
THE ROAD AHEAD

KEIR STARMER MP

FABIAN IDEAS NO.657



Fabian Society
61 Petty France
London SW1H 9EU
www.fabians.org.uk

Fabian Ideas 657

First published September 2021
ISBN 978-0-7163-0657-3

Editorial director: Kate Murray
Assistant editor: Vanesha Singh

This pamphlet, like all publications of the Fabian Society, represents not the collective views of the society but only the views of the authors. The responsibility of the society is limited to approving its publications as worthy of consideration within the Labour movement. This publication may not be reproduced without express permission of the Fabian Society.

© The Fabian Society 2021

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data. A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Designed by The Tin Can Collective, London, UK
Printed and bound by DG3, London, UK

To find out more about the Fabian Society, the Young Fabians, the Fabian Women's Network and our local societies, please visit our website at www.fabians.org.uk



THE ROAD AHEAD

KEIR STARMER MP

FOREWORD	2
1. REFLECTIONS	3
2. PAST	6
“Here you are! Don’t lose it again!”	6
The ideology that failed	7
Held back	9
3. PRESENT	11
Pulling back the curtain	11
The contribution society	12
Climate delay	13
Fixing the fundamentals	15
Opportunity and security	16
Identity and belonging	17
4. FUTURE	19
A nation remade	19
A new deal for business and working people	20
Real power in your hands	22
Healthy bodies and healthy minds	23
The best start in life for every child	24
Streets that are safe again	25
5. THE ROAD AHEAD	27
A country at a crossroads	27
ENDNOTES	29

FOREWORD

The pandemic has shown that the British people are still just as resilient and compassionate as we ever were. It has also shown us what matters most - our health, the places around us and the people we love. The next Labour government will place all these things at the heart of our ambitious plans to remake Britain.

But Covid-19 has also exposed the many fragilities in the ways we live, work and are governed. Inequality of opportunity and a lack of security are not inevitable - they are a result of a decade of Tory government that stripped back the state and left our country's foundations weakened when the virus struck.

Our country is now at a crossroads. Down one path is the same old insecurity and lack of opportunity. But down the Labour one is something better: a society built on everyone's contribution. It is a future where a modern, efficient government works in partnership with a brilliant, innovative private sector to create good jobs and harness the potential of technology. One where workers can expect more flexibility and fair pay for a fair day's work. One where we update our public services, education and health for the challenges and

opportunities of the future. One where the epic challenge of our generation - climate change - is tackled head on and where the jobs created come to our shores.

People in this country are crying out for change. The Labour path would give them real control over their lives and their local area. It would give power to make decisions to local communities rather than people in Westminster.

The Tories have been in power for more than a decade. They have failed to match their talk with action. Labour would make ourselves accountable to the British people. To achieve this, I propose 10 simple key principles to form a new agreement between Labour and the British people. My message to anyone who agrees with those principles is come with us. Let us take the road to a better, brighter, more secure future together.

Keir Starmer MP
September 2021

1. REFLECTIONS

When I became leader of the Labour party in April 2020, Britain had been in lockdown for 12 days. We are only now – 17 months later - beginning to see our liberty restored and our lives tentatively return to normality. We have lived through a period of upheaval so great that it will take us all – as individuals, as a country, as a people – many more years to fully understand it.

The pandemic has been a time of great loss. Families were kept apart from one another. The formative experiences that shape young lives were cruelly missed. Hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens lost their lives: each one a friend, a neighbour, a relative.

But modern Britain has always emerged from the most difficult periods in our history with a hunger to seize the moment and create a better country. We are, once again, at such a juncture. This pamphlet is about how we got here, where the country is now and what should come next.

It explains how we can capture the spirit that got us through the pandemic as we go forward. It also sets out the path we will take to meet our ambitions, the scale of change demanded by the British people and the huge challenges

facing us all. It is a vision of a better, fairer, more secure and prosperous Britain. My personal thanks go to our friends and colleagues at the Fabian Society for giving me the opportunity to write this and for publishing it.

Over the summer, people have been cautiously but enthusiastically returning to the things they love. Pubs, cafes and restaurants have filled up. Families and friends have met without restriction. The roar of the crowd at sporting events has returned. For my own part, I was finally able to do what I always wanted to do as leader of the Labour party: take our ideas for the future to people.

I have travelled the length and breadth of the country, hearing people's hopes and concerns, their plans to make up for lost time, their ambitions for the future. I have spoken with people of all ages, backgrounds and experiences. Some vote Labour, some vote for other parties, some do not vote at all. But everyone has a story to tell and a desire to be heard.

I have been struck by the complicated, sometimes contradictory way people are feeling. It is not rare to encounter optimism, worry, joy and reflection all during one chat. But I am also struck

by how little this country reflects the stereotypes that have been created for it. I do not believe we are a hopelessly polarised, divided, adrift nation as some say. People might not always agree on every subject, but they are generally reasonable, decent and understanding of one another. Grandparents express heartfelt concern for the prospects of grandchildren; people empathise with perfect strangers. Similarly, when I listen to the hopes and dreams and determination of the younger generation, I find it hard to agree with those who think our best days are behind us.

The truth is that the pandemic has reminded us of what matters most. We are social creatures, driven by a love of friends, family and the places around us. The sound of laughter and the fizz of ideas are more potent when shared with others. Houses are made homes and streets are made neighbourhoods by the people and the things we treasure. It is striking how much of that which has made us proud or given us cause for hope since last March was built on the power of people working together.

From the neighbourhood-level efforts of communities to look after one another, to the way businesses, scientists and the NHS drove the vaccine effort, we have seen how much more we achieve collectively. On the other hand, the moments that were most damaging and detrimental to our national effort – such as when senior Conservatives decided that the rules did not apply to them or enriched their friends with taxpayer money – were characterised by selfishness and arrogance.

The pandemic will change the way

we work and the way we live, but we must not allow it to atomise society further. People coming together is not just about what we can achieve: it is also about how we can live more fulfilled lives.

Spending so long in isolation has reinforced the importance of the places around us. Working from home was easier if you had a sizeable house and a garden – less so if you lived in a flat share with no outside space. Only being able to go out for one walk a day was more tolerable if your surroundings were safe and attractive.

In some sense, this is an old story about the importance of fairness and equality of opportunity. Lockdown was a more difficult, damaging experience for those whose kids' schools were not equipped for home learning, whose employment did not qualify them for sick pay, or who had existing health conditions. The burden fell on those who couldn't work from home and those who were already struggling. While the pandemic has been a shared traumatic experience, one we have got through together, some were destined to experience that trauma more profoundly because of circumstances beyond their control.

Some of the challenges facing our country are new. Technology, climate change, an ageing population and shifting geopolitics will change our world. People are no longer prepared to sit back while politicians shrug their shoulders. The future will belong to those who do not just mitigate against change but grasp the opportunities it provides.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The next Labour government will be focused on creating jobs people are proud of, reimagining our public services for those who use them, creating a new and better relationship with business and delivering world-class health and education. And we will build this on solid foundations, with security at home, in the workplace, on the streets and from those who would do us harm.

These ambitions are personal to me. My parents worked with their hands – my dad on the factory floor, my mum as a nurse. As well as working and raising children, my mum battled severe illness for most of her life. I spent large parts of my school years with her in high dependency units.

But despite these challenges, I was fortunate enough to be the first in my family to go to university, after which I was able to pursue a rewarding career. From defending ordinary people against the might of vested interests, campaigning against the death penalty, defending workers and their trade unions, and helping bring Stephen Lawrence's murderers to justice, I focused on causes I was passionate about. In 2008, when I accepted the role of Director of Public Prosecutions, it was because I wanted to serve my country and make it a better, safer place. My team and I worked closely with the police and security services to disrupt terrorists, to drive up convictions for rape and to defend rights. When I was given a knighthood for this work in 2014 my parents said it was the proudest day of their lives.

I am under no illusions that I did those things on my own. My parents may not have had much, but they

had secure jobs and a home: a strong platform on which to start a family. They could never have afforded private education or private healthcare – but we never felt we needed it. That made it possible for me to follow my ambitions and have a family of my own.

Does a working-class child in Britain today have the same opportunities my generation did? It is hard to think they do. It is still the case that your life chances are decided by the circumstances of your birth. That must change.

We can only do that if we provide the security and opportunities that will allow us to unlock our country's potential. It is a tragedy that we have a prime minister and a government so utterly unserious and completely unprepared for the great challenges of our time. That is why Labour must win and give the British people the government they deserve.

I want Labour to once again be Britain's bricks and mortar – a symbol of solidity, reliability, shelter and the prospect of building something new and better. To do that, our party must have a relentless focus on the challenges and opportunities of the future and how they can be shaped to the interest of working people. If we do that, we can once again forge the better country and better future we all want to see.

2. PAST

My life was transformed by the Labour government of 1945. It was transformative for millions of people like me, you know - education, the health service. It was proof that politics can make life better for people; that a social dream can become a social reality by the power of government.

- Glenda Jackson

My assessment now is that we probably didn't cut enough.

- David Cameron

“HERE YOU ARE! DON'T LOSE IT AGAIN!”

In order to plan for the future we must learn from the past. We must take lessons from the last four terms of Conservative rule and take pride in Labour's own record.

The last 75 years of Labour history have been characterised by towering achievement in government followed by long periods of self-doubt and navel-gazing. In recent decades, the legacy of the 1997 Labour government has become contested to the extent that the party has at times felt like separate

families living under one roof. This has been harmful and alienating. It has not progressed the cause of achieving a Labour government and has been damaging to our country.

The strength of the Tory party is in no small part due to its ability to shed its skin. Just 12 years separated the moral panic of 'Back to Basics' from the leadership of the libertarians David Cameron and George Osborne. More recently, the same politicians who were cheerleaders of austerity have been banned from even uttering the word. The Conservatives are not an easy opponent to pin down – and even less so when Labour has tied its own arms behind its back.

The standard version of Labour history is well-known. Out of the rubble of the second world war and the economic depression of the 1930s, the Attlee government rebuilt Britain, with millions of homes for the heroes of the conflict and the creation of the NHS. Perhaps its greatest achievement was that the Tory governments that followed had no choice but to try and build upon this legacy rather than dismantle it. The Blair and Brown governments were similarly ambitious for Britain: from

THE ROAD AHEAD

introducing the minimum wage and reducing child and pensioner poverty, to the hospitals and schools that were built and the nurses and teachers that were trained.

I could list many hundreds more things that Labour has done in power, a great shopping list of social, economic and national advancement. I could explain why each one mattered and the ripple effects it had on future generations. I could contrast them to the paucity of the Conservative record.

At Labour conference a few years ago, a video was shown before the leader's speech. It showcased Labour's leaders, all the way back to Keir Hardie. It was set to a moving soundtrack of testimony and archive footage. But as well as making me feel proud, it also made me frustrated. Because I realised that somewhere along the line, we had stopped talking in the present tense and consigned our achievements to the past. We had moved from being the party of 'white heat' to the party of sepia-tinged nostalgia. We had become a party squabbling over its own past, rather than one focused on the future of the country.

When we win, it is not because the country has come round to our way of thinking but because we have seized the future and moulded it. The Attlee government owed less to Marxist textbooks than it did to the famous Daily Mirror cartoon showing an Allied soldier holding out a sign reading "Victory and Peace in Europe" and the caption "Here you are! Don't lose it again!" The soldiers returning from around the world wanted change – and

they overwhelmingly voted for Labour.

In 1964, Harold Wilson began the modernisation of Britain, expanding educational opportunity, helping culture flourish and promoting science and technology. In 1997, Labour understood that a more liberal, tolerant country was being born alongside the old one and that the structure of society had not kept pace with the huge social changes of the 1970s and 1980s. It set about again modernising our country, fixing the gaping holes left by Thatcherism, with proper public services, constitutional reform and leadership in Europe.

The Labour party at its best does not wait around for the public to decide we are right. Instead, it adapts and updates. It does not look backwards – it marches forwards. It does not endlessly litigate the war effort – it wins the peace. It uses its history as a guide, not a parable.

THE IDEOLOGY THAT FAILED

It is impossible to live in this moment and not feel the winds of change blowing, just as they did in 1945 and 1997. After the global financial crash, the Conservatives' reckless economic approach failed to deliver growth or repair the public finances. We cannot allow the same mistakes to be repeated this time around.

The forces pushing apart our country and tearing at the social fabric – nationalism, extremism and misinformation – need to be tackled, but have either been embraced or ignored by Conservative and Scottish Nationalist governments.

The desire of people across the country to have real power and

control – expressed most forcibly in the Brexit vote - remains unmet. On every single one of these great challenges, the Labour party has an enormous opportunity to make the progressive case. The next Labour government must deliver sustainable growth, repair the public finances and give people the means to take back control.

But the arc of history will not bend towards us unless we force it to. We cannot go back into our comfort zones. We must embrace this new world and deal head on with the fundamental question of how Labour would remake Britain for the 2030s and beyond.

In the decade since Labour has been in government, right-wing governments both here and around the world have been busy. The projects of the Conservative government in Westminster can be broken up into three distinct but related periods.

First, using the global financial crisis as a smokescreen for rolling back the state. Second, a lazy, complacent veer from patriotism to nationalism, resulting in a botched exit from the European Union, the erosion of our defence and military capabilities and an unfolding foreign policy disaster in Afghanistan. And third, the ongoing attempts to import American-style divisions on social, cultural and sometimes national lines. We cannot understand where we find ourselves as a country today without an exploration of how these three projects have affected us.

Cuts to services and provision were the defining project of the Conservative government from 2010 to 2015, aided and abetted by the Liberal Democrats.

While David Cameron's two successors as prime minister have tried to distance themselves from this period, neither has found a similarly clear and concise way of talking about the economy or been prepared to fully confront austerity's failure. The lack of a clear economic message was hidden from view by years of debate over Brexit. But as that period came to an end, the curtain was drawn back on a government left without a defining mission or purpose.

It is hardly any wonder that the current government is desperate to avoid discussing its economic record. Everywhere you look in Britain today its effects can be seen. The government's own Social Mobility Commission reported this year that almost 700,000 more children are living in poverty than in 2012.¹ Across the same period, the number of children having to use food banks has risen dramatically.² Anti-social behaviour has soared, due in no small part to the fact there were 20,000 fewer police officers on the streets in 2019 than in 2010.³ A £6bn gap has opened in adult social care through the salami-slicing of council budgets.⁴

Across the country, a decade of Tory slash and burn economics has resulted in everything from fewer bin collections and increased fly-tipping to the closure of children's centres and lengthening waits for mental health treatment. The plan to strip back the state has come at immense cost to the social fabric of our neighbourhoods, our communities and our country.

David Cameron once famously declared: "We're all in this together." But the Tories' economic approach has

meant that some people found themselves more 'in' than others. The Centre for Cities has shown that seven of the 10 cities that have faced the largest cuts are in the North East, North West or Yorkshire.⁵ Many of the poorest regions in Western Europe can now be found in this country.⁶

A failure to actively shape and strengthen the economy means that vast potential is being wasted. We have a generation of young people struggling to find secure work, hampered by debt, priced out of housing and struggling to see the opportunities that my generation were afforded. They are the opposite of the tired old stereotypes of the lazy and entitled teenager or 20-something. Indeed, many of them are too young to ever remember economic good times or a government that offered them anything more than crumbs from the table. They have been forced to be wise beyond their years and have had their expectations checked.

Just before the Conservatives took power in 2010, Professor Sir Michael Marmot published a report on the state of England's health. In February 2020 he updated it, laying bare the sheer scale of decline. Among its shocking findings were that that life expectancy had stalled for the first time in a century and that for some of the poorest women in the country it had declined.⁷ It is an appalling legacy after a decade of government.

Recently, a curious thing has happened: the Conservatives have decided they no longer want to talk about the libertarian economics they once preached. Unable to fully change

course because of internal squabbles, their ambitions for the economy have become less and less clear. We have had plenty of slogans - 'Burning Injustices', 'Just About Managing', 'Global Britain', 'Levelling Up' - but precious little purpose or action. In the absence of a defining economic project or plan, the Tories have instead plunged headfirst into the murky depths of the so-called 'culture wars'.

HELD BACK

Britain has achieved so much – and yet it still has so much to offer. We have brilliant talent everywhere you look. There are innumerable success stories in business, education, industry, arts, sport, entrepreneurship and science. We are world leaders in creative industries, medical research and financial services.

There are vast resources of untapped potential in our people, our businesses, our towns and our cities. For too long we have been held back by a Tory government lacking in ambition and vision. The 2010s were a lost decade for Britain. One in which, instead of actively strengthening, rebuilding and reimagining our economy fit for the future, faith was put in the power of a free market model that valued the contribution of capital but not labour. A failure to properly plan has seen jobs disappear to automation and towns flooded as weather patterns changed; people plunged into debt and unable to afford their own homes; businesses treated as an afterthought and intricate supply chains put at risk. As this happened the government offered warm

words but blanched at action.

Entering the 2020s, Britain faced stagnant wages, vast inequality and the slowest growth in living standards since the second world war. Regardless of what came next, we would all have lived with the hangover from this decade of Tory failure. But what came was far more damaging.

3. PRESENT

England's comparatively poor management of the pandemic was of a piece with England's health improvement falling behind that of other rich countries in the decade since 2010. We offered four likely reasons why: the quality of governance and political culture which did not give priority to the conditions for good health; continuing increases in inequalities in economic and social conditions, including a rise in poverty among families with children; a policy of austerity and consequent cuts to funding of public services; and a poor state of the nation's health that would increase the lethality of COVID-19. Addressing all of these needs to be at the heart of what needs to change if we are to build a fairer, healthier society as we emerge from the pandemic.

- Professor Sir Michael Marmot,
Build Back Fairer report

England is still a place where a naughty boy who comes from nothing can live his dream.

- Raheem Sterling, It Was All A Dream

PULLING BACK THE CURTAIN

Monumental events often pull back the curtain on the state of society. The woeful condition of British recruits in the Boer War led to concerted attempts to tackle poverty-related illnesses. The 1918 flu pandemic led to the rise of socialised medicine and public health.⁸ The horrors and sacrifices of war changed almost every aspect of life. The coronavirus crisis has put rocket boosters under the urgency of change in our country.

At the time of writing, we have already suffered the worst death toll and the worst economic hit of any major European economy.⁹ That was not inevitable. Instead, it was a direct result of government action and inaction. Much attention has been paid to the decisions taken by the prime minister at the start of the pandemic and the repeated mistakes that cost this country so dearly. His lack of seriousness and grip led to a crippling inertia in the vital early weeks.

The breaching of lockdown by senior members of the government undermined public faith at a crucial time. The enrichment of Tory donors and ministers' friends with taxpayer money deserves an investigation of its own. But this analysis obscures the wider, systemic, structural

problems: the seeds of disaster that had been sown over a decade of underfunding and broken promises.

When Covid-19 reached these shores, it was hard to find a part of Britain that had not had its foundations weakened disastrously by decisions taken over the previous decade.

It was the NHS that stepped up most spectacularly during the crisis. But it was forced to do so from a position of weakness. We had 10 per cent fewer hospital beds at the start of 2020 than we did in 2010/2011. During the same period, the rate of occupied beds increased.¹⁰ Waiting times were at a record level before the pandemic, with 4.5 million people waiting for treatment, compared to 2.5 million when the Tories came to power.¹¹ GPs and hospitals were missing almost all routine targets. The NHS had nearly 100,000 staff vacancies, including 50,000 nurses.¹² PPE supplies were disastrously low and supply chains were feeble.

National plans for adult social care barely existed and the poor pay of Britain's carers, about a third of whom were on zero-hours contracts, meant staffing turnover was high.¹³

These problems went far beyond just health and care. The independent Institute for Government's report into the fitness of public services for coronavirus describes how the government's use of capital budgets to plug gaps in day-to-day spending across Whitehall had resulted in crumbling prisons and courthouses, making adaptation to Covid-19 regulations and social distancing more difficult.¹⁴ Inequalities in access to devices for home learning and internet

provision meant some pupils in state schools were at a disadvantage compared to their private school contemporaries – shamefully, many went months with no access to laptops and online learning.¹⁵ Across the public sector, understaffing was the norm rather than the exception.

One of the defining traits of Covid-19 has been its ability to get into the fissures of society and exploit weakness. When it reached Britain's borders, it found a perfect host. The resilience of the state and its institutions had been systematically eroded over a decade. It was apparent early in the crisis that those members of society already struggling or working on the frontlines were disproportionately affected.

In some ways, this should not have been a surprise: from our fragmented care system to the way that minority communities are disproportionately impacted by issues as varied as housing, benefits and health inequalities, Covid-19 merely shone the stage lights into corners that had been kept in the shadows for too long.

THE CONTRIBUTION SOCIETY

As the government lurched between inertia and chaos, it was the British people who kept our country going. Many nurses and doctors will tell you, as the nurses who cared for my own mum when she was gravely ill told me, that this is simply their vocation: "We're just doing our job." But it was not just the NHS: van drivers made crucial deliveries, teachers made online lesson plans, the police maintained order. Supermarket workers, who

never expected their jobs to be at the frontline of a health crisis, ensured the nation's fridges and cupboards were full throughout the pandemic.

The staff at a care home I visited in Letchworth refused to leave their residents behind, no matter what the personal risk. These were the heroes of the pandemic – ordinary people rolling up their sleeves and doing their bit.

It was this spirit that inspired millions of acts of selflessness across the country every day. Neighbours checking on neighbours, young people picking up food for the elderly, people signing up for community efforts. The totems of *laissez-faire* politics - hyper-individualism and the disdain for the very idea of society - vanished when we were tested most.

In these moments, we could see the glimmers of what our country is at heart and what it can be again. This isn't about being Pollyannish or sentimental. It is about the idea of a society based on contribution: being part of something bigger, playing your part, valuing others not just because of what they can offer you. I make no apology for believing that these kinds of traditional ideas must be a crucial part of our future. They are what inspire people to become nurses or carers and businesses to prioritise their employees' happiness and wellbeing. Their re-emergence has led to a re-evaluation of both what is important to us and what is possible.

I believe we are living through a time when the individualism that prioritises personal entitlement, moral superiority and self-interest is receding in society's rear-view mirror. In its place, we have the chance to build something more secure,

more fair and more just. A programme that offers proper opportunities to people across the country, regardless of where they live or their background; one that harnesses the resources of the state and the innovative brilliance of the private sector to work together rather than against each other. The Conservatives have paid lip service to this in the past, with half-hearted and quickly abandoned ideas like the 'Big Society'.

We would do things differently. In order to put contribution and community at the centre of our efforts, we would build an effective partnership of state and private sector to prioritise the things that we have seen really matter: health, living conditions, working conditions and the environment. And together we would flesh out those things that are less immediately tangible but still vital - community, wellbeing, security and opportunity.

CLIMATE DELAY

These ideas and this urgency can be applied to any of the great challenges facing us today. But nowhere is it more important than climate change. In recent years we have seen devastating wildfires in America, Australia, India, China and southern Europe. 20 million people a year are forced to leave their homes due to climate change – leading inevitably to increased migration pressures.¹⁶ The UK is getting wetter, with devastating floods now an annual occurrence. At the same time, we are also one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to heatwaves.¹⁷

While climate change denial has been

utterly discredited, we still face an equally pernicious obstacle – climate delay. This government now accepts that something needs to be done but lacks the vision, the ambition and the political courage to make it happen. While inaction in other policy areas holds back our country, inaction on climate change will mean life or death for many people.

The 2020s will be decisive. Future generations will judge this generation by the action we take now. But the world is currently not on track to meet its goals and the UN has suggested that current climate pledges will only achieve emissions reductions of one per cent by the end of the decade – nowhere near what is required. Our government has been talking the talk but it has not walked the walk. Not only is the UK currently way off track to meet our legally binding net-zero target, but we are not even on track to meet the less ambitious one that preceded it.¹⁸ As the world warms, we need so much more than warm words.

We are not just failing in our obligations when it comes to climate change. We are also – once again - failing to seize the opportunities it presents. Other countries have grasped that climate change is about jobs.

The private sector is racing ahead of our government, waiting for it to catch up. Airbus in Gloucestershire is currently developing the world's first hydrogen wing for commercial aircraft. This is world-leading research and design, combined with cutting-edge manufacturing. It is creating hundreds of good quality jobs, potentially massive export opportunities and a real sense of purpose and pride for workers. This

project is part of a bigger ambition to design the world's first zero-emission aircraft. The possibilities are huge. It is exactly the sort of thing Britain used to build when we were the workshop of the world.

But where is our government in this? Crippled by short-termism, unable to see the wood for the trees. Its erratic approach to how government can help shape the economy to the UK's advantage means we are missing the opportunities for the long-term, strategic investment we need now.

This is where Labour's vision of government working with the private sector will make the difference. We are in a global race for these jobs of the future but the government is still on the starting blocks. At Whitelee Wind Farm, just south of Glasgow, one can see first-hand the immense potential of wind power as its turbines generate enough clean electricity to power 350,000 homes. As an island nation, we have a geographical advantage when it comes to generating wind power. But the government has failed to invest in the industry to manufacture wind turbines here. As a result, we find ourselves in the farcical situation of having to ship in wind turbines from Denmark and Indonesia.

This failure to take a strategic view or put together a proper plan is not just about our climate commitments. It is not just a few sectors or parts of the country. Instead, it is at the very heart of the problems bedeviling Britain's economy and the prospects of too many in this country. A decade of Tory government has seen short-termism prioritised instead of what was really needed: a

proper plan to ensure that we are able unlock Britain's potential in the decades to come.

FIXING THE FUNDAMENTALS

The same theme applies much more widely. There are two fundamental things we need to fix in this country: insecurity and inequality of opportunity. Wherever you look, from the housing market to jobs, from young people to old, these are the primary colours that make up the palette of challenges facing us.

Imagine two young people leaving a decent state school in a town anywhere in the country. One is interested in academia. Perhaps they have their heart set on living in a city. The other student is just as bright, just as talented, but has different plans: they want to stay living near family and want to work with their hands or find a vocation. Both have the enthusiasm, the brains and the work ethic to contribute in whatever they choose to do. Given the opportunity, both will get on in life.

The first student gets the grades they need and heads off to university. After three years, they graduate and find an entry-level job – work opportunities are pretty good. But every month, half their income is handed to a buy-to-let landlord in the private rental market. They have no idea when the price might be hiked. They can never really settle because they could be priced out. A promotion comes at work and that offers some breathing space. But the idea of saving for a deposit on a place of their own is not so much slim as laughable. The prospect of putting

down roots, perhaps having a family, feels unrealistic.

In the meantime, their school friend found an apprenticeship. It was not easy: the numbers have plummeted and there are few available. Friends in a similar position had to settle for less money and less job security. Having started work, they stay living at home for a bit longer than they might have hoped – but local property prices are not too bad and they soon have enough to buy a smart, new-build home. At work, prospects are not obvious. Wages are not as good as they used to be. Periodically, there are rumours that the company might up and leave for somewhere else.

If those two friends were to meet up, what would they say about their experiences? They have taken very different paths and face different challenges. But the similarities are broad. They would both be proud of their achievements, their hard work and their successes. But at the same time they might also feel frustrated, worried, even pessimistic. Because hanging over them like a cloud is the sense that this is all too fragile: that the opportunities that once existed no longer do and that the link between hard work, fair play and reward has been broken. They might feel that if they had been born into money or in a different part of the country, things would be better for them. They both have so much to contribute – but are being held back from doing so.

This experience isn't unique to one part of society. Chronic insecurity and lack of opportunity pockmark the country. People aged 35 to 44 years were almost three and a half times more likely

to be renting in 2017 than they were in 1993, as people struggle for longer and longer to get on the housing ladder.¹⁹

London created one in four of all new private sector jobs in Britain after the global financial crisis, suggesting much more needs to be done to grow the private sector in other parts of the country.²⁰ A few months into the pandemic there were 12 unemployed workers for every job in some of our post-industrial towns – meaning that the areas that were already struggling had seen their prospects further dimmed.²¹

This lack of opportunity and security is pernicious. It creates a vicious cycle that is hard to escape from and which has far-reaching consequences. If we do not help people put down deep roots, they never get the chance to feel like a part of their community. If our work force is not as productive or as skilled as it should be, workers and businesses suffer. If we do not spread opportunity around the country, parts of our economy lie dormant. Tory governments have stood back, enamoured by the fallacy of ‘trickle-down’ economics, while parts of our country that built and produced things have seen good, skilled jobs disappear.

Make no mistake about it: Britain’s rivals on the global stage are not making the same mistakes. Just before lockdown, the interim CEO of City and Guilds sounded a warning to the government that “low productivity and growing skills gaps are plaguing businesses and the wider economy”, that “compared with our G7 counterparts, the UK’s low levels of productivity see us lagging well behind” and that “social mobility is in a worrying

state of decline.”²² We cannot say we have not been warned: if we do not change course, we will all suffer the long-term consequences.

OPPORTUNITY AND SECURITY

This all tallies up to no less than the erosion of a fundamental idea, central to our democracy and our way of life – the promise that the next generation will have the opportunity to do better than the last. When people are forced to move halfway across the country to find decent job opportunities or cannot afford to buy a modest home, or fear they will not have a retirement to enjoy or the ability to access basic care when they get old, something is badly wrong.

That is why we must turn our attention to opportunity and security. They are the sunlight that help liberty, democracy and citizenship grow: in their absence, each one is stunted. To complement them, we also need a renewed focus on the ties that bind us all together. Where Tory individualism decrees there is ‘no such thing as society’, we believe the opposite. On the back of the membership card given to every single Labour member it says: “By the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we do alone.” Our party is built on the belief that it is by bringing people together we make our country a better place.

In recent years that has been tested to breaking point. The decline of trade union membership, the diminution of our social housing stock and the institutional erosion of the places where we come together – from pubs to places of worship

– have all left people increasingly isolated. Chronic loneliness affects millions of adults across Britain. Faith in many of the institutions of our country has declined. The idea that the immigration and social security systems are a free-for-all has been fertile territory for populist politicians, who have sowed mistrust. The years of Brexit gridlock put enormous stress on our country.

This has all come at a time when personal technology and social media have changed the way we live. The democratisation of information provided by the internet means that the entire sum of human learning is available at the touch of a button – but so are conspiracy theories, crankery, misinformation and hatred. Building bonds between fellow citizens has never been more crucial.

But rather than take on these challenges, the Conservatives have tried to exploit divisions, leading to an increasingly bizarre obsession with what happens on university campuses, a crime bill that offers statues of slavers more protection than women walking down the street, and McCarthyite accusations of Marxist plots against everyone from teachers to those protesting racism. The limits on its effectiveness were exposed by the tawdry sight of the prime minister and Home Secretary refusing to criticise those who booed the England football team in the build-up to Euro 2020.

Despite these farcical examples, we should never be complacent – our political rivals sow the seeds of division and rancour liberally and effectively.

IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Most immediately damaging to our country has been the rise of the multi-headed hydra of nationalism. The Conservatives and the Scottish National Party may define themselves against each other, but their politics is symbiotic, requiring one another to sustain and grow. Their failures are similar as well: A&E targets in Scotland have been missed for years, and life expectancy gaps between deprived and affluent areas are rising. In education, progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap is minimal and international league tables show standards have fallen. Most shockingly of all, since the SNP cut funding for alcohol and drugs services, deaths have soared and Scotland has the highest drugs death rate in Europe.²³

Both the SNP and the Conservatives use culture to distract and deflect, creating division between people of these islands. The business of effective governance and improving people's lives comes second to ideology. Both use nationalism freely to whip up fear of the other.

Nationalists like to portray themselves as patriots. But patriotism and nationalism are not the same. In fact, they are opposites. Nationalism represents an attempt to divide people from one another; patriotism is an attempt to unite people of different backgrounds. Nationalism is about the casting out of the other; patriotism is about finding common ground. Nationalism is the flag as a threat. Patriotism is the flag as a celebration.

Nationalism is just one arm of the rise of identity-based politics in the Western world that has done immense damage to the progressive cause. By dividing people into smaller and smaller groups and diminishing the experiences of others, we atomise our society ever more and keep potential allies and friends at arm's length. Community, family and country are not conservative or backwards ideas – they are the building blocks of strong societies.

When we celebrate families, we celebrate them in all their different shapes and sizes. When we celebrate our country, it is a love of place and people, not jingoism. We don't seek to create in-groups and out-groups - instead, we want to create a forward-looking, inclusive

Britain. A Britain built on the bedrock of our traditions but one that evolves, grows and embraces change. A Britain that judges its people not by race, nationality or the way they live their lives – but on how they contribute to the greater good.

The challenges of the future will require us to build broad coalitions. In the pursuit of creating a better country and a better future we may sometimes disagree and have differences. It is our job to strengthen the union and reassert the bonds between the people of our country.

Over the last year of Covid-19 we have seen the prospect of a better society, built on people coming together for something bigger than themselves. As we face the future, we must be the party that represents that spirit and those ideas.

4. FUTURE

Now is not the time for half measures.

– Mark Carney, Venice International Climate Conference, July 2021

The future is unwritten.

– Joe Strummer, The Clash

A NATION REMADE

Britain is at a fork in its history. Down one path lies the same old economic and societal weaknesses, with predictable consequences and squandered opportunities. Down the other is a better, bolder, brighter future, one in which we learn the lessons of the pandemic and build a new society and economy that harnesses the strength of people coming together. A future in which we ensure everyone who wants to contribute can fulfil their potential. Where we reverse the tearing apart of our country, creating a more united kingdom and tackling the injustices that blight too many lives.

I want our country to take that second path. But that will only happen if Labour wins again.

As I speak with people, I am struck by just how much agreement there is on

where we are as a country and where we need to go next. People are crying out for real change and Labour will be at the vanguard of that. The scale of the challenge is vast. The erosion of our economic base, the underfunding of the services we rely on, the curtailment of ambition, the tearing of the social fabric, the mistrust that has been sown in our institutions and the constitutional damage done to our country have all combined to weaken our country's foundations.

If we are to come back better than before we need to fundamentally rethink how our country works. We must take inspiration from 1945 – but that cannot mean dwelling on the past. Instead, we must face the future. That means a new settlement between the government, business and working people. It means completely rethinking where power lies in our country – driving it out of the sclerotic and wasteful parts of a centralized system and into the hands of people and communities across the land. It means banishing the culture that unthinkingly accepts public services not keeping up with the sort of advances we have come to expect in the private sector. We will no longer allow

corruption, waste, anachronism and falling standards to be met with a shrug, as if there is something inevitable about each of them.

People want to emerge from lockdown into something better. They want to see a contribution society: one where people who work hard and play by the rules can expect to get something back, where you can expect fair pay for fair work, where we capture the spirit that saw us through the worst ravages of the pandemic and celebrate the idea of community and society; where we understand that we are stronger together.

Britain under the next Labour government will no longer be trampled by the tyranny of low expectations. If we are to reimagine what is possible, we will need to demand high standards. If we are to unlock the vast reserves of potential and productivity in this country, we will need to be restless. If we are to overcome cynicism, we will need to be the party of practical action.

Labour in government has always been about rebuilding and reconstruction. This time there is a nation to be remade.

A NEW DEAL FOR BUSINESS AND WORKING PEOPLE

Building that better country is not going to happen with the erratic approach to the economy of the Conservatives. But nor will it be created by a throwback to the planned economies of the 20th century.

The first task in remaking the nation will be resetting the relationship

between the government and business to create an economy that works. That will require a new, commonsense, practical approach: one in which we don't treat the economy as a battle for supremacy between public sector and private sector, but a joint effort. We need to drive innovation and change and drive up standards for employers and employees.

The state must become an investor and a leader. British businesses large and small must know the government has their back. Workers must see their pay, skills and conditions improve.

Business is a force for good in society, providing jobs, prosperity and wealth. But business has been let down by a Tory government that has failed to plan for the long term and provide the conditions in which long-term decisions can be made. When I speak to business leaders they are deeply frustrated by this. They feel we are giving our rivals in other parts of the world a head start.

We have seen from the government's failure to properly manage our departure from the European Union what happens when the expertise and concerns of business are ignored. The sight of empty shelves in our supermarkets should be embarrassing to ministers who failed to understand the complex supply chains and streamlined logistics that British businesses rely upon. By creating unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy, the government has cost both businesses and consumers.

We would fix the holes in the shoddy Brexit deal – but we also need to think more broadly about how government and business interact. My vision for

THE ROAD AHEAD

Britain is to make it the best place to do business because it has a government that works in partnership with the private sector. Businesses would be expected to play by the rules, respect their workforce, and contribute to their communities. In return, a Labour government would provide a level playing field, a skilled workforce and a modern infrastructure, from transport to public services.

There are huge opportunities here. We would start with a promise to ensure we buy, make and sell in Britain. Our national economy must be actively built, nurtured and developed to deliver widespread prosperity. The shambolic experience of public procurement, both before and during Covid-19, must end. Why when government departments are funded by taxpayer money are we so lax about ensuring that money is spent appropriately?

Labour would set high standards, ensuring public bodies give more contracts to British firms both large and small and design contracts to ensure we spend more in this country. We would report on this annually, with public bodies required to explain how much they are buying from British businesses. All major infrastructure projects currently in the pipeline would be reviewed to ensure we maximise the use of British materials and firms.

I believe the single most important part of improving lives is to ensure good, secure jobs are spread across the country and that people have real flexibility and choice at work.

In the first 100 days of the next Labour government, I will sign into

law a New Deal for Working People. It will provide security and opportunities for people across the country, with improved conditions, quality jobs, training and better pay. It will increase the minimum wage, ensuring proper wages that people can raise a family on. It will ensure rights for all workers from day one, such as sick pay, parental leave, and the right to flexible working, reflecting the realities of the post-Covid world. It would ban dubious practices such as fire and rehire and stop firms exploiting loopholes to get out of giving employment rights to their workers. We would give people stronger rights to be represented at work by their trade unions to help raise standards and protect workers. And, crucially, it would guarantee work or training for young people.

We would replace universal credit and reimagine our social security system to ensure that work pays. We want low-paid people to keep more of the money they earn, so that having enough money to raise a family isn't the preserve of the better-off.

All this would make a difference to hard-working people. It would put far more emphasis on balancing work with family, rather than choosing between the two. It would create happier, more productive employees. It would benefit business.

We would also use the challenge of tackling emissions as an opportunity for British industry and jobs. We would start that with a huge investment in a green recovery from the pandemic. We would boost the car industry to ensure that Britain leads in the production

of electric cars. We would get more offshore wind turbines built, powering our homes with clean energy. We would increase the manufacturing of clean steel to build our schools, railways and hospitals.

All of these actions would create jobs – hundreds of thousands, located across the country; jobs that give people real pride as they help in the effort to remake our nation. This is only the beginning of our ambition: we would set ambitious targets to eliminate the substantial majority of carbon emissions by 2030, to ensure Britain is an absolute leader and an example to the world. The scale of our ambition will only increase from here: if the Tory government continues to dither and delay over the coming years, I promise that Labour will take the decisions necessary to deliver on the environment and the economy.

REAL POWER IN YOUR HANDS

For too long, it has been accepted that many people in this country will not achieve their potential simply because of the circumstances of their birth. But there is nothing inevitable about this. We must aggressively strike down the pre-existing inequalities that mean too many children still have their life chances influenced more by their background and where they live. You cannot unlock a nation's prospects and potential while allowing vast swathes of its citizens to be held back.

I believe that where and how decisions are made is crucial. During the pandemic, we saw how Labour politicians in power across the country

were able to make a huge difference to their local area. But it also exposed how piecemeal regional power is. Too many places do not have those strong local voices. And even where they do, the powers they possess are not enough to match the power of their arguments. That is why if the people of Britain put their trust in us and return Labour to power, we will return power to the people of Britain.

It should go without saying that the best person to make decisions about what a community needs is someone who is part of and understands that community – but too often that does not happen. Britain today is one of the most centralised countries in Europe. Crucial decisions are too often made in offices in Westminster with little consideration of the lives they impact hundreds of miles away. That must change.

Labour in government would show that we take seriously people's demands for more control. We will deliver social justice, stronger communities and unlock potential by unlocking power, wealth and opportunity across the United Kingdom. But we will not do that by decree – we will put power and control in the hands of the people, whether at work, in accessing public services, or over the decisions that affect their lives.

Where the current Tory government has muddied the waters of transparency on the money it spends or the things it does, I want to make it easier to hold government to account. That means everything from ending the outrageous way government departments refuse freedom of information requests to

ensuring the next Labour government gives updates on our progress delivering on our key promises.

We would also act on tackling racism, drawing a line under the way important reports are allowed to pile up and gather dust in Whitehall. When people across the world come together to say that black lives matter, when England footballers take the knee before the biggest games of their lives and when black people chant ‘we can’t breathe’, they aren’t asking for more nice words or inquiries – they are demanding real progress. We would introduce a new Race Equality Act in the UK, aimed at tackling the complex structural racism that holds back people from every community.

The changes to our economy and where power lies will create an exciting, dynamic country. From the high streets of our towns and cities, to the global markets, Britain would be back on its feet, ready to take on the future. But my vision for this country is about more than that: it is also about rethinking the parts of society we all rely on, ready for the 2030s and beyond.

HEALTHY BODIES AND HEALTHY MINDS

One of my burning desires is to rethink and improve our public services. As Director of Public Prosecutions, there was rarely a case that came across my desk that didn’t involve people who had fallen through the cracks of public provision or where there had been missed opportunities to intervene earlier. Frankly, by the time a crime

has been committed, it is too late for both the victims and for the prospect of changing outcomes.

In recent years we could have used technology to revolutionise services. Instead, we have seen a scaling back of capability and ambition. The next Labour government will not make the same mistakes. Across our public services we need to focus on preventing the ills that plague society, not just patching them up. The pandemic has brutally exposed the challenges to our nation and we will act to address them.

Nowhere is this more keenly felt than in our health. We must now be ambitious. If we are to remake our nation then we should set ourselves the challenge of making this the healthiest country in the world.

A successful country depends on being a healthy country: the NHS matters to our health and it matters for our productivity. Inspired by the ambition of Wales and New Zealand, and the experiences of the pandemic that kept our minds and bodies healthy, Labour would put wellbeing at the heart of government decision-making.

The opening-up of discussion about mental health over the last decade or so has been important – but what is needed now is action. The 1997 Labour government set ambitious targets for waiting lists in the NHS and they worked: the next Labour government will set ourselves the same challenge on mental health. The mental health charity Mind suggest that just one in eight adults with a mental health problem are currently getting treatment²⁴ and waiting lists are soaring. We must be ambitious about

tackling this growing crisis.

We know that mental health is at the heart of so many other societal problems and making it as much a priority as our physical health will have so many positive effects for the wellbeing of our nation.

Likewise, we must drive down waiting lists for treatment that were already soaring before Covid-19, as well as shift our focus from acute care to prevention and improving quality of life. That will require filling staffing shortfalls and providing the NHS with the support it needs to improve standards of care. But it will also mean harnessing the power and potential of technology to transform healthcare provision. If we can make our shopping cheaper and more convenient through the power of modern technology, then it stands to reason we can revolutionise our health and our health services.

We are not naïve about the scale and importance of this challenge. We have an ageing population, one that will continue to grow over the next decade. Under the Tories, our health is getting worse, and the progress in living longer has begun to stall. Parents want their kids to grow up happy and healthy – but that will require action.

THE BEST START IN LIFE FOR EVERY CHILD

Changes to the education system over the past decade have left us lagging other parts of the world, with young people's life chances severely impacted. Even before the pandemic, the gap

between how well poorer children do at school compared to their peers had stopped closing for the first time in a decade.²⁵ In 2019, the UK had the biggest primary school class sizes in the developed world for the first time ever.²⁶ You cannot remake a nation with an education system that is failing families. It will be up to the next Labour government to turn things around, equipping young people for the challenges ahead and the opportunities the future economy brings.

I start with a simple belief: that every parent, no matter where they live, should be able to send their child to a high-quality school that prepares them for the future. Despite all the changes to the economy and job market, UK education policy is currently failing to prepare pupils for the future workplace. Fewer than half of British employers believe young people are leaving full-time education with sufficient advanced digital skills.²⁷

I want every child to leave school ready for work and ready for life. That means modernising education. The future workforce will need to adapt to change throughout their working lives. Our education system should be working with employers to make education and training ready for a world of work that will look very different. That cannot just mean a narrow focus on university education. Higher education is vital to transforming the prospects of so many young people but to be fit for the future we are going to need skills, education and training at every stage of our lives.

If we are to be truly ambitious for

young people everywhere, we need to go beyond the obvious. Young people leaving independent schools are imbued with enviable self-confidence, self-worth and belief, traits that drive them through their lives.

I was not privately educated but I have worked in environments dominated by people who were. From my days at university, through my legal career and as a politician, I've seen supremely talented, hard-working people from ordinary backgrounds held back, not just by material circumstances but by self-doubt or a sense they don't quite 'belong.' A Labour government would focus not simply on grades and qualifications, but the so-called 'soft skills' that help develop and round young people.

The Social Mobility Commission has found that children from poorer backgrounds are much less likely to take part in extra-curricular activities.²⁸ If we are to remake the nation, we must help young people from all backgrounds develop their potential. To do that, we need to ensure they know what the world around them looks like and the possibilities that are available to them. That is why I want to ensure that by the time they are 10 years old, every child should have had the chance to play an instrument, join a competitive sports team, visit the seaside, the countryside, or the city, go to cultural institutions, ride a bike and learn how to debate their ideas.

I have no time for those who say that when it comes to poorer children, we should stick to the hard, vocational

skills. No well-off family would ever consider denying their own children these experiences – so why should we not demand the same for the 90 per cent of British children who do not attend independent school?

One of the key drivers of people choosing to send their child to an independent school is the smaller class sizes. It is a disgrace that secondary school class sizes are now at their highest for 20 years.²⁹ I also want to make vocational routes far more exciting, accessible and rewarding options - designing a system for those young people that is just as ambitious as they are. Everywhere you look today, potential is being wasted. We can do so much to change this. Let's give parents and young people the opportunities they deserve and the chance at the best start in life.

STREETS THAT ARE SAFE AGAIN

Perhaps nowhere is the gap greater than between the Tories' rhetoric on keeping people safe and their record of delivery. Even as someone who spent years working in the criminal justice system, I am still shocked by the facts. There has been a 90 per cent increase in police-recorded domestic abuse since 2015/16. The National Domestic Abuse Helpline has seen an increase of more than 60 per cent in the average number of monthly contacts.³⁰

There are more than 8,400 fewer police officers than in 2010, while overall there are 10,000 fewer officers and PCSOs in neighbourhood policing roles than in 2014/15.^{31 32} The proportion of

officers on the frontline is at its lowest level since 2011.³³ Police staff numbers are down by over 7,000 since 2010, forcing frontline police officers to be behind desks instead of out on the beat.³⁴ Entire neighbourhoods and communities have been left with no visible police presence. The faith of the public in the police's ability to respond to crime began to fall in the years leading up to 2020.

Crime reduction was one of the great successes of the Blair and Brown Labour governments. An independent audit to mark 10 years of Labour in government described Labour's record as 'impressive', with a fall in the official crime rate of 35 per cent, record levels of police numbers, a dramatic cut in the time between arrest and sentence for young offenders, and increases in the number of drug users entering treatment.³⁵ But decisions over the last decade have seen much of this progress undone.

Police numbers were slashed, rape convictions fell to a record low and knife crime rose to its highest recorded level. The difference in the two records could hardly be more stark.

Few things can be more corrosive than feeling unsafe in our communities and on our streets. The government had an opportunity to do something about all this, with its Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. But instead of taking on the challenges facing us including the epidemic of violence against women and girls, they focused on protecting statues. In fact, it did not mention women at all. This is simply unacceptable. I have seen first-hand what we need to do on crime. That is why I'd bring in a new law aimed at ending street harassment, increasing

sentences for rapists and stalkers, introducing whole life tariffs for anyone found guilty of the rape, abduction and murder of an individual, a review to increase sentences for domestic murder, as well as providing new statutory protection for domestic abuse survivors and real action to tackle misogyny.

But it is not just these kinds of hideous crimes that are on the rise. Britain finds itself caught in a wave of anti-social behaviour, with staggering levels of vandalism, fly-tipping and threatening behaviour.

The Tories' claims to be a party of law and order would be laughable if their failure wasn't so serious. Security for the British people does not just exist at work and at home – it must also mean security from those elements of society who blight others' lives.

There can surely be no greater example of the misplaced priorities and hubris of this government than the fact it is currently spending hundreds of millions of pounds of taxpayer money on a vanity yacht when that money could be spent on tackling anti-social behaviour. That's precisely what we would do. But we would go even further – giving victims of persistent, unresolved anti-social behaviour the same rights as victims of crime. It is the perfect encapsulation of the Labour government I will lead – one focused on ambitious but practical changes that will make life much better for working families.

The challenges of the future are made greater by the paucity of what the Tories have offered over a decade in government. But we must never be daunted by them. The desire for change

THE ROAD AHEAD

is everywhere. The potential of our people, our society and our businesses are massive. The opportunities to reimagine and remake our country are immense. What we need now is a Labour government ready to once again deliver for Britain.

5. THE ROAD AHEAD

The economic project that drove the Tories and the Liberal Democrats through the last decade has died. The painful debates over leaving the EU are over. We are left with a government characterised by a lack of seriousness and purpose. It has slogans instead of plans. It creates absurd cultural battles rather than deal with the tricky business of improving the country. It has no answers to the huge questions posed by our interdependent world, such as migration, terrorism or climate change. It has no plans for how to make Brexit work for Britain, nor how to build new relationships in Europe and beyond.

Instead, it has disrupted British businesses and put the union at risk. It uses power solely for the purpose of holding on to power. In Scotland, the SNP has been in control for even longer, underachieving while distracted by an obsession with nationalism. Britain deserves better.

A COUNTRY AT A CROSSROADS

Our country now stands at a crossroads. The choice facing us is as stark as it has ever been.

Down one path is the same old Tory approach to the economy and society that was brutally exposed as a con by Covid-19. The one that stripped back funding, ran things at a bare minimum and weakened the foundations of our country. The one that left us vulnerable when the pandemic hit. An approach that inevitably means the very well off thrive, while the rest of us are left behind.

This current government might talk a different talk – but when it came down to it, they used the pandemic to hand billions of pounds of taxpayer money to their mates and to flaunt the rules they expected everyone else to live by.

The Labour path leads to a better, brighter future. One where everyone has the chance to fulfil their potential and their ambition. Where everyone can contribute to our national success, and where everyone's contribution to a healthy society, safe communities and a strong economy is properly rewarded. Where the government focuses on giving people security and opportunity. Where the government doesn't shy away from tough decisions, but puts hard-working families first when it

makes them. Where we cherish and nurture the bonds between our people and build a stronger union. One where our nation is remade.

Within the Labour party, there is often a debate as to whether principles or power matter more. I do not accept this framing. I believe that together they are the foundations on which all our great achievements are built.

But if Labour is to once again speak for Britain, the party must change and adapt to the challenges of our time. As we face the mid 2020s and beyond, I propose 10 principles for a contribution society that will form the basis of a new contract between Labour and the British people, rooted in both our party and our country's values.

- We will always put hard-working families and their priorities first.
- If you work hard and play by the rules, you should be rewarded fairly.
- People and businesses are expected to contribute to society, as well as receive.
- Your chances in life should not be defined by the circumstances of your birth – hard work and how you contribute should matter.
- Families, communities and the things that bring us together must once again be put above individualism.
- The economy should work for citizens and communities. It is not good enough to just surrender to market forces.

- The role of government is to be a partner to private enterprise, not stifle it.
- The government should treat taxpayer money as if it were its own. The current levels of waste are unacceptable.
- The government must play its role in restoring honesty, decency and transparency in public life.
- We are proudly patriotic but we reject the divisiveness of nationalism.

To anyone who believes in a better future, based on these principles, I say: join us. The road ahead will be long. The journey will not always be simple. But the choices are clear and the prize at the end great.

At this historic moment, Labour has a chance to once again build a better country for working people. This is the path we have chosen: let us take it together.

ENDNOTES

1. Social Mobility Commission, State of the Nation 2021: Social Mobility and the Pandemic
2. The Trussell Trust, End of Year Stats 2020/21
3. Full Fact, Police Officer Numbers, 2019 and Home Office, Police Workforce Mar '21, 28 July 2021, Table H3
4. Local Government Association, Debate on the Economic Affairs Committee Report into Social Care Funding, 28 January 2021
5. Centre for Cities, Cities Outlook 2019
6. The Guardian, Number of Europe's poorest regions in UK 'more than doubles', 10 December 2019
7. Evening Standard, Marmot 2020: Women's life expectancy at 10-year low in poorest parts of England, shocking new report reveals, 25 February 2020
8. Smithsonian Magazine, How the 1918 Flu Pandemic Revolutionized Public Health, September 2017
9. Reuters, UK had biggest G7 COVID economic hit, even with data differences – ONS, 1 Feb 2021 and BBC, Does the UK have highest Covid death toll in Europe?, 27 May 2021
10. Nuffield Trust, Hospital Bed Occupancy, June 2021
11. NHS, Consultant-led Referral to Treatment Waiting Times Data 2021-22
12. House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee, Workforce Burnout and Resilience in the NHS and Social Care, Second Report of Session 2021–2
13. Nuffield Trust, The NHS Workforce in Numbers, February 2020
14. Institute for Government, How Fit Were Public Services for Coronavirus? August 2020
15. Children's Commissioners, Children Without Internet Access During Lockdown, August 2020
16. Oxfam, Five Natural Disasters that Beg for Climate Action
17. Bristol Post, Why the South West Should be Worried about Climate Change, 22 January 2020
18. iNews, UK off course in bid to meet net-zero target 'because of clash with pandemic recovery', 7 July 2021
19. Office for National Statistics, Living Longer: Changes in Housing Tenure Over Time, February 2020
20. Centre for Cities, Full Scale of Britain's Job Crisis Uncovered in new Centre for Cities Research, March 2021
21. The Times, Red Wall Towns Worst Hit by Lockdown Job Losses, 1 June 2020
22. FE Week, Investment and Strategy Needed to Rescue UK From its Low Skills Doldrums, 29 February 2020

23. National Records of Scotland, Drug Related Deaths in Scotland
24. Mind, Mental Health Facts and Statistics
25. Education Policy Institute, Education in England: Annual Report 20202
26. The Telegraph, Britain Has Biggest Primary School Classes in the Developed World, 10 September 2019
27. BBC, UK 'Heading Towards Digital Skills Shortage Disaster', 22 March 2021
28. Social Mobility Commission: An Unequal Playing Field , 19 July 2019
29. The Guardian, Class Sizes in English Secondaries at Largest in Nearly 20 Years, 25 June 2020
30. Refuge, A year of lockdown: Refuge releases new figures showing dramatic increase in activity, 23 March 2021
31. Home Office, Police Workforce Mar '21, 28 July 2021, Table H3
32. Home Office, Police Workforce Mar '21, 28 July 2021, Tables F1, 2, and 3
33. Home Office, Police Workforce Mar '21, 28 July 2021, Tables F5
34. Home Office, Police Workforce Mar '21, 28 July 2021, Table H3
35. Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, Ten years of criminal justice under Labour – An independent audit, January 2007

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Keir Starmer is the Labour MP for Holborn & St Pancras and leader of the Labour party.

**FABIAN
SOCIETY**

THE ROAD AHEAD

KEIR STARMER MP

Our country is now at a crossroads. Down one path is the same old insecurity and lack of opportunity. But down the Labour one is something better: a society built on everyone's contribution, with high-quality services, security and opportunity.

In this pamphlet, Labour leader Keir Starmer MP sets out his vision of a fairer, more secure and prosperous Britain, built on Labour values. He proposes 10 principles for a new contract between Labour and the British people, which together make up an ambitious plan to remake our country.

FABIAN IDEAS NO.657

978-0-7163-0657-3

£5.95