ELECTION SPECIAL ISSUE

Fabian Review

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Spring 2010

Call yourself a progressive?

Cut through the election rhetoric

With Michael Marmot, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, Jonathon Porritt, Martin Narey, Richard Reeves and Phillip Blond

Plus

Mary Riddell interviews Alastair Campbell

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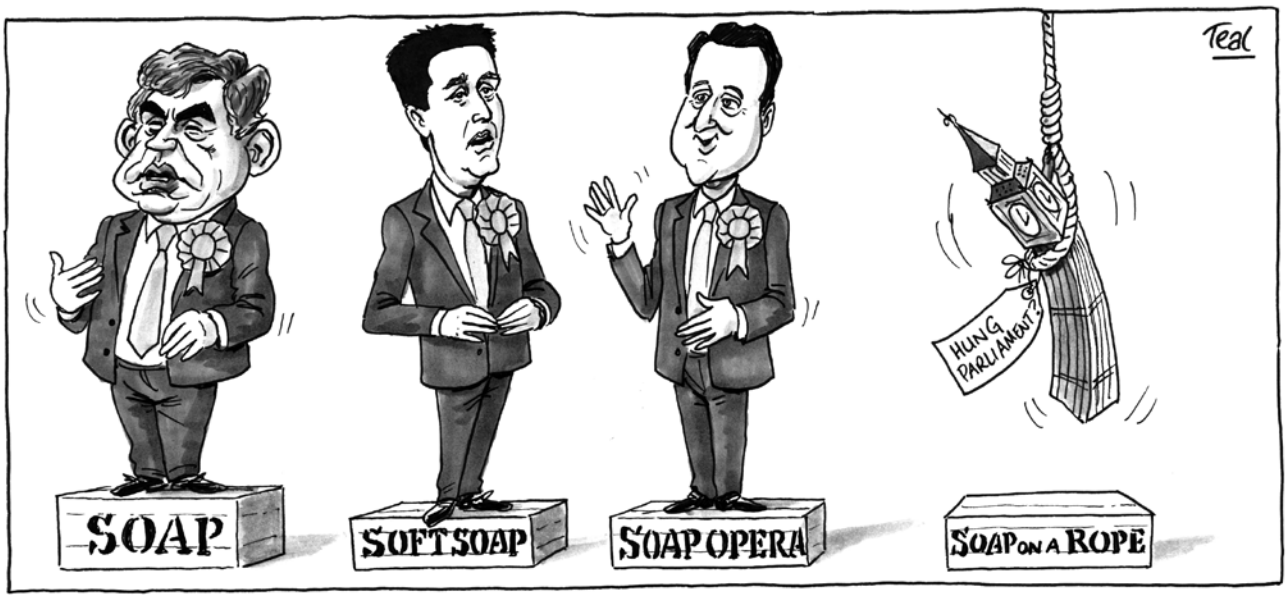

Image: Adrian Teal

The real test

The election campaign will be fought over whether or not the Tories have changed for real. But we need to get beyond the rhetoric to tell whether Cameron represents airbrushed Thatcherism or a true break with the past

"Same old Tories". Conservative party chairman Eric Pickles had no hesitation when asked, in a recent interview, to identify his party's main electoral vulnerability.

His opponents agree. That the Conservatives haven't changed will be a central Labour and Lib Dem campaign message. They will have plenty of ammunition to the central charge that the Cameron 'change' agenda owes more to the airbrush than any deep-rooted 'progressive Conservatism'.

The early promise of a less pessimistic Toryism – "you can't be the man on the park bench saying the country's gone to the dogs, and things were much better in 1985, or 1885" said George Osborne – has given way to hyperbolic claims about the 'broken society'. In the Tory age of austerity, the spending pinch will be felt by public sector workers and the squeezed middle, while wealth taxes are cut at the top.

Many of Cameron's candidates are sceptical about climate change and want a "fundamental renegotiation" of Britain's EU membership to be a priority in government. It is very likely that a Conservative majority in the House of Commons would see it vote to restore fox-hunting and restrict the abortion time limit, both on free votes in government time.

All of that may look more like a case of back to the future than change we can believe in.

But there are reasons why it is in Labour's long-term interests that the Conservatives do change, and why Labour's strategic problem is that they haven't changed enough.

Both Clement Attlee and Margaret Thatcher realised that a key test of deep change in society and politics was how far it converted or constrained political opponents. That can determine whether political changes endure for three Parliaments or for three decades.

To ignore areas where arguments were won would underestimate Labour's record. Traditionally, Conservatism rarely gets on to the progressive front foot but often finds it can live within what others create. The minimum wage, civil partnerships, devolution; better maternity and paternity leave; spending on aid and even the NHS: these now form part of the largely uncontested common sense of British politics. This is an important progressive legacy of the last decade, but is one that doesn't go deep enough to guarantee a progressive future.

Future outcomes depend on the political arguments we have now. The defining issue should be distributional fairness in response to a fiscal crunch. Rhetorically, the parties agree that the test of the political and policy response should be how it impacts the worst off, not the affluent. Progressive rhetoric matters – as long as it can be tested. In the next parliament, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating.

Britain also faces a series of long-term challenges where any progressive outcome depends on locking-in solutions for five Parliaments or more. These issues can't be taken 'above politics': political competition about how to achieve the carbon emission commitments could make for better legislation. But it should mean all sides placing limits on hyper-partisan politicking – such as the populist Tory assault on "death taxes" over funding social care – which fails to engage seriously with challenges which all should acknowledge.

The election battle of 2010 will show how we often remain well short of a progressive consensus in British politics. That remains a cause worth fighting for too.

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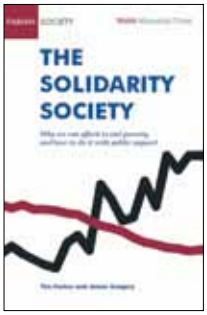
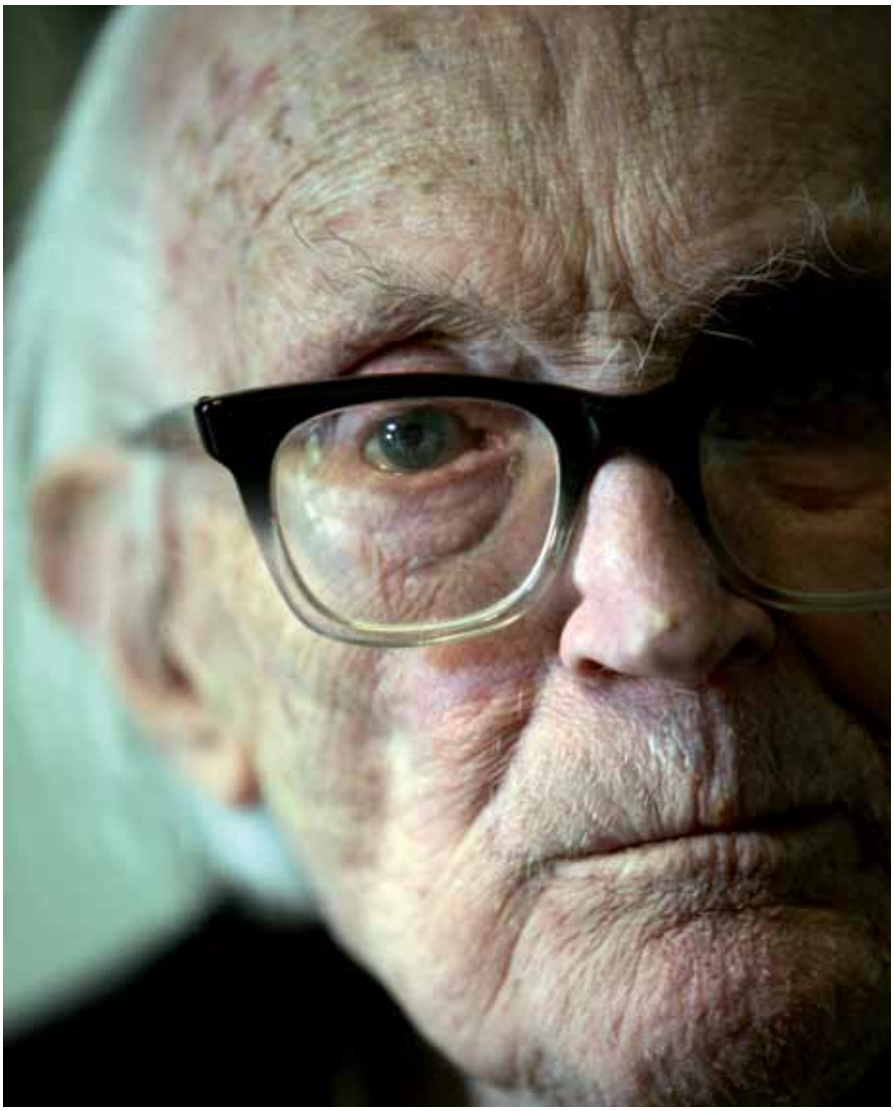


Tim Horton and James Gregory's Fabian book, *The Solidarity Society*, continues to have an impact on the future shape of Britain's welfare strategy. Work and Pensions Secretary Yvette Cooper (below, right) launched the report in the House of Commons and the authors have presented its conclusions across Whitehall as well as to the TUC. Will Hutton recently called it "a landmark book" and its findings have been discussed in *The Political Quarterly*, IPPR's journal *Public Policy Research* and CPAG's *Poverty*.

Fabian Research Director Tim Horton and economist Howard Reed published a detailed analysis of Lib Dem tax plans, which concluded that "the Liberal Democrats' proposed tax cut fails the fairness test." The report, published by Left Foot Forward, said that the Lib Dem's proposed policy of "spending £17 billion on increasing the personal allowance is a very poor way to help those on low incomes…In short, it is neither the best use of the resources nor a policy which achieves its central aim." To download the report visit www.leftfootforward.org

The Fabian New Year Conference hosted Gordon Brown's first major speech of the election year, in which he said "social mobility will be our theme for the coming election and the coming parliamentary term… because social mobility is modern social justice". The Prime Minister endorsed *The Solidarity Society*'s theme of universalism in his speech and was joined at the conference by Peter Mandelson (right), Vince Cable, Ken Livingstone, Hilary Benn and many more. Stonewall's Ben Summerskill described the conference as 'unmissable political detox for the start of every new year'.



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Michael Foot (1913 – 2010). Fabian General Secretary Sunder Katwala said "Foot was an enduring champion of the left's great literary traditions."

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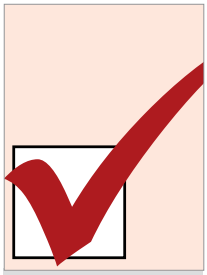

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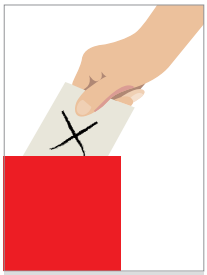

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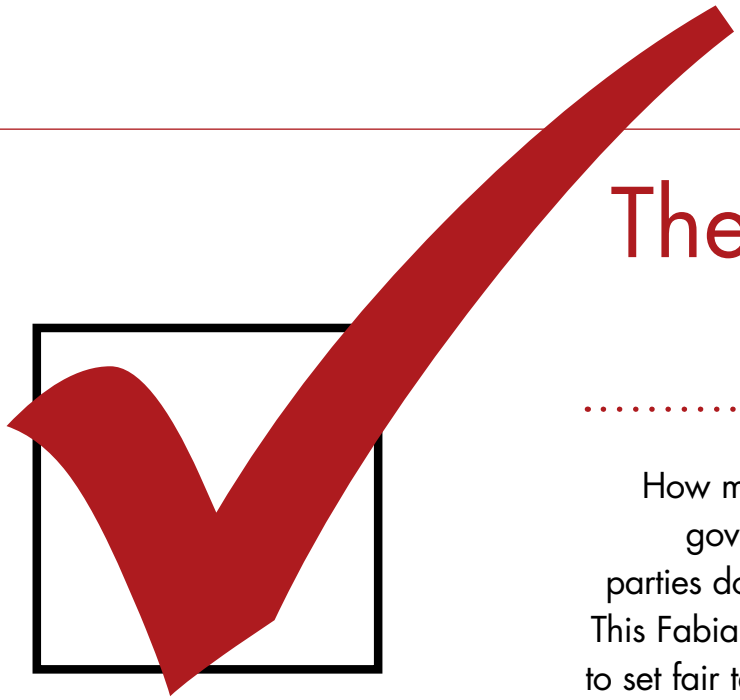
Mary Riddell interviews Alastair Campbell on page 11.
Visit www.alastaircampbell.org to get a personally signed copy of *The Blair Years*, with half the money going to the Labour Party.



The progressive benchmarks

How might voters substantively judge any government which says – as the major parties do – that their aims are progressive? This Fabian Review asks non-partisan experts to set fair tests which can be applied in good faith across the next Parliament, to whoever forms the next government – to assess whether they succeeded or failed on key progressive measures.

Is society stronger?

Despite the debate over whether Britain is 'broken', all political parties now agree that Britain's recent high levels of inequality have had profound negative social consequences. But whilst the left retains a faith in the state's ability to improve the lot of the poorest and the right places its faith in the family, the need to repair the social fabric through constraints on runaway top salaries and the bonus culture receives less attention.

THE TEST:

Compared to many other developed countries, Britain has a high level of income inequality, with the richest 20 per cent having incomes at least 7 times higher than the poorest 20 per cent, leading to our comparatively poor performance on levels of mental health, teenage births, imprisonment, drug abuse, social mobility and more. By the end of the next Parliament, the reduction of inequality should be established as a national target and the ratio of the incomes of the top 20 per cent reduced to no more than 5 and a half times the incomes of the bottom 20 per cent. This would bring our inequality down to levels currently enjoyed by Canada, France, Switzerland and Spain.

Richard Wilkinson is Professor Emeritus at the University of Nottingham, Kate Pickett is Professor of Epidemiology at the University of York. They co-wrote *The Spirit Level* and are Co-Directors of The Equality Trust.

Are health inequalities narrower?

All the main political parties have a commitment to reduce health inequalities. The experience of the last decade shows how hard this will be to achieve. Life expectancy has risen, but the gap between richest and poorest has not narrowed. Any government committed to reducing the health effects of social and economic inequalities will have to find a new whole of government approach.

THE TEST:

It may take a generation for important social changes to show up as reductions in inequalities in life expectancy. The test, therefore, is the degree to which a new government puts in place a cross-department strategy to deal with the 6 major domains that cause inequalities in health: early child development, educational performance, employment and working conditions, sufficient income for healthy living, sustainable and healthy neighbourhoods, action on prevention across the social gradient. Reductions in inequalities in all of these should be monitored and show progress in the direction of greater fairness.

Sir Michael Marmot is Chair of the Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England Post 2010 (Marmot Review)

Are fewer children in poverty?

The pledge to eradicate child poverty has been a source of great pride for Labour supporters but also some frustration, with dramatic progress in the wake of the 1997 election faltering badly more recently. David Cameron has committed the Conservatives to meet Labour's new target of eradicating child poverty by 2020. But for MPs elected this year, 2020 may as well be in the next geological period and there is a danger that the target will be warmly supported but progress toward it in the next Parliament will be negligible.

THE TEST:
With 2.3 million children in the UK still likely to be living in poverty at the time of the election, any government remotely serious about meeting the 2020 target of eradication will have to demonstrate significant progress during the next Parliament. So, by 2015, the absolute minimum requirement would be to reduce the proportion of children living in poverty in the UK (26 per cent in 1999) from 18 per cent now to 13 per cent (the missed 2010 target set in the optimistic days of 1999).

Martin Narey is the Chief Executive of Barnardo's

Is the economy greener?

The environment has been David Cameron's clearest break with the Conservative Party of the past. Labour has set ambitious carbon reduction targets but the lack of any meaningful international agreement at the Copenhagen summit has left the Government's green credentials exposed. The Tories have scored points with environmentalists by opposing Heathrow expansion and supporting high speed rail but lasting green credibility requires more than symbolic policy shifts: it must see Britain fundamentally reshaping its economy to reduce emissions.

THE TEST:
In an effort to keep global temperature rise below 2 degrees, the UK has set a target of cutting CO2 emissions by 34 per cent of 1990 levels by 2020. By the end of the next parliament, a progressive government would need to be well on its way to meeting this – and have reduced them by at least 20 per cent by the end of the Parliament.

Jonathon Porritt is Founder Director of Forum for the Future

Are people more powerful?

David Cameron's progressive conservatism speech said: "With every decision government makes, it should ask: does this give power to people, or take it away?" All politicians are explicit in their desire to give people more control over their lives; what this means in practice is often more opaque. However the question of control at work is the crucial measure of power here and, given both Tory and Labour's rush to embrace mutualism, provides a real test of whether progressive political posturing will come to anything in practice.

THE TEST:
Creating more equitable models of the firm is a key route to empowering people in the work place. If this was really a political priority, it ought to possible to quadruple the paltry 2 per cent of UK firms that are currently employee-owned. By 2014, a progressive government should use a range of tax incentives, advice support and venture capital funding to increase the current figure by at least four fold to 8 per cent of the economy.

Richard Reeves is Director of Demos

Are the poor richer?

'Recapitalising the poor' – a wider distribution of economic assets – is the totemic project of progressive conservatism. Labour's policies such as the Child Trust Fund and Savings Gateway have shared this goal but have failed to reverse the inequality in ownership of wealth in Britain. An obvious benchmark for a progressive government must be that steps to redress this – to recapitalise the poor – have been taken.

THE TEST:
In 2003 the bottom 50 per cent of the population owned 1per cent of the nation's wealth; by the end of the next parliament a progressive government should have at least doubled this.

Phillip Blond is Director of ResPublica

Send us your own progressive tests for the next government to review@fabian-society.org.uk

Wouldn't it be nice

Win or lose, the Thatcherite right will want to ditch the compromises of Cameron's 'progressive Conservatism' after the election. Only if the modernisers take them on can the party seriously claim to have changed, says Sunder Katwala.

Sunder Katwala
is General Secretary
of the Fabian Society

Asked what he thought of western civilisation, Gandhi replied "I think it would be a good idea". That is the attitude which non-Tories should take to claims of a progressive Conservatism.

Yet Cameronism in 2010 is a less centrist or modernising creed than appeared likely when he became leader in 2005. Until 2007, Cameronism was primarily a conservative project of accomodation to the New Labour legacy. Yet his party enters the election campaign declaring Britain a "broken society", manipulating statistics to try and deny that violent crime and teenage pregnancy have fallen. The financial crisis and recession changed Cameronism. The Keynesian tradition of Macmillan's progressive Conservatism was decisively rejected. As ex-Tory MP and Cameron-sympathetic columnist Matthew Parris put it, when the Tories rediscovered their voice, "it was, as it turned out, the old faith: a faith that Margaret Thatcher would recognise".

The limits of Tory modernisation

Yet the spectre of Thatcherism has haunted Tory modernisation for rather longer. Before the Conservatives decided that they did not need a "Clause Four" moment, they did try to have one. The limits of Tory modernisation were set a decade ago, in April 1999, when deputy leader Peter Lilley tried to lay the Thatcherite ghost and failed.

Lilley's R.A. Butler lecture now reads like a litany of mild Cameronite truisms, primarily that the party would never be trusted on public services if voters believed they were essentially hostile to a publicly funded welfare state. Lilley seemed to have the right Thatcherite credentials to mildly suggest not any form of apology, but that the party should stop "glorying in past successes" or "refighting battles" it had now won.

Yet all hell broke out. Party reaction at every level was "overwhelmingly negative", as Tim Bale details in his excellent new book *The Conservative Party from Thatcher to Cameron*. Among the most vituperative voices was Michael Gove, later to become a leading moderniser. Gove wrote that "no location is as undignified as being 'in the centre', where the lowest common denominator and the highest public spending meet ... an arid region where no principles can take root … a particularly shameless place for politicians to be". For Gove, government could never spend better than "freer citizens liberated by a smaller state".

This had two long-term effects. That it delayed any Tory rethink until two more defeats is well known. Less noticed is that the neuralgic reaction to Lilley set an electric fence to demarcate the limits of Tory modernisation: no Conservative frontbencher has offered any substantive critical assessment of the Thatcher legacy since.

So Cameronism has been primarily an often successful exercise in "brand decontamination". Every means of modern political communications was central to the project. What was off limits was any substantive or contentful critique of the party's recent past or its deeper ideological commitments.

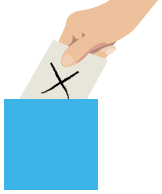
By contrast with New Labour, which created the sharpest of breaks with the party's history in its caricature of "Old Labour", the ProgCons have had no account of their recent history at all. This also cuts them off from reclaiming the party's pre-Thatcher political and intellectual traditions which thoughtful modernizers like David Willetts wish to revive. After all, Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher could hardly have been clearer about the scale of the rupture the New Right would make with soggy, consensus Conservativism of the post-war period. "Before 1974, I had not been a Conservative at all", as Joseph famously wrote.

Society and the role of the state

This central ambiguity of Cameronism – whether he seeks to break with Thatcherism, or rehabilitate it for gentler times – is encapsulated in his signature soundbite: "there is such a thing as society: it's just not the same thing as the state".

The mood music is Thatcher-distancing. Tory aides tell journalists the phrase was coined by Samantha Cameron, presented as a refreshingly untribal influence. But the leader's wife is not the original author. Proper credit should go to another influential Tory woman: Margaret Thatcher. Her Keith Joseph memorial lecture of 1996 argued that "To set the record straight, once again, I have never minimised the importance of society, only contested the assumption that society means the State rather than other people".

David Cameron often reaches out to progressive audiences, and he goes to great lengths to avoid uttering a syllable of criticism of Thatcherism when doing so. So he skipped out the 1980s entirely



when talking about poverty across the last century in his Hugo Young lecture at the Guardian. He does not therefore contradict himself when telling right-wing audiences that he finds the Thatcher record "awe inspiring", that he is "basically a Lawsonian" on flatter taxes, and that "those who ask whether I am a Conservative need to know that the foundation stones of the alternative government that we're building are the ideas that encouraged me as a young man to join the Conservative Party and work for Margaret Thatcher", as he wrote in the Telegraph.

Progressive futures?

The Conservatives have long expected to win the election. So defeat would be an enormous, traumatic shock, and present an existential choice: whether to deepen Cameron's modernisation or abandon it. That also remains an unresolved choice, to be played out more gradually, were the party elected to government.

The right is confident of prevailing over time. For many, Cameronism was primarily an electoral project. This is what is known as the "politics of and" theory, particularly promoted by Tim Montgomerie of ConservativeHome: that expressing concern for poverty, green issues and development gets 'permission' to promote a Tory agenda of lower tax, immigration and Euroscepticism: the politics of controlled immigration *and* international development. The key argument is that broadening the message should not entail compromise on core Tory goals like lower taxes and a smaller state, and that a Tory manifesto of 2015 should demonstrate the party's confidence that it can move rightwards more openly. There is evidence that the face of the Conservative Party is changing but that its views are not. David Cameron emphasizes his welcome achievement in selecting more non-white and female candidates. But candidates' views are largely to the right of the leadership, or the manifesto on which Cameron wrote for Michael Howard in 2005. ConservativeHome convincingly declares the next generation to be "modern Thatcherites" based on detailed candidate surveys. Another ComRes/New Statesman candidates poll found 72 per cent believe fundamental renegotiation of Britain's EU membership to be a priority in office; 91 per cent favour an immigration cap, while only 28 per cent believe government should legislate to make people greener.

But there might be three 'progressive' barriers to the triumph of the right.

Firstly, public opinion on key issues. The leadership, shaped by the defeats of 2001 and 2005, is less confident than its activists in the popularity of eternal Tory verities, particularly in fearing that lower taxes are not popular if public services are cut. Indeed, pressure to cut spending will only demonstrate how difficult it is to win public support for doing so; a Tory government telling activists that some tax rises are necessary is more likely than it plotting a long-term fall in the size of the state.

The Conservatives have long expected to win the election. So defeat would be an enormous, traumatic shock, and present an existential choice: whether to deepen Cameron's modernisation or abandon it

Secondly, the reality of governing. The right presses on key totemic public issues – the traditional trio of Europe, tax cuts and immigration, increasingly joined by climate skepticism. But governments have to govern across the range of policy. Beyond the overall pressure towards sharp spending restraint, the overall direction of policy will more often be continuity than change, initially at least. With the exception of schools reform, the Conservatives have developed relatively little policy beyond symbolic manifesto pledges: wanting more health visitors substitutes for any coherent health policy.

Thirdly, the evident insufficiency of a laissez faire ideology to address policy objectives the party says it accepts. The principle "less state and more market" offers little coherent purchase on how to meet legally binding climate emission targets, fund long-term social care, or improve public services while aiming to reduce health and educational inequalities.

For a progressive Conservatism to go deeper than symbolism, the central test is whether and how progressive ambitions do anything to constrain or change the decisions the party would make if in office.

The initial published draft of Cameron's *Built to Last* statement of party principles said that "The right test for our policies is how they help the most disadvantaged in society, not the rich". The reference to the rich was dropped before party members voted on it, with a reference to the limits of the state added. Still, testing every budget on whether its distributional impact is pro-poor, or regressive would be a central "good faith" test of whether ProgCon rhetoric makes any difference. Similarly, though Michael Gove once talked of challenging the "sharp elbowed middle class parents" in school admissions, many expect the Tory backbenchers to see that off. A willingness to join that fight properly would merit backing from Labour and Lib Dem voices.

The test of meaningful green credentials should be whether these change the balance as to whether market interventions, previously dismissed as 'distortions', can ever be justified on sustainability grounds. Could the party pursue its climate commitments without proving allergic to close EU cooperation in pursuit of a fair global deal?

There will be issues – on the real threat of climate change, or the need for British engagement in the EU – where the progressive faultline may fall within the Conservative Party. "The politics of and" suggests a Progressive Conservatism combination of true blue principles while 'engaging' with progressive non-party campaigners, from Friends of the Earth to the Child Poverty Action Group, mostly in a spirit of respectful disagreement. Progressive campaigners outside the party may have good reason to fear that any allies within it are isolated and outnumbered. There are reasons to worry that the Conservatives haven't changed very much; it would still be a good idea if they did. ■

Labour's task

With 'progressive' becoming an increasingly contested and confusing term, Graeme Cooke sets out what Labour needs to do to avoid being outplayed on what should be home turf.

Graeme Cooke
is Head of Open Left, at Demos

The argument between Labour and Conservatives about which party is the more progressive is indicative of the problems facing British politics today – 'progressive' is a very opaque term and its use is almost entirely confined to political and media insiders. This cuts against two essential ingredients of political success: having clarity of purpose while being rooted in the lives and experiences of the people.

Rediscovering these two traits – clarity and reality – is what Labour should focus on over the coming weeks and months, leaving the Tories to their unconvincing progressive contortions (which probably either confuse the voters, or simply pass them by). Whatever happens at the general election, there is a clear need for Labour to renew its ideas and methods so as to regain its momentum as a powerful and organised political movement, and this means getting both the policy and the politics right.

We need to start by avoiding some of the false choices the centre-left sometimes gets stuck in. Two good examples are whether we should be 'for individuals' or 'for collectives', or for 'more state' or 'more market'. Both are entirely circular debates, especially in the abstract (which is where they are normally conducted). The task is to combine the best of individuality – creativity, initiative and diversity – with the best of collectivity – solidarity, interdependence and mutualism. And similarly, it is to use the market and the state where they empower, but constrain each where they overpower. Avoiding such pitfalls is central to ensuring our political debate is outward looking and focused on people's hopes and fears – not internal point scoring.

Centre-left policy needs to be aimed at spreading security, equality and democracy in ways that are distinctive to the Labour tradition. In government, Labour has been too hands off with the market and then too hands on with the state. One consequence has been to squeeze both the power and the responsibility for people to act together to improve their lives and the society around them. Saul Alinsky argued that "there can be no darker or more devastating tragedy than the death of man's faith in himself and his power to direct his future" – and Labour should take inspiration from this truth in developing new ideas and methods.

This new ideological course for Labour – what we called in the Demos Open Left pamphlet *We Mean Power: ideas for the future of the Left*, "powerful people in a reciprocal society" – leads to three insights that should be Labour's policy focus heading into the next parliament.

The first is the need to challenge the market where it impoverishes people, rules by fear, and concentrates power. Or where the market outcome is just plain wrong, and runs counter to what we as a democratic society decide is right. This means ensuring anyone who works hard earns a decent standard of living, by ending the scandal of in-work poverty. Labour should also challenge market outcomes by guaranteeing work to the long-term unemployed and capping the cost of credit; and should reform corporate governance rules to give employees a say in the running of the organisation.

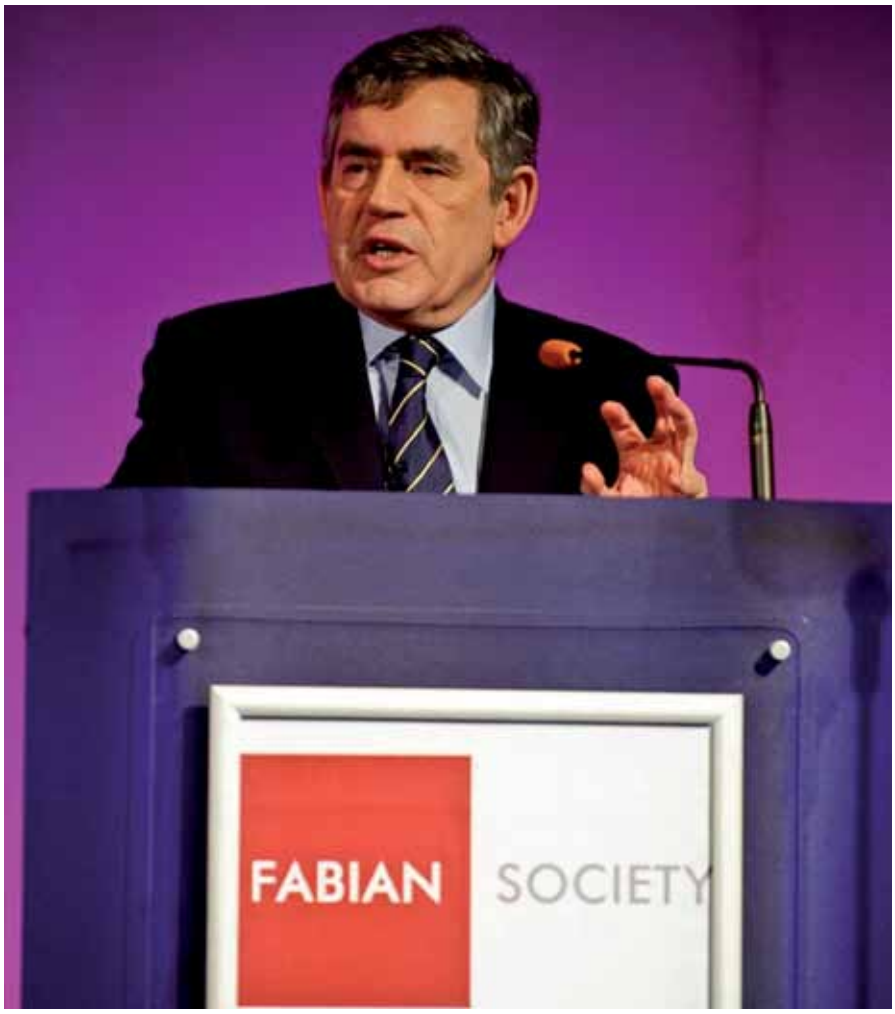
The second policy insight is the need to democratise the state so that people, not vested interests – whether in the form of a paternalist bureaucracy or an establishment elite – are in

control. Just like markets, the state is a good servant and a bad master. At its best, the state empowers people; at its worst it bullies and disrespects them. Similarly, it can protect people by constraining the market; but it can also concentrate power and exercise it arbitrarily. That is why democratic reforms are vital: electing the House of Lords, reforming the electoral system, strengthening parliament, re-building local and city government,

Market power must be constrained, state power must be democratised and social power must be cultivated person by person

and preventing big money from buying political influence. It is also why giving people power over their public services, and not tolerating their failure, is the right goal and requires balancing the interests of all those with a stake in public services – users, workers, owners and the local community.

The third policy insight is the importance of building up a strong and autonomous civil society that is neither a client of the state nor the commodity of the market. Trade unions, universities, the BBC, professional associations, faith groups, mutuals and third sector bodies all contribute to this. We should cherish and support them, while preserving their independence and expecting them to operate responsibly, respectfully and democratically. This insight also calls on the Labour movement to relearn the traditions and practices of organisation and action on which it was first built. This means remembering Alinsky's 'iron rule' of community organising: never do anything for anyone that they can do for themselves. Both the market and the state are necessary to give people the chance of power, but it is only people themselves who can take it and make it real.

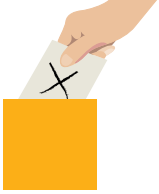


The Prime Minister speaking at the Fabian Society New Year Conference 2010

This is a very different vision for society and the role of politics to that presented by David Cameron. His idea of progressive conservatism talks about giving people power and shaping a 'big society'. This imitation of Labour goals is major political flattery. But the ideas and methods required are found in the Labour tradition. Market power must be constrained, state power must be democratised and social power must be cultivated person by person. By contrast, the Tories are neutral about the market, hostile to the state and wishful about society. They are left hoping that by taming big government, people will have power and society will heal itself. That is indeed a Conservative's definition of progressive.

In response, Labour needs to articulate a clear political identity and purpose, and re-root itself in the lives and experiences of the people. This can avoid the final false choice: between what Labour believes in and what it thinks the public wants to hear. If the party acts through people and their experiences – not against them or above them – it will stay in the political mainstream. And if the party shows real courage, principle and leadership, people will be persuaded by it and inspired to join with it. ■

We Mean Power: ideas for the future of the left is edited by James Purnell and Graeme Cooke and available at www.demos.co.uk



Where the Lib Dems fail on fairness

Despite many progressive credentials, in some areas the Liberal Democrats are worryingly inequitable, argues Stuart White.

Stuart White
is a lecturer and tutor in Politics and Director of the Public Policy Unit at Oxford University

Only the most blinkered and tribal of Labour supporters would deny that the Liberal Democrats are a progressive party on many issues – a party of social justice in its fullest sense. Indeed, on some policies the Liberal Democrats are currently more progressive than Labour. This is true not only in relation to civil liberties questions, but in some areas of tax policy. It is the Liberal Democrats, not Labour, that has rightly called for a new 'mansion tax' on housing wealth and for the rate of capital gains tax to be brought into line with income tax.

Nevertheless, there are respects in which the party's current policy platform fails the progressive test. Progressives should believe in ensuring a fair start in adult life for all young people. The Liberal Democrats are thoroughly confused on this point. Their current policies in this area are deeply inequitable.

Firstly, the party has committed itself to "phase out tuition fees over the course of six years, so that, after school, everyone who gets the grades has the opportunity to go to university without fear of debt, no matter what their background."

On the face of it, this may seem like an impeccably progressive measure. But there are reasons to doubt this. As an analysis from CentreForum, the Liberal Democrat think-tank, has shown, university participation is concentrated amongst children from higher income groups. This means that much of the benefit of higher education subsidies flows to children who are already relatively advantaged. Accordingly, Julian Astle calculates that some two thirds of the financial gain from abolishing tuition fees will go the richest 40 per cent of families. It is by no means clear that, in the present fiscal climate, this is the best use of public funds.

But don't tuition fees discourage children from lower socioeconomic groups from going to university? As CentreForum's analysis shows, there is in fact no evidence for this claim. Indeed, they cite research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies which shows that once one controls for level of academic achievement at age 18, children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have almost an identical probability of going to university as those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

> Why not keep the Child Trust Fund instead of abolishing tuition fees?

Nick Clegg knows all this. This is why he quite rightly sought to shift his party's policy on tuition fees at the party's conference in the autumn of 2009. But the party rebelled, and he is stuck with the policy. Nobody in the party has rebuffed CentreForum's tightly argued critique of the party's policy in this area.

There is a more general idea underlying the policy which is genuinely progressive. This is the idea that all young people are entitled to a decent start to adult life. If, however, one thinks that all young people are entitled to resources to launch creatively into their adult lives, this does not point to a policy of higher education subsidies. It points to something like a universal capital grant or what one can call a citizen's inheritance. In recent years, liberal political philosophers such as Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott have explored this idea. Indeed, not all that long ago, in the 1980s, the idea of creating some kind of universal capital account, endowing all citizens with a property stake as of right, was widely discussed by the Liberals and their allies in the Social Democratic Party.

This brings us to a second Liberal Democrat policy: their proposal to abolish the Child Trust Fund (CTF). The CTF is the first policy to ensure that all children reaching maturity have some capital of their own, enabling them to start their adult lives in a forward-looking, ambitious spirit. Unlike higher education subsidies, which go only to those who go to university, and disproportionately to children from higher socioeconomic groups, this policy is a universal and equitable one. The policy is far from perfect as it stands. But this is a reason to develop it, not to abandon it.

Back in 2005, Liberal Democrat propaganda was explicit about scrapping the CTF. Look at the party's 21-page policy summary today and, strangely, it is not mentioned, although Nick Clegg confirmed it is the party's policy in his speech at the party's 2009 conference. Liberal Democrats have tried to justify abolition of CTF by claiming it's a silly 'gimmick'. But this runs counter to their own historic philosophy of promoting 'ownership for all'. Or else they argue that we can do better things with public monies. But since they are proposing to spend scarce public monies on abolishing tuition fees, one must ask: Why not keep the Child Trust Fund instead of abolishing tuition fees?

Is it fairer to use scare public monies to provide a large subsidy at the start of adult life for a minority of academic children who come disproportionately from higher socioeconomic groups, or to provide the seed of a capital sum for every young person? ■

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Call me Dave

Alastair Campbell will go the extra mile to get Gordon Brown re-elected. He's even playing David Cameron in the Prime Minister's mock debates, he tells Mary Riddell.

Mary Riddell
is a columnist for the Daily Telegraph

Alastair Campbell's website does not suggest a man of fragile ego. His job description – Communicator. Writer. Strategist. – is accompanied by winsome photographs and favourable reviews of his latest novel, *Maya*, ("A Superb Read: Piers Morgan.") While it is true that Mr Campbell did not achieve his internet.org status by coyness, few would dispute his bigshot credentials.

In the years since Tony Blair's departure, the public profile of his erstwhile spin doctor has mushroomed. Once, he couldn't be the story. Now he can, and is. Such is Mr Campbell's celebrity that, if his partner reveals that he broke the Hoover on the only occasion he tried to use it, his domestic Luddism is front page news.

Nearly everything is known about Mr Campbell. His abrasive treatment of anyone, but chiefly the media, who crossed the Blairite machine made him fearsome to opponents (and some friends), while his support of the Iraq war made him reviled. But there is also a more vulnerable, or sensitive, side to New Labour's pugilist. He has made no secret of a mental breakdown, and his loyalties last long beyond the grave. An

indomitable fund-raiser for research into leukaemia, the disease that killed his best friend, he remains as closely bound to Tony Blair as in the days of power.

Though an open book, he is somehow hard to pigeonhole. Mr Campbell did more than almost anyone to make New Labour electable. In the eyes of his critics, he also did more than most to throw the party into disrepute. In his kitchen in Primrose Hill, in a jumper and blue jeans, he seems courteous, unflamboyant and rather private. No doubt the old truculence still lurks beneath the surface, but the brutalist carapace is no longer his daywear.

Do not, however, be deceived. Mr Campbell is back. That Gordon Brown is still in this election with a prayer of victory is due, in part, to Labour's magus of electioneering. What, exactly, is he doing at No 10? "I've been helping Gordon with PMQs. And I've been involved in the [pre-election leaders'] debate." Mr Campbell's role is to play David Cameron, a task about which he appears diffident. "It's not just me. Loads of people do it." Such as? "Douglas Alexander," he says, when pressed.

And what does drilling Mr Brown involve? "He's got the factual stuff in his head. But this is a very different format from PMQs. It's television, it's historic, and the viewing figures are going to be huge. The rules make it quite an odd event – no applause and strict on timings, so it's about getting used to that format. I just get at him the whole time, the way that Cameron would."

It is clear, although Mr Campbell is too tactful to say so, that a struggling Mr Brown was eager (some might think desperate) to secure the return of his old adversary. "I said to Gordon at the start... that I didn't want to go back full-time. I know there are people there who think I should be doing more, but I'm someone who can only operate properly if I'm doing it on my terms. When I was [there] 24/7, that was the only way I could do it, but there was a big downside as well as an upside. They all know – Gordon Alistair [Darling], David [Miliband], Peter [Mandelson]; the lot of them – that if they want to pick my brains on anything, they can.

"But I don't want to be there the whole time. Being full-on has a big effect on your family and your health. It wasn't that I didn't enjoy it before, but it was so hard. If I was back in that mode, I don't think I'd be terribly effective. Because I was so close to Tony, I had my hand on the levers. It's not that Gordon wouldn't say: 'Do have your hand on the levers.'" But, he implies, he is dealing with someone else's team and someone else's levers. This time round, Mr Campbell prefers to keep his distance.

The wonder, some might think, is that he is there at all. The antipathy between the Blair and Brown camps has not, even now, entirely evaporated. Any mention of Charlie Whelan, Mr Brown's former spin doctor and a regular visitor to No 10, reduces Mr Campbell to a mumble of unmistakeable scorn. More tellingly, Andrew Rawnsley's new book appeared to confirm Mr Campbell as the source of the remark that Mr Brown had "psychological flaws".

Mr Campbell is back. That Gordon Brown is still in this election with a prayer of victory is due, in part, to Labour's magus of electioneering

"No I wasn't. I never used that phrase about Gordon Brown. What is true, as I said in my diaries, is that there were moments...But the time comes when you have to face up to [today's reality]. The choice is not Tony or Gordon, and it's not Gordon or perfection. It's Gordon or Cameron. That's the way I feel about it. I'm not going to pretend that it was always sweetness and light between Tony and Gordon, or me and Gordon or Peter and Gordon; it wasn't. There were times when it was really difficult. No doubt about that."

The "great times" of sporadic harmony were, as he allows, balanced out by "the times when it was very difficult to work together, but ultimately we did." Are there still moments when he will shout at Mr Brown, or vice versa? "Yeah...but I'm not in the same position that I was. Before, I was a pivot of the whole thing. Now I'm in a different sort of place."

When I ask if he likes Mr Brown, he says, rather hesitantly: "Yes, I do like Gordon. I was very, very close to Tony, and still am, and I think Gordon has massive strengths. I think he's complicated, like they all are, but ultimately I am Labour, and I want Labour to win."

For such a tribalist, he is dispassionate in his assessment of the relative strengths of the two main parties. "I think on policy we're stronger than them. We've got a great record, which we don't talk about enough. Where we're weak is that they've got a lot of money, and we don't." It cannot, I suggest, be easy to be tasked with carrying what many considered an unwinnable election.

"Let's put it in perspective," he says. "I'm not carrying it in the way I've carried previous ones." Perhaps he simply cannot face the toil that put so much strain on his partner of many years, Fiona Millar, and their three children. Perhaps he fears that the game is up. For the first time, he admits, he has no idea what this election will bring. "I honestly can't call it. In 1992, I didn't think we were going to win. Deep down, I didn't. In pretty much every campaign, I've called it right. I got 1997 wrong in terms of the majority. I didn't think it would be as big as that. Ditto 2001 and 2005, I got about right. This one I genuinely can't call. It could be a Labour win, it could be a hung Parliament, it could be a Tory win. It could be any of those three, and the debates are going to be very important."

It seems quite an admission for Alastair Campbell to concede that the Tories might win. That pragmatism, however, may not be good news for the Opposition. The ebbing of the old fury with which he fought for Blair's Labour party may make him a more formidable opponent. It is clear that he has studied Mr Cameron forensically, isolating every chink of weakness.

"Six months ago, Cameron could do no wrong, and Gordon could do no right. That's changed a bit. Cameron still gets an easy ride, but people are looking at him more sceptically, whereas Gordon has got better." The shift, he suggests, is marginal but enough for him to work on.

"Cameron has been at his weakest when he feels the need to be someone he's not...A lot of damage to our political

opponents was forged in PMQs. When it was Hague, he was very funny but had no judgment, with Duncan Smith it was opportunism, with Howard it was opportunism plus nastiness – all that came out in the campaign. With Cameron, there's this idea that he's just not serious, he's not substantial, he says nothing about the economy.

"But he has strengths. He's a perfectly presentable communicator. The posh thing is a problem for him, but he gets round that a bit. Come the campaign, Gordon has to be the very serious, policy-driven, issues-based [leader, showing that] politics is about big causes."

Like a football coach replaying a match, Mr Campbell monitors the image game. "The Piers Morgan interview addressed a perceived Gordon weakness, which is that he's not terribly human and humorous. The Trevor MacDonald interview underlines Cameron's perceived weakness – that he's all about presentation." As the leadership debates approach, Mr Campbell has analysed Mr Cameron as closely as Mr Brown. "And then you've got the complication of Clegg," he says, perhaps a touch dismissively. "It's a massive opportunity for him."

Too massive? "When we were negotiating the TV debates that never happened, back in 1997, I don't think it was ever thought, even by the LibDems, that the LibDems would have equal billing."

Some things never change. Mr Campbell's dislike of the media seems undiminished, for example, and a recent blog castigates the BBC for running Kate Winslet's marital split above Michael Foot's funeral. The name of Blair crops up so often in our interview that it seems likely that his former henchman remains wistful for the old days. Certainly, he will never be free of them. That much was evident in his recent appearance before the Chilcot Inquiry, where he defended the Blair line with undiluted truculence. Now he sighs at the mention of Iraq.

Yet for all his bullishness, Mr Campbell is an emotional man, as quick to weep as to berate. I would have expected him to be bitterly affected by the loss of civilian life. "People want me to say the decision was wrong, and it was a complete disaster. I've never not respected the views of those who came to a different decision. [But] the PM, he had to make a decision. I supported him in that decision. I support him now...I'm just not prepared to do what too many people have done when things get tough – to cut and run and say it was nothing to do with me, and I didn't really mean it at the time."

So it may be that he was motivated more by loyalty and stubbornness than by personal conviction. On less grave issues, Mr Campbell sometimes seemed at variance with Tony Blair. Given that he held more left-wing views, on education in particular, does the Brown agenda chime more closely with his ideas?

"Possibly. That said. I've never been a policy animal. I'm interested, but I was always about strategy. Yes, there were times when Tony and I disagreed. I used to think: 'Hold back a bit.' But on public services, it's not now about Blair, Brown, Blunkett, Balls...all that stuff. It's them or us. Tory or Labour."

Two individuals are, however, singled out for praise. One is Alistair Darling ("an unsung hero: People really respect him") The other is the Transport Secretary, Lord Andrew Adonis. "He's been an absolute star." Such a tribute seemed unlikely "when he was a slightly unpolitical policy head in No 10. I was always saying to Tony: 'Look, can we inject a bit of politics into this guy?' But I know people in the transport world, and they say he's been brilliant."

Then there is Lord Mandelson, Mr Campbell's co-star in the Blair/Brown psychodrama. Did his return save Mr Brown? "None of us know. You can never tell. It was an important moment, because Peter has real talent and experience…That visceral neuralgia he used to inspire in people is very limited [now]… I used to say: 'Peter, you must be more humble.' So he did a couple of interviews before phoning me to [announce]: 'I have to say, I did the humility thing rather well'. He's grown up and definitely made a difference."

Who should be the next leader of the Labour Party? "I really think it's sensible not to get into that…There's plenty of good people around – Harriet, Alistair, Johnson, the Milibands." No mention, I notice, of Ed Balls? "OK, add Balls," he says, before reeling off more names. Win or lose, is this Mr Campbell's last hurrah? "Don't know. Haven't thought about it. I'm not going to go back, but I'll probably be around a bit."

I had read a throwaway line suggesting that he was drinking again, albeit occasionally, many years after he suffered a mental breakdown and foreswore alcohol. "I was," he says, as if this dalliance is already in the past. "I drank a bit on holiday. Wasn't really bothered about it."

Why did he ever start again? Was it, I suggest, to test his own limits and resolve? "Possibly. I don't know. I thought: this isn't very sensible. I think partly it was a sort of testing thing. Probably a last test."

Presumably he was assessing the boundaries of compulsion. In the past years, he has not only jettisoned his frenetic work schedule. He also gives the impression that politics, which once seemed a narcotic to him, has become a job.

Maybe he is managing his own expectations. No doubt, as he says, the sacrifice became too great. But there seems to be another factor. For much of his adult life, Alastair Campbell has been a serial loyalist, devoted to powerful men. Now, with all his mentors gone or outgrown, his allegiance is to the party rather than to any individual.

Not that he and Mr Brown aren't close. Each must know the other's secrets and frailties as well as his own. I ask what's the best advice Mr Campbell has given the PM. "Be yourself. The only communication that works is authenticity. Part of the reason he's more relaxed is that he's a serious, heavyweight guy. He likes working on policy. He isn't someone you would see on his bike in a Lacoste top. It just isn't for him."

Can Labour, six points behind at the time we meet, take this election? "If you're a footballer and you go out on the pitch thinking we're going to lose, then we will." While this does not sound the most ringing endorsement, it would never be wise to underplay Mr Campbell's skills, Mr Brown's stamina or the sinews binding two oddly-matched protagonists with the shared longing to win it one more time. ■

Alastair Campbell's latest novel Maya *is published by Hutchinson priced £18.99*

The top ten terrible Tories

David Cameron may have succeeded in somewhat detoxifying the Conservative brand, but for many Tories old habits die hard. Blogger Laurie Penny gives us her personal pick of who we should be worried about.

Laurie Penny is a freelance journalist and political commentator. She writes the popular blog http://pennyred.blogspot.com.

10 IAIN DUNCAN SMITH

When Thatcher's wing-man Lord Tebbit handed over his Chingford seat to his protégé in 1992, he famously said: "if you think I'm right wing, you should see this guy." IDS has always been an advocate of the more 'traditional' elements of Tory thought, despite his reinvention as the Tories social justice guru. As a traditionalist opponent of gay rights and equality legislation, he was elected to the party leadership in 2001 with the support of the recalcitrant Conservative old guard. IDS currently heads up the Centre For Social Justice, which despite its touchy-feely bona fides, has been a driving force behind the 'Broken Britain' agenda.

9 DAN HANNAN

"We're not really sure what Daniel Hannan's problem is with the NHS," said a journalist for the Daily Mash in 2009. "Perhaps they were unable to save his hair." The Telegraph columnist and tiresomely Eurosceptic MEP attacked the National Health Service on screechily right-wing American station Fox News, fabricating statistics like a frenzied dressmaker on the rampage in Ipsos Mori. Hannan pursues a furiously anti-tax, anti-Europe agenda, and retains a solid base of support amongst Conservative party members. His British version of the strident Republican anti-tax 'Tea Party' campaign has attracted an unnerving dribble of support.

8 ROGER HELMER

The East Midlands MEP recently caught the public eye by forming an allegiance with Polish politician Michael Kaminski, whose party pursues an openly homophobic agenda. Defending Kaminski, Helmer declared that homophobia does not exist and that the word "is merely a propaganda device" designed to "denigrate and stigmatise those holding conventional opinions". Helmer is also a prominent and dedicated climate change denier, with an agenda motivated by faith, not facts: he says "perhaps world religions should have more faith in God, and less in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change" but seems unclear on whether the earth "has been warming, slightly and intermittently, for the last 150 years" (2008) or whether "the world is cooling" (2009).

7 NADINE DORRIES

Ditzy as she may appear, beneath the fluffy expostulations of Nadine Dorries's high-heel evangelism lies a cold, hard right-wing moral agenda. Dorries, who casts herself as 'the Bridget Jones of Westminster', was the impetus behind the forced-birth amendments to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology bill of 2008, launching an emotionally manipulative propaganda campaign in conjunction with the Daily Mail to reduce the time-limit on legal abortion. A Channel 4 documentary later exposed Nadine Dorries's close links to the bigoted, fundamentalist Christian organisation Christian Concern For Our Nation. Although the bill was defeated, Westminster sources confirm that Dorries is planning to resume her pro-life tubthumping in the event of a Tory government.

6 LORD ASHCROFT

A key Tory donor, member of the legislature and now infamous 'non-dom', Tory deputy chair Baron Ashcroft has been at the centre of a number of allegations of corruption in the UK and abroad. Much of his money comes from Belize, where he has a controlling interest in the People's United Party, which introduced laws that many claim are extremely financially advantageous to Ashcroft. In 2003, High Court Justice Mr

Peter Smith condemned Ashcroft's business style, saying that "The proper word to my mind is blackmail." David Cameron had previously dismissed BBC investigations into his bankrolling baron's affairs, saying that 'someone's tax status is a private matter between themselves and the inland revenue.' The Tory leader currently has no plans to extend this gracious admission of financial privacy to people receiving state benefits or, indeed, to unmarried couples.

5 JOHN REDWOOD

Nicknamed 'Vulcan' by the liberal press for his cold, moralising demeanor and passing resemblance to Mr Spock from Star Trek, one suspects that playground insults have never been enough to put this reactionary ideologist of the Eurosceptic right off his stride. Redwood is back on the scene as adviser to David Cameron and co-chairman of the Conservative Party's Policy Review Group on Economic Competitiveness. He told the Telegraph in February 2010 that he will be working to ensure that the party cuts 'early and deep' if it elected to power – the Cat Stevens approach to financial prudence – but has announced on his blog that he would cut the welfare state in order to secure military spending. It is for women, however, that Redwood reserves special disdain. He called date rape "a disagreement between two lovers as to whether there was consent on one particular occasion," saying that "young men do not want to have to take a consent form and a lawyer on a date."

4 DAVID CAMERON

Cameron is the shine on the face of a wider Conservative Party that remains largely unchanged, and which is already rumbling its dissent against his modernising efforts. In December 2009, a drunken young Conservative Future pundit ominously told *Prospect* journalist Dan Hancox: "Don't get me wrong, Cameron is… necessary. But George Osborne: he's the bloody man." As a modesty slip for all that is loathsome about the Conservative party, David Cameron is quite possibly the most dangerous Tory of them all.

3 ANDY COULSON

Cameron's chief communications adviser seems to be trying to out-do Labour's Princes of Darkness by becoming embroiled in allegations of sleaze and fraud before his horse is even out of the paddock. The recent phone-tapping scandal, which uncovered years of dodgy practice during Coulson's editorship of the News of the World, suggests that the Conservatives are fully intending to spin with as much ferocity as Labour ever did – albeit with a little less panache.

2 MARGARET THATCHER

Need we elaborate? Despite retiring from the Commons in 1992, the Iron Lady casts a constant ideological shadow on contemporary Tory thought, and is openly acknowledged as a spiritual leader by many in the shadow cabinet.

1

JACOB REES-MOGG

In any sane society, people like Jacob Rees-Mogg would be kept away from Westminster with big sticks and given safe, undemanding jobs to do in small dark rooms. The PPC for North East Somerset, who is the son of former Tory candidate and *Times* editor William Rees-Mogg and the brother of fellow PPC Annuziata Rees-Mogg, once described children from underprivileged backgrounds as "pot-plants", and named his son after "the first anti-taxation martyr". Jacob Rees-Mogg lives with his wife and his childhood nanny, who still accompanies him to official events, earning him a rather unsporting ribbing from the *Mirror*. When questioned about his continued reliance on Nanny, forty-year old Rees-Mogg snapped, "if I had a valet, people would think it was perfectly normal". He went on to make several speeches about the evils of 'the Nanny State'. All this sounds like a jolly laugh until one remembers he is standing for a safe Tory seat. The 2008 Mayoral race gave the lie to the idea that the British never elect bumbling right-wing cartoon characters, and Rees-Mogg and his Nanny could soon be voting on issues that matter to those without even valets.

Goodbye, hello

With more vacancies in the House of Commons than ever before, Paul Richards profiles the next generation of Labour parliamentarians.

Paul Richards is a member of the Fabian Society executive. He writes a weekly column for Progress and for LabourList. Paul was a parliamentary candidate in 1997 and 2001

When the new parliament assembles a little later in the year, there will be more new faces than at any time since 1945. The police and parliamentary authorities will cope by issuing a thick booklet of new MPs' mug shots to their staff, in the hope of avoiding the embarrassment of blocking the path of some callow youth who turns out to be the new Member for Wherever. But who are the people that will become our new Labour representatives; and what should we make of them? After the turmoil of the expenses scandal, will the new intake be a symbolic new start for Westminster?

A new book by Bob Holman on Keir Hardie reminds us that the Labour Party was founded to represent working class people in parliament. Today, with Labour MPs in the majority, the House of Commons has just six per cent of its number drawn from the manual working class. That's not to say that the ranks of Labour barristers, lecturers, television producers, journalists, local government officers, trade union officials and former special advisers do not include decent, effective MPs. Attlee, Wilson, Benn, and Foot never worked a machine tool, stood on a production line or saw the bottom of a mineshaft, yet no one would doubt their socialist conviction or their ability to speak up for the under-represented.

Let us hope the same can be said of the latest crop. The police on the gate will have little difficulty recognising the new members for Liverpool West Derby and Leyton & Wanstead. John Cryer and former Fabian General Secretary Stephen Twigg will be 'retread' MPs, back after losing their seats in 2005. Cryer's neighbour will be Stella Creasy in Walthamstow, a Cambridge psychology graduate (with a PhD from the London School of Economics), a former aide to Douglas Alexander, and ex-Mayor of Walthamstow. She has come a long way since interning at the Fabian Society. Bangladeshi-born Rushanara Ali will hope to turn Bethnal Green & Bow Labour once again. She works at the Young Foundation which was founded by the great sociologist and reformer Michael Young. She was assistant to Oona King MP, and studied PPE at Oxford.

So far, so insider. This theme continues when one looks at the number of former special advisers likely to join the Labour benches. Every new parliament contains a healthy collection of these former ministerial aides, and this one will be no exception. John Woodcock (ex-John Hutton and ex-Gordon Brown), Emma Reynolds (ex-Geoff Hoon), Liz Kendall (ex-Patricia Hewitt and ex-Harriet Harman), Nick Bent (ex-Tessa Jowell) and possibly (if selected) Michael Dugher (ex-Geoff Hoon and ex-Gordon Brown) will be elected as MPs. As with Balls, Purnell, Hilary Benn and both Milibands, former special advisers give the Prime Minister a ready pool of talent to fast-track into government. Another future minister is the ex-Bank of England economist and author of the new book *Why Vote Labour?* Rachel Reeves, who is fighting Leeds West for Labour.

Another candidate well-versed in the world of professional politics is Heidi Alexander, a Lewisham councillor who hopes to replace her former boss Bridget Prentice MP. In Clwyd South, Welsh-speaking Susan Elan Jones is another former councillor who will want to win for Labour. A heavyweight addition to the Commons will be Kate Green, who like Frank Field, is a former chief executive of the Child Poverty Action Group. She is standing for Labour in Stretford & Urmston. Heading very slightly outside the beltway, we find Karl Turner in Hull East, a former antiques dealer and criminal barrister who will fill John Prescott's size nines. Greg McClymont was born and raised in the snappily-titled seat of Cumbernauld Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East, before becoming a politics lecturer at Oxford University. He aims to replace Rosemary McKenna.

Elsewhere, Labour historians will be pleased to note that the Red Clydesider Manny Shinwell's great niece will be on the Labour benches, if Luciana Berger wins in Liverpool Wavertree. Another relative of a leading Labour figure will join the Parliamentary Labour Party if Harriet Harman's husband Jack Dromey, a long-standing official with Unite, wins in Birmingham Erdington. Lillian Greenwood, Labour's candidate in Nottingham South, is another trade union official hoping to be elected. At least two lawyers hope to enter parliament. Shabana Mahmood aims to replace Clare Short in Birmingham Ladywood, and Chuka Umunna is standing in Streatham in south London. In Gateshead, an all-postal ballot selected Ian Mearns, deputy leader of the local council. Replacing Stephen Byers in North Tyneside is Mary Glindon, a local councillor. In Newcastle Central Chi Onwurah is the candidate. She is an engineer by profession, and her maternal grandfather was a sheet metal worker during the 1930s on the Tyne. But her Nigerian father took the family to Nigeria during the civil war, and Chi returned to Newcastle as a refugee.

Lawyers, trade union officials, councillors, academics, think tank staffers, pressure groups and charities: Labour's new generation is a talented bunch. Within their ranks are the Labour cabinet ministers and Prime Ministers of the future. But there are not many with the kinds of jobs and backgrounds that Keir Hardie would recognise.

Well, except one. Step forward Ian Lavery, like Hardie a former coal miner, and President of the National Union of Mineworkers. He hopes to represent the mining towns and villages of Wansbeck after May. He is exactly the kind of Labour MP Keir Hardie had in mind. ■

"A question of whether we care"

There's a growing political clamour about the 60,000 people with multiple needs and exclusions – people who have been in prison, are often homeless, with drug habits and mental ill health. As the Fabians publish a new pamphlet, *Hardest to Reach*, David Blunkett looks at Labour's track record on social exclusion and the challenges for the next government.

David Blunkett is MP for Sheffield Brightside and has served as Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Education and Employment.

There are very few people who, at some point in their lives, have not experienced a major problem. It can be bereavement of a loved one, or a sudden and unexpected event such as unemployment or the onset of disability. It can be two or three smaller events that come one after the other, like waves coming up a beach.

Many people sink into what can appear to be unmanageable difficulties – and fear that they'll never get out of them.

They can face varying degrees of depression, leading to the reinforcement of other problems – from not being able to get a job to not meeting people, getting out of the house or having an income that allows you those pleasures which make life worthwhile.

Since the beginning of industrialisation 250 years ago, villages and rural communities have offered basic neighbourly and community help.

To recapture that mutuality and reciprocity today there is a general consensus that we need to reinforce the local. But sometimes this 'localism' is carried to extremes, where we decentralise and devolve without any concept of how we can hold authority to account. Often, we don't have clear lines of responsibility – or the opportunity for meaningful redress.

That is why the experiment driven by my former Permanent Secretary and my friend Sir Michael Bichard, Total Place, demands urgent expansion and reinforcement.

It's basic common sense: bringing together the challenges that individuals, families and communities face and then combining the funding and the mechanisms for delivery in order to address those challenges.

Another friend of mine, Emma Harrison, is the founder and head of A4e (Action for Employment). She deals with the challenges not just of unemployment but of rehabilitation, reassertion of confidence and self-esteem. She has come up with her own snappy title for addressing these problems. She calls it 'Total Person' – not simply looking at the problems of the wider community, but addressing the issues facing individuals and their families in a meaningful way.

There's a great deal in this. Looking at the core problems, getting to the root of what is wrong and then doing something about it. Sadly, all too often, we don't do it.

I'm involved with a number of major voluntary and community organisations – from very small charities to big national operations like the Royal National Institute of Blind People, Guide Dogs, the Alzheimer's Society and Breakthrough Breast Cancer. On every occasion, there will be more than one problem to be addressed when an individual reaches out for help. One local organisation that I've been involved in for many years brings together the relatives of drug and substance abusers. Their cry to me when I was Home Secretary was very simple: "Does our son or daughter have to go to prison in order to detox, get life skills and escape from the pushers?" The answer clearly has to be "No".

Old-fashioned social work used to adopt this approach. It had the fancy name of 'generic social work', but it was also based on community ('the patch', as they used to call it) and specialisation. We now have Children's Trusts, Children and Young Persons Directorates, Adult Services and the like. The approach to dealing with these problems has fragmented.

There has been progress over the course of the last decade – but a renewed focus on homelessness would reap benefits. The ability of a family to hold down a tenancy is crucial for reintegration and overcoming dysfunctionality – a roof over one's head being a basic right, but also often being the source of community disquiet where anti-social behaviour creates havoc. Tough action – as provided for in the legislation we passed in 2003 – is needed to deal with such behaviour; but we need to ensure that the support systems are available to do something about it in the long-term. Individual Support Orders, alongside Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, are essential. Were we to go back to the early period of

this Government, I would certainly be advocating that we emphasise this joint approach, which demonstrated that we were 'on the side' of the community, but also 'alongside' the individual or family in turning things around.

Intergenerational disadvantage has to be tackled at its root. For communities to flourish, those whose lifestyles are outside the norms of society need to be tackled. This benefits the individual, but it is also essential for the maintenance of a civilised and civilising community.

To assist with tackling disadvantage, we have Sure Start. I'm deeply proud of this. I believe it's one of this Government's greatest legacies and that it will prove in years to come to be ever more beneficial to functioning families, to have helped heal fractured communities and to have given a chance in life to kids who would, in previous generations, have been on the scrapheap. It's important that this is not watered down.

It is at the earliest time in a child's life that we can spot not only the dangers, but the potential. The dangers often arise through family circumstances. We must reinforce society by intervening at an early stage to tackle dysfunctional families, unacceptable behaviour by parents and any lack of a basic structure and framework by which to live.

Baseline assessment at the time the child entered infant school is one way of picking up challenges and working out how best to deal with them. The development of both Sure Start and universal nursery education should have enabled us to pull this process forward; but practice is variable and commitment is sometimes lacking. For every adult to matter, we need to start with the nurturing of children, as well as the fostering of responsibility and wherewithal to deliver. We are, in effect, providing the 'extended family' by seeing the community as that strength and resource. This is a very substantial philosophical distinguishing feature of social democratic politics. We recognise that it is people themselves, on the ground, doing the job, who make the difference. The concept that government can do it all and that government is to blame for people not doing it, is not only bizarre but extremely dangerous.

So, we need Total Person as well as Total Place. We need to combine the resources and the mechanisms for providing answers.

The engagement of the public is crucial, especially at the neighbourhood level, where people can be included in deciding where small budgets can be deployed to make big changes (as in Cologne, where the internet is used to involve people in making decisions about priorities). The issue is not one priority against another, or one set of cutbacks versus another; but how to combine budgets in a way that meets the aspiration of Total Place.

> It is those who deliver services and not those who formulate and legislate on them who can, in the end, make the difference

With the global meltdown and the challenge of deficit reduction, all we hear is the cry for cuts. Any fool can actually cut budgets or reduce spending. The real issue is how to use money more wisely; how to build up that social capital, reinvigorate civil society and help people to help themselves … but in a way which actually reinforces mutuality.

If, of course, you're against the role of government per se – if you believe that the state is, by its very nature, a dangerous leviathan – then you will, as our opponents do, wish to dismantle that collaborative and collective approach. You will wish to create a social market to match the economic market which has been so devastating in its effect on all our lives.

If, however, you believe that we can have an enabling, supportive state which engages people and reinforces their sense of worth and civic pride – and that we can rebuild a genuine sense of community – then you will want us to join up services, look at problems holistically and meet people's needs in a way that makes sense to them. People don't recognise departmental boundaries, or the ever-changing names of agencies and quangos. What they want and what we should give them is help in an appropriate form when it is most needed.

Whether it is individual budgets for people with specific or special needs, tailored services (including for education) or programmes designed to help people with multiple challenges (drugs and associated mental health problems, for example), we must make what we offer in terms of services more flexible, responsive to personal need and avoid confining people to the silos which we ourselves create. After 1997, we developed, as part of the reform of the Employment Service, personal advisers in relation to the New Deal. This has now been enhanced with much greater responsiveness through the Flexible New Deal. There is so much more that could be done in relation to greater delegation, use of imagination and ability to respond to the particular needs of individuals.

This touches on the continuing modernisation and reform agenda for the delivery of public services. The importance of the voluntary and community sector – the Third Sector – is critical here; not just in terms of innovation, but in meeting niche requirements.

Achieving this is a massive task. In 2004, we started the process of legislating for what became known as the National Offender Management Service. The idea – building on the progress we had made in bringing education, health and employment services into prisons – was to join up the best of the work of probation with prisons and outside organisations. The result has sadly not been an influx of imaginative or creative ideas to bridge the gap and to work with offenders as human beings, but rather a retrenchment, with the probation service becoming increasingly disaffected and the voluntary sector feeling that their part is unappreciated and neglected.

I use this as an example of how good intentions can come apart if those engaged in the delivery of services are not committed to an entirely radical new approach. It is those who deliver services and not those who formulate and legislate on them who can, in the end, make the difference. To recognise this is to appreciate that we have to change hearts and minds, to mobilise the will of people to make that difference to the lives of others in their workplace, in their neighbourhood and in their own family.

In the end, it's a question of whether we care. ■

The myth of inherited inequality

The science is clear says Danny Dorling: intelligence isn't inherited. So it's not just wrong for politicians to talk about potential, it's bad for equality.

Danny Dorling
is professor of Human Geography at the University of Sheffield

John Hills's National Equality Panel report of January 2010 revealed that our social divisions are even wider than we thought. In London today, the best-off tenth of citizens have recourse to 273 times more wealth each than do the worst-off tenth. Never before has so much been held by so few; and such great inequalities in wealth can dull our thinking by creating a pernicious assumption that people are inherently different.

If most people in affluent nations believed that all human beings were alike – were of the same kind, the same species – then it would be much harder to justify the exclusion of so many people from so many social norms. It is only because the majority of people in many affluent societies have come to be taught that a few are especially able, and others particularly undeserving, that current inequalities can be maintained. It seems inequalities are not being reduced partly because enough people have come – falsely – to understand inequalities to be natural, and a few to even think inequalities are beneficial.

The code word used to talk of inequality as natural is to talk of children having differing 'potentials'. This belief in inherited intelligence – geneticism – is dangerous and remains uncritically challenged at the heart of much policy making in Britain. But recent evidence can help dispel the myth that children from different social backgrounds are born with differing potential.

It was only in the course of the last century that theories of inherent differences amongst the whole population became widespread. Before then it was largely believed that the gods ordained only the chosen few to be inherently different and therefore favoured – the monarchs and the priests. Back then mass deprivation was a fact of life, as there simply could not be enough produced to enable the vast majority to live anything other than a life of frequent want.

It was only when more widespread inequalities in income and wealth began to grow under nineteenth century industrialisation that theories attempting to justify these new inequalities as natural were widely propagated. Out of evolutionary theory came the idea that there were a few great families which passed on superior abilities to their offspring and, in contrast, a residuum of inferior but similarly interbreeding humans who were much greater in number. Often these people, the residuum, came to rely on various poor laws for their survival and were labelled paupers. Between these two extremes were the mass of humanity in the newly industrialising countries: people labelled as capable of hard working but incapable of great thinking.

These early geneticist beliefs gave rise to eugenics. Eugenics had become almost a religion by the 1920s; one that famously gripped many prominent Fabians at the time. It was an article of faith to believe that some were more able than others and that those differences were strongly influenced by some form of inherited acumen. However, after the horror of the genocide of the Second World War, where men of all classes fought and died together, and after the later realisation of the importance of generation and environment to achievement, eugenics was shunned. Contemporary work on epigenetics – the study of heritable changes in gene expression that do not involve changes to the DNA sequence – explicitly steers away from saying genetic makeup determines the social destiny of humans along an ability continuum. But, in

contrast to modern scientific understanding, geneticism is the current version of the belief that not only do people differ in their inherent abilities, but that our consequent 'ability' (and other psychological differences) are to a large part inherited from our parents.

There are sceptics but the overwhelming weight of progressive scientific opinion now suggests that, if there is any inherited influence on acumen, the effects are tiny. Recently I have brought together the evidence and have been convinced: there is no general, even slight, inherited inequality[1]. Sadly, many political commentators are unaware that the debate as to whether inherited acumen is minuscule or non-existent has moved on. For instance even the *The Guardian* newspaper recently published an article which suggested that "common sense tells us that inherited inequality is in part the result of economic injustice and in part the results of disparities of intelligence."[2]

As Professors of Psychiatry and Psychology at the University of Minnesota (and international authorities on genetics and twin-studies) Irving Gottesman and Daniel Hanson, pointed out five years ago: "questions of nature versus nurture are meaningless." They explain that depending on the circumstances into which we are born and given how malleable and unformed our brains are at birth, none of us are destined regardless of circumstance to be either great thinkers or great imbeciles.

Intelligence is not like wealth. Wealth is mostly passed on rather than amassed. Wealth is inherited. Intelligence, in contrast, is held in common. James Flynn's work has shown how successive generations of children appear to out-perform their parents when their apparent intelligence is measured. Unlike monetary wealth, what matters most when it comes to appearing to be clever is the generation you are born into, then where and to whom you are born.

The similar outcomes of identical twins are often held up as evidence of genetic influence on IQ. If identical twins are separated at birth and then adopted by different families, they will appear to perform in a way that is correlated. This is, however, unconvincing as proof of inherited intelligence. Firstly, as Flynn explains, they perform similarly because they are of the same generation. Secondly, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that teachers and other key individuals treat children slightly differently according to their appearance, leading to differential attainment. And of course the one thing we know about identical twins is that they tend to look very much like each other.[3]

Studies of how Afro-Caribbean children did badly in school in the 1960s when taught by white teachers in London, or of what happens when you suddenly decide in an experiment to treat all the blue eyed children in a classroom with disrespect, show how much it matters how children are treated when they are learning. The correlations between the measured test performances of identical twins separated at birth are slight; slight enough to easily be explained, not by genes, but by how different sets of teachers are treating them in similar ways because of their similar physical appearance. Tall, good looking, white children receive (on average) more praise in societies where the bias is toward height, certain perceptions of beauty and being white – and get correspondingly better results.

The current scientific consensus is that intelligence – the capacity to acquire and apply knowledge – is not an individual attribute that people come with, but rather it is built through learning. No single individual has the capacity to read more than a miniscule fraction of the books in a modern library, and no single individual has

Intelligence is not like wealth. Wealth is mostly passed on rather than amassed. Wealth is inherited. Intelligence, in contrast, is held in common

the capacity to acquire and apply much more than a tiny fraction of what we have collectively come to understand. We act and behave as if there are a few great men with encyclopaedic minds able to comprehend the cosmos; we assume that most of us are of lower intelligence and we presume that many humans are of much lower ability than us. In truth the great men are just as fallible as the lower orders; there are no discernable innate differences in people's capacity to learn, other than those caused by failing to develop basic cognitive functions. Take, for example, Margaret Thatcher's 'tall poppies' speech:

"I would say, let our children grow tall and some taller than others if they have the ability in them to do so. Because we must build a society in which each citizen can develop his full potential, both for his own benefit and for the community as a whole, a society in which originality, skill, energy and thrift are rewarded, in which we encourage rather than restrict the variety and richness of human nature."

The 'full potential' idea presumes some great variety in potential. That variety is not found when looked for – except by those who wish to find it. There is variety in outcome, but not in opportunity, if unhindered. Human intellectual ability is rather like our ability to have opposable thumbs or binocular vision or to sing: we evolved to have it. There are cases where children are born with potential fixed low – but these are the results of just a few conditions, such as oxygen depletion at birth, chromosomes causing Downs Syndrome, malnutrition problems and severe lack of attention. It is much more an either/or, for those unlikely to do like others regardless of subsequent circumstance, than the commonly perceived continuum of intelligence. Our problem today is that 100 years of intelligence testing strengthens the idea of there being a curve of ability potential.

Britons spend proportionately more money than any country other than Chile on private education – more even than the USA, below Higher Education level. Half of all 'A' grades at A-level go to the 7 per cent of children privately educated. It's very sad for the English – but a great natural experiment for the world to show that you can simply take a set of children and throw money at them and they will appear to do well at tests. That does not mean there is a continuum

and these children are near the top end of it – what it does mean is that you could take 7 per cent of almost any set of children and put them in an environment that means they appear to learn more than the other 93 per cent. If there were a continuum to ability potential then the private schools – and especially the top public schools – would have found it far harder than they did to monopolise the A grades.

Learning for all is far from easy, which is why some educators confuse a high correlation between the test results of parents and the test results of their offspring with evidence of inherited biological limits. Human beings cannot be divided into groups with similar inherent abilities and motivations; there is no biological distinction between those destined to be paupers and those set to rule them.

In academia today, perhaps unsurprisingly, those whose arguments more often suggest possible hereditability are disproportionately found in the most elite institutions, and among many of those who advise some of the most powerful governments of the world. Eugenicism has risen again, but now goes by a different name and appears in a new form and is now hiding behind a vastly more complex biological cloak. For example, it was recently stated in a textbook supposed to be concerned with 'fairness' and including amongst its editors people near the very heart of government, that "there is a significant correlation between the measured intelligence of parents and their children … Equality of opportunity does not aim to defeat biology, but to ensure equal chances for those with similar ability and motivation."[4] This quote was written by a professor based in the city of Oxford. It is disproportionately from places such as Oxford University that possible excuses for exclusion are more often preached. To give another example from the same institution: "children of different class backgrounds tend to do better or worse in school – on account, one may suppose, of a complex interplay of socio-cultural and genetic factors."[5] Outside of Oxford, researchers are so much more careful with their words when it comes to suggesting such things. Why?

There are many advantages – but also disadvantages – to working in a place like the University of Oxford when it comes to studying human societies. It is there and in similar places – like Harvard and Heidelberg – that misconceptions about the nature of society and of other humans can so easily form. This is due, Pierre Bourdieu has claimed, to the staggering and strange social, geographical and economic separation of the supposed crème de la crème of society into such enclaves.[6] The British Prime Minister during the time these Oxford academics were writing had clearly come to believe in a kind geneticism, as revealed in his speeches. Tony Blair disguised his geneticist beliefs by talking of them as the "God-given potential" of children, but it is clear from both the policies he promoted, his 'scientific Christianity', and the way he talked about what he thought of his own children's special potential, that his God dealt out potential through genes.[7]

A strand of eugenics thinking has never gone away in how many left-wing policy-makers in Britain treat and describe inequality and the poor. We need to exorcise these past ghosts before we can get out of some of the ruts in our current collective thinking. We need to understand that the modern forms of crypto-eugenic belief – geneticism – lead to an implicit acceptance of social segregation, to enclaves, escapism, excuses for huge wealth gaps and an argument being made which promotes inequality as good. ■

Endnotes

1 Dorling, D. (2010) *Injustice: why social inequalities persist*, Bristol: Policy Press (Chapter 3, footnote 28, page 326 if you want *all* the details!)

2 Blond, P. and Milbank, J. (2010) No equality of opportunity, *The Guardian*, 28 January 2010, page 28.

3 For one of the most insightful discussions, which does not discount the genetic possibilities, but which says they are so tiny that by implicit implication appearance could be as important, see the open access copy of James Flynn's December 2006 lecture at Trinity College Cambridge: http://www.psychometrics.sps.cam.ac.uk/page/109/beyond-the-flynn-effect.htm (accessed 9/7/2009), the full length version of the argument is: Flynn, J. R. (2007). *What is Intelligence? Beyond the Flynn effect*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press..

4 Miller, D. (2005). *What is Social Justice. Social Justice: Building a Fairer Britain*. N. Pearce and W. Paxton. London, Politicos: 3-20. (pages 14-15).

5 Goldthorpe, J. and M. Jackson. (2007). "Education-based meritocracy: The barriers to its realisation." *Economic Change, Quality of Life and Social Cohesion* 6th Framework Network, from http://www.equalsoc.org/paper_fetcher.aspx?type=2&id=11. (page S3).

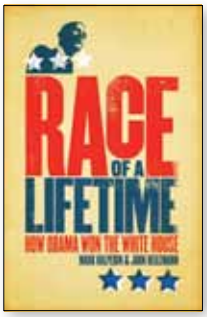
6 Bourdieu, P. (2007) *Sketch for a self-analysis* (English edn), Cambridge: Polity Press.

7 For the full wording of his text about children's abilities delivered in 2005see: Ball, S. J. (2008). *The Education Debate*. Bristol, Policy Press.(page 12). Tony's comments about the work which would be beneath his children are recorded in Steel, M. (2008). *What's going on*. London, Simon and Schuster. (page 8).

American psychodrama

This political sizzler is a rip-roaring read, but depicts the politics of another age says Tom Hampson

Tom Hampson is Editorial Director of the Fabian Society



Race of a Lifetime

By Mark Halperin and John Heilemann

Virago
£20

Race of a Lifetime is part of a genre of political writing that's on the ascendant. John Heilemann and Mark Halperin – both Washington Beltway insider journalists – have placed the narrative at the exact midpoint between two areas of public life that you might have thought were irreconcilable: high-end political campaigning and celebrity soap opera culture. David Axelrod meets Judge Judy. It is quite a heady mix.

Race of a Lifetime tells a series of incredible tales. It turns out that all the time we were captivated by the Southern working class charm of Democratic candidate John Edwards telling us how his passion for his wife was undimmed by her terminal breast cancer, he was actually having a none-too-secret affair and organising for a friend to pretend the resulting child was his own. It turns out that Obama, far from being subtle, sophisticated and charming, is actually aloof, arrogant and self-absorbed. It turns out that the Clinton juggernaut was even more dramatic than we ever could have guessed – with practically daily tears, tantrums and betrayals.

Ariana Huffington has been here already, recognising that the core demographic of new, 17 –40 year old Obama voters had – yes – a tendency towards political obsessiveness but – while they were waiting for each new poll – were watching Oprah, Ricky Lake and following the daily sagas of Brangelina, TomKat and Benifer.

Huffington Post has closed the gap between the cerebral and the celebrity; as I write, today's stories range from the White House's plans for child protection in the new health care bill, through Joe Biden's use of the F word, to David Hasselhoff's daughter attending fat camp. Both are of more than passing interest, but as the painful Billary impeachment soap opera showed in the 90s, the ultimate consequences of this prurient fascination are hardly good for democracy.

Over here we are not so different. The media has long had a glutton's taste for saucy political scandal and in Westminster – far more than the disparate and often regional intrigues around the United States – rumour is political currency. Andrew Rawnsley's book had many of the same strengths and weaknesses – noisily proclaiming its A-list sources in order to drown out criticism of its shaky narrative and its partiality.

Questions of exactly which special advisor shouted at which ministerial aide are of obsessive interest to journalists, think tankers and politicians, and often with good reason: undoubtedly it would have mattered if John Edwards had reached any further up the greasy presidential pole. Just as it would have rightly mattered in the 1992 election if John Major's affair with Edwina Curry had come to light.

You could argue that this scrutiny is healthy. But what does real damage to politics is the invention of personality by the clumping together of a series of odorous insinuations – of Brown's bullying, of Major's poor temper, or Blair's depressiveness – that seep out of the cracks of Whitehall and Westminster and into the cultural mainstream.

Personality, of course, does matter. If Obama is aloof and arrogant that gives voters a clearer picture of the man they voted for. But a clearer picture is the last thing *Race of a Lifetime* gives you. Its ability to muddy the waters, to suggest personality traits with scant evidence, is impressive.

What's more, from two apparently such well respected figures, the quality of the journalism is, frankly, awful. At one point, we are told, "The schedule was killing [Obama]. The fatigue was all-consuming. The events piled up on top of one another, making his temples ache. He tried not to bitch and moan too much, except when it got out of hand – meaning almost every day." This is typical of the tone – unsourced insights into how the candidates were feeling. Or what we might call guesswork.

The real question about this hyperbolic tone is whether it is redolent of the past or of the future. It is certainly entirely unconnected to the reality of politics. Firstly, it is ignorant of the real stuff of political life – the grassroots movements, the community activism, people knocking door-to-door, people cajoling and convincing neighbours. *Race of a Lifetime* acts like it understands these things – they were, after all, a massive part of the Obama campaign – but is seduced by power and leadership into thinking those at the top are all that matter.

Secondly – ironically – its preoccupations are very much of the era preceding the change it seeks to chart: Obama's use of online activism changed how politics works. From 2008 onwards, while the public life of politics might be about panic and arrogance and affairs and bullying, its personal life is about widespread and growing democratic debate and activism.

But we shouldn't kid ourselves: the book is gripping and enjoyable. The fact is that a politics that was only representative, that debated nothing but policy, and where leadership was subordinated to democratic will would be less, well, fun. If we lost our fascination with the strange lives and personalities of our leaders we would only have to invent them.

Find out how to win a copy of *Race of a Lifetime* on page 24

Listings

A note from Local Societies Officer, Deborah Stoate

Looking at Fabian News for March 1910, it's interesting to see what the local societies had on offer a century ago. Fabian News was then a 16 page monthly newsletter containing – then as now – political columns and comment, book reviews, and local society listings and reports along with national Fabian events.

From this we learn that the Glasgow Society was having a series of lectures on 'The Abolition of Poverty'. Liverpool had a visit from Alderman Sanders who 'in his best and breeziest manner, gave us a stimulating review of the general political and social situation and the place of the Fabian Movement'. Sheffield held a social event which was 'quite a new departure. The experiment proved highly successful!' And Walsall held a debate on the subject 'That Socialism is Indispensible to National Welfare', and the manner of the debate evidently 'deepened the impression in Walsall that the Local Fabian Society is a force to be reckoned with'.

Two members of the Manchester Fabian Society had started an 'illustrated humorous penny weekly entitled 'Laughter; Grim and Gay', described as the first illustrated humorous Socialist Paper in Great Britain. I wonder how long that lasted?

BIRMINGHAM
All meetings at 7.00 in the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham. **For details and information contact Andrew Coulson on 0121 414 4966 email a.c.coulson@bham.ac.uk or Rosa Birch on 0121 427 3778 or rosabirch@hotmail.co.uk.**

BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT
26 March. Ellie Levenson on 'Why Politics Needs Women'.
All meetings at The Friends Meeting House, Wharncliffe Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth at 7.30. Contact Ian Taylor on 01202 396634 for details.

BRADFORD
New Group forming. If anyone is interested in joining, **please contact Celia Waller on celiawaller@blueyonder.co.uk**

BRIGHTON & HOVE
Regular meetings. **Details from Maire McQueeney on 01273 607910 email mairemcqueeney@waitrose.com**

CANTERBURY
New Society forming. **Please contact Ian Leslie on 01227 265570 or 07973 681 451 or email i.leslie@btinternet.com**

CARDIFF AND THE VALE
Details of all meetings from Jonathan Wynne Evans on 02920 594 065 or wynneevans@phonecoop.coop

CENTRAL LONDON
Regular meetings at 7.30 in the Cole Room, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1A 9BN. **Details from Ian Leslie on 01227 265570 or 07973 681451**

CHESHIRE
New Society forming in Northwich area. **Contact Mandy Griffiths on mgriffiths@valeroyal.gov.uk**

CHISWICK & WEST LONDON
25 March. Tim Horton of the Fabian Society. 8.00 in the Committee room at Chiswick Town Hall. **Details from Monty Bogard on 0208 994 1780, email mb014fl362@blueyonder.co.uk**

COLCHESTER
18 March. Gavin Hayes of Compass **Details from John Wood on 01206 212100 or woodj@madasafish.com Or 01206 212100**

CORNWALL
Helston area. New Society forming. **For details contact Maria Tierney at maria@disabilitycornwall.org.uk**

DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM
Regular meetings at 8.00 in the Ship, Green Street Green Rd at 8.00. **Details from Deborah Stoate on 0207 227 4904 email debstoate@hotmail.com**

DERBY
Regular monthly meetings. **Details from Rosemary Key on 01332 573169**

DONCASTER AND DISTRICT
New Society forming, for **details and information contact Kevin Rodgers on 07962 019168 email k.t.rodgers@gmail.com**

EAST LOTHIAN
Details of all meetings from Noel Foy on 01620 824386 email noel.foy@tesco.net

FINCHLEY
Enquiries to Mike Walsh on 07980 602122

GLASGOW
Now holding regular meetings. **Contact Martin Hutchinson on mail@liathach.net**

GLOUCESTER
Regular meetings at TGWU, 1 Pullman Court, Great Western Rd, Gloucester. **Details from Roy Ansley on 01452 713094 email roybrendachd@yahoo.co.uk**

GRIMSBY
Regular meetings. **Details from Maureen Freeman on m.freeman871@btinternet.com**

HARROW
23 March. **Dan Whittle of Unions 21 Details from June Solomon on 0208 428 2623.** Fabians from other areas where there are no local Fabian Societies are very welcome to join us.

HAVERING
24 May. Alan Pennington on 'Should Pension Schemes be Pensioned off?'
Details of all meetings from David Marshall email david.c.marshall.t21@btinternet.com tel 01708 441189

HERTFORDSHIRE
Regular meetings. **Details from Robin Cherney at RCher24@aol.com**

ISLINGTON
For details of all meetings contact Jessica Asato at jessica@jessicaasato.co.uk

MANCHESTER
Details from Graham Whitham on 079176 44435 email manchesterfabians@googlemail.com and a blog at http://gtrmancfabians.blogspot.com

MARCHES
New Society formed in Shrewsbury area. **Details on www.MarchesFabians.org.uk or contact Kay Thornton on Secretary@marchesfabians.org.uk**

MIDDLESBOROUGH
New Society hoping to get established. **Please contact Andrew Maloney on 07757 952784 or email andrewmaloney@hotmail.co.uk for details**

NEWHAM
For details of this and all other meetings Ellie Robinson on marieellie@aol.com

NORTH EAST WALES
Further details from Joe Wilson on 01978 352820

NORTHUMBRIA AREA
For details and booking contact Pat Hobson at pat.hobson@hotmail.com

NORTHAMPTON AREA
New Society forming. **If you are interested in becoming a member of this new society, please contact Dave Brede on davidbrede@yahoo.com**

NORWICH
Anyone interested in helping to re-form Norwich Fabian Society, **please contact Andreas Paterson andreas@headswitch.co.uk**

PETERBOROUGH
16 April. Neal Lawson of Compass on 'Markets – Are there any Alternatives?'
Meetings at 8.00 at the Ramada Hotel, Thorpe Meadows, Peterborough.
Details from Brian Keegan on 01733 265769, email brian@briankeegan.demon.co.uk

PORTSMOUTH
Regular monthly meetings, **details from June Clarkson on 02392 874293 email jclarkson1006@hotmail.com**

READING & DISTRICT
24 March 'Question Time for Local PPCs'. Both meetings at 7.30 at RISC.
For details of all meetings, contact Tony Skuse on 0118 978 5829 email tony@skuse.net

SHEFFIELD
Regular meetings on the 4th Thursday of the month, 7.30 at the Quaker Meeting Room, 10 St James Street, Sheffield S1. **Details and information from Rob Murray on 0114 2558341or Tony Ellingham on 0114 274 5814 email tony.ellingham@virgin.net**

SOUTH EAST LONDON
For details of all future meetings, please visit our website at http://mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/selfs/. Regular meetings; **contact Duncan Bowie on 020 8693 2709 or email duncanbowie@yahoo.co.uk**

SOUTHAMPTON AREA
18 May. Post Local and General Election Analysis.

June. Human Rights and Democracy in Burma (details to follow).
For details of venues and all meetings, contact Andrew Pope on 07801 284758

SOUTH TYNESIDE
April (date tbc). Annual Dinner. 19.15 at the Westoe Pub, Westoe Rd, South Shields.
For information about this Society please contact Paul Freeman on 0191 5367 633 or at freemanpsmb@blueyonder.co.uk

SUFFOLK
For details of all meetings, contact Peter Coghill on 01986 873203

SURREY
Regular meetings at Guildford Cathedral Education Centre.
Details from Maureen Swage on 01252 733481 or maureen.swage@btinternet.com

'TONBRIDGE AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS
16April. Susan Steed of the New Economics Foundation on 'Valuing What Matters'
21 May. Alan Bullion on 'The Economics of Latin America'
All meetings at 8.00 at 71a St Johns Rd. **Details from John Champneys on 01892 523429**

TYNEMOUTH
Monthly supper meetings, **details from Brian Flood on 0191 258 3949**

WEST DURHAM
The West Durham Fabian Society welcomes new members from all areas of the North East not served by other Fabian Societies. It has a regular programme of speakers from the public, community and voluntary sectors. It meets normally on the last Saturday of alternate months at the Joiners Arms, Hunwick between 12.15 and 2.00pm – light lunch £2.00. **Contact the Secretary Cllr Professor Alan Townsend, 62A Low Willington, Crook, Durham DL15 OBG, tel, 01388 746479 email alan.townsend@wearvalley.gov.uk**

WEST WALES
Regular meetings at Swansea Guildhall, **details from Roger Warren Evans on roger@warrenevans.net**

WEST YORKSHIRE
Details from Jo Coles on Jocoles@yahoo.com

WIMBLEDON
New Society forming. **Please contact Andy Ray on 07944 545161or andyray@blueyonder.co.uk if you are interested.**

WIRRAL
If anyone is interested in helping to form a new Local Society in the Wirral area, **please contact Alan Milne at alan@milne280864.fsnet.co.uk or 0151 632 6283**

YORK
Regular meetings on 3rd or 4th Fridays at 7.45 at Jacob's Well, Off Miklegate, York.
23 April. John Grogan MP
Details from Steve Burton on steve.burton688@mod.uk

NOTICEBOARD

These pages are your forum and we're open to your ideas. Please email Tom Hampson. Editorial Director of the Fabian Society at tom.hampson@fabians.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP RATES

On 14 November the Annual General Meeting of the Society agreed an increase of £2.00 in annual subscriptions to help fund our programme of events and publications. The annual rates are now:

	Cheque/Standing Order	Direct Debit
Ordinary	£37.00	£35.00
Reduced	£19.00	£18.00

Retired members, students, unwaged and unemployed members may pay at the reduced rate.

The six-month introductory offer remains at £9.95 (£5.00 for students).

FABIAN FORTUNE FUND

WINNER: Joyce Mapp, £100

Half the income from the Fabian Fortune Fund goes to support our research programme. Forms available from Giles Wright, giles.wright@fabian-society.org.uk

POST-ELECTION CONFERENCE

Saturday 15 May 2010
Brunei Gallery, The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)

Join us for the first big political event after the election, where we hope to be debating Labour's future agenda in power. The conference programme will be announced after May 6th.

Tickets are available on www.fabians.org.uk

This event is kindly supported by

FABIAN QUIZ

WE HAVE FIVE COPIES OF *RACE OF A LIFETIME* TO GIVE AWAY – TO WIN, ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

PENGUIN VIKING

2010 will see the first televised debate of party leaders in the UK. In what year was the first one held in a US presidential election?

Please email your answers and your address to review@fabian-society.org.uk or send a postcard to: Fabian Society, Fabian Quiz, 11 Dartmouth Street, London. SW1H 9BN. Answers must be received no later than Friday June 4th 2010.

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