

FABIAN REVIEW

The quarterly magazine of the Fabian Society

Spring 2015 / fabians.org.uk / £4.95

TIME *to* CHANGE



*Politics is reinventing itself. The Fabian Review election special investigates how Labour can respond. With Georgia Gould, Peter Hain, Seema Malhotra, Marcus Roberts and more **p8***

*Stephen Bush interviews Labour's deputy leader Harriet Harman **p22***

*10 things the Fabians have learnt this parliament **p27***

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FABIAN REVIEW

Fabian Review is the quarterly journal of the Fabian Society. Like all publications of the Fabian Society, it represents not the collective view of the Society, but only the views of the individual writers. The responsibility of the Society is limited to approving its publications as worthy of consideration within the Labour movement.

Editor, Ed Wallis
Assistant Editor, Anya Pearson
Cover illustration © Kenn Goodall / bykenn.com
Printed by DG3, London E14 9TE
Designed by Soapbox, www.soapbox.co.uk

ISSN 1356 1812
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The inequality election

Labour has the ambition and policies to tackle inequality. In the election campaign, it must find its voice—*Andrew Harrop*

POLITICS IS FRAGMENTING and it seems another inconclusive election is before us. The established Westminster parties have failed to find an answer to public disenchantment, as people say ‘you’re all the same’. But this year the choice between a Labour or Conservative government could not be more stark.

The dividing lines boil down to one word: inequality. Under Conservative plans Britain will become far less equal. Under Labour, there is the chance of a different path. Fabian research published in February provides the backdrop, showing that if politicians do nothing inequality and poverty will soar.

But the Conservatives don’t even plan inaction, they seek to actively widen the gap. Already, five years of austerity have hit the living standards of the poorer half of society, while leaving most in the top half untouched.

Now the Conservatives proudly promise more of the same. They will strip £12bn from the incomes of the bottom 50 per cent, through benefit cuts, while simultaneously giving away £7bn to the top half in income tax cuts. This is not a dirty secret, hidden away in the Tory small print. It is front and centre of their election campaign.

By contrast, Labour presents its most egalitarian platform for a generation. Ed Miliband has pitched himself on the side of ‘the many’, standing up to vested interests and powerful elites. He has set out radical ambitions to reduce levels of low pay and said that his economic goal is to raise typical family incomes not GDP, adopting a 2014 Fabian proposal.

And the party has not abandoned its commitment to eradicating child poverty, although after the election it will

need to set an achievable target date now that Gordon Brown’s original deadline can no longer be met.

Nor is Labour simply willing the ends. The party has a radical package of egalitarian policies. Market inequalities will be addressed by workers on boards, employee ownership, a revolution in non-graduate skills, a big push for the living wage and a much higher minimum wage.

Labour has also changed its mind on the role of tax in tackling inequality. The mansion tax, the 50p top rate and reform of pension tax relief are all ways to diminish soaring inequality. These are policies which will redistribute money from those with the broadest shoulders, but economists reckon they will also change incentives and so reduce inequality in the market.

The missing piece of the jigsaw is an affordable strategy for benefits and tax credits. This is not just for a few at the bottom: middle income families will only see their living standards rise to reflect economic growth if social security becomes more generous.

Ruling out savage new cuts is an important start. But the new Fabian research shows it is possible to raise benefits, especially for children, without borrowing more; by recycling the tax revenues generated from improvements to the labour market back to households.

Labour’s challenge now is to set out its stall and show more clearly what is at stake. It must convince voters that it is not just a party of good intentions, but answers that really work.

Inequality is the defining issue of our times. And only Labour can ever put it at the heart of our politics. The party has the ambition, it has the policies. It must find its voice. **F**

Shortcuts



DIGITAL ALCHEMY

The digital revolution will work in Labour's favour—*Fran O'Leary*

With people now spending well over two hours online each day, digital communications are frontier territory in general elections. As new technology develops, new digital platforms emerge and our online behaviour changes, everyone is experimenting as they mix science with creativity. It's a very modern kind of alchemy; no one has the definitive formula to convert online content into votes, but everyone is searching for gold.

Getting digital right could have a huge impact on the long-term future of the Labour party. People now get much of their political information from online platforms, as well as traditional media. Labour has the most to gain from this disruption to the traditional gatekeepers of truth, so to make the most of this, the party should review the success of its digital experiments after the election, concentrating on the following areas: motivating supporters, persuading people, winning support and engaging the disengaged.

Some politicians are effective in motivating support using Twitter and Facebook, but other candidates still appear robotic. Citing a recent study from the Pew Research Centre in the US, Jonathan Birdwell at the think tank Demos argues: "If MPs made more effective use of a Facebook profile – to show constituents who they really are, their true views, their sense of humour, and the good work they do in the constituency and in the Commons – it could potentially help to increase trust the public's trust in its politicians".

Activists, too, can use the simplest tactics such as 'doorstep selfies' to motivate supporters to campaign again. In future elections, Labour should continue to ensure this kind of campaigning doesn't become too cliquy. Hashtags and slogans should be as easy to

understand for the friends of friends of the activist, as well as the activist herself.

Labour should also map out the digital experience of the party for new members, supporters, old timers, and those considering returning to the party. We've all heard the complaints about the frequency of emails asking for donations. As our understanding of digital behaviour develops, the party should take a more sophisticated approach that enables and encourages people to progress from being supporters, to activists, and beyond.

Reaching out to the disengaged shouldn't be seen purely as an election campaign tactic

The potential of digital campaigning really hit home for me in the run up to the Scottish Referendum, when I met young CWU members who had become politicised through social media. For many, the distinction between online life, and offline life, is now irrelevant – it's all real life. As Mike Joslin of Organise Consulting puts it: "The 2010 general election was the first social media election but 2015 will be the first digital relationship election." To persuade and win the support of young voters, Labour will need to invest more thinking and resources into building these digital relationships as part of its long term strategy.

Digital can also be used to reach those who are disengaged from politics. Around 39 per cent of people didn't cast their vote in the 2010 general election and the Lodestone Political Survey found that many of these people said that they would vote Labour if they voted in future. A number of important initiatives, such as the RegistHERtoVote campaign and Bite the Ballot, are using digital platforms to try to encourage more people to register to vote.

Yet reaching out to the disengaged shouldn't be seen purely as an election campaign tactic. With levels of traditional political engagement in decline, this should be a strategic priority to secure the long-term future of the Labour party. The potential for social media micro-targeting should be further harnessed by Labour to engage with people in future elections; according to Jonathan Birdwell, "social media advertising tools can be incredibly useful for tailoring

specific messages to specific groups based on demographics – or even their interests."

Labour should bear in mind, however, that our understanding of what works is still in its infancy. In the commercial world, many brands still struggle to work out the genuine return on investment they are likely to get from promotion on social media. The same is true of politics. Post-election, the media will closely scrutinise whether the Conservative's rumoured mega-spending on Facebook advertising was worth it – big spending doesn't always directly lead to big successes.

As Labour gets prepared for the battles that follow the 2015 general election, its team should take time to review the digital highs and lows from this campaign. It's only by facing up to the failures, as well as the successes, that the party will perfect its recipe for digital alchemy. **F**

Fran O'Leary is director of strategy and innovation at Lodestone, a Co-Founder of the RegistHERtoVote Campaign, a member of Centre for the Analysis of Social Media's network of experts and is writing in a personal capacity



KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

We need to foster a stronger relationship between Westminster and people's lives—*Seema Malhotra*

If there's one thing that is certain after the general election, it's that politics is unlikely to be the same again. The rise of multi-party politics in the UK is shifting the electoral dynamics in our communities as party loyalties continue to loosen. Meanwhile, satisfaction rates with politics drop ever lower.

The ongoing crisis of legitimacy in our politics and the distance that people feel from the political process are real matters for concern. Although there are long waiting lists for tickets to see Prime Minister's >>



>> Questions every week and school and community visits to the House of Commons remain popular – both testament to parliament’s enduring draw – the feedback I get from such visits is that so much more goes on in the House of Commons than people are aware of. This suggests there is a deeper issue: that our democratic crisis is as much a failing of political education as of how people build a relationship with politics.

However, every challenge brings an opportunity. In a time of reduced party loyalties it is time to think anew about the interconnections between parties, representatives and voters. The most fundamental shift we would benefit from making is to start thinking about politics as a relationship, rather than about a set of transactions. Parties have understandably focused on winning votes; we seek to identify whether people are ‘weak’ or ‘strong’ Tory or Labour. Whilst this is necessary for election operations, it is not sufficient to sustain our democracy as a whole. We need to foster a stronger relationship between Westminster and people’s lives.

A deeper sense of nationhood has got to be part of this, reconnecting our democracy with what it is to be British, embarking on a new journey towards common goals and a shared purpose. In the run up to the election, a positive narrative about a shared future is going to be essential. The message must be that politics can work in partnership with people, rather than simply doing things to them. It’s about joining up political language, public services and people’s reality

so people see how politics improves their lives, rather than makes it more difficult.

Building a politics that recognises the importance of relationships, both within communities and between communities and political decision making, does require reform of processes and policy. I was struck recently by the importance of relationships of all types while talking with the Family Group initiative in my constituency. Working with the most challenging children in a small number of schools, Family Group recognises that in tackling poverty or social exclusion, you can’t just focus on the child in isolation. If the family system is broken, perhaps because the parent had a dysfunctional relationship with their own family, you will need to work with the family as a whole in order to help the child.

The intervention focuses on systems – the family system, school system and work place system – as well as the relationships between them. Exclusion in one system can result in exclusion in another, so Family Group works to improve the relationship between the parent and child, the child and the school, and the parent and the workplace. It can reap quite incredible results.

In applying this principle to politics, and in recognising that turnout tends to stay high in higher social classes and networks, it becomes apparent that politics, too, is in many ways a broken system. People have lost the anchor that moored them to local and national politics and see little role for themselves within that framework. That

lack of connection can be compounded over very basic matters. The biggest issue at one residents’ meeting I went to was the fact that no one was allowed a key to the noticeboard in the park in their community. In an area with low social networks and with high levels of deprivation, this seemingly small problem left people feeling left alone and resentful of a public service that seemed to serve everyone but them.

So in starting to develop a deeper relational politics, we should start by focusing not just on reversing the lagging indicators of turnout, confidence and identity with political parties, but identifying new measures of a more thoughtful relationship between citizen and state. These goals will help us achieve a more connected politics focused on a stronger sense of national and common purpose. **F**

Seema Malhotra is Labour and Co-operative member of parliament for Feltham and Heston and is chair of the Fabian Society



GROWING TOGETHER

Engaging employees is fundamental to unlocking the productivity challenge—*Nita Clarke*

New technology is disrupting established industries at a breakneck pace. Just think of the effect of internet banking on employment in the financial sector; the likely effect of driverless cars on the automotive sector; of social media on taxi services; of drones for logistics; and biotechnology for healthcare. At the same time, customers – whether of public services or private utilities – have become more demanding.

Constantly innovating to anticipate demand, and improving productivity and performance, is the key to success for organisations across today’s economy. But under pressure from the quarterly results treadmill, too often leaders take the short-term view. They slash costs, usually in the form of making people redundant (‘reducing headcount’ in Orwell-speak), rather than thinking more strategically about partnering with employees to improve efficiency,

deliver better to customers and develop new products.

Too many organisations are trying to run 21st century organisations in last century's style. Yet it has become crystal clear that the old view of how people behave at work, based on deference and trust, no longer holds water. Neuroscience tells us why old-style command and control management approaches backfire, because people will only embrace, rather than resist, change in a safe environment.

More positively, many people are no longer willing to hang their brains on the door when they come into work. We seek meaning and fulfilment, and if an organisation does not provide these, many will find another that does. How telling that in the recent *Sunday Times* survey of the top 100 graduate employers, no fewer than four of the top ten were public sector, with the Teach First programme in second place. Also in the top ten were the NHS, the civil service and the BBC; service sector organisations (including PWC on the top spot) took up another three places and although Aldi and Google made the list, they were joined by Britain's leading retail mutual, the John Lewis Partnership at number ten. Hardly a ringing endorsement of our private sector from our future leaders. No wonder the CBI has embarked on a groundbreaking campaign to restore trust in British business.

And overlaid on all this complexity is the challenge of transparency. Glassdoor – a website where people rate their employers – receive over a million hits a month in the UK alone, and social media provides open forums for real-time feedback, exposing the reality that can lie behind corporate spin. Clearly, reputational risk is the greatest danger facing even the mightiest organisations today, as the recent experience of Tesco demonstrates.

Of course it remains a key responsibility for the left to ensure that the proceeds of success are shared fairly – or at least that any pain is fairly shared – as well as pointing out the egregious effects of bonus culture at a time when many people at work are struggling financially. So is highlighting the damaging consequences for some workers of zero hours contracts, contracting out and casualisation.

But in my view, supporting a positive, pro-active agenda, which can transform workplaces through engagement, is vital for organisations and individuals alike – not to mention UK plc.

We have seen how this can work in practice. The history of the revival of the UK car industry, and the massive inflows of

investment and consequent job creation, is based on a series of agreements between unions, the workforce and management to secure continuous improvement techniques that have led to Toyota, Nissan and Jaguar Land Rover products at the top of the consumer wish list. The UK now has the most productive car plants in the world. BAE Systems reduced the unit cost of the F35 fighter jet through a ground-breaking agreement with its union on workforce skills enhancement. Similar examples of improved productivity through partnership working can be found in the sectors where USDAW, Community and Prospect, among others, organise.

The left has a major opportunity to build a common platform with progressive employers who have signed up to the importance of this new way of working

For engagement to be more than just a tick-box survey it has to include a strong strategic narrative that gives meaning to people's work. It needs managers who know how to treat people as individuals, with jobs designed so that people can bring their whole selves to their work, and which enable individual growth. It requires organisational integrity, where the values on the wall are reflected in day to day behaviours, and inappropriate behaviours are called out. Above all, employees must be respected, informed and listened to, able and willing to speak openly about all aspects of the organisation. And we know that individual employee wellbeing is also essential.

But too many organisations exhibit few or none of these characteristics. The left has a major opportunity to build a common platform with progressive employers who have signed up to the importance of this new way of working – for example those who are sponsoring the Engage for Success movement (www.engageforsuccess.org). This is more fertile territory than a default condemnation of business, but to do that successfully and to have a voice that is respected at the highest levels, we have to acknowledge the unprecedented demands that living in a volatile, complex and ambiguous world are placing on leaders and on organisations. **F**

Nita Clarke is director of the Involvement and Participation Association and was previously Tony Blair's assistant political secretary with responsibility for trade union liaison



A MORE DIVERSE JUDICIARY

Being a judge still feels like belonging to a club to which women and ethnic minority lawyers aren't invited—*Geoffrey Bindman*

The balance between men and women among our senior judges compares poorly with other countries. In 2012 Britain ranked fourth worst in Europe. More shamefully still, there is not one Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) judge in either the Court of Appeal or the Supreme Court. In the Supreme Court, 11 out of 12 judges are white men. Only eight out of 38 judges in the Court of Appeal are women.

Lady Hale, the only female Supreme Court judge, has said that we are "out of step with the rest of the world". The facts bear this out. In the US and the Canadian Supreme Courts, a third of the judges are women. In Australia there are three women out of seven and in New Zealand two out of five.

The President of the Supreme Court, Lord Neuberger, said recently that the judiciary is "male, white, educated at public school, and from the upper middle and middle classes." Can we seriously claim to have the best possible judiciary when it is drawn from such a narrow sub-section of society?

Judicial diversity is a pressing concern for three main reasons. First, a judiciary that is composed almost exclusively of a small class cannot command broad community respect. It lacks democratic legitimacy. Secondly, the impediments faced by apparently qualified women and minorities are unfair to those seeking a valued career. Thirdly, a diverse judiciary dispenses better justice. To quote Lady Hale again: "I have come to agree with those great women judges who think that sometimes on occasion we may make a difference. That is the result of the lived experience of being a judge for 20 years and a Law Lord or Supreme Court Justice for 10."

Until the Constitutional Reform Act in 2005, the appointment of judges was in the sole discretion of the Lord Chancellor, whose decisions were based on secret soundings, followed by the 'tap on the shoulder' of the chosen ones. The Act created the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) to bring greater transparency to the system through >>

>> an open and independent selection process. The JAC is responsible for recommending candidates for appointment but the Supreme Court is excluded from its remit.

The statute provides that “selection must be solely on merit” and that the JAC “must have regard to the need to encourage diversity in the range of persons available for selection.” Merit is not defined. Lord Falconer, tongue in cheek but accurately, told the House of Lords Constitution committee: “Merit is regarded as coterminous with having been a junior and a QC at the Bar for 30 years”.

A cultural change is needed but it has to be kick-started. A quota system could do this

The JAC has formulated six “qualities and abilities” which are used to assess merit, but they do not include the contribution a candidate may make to diversity. This needs to change: contribution to diversity should itself be taken into account in assessing merit.

The JAC has tried hard to open up access to the judiciary to a wider range of applicants, but it is hampered by excessive caution as well as by some factors beyond its control. Among the latter are conditions of judicial employment which can deter potential candidates from applying, especially those with family responsibilities. The circuit system, which dates back to the Middle Ages, is one major obstacle. It requires long absences from home to try cases in different parts of the country. This should be replaced by regional appointments. Restrictions on part-time work and short-time appointments are also a barrier, as are restrictions on judges returning to private practice after leaving a judicial post. Most of these restrictions are unnecessary or at best too wide.

Another major impediment to the widening of the pool of candidates is the view that a new judge must ‘hit the ground running’ by already having substantial judicial experience. This approach obviously favours Lord Falconer’s long-serving barristers – a largely white male category. What’s needed is an improvement in judicial training and a greater willingness of solicitors’ firms to release their aspirant judges for that purpose and for part-time appointments to fit them for permanent posts. There should be greater recruitment of academics and the restrictions on the appointment of Chartered Legal Executives should be relaxed.

The greatest barrier may be the survival of Lord Neuberger’s traditional stereotype.



It has created the sense among many women and ethnic minority lawyers that becoming a judge is joining a club to which one does not naturally belong and where one is not welcome. A cultural change is needed but it has to be kick-started. A quota system could do this: modelled on the experience in other jurisdictions, it would help us achieve minimum representation of women and ethnic minorities as soon as possible. **F**

Geoffrey Bindman QC and Karon Monaghan QC's report Judicial Diversity: Accelerating Change was commissioned by Sadiq Khan, the shadow justice secretary, and can be accessed through the Labour party



FINDING THE FRONTLINE

Now is the time to focus all our energies on battleground seats
—Suzy Stride

I grew up in the East End of London. My mum worked nights at a supermarket and my dad worked for the local authority. For the last 10 years I’ve worked with unemployed young people, helping them develop the skills they need to find work.

Because of these things, I’m interested in a politics that speaks to real people about real improvement and transformation in their lives. That’s why I love speaking to voters:

because although politics is about many things, if we as individuals are not out ‘on the doorstep’ on a weekly basis connecting with people where they are at, hearing their concerns about their kids’ lives, the NHS or even the last Labour government, then I don’t think we deserve to be in politics.

For this reason, politics to me is about having the right ideas to change this country for the better – but it’s also about listening to people and winning over their hearts and minds. Our movement’s two greatest assets have always been our people and our ideas. I’m 100 per cent sure we have the right ideas, but we need to talk about using our people – as our most valuable campaigning resource – more intelligently.

Last week, I popped round to see a pensioner who had left a message for me to go and see him. A D-Day veteran well into his 80s, over a cup of tea the gentleman told me he wanted to join the Labour party. I asked him what was behind his decision, and he said: “I can’t stand what they’re doing to our country”.

That moment will live with me long after this election has been consigned to re-runs on BBC Parliament. A few days later I met our next newest member, a 14 year old teenager, who came out canvassing with us that weekend. The labour movement is made up of people of will and conviction, often from different backgrounds or perspectives, pulling together for change.

I am excited about policies like taxing bankers’ bonuses to create a jobs guarantee for young people. I know from working with this age group that this would transform the lives of thousands across the country. But to make those ideas a reality, we need activists from across the country helping out in the marginal seats that will decide who is standing at the lectern outside Downing Street on May 8th.

The question we need to be asking ourselves with a few weeks to go is: am I focusing all of my energy on the frontline, in the battleground seats that will decide the next general election?

We know that a large number of our activists live and work in London and are doing an amazing job of supporting seats there. But for these final few weeks we can only win if our London activists also support seats outside the capital. I understand that people are passionate about campaigning to make a difference where they live, but for these final weeks we know it has to be about the seats in which we can do the most to push back UKIP and the Tories.

I believe to win partly rests upon whether we apply the value of sharing resources to

the way we campaign. In the same way that we believe in taxing bankers' bonuses to share money where it is most needed, we should share more of our people and funding resources to areas where they are most needed, not just within regions but across regions. Seats that have fewer members; seats that desperately need help; and seats that will decide whether we can bring the change we need to bring in May.

A possible solution could be that activists and Labour MPs in every seat in London which is not a battleground seat commits to campaigning in a battleground seat outside of London. Similarly, every non-battleground London seat could run a phone bank for another constituency that needs help, bearing in mind that battleground seats in London probably get 10 times the activists than seats outside the capital.

The next few weeks can't be about anything else other than bringing change for people, and fighting for those who need us to fight for them. We believe in something bigger, that things can be better, and we are willing to fight for it – that's why we go out in the early mornings or make phone calls or deliver leaflets. However, in order to bring in all the changes that are needed for housing, jobs and the NHS, we must be in government. So we have to ask ourselves: am I doing the most effective thing and targeting my time to make that a reality? We can win, we should win, we need to win – but please, make sure you're fighting on the front line. **F**

Suzy Stride is Labour's parliamentary candidate for Harlow



THE DEMOCRACY LAB

Experimenting with new forms of democracy could change politics as we know it—*Claudia Chwalisz*

Historically, *demokratia* meant a participatory government where the *demoi* (people) had equal *kratos* (power). Only since the late 1800s has this 2,000 year-old concept evolved into what we recognise

as democracy today: elected representative democracy. It is summed up in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections." But why do we assume that the process of democracy is as important as the desired end: people's equally shared control over their government?

As participation in British elections falls to a historical low, the legitimacy of our politicians and political parties to rule over us is badly compromised. With the UK electoral battleground fracturing, it is possible for the next government to be formed with only around one third of support from those who voted. If we go by the 2010 voter turnout figure, that means only one third of the 65 per cent who turn out support the governing party. It's no wonder that only 14 per cent of British people feel like their voice counts in decisions being made by the people they've elected to represent them, according to the latest Hansard Society Audit of Political Engagement. So far, UKIP have been the first to seize on this mood of political disaffection, offering a 'voice' to those who feel like the mainstream political class has been ignoring their concerns. UKIP's rhetoric is hyperbolic and its solutions are simplistic, but the centre-left is ignoring the underlying distrust that's driving populism at its peril.

So we should first ask ourselves what the role of democracy is, and then seriously consider other institutions and methods of democratic representation that might better serve that function. The way forward could be a true rebalancing of power away from Westminster, devolved parliaments, assemblies, and local councils to communities and individuals. We could look towards new democratic innovations, defined by Graham Smith as "institutions that have been specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process". These innovations vary from citizen assemblies or 'mini-publics' to participatory budgeting, randomly selected councillors, a Citizens' Senate, citizens' juries, and deliberative polling amongst others.

Experimenting with democracy has been successful in other countries. In Australia and the Netherlands, the government is pioneering the use of randomly selected citizens' juries to actively involve people in helping change their communities. Ireland, Iceland and Estonia all

recently organised citizen-led constitutional conventions. Ontario and British Columbia held citizens' assemblies on electoral reform; in Vancouver, a randomly selected citizens' panel is making decisions on town planning.

The recently retired Chief Justice of New South Wales James Spigelman summed up why these innovations matter: "The jury is a profoundly democratic and egalitarian institution. Selection by lot has two distinct advantages. First, it operates on the principle that all persons to be selected are fundamentally equal and that, in the relevant circumstances, it is invidious to say that one person is more qualified than another. Secondly, selection by lot prevents corruption of the system."

We're obviously not facing a shortage of new ideas in how to improve our democracy. The challenge is how to regain the original genius of equal representation on a systemic level rather than a one-off basis. After the Scottish referendum, there have been suggestions to organise a citizens' constitutional convention in the UK. According to a new study at the University of Edinburgh, only 9 per cent of people across the UK disagree with the idea of a constitutional convention, defined as "a series of meetings and events in which ordinary citizens and experts from across the UK could develop proposals for how the UK should be governed."

Aristotle articulated the idea that to govern well, a society requires the contribution from different kinds of government – by the best, by the few, and by the many. Over time, we lost this last pillar on which our mixed polity rests. Labour would benefit from accepting that political reform has significant appeal to an electorate disillusioned with traditional politics. As the figures supporting a constitutional convention indicate, demand for change and for greater citizen involvement is clearly there. The next step could be to institutionalise citizen participation in political decision-making – through regular citizen juries or the other innovations mentioned, such as randomly selecting local councillors. These innovations aren't a threat to elective representation; they are enriching additions that will renew democracy for the 21st century. **F**

Claudia Chwalisz is a researcher at Policy Network and a Professor ADH Crook Public Service Fellow at the Sir Bernard Crick Centre for the Public Understanding of Politics at the University of Sheffield



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Win, lose or draw...

...Labour needs to keep changing, writes *Marcus Roberts*



Marcus Roberts is deputy general secretary of the Fabian Society

POLITICS HAS CHANGED dramatically over the last five years. The coalition, the collapse of the LibDems, the rise of UKIP, the Greens and the SNP; all of this, plus voter anger towards the traditional parties has created a challenging environment for exploring new ideas of political, economic and societal renewal.

The current moment has many causes. Some of them are long-term and structural, like the dealignment that has left our main political parties with a diminishing share of the vote. Some of them are current and cultural: the peculiar consequences of the coalition, revulsion caused by the MPs expenses scandal, the narrowing social make-up of the professional political class. But the upshot is clear. Politics feels out of tune with people's lives and increasingly people are either turning away or seeking new alternatives to the main political parties.

Win, lose or draw on 7 May, how Labour responds to this will define its success or failure in the next parliament. Labour's last five years have been packed full of the promise of big ideas battling to survive against political compromise. From Blue Labour to community organising, from 'responsible capitalism' and 'predistribution' to the 'cost of living crisis' and the energy price freeze: the story of Ed Miliband's five years as leader of the opposition is the story of struggle between ideas that could change British politics fundamentally, and British politics' fundamental ability to resist such change.

But on the eve of either a return to government or continued opposition it is worth reflecting on the sources of hopes and strength that might sustain the party over the next parliament. For these are the forces that can continue to reshape our party and our politics.

Party reform: Movement versus machine politics

The idea that Labour should be a party far broader and deeper than just its 200,000 members was key to the early days of Miliband's leadership. Through Refounding Labour, the party's constitution was changed to embrace community activism as a core part of Labour's mission. This process yielded some sensible reforms, but none of them fundamentally changed Labour's way of doing business or reset the conversation with the country. Tim Bale's new book *Five Year Mission* captures the bathos: "The announcement that, at some point in the future, registered supporters might play a minor role in electing the Labour leader ... did not really cut it".

Miliband rightly received praise for going beyond even Blair in the wake of the Falkirk selections crisis of 2013 in requiring trade union members to opt-in to Labour membership rather than opt-out. The move, which came at a cost of both political capital and cold, hard union cash, was a crucial step on the journey to convert trade unionists from paper supporters into election-fighting activists.

But perhaps the greatest hope of Labour's spell in opposition has been the Arnie Graf project. Graf, an early mentor to Barack Obama, was commissioned by Ed Miliband in 2011 to conduct a root and branch review of local parties. He subsequently set about working with MPs, candidates,

organisers and activists to develop greater connections between Labour at the local level and the communities the party wished to represent. Focusing on training and mentoring, Graf promoted community campaigns based on issues like the living wage, night safety and pay day loans. The idea was to both rebuild trust between Labour and voters by showing that Labour could be judged by its actions, not just its words, and by so doing could grow the capacity of local parties as supporters progressed from single issue

campaign alliances with Labour to full blown election activism. Sadly, Graf left the UK after press pressure over questions of his work status. Miliband, despite having praised Graf's work as essential to Labour's future and even appearing in an election video with him,

did not ensure his return.

Emerging from this mixed picture are clear indications for Labour's future. Whether Labour wins or not, the party must grow its numbers, promote trust and respect towards its rank and file, and care just as much about delivering change through local campaigns. With the SNP enjoying a membership of over 100,000 (compared to just 10,000 for Scottish Labour) it is clear that mass movement politics practised by a governing political party is still possible. Labour's challenge over the next five years is to tap the energies of movement politics to inspire volunteers in their hundreds of thousands to join Labour's cause. To do so the party must change culturally, respecting, empowering and including its members in far more of its decisions and showing the confidence to 'let go' and embrace a diversity of organising techniques across a broad range of varying local issue and electoral campaigns. This means a Labour party that practises devolution in its organisational approach as well as its policy offer to prove it trusts its activists with greater influence over all functions of the party – from candidate selections to policy making.

Inequality

At the heart of Miliband's politics is a driving hatred of inequality. To his great credit Miliband put the inequality question at the forefront of policy thinking, media interventions and campaigning efforts. Tapping into the wider anger around growing inequality on the left, Miliband committed himself to the 50p top rate of tax as a matter of "morality" during his leadership election, expressed solidarity with the Occupy protestors of 2011 and forced even Cameron and Osborne into defending their government in terms of the inequality debate. The combination of Miliband's own formidable intellect and his cadre of clever advisers, like Marc Stears and Greg Beales, helped move the party on from its New Labour reputation of redistribution by stealth paired with public praise of wealth.

More than any other single subject, inequality – not just of income but of power as well – has the potential to fire up Labour hearts and inspire a mission of profound social change that reaches far beyond the benefits of just winning elections. Crucial to this has been the understanding that tackling economic inequality is insufficient for a truly radical Labour party. The legacy of Jon Cruddas's manifesto work will provide rich pickings for a Labour party eager to

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go further on the devolution of power and budgets. This would mean far greater localism and 'people-powered public services' with stronger parent and patient involvement in schools and the NHS. Within government or from opposition, Labour in the next five years would be wise to develop this work by adopting an agenda for fighting inequality as it seeks to establish its defining mission in British politics.

Predistribution

Perhaps no other word so neatly sums up the potential and the pain of Miliband's time in opposition as 'predistribution'. Beloved of leftist policy wonks like Jacob Hacker and Jon Cruddas, this is the idea that inequality can be tackled not just after the fact via taxation and redistribution but beforehand, through improved wages and life chances. Predistribution challenged Labour's decades-old consensus that the best the party could hope for was to grow the economy, tax the proceeds of wealth and use the welfare state to address the worst excesses of societal and economic failures. After all, New Labour enjoyed over a decade of huge parliamentary majorities and lavish public spending before the financial crisis of 2008 and yet was unable to meet its ambition of halving child poverty, because redistribution of wealth and statist approaches to societal change were proved insufficient to such deep and complex problems.

Rather, through ideas like regional banks to provide access for credit for business growth outside of London, an activist industrial policy to regrow Britain's manufacturing sector and worker representation on boards to ensure higher pay, pre-distribution sought to seek more imaginatively about how Labour in government might best shape society. And as Labour looks to its next generation of leaders like Liz Kendall, Lisa Nandy and Gloria De Piero, it is telling that these rising stars have used their portfolios to think creatively about how to achieve social change through a mix of state intervention, market change and partnership with communities. Without question, the attractiveness of Labour of a political agenda that delivers fairness, fights inequality and avoids the crudities of tax and spend, will ensure that predistribution survives the next five years – even if it gets a much-needed name change.

Responsible capitalism

Miliband consigliere Steward Wood once described Milibandism "in three words: markets need rules." Responsible capitalism is a classic achievement of Miliband. By speaking out against banker bonuses, opposing price gouging energy companies and advocating for a living wage, Miliband set out a vision of how capitalism should embrace its producers not its predators. Sensible market interventions like rent increase restrictions for tenants routinely went through a cycle of being dismissed in the right wing press as socialist before being quietly adopted in some form or another by the Conservatives in government.

With leading Blairites like Lord Sainsbury speaking of 'progressive capitalism' and the *Times* columnist Philip Collins talking of how in the wake of the crash even Blair

would have changed course on the role of the state with regard to markets, it is clear that responsible capitalism will be a strong theme in Labour's policy throughout government or opposition to come.

What's left?

Movement politics, fighting inequality, predistribution and responsible capitalism: taken together these are the powerful forces that will shape Labour over the decade to come.

Putting them together in a coherent narrative that addresses the crisis of politics and the legacy of the crash has been a challenge for Labour throughout this parliament. For a while, it seemed that 'one nation' Labour might allow the party to unite these ideas in broad movement of national renewal against inequality that would reshape the economy and the state alike. But the one nation idea was quietly dropped in favour of a more traditional pro-NHS, anti-Tory general election campaign.

Labour in opposition has chosen to focus far more on the crisis of capitalism than the collapse in political trust which helps explain why its organisational development as a party has been so limited. As a result the party's direction of travel in policy terms is more promising than its attempts to renew British democracy. If the party is to be successful in government it will need to go far further in embracing cultural and organisational change in order to reconnect with increasingly disillusioned voters.

But to successfully tackle both the crisis of politics and the crisis in the economy, it is vital that Labour's agenda for the future is not reduced down to a menu of policy choices or dividing lines. Policy must always be an articulation of a deeper political meaning, but this has often been absent. The mission for Labour as a movement should be to embrace a politics of compassion and solidarity for both working people and the disadvantaged within a nation where power is more evenly shared.

As leader of the opposition, Miliband's legacy is that he correctly identified the forces of movement politics, inequality, predistribution and responsible capitalism as the sources of greatest strength for the left during these years. Miliband may not always have embraced these themes as fully as some might have wished (the ex-Treasury special adviser gene was always too strong for a full blooded radicalism it would seem), but it is to his credit that Labour has a powerful political and intellectual arsenal to draw from. **F**

Farewell to Marcus Roberts

In May the society will bid a fond farewell to our deputy general secretary, Marcus Roberts. Since 2011, Marcus has made a huge impact at the Fabians Society, transforming our research activities and leading our Labour's Next Majority programme on political reform. Marcus brought to the Fabians political acumen and good cheer in equal measure. He will be greatly missed by the society and we wish him well for the future. *AH*

Fifty shades of red

Anya Pearson and Richard Speight take a closer look at the candidates for Labour's top target seats

On the eve of the 2010 general election, the *Fabian Review* profiled the incoming generation of Labour MPs. There was a sense of optimism that these new Labourites could put both the scandal of expenses and the interminable divisions of the Blair/Brown era behind the party.

The optimism has proved to be justified. Many high profile shadow cabinet members were in the 2010 intake and Labour's campaign has been, in the main, free of the civil wars that came to characterise the New Labour government.

Since then Labour's selection processes have come under considerable scrutiny, following the furore over the Falkirk selection and the ensuing Collins Review. How the party does selections has changed and is likely to change further as it grapples with declining levels of support for established political parties. So who are the next generation of Labour MPs? We've examined the backgrounds of candidates in Labour's top fifty target seats to see whether the country is aptly reflected.

One of the most pernicious allegations levelled at modern politicians is that of professionalism. All three main party leaders are, to a greater or lesser extent, 'boot room' candidates – advisers, turned MPs, turned ministers, turned leaders – and this, combined with the practice of parachuting favoured candidates into safe seats, has contributed to public unease about politicians' real life experience.

However, there is little evidence of this in Labour's top fifty candidates. Just a handful are ex-political advisers, and they have often had 'real jobs' too, as journalists, or in business. The third sector represent a decent proportion of candidates, though, with 11 from the charitable or voluntary sector. These candidates present an ambiguity for Labour. In the negative column, they feed a perception of a revolving door between Whitehall, Westminster and 'charity street'. On the other hand, selecting proven campaigners with a record of advocacy for marginalised people will increase the party's depth and knowledge base. Campaigners



like Kate Green and Sarah Champion have been quiet but effective Westminster operatives; the latter went from running a children's hospice to campaign impressively on behalf of victims of sexual exploitation in Rotherham without any previous experience of Westminster.

We've examined the backgrounds of candidates in Labour's top fifty target seats to see whether the country is aptly reflected

The revived strength of Labour's localism is evident in the number of councillors-turned-candidates. Of Labour's top fifty, 18 serve as councillors, mostly in the area they're seeking to represent as parliamentarians, like Carlisle's Lee Sheriff or Ipswich's David Ellesmere. This is positive; polling for the *Fabian Review* revealed that voters are looking for candidates with a record of local action, who are willing to put political differences to one side to 'get things done'.

At 11, there is a high proportion of re-nominees seeking re-election in their former constituency or nearby. It's easy to understand the temptation to reselect an MP who comes ready made with a local reputation and a record of action, and of course many fine MPs lost their seats in 2010. But any public perception of an electoral merry-go-round could be dangerous.

How does this compare with candidates chosen for the Conservative's 40:40 strategy, based on holding 40 marginal seats and winning 40 target seats? There are far fewer re-standing MPs (though of course there were far fewer losing Tory MPs in 2010; a number of candidates are standing once

again in the same constituency), but councillors are similarly well-represented amongst Tory ranks.

People with a background in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are, perhaps unsurprisingly, rather better represented for the Tories. This is an area Labour could well improve in, especially considering its canny SME-friendly policies. It will be far harder to mistakenly characterise Labour as 'anti-business' if more shopkeepers and business people stand as candidates.

Restricted shortlists – black and minority ethnic (BME) and non-special adviser shortlists have been mooted to join the unquestionably successful but hardly uncontroversial all-women shortlists in the tools available to the NEC. Such shortlists do have their place, as Labour's growing female representation in the PLP demonstrates. There may well be a case for BME shortlists as still not enough target candidates are from a minority ethnic background. But more fundamental still is the need to change further the culture of party selections. The Future Candidates Programme has been a qualified success, bringing forward new kinds of candidates, but potential outsiders are still daunted by the party's arcane rules and 'who-you-know' culture. Labour could do more to attract candidates with 'real life' experience by strengthening recruitment and training, impose stricter spending limits on selection contests and increase transparency.

The numbers for 2015 bear testament to a party committed to changing its approach to selections. Labour has a wealth of candidates who have earned their stripes in the council chambers and campaign groups across the country, who elected or not will be a credit to the party. But whatever the election result, Labour must continue to open up and broaden out its candidate base. The political times demand it. ■

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No party for young people?

Young people are more politically active than many assume, but Labour must change the way it operates in order to avoid losing relevance for the next generation, writes *Georgia Gould*



Georgia Gould is a Labour councillor in Camden and author of Wasted: How misunderstanding young Britain threatens our future (Little, Brown)

YOUNG PEOPLE IN Britain today are deeply political – just as likely to volunteer as previous generations, highly engaged in political issues and entrepreneurial about social change. They just aren't joining political parties or showing many signs of wanting to identify with them. In 2011 15.8 per cent of young people supported a political party compared to 57.8 per cent of over-75s.

However, this is by no means unique to political parties. We can see similar patterns in religious organisations, trade unions and many traditional community associations. In 2013 just 9.5 per cent of 20 to 24 year olds were members of trade unions. In 2010 65 per cent of young people between 18 and 24 did not belong to a religion compared to 24 per cent for those over 75. Young people are less likely to engage in formal institutions, full stop.

I've lost count of the times a young person said to me: I am not my class, my race, my gender, 'I am just me'. There is a reluctance to be labelled and a pursuit of personal expression which comes with greater lifestyle choice. The shaping of a personal narrative through work, enterprise or community activism becomes a political journey in itself, so who needs a party?

This is a big challenge for the Labour movement, built as it is on strong collective identities. I remember sitting with a group in the Welsh Valleys whose fathers and grandfathers had a rich tradition of union activism and hearing confusion at the idea of joining a union or even taking collective action: "What happens if everyone turns up, we're all together and there is only one job available, everyone's against each other again."

This doesn't mean we should give up and go home as politics becomes a battle between independents, or wait for Russell Brand's revolution. While young people are exercising a silent protest, the whole political system carries on oblivious. The result is that young people and, especially, disadvantaged young people lose out. Research by IPPR found that in the 2010 spending review, 16 to 24 year olds faced cuts to services worth 28 per cent of their annual household income, compared to just 10 per cent for those aged 55 to 74. The infrastructure to support young people is being decimated around the country with over 350 youth centres having closed since 2010.

Changing this story requires those involved in politics to profoundly re-think how we engage with young people. Luckily we are not fishing around in the dark here; there are some brilliant guides to how to do this in young people themselves.

Successful youth movements from Rock the Vote to Citizens UK's City Safe campaign are optimistic about the potential of young people and they trust them enough to hand over power. They embrace youth leadership, invest in relationships, and give space for personal autonomy within a broader network. They have an open and porous membership but a strong central purpose, and they are transparent about how decisions are made.

Young people don't have to engage with political leaders as they have been busy creating their own. Take Eliza, who started a movement against gangs around the message of Lives not Knives, or spoken word poet Suli Breaks author of 'Manifesto for Millennials', who uses his YouTube platform



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to spark global conversations about issues important to young people. He is in constant dialogue with his audience, refining and developing his message based on their feedback.

The Labour party could learn from these movements and individuals by embracing structural reform in terms of open primaries and utilising technology to open up how we create policy. In how we govern, it will require a radical devolution of power down to city regions, local government and down again to communities so young people can have a meaningful say over their services. Public services that work for young people are ones where well-trained staff are trusted to innovate and given the time to build meaningful relationships with those they seek to serve. Citizens want much more than just a vote; they should be given the opportunity to take part directly in decision-making in deliberative forums and citizen initiatives. From the young unemployed group in Bradford who asked me why we needed politicians when we could directly vote on issues through social media to the students in Sussex demanding a seat at the table, the message I heard time and time again was – listen to us and trust us.

This will require honest and inspiring political leadership underpinned by policies developed with young people that deal with the urgent crisis facing them in relation to housing, training, employment and fair pay.

The Labour party are well placed to be the party of the young. Generation Y are on the whole more socially liberal than previous generations. They also tend to take a more open, global perspective. In a recent poll of 17 to 22 year olds, 62 per cent thought Britain's membership of Europe was a good thing. While young people have a strong narrative about personal responsibility, they will support action by the state where they feel it helps those trying to get on. It is a challenge to Labour to prove that reciprocity and fairness sit at the heart of our approach to welfare. These

values are most importantly optimistic; the Labour party is at its best when it calls on people's hopes.

That being said, young people are not going to fall in line to replace older Labour voters as a loyal band of followers. Their votes will have to be earned time and time again. Outside of electoral politics, young people have competing narratives to explain their disenfranchisement from conspiracy theories through to revolutionary agendas. Anger and alienation is always going to be a breeding ground for system overthrow.

We know that there is growing intergenerational inequality, but layer on top of that rising wealth and income inequality and you are left with a group of young people who are becoming increasingly

marginalised in every area of life. We know social mobility is stagnating but research also shows young people bought up in poverty are less likely to engage in formal politics or have a strong sense of community. This is what Professor Mike Savage calls the 'paradox of class': as people begin to move away from collective identity and organization, the grip of social stratification on their life chances tightens. Too many young people in Britain are caught up in a churn of unemployment and low-paid work with little opportunity for progression, yet if you subscribe to an ideology of personal responsibility then the only person you feel is to blame is yourself. We see in young people the proliferation of mental health issues, depression and isolation.

It is time to recognise that the current social contract has broken down and work with young people to build a new one. Young people don't just want a job, they want the opportunity for creativity, entrepreneurialism and to be part of something bigger than themselves. The big challenge for Labour is to hold as many aspirations for young people as they do for themselves. Young people and especially disadvantaged young people desperately need the Labour party to take up their cause. But to do so we have to meet them where they are, not where we would like them to be. **F**

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Of mandarins and ministers

Incoming Labour ministers must ensure that they are not just in office, but in power, writes *Peter Hain*



Peter Hain was elected MP for Neath since 1991, was a cabinet minister for seven years and a Minister for a further five, covering Wales, Northern Ireland, Leader of the Commons, Energy, Foreign Office and Work and Pensions. His new book Back to the Future of Socialism is published by Policy Press

ED MILIBAND'S LABOUR government will take office in the toughest of circumstances: our public services on the rack because of cuts, a weak economy with hesitant growth based upon personal debt, housing assets and consumer spending, and with a record trade deficit. Despite the constant Tory mantra, 'it's the deficit, stupid!', all their targets on borrowing, debt and the budget deficit have been missed. Their neoliberal austerity agenda is failing, like elsewhere in Europe. Labour will also face the small problem of ruling without a comfortable majority – or, if the pundits and pollsters are to be believed, no majority.

Labour's first task will be to abandon the growth-choking austerity, as I have argued in my new book *Back to the Future of Socialism*, where I set out a coherent, evidence-based alternative, focusing initially on capital spending. But the key will be for incoming ministers to grip their briefs and departments in a way too many in government never do.

When I was appointed a minister by Tony Blair in May 1997, nobody had really taught me how to be one. Although during the 1997 election campaign I had read Gerald Kaufman's instructive if somewhat satirical book *How to be a Minister*, I relied upon my own experience, instincts and political values.

Crucially important for an incoming minister is to have a plan; otherwise, the private office, diligent and supportive though I found all of mine in twelve years of government, quickly takes over and fills the diary, prompting busy

hours of worthily processing papers and shuffling between meetings. Most important is to arrive on the first day with a sense of political priorities, even if the detail needs to be filled in. Otherwise even the most able ministers find themselves running to keep up, and sinking under piles of routine paperwork.

Many in our ministerial cadre, particularly though not exclusively below cabinet level, seemed more captured by their departments than not. However, Charles Clarke was a notable exception. In 2000, when we were both ministers of state, he in the Home Office, me in the Foreign Office, we had a meeting to discuss getting retired police officers to help with the transition from military peacekeeping to local civilian security, especially in African conflict zones. My officials had been frustrated by lack of co-operation from their Home Office counterparts and recommended a ministerial meeting to resolve the impasse.

Often on such occasions, a ministerial colleague would regurgitate their brief and the meeting would end, with officials happily going off to do what they love doing: reflect, write a fresh paper and prepare for another meeting. 'Departmentalitis' is rife within Whitehall, the Treasury by far the worst offender, so I was briefed up to persuade Charles of the merits of the proposal.

He arrived, plonked his burly frame on my office sofa, eyed up the grand old colonial surroundings, and politely interrupted my opening remarks: "Peter, I have looked at



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/duncan/h1/3940915480>

this carefully – and I completely agree with you.” His officials looked more startled than mine. “Now shall we tell them all to work out the details as quickly as they can, and let’s discuss some politics?” As the room emptied, we reflected upon what proved to be a common perspective on the shortcomings and successes of the Blair government and how to make it better. How refreshing it was to deal with Charles.

It is pointless being a minister unless you are prepared to give political leadership. Although the legendary Yes Minister television series, where civil servants run rings around their hapless minister, often comes uncomfortably close to the mark, my experience was rather different. Officials, I found, valued strong political leadership and direction – ministers who knew their own minds – provided they were willing to take advice. The best private secretaries ensured delivery of my ministerial decisions whilst keeping a wary eye for propriety and telling me things I might not want to hear. The best officials had a ‘can do’ rather than a ‘can’t do’ attitude and, if the civil service only adopted that motto as the norm it would be massively more efficient and immeasurably better at delivery.

The best officials had a ‘can do’ rather than a ‘can’t do’ attitude and, if the civil service only adopted that motto as the norm it would be massively more efficient and immeasurably better at delivery

Maintaining a grip on the ministerial brief involved striking a balance between the routine and the significant. My years in government suggested several lessons.

Around 80 per cent of the pile of papers and files in your in-tray or red box was straightforward and could in principle have been handled by the departmental machine. You needed to keep a weather eye on this bulk because it might contain elephant traps or plain mistakes. It might also contain what I called ‘piss-off’ messages to MPs, couched in turgid prose by drafting officials blissfully oblivious to their impact. You couldn’t simply sign off this material even if tired or late at night. However, for me, doing the job successfully meant focusing as clearly as possible on the 20 per cent where a difference really can be made. I also ‘did my red boxes overnight’, keeping on top of the workload, leaving more time to prioritise and focus on the politics.

Are we in office but not in power? That age old question for Labour governments will be worth every one of Ed’s new Labour ministers asking themselves every day. **F**

The chance to thrive

With banks still reluctant to lend, Labour should create a new privately run, publically backed fund to support new enterprises, write *Martin Clarke* and *Nick Butler*



Nick Butler is visiting professor and Chair of the King's Policy Institute at King's College London. He was formerly head of strategy at BP



Martin Clarke is an ex-partner at Permira and currently CFO of the AA

THE DISTANCING OF the Labour party from business is both regrettable and unnecessary. Labour must be on the side of business, helping to remove barriers and to encourage investment. To focus on the failings of a minority of business leaders and organisations is a necessary function of a political party committed to fairness and the protection of the interests of those who cannot always protect themselves. But that should not be allowed to be painted as hostility to business in general and the majority of companies who work hard, provide good jobs and who do not exploit their customers.

In an economy which is enjoying only fragile growth, coupled with a commitment to further reductions in public spending and the inevitable loss of further public sector jobs, the only source of new employment lies in the private sector. We need business to create new jobs – for school

leavers, graduates and for those displaced in the labour market by rapid technical change. Those jobs are needed across the country and will be the principle source of regeneration and wealth creation in areas which have been neglected as old industries have declined. In the absence of new private sector jobs we will have more unemployment – especially in the regions – with all the social and economic costs that brings and more underemployment, particularly of graduates who deserve more after going through university.

Labour should help business and the place to start is through the creation of new financing mechanisms to help those with the energy and ability to create and grow new enterprises. The consolidation of the banking sector after the problems of 2008 has hit new business lending hard. In an attempt to sort out their balance sheets, banks have

cut back on lending that carries obvious risks. It is safer to lend to a big company with extensive assets and a clear income stream than a new or growing business, whose assets consist solely of the brains of the people employed and whose income stream is an aspiration rather than a current reality.

Creating and growing new companies takes time and patience – especially when the economic environment is uncertain and volatile. That means companies need lenders who themselves have patience and who are not looking to sell out within a fixed period of five or seven years – or in some cases less. They also need lenders who are prepared to recognise the value created by those who put the effort into creating new and growing companies.

Hedge funds have a legitimate role in the economy but their time horizons and demands for dominant ownership positions don't match the needs of most small and medium sized enterprises. Some banks do continue to lend but the requirements are too formulaic and are too often determined by head offices rather than by people at the local level who know and understand the people and the companies they are dealing with.

The search for new funding mechanisms is not new. There are innumerable schemes – each with their own acronyms. The results have been very limited and to those who run small and medium sized companies the main product has been confusion. Tens of thousands of smaller companies still say that they lack support or interest from the financial institutions they deal with.

Labour should start from the problem and offer a practical solution. We need a financial institution run on proper commercial lines and designed to make a profit for investors which has a wider horizon in terms of time scale and location than anything which exists at the moment.

The best approach would be a fund, managed privately but underpinned by public guarantees, which would work through a regional structure. The fund would not only provide finance to those who could present a good investment case. It would also provide the different aspects of support which are so often absent from current banking relationships. New and growing companies need access to low cost reliable help with planning, legal and regulatory issues. Many small companies cannot afford to employ separate specialists to cover each of these areas. Too often the burdens fall on the entrepreneurs themselves, adding to the pressures and increasing the risk of failure.

Most importantly a new fund would invest on the basis of timescales relevant to the enterprises themselves. This would vary and would, of course, be performance-related. The aim is not to enable small and medium sized businesses to get easy funding without clear commercial objectives. It is to enable them to get funding which allows them to fulfil their ambitions in a reasonable amount of time. Loans and investments would not be permanent – in common with other funds there would be a moment when holdings should be sold on and profits taken.

The imbalances of economic activity across the UK are serious, with the current situation encouraging migration and a concentration of activity in a small number of areas while other regions are neglected

The regional element is important. The imbalances of economic activity across the UK are serious, with the current situation encouraging migration and a concentration of activity in a small number of areas while other regions are neglected. Banking – which means local banking – should be at the heart of thriving local economies. A fund dedicated to helping new and growing businesses should be present across the country building on local knowledge and experience.

Of course there would be a cost but the net cost over time would be quite limited. Government could be a direct investor or could provide guarantees. Over time the fund, however, should become self-financing – recycling the proceeds of one round of investments into the next.

The fund would invest primarily through equity (the sale of shares) rather than debt (business borrowing). Equity investments create a real partnership based on an alignment of interests. Equity investors share an interest in success whereas those who simply provide debt have an interest only in getting their money back.

It is also important to stress that the fund should be run and managed by professional investors. There has to be no question of returning to the failed model

of ventures, such as the Greater London Enterprise Board, which were run and managed politically. Those mistakes gave past attempts by Labour to find investment vehicles to help business such a bad name. A professional solution is both possible and essential.

We regard such a fund as an example of the creative use of public policy and public money. We live in a mixed economy rather than in a world of raw capitalism. Business and government are interdependent and inseparable. No government can fulfil its objectives unless business is thriving. At the same time, business cannot thrive if government does play its part in ensuring that normal market mechanisms are working effectively. At the moment too few companies are being given the opportunity to thrive. They lack access to capital through no fault or failing of their own, but simply because the banking sector is not able to fulfil its proper function. This is an unhappy market failure and is reducing Britain's capacity to generate wealth and jobs.

The fund we are proposing does of course carry echoes of previous endeavours. After the second world war, the Labour government created a fund called the Industrial and Commercial Finance Corporation (ICFC) – regionally located, professionally managed and financed by the banks. ICFC, which was later rebadged as 3i and is today a FTSE100 business was a success we can learn from. Above all it responded to the needs of the times, needs which have clearly resurfaced again. The financial market is failing small and growing businesses. A new government should act to correct the market's failure.

Nothing would demonstrate more clearly Labour's commitment to business and enterprise than the development of practical solutions to practical problems. ■



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The overwhelming case for new public housing

Investment in public housing must be a central part of a new national political mission. *John Healey* and *John Perry* demonstrate how we can overcome the obstacles and build the homes we so desperately need



John Healey is a Labour MP and a former housing and treasury minister



John Perry is a researcher and writer on housing policy, writing in a personal capacity

WE FACE A housing and cost of housing crisis greater than at any point since the aftermath of the second world war. Britain is not building enough new homes, and the accommodation that is available is increasingly unaffordable to millions of people.

It is a measure of a nation’s politicians whether they can rise to the big challenges their country faces. Housing is now such a test.

We need to build around 250,000 homes a year but are currently managing less than half that. One in five homes is classed as ‘non-decent’, rising to one in three in the private rented sector. Housing is the largest single cost for many households, and poorer families face the highest costs as a proportion of their income.¹ More than a quarter of a million households now face homelessness each year, and the figure is rising.

Meeting the challenge of this housing crisis means more is required of all who can make a contribution – commercial housebuilders, housing associations and councils. Above all, strong leadership and smart action from government is imperative. And investment to build new public housing – council and housing association homes at a genuinely affordable rent – must be a central part of a new national political mission.

Almost everyone concedes there’s a serious problem, across the political spectrum. Even David Cameron has admitted many young people now watch the TV show *Location, Location, Location* “not as a documentary, but as a fantasy”. *SHOUT*, the new campaign for social housing was launched last year with backing from all political parties. And Conservative pressure group ‘The Good Right’ has recently advocated “a Harold Macmillan-sized, state-supported housebuilding programme”.

But the government’s policies are falling far short. Having promised that ‘we will become a nation of homebuilders’ before 2010, two years on just 107,980 new homes were completed in England in 2012–13 – the lowest peacetime total since the 1920s. Last year, 118,770 new homes were built. Current government policies are also intensifying

rather than relieving the cost of housing crisis. Government capital investment in social rented housing was cut by two-thirds in 2010 and by shifting the remaining subsidy to build only so-called ‘affordable rents’ – a perversion of traditional social housing at up to 80 per cent of market rents – the provision of truly affordable social rented homes has been choked off.

In the next parliament there must be a change, and that means putting the overwhelming case for social housing to politicians and the public. Here’s our summary of that case – five reasons why we believe the case for social housing is so strong, and the three biggest challenges to tackle.

Five reasons we need more social housing

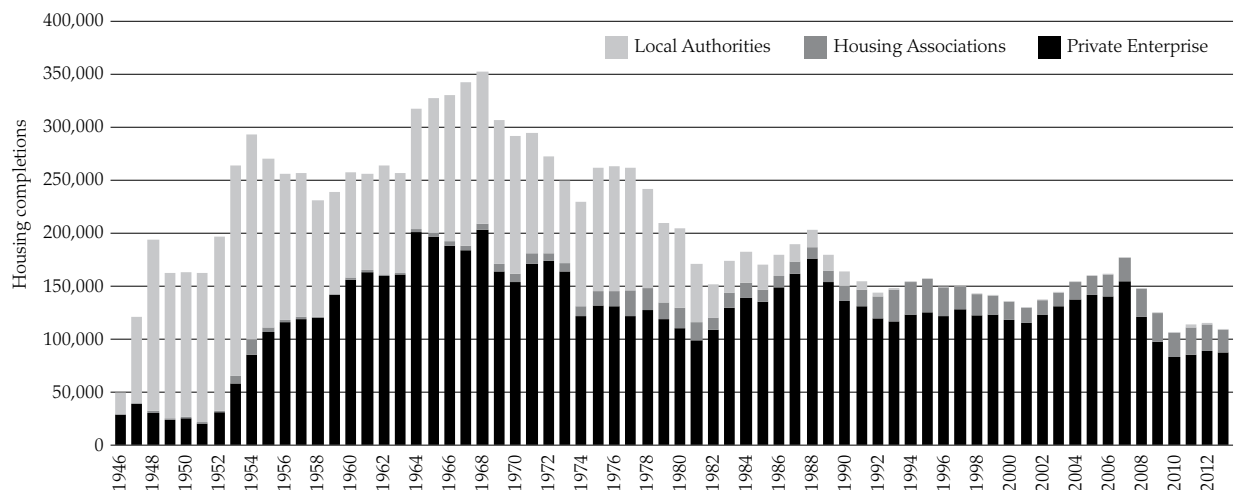
1. To build enough homes

There’s now a broad based consensus that we must build more homes. We need 250,000 extra homes a year, but under the coalition average build rates have been only 113,000 a year. Under 13 years of Labour government until 2010, the average was 146,000 – higher, but still far too few.

Absent from this housing debate is an honest admission that we have no chance of coming anywhere close to building 250,000 homes a year through the private market alone. Nor is this a route to reach the more modest annual target of 200,000 new homes by 2020. There has only been one year since the end of high-volume council housebuilding when we have managed to build 200,000 homes in England, and that was at the height of the unsustainable ‘Lawson boom’ in the late 1980s. Even then, councils were still building 15–20,000 homes a year.

Social housing used to make up a large part of the new overall housing supply each year. After big reductions in the 1980s, the figures flat-lined for two decades until a small revival began, boosted after the global financial crisis by the reform of council housing finance begun by Labour in 2009–10 and completed by the coalition. If we are to build the houses our country needs, the next government >>

Figure 1. Housing completions since 1945



Source: DCLG Live Table 244

>> must ensure many more council and housing association homes are built.

2. To make homes affordable

The cost of housing crisis blights the lives of at least three groups of people. First, it is estimated that there are 1.3 million households in low- to middle-income groups who spend more than 35 per cent of their income on housing – an internationally recognised threshold of affordability. Second, there are those who cannot buy or rent at all. There are over 4.6 million ‘concealed’ households: single people or couples living with others, such as parents, relatives or friends. Today, official figures show 1.4 million fewer young households (under 44 years old) are buying their own homes compared with ten years ago. Third, there is rising homelessness. In 2013–14, some 280,000 households were assisted as homeless, 38 per cent more than in 2009–10.

So several million households are hit by the lack of affordable housing, paying excessive costs, denied a home of their own or actually homeless.

More social homes would help all of these households. But policy changes made by coalition ministers now mean that what used to be affordable housing, is often no longer genuinely affordable. Up until 2011–12, the majority of affordable housing was built to let at ‘social’ rents linked to local incomes as well as building costs, which on average means 50 per cent of market rents. But current government policy has aggressively increased ‘affordable’ rents to as high as 80 per cent of open market prices. Starts on site to build new social rented homes have fallen by 90 per cent – from 40,000 to 4,000 – since 2009–10 and on current plans will soon be close to zero.

The government also forced ‘conversion’ of existing homes at social rent levels to the new affordable rents, and increased right to buy discounts without replacing those social homes lost through sales. As a result, we’ve lost 63,000 more social rented homes than we’ve built in just two years.²

The impact on affordability is severe. In some parts of the country, hiking social rents to 80 per cent of market prices can mean that they are double average take-home



pay, putting them completely out of reach for families on low incomes. In the London Borough of Camden for example, raising rents to 80 per cent of the market would necessitate an after-tax income of almost £50,000.

3. To secure value-for-money from public spending

Public spending on social homes pays for itself. Every £1 invested in social housing pays back £1.18 into the public purse over 30 years because of lower housing benefit payments.

Despite the deepest cuts to housing benefit ever in this parliament, spending on housing benefit has risen by £2.5bn and is set to rise in real terms in every year of the next parliament, in part because social rents have been hiked to ‘affordable rents’.³ Cutting back on investment in social housing and raising rents is a false economy for the taxpayer: savings made in one department only push up costs in another. The policy switch away from traditional social rent to ‘affordable rent’ in this parliament alone will add £5.4bn to the housing benefit bill over 30 years.

By contrast, an ambitious public housing programme would save the exchequer money over the long term. Recent modelling shows that working up to building 100,000 new social rented homes a year by the end of the next parliament would not only pay for itself in less than 30 years but provide a net benefit to the public purse of £12bn through lower housing benefit costs.⁴

What’s more, public investment is a lever for private investment. The record of this government has shown this relationship in reverse: alongside the cut in public housing investment over the last four years, there was £1.4bn less private housing investment in housing association homes last year than in 2010–11.⁵

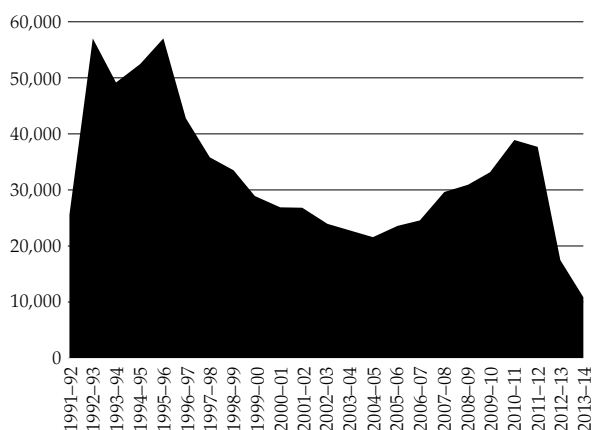
4. To increase work incentives

Housing costs are a critical factor in making work pay. The steep taper on housing benefit withdrawal is a disincentive to earn more, and higher rents mean that disincentive lasts for longer. This problem is built into and will continue under universal credit. Lower, social rents can make it more worthwhile for people to work by increasing their take home pay.

For example, take a family with one child and two parents who are both working part time at the national minimum wage when one of the parents is offered the chance to work full time. If they are living in private rented accommodation paying an average private rent, their net income will increase by £1,400 per year as a result of the extra hours. But if they are living in social housing, paying an average social rent they will take home an increase of £2,700.

Two key coalition changes – universal credit and ‘affordable rents’ – will combine to drag many more council and housing association tenants into benefit dependence: the very opposite of stated government aims.

Figure 2. Social rented homes provided in England, 1991–2014



Source: DCLG Live Table 1000

5. To boost jobs and the economy

The economy is still operating below capacity, and building homes provides a direct boost. Every £1 spent on house building generates £2.84 in total economic activity and, according to government estimates, supports 12 year-long jobs for every £1 million of building investment.⁶ If we built 100,000 homes a year, it has been estimated that we could create 90,000 jobs.

When the financial crisis and downturn struck, and the private sector was unwilling or unable to build, the Labour government switched spending to housing as a stimulus. A big programme of social housing now would have a direct positive economic impact as well as helping provide jobs and apprenticeships.

...and the three biggest challenges

Any government that is committed to build more genuinely affordable public homes will face three big challenges: cost, public support, and delivery. We're convinced they can be overcome – here's how.

1. Cost

The extent to which further austerity measures are needed to reduce government borrowing (currently just under 6 per cent of GDP in 2013–14) is subject to political debate. Politics is always about choices and proper fiscal targets can be set and met in different ways. But whoever leads

the next government will first need to consider the cost of a significant social house building programme.

There are a range of policy changes which will increase the number of social homes built at little or no cost to the public purse. Restoring the private contribution towards public homes by tightening up developers' obligations to include social housing in their projects could yield big rewards without harming overall viability. As recently as 2007–08, 'planning gain' from private developers was worth almost £5bn and contributed to the provision of 48,000 new homes. By 2011–12 this had fallen by one third and today's figure is likely to be much lower still because of changed government rules.⁷ Ending the giveaway of tax-payer investments through indefensible right-to-buy discounts by insisting that 'one-for-one replacement' of all homes sold really means one-for-one would safeguard thousands of social homes. The Lyons Review on housing set out a number of further ways in which we could increase the supply of new homes within existing fiscal constraints.

Even with these changes, a bigger social housebuilding programme will require more capital spending. But this is borrowing to invest, just like people take out a mortgage to buy a house. This investment creates a long-term asset and yields a financial return to the public purse in rents and lower housing benefit payments – and savings in the latter, as set out above, would pay for the upfront cost of investment over less than 30 years. Above all, such investment provides new homes that that will last for decades, and each home built becomes an asset against which the council or housing association can raise further funds to build more new homes.

This investment creates a long-term asset and yields a financial return to the public purse in rents and lower housing benefit payments

Right now it's a particularly attractive investment for the public purse to make. With yields on 10-year gilts currently below 1.5 per cent, UK government borrowing costs are just about the lowest they've ever been.

2. Public support

There are good levels of public support for social housing. Polling by YouGov for the Fabian Society last year revealed that a majority of people (57 per cent) back more social housing being built, and more support than oppose social housing being built in their area (44 per cent vs 27 per cent). That's true across social class, gender, age and region.

We also know how we can increase support for social housing: good design standards, and allowing local people to stay in their area by giving them greater access to social homes built in their neighbourhood can both help.

But the wider challenge is to correct the marginalisation of social housing. Fewer social homes means only those with higher support needs can often get new social tenancies which reinforces the perception amongst many people that council or housing association homes are not for them or their family and reduces public support for new social housing.

Part of the answer lies in building to make more homes available but an important part is also ensuring that developments are mixed so communities are mixed. This is why powers to require social housing to be built alongside open market housing

through 'planning gain' are so important, not just to ease pressures on the public purse but because they are essential in creating mixed-tenure developments.

3. Delivery

Building public homes on the scale required is a huge delivery challenge, for central government, local authorities, housing associations and the private sector.

To kick-start construction, the next government should strike a national 'new deal for housing' – a national target for new social homes and a commitment from all the players in the housing field that they will do their bit. Government needs to provide funding and land, developers must build and be mindful of the social obligation they have to cater for all who need a home and not just a few, and local authorities and housing associations must focus on increasing the number of homes built while staying true to their social mission of providing genuinely affordable accommodation.

The case for social housing is overwhelming. We need the political will and a government this May who is willing to make it happen. ■

Notes

1. www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-370146
2. Based on local authority and HCA statistical returns
3. Autumn Statement outturn figs
4. Modelling by John Healey MP
5. UK Housing Review 2015
6. L.E.K. Consultants (2012) *Construction in the UK: The benefits of investment*. London: UK Contractors Group (see www.ukcg.org.uk)
7. DCLG (2014) *Section 106 Planning Obligations in England, 2011–12*



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All aboard

Harriet Harman's campaign to reconnect women and politics has been knocked by some. But in an increasingly divided nation, Labour's general election campaign will be fought on the future of equality. *Stephen Bush* meets a shadow deputy prime minister ready to rumble



Stephen Bush is editor of the Stagers, the New Statesman's politics blog

AT THE CLOSE of her 2014 Speakers' Lecture on parliament and equality, Harriet Harman reflected on the furore over Beyoncé Knowles' *I Am Mrs Carter* tour. "This is highly relevant to me because, like Beyoncé, I too am going on tour in the new year – my general election tour 2015. Like Beyoncé I've been thinking about what to call my nationwide tour. If anyone here's got suggestions, please do let me know. But I think it is unlikely to be 'I am Mrs Dromeey'."

In the end, the Labour deputy leader's tour was called *Woman to Woman*, but it was the colour of the campaign's battle bus – a patronising pink or a 'one nation' magenta, depending on your perspective – that made the headlines.

When we meet, I assume that she's tired of talking about it, but in fact it's one of the things she's keenest to discuss.

She tells me of a stop the bus made at a call centre in Cardiff where one woman and her husband "wanted another baby, but they just couldn't work out the logistics to have another child and keep both their jobs, and there was another woman who couldn't take a promotion because of the cost of childcare".

And she recalls an encounter between the driver of the bus and a tollbooth operator, who leaned over and said: "By the way, I think the bus is a brilliant idea". Harman smiles. "That is a connection between that woman and politics. The pink bus is a strong message, and the magic of it is that women know when it comes to the pink bus they are not a marginal afterthought. They are central – it is about them."

One Labour MP reflected recently that "Harriet has 'leaned in' to the pink bus, and that has shut up the detractors." But then, Harman was leaning in long before Sheryl Sandberg made it cool; when she was elected in a 1982 by-election she was just one of ten female Labour MPs. If Labour win a majority, she will be one of 141. She is, potentially, 50 days away from being the first female deputy prime minister.

Or is she? That same Speaker's Lecture also drew headlines for her criticism of Gordon Brown for denying her the title of deputy prime minister that her male predecessor, John Prescott, had had under Tony Blair, and I wonder: will she insist on being given the title by Ed Miliband? "I'm now shadow deputy prime minister," she says, "so it's two steps forward, one step back. Obviously I've reflected on the situation ... but it is the prime minister's fiat."

In the recent debates over party reform, Harman's hopes of codifying the need for a balanced ticket in terms of gender at the top of the party never came to fruition but she believes that "the Labour party, and that includes the members, the councillors and MPs, are now of the settled view that you have to have a balanced team." In Scotland, the leadership of Johann Lamont and Anas Sarwar, a female leader and a male deputy, has given way to another duo, of Jim Murphy and Kezia Dugdale. "I think that is quite integral to the party's thinking, including Ed's. It's more of an expectation now, instead of a huge fight."

When we speak, Harman has ahead one last "huge fight" with Nick Clegg at Deputy Prime Ministers' Questions. She is one of the party's happy warriors, who certainly doesn't have any time for trying to cosy up to the coalition's junior partners. One particularly bruising encounter – for Clegg, at least – saw the deputy prime minister embarrassed over

his failure to promote a single woman to the Cabinet table. Harman assures me that she'll be similarly hard on the Liberal Democrat leader this time. But I wonder: isn't there a chance that this is the wrong note, that Labour looks dangerously tribal in a time of increasingly pluralistic politics; a BBC party in the age of Netflix? Harman's not convinced: "[The question] of who is in Number 10 and who is leading the government, of who is the prime minister and what are their values ... there's nothing pluralistic about that."

As for the idea that Labour is out of touch, for Harman, who has been a candidate at every election since 1983, it doesn't quite feel like that this time.

"I remember the elections in '83 and '87," she says, "where people were really hostile to Labour all around the country ... then in 92 there was that thing where people wouldn't look at you," she pauses, "and all the opinion polls were saying Labour's going to win, and they just won't look at you and you just think: oh, it doesn't feel like it's supposed to."

The problem now, she tells me, is that "people feel they've sort of got a wider choice, but the gap between the choice they make and who is prime minister doesn't feel straightforward. And the paradox, you know, is if some young person thinks that they're more left-wing than right and hates the Tory government, is living in a Labour-Tory marginal but thinks they're going to vote Green, well..."

One of the problems with the collapse in trust in politicians after the expenses scandal and the financial crisis, Harman argues, is that the "lack of connection" means people are being "more near-faced about their vote rather than who's going to be prime minister and the impact that is going to have on their lives." Out in the pink bus, Harman has seen more of that than many of her colleagues. That might be one reason why she's less invested than many others in further conversations about the party's processes. "I think it's the sort of thing where nobody goes like: 'Yay! We're going to embark on a consultation and have a special conference'. Nobody joined the party for that. However, it did make people feel uncomfortable at certain points that there was an election and some people had four votes and some people had only one vote, while some people from the trade unions could [vote] even though they were members of a different party. It's like house-cleaning, in that it was important to get it right and was worth doing."

But I wonder: if, as feels distinctly possible, Labour finish second either in votes, seats or both, wouldn't a Labour-dominated government only make the public disconnect with the voters even worse? Could the party possibly take office in those circumstances? "This is a huge hobby horse for me," Harman tells me. "You're going to regret asking me this question. People glibly say the electoral system favours Labour. It absolutely doesn't. It is against Labour, in an entrenched way."

It comes down to the tricky question of electoral registration – made even more difficult by the coalition's changes to voter registration. "The thing about the electoral register is twofold. It's not just about who can vote, it's about where the boundaries of constituencies are," she explains. "At the moment, the Electoral Commission says that about three to four million people are not registered to vote, and the characteristics are absolutely clear ... If you're white, over fifty, own your own home and don't live in a >>>

>> city, you will be registered to vote. And one of the things I've found in by-elections in Tory seats is that behind every single door there's a person that's registered." However, in Labour strongholds, it's quite the reverse: "Every fourth door, there's someone who isn't registered. Because the people who are least likely to be registered are young, renting, BAME and living in a city. And if the electoral register properly reflected that we would have eight more seats in London."

"We should never take the voters for granted," she adds, "but they'd more likely be Labour. There's an assumption that there's a higher turnout in marginal seats, but actually the correlation is class. If you have a rock-solid Tory seat you still have a high turnout because people are on the register and they still vote. But if you have a hard-pressed inner city constituency people are less likely to vote." So, she concludes, "If we have the largest number of seats – if we don't have an overall majority, that is – we will actually be representing millions of people who are not on the register, whose constituencies don't even exist and who won't have voted. So I don't buy the argument that we would lack legitimacy." The electoral system, Harman believes, is "undemocratic, but not in a random way. It's in an unequal way in terms of ethnicity, in terms of socio-economic class."

It feels like an unconscious rebuke to the people who say that Labour's deputy leader's brand of feminism is too middle-class, something I put to her. "One of the things that has always beset struggles for social justice," she responds, "is creating a hierarchy of inequalities, like: let's decide whether it's worse to be black or to be a woman. Actually there's a range of ways you can have unequal life chances and we ought to be working to tackle all of those, not setting one against the other."

"In the distant past," she recalls, "some men in the Labour party who didn't agree with women's rights criticized us, saying we were all middle class. It's an accusation that originates with people who thought that it was a politically correct way to have a go at women, at feminism, and it's a pity if any modern-day feminist goes along with an argument that is just anti-feminist. You don't want one bit of inequality set against the other. You need to work on all of them." She recalls a common sight from when she was a newly-qualified lawyer that highlights the problem with creating that hierarchy of inequalities. "Chambers could advertise that 'the right man' would be from a public school," she tells me. "The fact that this was a middle-class job didn't make that alright."

One of Harman's biggest achievements in tackling those compound inequalities was the Equality Act. She recalls the sudden increase in power and influence that came with triumph in the deputy leadership election: "I was in the position to argue for things [before] but I was in a much stronger position to put something on the agenda." It was either Labour at its best or top-down diktat at its worst, depending on who you speak to. Harman, unsurprisingly, comes down on the former. Legislation doesn't change culture overnight, but, she argues, it shifts "the duties of public organisations to be promoting gender equality, to be promoting racial diversity."

"The agenda of using the power of public policy to make things more equal is not about telling people how to make people better," Harman argues, but about changing

people's lives for the better. The Act, she says, is "fundamental to why people are in the Labour party, why people support the Labour party". Culture is shifted by legislation, and representation too. "It's not just territorial," she argues, "When Bernie Grant came in [to parliament] my constituents from an African background would look to him and think 'Great. He's speaking up for me.'"

That's why, she says, Labour must do more to get people from different backgrounds into parliament. "You want people like Ian Lavery in Wansbeck who used to work down a mine, you want people like Sharon Hodgson who use to work in a call centre as well as people who used to work in the law and in business." She talks about Naz Shah, Labour's candidate in Bradford West, who overcame a difficult childhood and the imprisonment of her mother to become Labour's standard-bearer. "She will represent not just the people in her constituency but all the people who feel they've had an absolutely terrible time and want somebody to fight for them." That's why it's important, she says, in a self-deprecating tone, "not just to have people who go to a great school, then go to university, then get a legal qualification, then go to work at a legal centre, then to the House of Commons – like me!"

But sometimes a lawyer, and the big clunking fist of top-down legislation, is required. When Harman first entered politics, the divisions were larger and the disagreements more overt. "We've definitely moved from a situation where people would be outright discriminatory, you know?" She recalls explicit arguments, such as: "We are not going to have a woman in this job because we've already got a woman in this company and if we had another one they'd only fight". These days, "you get verbal agreement but passive resistance to change, and generally speaking, it's easier to agree to an ideology of equality than be prepared to make the changes that are necessary". The Equality Act, Harman explains, was designed to break down that passive resistance. She describes how, under the last government, the arguments changed. "The gender pay gap's a terrible thing, but it's not like that in our company, *we're* fair. In our hospital trust, *we're* fair."

"You have to see what is going on," she argues, "to be able to say actually it is unfair in *this* company, in *this* housing association, or *this* hospital trust." The Act did that, but, she says ruefully, "then we lost". It meant that the requirements on pay transparency – which were meant to transition from voluntary to mandatory disclosure after a short period – have been largely forgotten, while the Equalities and Human Rights Commission has been "completely damped down". "I mean, have you heard *anything* from them since we left [office]?"

Also mothballed was clause one of the Equality Act, which focused on narrowing the gap between the top and the bottom, the importance of which, Harman says, comes because "if the rungs of the ladder are hugely apart" – she sketches a ladder on a piece of paper – "and if you're a child *here*" – she makes a mark, "the gap is too large. You can't have social mobility if the rungs of the ladder are too wide".

"I want us to get back in again and implement clause one and *really* implement the Act," she says. As the short campaign looms large, it seems as a good a reason as any to climb aboard that pink bus. ■

Books

Stand and deliver

The pioneer of the delivery unit, Michael Barber, offers timely lessons for a future government, writes *Jen Gold*



Jen Gold is a researcher at the Institute for Government and has authored a number of reports on policy implementation and delivery units, including Data-driven Delivery and International Delivery

The skills needed to win elections are very different from those required to govern effectively. In his new book Sir Michael Barber makes a compelling case for governments to pay far more attention to the science of delivery – the “set of processes that enables governments to deliver ambitious goals by learning effectively as they go, and refining as necessary.”

Barber uses the problems that recently beset US healthcare reforms as a cautionary tale. Few would deny that Barack Obama is one of the most skilled political campaigners of his generation. But the technical problems that plagued the roll out of the HealthCare.gov website were hugely damaging – and entirely avoidable. As Barber persuasively argues, from the moment the Affordable Care Act passed into law in 2010, the White House and Department of Health and Human Services should have tracked progress, identified problems, and stress-tested solutions. Instead, the full scale of the website’s problems came to light only in the autumn of 2013. This flagship reform had simply been left to flounder under a lack of proactive management.

Over the course of its eight chapters, *How to Run a Government* offers a blueprint for avoiding such blunders and successfully delivering campaign commitments. In particular, Barber highlights the importance of leaders establishing clear priorities and ensuring the government machine has the capacity to deliver, aided by central delivery units; emphasises the need to build resilience into government by establishing monitoring routines and developing strategies for rapid problem solving; and considers the potential for linking performance to budget decisions.

To this end, Barber lays out 57 “rules”. Above all else, he sees delivery units as the engines keeping administrations relentlessly focused on effective implementation. These small units, operating at the centre of either departments or entire governments, gather and scrutinize performance data, regularly brief leaders, and intervene when necessary.

Barber’s recommendations are based on decades of direct experience working for and advising governments, both here and overseas. Between 2001 and 2005, he set up and ran the Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit (PMDU). This



How to Run a Government, so that citizens benefit and taxpayers don't go crazy

Michael Barber
(Penguin, March 2015)

model is now a global phenomenon, with similar units on six continents.

With the general election and subsequent spending review very much on the horizon, this book offers a number of timely lessons for a future government. For one, it recommends establishing a central delivery function at the outset. It took the Blair administration until its second term – after four years of slow progress on key reforms – to establish this capacity in the form of the PMDU. The coalition government was also slow on the uptake; the PMDU was abolished in 2010 but just a year later, frustrated by the lack of a means to monitor and drive key priorities, it reappeared under the guise of the Implementation Unit.

Equally, Barber notes that leadership continuity really does matter. Reshuffles and constant ministerial churn can seriously undermine delivery. Barber offers a memorable anecdote in this regard:

“Kim Howells MP held six different roles during Blair’s ten-year premiership. I saw a good deal of him when, at Transport, we were enjoying collaborating on the brave effort to ensure that the trains ran on time. We were just getting some traction when, for no reason I ever understood, he was gone again, this time to the Foreign Office to deal with the Middle East.”

Finally, Barber points to a range of trends – from open data and transparency to continued outsourcing, digital services, and privacy concerns – that will shape the trajectory of delivery reforms over the coming decade. He highlights the multiple innovations of other jurisdictions from which the UK can learn: Maryland’s commitment to transparency in performance data, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s use of virtual ‘dashboards’ to monitor its school system in real-time, and Malaysia’s use of cross-sector innovation labs to formulate delivery action plans – to name but a few.

Ultimately, Barber isn’t advocating a static approach. The science of delivery, he tells us, “is not a complete science and never will be.” But whatever the result in May, the need to restore fiscal balance means the next government can ill afford to ignore Barber’s advice. ■

Quiz – Five years in politics

As the general election campaign begins in earnest, find out how closely you've been paying attention since 2010

Who?

- 1. There have been 21 by-elections in this parliament, but who was the winner in the first?**
 - a. Dan Jarvis
 - b. Debbie Abrahams
 - c. George Galloway
 - d. Lucy Powell
- 2. Who was the socialist Spitzenkandidat (EU Commission Presidential candidate) in the 2014 European elections?**
 - a. Helle Thorning-Schmidt
 - b. Matteo Renzi
 - c. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen
 - d. Martin Schulz
- 3. Who described George Osborne and David Cameron as 'posh boys who don't know the price of milk'?**
 - a. Louise Mensch
 - b. Ed Balls
 - c. Nadine Dorries
 - d. Douglas Carswell
- 4. Who are the only MPs to have occupied the same shadow cabinet brief for the duration of Ed Miliband's leadership of the Labour party?**
 - a. Rosie Winterton & Sadiq Khan
 - b. Hilary Benn & Douglas Alexander
 - c. Harriet Harman & Chuka Umunna
 - d. Ed Balls & Yvette Cooper
- 5. Who got involved in a televised scrap with Stuart the dog in 2013?**
 - a. Jeremy Paxman
 - b. Boris Johnson
 - c. Iain Dale
 - d. Michael Crick

How?

- 6. How many more people voted 'No' than 'Yes' in the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum?**
 - a. 167,298
 - b. 383,937
 - c. 723,394
 - d. 1,012,463

- 7. How did newly elected Tory MP Rory Stewart refer to parts of his new constituency in 2010?**
 - a. "Pretty picturesque"
 - b. "Pretty awful"
 - c. "Pretty primitive"
 - d. "Pretty dire"
- 8. How many Tory MPs rebelled against equal marriage in 2013?**
 - a. 31
 - b. 53
 - c. 91
 - d. 134
- 9. How many years has retiring Father of the House Sir Peter Tapsell served in the House of Commons?**
 - a. 23
 - b. 39
 - c. 49
 - d. 58
- 10. How many times did Ed Miliband utter the phrase 'One Nation' in his 2012 Conference speech?**
 - a. 18
 - b. 38
 - c. 48
 - d. 71

Which?

- 11. Which TV programme served as the source for the term 'omnishambles' used to describe George Osborne's 2012 budget?**
 - a. Yes, Minister
 - b. The Thick of It
 - c. House of Cards
 - d. The West Wing
- 12. Which political party were described as 'like cockroaches after a nuclear war, just a bit less smelly'?**
 - a. BNP
 - b. Labour
 - c. UKIP
 - d. Liberal Democrats
- 13. Which of his favourite bands was David Cameron told to stop listening to by a band member in 2010?**
 - a. Rage Against the Machine
 - b. Radiohead
 - c. The Smiths
 - d. Bananarama

- 14. Which television programme did Ed Balls admit moved him to tears in 2011?**
 - a. Downton Abbey
 - b. Antiques Roadshow
 - c. Doctor Who
 - d. Cash in the Attic
- 15. Which of these parties DID NOT increase its share of the vote in the 2014 European elections?**
 - a. UKIP
 - b. Labour
 - c. Green Party
 - d. SNP

Where?

- 16. Where were the results of the 2010 Labour leadership election announced?**
 - a. Manchester
 - b. Brighton
 - c. Liverpool
 - d. Birmingham
- 17. This parliament saw the first police and crime commissioner elections. Where didn't Labour win?**
 - a. Northumbria
 - b. West Yorkshire
 - c. Cumbria
 - d. Derbyshire
- 18. UKIP gained its first elected MPs in this parliament but where did its first MP represent?**
 - a. Haltemprice and Howden
 - b. Chatham and Aylesford
 - c. Romford
 - d. Castle Point
- 19. Where did David Cameron attract controversy for not tipping a waitress on holiday?**
 - a. Cornwall
 - b. Italy
 - c. Spain
 - d. Skye
- 20. Where did the pro-AV campaign secure the highest share of the vote in 2011?**
 - a. Oxford
 - b. Cambridge
 - c. Hackney
 - d. Liverpool

Answers: 1b 2d 3c 4a 5c 6b 7c 8d 9c 10c 11b 12d 13c 14b 15c 16a 17c 18d 19b 20c

10 things we learned from Fabian research this parliament

1. Focus on the long-term vision

The Fabian Commission on Future Spending Choices was the lynchpin of the Fabians' programme since 2010 and showed government could spend more after 2015 than George Osborne plans to, without prejudicing public finances. It recommended taking a long-view of public finances, restoring a regular cycle of spending reviews and encouraging ministers to set a 'ten-year test' on public spending decisions to consider their long-term effects.

READ: *2030 Vision* (bit.ly/1GcJaS6)

2. We're all localisers now...

Jon Wilson's 2012 pamphlet *Letting Go* led the way for a new generation of Labour localisers, proposing radical decentralisation of power to local government and to individual communities. Long caricatured as a bastion of statism, the Fabian Society explored this new devolutionary dimension with a slew of pamphlets on how politicians can 'let go'.

READ: *Letting Go* (bit.ly/1EpDtQB);

Within Reach (bit.ly/19r0gkV)

3. ...But the state endures

That being said, increased localism must go hand in hand with a reform of how the state works at top and bottom. The 2014 report *Going Public* set out a clear roadmap for reconciling Labour's divergent trends into a coherent set of principles for public services, which prioritise 'public character'. 62 per cent of people think that public services should be delivered mainly or entirely by the state, rather than by charities or businesses as highlighted by *For the Public Good*.

READ: *For the Public Good* (bit.ly/1xrzmyw);

No Right Turn (bit.ly/1MFfDT3);

Going Public (bit.ly/19r5QU5)

4. Take pride in place

2015 will be a crucial year for climate change activists with the international climate change conference in Paris. But Fabian research in *Pride of Place* and *Places to Be* highlighted the importance of politicians placing an emphasis on the local environment as well as the global – green spaces as well as greenhouse gases. 26 per cent said they regarded climate change as an important environmental issue – the same as dog fouling and litter. Finding a pathway from



getting people who care about their local environment to caring about climate change will be a key challenge in the next five years.

READ: *Pride of Place* (bit.ly/1BLvfTa);

Places to Be (bit.ly/1ClhThe)

5. Politics needs to change

According to polling for the Fabian Review 57 per cent of people think politicians seldom give straight answers to straight questions on radio and TV and 36 per cent think politicians are more interested in scoring political points than doing the right thing. Politics needs to change to reflect people's aspirations for a politics grounded in the everyday realities of life, rather than its own internal rules.

READ: *On Another Planet* (bit.ly/1x8ylku);

Back to Earth (bit.ly/1xsckaQ)

6. What we measure matters

The UK's post-crash public discourse has been dominated by Britain's GDP growth with every quarterly growth estimate pored over by party spinners. But are we measuring the right things? *Measure for Measure* by Andrew Harrop and Rob Tinker proposed median household income as a new, key economic indicator to gain a better insight into the success or otherwise of our economy.

READ: *Measure for Measure* (bit.ly/18wZy4v)

7. Building better business

67 per cent believe that: "The ways in which government, banks and major companies operate will have to change radically before prosperity is likely to return to British families" according to polling for *All of Our Business*. To meet this aspiration, Labour needs business as an ally, not an enemy and should agree a new charter with business to achieve its vision of a more 'responsible capitalism'.

READ: *All of Our Business* (bit.ly/1MMQJkj);

In It Together (bit.ly/190AtPn)

8. UKIP isn't just a problem for the Tories

Revolt on the Left, by Marcus Roberts revealed the scale of Labour's UKIP problem, identifying five Labour seats under direct threat from Farage's party – Great Grimsby, Dudley North, Plymouth Moor View, Rother Valley, Rotherham – and highlighting a further sixteen seats which might flip to the Conservatives as a result of the UKIP surge.

READ: *Revolt on the Left* (bit.ly/1AY312V)

9. We're losing the war with the junk food giants

Obesity for the poorest children is now worse than it was ten years ago – before Jamie Oliver's healthy school meals campaign. And the interim report of the Fabian Commission on Food and Poverty also revealed that the government budgets for healthy eating campaigns are being overpowered by ad spend from junk food giants like McDonalds, KFC and Mars.

READ: *A Recipe for Inequality*

(bit.ly/1EvkCnv)

10. Poverty and inequality will define the next parliament

If Britain keeps its current course, based on the government's policies there will be 1.2 million more children in poverty and 3.6 million more people below the poverty line by 2030. *Inequality 2030* by Andrew Harrop and Howard Reed painted a stark picture of the future for poverty and inequality but offered hope that plausible and affordable government intervention can make a massive difference to the living standards of typical households and to future levels of poverty.

READ: *Inequality 2030* (bit.ly/1Gdczvo)

Listings

- BEXLEY**
Regular meetings. Contact Alan Scutt on 0208 304 0413 or alan.scutt@phnecoop. Coop
- BIRMINGHAM**
For details and information, please contact Andrew Coulson at Andrew@CoulsonBirmingham.co.uk
- BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT**
27 March: Douglas Lock. Chair of Christchurch CLP. 'The UK Economy: What are the prospects for the next 5 Years?'
29 May: Post General Election Any Questions Evening' with Local Candidates.
26 June: Lord Roger Liddle Meetings at the Friends Meeting House, Wharnclyffe Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth at 7.30. Contact Ian Taylor on 01202 396634 for details or taylorbournemouth@gmail.com
- BRIGHTON & HOVE**
27 March: Purna Sen, PPC Brighton Pavilion and Warren Morgan, Leader of the Labour Group, Brighton and Hove City Council on 'Labour's Policies, Local and National'
24 April: Professor Richard Vogler on 'Crime, Justice and the City of London' Details of all meetings from Ralph Bayley: ralphbayley@gmail.com
- BRISTOL**
Regular meetings. Contact Ges Rosenberg for details on grosenberg@churchside.me.uk or Arthur Massey 0117 9573330
- CAMBRIDGE**
Contact Cambridge Fabians at cambridgefabians@gmail.com www.cambridgefabians.org.uk www.facebook.com/groups/cambridgefabiansociety
- CENTRAL LONDON**
Details from Giles Wright on 0207 227 4904 or giles.wright@fabians.org.uk
- CHATHAM & AYLESFORD**
New Society forming. Please contact Sean Henry on 07545 296800 or seanhenry@live.co.uk
- CHISWICK & WEST LONDON**
26 March: Dr Brian Fisher on 'Labour's Policy on the NHS' .8.00 in the Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, Chiswick. Details from Dr Alison Baker a.m.baker@blueyonder.co.uk
- COLCHESTER**
Friends Meeting House, Church St., Colchester Details from John Wood on 01206 212100 or woodj@madasafish.com Or 01206 212100
2nd April. Dr Ewen Speed on the privatisation of the NHS.
28th May, Our AGM, with Stewart Lansley, the journalist and writer.
- CUMBRIA & NORTH LANCASHIRE**
Meetings, 6.30 for 7.00 at Castle Green Hotel, Kendal. Contact Dr Robert Judson at dr.robertjudson@btinternet.com
- DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM**
Regular meetings at 8.00 in Dartford Working Men's Club, Essex Rd, Dartford. Details from Deborah Stoate on 0207 227 4904 email debstoate@hotmail.com
- DERBY**
Details for meetings from Alan Jones on 01283 217140 or alan.mandh@btinternet.com
- 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 noelfoy@lewisk3.plus.com
- EDINBURGH**
Regular Brain Cell meetings. Details from Daniel Johnson at daniel@scottishfabians.org.uk
- EPSOM & EWELL**
New Society forming. If you are interested, please contact Carl Dawson at carldawson@gmail.com
- FINCHLEY**
Enquiries to Mike Walsh on 07980 602122 mike.walsh44@ntlworld.com
- 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 Malcolm Perry at malcolmperry3@btinternet.com
- GRIMSBY**
Regular meetings. Details from Pat Holland - hollandpat@hotmail.com
- HARROW**
Details from Marilyn Devine on 0208 424 9034. Fabians from other areas where there are no local Fabian Societies are very welcome to join us.
- HASTINGS & RYE**
Meetings held on last Friday of each month. Please contact Jean Webb c/o the Fabian Society, 61 Petty France
- HAVERING**
24 March: David Marshall on 'Falklands. 250 Years and Beyond'. 8.00 in Billet Studio, Fairkyte Arts Centre, Hornchurch. Details of all meetings from David Marshall email david.c.marshall@talk21.com tel. 01708 441189 For latest information, see the website haveringfabians.org.uk
- IPSWICH**
Details of all meetings from John Cook: contact@ipswich-labour.org.uk twitter.com/suffolkfabians
- ISLINGTON**
18 March: David Lammy MP. 7.30 at the Italian Advice Centre, Canonbury Rd, London N1 2UT. Details of this and all other meetings from Ed Rennie on edrennie@gmail.com
- LEEDS**
Details of all meetings from John Bracken at leedsfabians@gmail.com
- MANCHESTER**
Society reforming. Details from Rosie Clayton on mcrfabs@gmail.com www.facebook.com/ManchesterFabians Twitter: @MCR_Fab
- The MARCHES**
Society re-forming. If you are interested, please contact Jeevan Jones at jeevanjones@outlook.com
- MERSEYSIDE**
Please contact Hetty Wood at hettyjay@gmail.com
- MIDDLESBOROUGH**
Please contact Andrew Maloney on 07757 952784 or email andrewmaloney@hotmail.co.uk for details
- NORTHUMBRIA AREA**
Please contact Pat Hobson: pat.hobson@hotmail.com
- NORTHAMPTON AREA**
Please contact Dave Brede on davidbrede@yahoo.com
- NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE**
Please contact Richard Gorton on r.gorton748@btinternet.com
- NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**
Details from Lee Garland: secretary@nottsfabians.org.uk, www.nottsfabians.org.uk, Twitter: @NottsFabians
- OXFORD**
Please contact Michael Weatherburn at michael.weatherburn@gmail.com
- PETERBOROUGH**
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**
18 March: Portsmouth's PPCs John Ferrett and Sue Castillon on 'Why we Need a Labour Government'. 7.30 at the Havelock Community Centre, Fawcett Rd, Southsea. Details from Dave Wardle at david.wardle@waitrose.com or 02392 812012
- READING & DISTRICT**
Please contact Tony Skuse on 0118 978 5829 email tony@skuse.net
- SHEFFIELD**
Regular meetings on the 3rd Thursday of the month at The Quaker Meeting House, 10 St James St, Sheffield, S1 2EW. Details and information from Rob Murray on 0114 255 8341 or email robertljmurray@hotmail.com
- SOUTH EAST LONDON**
Contact sally.prentice@btinternet.com
- SOUTH WEST LONDON**
Contact Tony Eades on 0208487 9807 or tonyeades@hotmail.com
- SOUTHAMPTON AREA**
24 March: AGM and meeting. For details of all meetings, contact Eliot Horn at eliot.horn@btinternet.com
- SOUTH TYNESIDE**
17 April: Annual Dinner with speaker Emma Lowell-Buck MP. Contact Paul Freeman on 0191 5367 633 or at freemanpsmb@blueyonder.co.uk for tickets and information
- SUFFOLK**
21 October: Dr Jenny Morris on 'Rethinking Disability Policy' 27 November: Lord Roger Liddle on 'The Europe Dilemma' 7.30 at Ipswich Library Lectur4e Hall Details from John Cook - ipswichlabour@gmail.com, www.twitter.cdom/suffolkfabians
- SURREY**
26 April: AGM 2.30 followed at 3.00 by Danialle Spencer of CARE International on 'The Syrian Refugee Situation. Meetings at Guildford Cathedral Education Centre at 3.00pm. Details from Robert Park on 01483 422253 or robert.park.woodroad@gmail.com
- TONBRIDGE & TUNBRIDGE WELLS**
17 April: Sandy Siemansky from the Open University on 'Critical Evaluation of Social Policy' 15 May: Discussion on the Outcome of the General Election Meetings at 8.00 at 71a London Rd. Contact John Champneys on 01892 523429
- TYNEMOUTH**
Monthly supper meetings, details from Brian Flood on 0191 258 3949
- WARWICKSHIRE**
All meetings 7.30 at the Friends Meeting House, 28 Regent Place, Rugby. Details from Ben Ferrett on ben_ferrett@hotmail.com or warwickshirefabians.blogspot.com
- WEST DURHAM**
Welcomes new members from all areas of the North East not served by other Fabian Societies. Regular meeting 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 0BG, tel, 01388 746479 email Alan.Townsend@dur.ac.uk
- WIMBLEDON**
Please contact Andy Ray on 07944 545161 or andyray@blueyonder.co.uk
- YORK**
Regular meetings on 3rd or 4th Fridays at 7.45 at Jacob's Well, Off Micklegate, York. Details from Steve Burton on steve.burton688@mod.uk

Fabian News

Noticeboard

Date for your diary

Annual House of Lords Meeting and Tea

Tuesday 14 July at 2pm

Tickets £20 from Deborah Stoate: debstoate@hotmail.com

Fabian Fortune Fund

WINNER:

Richard Pennell £100

Half the income from the Fabian Fortune Fund goes to support our research programme. Further information from Giles Wright, giles.wright@fabians.org.uk

FABIAN QUIZ



HOW TO RUN A GOVERNMENT, SO THAT CITIZENS BENEFIT AND TAXPAYERS DON'T GO CRAZY

Michael Barber

The secrets of successful government from Michael Barber, one of the world's experts on carrying out lasting improvements in public life.

Billions of citizens around the world are frustrated with their governments. Political leaders struggle to honour their promises and officials find it near impossible to translate ideas into action. The result? High taxes, but poor outcomes. Cynicism not just with government but with the political process. Why is this? How could this vicious spiral be reversed?

In this book Michael Barber draws on his wealth of experience of working for and with government leaders the world over to present a blueprint for how to run a government. Using contemporary cases from every continent and classic examples from history, he makes a case for a new approach. From Downing Street to Punjab, Charles I to Churchill, this book shows that the solution is less about ideology and more about clear priorities and meticulous planning.

Penguin has kindly given us five copies to give away. To win one, send us your predictions for the following:

What is the number of seats the Labour party will win at this year's general election?

Please email your answer and your address to review@fabian-society.org.uk and we will select the five closest guesses.

Or send a postcard to: Fabian Society, Fabian Quiz, 61 Petty France, London, SW1H 9EU



ANSWERS MUST BE SUBMITTED BEFORE THURSDAY 7 MAY TO BE CONSIDERED



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SAVE THE DATE

Fabian Summer Conference, Saturday 6 June 2015

We are excited to announce that this year's Fabian Summer Conference will take place just one month after the general election, on 6 June 2015, at a Central London venue (TBA).

We will announce our speaker line-up and timings following the election, but in the meantime you can book your place – with a special discounted rate for Fabian members, at www.fabians.org.uk/events/fabian-summer-conference-2015/



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