

# FABIAN REVIEW

*The quarterly magazine of the Fabian Society*

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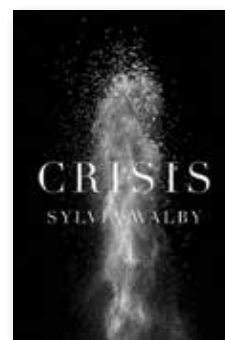
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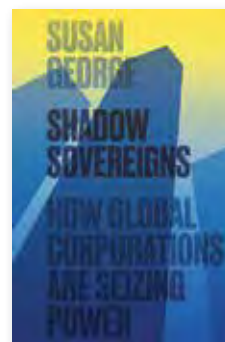
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**FABIAN  
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Fabian Review is the quarterly journal of the Fabian Society. Like all publications of the Fabian Society, it represents not the collective view of the Society, but only the views of the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

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## Opposition territory

Labour answers can be radical, so long as it contests the same terrain as the Conservatives, writes *Andrew Harrop*

CONGRATULATIONS TO JEREMY Corbyn on a famous victory. He has earned a mandate to test a different path for Labour, and while his promise of a shift to the left comes with huge political risks, in fairness, so did ‘business as usual’.

After all, in a little over four months, the mainstream of the Labour party suffered two extraordinary election defeats. In May it was rejected by the country, and now it has been spurned by its own members and supporters. For that reason all those in the Labour family who did not support Mr Corbyn need to reflect with humility and make a deep commitment to rebuild, reach out and reconnect.

But with Labour’s leftward shift comes the danger that the Conservatives will steal Labour’s clothes and present themselves as the sole occupants of the ‘one nation’ centre of British politics. Despite the Conservative ultras in the wings, David Cameron and George Osborne know that their continued success lies in reaching deep into Labour’s intellectual and geographic territory.

For supporters of the Ed Miliband project, this induces mixed feelings. Because of the agenda Labour set this May, the UK will have a ‘national living wage’, an apprenticeship levy, extended free childcare, non-dom tax reform and an extra £10bn for the English NHS. Some of these pledges go further than Labour could have dared, because the Tories have ‘credibility’ – and no one to criticise them from the right.

But other aspects of Osborne’s agenda for ‘working families’ are entirely bogus. The summer budget was by far his most regressive, with huge cuts to in-work social security. And the rhetoric of lifting people out of tax is a facade for tax changes that benefit upper-middle income

groups. On average, the poorest third of families are set to lose approaching £1,000 a year, while those in the second highest income decile will see no change.

Now Labour must oppose with spirit and cunning, in order to unmask policies which are not what they seem – and which do not paint a true picture of the nation we are. The party should attack the welfare bill both because it will bring pain to so many low-to-middle income homes, and also because well-judged opposition will enable Labour to change how people think. The task this autumn is to convince voters that poverty has become a story not of ‘Benefits Street’ but of ordinary low-paid families unable to make ends meet.

After a campaign based on passion and principle, Corbyn must now learn to fight battles on the issues that matter to typical families, not his own activists. That includes talking about the areas where the party was trusted least this year – spending and immigration. By no coincidence these are the issues where the opinion of party activists is furthest from those of its former voters. Jeremy Corbyn must start by listening hard to Labour’s 2015 deserters.

But this is not a call for triangulation, which is not a word that’s in this leader’s lexicon. The party’s answers can be radical, so long as Labour contests the same territory as the Conservatives and brings new thinking to the table, not rigid certainties from the past. Labour must face the future.

115 years ago the Fabian Society helped found the Labour party to bring radical change to Britain. That is only possible when Labour is able to challenge the orthodoxy of the times, but also secure the democratic support of the British people and find practical answers that work. **F**

# Shortcuts



## BEFORE WE MOVE ON

We still need to confront what New Labour was and what it might have been—*Emily Robinson*

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Around this time last year, I wrote a paper on Ed Miliband and his relationship with Labour's past. I argued that he was able to invoke Labour's traditions more easily than his predecessors because the political questions they involved were effectively settled. He could afford to be pictured at the Durham Miners' Gala, for instance, because – despite a few alarmist columns – there was little expectation that he would be returning to a large-scale programme of nationalisation (let alone re-opening the pits!). And when he spoke of 'moving on from New Labour, but not going back to Old Labour' only the first half of the formula carried any political weight, because only that past was still open; the break with 'old' Labour had already taken place.

But if this summer's leadership contest has taught us anything, it is that there are no closed questions in politics. The past can always reignite.

One of the few things for which Miliband has received credit was holding the party together, and avoiding any splits between Brownites, Blairites, and what we might now think of as Corbynites. Just as the 'one nation' message attempted to reconcile the different parts of Britain, so it also tried to hold together the different parts of the Labour party. This could have been a politics of inaction. Yet, at the centre of the one nation project, were the beginnings of some very serious attempts to think through what had happened during 13 years in government, and to produce a new vision of what both the party and the country could look like.

One of the most interesting lines of thought was that it was possible to reject what New Labour was, while defending what it might have been. In the *Fabian Review* in 2013, Stuart White and Martin

O'Neill set out a convincing vision of what they called 'The New Labour That Wasn't'. As they put it, the very ideas that New Labour rejected so strongly (a decentralised, pluralist approach to both the economy and the political system) were also those that had underpinned the whole project at its outset. In a similar vein, Jon Cruddas has frequently spoken of the richness and the romanticism of early New Labour, and even suggested that it was rooted in the ideals of the ILP. Underlying both these accounts lies the question of how to recapture this spirit, and to rekindle these possibilities.

## We need to understand why New Labour inspired so much optimism for a programme that was far more radical than is often remembered

This emphasis on the lost paths of British politics has clear echoes of Blue Labour. That project rightly gained a reputation for fetishising the periods when Labour was not in office, for preferring the Lansburys to the Attlees. But rethinking and reclaiming the lost potential of New Labour was perhaps a more productive enterprise. It was intrinsically about grappling with a project of government and its relationship to the power of the state.

The idea of reframing New Labour in this way might not have been to everyone's taste, but at least it had the virtue of reckoning with the past – confronting both what it was and what it might have been. Unfortunately this project never quite got off the ground. Unpicking the wreckage of the past seemed less important than 'moving on'. And in the scramble for that elusive 35 per cent of votes, any clarity over which parts of New Labour's record to own and which to deny was lost.

And here we are, coming out of a leadership election that, on the face of it, seems to have been about nothing but New Labour and its legacy. But in fact there has been very little attempt to examine this for what it really was. It is not a past that can be easily dismissed as just a wrong turn, or a dead end. But neither can it be uncritically accepted as the necessary path that Labour had to take.

We need to understand why New Labour inspired so much optimism, from such a broad swathe of the population, for a

programme that was far more radical than is often remembered. This can't be reduced to media management, fiscal caution and market liberalism, as both its detractors and defenders often seem to suggest. There was also a promise of a 'new politics': social democratic, pluralist, localist and optimistic; based on robust public services, a strong conception of citizenship, powerful communities, and an outward-facing approach to the world. But we also need to think about where it went wrong – why New Labour in government became managerialist, tribalist, centralising and defensive. And most of all why it ended up justifying things as they were, rather than trying to create a new conception of the common good.

This shouldn't just be put down to bad faith. We need to think about the pressures (internal and external) that forced the party in that direction, and come up with strategies to resist them next time around. In the rush to 'move on' from the Miliband years, it would be a shame if this project was lost. There is still a great deal of difficult thinking to be done. **F**

*Emily Robinson is a lecturer in politics at the University of Sussex*

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## GREEN NOTES

Tackling climate change is now an issue of economic credibility—*Alastair Harper*

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It is an unusually mild November morning in 2005, and Tony Blair has just spent three quarters of an hour hiding in a back room of the Business Design Centre, Islington. Instead of addressing the CBI's annual conference, as he is meant to be doing, he is avoiding a pair of Greenpeace protesters, who are dangling from the rafters and

dropping confetti onto the business-like audience below them. They say they will stop the protest if the CBI allows them to speak for 10 minutes on the issue about which they are protesting (nuclear power). The CBI director general, Digby Jones, explains that he “doesn’t give in to ultimatums”. In the end, the prime minister gives his speech in the food hall next door.

10 years ago, this might have been read as a typical interaction between business and environmental groups, Venn circles with almost no overlap of interests. In 2004, Digby Jones warned against the government’s plan to reduce the UK’s emissions by 20 per cent, asking them not to risk “the sacrifice of UK jobs on the altar of green credentials”.

But a decade down the line, the interests of business and environmental campaigners have aligned, little by little. The CBI’s current director general, John Cridland, states that “climate change is one of the most critical issues facing business and society. Both the science and the economics are clear: we must act now, or pay a greater price later.” Meanwhile, Greenpeace still has a problem with the prime minister; but this time, as they recently put on their blog, they’re asking why the ‘party of business’ is ignoring the markets and damaging the main growth industries of this century.

If the CBI is worried about climate change’s impact on society, and Greenpeace are campaigning in defence of the market, clearly, something has changed. That thing has been a deliberate decision to use the power of the market as the means by which we decarbonise.

Rather than funding publicly-owned low carbon generation, we have, instead, attempted to push capitalism towards the outcome we need, and have built a competitive low-carbon-generation market. But this requires government involvement to set the rules; any market of this kind requires the state to act as referee.

So, in 2001, the UK government made vehicle excise duty cheaper for less polluting vehicles, and Nissan chose to build their electric vehicle factory in the north east of England. We started planning for zero carbon homes in 2006, and the construction industry spent the next decade getting ready to build them, and exporting the skills they acquired as a result. The government’s Green Investment Bank was launched in 2010, and in June this year made its 50th investment – £2 million into heat recovery projects in Scotland.

This has been a remarkable success. The last four years’ worth of investment in renewables, to the tune of some £40bn,

is equal to the growth in total private investment in the same period. And, just as it’s boosted our economy, it’s had a radical effect on our emissions. With all this activity, we haven’t reduced our emissions by 20 per cent, the figure Digby Jones so feared. As of last year, we’ve reduced them by 36 per cent.

In terms of big national infrastructure, low carbon is the only serious option when it comes to attracting private investment. In the last infrastructure plan from the Treasury over half of planned investment was low carbon – some £174bn. The vast majority of that staggering sum will come from private businesses choosing to invest in this country. Setting the right rules allowed us to use the private sector to deliver low carbon infrastructure we need – unlike the high-carbon infrastructure investment in the pipeline, most of it roads, where the public sector has to foot the whole bill itself.

### The Green Deal has delivered far less than expected

But now something has changed again. All the policies mentioned above, and many more, have been dropped in the first few months of the new government. Adjustments to policies may have made sense. The Green Deal has delivered far less than expected. Meanwhile, renewables have proven more popular and more efficient than the system for guaranteeing them a price, the Levy Control Framework, could handle. But no one expected arbitrary scrappage without, so far, any replacement. It leaves a question mark for investors who now lack the policy structure they need to invest and, crucially, lack the trust in the longevity of any government policy that comes next.

The reaction from investors has been one of dismay. £174bn is a great deal of global investment for the UK to put at risk. This is bad timing when world leaders are going to be delivering major progress on climate change in Paris this December – and encouraging global investors to back low carbon. They will be reaching for their cheque books and the risk is we blow the chance for them to pick the UK as their beneficiary. So tackling climate change is no longer just an issue of morality, or chasing ‘the green vote’ – it’s about economic credibility. Not taking it seriously could be damaging for any politician whose reputation is built on their economic credibility. How much damage it does to investment into this country, we’ll have to see. **F**

*Alastair Harper is head of politics at Green Alliance*



### BACK TO COLLEGE

Labour still hasn’t got the balance right in how it picks its leader

—*Dick Leonard*

For the first 80 years of its existence, the Labour party’s leader was exclusively chosen by its MPs. In those years there was provision for an annual ballot when the party was in opposition, but there were only eight contests. Clem Attlee, for instance, led the party for 20 years, but was never again challenged after he was first chosen in 1935, when he defeated Herbert Morrison and Arthur Greenwood.

In fact, there were only two occasions when the incumbent was challenged during the whole period, when Hugh Gaitskell defeated Harold Wilson in 1960, and Anthony Greenwood the following year. The last election held under this system was in November 1980, following the resignation of James Callaghan, a year after his general election defeat by Margaret Thatcher in May 1979.

Four candidates contested the leadership, and Michael Foot narrowly defeated Denis Healey on the second ballot. By this time, there was irresistible pressure within the party for ordinary members to be involved in the election of the leader and deputy leader.

On 24 January 1981, at a special conference at Wembley, the party endorsed a procedure under which they would henceforth be chosen by an electoral college, with 40 per cent of the vote allocated to affiliated organisations (predominantly trade unions) and 30 per cent each to MPs and individual party members.

Michael Foot remained leader, and the new system was not put into effect until his resignation, following his defeat in the 1983 general election. Just before this election there had been a general election in Australia, where the Labor leader, Bill Hayden, was generally expected to be heavily defeated by the prime minister Malcolm Fraser’s right-wing coalition. However, on the very day the election was called, Hayden was persuaded by colleagues to stand down, in favour of his very popular deputy, Bob Hawke. Hawke then routed Fraser, and

Hayden's reward for his 'self-sacrifice' was to be appointed as foreign secretary in the new government.

In Britain also, the polls were pointing to a heavy Labour defeat, and perhaps with the Australian example in mind, Gerald Kaufman, then the shadow foreign secretary, sought an interview with Foot, at which he strongly urged him to make way for his deputy, Denis Healey. This was the only way, Kaufman argued, that Labour could hope to win the election. Foot declined, and Labour suffered its heaviest defeat since 1935. It is unlikely that Healey would have been able to pull it off against Margaret Thatcher, still adorned with the laurels of the Falklands War, but few doubt that he would have done better than Foot.

The electoral college system survived until 2010, when it produced the embarrassing result that Ed Miliband was elected ahead of his brother, despite polling fewer votes. No one was more embarrassed than Ed, who exerted himself to secure amendments to the system, ostensibly designed to limit the influence of trade union leaders.

In fact, the major consequence of the changes agreed was sharply to cut down the role of Labour MPs. They previously controlled a third of the votes, but were now reduced to fewer than 300. Individual MPs found that their votes counted for no more than those of any other party member. What the MPs retained was their monopoly over making nominations, seen as a guarantee that the party would never choose a candidate who had only minimal support in the PLP.

That guarantee was effectively thrown away by the two dozen or so MPs who, while not intending themselves to vote for Jeremy Corbyn, light-heartedly decided to nominate him, in order 'to broaden the choice'. Together with the decision that 'party supporters' could buy voting rights for £3 per head, this is likely to lead to widespread dissatisfaction with the result, irrespective of who emerges as the winner. There will undoubtedly be demands for further changes 'next time'.

It would be impracticable, and undesirable, to go back to a system of election by MPs, and difficult to withdraw the newly-granted rights of party supporters. A better option would be to restore the electoral college, but with a different weighting of the various sections. My suggestion would be 30 per cent each for MPs, affiliated organisations and party members, and 10 per cent for supporters. This, I believe would be a truer representation of the balance of opinion within the party.

The leader should be elected for a (renewable) term of two and a half years. This is more appropriate for a fixed-term parliament, giving the membership an opportunity to reconsider their choice halfway through, if they think they have made a mistake. **F**

*The paperback version of Dick Leonard's History of British Prime Ministers: Walpole to Cameron will be published in November*



## SPENDING CHOICES

Labour must choose its moments to hurt the government—*Karim Palant*

The biggest worry people who didn't vote Labour cite for not doing so is that Labour would spend too much. 40 per cent told a poll commissioned by the TUC that it was fear of Labour profligacy that prevented them supporting the party in 2015 – by far the highest, ahead of fear Labour would make it too easy to live on benefits and be bossed around by Nicola Sturgeon in second and third place. The story is similar for non-voters as well.

We have now lost two consecutive general elections on a platform which the public saw as arguing for higher spending, whether or not we actually were.

How to respond is the argument the Labour party is having at the moment – and George Osborne's autumn spending review will be the moment when this internal debate goes public.

You may think this is about economics. But responding to the spending review is an exercise in politics as much as economics.

One position is that the main goal of Labour in opposition should be to oppose 'austerity' more vehemently and that this was not sufficiently argued in the last parliament.

Why is latter point so frequently – if misleadingly – made? I have a theory. Losing valued services, seeing vulnerable people worse off, is painful. Many on the left want, more than anything else, to see the party they choose leading the fight against that hardship.

It is inconvenient, therefore, that the main reason people didn't vote Labour was fear we would spend too much. And it is even more inconvenient if the conclusion is that we need to do more reassuring on spending and less shouting about cuts.

The answer for advocates of the first approach is making the implausible claim that fear of Labour overspending was caused by Labour not shouting loud enough about the merits of higher spending. If this is right, then responding to the spending review is easy. It should involve marches and protests and campaigns to save almost everything.

But it isn't right – and it will end with another Labour defeat. Because spending five years reinforcing the electorate's biggest fear about you is only ever going to end that way.

An alternative approach is, in the jargon, to 'close the issue down' – proactively agreeing with George Osborne's spending plans. We should therefore not point out that to achieve a budget surplus George Osborne has no need to make the 40 per cent cuts to unprotected departments he is considering. That many vital departments will have been sliced almost in half is something to be lamented privately, if lamented at all.

Two problems. First, you don't need to be an advocate of a core vote strategy to see that stoking the idea that the out of touch Westminster parties are all the same won't see Labour win. Labour wins when people believe politics things can change for the better.

Second, it won't survive contact with reality. No leadership candidate has held the line that the government's £12bn welfare cuts are right or fair. An approach that depends on achieving the impossible is no strategy at all.

Which brings me to the approach I would advocate. It is harder to explain and harder to do day to day. And it is Labour's only chance.

The sporting analogy that most closely fits the task of leading the opposition is an opening batsman facing a world class fast bowling attack. You don't choose the pitch. You must play a straight bat and pick your shots. Take your limited chances to score. And even if you duck, you might still get hit.

You must avoid taking a swipe at every passing government decision – and avoid slogging around the country, promising the earth. But equally you cannot simply defend and say as little as possible. Winning means taking calculated risks – choosing your moments to give the government a good whack. That has to begin with the spending review.

Even if overall surplus by 2019/20 is the right goal – controversial in itself – then 40 per cent cuts to unprotected areas are over the top. And there will be serious

damage done to social care, the police and other areas. But the leader must pick their battles, and have the strength to get Labour MPs and shadow ministers to defend those choices. That includes asking some shadow ministers to lower their own profile rather than argue against specific cuts.

The leader will need to hone their argument down to a few simple statements that make a wider argument for how Britain could be doing better. They should be saying nothing high profile which does not reinforce this purpose.

And the choice of what is opposed, or advocated, should not be based on emotions, social policy, or even economics. They should be based on what helps to tell that wider story the leader is seeking to tell. About themselves and about the Tories' failure.

Governments don't U-turn often – and never if the opposition is not at the races electorally. Oppositions can only say stuff. If they choose to say the things that make it more likely they win then – as at times in the last parliament – George Osborne may back off his most extreme policies for fear of losing.

And if they continue they may well win. The Tories only have a majority of 12. They can be beaten. By contrast, protesting against every passing problem is the surest way to lose – and to guarantee another five years of impotent protest. **F**

*Karim Palant was head of policy to Ed Balls*



## A NEW PARTNERSHIP

Clinicians and politicians must work together to decentralise and depoliticise the NHS—*John Fabre*

The NHS has few, if any, equals in terms of the ambition of its objective. The principle on which it was established is that good health is central to the life of every citizen, and that guaranteeing this irrespective of the ability to pay is a social ideal of the utmost value.

The NHS remains an admirable institution, but is in decline. There is a curiously fractured situation between civil servants and politicians on the one hand, and on

the other the large majority of doctors, nurses and other NHS staff. The former are proceeding with overwhelming confidence and enthusiasm. The latter feel disconnected from the system they are working in, and morale is low and falling.

There are two core issues to be addressed for the NHS to enter its second 70 years as a successful medical and social enterprise.

The first is that the NHS must be a genuine partnership between politicians and clinicians. Large numbers of votes hang on how well governments are perceived to be doing with the NHS. Consequently almost every aspect of the NHS is politicised.

Government influence and ultimate control over the NHS is necessary – but if it is ever to have stability, the NHS must operate at arm's length from politicians.

Government policies can have devastating effects. The Labour government's decision in 2004 to remove out-of-hours responsibility from GPs has reduced the quality of out-of-hours care, and has had an ongoing and major destabilising effect on the hospital service. The coalition government's 2012 Health and Social Care Act is leading to privatisation and fragmentation.

The second core issue is the need for clinically informed leadership and a national leadership structure. Leadership currently involves politicians and civil servants, with very little input from doctors and nurses. There is no national structure for the flow of information, ideas and responsibility, which is essential for any large organisation, especially one with more than a million employees and a budget of £110bn.

A clinically strong and democratically legitimate NHS England board, along with equivalent boards for the other UK regions, is an essential foundation for the future NHS. Only 4 of the 17 current NHS England board members have a medical or nursing background. The board should be modified to include 15 nominees from the medical Royal Colleges (covering general practice, nursing and all major clinical specialties), two members from regional GP boards and 2 from chief executive boards. Thus constituted, the NHS England board would be broadly based clinically and have substantial democratic legitimacy. It would provide an excellent advisory board, and play a key role in the formation of policies. These are crucial roles that the current NHS England board is simply not structured to play.

The need to improve leadership at individual hospital level is one of the most serious issues facing the NHS. Average tenure of chief executives is currently less than 2 years, suggesting a transient managerial role.

Very few chief executives have a medical or nursing background. The provision of high quality chief executives in each of the several hundred teaching and district general hospitals in England is almost certainly unachievable unless the minority of NHS consultants with the appropriate personal qualities takes on this role. The chief executive role would be for set periods, say four years renewable once, and consultants would retain some clinic work, say one day per week. Chief executives would form regional boards and a national board, in order to better tackle both local and national problems.

General practice is being driven by unrestrained market forces and political pressures into an industrialised service with an impossibly high workload and an unsatisfactory organisational structure. Young doctors are turning away from general practice. It is a complex problem, and there are no credible solutions on offer.

General practice must be a service focused entirely on achieving excellence in primary medical, nursing and social care. The current management culture confuses boundaries with barriers. The only meaningful barriers are operational ones, for example when hospitals are unable to return patients to primary care because of a lack of nursing or social support.

In these proposals, GPs would have responsibility for all primary medical and social care, and would be organised into regional GP boards covering geographical areas corresponding to the 211 existing CCGs. However, commissioning of services and the internal market would be discontinued. The new regional boards would be run by GPs with different perspectives and objectives.

The key immediate objective in general practice must be reduction in workload. This can be achieved in part by the effective deployment of 5,000 or 6,000 additional GPs to practices throughout England over a transition period of three to four years, and also by ensuring that the demands made on GPs by the government are clinically sensible. Once this is achieved, the overwhelmingly important task will be negotiations for reintroducing a GP-implemented out-of-hours service along the lines of the 2004 GP cooperatives.

No more reorganisations is the current mantra. However, without reorganisation of the current situation, the trajectory of the NHS is towards its demise. These proposals are fundamentally towards a simpler and far more stable structure. **F**

*John Fabre is professor emeritus at King's College London. For a full version of this article please visit [www.thecircleofmuses.co.uk](http://www.thecircleofmuses.co.uk)*





## OUR MOVEMENT

Labour's new leader says the party must stop being a machine and start being a movement again

—Jeremy Corbyn

Labour has many challenges to win in 2020. But the first challenge we must meet is for us as a party. We need to be united in our identity and our values – proud of what we stand for, and confident and credible that we can deliver a better society.

To do that, we have to stop being a machine and start being a movement again. Our party was founded to stand up to injustice, but too often we have lost our way. We've listened to the counsel of the Westminster commentariat rather than our people and our communities, and been cowed by powerful commercial interests and the press.

Our best media is our movement: the people who organise in their workplace or who are active in their communities, they will deliver our message. If we listen to those people – value their wisdom and insight, rather than just seeing them as foot soldiers – we can produce a shared vision that can take the country with us.

The more we exclude our people, the weaker we are. I propose that we review our membership fees to become as inclusive as we can. We need to democratise our party, involve people in new and creative ways, and campaign with them for change at a local, national and global level.

We need to stop looking at the electorate through party labels, asking how can we win back Tory voters? How can we appeal to SNP voters? How can we outflank UKIP?

This is the politics of the machine, which sees elections as a game to win – and recreates the world in its image. It constructs the electorate as 'Terraced Melting Pot' or 'New Homemakers' or 'Suburban Mindsets'. We reduce the electorate to faceless categories, and target them with specially tailored policies.

This is not how politics works. We are not trying to sell people on trying a new



Corbyn rally © Ciaran Norris

brand of washing powder. Instead, we must listen to our local trade unions, local parties, local councillors, constituency MPs and local members who know their communities. They know the people and the issues they face. We need strong networks in every location, built from the bottom up, not dictated to from above.

Top-down behaviour has to end. Labour has drifted into a presidential model of politics in which the leader and their office comes up with all the policies. I want to change that. In the past when Labour party conference voted for something the leadership didn't like, senior MPs were wheeled out to tell the press that it would be ignored. That alienates our support and undermines our principles as a democratic socialist party.

We cannot simply make policy at party conference once a year. We need to review our policy-making process to ensure that it is inclusive, accessible, participatory and able to take democratic decisions quickly when necessary.

This will help to rebuild trust not only in our party, but also in the idea that government can empower people and transform society.

We also have to bust the myths that there is less money around and austerity is inevitable. Austerity is not an economic necessity, but a political choice. That is not just my assessment but that of some of the world's leading economists, among them Nobel laureates. The idea that a crash caused by boardroom greed and cabinet neglect should be paid for by cuts to the services and benefits of all is not a Labour idea.

We must become an anti-austerity movement, but we must do more than that. Together we must build a vision for a modern prosperous and sustainable economy that works for all, not just a few.

At the last election, 34 per cent of people who were registered to vote didn't vote. They are more likely to be younger, from an ethnic minority background and to be working class – as are the hundreds of thousands who are not registered to vote at all.

These are the people who would benefit most from the sort of Labour government I know we all believe in: that stands up against discrimination; that reduces inequality and poverty; that campaigns with people for a fairer society for all.

If we had convinced just one in five of those who didn't vote then we would today have a Labour government. And I know too that we can win back the trust and support of many of those who left us in 2015 for the Conservatives, UKIP, the Greens or SNP.

Ours is a movement to give people hope – the hope of a better world, with less injustice and more equality, peace and solidarity. Together we need to agree policies that will achieve those goals and then campaign for them, winning more people over with our principles and giving them hope that things can be better. If we do that, the election will then be ours for the taking. **F**

*This is a version of an essay which first appeared in *Leading Labour: The Fabian essays*, published in August. The full version can be found at [www.fabians.org.uk](http://www.fabians.org.uk)*

*Jeremy Corbyn is leader of the Labour party*

# The art of opposition

The Conservative government's goal is to occupy the centre ground and lock Labour out of power for a generation. *Ruth Davis* and *Ed Wallis* set out a strategy for how Labour can establish a new identity in opposition and rebuild its relationship with the people of Britain



*Ruth Davis is a writer, campaigner and political analyst*



*Ed Wallis is editorial director and senior research fellow at the Fabian Society*

**I**T IS FIVE months since the exit poll that shattered Labour's dreams of a return to office after just one term. Now, after an extraordinary and unexpected summer of internal debate, the party must face up to the task the electorate has presented it with for the next five years: opposing the first majority Conservative government of the 21st century.

The message that has reverberated from the leadership contest is the importance of offering a clear alternative. Labour's professional political class has seemed unable to muster anything that looks, sounds and feels any different to business as usual; to the dark suits and yawning platitudes that have constituted our mainstream politics in recent times. Jeremy Corbyn's obvious authenticity and demonstrable difference have driven a coach and horses through the party's supposed certainties.

In light of this, there will be some temptation for Labour to become the party of 'no', burnishing its anti-austerity mes-

sage, and through this seeking to offer greater moral clarity against the intensifying Tory cuts. The strong parliamentary presence of the SNP will heighten the allure of this route.

It would, however, be unwise for Labour to forget the lessons of its recent defeat. The first fruits of Jon Cruddas's review into why Labour lost provided an important reminder that "the majority of voters in England and Wales supported the Tories' austerity measures" and that "the idea of an anti-austerity alliance with the SNP is unacceptable to a majority of English and Welsh voters." What's more, recent Fabian research has estimated that 4 out of 5 of the votes Labour will need in English and Welsh marginal constituencies to win in 2020 will have to come direct from people who voted Conservative this year. So how can Labour credibly oppose the Conservatives while also rebuilding its relationship with the people of Britain? How can it offer a clear economic alternative at the same time as winning back trust?

## The movement is everything

Labour's first job will be to build and strengthen the relationships that allow it to stay together as a party and a movement, whilst tackling these big questions. Keeping Labour united was once seen as Ed Miliband's greatest achievement, but has subsequently been deemed a dereliction, a failure to 'have the argument'. But now, after talk of viruses, resistance and a battle for Labour's soul, the risk is that the party skips over renewal and regeneration to dive head-first into factional splits. Labour must find a way to have a deep rethink of its creed in a humble, civilised and plural manner. Indeed, the generosity and openness of this internal conversation will be a critical test of the party's ability to match the Conservative's 'one nation' offer. A party unable to come together around its own sense of the common good is unlikely to be able to build a sense of common purpose with the electorate.

This means doing politics differently at every level. Traditionally, so much weight has been placed on the party leadership and the parliamentary party – and while they must be its frontline, actually renewal will come from below. Labour has always been a movement or it is nothing, and the democratic energy unleashed by the leadership contest has been a sight to behold. Now there is an opportunity to harness this and for local parties to build on the work of the American community organiser Arnie Graf in the last parliament, with which the party's engagement ultimately proved piecemeal and superficial. Labour's future lies as a radically decentralised organisation, where shared values and a sense of purpose emerge through relationships and action, rather than being imposed from above.

If the Labour party pursues this genuinely democratic project of institutional renewal, the task of the leadership will be to capture the emerging sense of shared priorities and reflect them in a politically salient strategy of opposition.

## The Conservative's 'one nation' challenge.

In parliament, the starting point for any opposition is the Queen's speech, the road map to the legislative year ahead. This is not just where a government defines its purpose, but is an opportunity for an opposition to do the same. It is a framework for an alternative story about the country, and the fulcrum for building campaigns outside Westminster.

The programme laid out by the Conservative party earlier this summer – in the Queen's speech and the budget – was designed to put the Labour party on the wrong side of a set of political arguments that the government believes will damage it for a generation, and accelerate its decline as a party of the working class.

From immigration to trade union rights, from welfare and apprenticeships to the living wage and English devolution, the ground has been laid for a titanic narrative struggle. The Conservatives will attempt to present themselves as the party of quality education, affordable homes and decent wages for working people. At the same time, they will encourage Labour to use its political energy on opposing spending cuts, defending welfare, and aligning itself with big public service unions (which provide the party with a substantial part of its funds).

This sets Labour an unprecedented challenge, because blanket opposition to the measures on the table will give

the Conservatives exactly what they want, whilst risking mortal damage in the eyes of the electorate. The test of Labour's skill will be whether it can use this hazardous environment to spring the trap laid for it, and instead establish a new identity and purpose that takes it beyond the government's intended stereotypes.

First and foremost, this will require it to capture the public imagination with a vision of the economy that achieves social justice through means other than just fiscal transfers: tax and welfare. An economic vision founded on contribution, reciprocity and the empowerment of citizens had begun to emerge before the last election through the policy review process, before it was abandoned by the leadership as they sought to 'shrink the offer'. Returning to this framework, which has broad support across many parts of the party and was built through conversations at a constituency and local as well as national level, would finally allow Labour to challenge the Conservative's one nation pretensions, whilst reclaiming its own historical grounding as the party of work and workers.

## Opposing opportunities

Part of the response to the Conservative's political gambit will be inevitably short-term and tactical. As well as the need to resist the most egregious legislative measures – or at least paint them as partisan and extreme, a departure from the 'common sense of the age' – the party will want to demonstrate that it can cause the government discomfort. But the choice of which fights to pick should be determined by the basic tasks of opposition: are there places where bad law can be made better, or where the government's dominant narrative can be disrupted or undermined?

This requires looking at where the government is politically vulnerable, but also where cross-party and non-partisan alliances can cause it serious problems. In an era of rock bottom political trust, voices from outside of party politics can be uniquely effective in rallying opposition. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 is a good example from the last parliament, where Labour was able to secure significant amendments and political capital by working with GPs, the BMJ, the King's Fund and the Royal Colleges, all of whom were lined up against Andrew Lansley's reforms. As we look forward, the IFS will generally carry greater weight than Labour in determining (for example) if the government's budgets really do 'hit the poorest hardest'. The potential to call on voices such as these should help guide Labour in choosing where to focus its opposition.

## Yes and, instead of no but

Some areas of obvious potential include the proposed reductions in working tax credits, which have already been condemned some self-styled 'one nation' Conservatives; the EU referendum bill, where the government is inevitably mired in in-fighting; and the troubled and divisive HS2 project.

No doubt these upcoming battles are already whetting the appetite of some Labour MPs. But to succeed in the job of re-building electoral trust and credibility, and to thwart the Conservative's bigger political project, there are also areas where Labour must learn a language of unambiguous support, like the devolution bill.



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Despite serious attempts to develop a distinctive Labour localism in the last parliament, Labour has been comprehensively outflanked on the issue by the ‘northern powerhouse’ project. ‘Devo-Manc’ is a fantastic opportunity to build civic pride, spread power, drive efficiencies and turn around some of the country’s worst health outcomes. It is also an opportunity for Labour politicians to control significant regional budgets at a time when it is out of power in Westminster. Cornwall’s new powers are a chance to put down roots in one of poorest regions of the country, where there is almost no Labour presence at all. Yet Labour has gone out of its way to find fault with the government’s devolution deal, too often sounding grudging and churlish. Instead, as Tristram Hunt put it in a recent speech to Demos, “we must shelve our timidity, match the Tory offer and go beyond it”. Better still, the plans to do so should be shaped and articulated by those already running successful Labour councils.

### Strategic attack

But the biggest test for Labour will come in the form of the strategic elephant traps that have been laid by the Conservatives with such precision. While these are undoubtedly politically fraught, they also present opportunities for

deep thinking about the party’s intellectual underpinnings. They are the prisms through which Labour must ask itself what is it for, in modern Britain?

A case in point: Labour’s meltdown in the high-summer sun over the welfare bill. It has been obvious for a long time that one of Labour’s biggest strategic weaknesses is that it is seen as the ‘party of welfare’. As a recently unearthed memo written by Ed Miliband’s pollster in 2010 put it: “Labour is seen to have been a principal architect and defender of a benefits culture.”

The easy thing to do here would be to blame the right-wing media for promulgating a ‘scrounger’ narrative, attempt to reframe ‘welfare’ as ‘social security’, and oppose the cuts with a righteous fervour. The harder thing would be to accept that, when people think of Labour as the ‘party of welfare’, they have a point. Ultimately, Labour’s welfare bind is a reckoning with how it has conducted its core business for over half a century: the ‘end’ of a more equal society has been pursued almost exclusively through the ‘means’ of the tax and benefits system. Fiscal transfers to alleviate poverty have been Labour’s way, more than tackling market inequalities at source or investing in the productive economy. So now the welfare bill asks it to choose between the devil of supporting greater inequality, or the deep blue sea of being on the wrong side of public opinion. The chal-

lenge for Labour is to develop a different answer – one that prioritises work and contribution, and reimagines the left’s purpose in an era of globalisation, scarce resources and complex problems.

If Labour were able to offer an answer of this kind, they would have a least a chance of defining themselves on their own, rather than the Conservative party’s terms. In so doing, they would also free themselves to exploit the Conservative’s weak flank: a welfare reform programme that leaves working people worse off. But to get a hearing on this issue will require a reckoning not just on welfare, but on the wider politics of austerity.

The biggest electoral task facing Labour is to restore people’s faith that their money is safe in the party’s hands, that taxes will be spent wisely. This is not the same thing as agreeing with George Osborne’s spending plans or accepting the increasing haste of the state’s retreat from public life. Nor is it the same thing as accepting the Conservative’s wider analysis about the economic necessity of austerity. But it does mean recognising that the sharp differentiation from the government which the party seeks on spending must be found within a very shallow pool of economic trust; and that by proclaiming itself an ‘anti-austerity’ party, rather than laying out how it plans to invest in the productive economy, Labour will dry up that pool still further.

All this points to the need for a political story that foregrounds the re-distribution of power rather than fiscal transfers; and makes the case for prudent public spending, focussed on areas that build the economy and have huge public support – including education, health, and essential infrastructure.

The trade union bill will provide a significant opportunity to set out this story clearly, if Labour is brave enough to take it. Undoubtedly, this is a pernicious and politically motivated piece of legislation, which will be fought tooth and nail as a partisan attack on Labour’s funding streams and an affront to workers’ rights. But with unions at risk of strengthening their ‘dinosaur’ caricature, what if Labour recast it as a moment to reimagine industrial democracy in a postindustrial society?

This will require the whole of the labour movement to be self-reflective and clear-sighted. Union membership has been in decline for decades, a symptom of the hollowing out of a manufacturing economy and the rise of a service one. The density of union membership in the public sector continues to mask its dearth in the private. It is now a decade since the labour market expert David Coats warned in the Fabian pamphlet *Raising Lazarus* that “the rhetoric of struggle, strikes and strife has little purchase on the opinions of employees who care more about ‘getting on’ than ‘getting even’.” Little has changed in tone in the intervening years, meaning how unions look from the outside – white, male, middle aged, manual workers – rarely matches up with the profile of their members, who are more often than not graduate women working in offices.

Rather than weakening the unions, achieving the centre-left’s goals in the new economy requires them to

have a much stronger role, putting democracy right at the very heart of how the economy functions. The aim must be, as GDH Cole put it, to move trade unions from “a bargaining force to a controlling force”: a bulwark against the overriding power of capital, right at the very heart of the firm. This would require much closer partnership working between business and unions, putting trust, long-termism and shared endeavour at the heart of a new British business model.

The labour movement needs to broaden its appeal beyond its declining traditional foundations, taking root in the emerging sharing economy and new forms of work like freelancing.

Understandably, the tense battle over the bill will enflame passions, but the labour movement must be careful not to miss

the opportunity to set out a much more radical alternative and provide an inspiring vision of free, democratically-accountable trade unions.

This effort, like so many, will be immeasurably strengthened by working at a grassroots level to campaign for, and indeed to build the alternative that Labour should be proposing in Westminster. A labour movement actively working to establish democratic trade unions in ‘hard to reach’ low-wage private sector work places will be both a more credible political force, and a more powerful force for good in the lives of those it seeks to represent.

## Conclusion

Labour’s task might sound Herculean; but in reality there are a relatively small number of things that an opposition needs to do well, once (and if) it has recaptured a more confident sense of its own identity.

In simple terms, Labour will need to mount a critique of the government’s actions based on an understanding of where the Conservatives are politically weak; and to use the government’s own legislative and budgetary programme as a springboard for a new story about how Labour would govern differently. Ideally, the party should support both parts of this work with grassroots campaigns that reflect and establish facts on the ground.

Opportunities to inflict defeats on the Conservatives as and when they come along will of course be tempting. But they should be exploited within this overall discipline of principled opposition; that is, opposition that either delivers better practical outcomes for the people of the country, or builds Labour’s credentials as an alternative government.

Labour has a duty to take the responsibility of opposition seriously, and do the job well. The government has made little secret of the fact that its intention is to use this parliament to cement Labour into a series of choices and attitudes that will alienate it from working people. Its goal is to occupy the centre ground and lock Labour out of power for a generation. If Labour sets out humbly to rebuild its relationships with those people, and through this to shape a vision for a just and democratic economy, it will not only have renewed its sense of purpose; it will also have regained its freedom to act. **F**

## The biggest electoral task facing Labour is to restore people’s faith that their money is safe in the party’s hands

## Political cross-dressing

The revival of compassionate conservatism means Labour will have to move out of its political comfort zone, argues *Tess Lanning*

While Labour was busy debating who should lead the party over the next parliament, George Osborne and David Cameron moved swiftly to close down political dividing lines and broaden electoral appeal.

Thus the first Conservative budget in almost two decades was billed as ‘a budget for working people’. The chancellor even included tweaked versions of Labour’s manifesto pledges on skills and low pay, with the introduction of an apprenticeship levy and a ‘national living wage’ for over 25 year olds. Commitments to slow the pace of spending cuts, increase childcare provision, crack down on non-payment of the minimum wage and build a new ‘northern powerhouse’ are further examples of political cross-dressing.

With only a fragile majority, the revival of compassionate conservatism represents an ambitious bid to reach into traditional Labour heartlands and respond to the rise of nationalist parties in England and Scotland. These measures also seek to address the biggest policy failures of the last parliament. In five years the coalition did little to address the unbalanced nature of the UK economy. Productivity is still below its pre-crisis peak, in part because growth has been concentrated in low paid sectors. As a result families were on average worse off on the eve of the election campaign than they were in 2010, and levels of low pay and insecurity remain unacceptably high.

Labour has a key role to play in holding the government to account on this agenda. The focus on working people is a significant shift for the Conservative party, which has long argued that growth is best driven by providing incentives and rewards for a few firms and people at the top, whose wealth will eventually ‘trickle down’ to everyone else. Deregulation is seen as the key to productivity, and the party struggles to embrace progressive market intervention, even when there are clear concentrations of power that are bad for business and consumers.



Look a little closer and the contradictions are easy to spot. The budget prioritised tax give-aways to large corporations and the wealthy over frontline services and support for small businesses. The enhanced minimum wage rate for over 25 year olds provided cover for large cuts to tax credits that will leave many working families worse off. Measures to tackle the cost pressures and unfair practices people face in the markets they rely on for their everyday needs, such as energy, transport and housing, are notably lacking.

The Tory shift to the centreground is also an opportunity for the Labour party to re-examine its own historic mantle as representatives of the interests of working people in government – and what that means in an era of fiscal austerity.

The last Labour government improved living standards by investing heavily in public services and support for working families. But the same levers are not available today. The intellectual task in the post-crash world is how to build a fairer and more prosperous society without spending more money.

In the last parliament, Labour argued that this required more active intervention to build an economy that supports rising living standards, and a willingness to take on powerful interests where they are an obstacle to this. They called for sensible market reforms – rather than new spending commitments – to underpin affordable energy, transport and housing supply and drive a higher skill, higher wage growth model.

A core challenge for the next five years is to apply the same rigour to the state – reforming public services to meet the needs of a more diverse and ageing population within

current spending constraints. Attempts to reduce waste or spend money differently are politically difficult, as they usually involve shifting existing entitlements from one set of people and priorities to another. These necessary but painful trade-offs require a new approach to public service reform – one that does more to involve people in the decisions that affect their lives and communities, and puts in place structures that seek to balance the interests of different stakeholders in a given area. Higher performance standards, better training and more democratic governance structures would also enable frontline staff to respond better to the needs of the communities they serve.

Whether Labour is able to convince a deeply sceptical public that they can deliver more with less will be crucial to addressing its own electoral weaknesses in the years to come. But the need to reform is not just about value for money. The failure of the European left to respond effectively to austerity politics has left a vacuum that is increasingly being filled by the return of destructive nationalism to the continent. Democratic renewal of the institutions that govern social, economic and political life could provide a route to addressing this disillusionment with mainstream politics.

For Labour in opposition, this means understanding how to combine efforts to build a majoritarian coalition for change at national level with a deeper connection to the communities it represents. Efforts to strengthen local leadership could also inform a distinct, centre-left approach to the issues of most concern to disenfranchised communities, such as patriotism, identity and immigration. In other words, like the Tories, today’s political fault lines may require Labour to move out of its comfort zone. ■

*Tess Lanning worked as a policy adviser to the Labour party in the last parliament. She is writing in a personal capacity.*

## Show and tell

Labour must shine a light on the government's housing policies and show that we have better solutions, writes *Helen Hayes*

Everyone knows we're in the grip of a housing crisis that's been years in the making. It's the biggest issue facing my constituents in London: since I was elected as an MP in May, housing has been far and away the main concern in my surgeries. There are more people than ever on council waiting lists in London, huge numbers of people with insecure, short-term private tenancies, and a whole generation for whom owning their own home is currently an unattainable aspiration. The impacts of the crisis are wide-ranging and far-reaching – from the health consequences of poor quality homes, to children without the space at home to do their homework, and young people unable to put down roots because they continually have to move as each short-term tenancy comes to an end.

In this context, the government has announced a series of housing policies, the most high profile of which is the extension of the right-to-buy to housing association tenants, funded by the forced sale of council homes. This policy is designed to appeal to those in the midst of the crisis and opposing it is a conundrum for Labour. Right-to-buy speaks to many people's individual hopes very directly and the Tories are already using it to question Labour's commitment to 'aspiration'. But we cannot equivocate on a policy which even the *Daily Telegraph* described as "economically illiterate and morally reprehensible". The key to our opposition is understanding the aspirations it seeks to appeal to and unpacking its serious technical flaws. We must then propose better, more effective solutions and demonstrate at local level, the ways in which Labour can deliver.

First, we can oppose the extension of the right-to-buy on its own terms: 'aspiration'. Aspirations for housing run both wide and deep – our desire for security, permanence, a place that we can make our own. These aspirations are for an essential standard of



decency, affordability and security, whatever tenure type we live in or aspire to. By focusing their flagship policy on a group of people who are, on the whole, already well-housed in affordable homes and by funding this through the further forced sale of council homes, it will become harder for many more people to fulfil their own aspirations for a decent, affordable, rented home. It will add further pressure to the private rented sector, driving up private rents and making it even harder for private renters who want to buy their own home to save for a deposit. This policy will undermine the housing aspirations of many more people than it will deliver for.

Second, we must be clear how completely flawed this policy is technically. There are few in the housing sector who think that it is a good idea. It flies in the face of the Tories' reliance on independent housing associations as the mainstay of the social housing sector since the 1990s. Extending the right-to-buy involves significant state intervention in the stock of independent housing associations and, by de-stabilising the asset base that they borrow against in order to invest in new homes, it will stop them from being part of the solution to the housing crisis. Unless the Tories are prepared to fund the provision of new homes up front, there can be no confidence that the homes sold will be replaced, as only 1 in 20 homes sold under right-to-buy since 1980 have been replaced to date. We need to work with a broad coalition of housing providers to make the case that this policy lacks competence and to propose alternative solutions.

Finally, Labour councils and mayors must demonstrate our commitment to tackling the housing crisis. We must show, not only that we understand housing aspirations, but that we can help our communities to realise them. The key to addressing the housing crisis is building more homes to rent and to buy across all housing tenures. Labour councils are already leading the way on the commitment to deliver new council homes, and on a proactive approach to planning which delivers new social housing via section 106 planning gain and the community infrastructure levy.

From 2010–2014, Labour Southwark and Lambeth delivered 2570 and 2250 new affordable homes, while Tory Hammersmith and Fulham, Lib Dem Sutton and Green Brighton delivered just a fraction of these (500, 700 and 340 respectively). We should also be firm in our support at local level for models such as shared ownership and rent to buy, which enable people to save in order to buy their own home without any net loss of affordable housing, as well as more private sector homes, which will help to reduce the cost of buying for those who aspire to home ownership.

Labour must be resolute and unequivocal in our opposition to the extension of right-to-buy in London. Not because we question people's aspiration to own their own home, but because housing aspirations are about decency and affordability as well as ownership and because extending the policy will thwart the aspirations of far more people than it will benefit.

Most importantly, we can oppose this policy most effectively by demonstrating that we have more effective solutions to offer and that we are delivering them in local government. **F**

*Helen Hayes is MP for Dulwich and West Norwood and a member of the CLG select committee*



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# We can work it out

Chuka Umunna started the summer as leadership frontrunner but ended it returning to the backbenches. He talks to *Mary Riddell* about life under a new leader and how to rebuild the Labour project



*Mary Riddell is a columnist for the Daily Telegraph*

**N**OT LONG BEFORE the new Labour leader was announced, Chuka Umunna bumped into a constituent in a Streatham supermarket car park. “I asked him who he was supporting, and he said: ‘Well, you’re not going to like it, but I’m voting for X.’” (Though the former shadow business secretary declines to name the mystery contender, it seems clear that X equals Jeremy Corbyn).

“My constituent told me that he just wanted a fight; that he wanted a leader who would say what he thought in the media and the Commons about ‘these damned Tories.’ He accepted that would not get us elected, but he said the election was not for a long time. I reminded him that when we

last chose that course, the extreme injustice of years of Tory government boiled over, and we had two riots in the 80s in my constituency.”

Umunna accepts that there were diverse triggers for the Brixton riots. “The primary cause was racism in the police, but [Lord] Scarman found that a huge contributory factor was poverty and inequality.” Is he really suggesting that a Labour party led by Corbyn could pave the way for violence and uprisings? Though the new leader’s name is never mentioned, it appears so.

“I really hope we won’t see a repeat of the social unrest we had during the last long period of Conservative government. [But] I wouldn’t dismiss it. The longer the Tories are



in, the more social injustice we will see. If history teaches us anything, it's that if you want a more just world, then at some point electability has to come into view."

When we first meet, the latest chapter in Labour party history is still unwritten. Although the announcement of the new leader is then some days away, it is clear that Corbyn has already won. The impending landslide is inscribed not only on betting slips and in pollsters' forecasts but on the face of Chuka Umunna, who withdrew his own bid for the leadership. At the end of a long and wearying contest, the candidate-who-never-was appears more exhausted than the actual contenders.

We speak again exactly 24 hours after Corbyn stormed to victory. Although neither of us knows it, this is to be Umunna's last day in the shadow cabinet. While he had decided that he could not serve a leader who was not unequivocally committed to staying in the EU, nor did he wish to follow the example of colleagues who had staged instant departures.

"I'm not planning to serve in [Jeremy's] shadow cabinet," he told me when we first met. "But I didn't want to resign immediately, because we've got parliamentary business for which I am responsible."

And so Umunna planned to remain in post to argue the opposition's case on the trade union bill that came before the house 48 hours after Corbyn was elected.

"I thought that going off and leaving them in the lurch when they hadn't even appointed anyone in my place would be wrong," he told me on the eve of the debate. "I will have a discussion with him [Corbyn] about these things. I totally respect others who have resigned, but I have immediate business." A few hours later, Umunna was gone. In a meeting described as "businesslike and collegiate", his offer to stay was declined by the new leader. As Umunna was informed, his successor, Angela Eagle, was already in post.

Umunna had not expected any attempt to keep him. Corbyn's team had not previously "offered anything specific, but they wanted to know my position," and his mind was already made up. "I don't intend to carry on in shadow cabinet," he told me. Nonetheless, the speed with which Corbyn pre-empted a politician as skilful as Umunna reveals an unexpectedly ruthless streak.

If Umunna was startled at the speed of his departure, he was "not wholly surprised" by Corbyn's vast mandate. "It became clear soon after the YouGov poll [which predicted the eventual result some weeks beforehand] that barring a miracle, he was going to win. I was expecting a resounding victory. Usually Labour supporters and members believe that you make your values real by getting into government, but that is not the desired outcome at present. That will change as a general election draws nearer, but the desire for now is the greatest protest against what is happening. I may not agree with that, but I understand it."

In the short term, the departure of Chuka Umunna stands as an emblem of New Labour's fall. A moderniser who struck many Blairites, and Tony Blair himself, as a future leader, he now faces a long spell on the backbenches. The role swap under which Labour's mainstream voices

have become the insurgents has not seemed an entirely easy process for Umunna.

The news, early in the contest, that he and Tristram Hunt, the former education spokesman, were setting up a group named Labour for the Common Good prompted media speculation on a "Resistance" movement to advance the modernisers' agenda from within the ranks of the parliamentary party.

So angry was Lord Prescott that he accused Umunna of disloyalty. "I had a lively discussion with John – just put it like that ... Somebody decided to leak [the group's founding] to a newspaper and put a particular spin on it – which is part of the problem with the culture of the parliamentary party. It's become quite factional. We need to get off that."

Umunna, who finally left the shadow cabinet promising not to be "a thorn in the side" of the new leader cites the Tories' "much more open approach" to incubating new thinking outside and within parliament as his model. "There used to be a rich tradition in the Labour party of different groups – Tribune and others. That had a negative side because it bred factionalism, but there was a positive side [too]. You actually had colleagues coming together and talking about policy."

Having been portrayed (unfairly, he says) as veering from confrontation to emollient, Umunna favours qualified co-operation with Corbyn. "We have to accept the result ... and try and make the thing work. I don't think frankly the party would forgive us if we did anything but that. I think it's very unlikely that [Corbyn] would junk many of the positions he's campaigned on. But ... while one may not serve in shadow cabinet, that does not mean one doesn't support the leader and ensure the party gets elected again."

Had his mentor, Tessa Jowell, been chosen for the mayoral nomination, Umunna was considering devoting much of his time to helping her. The unsuccessful campaign of Liz Kendall, whom he backed, and the defeat of Dame Tessa, signify the closing of routes to a politician for whom all avenues once seemed open.

Trained as a lawyer and billed as the British Obama, Umunna's background was one of wealth on his mother's side (his grandfather was Sir Helenus Milmo, a prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials) and of poverty on his father's. Bennett Umunna, a penniless migrant from Nigeria, subsequently became a successful businessman before dying in a car accident when his son was in his teens.

Umunna won his Streatham seat in 2010 and embarked on a parliamentary fast track. Briefly Ed Miliband's PPS, he was made shadow business secretary in 2011 by the new leader he once referred to as his "mate." Though he served loyally in the shadow cabinet, that warmth appeared to evaporate amid rumours that Umunna, like other senior colleagues, felt that they were not given sufficient leeway to air their plans.

Were his talents under-used? "I wouldn't put it quite like that. Ed took responsibility for the defeat, and I don't think that's fair because it was a collective failure. All I would say is that there were difficult times." Tellingly, he embarked on

### Having been portrayed (unfairly, he says) as veering from confrontation to emollient, Umunna favours qualified co-operation with Corbyn

the general election campaign believing that Labour would fail. "I started the campaign thinking we would lose in probability and that there would be a renewal of the coalition. I didn't expect a Conservative majority."

The actual result, and Miliband's immediate resignation, gave Umunna his chance to replace him as leader. Hailed as the favourite even before he had declared his candidacy, he withdrew early on, thus removing one obstacle in the Corbyn ascendancy. Does Umunna think that he could have stopped Corbyn and blame himself for failing to try?

"People have been very generous about what might have happened. But I don't necessarily share the view that things might have turned out differently. So I don't think that. I have never thought: Oh my goodness, I might have stopped this."

Though his decision not to fight is now long past, it still seems curious that as shrewd a media operator as Umunna should have been blindsided by the press attention he cited as his reason for quitting the race. He admits now that he felt it incumbent on him to heed those urging him to stand. "I did feel a degree of duty to those urging me to put myself forward ... I completely under-estimated the extent to which my girlfriend, my family, my loved ones would be [scrutinised]."

But he, I suggest, was the one who appeared to draw his girlfriend, the employment lawyer Alice Sullivan, into the public glare. "I'd appeared with her in public several times before. Until you're actually in the eye of the storm it's hard to know how you and people around you will think about it ... I felt terrible about it. My family is incredibly important and precious. I've said that I could live without leading the Labour party, or [without] politics. For once I decided to put the rest of my life first."

Untrue rumours about his sexuality or financial circumstances were, he says, merely part of the speculation to which he was subjected. "There was drugs! The other [story] doing the rounds was that I had a family member in Isis. Part of the relief of getting out [of the race] was the liberation from all that nonsense. I have nothing to hide. You don't put yourself forward as party leader or a high profile member of shadow cabinet if you do have anything to hide."

There was another trigger for his exit. "Part of the judgment was whether I was ready or whether I needed to spend more time thinking about how you renew social democracy. I'd always had doubts about whether I should put myself forward or whether I needed more time to think about this stuff. If this contest has exposed anything, it's that we haven't rebuilt the Labour project properly since 2007."

Nor, in his view, did modernisers like him understand the trauma of the general election rout. "We underestimated the emotional upheaval precipitated by the result. Members who had been campaigning for Labour candidates were in deep grief. It was a massive shock to the system. Others were, and still are, very angry and bewildered."

"In order to make an argument for an alternative way forward, you have to build relationships. We're not very good at doing that with people who are part of our party, never mind maintaining good relations with others." Moderates, he says, relied on factual evidence and rational argument. "It wasn't wrong, but we failed to engage with the emotion. We displayed a woeful lack of emotional intelligence in making our argument, and that includes myself."

Too often, he says "it sounded like we were dismissing people who were critical of New Labour and saying they were mad ... How on earth are you going to persuade people of a case if you don't meet them where they are?"

The Blairite old guard, I suggest, don't get that message. "Blair does." Then why would he tell Corbyn sympathisers to get a heart transplant? As Umunna says, the former leader later offered a much more nuanced view. So he got it wrong first time? "People got it wrong."

As for the question of how Labour modernisers could get it right, Umunna might be the first to admit that the ideas on offer seem amorphous compared to Corbyn's clearcut prospectus. The future direction will "draw on New and Blue [Labour]." His party, Umunna believes, must emulate the Tories, who incubated ideas in a range of think tanks and in-house policy units before "grabbing the best of those new ideas."

As he has previously said, he favours asking Arnie Graf, Ed Miliband's sidelined community organiser, to mobilise those new members amenable to centrist policy. "The worst thing that could happen would be if the new joiners were a flash mob who came in and left after the result." There seems little sign of that happening while Corbyn is still able to command the excitement that eludes Labour's beleaguered moderates.

Where will the focus be for the radical thinking that Umunna's own sub-group plans to undertake? "A lot of it will revolve round the conception of the state and what it can do in an era of globalisation. And secondly, how can we make supranational co-operation much more meaningful and effective."

"If we set ourselves up as an alternative [to Corbyn], I'm not sure that will win over the movement. We want to feed powerful ideas into the debate, and hopefully the leadership will run with them. We shouldn't be seen as an opposition. I know this is going to be a difficult thing to pull off because inevitably the media will be looking to juxtapose one view against another, but there may be quite a lot of common ground. I agree with Jeremy Corbyn that we have to change the culture of the Labour party."

But as Umunna warns, sooner or later Labour will have to confront the question of how it gets elected again. "I believe very strongly that there isn't a choice to be made between your values and principles and being popular and plausible. The two are mutually dependent. That is why Keir Hardie and the party founders were clear that Labour was there to take government in order to deliver for the people. Now Jeremy has won, it will be good to have the debate about how Labour gets into office."

How, with Corbyn at the helm, will it all end? "Whether we get back into office depends on the programme. I'm very clear that a Labour government is better than a Tory one." It is conceivable, he believes, that Corbyn will lead the party into power in 2020. "Anything is possible as the last few months have shown. I wouldn't want to make any predictions about the next general election."

In the next few months, it will become clearer whether Labour is heading for victory or for the wilderness years that gave rise to civil unrest. Whichever scenario prevails, Chuka Umunna, the candidate who escaped the maelstrom, will be waiting for his second chance. ■

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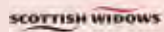
TIMING/ROOM	INFORMATION	SPEAKERS	PARTNERS
12.30–13.45 <i>Lancing Suite</i>	<b>HOW CAN LABOUR WIN BACK OLDER VOTERS?</b>	Caroline Flint MP (Don Valley), Peter Kellner (president, YouGov), Caroline Abrahams (charity director, Age UK), Andrew Harrop (general secretary, Fabian Society), Martin Kettle (associate editor, The Guardian – chair)	
12.30–13.45 <i>Glyndebourne 2</i>	<b>HAVE WE TAKEN WOMEN FOR GRANTED?</b>	Helen Goodman MP (member, Treasury select committee), Fiona Twycross AM (economy and fire spokesperson, London Assembly Labour group), Ivana Bartoletti (chair, Fabian Women's Network), Abena Oppong-Asare (deputy leader, Bexley Labour group), Alice Perry (local government representative, Labour NEC)	 
14.15–15.30 <i>Lancing Suite</i>	<b>FUTURE OF THE LABOUR PARTY</b> <i>Pamphlet launch</i>	Ivan Lewis MP (Bury South), Josh Groves (campaign manager for Jess Philips MP), Steve Morrison (founder, Use Your Voice), Johnson Situ (councillor, Peckham), Alvin Caprio and Jessica Toale (project leads and joint chairs)	
16.00–17.15 <i>Lancing Suite</i>	<b>CLOSING THE GAP:</b> <b>How should we deliver a health and care service for the 21st Century?</b> <i>Pamphlet launch</i>	Malcolm Clark (coordinator, Children's Food Campaign, Sustain), Martin Edobor (vice-chair, Young Fabians), Amrita Rose (former chair, Young Fabians Health Network), Sophie Keenleyside (chair)	
18.00–19.15 <i>Lancing Suite</i>	<b>FABIAN QUESTION TIME</b>	Dan Jarvis MP (Barnsley Central), Angela Rayner MP (Ashton-under-Lyne), Will Hutton (political economist and writer), Yvonne Roberts (chief leader-writer, The Observer)	
21.00–23.00 <i>The Old Market*</i>	<b>FABIAN SOCIETY RECEPTION</b> <b>By invitation only</b>	Special guests throughout the evening	

## ROUNDTABLES

by invitation only ([events@fabians.org.uk](mailto:events@fabians.org.uk))

### 60-SOMETHINGS:

Work, money, family and health in the decade of transition

Partner: 

### SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE:

Getting young people ready for the world of work

Partners:   

### CHARTING A NEW COURSE:


















A local agenda for Labour and business (private dinner)

Partner: 

### THE LOCAL HEALTH SERVICE?

Healthcare devolution in practice

Partner: 

	TIMING/ROOM	INFORMATION	SPEAKERS	PARTNERS
MONDAY	12.30–13.45 <i>Lancing Suite</i>	<b>NORTHERN POWERHOUSE: Spin or substance?</b>	Nick Forbes (leader, Newcastle city council), John Hollande-Kaye (chief, executive Heathrow), Tony Travers (director, LSE London)	
	12.30–13.45 <i>Glyndebourne 2</i>	<b>THE PATH TO PROSPERITY: Solving Britain's productivity puzzle</b>	Seema Malhotra MP (shadow chief secretary to the Treasury), Stephen Doughty MP (shadow minister for trade and industry), Terry Scouler (chief executive, EEF), Heather Stewart (economics editor, The Observer),	
	14.15–15.30 <i>Lancing Suite</i>	<b>DEFENDING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT</b>	Keir Starmer MP (former director of public prosecutions), Emily Thornberry MP (Islington South and Finsbury), Ivana Bartoletti (chair, Fabian Women's Network), Kate O'Rourke (chair, Society of Labour Lawyers, and solicitor), Reema Patel (secretary, Fabian Women's Network, and democracy commentator)	 
	18.00–19.15 <i>Lancing Suite</i>	<b>CITIZENSHIP, CONTRIBUTION, AND RESPONSIBILITY: Is the left ready for a new social contract?</b>	Stephen Twigg MP (shadow justice minister), Maurice Glasman (Labour peer), Michael Lynas (chief executive, NCS Trust), Melanie Onn MP (Great Grimsby – chair)	
	18.00–19.15 <i>Glyndebourne 2</i>	<b>PRICED OUT: How can we meet the extra costs of disability?</b>	Kate Green MP (shadow minister for women and equalities), Elliot Dunster (group head of policy, research and public affairs, Scope), Howard Reed (director, Landman Economics), Catherine Scarlett, Andrew Harrop (general secretary, Fabian Society – chair)	
TUESDAY	19.45–21.00 <i>Lancing Suite</i>	<b>A BLANK CHEQUE? What can austerity Britain afford for older people?</b>	Debbie Abrahams MP (member, work and pensions select committee), Janet Morrison (chief executive, Independent Age), Eleanor Southwood (vice-president, RNIB), Andrew Harrop (general secretary, Fabian Society – chair)	  
	10.15–11.30 <i>Lancing Suite</i>	<b>LABOUR'S PURPLE PROBLEM: How do we respond to the challenge of UKIP?</b>	Dan Jarvis MP (Barnsley Central), Rowenna Davis (former parliamentary candidate for Southampton Itchen – invited), Rayhan Haque (project lead, Labour's Purple Problem), Martin Edobor (vice-chair, Young Fabians – chair)	
	11.45–13.00 <i>Lancing Suite</i>	<b>FUTURE OF EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY ROUNDTABLE</b>	Seb Dance MEP, Catherine Ashton (former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – invited), Darina Agha (international secretary, Swedish Social Democratic Youth League), LJ Davies (chair, Young Fabians International Network – chair)	
	18.00–19.15 <i>Lancing Suite</i>	<b>THE WEEK IN REVIEW: The speech, the leader, the party</b>	Lisa Nandy MP (shadow secretary of state for energy and climate change), John McTernan (political commentator and strategist), Tim Montgomerie (columnist, The Times), Andrew Harrop (general secretary, Fabian Society – chair)	
	18.30–19.30 <i>Hilton Brighton, Hall 7 – Tyne*</i>	<b>FROM EMERGENCY RELIEF TO LONG-TERM RECOVERY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</b>	Virendra Sharma MP, LJ Davies (chair, Young Fabians International Network), Yotam Polizer (senior project developer and psychosocial support coordinator, IsraAID), Amrita Rose (chair)	 
	19.45–21.00 <i>Lancing Suite</i>	<b>CAMPAIGNING AND BEING HEARD IN THE NEW MULTI-PARTY ERA</b>	Richard Angell (director, Progress), Olivia Bailey (research director, Fabian Society), Katie Ghose (chief executive, Electoral Reform Society), Neal Lawson (director, Compass)	  



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## Too far, too fast?

*Andrew Harrop* considers Jeremy Corbyn's policy proposals and suggests they need an injection of Fabian gradualism



*Andrew Harrop is  
general secretary of  
the Fabian Society*

**L**OOKING AT THE Corbyn insurgency through the prism of policy risks misunderstanding its essence. Corbynmania, at its heart, reflects a yearning for a different way of doing politics – a departure in tone, mindset and organisation from the orthodoxies of mainstream Labour. But people also voted for Jeremy Corbyn because of his radical policy agenda – and following his election, he now has a mandate to pursue it. So what does the Corbyn platform look like and how should the non-Corbynite left react?

Corbyn stood on a left-populist platform which succeeded because it sounded distinct from the mushy managerialism of other Labour voices: an end to austerity, scrapping university tuition fees, capping rents, renationalising the railways, cancelling Trident renewal, rejecting a North Atlantic trade deal. A list like this pulls at the heartstrings of the political left. Some of it is popular with the public too, with rail renationalisation the standout example. But even when it is not, it has the characteristics of populism – it is simple and emotional.

This is not necessarily a criticism because, after New Labour and the failure of the technocratic Miliband project, the left needs to be wary of too much equivocation and complexity. For example, Corbyn's humanity and compassion when talking about immigrants and benefit claimants compares favourably with the painful contortions of the Miliband era. But this case also illustrates how much distance there is between the emotions of the Labour selectorate and broader public opinion.

Typical voters, while potentially sympathetic to individual items on the Corbyn shopping list, are likely to feel that collectively it amounts to an extreme agenda. After all, the public has just rejected Ed Miliband, even though they liked most of his specific policies. This was both because they feared a leap into the unknown and because of Labour's past record on spending, immigration and welfare. The Corbyn platform is unlikely to induce a different response.

The same is true when it comes to foreign policy, the area where Corbyn's views were best known before this summer. While some of his ideas will attract public sympathy, in particular his commitment to the Palestinian cause and his scepticism regarding military interventions, his stance on nuclear weapons and NATO will not. And even when people agree with the positions Corbyn takes on individual issues, they may soon detect that these are bound together by a polarised 1980s worldview, based principally on antagonism towards the United States. This is not an outlook that most British people share, and it also leads Corbyn to some views which are disturbing even for many on the radical left. For example, while Corbyn has championed justice and self-determination for oppressed peoples across the world, he backs an imperialist 'spheres of influence' approach when it comes to Russia and Ukraine.

There is more to the Corbyn platform, however, than left-populism at home and anti-Americanism abroad.

During his campaign he shone a spotlight on issues which have often been neglected, including the arts, life-long learning, mental health and harassment of women. If Corbyn can draw such forgotten issues into the mainstream, then he will leave a lasting and welcome legacy whether he is leader for five months or five years.

There is also more continuity with Labour's recent past than initially meets the eye. Across whole swathes of domestic policy, his platform represents supercharged Milibandism: like Ed, Jeremy wants to champion public investment and establish a National Investment Bank, crack down on tax avoidance, dash for zero-carbon electricity, build hundreds of thousands of new homes, re-regulate buses, hold a constitutional convention, extend free childcare and challenge zero-hours contracts. Even on austerity, their views are not as far apart as they first seem, because Ed Miliband's fiscal plans actually gave him a lot more room for manoeuvre than he dared admit during the election.

In most of these cases, Corbyn wants to travel down the route Miliband charted, but go further and faster. Sometimes that is for the good. There was often an insipid caution to Miliband's micro-scale policies, with Labour politicians struggling to shed the mindset of former ministers. For example, Labour made little pro-

gress with its exciting plans to integrate social care into the NHS, and never committed the money for building the homes its own numbers said were needed.

But sometimes the Miliband caution was correct, where the practicability of a policy was in question. For example, the Corbyn campaign has promised action on tax abuse and tax reliefs on a scale which most experts think is unachievable. And in some areas Corbyn's policies risk hurting the very people they are designed to help. Take Corbyn's call for all private rents to be capped relative to local earnings, which goes far beyond Miliband's proposal for controls on rent inflation during the life of a tenancy. The charity Shelter has warned that this will reduce housing supply and make it harder for people to find affordable housing.

It's the same story with employment. Corbyn has called for a £10 per hour national minimum wage, with no reduced rate for young people or apprentices. If implemented rapidly this would be certain to reduce employment, especially among the young. Other Corbyn policies might have the same result, for example the introduction of 'day one' protection from unfair dismissal, banning all zero-hours contracts, scrapping welfare-to-work conditions and significantly increasing benefit payments for young people.

These aren't all necessarily bad ideas, but they pose risks, so they should only be introduced incrementally, with robust piloting and evaluation. The left must cherish the Fabian tradition of evidence-based policy.

Poorer families would be the first to suffer if Corbynomics were to lead to fewer jobs and affordable homes. They

**There is more continuity with Labour's recent past than initially meets the eye. Across whole swathes of domestic policy, his platform represents supercharged Milibandism**

might also be victims of his proposals for monetary policy, which are likely to fuel inflation. During the leadership election, Corbyn proposed that the Bank of England should create money for public investment, seemingly on an on-going basis. While some variant of this scheme might have been a sensible option in the depths of the financial crisis, as a permanent policy it is not. If pursued on a sufficient scale this ‘people’s quantitative easing’ would inevitably drive up prices. Corbyn is right that the UK needs a permanent, structural increase in investment, but printing money to spend on infrastructure can only be a temporary, cyclical intervention before it triggers inflation.

Corbyn should instead have called for the government to significantly increase borrowing (especially while it is so cheap) in order to create new assets, an entirely orthodox position for macroeconomists and accountants. Yet while his solution is flawed, it is to Corbyn’s credit that he is seeking a step-change in public investment. This is one of several examples of where Corbyn’s policy platform seeks to respond to big strategic challenges facing the UK.

In thinking about their solutions, the task is to eschew both unrealistic populism and tepid managerialism, by creating long-term frameworks of escalating action, of a sufficient scale to achieve radical change. Against this benchmark, his proposals for both energy and housing have much to commend. However, in places they also feel very statist, with little appreciation that such challenges need responses from both government and markets.

When it comes to energy, Corbyn says he wants community energy generation and a wide diversity of suppliers, but his main priority seems to be to renationalise the energy grid and the ‘big six’ companies, which would stall green energy investment. With housing, while his commitment to a huge programme of social housebuilding is welcome, he seems to see local authorities, rather than housing associations, as the exclusive builders of new affordable homes. Meanwhile he rejects any significant moves to free-up the land market by re-zoning a proportion of greenbelt, which many now think must be part of the solution to the housing crisis at least within the borders of London.

These are examples of where Corbyn’s platform seems out of touch with the changing face of Britain, despite his strapline ‘Vision for Britain 2020’. He seems hostile to motoring, when it now has a zero-carbon future. He says little about the evolution of work, as innovation in technology and job design transforms an economy once built around large employers. And he has not explained how he will marry people’s expectations for personal control and power with his collectivist vision for public services.

Corbyn, rightly, sees fundamental reform of taxation as another major strategic challenge. So far, however, he has willed the ends, but not the means. He has committed to ensuring that the whole tax system is progressive, but a new Fabian report *Tax for Our Times* shows this will entail huge upheaval. Corbyn has talked about large businesses and the super-rich paying their due. But he will need to go much further and develop a plausible strategy for raising taxes on the income and wealth of the top 10 per cent, as well as the top 1 per cent, while cutting the burden of indirect taxes for people living in poverty. He seems keenest on a 5 pence rise in national insurance on earnings over £43,000, which will certainly create waves among middle-

## MAJOR JEREMY CORBYN SPENDING PROPOSALS

- Restore 2010 spending levels for adult social care, further education, the arts and the BBC
- Scrap university tuition fees and restore maintenance grants and the 16–19 education maintenance allowance.
- Establish a right to free lifelong learning and a statutory youth service
- Cancel plans for the state pension age to rise to 68
- Expand the provision of free, universal childcare
- Increase spending on mental health services
- Pay people aged under 25 the full adult rate of social security

high earners in marginal constituencies. But he has not so far presented plans for improving the taxation of property, pensions, gifts or capital gains.

Cynics might argue that tax reform is so politically deadly that it should only be attempted by stealth, when ensconced in government. But there is something to admire in Corbyn’s appetite for championing important but unpopular structural changes and he should press ahead with a detailed plan for tax rebalancing.

However, Corbyn’s candour on tax needs to be consistent. He has made a series of major spending proposals – see box above – while also promising to eliminate the current deficit. He therefore needs to publically accept that his proposals will lead to ordinary families paying more tax: his pledges cannot all be paid for by big companies and the wealthy (or by Corbynite defence cuts).

These campaign spending plans are not Labour policy, and must now be debated by the whole party. Some of them are very worthwhile, but together they will cost many billions of pounds. The Fabian Society hasn’t put a price tag on them all together, but you can bet that a Conservative party researcher is on that job right now. And there will be other spending priorities which a 2020 Labour government will not wish to ignore. For example the OBR projects that spending on pensions and health could rise by around 1 per cent of GDP during the next parliament, and working-age social security will be on the brink of collapse by 2020.

Bevan said “the language of priorities is the religion of socialism” and Corbyn must recognise there are choices and trade-offs. Even if a huge and sudden increase in tax-funded public spending was politically achievable, it would significantly reduce the disposable incomes of typical working families. Most of Corbyn’s spending promises may one day be achieved, but that does make it desirable or practical to bring them all about at once. Jeremy Corbyn may not like to hear it, but his plan for Britain needs an injection of Fabian gradualism. **F**





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# Understanding Corbynmania

For Labour to rediscover its purpose, it needs first to understand the remarkable rise of Jeremy Corbyn, writes *Olivia Bailey*



*Olivia Bailey is  
research director  
at the Fabian Society*

**T**HE LABOUR PARTY has much in common with the phoenix, the mythical, long-lived bird that is cyclically reborn. When the bird is in its youth, it is defined by beauty and power. As time passes, its feathers grow dull and it becomes tired. And then, as it dies, it bursts into flames.

From the ashes of this leadership contest, a new party will be born. The nature of that party is not yet clear. But what precipitated the violent shock of Jeremy Corbyn's election was a failure of tired ideas and tired politics. Labour must take this opportunity to rediscover its purpose. But before it can do that it needs to understand what has happened, and why.

Jeremy Corbyn's meteoric rise has very little to do with the personal qualities of the man himself. Instead, his victory was a visceral reaction to four political and organisational challenges that the Labour party could, and should, have faced up to before now.

The first centres on an appetite for an end to 'politics as usual'. In a world of suits and sound bites, Jeremy Corbyn cut through because he sounded and looked different. Just as Nigel Farage's pronouncements awoke a populist right, Jeremy Corbyn's 'straight talking, honest politics' grabbed the attention of the left. As one Fabian member and Labour councillor supporting Corbyn told me in an interview for this piece, Corbyn got his vote because he is "honest, forthright and sincere" and "an example to everyone".

Analysis of Corbyn voters by YouGov reinforces this view. As a group they are much more likely to want to see 'change' and believe the world is run by a 'secretive elite'. They are also almost twice as likely as supporters of the other candidates to have voted Liberal Democrat in 2010, the commonly accepted outlet for the 'protest vote' at that time.

Dissatisfaction with the political status quo has been building for years, with the effects of the expenses scandal

still firmly embedded in the public psyche. You can almost feel people's dislike of politicians when you knock on their doors, demonstrated most powerfully in Scotland as the SNP surged to power. Labour's failure to react to the public mood for a new type of politics is part of the reason that Jeremy Corbyn captured such enthusiasm. He became the bearded and bedraggled face of a new political zeitgeist. A desire for politicians who say what they think and do what they say.

The second cause of 'Corbynmania' was the failure of the mainstream candidates, and the party at the last election, to articulate a new purpose for Labour in a vastly changed political and economic context. When I asked Corbyn supporters why they thought Labour lost in May, they overwhelmingly replied that it was because Labour 'didn't stand for anything'.

Jeremy Corbyn's socialism is ideologically pure. It is easily understood, like New Labour was easily intelligible in the 1990s. But Ed Miliband's Labour party was never really able to communicate what it stood for, despite a policy offer that was actually quite distinct from those of its rivals. The mainstream leadership candidates did little to demonstrate that they'd have done a better job.

Even Tony Blair has accepted that Labour must now change and apply its values to today's context, and Jeremy Corbyn's election surely underlines the conclusion of the 1994–2010 New Labour project. But if the party is to now reposition itself as a credible party of government then it must once again do what Tony Blair did. The Labour party was founded in the spirit of the workplace solidarity of the industrial revolution, but when it applied its values to a modern context, after the second world war, in the 1960s, and in the 1990s, it was able to change the country for the better. It must now find a way to apply those values to a post-crash, hi-tech, less hierarchical economy, while also facing up to an electorate less bound by traditional class or

political party loyalty. Corbyn's 'old' Labour is a denial of these challenges, rather than a solution.

The third reason for Jeremy Corbyn's success centres on the frustration of powerlessness. When facing the reality of a further five years of Tory rule, voters in this leadership election prioritised 'strong opposition' over the compromise and discipline that comes with forging a government in waiting. The shock of election defeat in May has made many feel that Labour's chances of returning to government are hopeless. When asked whether Jeremy Corbyn could win in 2020, one Fabian Labour councillor spoke for many when he said "I don't really care", "we need an opposition now."

Throughout Labour's history, the party's left wing has tended to grow stronger in the years after the party leaves office. This makes sense. As regressive policies hit home, and as activists see people suffer, they embrace more radical ideas. It is a mistake to expect rational electoral strategy to triumph when people are reacting with anger and passion to what the Tories are doing and feeling powerless to stop it. One Corbyn supporter said "I'm voting for hope". In this leadership election, the mainstream candidates failed to provide that.

Finally, there is an organisational point to make. The moderates were unaware of the threat of the left, and they were out-organised by them.

One result of the Blair years was the hollowing out of Labour's internal democracy. In the wake of Militant and heated rows on a national stage, it was deemed best to try and starve the malcontents of oxygen. While this helped with the presentation of a 'new' Labour party, it also meant the Labour leadership fell out of step with the membership. The hard left were controlled on a national stage, so their

impact was underestimated elsewhere. That is perhaps part of the reason party leadership was prepared to facilitate left victories in some parliamentary selections, as part of wider deals with unions who were, themselves, struggling with an increasingly radical activist base.

Out of the view of head office, the organised left has been building at the grassroots. The strength of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy is the best example of this. They have access to thousands of members through meticulous mailing lists, and the candidates they back regularly top the poll in the party's internal National Executive Committee elections. In Young Labour elections, a new generation of left wingers challenge for national positions.

While the left of the party have been building, Labour's mainstream has lazily relied on the strength of the party machine and the profile of the leader. It is not a coincidence that this summer the moderate candidates were swamped on social media by so called Corbynistas. They don't have a gang to fight for them. Facing 'movement politics', they had only the strength of their argument. In politics, that is never enough.

Jeremy Corbyn didn't win this election thanks to miscreant entryists, he won a majority amongst members and amongst legitimate Labour supporters. He didn't win it because he's personally charismatic. He didn't even win it because Labour members suddenly surged to the left. He won because people were fed up with a tired status quo, and because Labour's mainstream failed to organise and renew.

This leadership contest was the New Labour phoenix going up in flames. Labour must now be reborn from the ashes. Jeremy Corbyn knows what party he wants to build. The question is: does everybody else? **F**

**MONDAY 28TH  
SEPTEMBER,  
18:00-19:15**

CITIZENSHIP, CONTRIBUTION AND RESPONSIBILITY: IS THE LEFT READY FOR A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT? IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NCS TRUST

STEPHEN TWIGG MP, MAURICE GLASMAN, MICHAEL LYNAS (CHIEF EXECUTIVE, NCS TRUST), CHAIR, MELANIE ONN MP (GREAT GRIMSBY)

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# Messages from the other side

*Jessica Studdert* investigates the Conservative party's time in opposition and finds lessons for Labour's renewal



*Jessica Studdert was formerly political adviser to the LGA Labour Group. She writes in a personal capacity*

**I**N TRYING TO make sense of Labour's current predicament, many are looking to the party's experience of the 1980s and 1990s for insights. But might it in fact be the Conservative party in the 2000s that provides more answers?

Tim Bale wrote the definitive guide to the Conservative party's journey through opposition. Published in 2010, *The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron* considers why, as an organisation whose purpose is to win elections, a political party might work directly against its apparent self-interest and persistently fail to successfully appeal to the electorate. He understands political parties as an interplay of ideas, interests, institutions and individuals, which combine in ways that do not always result in purely rational decisions.

The respective natures of the Conservative's ejection from office in 1997 and Labour's in 2010 were very different, with the former subsequently operating in the shadow of their opponent's landslide victory and the latter under a coalition which masked the depth of the party's defeat. Yet from the perspective of how political parties respond to failure, Bale's analysis of the Conservative party has interesting echoes for Labour.

Following election defeat, a quick leadership election without a proper post-mortem enabled a sense that the new government's victory was circumstantial. This influenced a tendency to underestimate them and a complacency took hold whereby there was little upward pressure for fundamental reform within the party. As individuals, the new party leaders – William Hague in 1997 and Ed Miliband in 2010 – failed to break free from poor public images and their authority was continually questioned.

Both opposition leaders pursued institutional reform of internal party structures to give members a greater role in future leadership elections, in attempts to convey at least the impression of change. Since they were each driven by

a need to keep their party on side, neither's ideas strayed significantly beyond their respective comfort zones, preferring to pursue populist versions of traditional party issues. In Hague's case these were Europe, tax cuts and asylum/immigration. In Miliband's it meant taking on predatory capitalism, the Murdoch press and tax avoiders. Both were convinced their ideological instincts resonated with the electorate.

Because neither leader recognised or neutralised their party's negatives, their respective election results demonstrated how far the Conservatives in 2001 and Labour in 2015 both remained from the average voter on the most important issues of the day. But immediate departures of unpopular leaders and swiftly timetabled leadership elections again prevented parties carrying out proper political post-mortems. During these internal elections, however, the party grassroots indicated little appetite for accommodating public preferences and a strong desire to double-down on traditional party concerns.

At this point, Labour's present day is reached. The Conservative party's future in 2001 is known. The new leader, Iain Duncan Smith, was reluctant to pursue fundamental change and retained a dogmatic approach to the government's strong points: education and health services. Frustration with his poor performance led to his deposition, yet Michael Howard's leadership and ultimate defeat in 2005 in the words of Bale "tested to destruction the claim that if only the Conservatives shouted louder rather than really listened to the electorate they would persuade it to listen". It was only after this third defeat and a comparatively longer period of post-defeat analysis that the party elected a leader whose strategy explicitly sought to recognise and respond to public opinion.

So is the Labour party also now destined for inertia or the adoption of more extreme positions that widen the gap



Cameron in opposition © Conservatives

between itself and the voting public? The psychology of a party raw from rejection and a leadership election in which the dominant question has been not how to win in 2020 but of whether to win, suggests this is an immediate risk.

It seems that individuals who speak uncomfortable truths to parties before they are ready to hear them will be met with strong grassroots resistance. Compare, for example, Theresa May's characterisation of the Conservatives as 'the nasty party' in 2002 to Liz Kendall's central leadership campaign message that the Labour party has lost trust on the economy and needs to change to win in 2020. Both attracted more opprobrium from their respective parties than they did sympathy.

Cameron's Conservative modernisation strategy after 2005, as Bale argues, relied more on thin positioning rather than deeper reform. It largely fell away once the global financial crisis enabled a message of incompetence in the government to chime with the electorate. Yet, the groundwork he had put in brought the party back into contention.

If there are lessons from the post-2001 experience of the Conservatives for Labour, these would be focused on whether, and how, it is possible to bring forward rather than postpone the difficult work of renewal. This would involve entering difficult territory and addressing uncomfortable truths for the party faithful as it must reach beyond the core.

Labour is, at present, a heavily tarnished brand. This is a bitter pill for any party, but arguably the more so for one whose identity is built on the strong moral foundation of social justice. Without an immediate period of 'decontamination' in which negative perceptions are identified, understood and addressed, the party will not earn the right to be heard by the public. Part of this will mean more than just accepting that people perceive Labour spent too much before the financial crisis hit, but also demonstrating specifically how Labour would govern differently in the future.

As part of a strategy of genuine change, Labour has no alternative but to get to know, and bond with, the people of England once more. Following the failure of a narrow

'35 per cent' strategy targeted at Labour's traditional base, and with the electoral landscape set to be transformed by constituency boundary reviews, further devolution to Scotland and the introduction of English votes for English laws; the values, hopes and concerns of the English people as a whole will be ignored at the party's peril.

What should be an asset to the Labour party – that it is the only political party to be one of the top two contenders for office in each of the nations of Great Britain – is at present a weakness. Unless the party reforms its tight centralised structure to one more reflective of the emergent federal nature of the country, enabling greater pluralism and diverse approaches within each nation, it will fail to adapt.

An opportunity the Labour party never fully grasped during the last parliament is that of devolution. The party went through the motions of adopting some of the rhetoric of this agenda and developed some ideas in its policy review to reform public services around places and adopt a more devolved growth strategy. But because devolution didn't translate neatly into a retail 'offer', it was ultimately marginalised as a policy rather than mainstreamed as a statecraft, and instead the Conservatives stole a march on Labour.

Devolution presents Labour with the opportunity to get beyond its traditional socio-economic worldview and into the realms of culture and identity that the party struggles to talk about. If Labour could develop a politics that empowers localities to be more resilient and fosters civic pride as positive and inclusive, then a richer conversation with the electorate could begin.

The path of political party renewal following successive election defeats will never be linear. Political parties will inevitably see in sharper focus the world as they would wish it to be rather than the world as it is. The task of political leadership will always be to craft a vision that balances what people want with what they need. But history is there to be learned from – if it isn't, experience suggests it will be repeated. ■

# Smart state

The state can be reimagined around the lives of children, argues *Kate Mulley*



*Kate Mulley is director of policy and campaigns at Action for Children*

**F**OR 20 YEARS, the role of the state in our lives has been reshaped by the principle of give and take. There are certain things the state should be expected to provide, but accessing them requires certain behaviours from citizens. People are therefore encouraged to make the 'right' choices and punished if they fail to do so.

Often there is no good choice, only a series of compromises. Reductions in tax credits nudge parents to work longer hours and rely on others to care for their children. Choice becomes illusory when an unexpected bill or a health setback lead to choosing between heating or eating.

This autumn, the comprehensive spending review will require us to reimagine the role of the state yet again. And the challenge for any government is to consider the impact of its policies on those who have neither the power nor the capacity to shape their own future: children.

By their very nature, children are the most vulnerable to the changing winds of political decision-making. Somehow, we accept the impact on them as an acceptable price for a society that is fair for adults – however you define 'fair'. Yet early action to ensure strong child development, build emotional wellbeing and instil resilience would produce adults more able to weather those winds in the future.

A cross-party pact to put children first, especially the most vulnerable, and embrace policymaking driven by outcomes, could be the touchstone of those involved in the work of re-shaping the state we need.

## **Shrinking state, disappearing children**

The summer budget was judged by the Institute for Fiscal Studies to have been "regressive...taking much more from poorer households than richer ones". The legendary local authority spending 'graph of doom' suggests that statutory services and social care costs will soon account for all local spending, leaving other services such as libraries, parks and leisure centres high and dry. Welfare changes are creating a more basic safety net, sometimes a temporary one, and only for those who demonstrate they are 'deserving' by making the right 'choices'.

By any measure the state is retreating from our lives. As it does so, it loses track of people. They essentially become invisible.

It is counter-intuitive but reductions in public services are often accompanied by a fall in demand. This isn't because the children who needed them before simply shrug their shoulders and sort themselves out. It's because without the universal services that act as a gateway to support – drop-in centres, youth clubs, children's centres – there's no one left to offer a listening ear, share information or to make a referral.

Youth workers do more than offer diversionary activity during the school holidays – they can spot signs of neglect or abuse, domestic violence, gang involvement, trauma or mental ill health. Each of these could lead to a supportive conversation, a little life advice, a referral for intervention or treatment. No youth worker, no experienced eye to spot

emerging problems. Those young people either disappear from the state's radar completely or only return when a problem has become a terrible crisis.

When parents become invisible in similar ways – because support groups no longer meet at the local library or child development classes are no longer on offer – their children do so too. The act of reaching out for help, especially to services that only exist for those in the most desperate need, is far harder and more stigmatising than finding it through a local mother and baby group.

As the state withdraws from its citizens, they too will withdraw from the state. Home stops being a point on our wider life-network, distinct but connected, and begins to resemble a fortress. When home isn't safe then, most of all, children need opportunities to be seen.

### A smarter role for the state

Simply retreating from the public realm is potentially disastrous. There is a real danger that problems that are supposed to be everyone's business, such as child neglect, become nobody's business. By the same token, throwing money at late-stage interventions will remain a very expensive sticking plaster – and still neglect is 'somebody else's problem'.

There is an idea which, committed to wholeheartedly, would help solve the problem of disappearing children. It would build protection and support systems designed to achieve positive results, rather than merely aiming to reduce risk. This avoids the current problem of policies and processes growing up around children like brambles. Ultimately, it encourages early action to improve family life, reduces the likelihood of neglect and builds stronger foundations for children that will benefit them throughout their lives.

What is this magical cure-all? Put simply, it's deciding what 'good' looks like and setting your policies and process to pursue it. Any casual viewer of *The Apprentice* will tell you that a successful endeavour needs a vision. Why not a vision for a decent childhood? What outcomes are we trying to achieve?

Outcome-based approaches are not new but have never been timelier. Measures of state effectiveness, like child poverty targets, are being rewritten and public spending decisions are increasingly driven by cost not impact. A simple perspective shift could transform children's worlds.

First, be clear about what a decent childhood is and make it the goal of your policy – what it enables children to achieve is its very purpose, not a by-product.

Second, judge the worth of your policies by children's lived experiences of the outcomes you are working towards. Are they healthier? Able to communicate and build relationships? Benefiting from education? Able to deal with life's knocks and likely to become happy, healthy adults?

By focusing on outcomes, there is room to imagine a role for the state that helps to build resilient and energetic communities that care for children and support them to thrive. One that goes further than simply allowing communities to develop their own solutions but also invests in enabling them to do so, helping them to ask the right

questions, identify the problem, organise and understand how change can happen.

It is bigger than the 'big society', which asked the state to step back and communities to step in. It's about a partnership between state and community, with the efforts of each enhancing the capabilities of the other. This is particularly important in places where more people face multiple challenges that make it harder to be an active participant: low income, a lack of jobs, low educational attainment, poor communication skills. Ultimately though, the state must also be there to help when things go wrong.

Care is not simply about managing risk, but about building on people's strengths. People need structure and support to foster networks, skills and confidence. They need places to meet and ideas to explore.

The parenting support we offer at Action for Children is not only about teaching child development milestones. It is designed to build resilience in all aspects of life. Parents are encouraged to learn about the importance of play, cooking skills, managing money, reading and language, all of which can improve their children's life chances. Vitally, they are often encouraged not by professionals but by peers. Where possible, parents offer support to other parents, with professionals providing training and supervision.

A similar transformation could be enacted in our care system by making one of its principle aims to achieve recovery and healing from past harm, and promotion of resilience and emotional wellbeing.

A clear articulation of what a decent childhood looks like would also offer the rather delicious prospect of 'nudging' governments right back – to take into account the likely impact on children of policies aimed principally at adults, such as welfare changes.

### Peering into the briar patch

We like to think that we care for children in this country. We agree we have a responsibility to protect them from harm, so we have passed laws and drafted regulations. We have joined the public outcry when vulnerable children are spectacularly let down. We have created duties and procedures to reduce the risk of harm befalling children who do not have a parental figure to fight tooth and nail for their rights.

But, inadvertently, we have created a briar patch; one which masks children's real experiences when they find themselves in 'the system'. The truth is that there is no single 'system' and we have lost sight of what the role of the state should be in children's lives. Social workers change, rules appear arbitrary and advocating for your own rights is a task that would challenge an experienced barrister.

Too often the debate flits between what is spent and what is achieved for children, without making a clear distinction between the two.

This autumn's spending review is the opportunity to air a fundamental social debate, about the value we place on all children and the purpose of the policies we create around them. **F**

**The truth is that there is no single 'system' and we have lost sight of what the role of the state should be in children's lives**

# Books

## Post-Labour

Can Labour adapt to the changes of 'postcapitalism', asks *Robert Tinker*?



*Robert Tinker is co-author of the Fabian reports Measure for Measure: Economic indicators for a fair and prosperous society and In it Together: Labour's new relationship with business*

This summer, stock markets on both sides of the Atlantic tumbled as growth faltered in the world's second largest economy. The extraordinary measures taken in response by the Chinese authorities are thought to have stopped the panic. Yet the events have strengthened opinion that we are now closer to the next recession than the last – and less able to defend ourselves when it does come.

Against this backdrop at least three broad scenarios for the British economy seem possible. One is 'business as usual' in which output, wage growth and other indicators of economic health return to their pre-crisis norm. On the other hand, we could be at the beginning of a 'new normal' in which the economy permanently underperforms against the pre-crisis years and faces new challenges in the form of demographics, climate change or the impacts of migration. Alternatively, this new normal might ultimately prove unsustainable. In this eventuality a third scenario is possible in which our existing market economy evolves into something different.

In the aftermath of the last crisis, the political debate centred on the first of these scenarios – in short, how to let the good times roll again. But the recession exposed structural flaws in the economy and more recently aspects of the second scenario have started to raise their heads. The possibility of a permanent slowdown in the Western economies is now openly discussed (so-called secular stagnation) and elite policy bodies issue warnings against new threats such as rising inequality. Except at the margins, however, few have made a compelling case that our economic future might resemble the final scenario and that capitalism as we know it is coming to an end. This is the task Paul Mason sets himself in *Postcapitalism*.

It begins with Wikipedia; or more specifically, the qualities of information, technology and networks which make an online encyclopaedia like Wikipedia possible. For Mason, they have the potential to overturn much mainstream thinking about the way modern market economies currently function.



### Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future

Paul Mason  
(Allen Lane, £16.99)

Consider the pdf document you are perhaps reading this review from. Many undergraduate students are taught that economics is the study of how rational individuals make choices under conditions of scarcity. However, this particular information good is not scarce but infinitely reproducible and so technically abundant. The same is true of the digital music file sitting on your desktop.

Taken to its conclusion this logic begins to chip away at the foundations of traditional market economics. If the tendency is for the marginal cost of information goods to fall towards zero, then profit and the price mechanism are threatened. "Now certain goods are not scarce...so supply and demand become irrelevant...Only intellectual property law and a small piece of code in the iTunes track prevent everybody on earth from owning every piece of music ever made". At the same time the continued spread of information technology will see human labour increasingly replaced by machines and lead to an expansion of non-market, horizontal forms of exchange.

It is natural to consider economic change of this scale and pace with an air of pessimism. But for Mason its benefits have the potential to transform our lives for the better. The problem, it is argued, is not what lies ahead but what is preventing us getting there now. Here lies the key thesis of *Postcapitalism*: today there is contradiction between the possibility of free, abundant and socially-produced goods and the economic structures which uphold a hierarchical, monopolised and privatised model of late capitalism. It is the conflict between the positive spill overs of infinitely reproducible data files (or lifesaving drugs) and the intellectual property laws which capture and profit from these externalities.

Whether these contradictions will usher in an economic future qualitatively different to our own is an open debate – and it is a debate which *Postcapitalism* will do much to inform. Mason's preference is about as difficult to discern as his feelings toward the oligopoly who do rather nicely from the status quo. But it is not a determin-



istic thesis. Energy depletion, climate change and demographics make 'postcapitalism' more likely but alone they provide "... a clear view of what society should be like, but no means of getting there".

As an agent of change *Postcapitalism* has little time for traditional, party-based politics. But at a time when the Labour party – once the natural repository of votes for those at the sharper end of the market economy – is in desperate need of renewal, the political questions raised in this book are pertinent. Earlier this year the general election threw up multiple cases of first time voters in 'Labour heartlands' with no memory of politics based on traditional notions of solidarity, workplace or community. The few remaining local economies which sustained the mass Labour movement are being replaced by more individualistic and plural political identities. *Postcapitalism* presents a non-defeatist account of the political possibilities associated with this shift. Whatever you think of the conclusions reached, it deserves attention.

What's more, it reminds us that the conflict between networks and hierarchies is not limited to the economic sphere. Today the opportunities for political action extend far beyond traditional party structures. But within the Labour movement, decentralisation and devolution are avenues for renewal which have only ever been tentatively explored, despite the lip service frequently paid to creating a mass movement. Few people doubt that winning elections matters (of course it does), but a form

It reminds us that the conflict between networks and hierarchies is not limited to the economic sphere



Sharing economy © OutiShare

of politics which is about more than simply governing feels equally distant.

If it chooses to, the Labour party can define a progressive century. It will need an account of the big economic shifts which will define that century; adapt to a society with multiple, looser connections; focus as much on creating power as winning it; and forge a common cause with the civil society campaigns and social movements which are motivated by its own democratic, egalitarian ideals. In his introduction Paul Mason describes his book not as a guide to the future but a set of "coordinates". Only a few readers will agree with everything *Postcapitalism* has to say about the future, but many will also treat the broad sweep of its arguments as helpful directions too. **F**

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Source: Airports Commission: Strategic Fit: GDP/GVA Impacts. PWC. June 2015

## Climbing the mountain

In a new period of opposition, *Seema Malhotra* considers how the Fabians can help the left respond to challenging times



The general election in 2015 wasn't just a defeat – it was a political earthquake for the Labour party.

We have seen the likely permanent shift to multi-party politics in Britain, and a greater fragmentation on the centre-left. However, the result masks how slender the Conservatives' victory was. Whilst they secured a parliamentary majority of 12, their share of the vote increased by 0.8 per cent compared to an increase in Labour's share of the vote by 1.5 per cent.

That isn't to be complacent about our challenge. The era of two party or even three party politics is over. We are entering a new period of opposition – more complex, more nuanced. And we have a vital job to do – not just in being the official opposition but also the effective opposition. Achieving this will need to be done through an ongoing evidence-based process of renewal that continues after the leadership election is over.

As a long standing member of the Fabian Society, I'm proud of our strong history of leading debate in the Labour movement. Many of the ideas and policies which powered Labour to seminal general election victories in 1945, 1964 and 1997 were the product of Fabian research, debate and discussion.

Whenever Labour has suffered electoral defeat Fabians have rolled up their metaphorical – and actual – sleeves and actively engaged in the process renewing and refreshing Labour's policies and processes. Our local societies, the Young Fabians and the Fabian Women's Network are huge assets for us as we reach out into our membership across the country.

In the aftermath of this year's defeat, the debate will inevitably continue about why



we lost. But we also need to drive forward the debate about how we win. The recent Fabian report *The Mountain to Climb* is an important contribution to the analysis of the electoral challenge facing Labour in 2020. Scholarly, serious but stimulating – Fabianism at its best.

As we work towards our next electoral test in May 2016 – the Scottish, Welsh, London and selected local council elections, the political terrain is evolving faster than ever before. The 56-strong SNP parliamentary group have been trying to create the impression that they, not Labour, are leading the opposition to the Tories. They have made some important contributions and there is much common ground, but their bigger goal is clear. The goal isn't to get the Tories out of power, but to seek another Scottish independence referendum. Division and nationalism are forces we can challenge – but only through strong arguments, backed up by action, about why we have more to gain from being together.

And in leading the debate in parliament and in the country, as we must, on the domestic, constitutional and international challenges ahead, we must not just be opponents but be working where we can to improve necessary legislation and be setting out an alternative vision for our country.

Opposition in parliament is not just about defiant speeches. Fabians know that taking out the banners, holding the marches and speaking to those who already agree with us will not be enough. It is going to be about getting into the trenches, digging deep into the Tory's proposals as they move further to the right, and setting out an alternative that the nation can believe in. We will need to seek opportunities for alliances that will see

government defeats on steps the Tories are deliberately taking to reduce the resources and influence of working people – whether on the welfare bill, trade union reform bill or boundary changes.

Both inside and outside of parliament, we need to lay out a narrative behind the Tories' policies which counters their spin. Issues like the centralisation of power but devolvement of responsibility for failure; the illusory expansion of personal freedom, whilst the shrinking of supportive and emancipating state institutions which allow people to actually exercise that freedom; and protecting cosy market cartels and monopolists rather than consumers.

Labour's challenge is to avoid living solely in our comfort zone, but instead define a new vision for our country, including addressing areas where the Fabians have made strong interventions – internationalism, social justice and the question of identity to name just a few. To stay relevant in a complex world of changing social, economic and political forces, solutions from the past won't be enough. Our opportunity is to use our history to help set out afresh a new sense of purpose.

The battlefield of the next election will be different. We need a new political philosophy that resonates for today.

In this the Fabians have the strength, analysis and credibility to lead the debate and engage our movement, as we set out a vision of a different, stronger Britain under a Labour government and its place in the world – united, compassionate with prosperity for all. ■

*Seema Malhotra is MP for Feltham and Heston and chair of the Fabian Society*

## Noticeboard

### Fabian Society AGM 2015

**Venue:** Conference Hall, Mary Sumner House (Mother's Union), 24 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3RB

**Date:** Saturday 21 November 2015, 13:00–16:30

- 13:15** Doors open  
**13:30** Debate  
**14.30** Tea and Coffee  
**15.00** Annual General Meeting

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 2015 AGM
3. Matters Arising
4. In memoriam
5. Chair's Report
6. Treasurer's report
7. General secretary's report
8. Approval of annual report 2014/15
9. Appointment of auditor
10. Jenny Jeger Prize
11. Date of next AGM
12. AOB

**16.30** (approx) Close of meeting, followed by an informal social.

To register your attendance at the AGM, please visit [www.fabians.org.uk/agm-2015](http://www.fabians.org.uk/agm-2015)

### AGM Resolutions

Proposed by Peter Stern: This AGM calls on the Executive Committee to encourage the setting up of policy groups or networks, open to all members.

Proposed by the Executive Committee: Rule 9 shall be amended by deleting clause (d) and replacing it with: '(d) one member who shall be appointed by the Scottish Fabians executive and one member appointed by the Welsh Fabians executive (subject to the provisions of rule 12)'

Rule 12 shall be amended, by deleting: 'The Society shall also elect by ballot one member of the executive committee to represent the Society in Scotland and one member to represent the Society in Wales' and replacing it with: 'In the absence of a valid nomination by constituted executives of the Welsh Fabians and/or Scottish Fabians, the Society shall also elect by ballot one member of the executive committee to represent the Society in Scotland and/or one member to represent the Society in Wales'.

### Fabian Fortune Fund

**WINNER:**  
Ivan Gibbons £100

Half the income from the Fabian Fortune Fund goes to support our research programme. Forms and further information from Giles Wright, [giles.wright@fabians.org.uk](mailto:giles.wright@fabians.org.uk)

## FABIAN QUIZ



### PROMISED YOU A MIRACLE

Andy Beckett

The early 1980s in Britain were a time of hope and of dread, of Cold War tension and imminent conflict, when crowds in the street could mean an ecstatic national celebration or an inner-city riot. In *Promised you a miracle*, Guardian journalist Andy Beckett recreates an often misunderstood moment of transition, with all its potential and uncertainty: the first precarious years of Margaret Thatcher's government. By the end of 1982, the country was changing, leaving the kinder, more sluggish postwar Britain decisively behind, and becoming the country we have lived in ever since – one that is assertive, commercially driven, outward-looking, and often harsher than its neighbours.

**Penguin has kindly given us five copies to give away. To win one, answer the following question:**

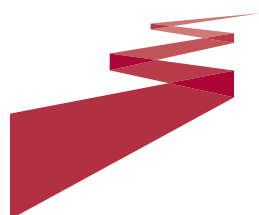
*What was Margaret Thatcher's election winning majority in 1979?*

Please email your answer and your address to: [review@fabian-society.org.uk](mailto:review@fabian-society.org.uk)

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



**ANSWERS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2015**



## FACING THE FUTURE

Following a summer introspection and the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader, it is time for Labour to provide the robust opposition the country badly needs. But the party also needs a fundamental debate on its purpose in our changed political and economic context. Labour must stay true to its enduring values, make itself relevant for the 2020s, and broaden its appeal to people who rejected the party this year.

To make that possible, the Fabian Society is launching a new programme Facing the Future.

Through debates, publications and research we aim to bring together the broadest range of voices to challenge the Labour Party to do better for all those who need it most.

To support this work, we have launched a new fundraising club for those who can contribute. You can join for a minimum monthly donation of £30. We are also seeking one off donations.

To find out more, visit: [fabians.org.uk/facing-the-future](http://fabians.org.uk/facing-the-future)

# ANNUAL REPORT 2015



## Seema Malhotra MP, Chair of the Fabian Society

Last December I took over as chair of the society from outgoing chair Jessica Asato, whom I would like to thank for her leadership, and to extend congratulations for her excellent campaign as Labour's parliamentary candidate in Norwich North and on the birth of her daughter Freya.

This year the Fabian Society has achieved an incredible level of output for such a small team, a real credit to the work of general secretary Andrew Harrop, Felicity Slater, Ed Wallis and the staff and volunteers at the Fabian Society. I am proud of the contribution the Fabians made in the run up to the general election, from our agenda setting New Year Conference and our cross-party conference in March on A Future without Poverty. Labour lost the election but the imperative to change Britain for the better remains, perhaps more than ever.

That's why it's right that the society's publications in the last year have focused on key debates of our time, contributing to our vital role in shaping discussion on the centre-left about how we respond on issues at home as well as Europe and beyond. A *Convenient Truth: A better society for us and the planet* by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, the authors of *The Spirit Level*, was one such output, setting out the relationship between inequality, consumerism and environment sustainability. Andrew Harrop and Howard Reed's *Inequality 2030* highlighted how the UK has faced almost 10 years of falling living standards with poverty and inequality on the rise. The research showed that plausible and affordable government intervention can reduce future levels of poverty and that we will pay a high price for inaction.

Since the election we have been driving forward debate about how we respond, understanding the dynamics of Labour's defeat and the experience of Fabians who stood as candidates to help ensure the party can win again in 2020. The recent Fabian Report *The Mountain to Climb* is an important contribution to the analysis of the electoral challenge facing Labour in 2020. Other contributions include how we should

reinvent taxation, and better balance local control with national standards in healthcare.

The Young Fabians have continued to inspire and engage, and produced an excellent output, *China Ready: Equipping Britain for an Asian Future*. The Young Fabians, the Fabian Women's Network (which saw its 10th anniversary this year) and all our local societies are tremendous assets to the Fabian Society, helping us reach out and enrich our debate and contribution to political thinking across the country.

My thanks to Phil Mutero and Giles Wright – membership has grown to over 7000 and I have every confidence with the programmes underway for this year that the numbers will continue to rise. Thanks also to the executive, our vice chairs Steve Race and Ivana Bartoletti and our treasurer David Chaplin for all their fantastic support this year.

Inevitably we have seen members of the staff team move on to new roles and I would like to thank all of them for they helped achieve. We said goodbye to Marcus Roberts, deputy general secretary, Anya Pearson, assistant editor, Richard Speight, media and communications manager, Ciara Dunne, events and partnerships assistant and Rob Tinker, senior researcher. We have also welcomed Olivia Bailey as research director and Lucy Snow as editorial and communications manager.

The Fabians helped found the Labour party and I'm proud of our strong history of leading debate in the Labour movement. Just as we drove forward many of ideas and policies which powered Labour to victory in 1945, 1964 and 1997, I know that we will this year be helping build the first steps of Labour's pathway to victory in 2020.

## Treasurer's report

Despite the wider challenges facing the Labour movement following the 2015 general election, the Fabian Society has ended the financial year in a fairly solid position.

Since May, we have focused firmly on protecting our revenue and preventing further losses to our income streams as a result of the general election.

Over the coming 12 months, my personal priority – on behalf of the Executive Committee – will be to continue to monitor this closely with a firm objective of ending the year with a tangible financial reserve.

That ambition aside, the society will continue to face considerable new threats to our financial stability over the coming year.

At the time of going to press, the result of the leadership election has yet to be declared, but clearly wider changes in the Labour party will affect the society's fundraising efforts and our funding streams. In addition, despite challenges over the past two years, effectively managing our cash-flow remains a top priority for the Executive Committee and the task is made much harder at a time of uncertainty.

Finally, whilst membership number have begun to slowly improve, our challenge as a society is now to continue that growth and ensure newly joining members remain with us for the foreseeable future. The Young Fabians, as always, have a key role in supporting this ambition.

Finally, I'd like to pay tribute to all the staff, especially Phil Mutero our operations director, for all their hard work. The society's staff have done an outstanding job at seeking out new funding opportunities, the team's entrepreneurial spirit is a huge asset to the society and our future.

**David Chaplin**

We are grateful to our funders:

### Research and Editorial

DST, FEPS, FES, Groundwork, Impetus Trust, Keep Britain Tidy, NASUWT, Portman Group, RSPB, Scope, Sanofi, TUC, TULO, Woodland Trust, Webb Memorial Trust

### Conferences, Receptions, Lectures & Seminars

ABI, Age UK, Alzheimers Research UK, Alzheimer's Society, Barclays, Bellenden, CBI, Cohn & Wolfe Political Counsel,

Crisis, Europe Commission, ICAEW, Law Society, Maitland Political Ltd, Oxfam, Tidal Lagoon Power, Water UK

### Trade Unions

Community, CWU, FBU, GMB, TSSA, TUC, UNISON, USDAW

The Fabian Society's financial year runs from July 1st 2014 to June 30th 2015 and the financial information in this report covers that period. This report is sent to all members in the September mailing and presented to the AGM which takes place on Saturday 21st of November 2015.

## Financial statements

The accounts presented in this report are an extract from the financial statements and may not contain sufficient information to allow a full understanding of the financial affairs of the society. For further information the full financial statements and auditor's report should be consulted. Copies of these can be obtained from the Fabian Society, 61 Petty France, London SW1H 9EU. The full financial statements were approved on 7 August 2015.

## Auditors statement

We have audited the financial statements of The Fabian Society for the year ended 30th June 2015 which consists of a balance sheet, income and expenditure account and notes to the accounts. These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention as modified by the revaluation of freehold property and on the basis of the accounting policies set out therein. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and The Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (The FRSEE) effective April 2008 (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice for Smaller Entities).

In our opinion the Financial Statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with The Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (The FRSEE) effective April 2008 (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice for Smaller Entities), of the state of The Fabian Society's affairs at 30th June 2015 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended.

Knox Cropper  
Chartered Accountants  
8/9 Well Court  
London  
EC4M 9DN

Registered Auditors

## Income and expenditure accounting for the Year Ended 30th June 2015

	2015	2014
	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>		
Individual Members	205,604	186,886
Institutional Affiliations and Subscriptions	6,320	5,325
Donations and Legacies	7,377	50,512
Publications Sales	3,751	2,548
Conference and Events	242,057	151,261
Publication Sponsorship and Advertisements	54,650	86,690
Research Projects	176,500	235,679
Rents	15,593	24,271
Bank Interest, Royalties and Miscellaneous	599	2,178
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£712,451</b>	<b>£745,350</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Research Projects	38,236	38,244
Staff Costs	387,687	376,123
Printing and Distribution	71,636	85,901
Conference and Events	87,947	83,600
Promotion	6,628	8,410
Affiliation Fees	5,244	5,990
Postage, Phone and Fax	12,082	13,563
Depreciation	17,873	18,965
Travel	2,121	901
Other	5,837	5,518
Stationery and Copying	9,073	9,102
Legal and Professional	5,680	9,257
Irrecoverable VAT	422	564
Premises Costs	53,083	49,461
Information Systems	8,080	8,372
Bad Debts	-	1,000
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£711,629</b>	<b>£714,971</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) Before Tax and Transfers</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>30,379</b>
Transfers from Reserves	-	-
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) before Taxation</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>30,379</b>
Corporation Tax	-	(1,832)
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<b>£822</b>	<b>£28,547</b>

## Balance Sheet

as at 30th June 2015

	2015		2014	
	£	£	£	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>		<b>1,253,716</b>		<b>1,270,081</b>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>				
Stock	2,120		2,340	
Debtors and prepayments	98,077		121,343	
Bank and cash	487		698	
		100,684		124,381
<b>CREDITORS-AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN 1 YEAR</b>				
Creditors and accruals	(81,864)		(122,748)	
<b>Net current assets</b>		<b>18,820</b>		<b>1,633</b>
<b>Net assets</b>		<b>£1,272,536</b>		<b>£1,271,714</b>
General fund		1,266,261		1,265,439
Restricted fund		6,275		6,275
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>		<b>£1,272,536</b>		<b>£1,271,714</b>

# Listings

## BEXLEY

Regular meetings. Contact Alan Scutt on 0208 304 0413 or alan.scutt@phonecoop.coop

## BIRMINGHAM

9 November 6.45 Professor John Hills of the L.S.E. on 'Good Times, Bad Times. Why we need the Welfare State and to pay for it'. Venue tbc. For details and information, please contact Andrew Coulson at andrew@coulsonBirmingham.co.uk

## BOURNEMOUTH & DISTRICT

30 October. Karin Christiansen, General Secretary, The Co-operative Party 27 November. Andrew Noakes Meetings at The Friends Meeting House, Wharnccliffe Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth at 7.30. Contact Ian Taylor on 01202 396634 for details or taylorbournemouth@gmail.com

## BRIGHTON & HOVE

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

## CARDIFF

Society Reforming. Contact Jonathan Wynne-Evans on wynneevans@phonecoop.coop

## CENTRAL LONDON

Details from Giles Wright on 0207 227 4904 or giles.wright@fabians.org.uk

## CHISWICK & WEST LONDON

24 September Adam Corlett from the Resolution Foundation. Also 29 October and 3 December. All meetings at 8.00 in Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall. Details from the secretary, Alison Baker at a.m.baker@blueyonder.co.uk

## COLCHESTER

1 October. Simon Collyer from Association of Pension and Benefits Claimants CIV. 22 October Andrew Harrop, General Secretary of the Fabian Society. 19 November Rev Neil Richardson and John Jemison on 'Socialism'. Details of meetings from the secretary, Maurice Austin, maurice.austin@phonecoop.coop. Friends Meeting House, Church St., Colchester

## CROYDON and SUTTON

New Society forming. Contact Matthew Doyle at mpdoyle69@gmail.com

## CUMBRIA & NORTH LANCASHIRE

Meetings 6.30 for 7.00 at the Castle Green Hotel, Kendal  
Details from Robin Cope on robincope@waitrose.com

## DARTFORD & GRAVESHAM

Regular meetings at 8.00 in Dartford Working Men's Club, Essex Rd, Dartford  
Details from Deborah Stoaate 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@lewis3.plus.com

## EDINBURGH

Regular Brain Cell meetings. Details of these and all other meetings from Daniel Johnson at daniel@scottishfabians.org.uk

## EPSOM and 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

## GREENWICH

Please contact Chris Kirby on cckirby@hotmail.co.uk

## 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 and RYE

Meetings held on last Friday of each month. Please contact Jean Webb c/o the Fabian Society, 61 Petty France

## HAVERING

5 October. Dr Martin Edober. Joint meeting with Havering Young Labour. 3 November. Cllr Naushabar Khan. 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 Twitter @haveringsfabians

## IPSWICH

Details of all meetings from John Cook: contact@ipswich-labour.org.uk twitter.com/suffolklabians

## ISLINGTON

Details from the secretary Ed Rennie at islingtonfabians@hotmail.co.uk

## LEEDS

Details of all meetings from John Bracken at leedsfabians@gmail.com

## MANCHESTER

Society reforming. Details from Christopher James on mcfrfabs@gmail.com www.facebook.com/ManchesterFabians Twitter @MCR\_Fab

## MERSEYSIDE

Please contact James Roberts at jamesroberts1986@gmail.com

## MIDDLESBOROUGH

Please contact Andrew Maloney on 07757 952784 or email andrewmaloney@hotmail.co.uk for details

## NORTHUMBRIA

For details and booking contact Pat Hobson: pat.hobson@hotmail.com

## NORTHAMPTON

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

Details from Dave Wardle at david.wardle@waitrose.com

## READING & DISTRICT

For details of all meetings, 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 robertjmurray@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

For details of venues and all meetings, contact Eliot Horn at eliot.horn@btinternet.com

## SOUTH TYNESIDE

Contact Paul Freeman on 0191 5367 633 or at freemanpsmb@blueyonder.co.uk

## STOCKPORT

New Society forming. Contact Michael Roddy on roddy75@btinternet.com

## SUFFOLK

Details from John Cook, ipswichlabour@gmail.com, www.twitter.com/suffolklabians

## SURREY

Details from secretary Warren Weertman at secretary@surreyfabians.org.uk

## THANET

New Society forming. If you're interested, please contact Will Scobie at willscobie100@hotmail.com

## TONBRIDGE and TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Contact John Champneys on 01892 523429

## TOWER HAMLETS

Regular meetings. Contact: Kevin Morton 07958 314846 E-mail towerhamletsfabiansociety@googlemail.com

## 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 Miklegate, York. Details from Steve Burton on steve.burton688@mod.uk

## South West Regional Conference

Saturday 14 November, Miramar Hotel, Bournemouth

'A New Beginning? Labour's Way Forward'

Speakers include:  
Lord Roger Liddle,  
Claire Moody MEP, Alan  
Whitehead MP, Rowenna  
Davies, Andrew Harrop,  
General Secretary of the  
Fabian Society, Dr Howard  
Stoaate, Rev Dr Chris Steed

Details from Deborah Stoaate at debstoate@hotmail.com or 0207 227 4904 or Ian Taylor taylorbournemouth@gmail.com or 0120239663

# CHARTING A NEW COURSE

Over the last few years, the Fabian Society and the Portman Group have been working together to redefine the relationship between government and business.

In 2013, 'All of Our Business' discussed new YouGov polling, which revealed that people are wary of building a new political economy on the foundations of ideology. Instead, people want to see a much closer partnership between state and business – one where responsibility is shared, where there is collaboration as well as competition, and where the needs of local communities are met.

In 2014, the report 'In it Together' outlined how this new partnership model might be achieved in practice. It proposed a Charter for Business, where government sets out its vision for the economy, and then engages business in helping achieve it.

Now, new work will consider how this charter might be realised at a local level. With devolution of power high on the political agenda, how can councils, with their close understanding of their specific situation, work with businesses to ensure every area can build flourishing economies and healthy communities?

For more information and to join the debate, please email [debate@fabians.org.uk](mailto:debate@fabians.org.uk)



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General Secretary: John Hannett President: Jeff Broome Usdaw 188 Wilmslow Road Manchester M14 6LJ

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