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The Oxford Left Review

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Editorial

As this second issue of the Oxford Left Review goes to the presses, we find ourselves contemplating the post-election landscape. What are we left with? We have a Conservative government, whose cuts will hurt the vulnerable. We are left with no leader, and have, through a leadership contest, the opportunity for a thorough rethink of our aims and direction. But, most important, we are left with a space where New Labour used to be, and with the rare chance to forge a revived Labour party that has the values of the Left at its core.

Whatever we think of the past thirteen years of Labour government, and whatever direction we now take, it would be churlish not to recognise the significant achievements of the past thirteen years. But the fact remains that New Labour failed to talk a coherent language, its ideologies were unclear, and although many of its achievements transformed lives – such as tax credits, the minimum wage, and legislation for social and economic equality – it failed to reach its full potential as a party of reciprocity, collectivity and redistribution.

New Labour was crafted as a party to govern – it operated with the overriding aim of winning power, and in that regard it has now failed. The mistaken claims that the election was in some way a victory for Labour lead directly to the equally mistaken implication that no fundamental change is needed.

The second space left by the election is the gap previously occupied by the Liberal Democrats. There are lessons to be learnt from their failure to garner the votes promised in the polls – either that the 'progressive majority' was fearful of a Tory government and 'came home to Labour', or that the Liberal Democrats were unable to convince the electorate of their 'progressive' values. Roberta Klimt's theory is more creative (p.28): that the Liberal Democrats acted "less as a viable party than as an energising, almost an artistic principle, which put the electorate back in touch with their deepest, longest-held values." People in Britain identify with the left and with Labour, but the party does not speak for them.

This itself teaches us something about New Labour; an important point for the forthcoming leadership contest. As Jeremy Cliffe demonstrates in his review of the political landscape (p.31), the public is less conservative than New Labour often presumed. David Miliband correctly acknowledges that the party must move beyond New Labour, but at the same time he seeks to turn the party into a "unifying force for all shades of centre and centre-left opinion". If this is the choice that Labour decides to make, it runs the risk of responding to a falsely perceived 'cen-

trist/centre-right' public, and of losing in the process an opportunity for radical change. It may even move the entire political spectrum further to the right. Better to heed Ed Miliband's admission that "We lost that radical edge" and ask how, instead, we now make a political argument strong enough to move the public further to the left, to where we stand. As Professor John Curtice has shown, political parties do not just respond to political opinion; they actively influence it.

As such, the danger is that we become complacent and decide that if we settle down in the centre we can represent the 'progressive' majority. In the first issue of OLR, Dr. Stuart White wrote of the "false idea that Labour has a monopoly on progressive politics". It is this false idea which, if not challenged, risks an all-too superficial process of Labour renewal, one shot through with the vague and fluffy language of 'progressivism'.

To be 'progressive' is not to hold a particular ideology. The term has come to be synonymous with whatever the centre-left does, but its sheer vacuity was demonstrated when Cameron badged it onto the new Liberal Conservative alliance. Progress is merely an expression of a desire to go somewhere; it implies no specific goal . It is the language of US politics, which, unlike that of the UK, has very little socialist heritage. It is the language of Whigs, and not socialists; even the simple negation of the ideology of Conservatism. And today it is a form of semantic 'flinch' used by some on the centre-left unwilling to use more meaningful terms such as 'left', 'redistributive', 'social democratic', 'collectivist' or, God forbid, 'socialist'.

'Progress' is not an end. It is not even a means to an end. As James Stafford argues (on p.5), "'progress' is value-neutral, a historical process – in some form, it will happen. Our job is to shape it." Labour activists and the wider left have a unique opportunity to be a part of shaping a bolder, more radical party. This issue of OLR sets out to examine that ideological and intellectual challenge.

In his essay on Keir Hardie (p.16), Dr. Jon Cruddas offers a revived ethics of socialism. He points to the need to rediscover the language of reciprocity and collective interests by giving expression to our more social instincts:

"The technology for giving primacy to our acquisitive and selfish desires already exists in the form of a capitalist market economy. But we have not yet adequately devised the social technology capable of giving fullest expression to the generous and altruistic side of our personality. That is the main task of the future left."

Four important articles emphasise this necessity. On the issue of foreign affairs, Leonie Northedge (p.44) suggests that the altruistic side of the entire country has been neglected, and that there are both moral and pragmatic reasons to better affirm our common humanity and belief in equality. Dr. Ben Jackson (p.9) also acknowledges

the need and potential of cross-border intellectual exchange, writing: "the future of social democracy will eventually have to be hammered out internationally." In economics, Stafford argues that freedom from the ills of capitalist economics will not come about simply by 'banging on about the market': "By crowing 'the free-market has failed' and simple-mindedly clobbering New Labour for selling out to it, sections of the British left show themselves to be unequal to the task of proposing valid alternatives." Jackson illustrates the urgent need to start constructing an "authoritative alternative economic model" as the only means to escape what Matthew Kennedy (p.14) calls the "prevailing system of socioeconomic organization" which is strengthened with every crisis. Such an undertaking requires serious commitment to ideological and economic development.

Part of this involves returning to ideologies which have been rooted in the left for centuries. In his powerful call for equality, Peter Hill (p.23) describes the need to make radical yet practical changes to our economic systems, "based on the ideals of a genuinely classless society, and the dignity of all worthwhile kinds of labour". Scott Carless (p.48) explores the 500-year history of the Basic Income, a concept linked to, yet more radical than, the Living Wage, and more important now than ever before. Cailean Gallagher (p.53) highlights the importance of Cooperatives not as a way to achieve efficiency through the quasi-privitisation of public sector services, but as a form of ownership of the means of production, and a way to instill social equality in economics. Although the right has strived to appropriate – and so neutralize – many of these concepts (such as the Tories' recent endorsement of Cooperatives, and their support for the Living Wage), these ideas belong to the left. We should be proud to promote them.

It is at this point that the left may adopt an idea of 'progress' defined specifically as the willingness to develop and devise new ideologies that distribute power and agency more equally. And in doing so it can work with the 'progressive consensus' of academics, politicians and think tanks which are willing to pursue these ends. In a review of a joint Compass Oxford-OULC panel event last term which brought together high-profile figures from the leading centre-left think-tanks (p.56), Sam Burt offers a vivid illustration of the "diversity of organized opinion" of the major think tanks at the heart of Labour, but also the possibility of "building a philosophical consensus" within, and between, the Labour ginger groups.

Only once we start to review and renew our own ideologies are we in a position to work with other groups to form a 'progressive majority'. The victory for the Green Party in Brighton Pavilion is to be applauded, and the potential for progressive cooperation between Labour and Green is an example of the wider possibilities. In light of the recent election results, as well as the increased prospect of electoral reform, Kaihsu Tai (p.35) offers a hypothetical and comparative analysis of the potential for cooperation in parliament, and the prospect of work-

ing with other parties in a progressive coalition; a possibility supported by Brian Melican's 'Lessons from Germany' (p39), which considers the prospects of coalitions with parties with whom we share common ground, if not identical ideology.

At this point in Labour's story it would be a grave mistake simply to form new allegiances and coalitions without using the opportunity to build a new party. The hung parliament and the prospect of electoral reform will allow us to overcome what Cruddas calls the 'trap of orthodoxy' as parties find new ways of playing politics. The fortune of the future Labour Party will depend on the new leader and on the chance to be a part of a serious debate about the party's future. Many have talked of the need to open up the Labour Party, and to learn from the likes of Citizens UK and the Living Wage Campaign. Alongside this we need to develop a different economics; one based not solely on profit; one that shares the proceeds of growth; that is equitable and fair; and in which every person invests more than just labour-hours.

This is the moment to help forge a new party based on clear and well-defined principles - progress, yes, but in a particular direction. The space is there; it is not enough to just acknowledge it, we should also help to fill it. This intellectual challenge will fall, in part, to the academic community, and we hope that this issue of the Oxford Left Review contributes, in some modest measure, to the process.

The Oxford Left Review is published termly. The journal will be most valuable if discussion develops around the issues and themes of each edition. Responses to any articles are welcome.

Contributions to future editions are also welcome.

Any contributions, responses or queries should be sent to the editor at cailean.gallagher@balliol.ox.ac.uk.

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IDEOLOGY AND POWER; OR, STOP BANGING ON ABOUT 'THE MARKET'

JAMES STAFFORD

Far be it for a mere student to question the integrity and intellectual reach of the think-tank culture; 'they', after all, are paid to think, whilst 'we' must pay for the privilege. Yet, sitting through any number of interminable panel discussions at the myriad feel-good soirees for the impotent Left, you can't help but wonder. The rarefied cant of intellectual PR men can be every bit as boring and counterproductive as the outright cant of professional politicians; the former is doubly unforgiveable, since it is both politically purposeless and rhetorically unnecessary, given the intelligent, self-selecting audiences to which it is inevitably delivered. The Left's – and frequently Compass's – cack-handed dogma of the 'free-market gone mad' has, sadly, been a major product of this peculiarly dismal intellectual terrain.

Banging on about 'the market' has demonstrably failed as a rhetorical strategy for mobilizing popular dissent against the excesses of corporatist globalization. It is simultaneously abstract and vapid – a vast oversimplification that has the disadvantage of being both untrue and incommunicable. This oversimplification stems from a crucial failure to recall properly the lessons that some on the Left learned from the 1980s. Neither 'Thatcherism' nor 'Reaganism' (whatever they were) was the product of a straightforward, uncritical, or dogmatic appropriation of Hayekian or Friedmanite economics, and globalization has certainly not unfolded according to the free (still less the 'fair') interplay of competitive market forces. One of the most memorable sections of Richard Vinen's recent look at Thatcherism recalls a 1985 interview with Norman Tebbit: "Friedrich who?" - he impatiently asks an eager aide. As another Thatcher scholar, Andrew Gamble, observed as early as 1988, a 'free economy' necessitates a 'strong state' to protect both property and profit, and ensure that appropriate markets and resources are open to vigorous exploitation. Even before the state capital injections of 2008-9, the banking sector operated in international and domestic contexts that were hardly heroically competitive or entrepreneurial. The engine of global growth – the curiously symbiotic relationship between high levels of American debt and artificially low Chinese labour costs – has been driven by state action on both sides, and remains unbroken. Post-socialist states, from Pinochet's Chile to Putin's Russia, have 'embraced the market' through the concentration of political and economic power, closing off possibilities for dissent or competition. Any analysis proposing alternatives to the so-called global 'free economy' must not forget the awesome repressive capabilities of 'the strong state'. These are important in understanding how our deeply inequitable and autodestructive world-system actually functions, as opposed to how its defenders would like it to function.

Nor, as Ben Jackson observes in January's Renewal, has the New Right succeeded in 'rolling back the welfare state' – indeed, this failure remains a major source of anxi-

ety for its leading ideologues. In Britain, this problem is particularly acute. The privatized, alienated and stubbornly irreducible state bequeathed to Cameron's 'age of austerity' by New Labour is as much Thatcher's child as Blair or Brown's. A forgotten, but epochally significant, aspect of 'the Thatcher revolution' was 'Raynerism', a programme of Civil Service reform instituted by Sir Derek Rayner, a senior executive at Marks and Spencer (of all places) in the early 1980s. The perceived inability of Oxbridge classicists to run nationalized industries, or understand the meaning of 'public money', was a universal preoccupation during the 1970s; 'two-tier dilettantism', productive of the supposedly fatal pairings of humanities graduates as ministers and permanent secretaries that led government departments, was widely blamed for the failure of the technocratic revolution promised by the first Wilson government. The Raynerist prescription identified the interpenetration of state and corporate bureaucracies as the solution to persistent amateurism, and it is now routine practice for senior civil servants to be imported directly from the commercial sector. It is no wonder, therefore, that various models of commercialization have been the frequent recourse of successive governments, or that ex-ministers are increasingly relaxed about performing favours for the relevant industries after leaving office (see the latest round of Blairite indiscretions, helpfully exposed by the Sunday Times in a rare moment of actual journalism). The institutionalized response of Whitehall to its own perceived inadequacies has been to embrace the dubious maxims of big business. Not for nothing is the unhappy subject of the Purnell-Cooper workfare reforms referred to as the 'client' or 'customer', rather than the 'citizen'.

This process cuts another way, too – it has resulted in the direct support, politically and financially, of private profit through public activity. The nationalization of the banking sector, apparently imposed without any conditions for better behaviour on renumeration or environmentally responsible investment, was conceptually easier for Brown than it was for other world leaders for a reason: it was the logical continuation of a pre-existing trend in Government thinking, which has long been content to offer taxpayers' money to private contractors to improve shareholder return on public projects. Rail franchises, energy and water companies, public building projects - all, ultimately, are 'too big to fail,' or at the very least too politically important; all, ultimately, are therefore in a position to privatize profit and nationalize liability, and are adept at finding legal means to bypass any limitations government might seek to impose on them in original contracts. Competitive tendering reveals itself to be a process that has very little to do with the free market, and everything to do with the willingness of an enthralled, under-confident state apparatus to subsidize an oligopolistic private sector.

Nationally and globally, therefore, the systems of economic and social domination that the Left must confront do not function as their advocates would have us believe. The 'free market economy' is compromised enough to be indefensible as an analytical concept. Around the world, the concentration of power through the close identification of the interests of state and corporate bureaucracies, not the free interplay of genuinely competitive market forces, determines the patterns of consumption and oppression that guarantee massive inequalities, disempower citizens, and threaten

the ecological bases of human civilization. This concentration is rarely self-conscious, even in its specific manifestations. If it was, we would be free, like adolescent Michael Moore fans or Youtube conspiracy theorists, to dismiss the illusion of 'free-market capitalism' as a simple case of interest-based ideology, a diversionary tactic to blind us to the real aims of the dastardly power-mongers at neo-liberal HQ. There is something perversely reassuring in such a viewpoint, since it implies that somebody, somewhere, knows what they are doing. The reality, of course, is much darker.

Students of intellectual history and literary criticism are well aware of the continuing importance of the notion that ideology constitutes a 'cultural system', prevalent amongst some of the most advanced social scientists of the 1960s and 1970s. Functioning through a network of rhetorical tropes or 'signs', ideology makes complex social realities intelligible; these signs are necessarily inconsistent, shifting, and constantly contested, since this is in the nature of the political, social and cultural formations that produce them. According to this analysis, these formations do not simply dictate ideological viewpoints, but are engaged in a constant dialogue with them: 'speech-acts', as Skinner terms them, constitute an autonomous sphere of public action, capable of shaping other social realities. The rhetorical tropes of the 'free-market' – 'entrepreneur', 'merit', 'competitiveness', 'business', 'efficiency', 'profit', 'prosperity', 'wealth-creator' – performs just such a function for the hegemonic interests of international capital. The banker who talks enthusiastically of free enterprise, sitting atop the vast bureaucracy of a centuries-old institution that has been recently saved by substantial injections of taxpayers' money, is not involved in an act of conscious deception; he has been formed by neo-liberal ideology, even as he defends it. It is the language he speaks. The destructive social, economic and environmental processes the left (should) criticize are frequently, therefore, unintentional at the macroscopic level, driven by motivations and relationships that their defenders are incapable of admitting to. In short, nobody is in charge.

By basing our responses to the financial crisis, mass inequality, and the threat of dangerous climate change on an attack on the 'free market', we unwittingly yield ground to the fictions advanced by the very people who are driving these developments. We talk about their 'free-market' as if it is the only conceivable vision of capitalism, lending it a coherence it lacks, and evading the more radical critiques – of private property and labour alienation – that used to be the province of the left. By crowing 'the free-market has failed' and simple-mindedly clobbering New Labour for 'selling out' to it, sections of the British left show themselves to be unequal to the task of proposing valid alternatives. No-one supposedly 'of the left', at least with an ounce of (political) sanity, can sensibly argue that a Tory government would not have acted far worse than Labour have done since 1997, or that there was a serious alternative to the quick-fire bailouts that saved millions of jobs and countless modest bank deposits – as well as corporate bonuses - in the autumn of 2008. Yet organizations like Compass frequently run the risk of underestimating the very real political and economic limits to the reconstruction of social democracy, confusing the 'exposure' of the 'failure' of neoliberalism with a genuine assault on its powerbase. In a British context, there need

to be two fronts in this assault, with distinctive but interrelated methodologies.

The Labour party's priority must always be to gain and hold power, and to act in the interests of those that other parties are less disposed to advance. This has always demanded an incrementalist approach that has frustrated purists and radicals since long before the days of Blair and Brown. New Labour's novel crime was their willingness not merely to accommodate and work around the economic and international constraints on social democracy, but to 'go native', and actively seek to strengthen them. This enthusiasm has ensured that New Labour has lost touch with the bases of radical social opposition and dissent that are a necessary part of an integrated, yet pluralist left. No thinking person who describes themselves as left-wing can be an uncomplicated 'progressive': 'progress' is value-neutral, a historical process – in some form, it will happen. Our job is to shape it.

A 21st century left that – in the useful formulation of OpenLeft, a project that shows rare signs of breaking the think-tank mold – 'prioritizes the politics of human agency' should, therefore, be highly selective and critical in its approach to other people's visions of modernity. Do we not resent some aspects of globalization? Does the destruction of the environment really justify nominal increases in the standard of living, inequitably distributed? Do we concern ourselves with 'what works', or with what needs to work? And, instead of spying on them from the Home Office and mocking them in think-tank soirees, should not the practitioners of a necessarily constrained democratic politics nonetheless sympathise with, and actively listen to, those who ask these questions with an uncomfortable urgency, by breaking into power stations or gluing themselves to statues? That last one is something of a mouthful, but one thing's for sure. Banging on about 'the market' is getting us nowhere.

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The Art of the Impossible

Dr. Ben Jackson

'Politics, they say, is the art of the possible. In half a century of public and professional life I have not found it so. The limits of the possible constantly shift, and those who ignore them are apt to win in the end. Again and again I have had the satisfaction of seeing the laughable idealism of one generation evolve into the accepted commonplace of the next. But it is from the champions of the impossible rather than the slaves of the possible that that evolution draws its creative force.'

Barbara Wootton

Barbara Wootton's life spanned the bulk of the twentieth century (1897-1988) and many remarkable shifts in the boundaries of political possibility. A social scientist and indefatigable contributor to progressive causes, Wootton witnessed the arrival of democracy in Britain; the rise of Labour (she worked as a researcher for the Party in the 1920s); the creation of the welfare state; and the social and legal liberalisation of the 1960s. She ended her career in the House of Lords, appointed as one of the first batch of life peers in 1958 and the first female member of the second chamber.

But Wootton also lived to see one further redrawing of the boundary of the possible: the ascendancy of a revived free-market right under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. Like the other major political changes just mentioned, in retrospect the rise of the right has acquired an air of inevitability. But this is of course misleading. A careful examination of the politics of the last forty years discloses the importance of agency and contingent events in regulating the pace and trajectory of political change. As Wootton well understood, the boundaries of political feasibility are subject to periodic renegotiation in part thanks to the efforts of 'the champions of the impossible'. Foremost among the ranks of the latter in recent times must surely be the dedicated intellectuals, activists and business-people who nurtured the gospel of the free-market through its wilderness years.

Faced by economic crisis and political defeat, the left is rightly reexamining how we arrived at the present conjuncture and debating how British politics might be shifted in a more progressive direction. To what extent can the strategy and tactics pursued by the right in their years of exile from the political mainstream be adopted by the left? How was the right able to turn the economic crisis of the 1970s to their lasting political advantage? How did right-wing politicians, scholars and activists establish themselves as apparently magical practitioners of the art of the impossible?

First, we should not exaggerate how successful the right has been. In spite of the generally gloomy tone of most left commentary, the free-market right has not yet managed to roll British politics back to the era of laissez-faire. Public spending, particularly on

the welfare state, remains robust by historical standards and difficult to reduce; the conviction that collective political decisions should in important respects trump the outcome of market-based transactions remains deeply entrenched in the practice of the state and in public opinion. The years of Labour government since 1997 have seen some modest strengthening of these deep-rooted social democratic achievements.

Free-market intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s argued that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the character of politics fundamentally shifted in favour of an expansion of state capacity and democratic collective action, not just in Britain but across the industrialised world. The scale of the task that the free-market right set itself was therefore not only opposing the post-1945 social settlement, but also fermenting a fundamental rebellion against the direction of political thought and public policy since the turn of the century. Judged against this exacting standard, the free-market right has thus far largely failed to achieve its objectives.

However, it would be idle to deny that the last thirty years have also seen a series of demoralising defeats for the British left on socio-economic issues, particularly in relation to macroeconomic policy, economic inequality and the character of the labour market (the introduction of a minimum wage notwithstanding). So without mythologising the success of the right, we must nonetheless take a thorough audit of how the left came to be contained and then defeated on these pivotal issues. The current debate on public spending reveals the success of the neo-liberal poison pill bequeathed by the Conservatives to subsequent Labour governments: the tax base of the British state is probably too low at present to support the level of social spending desired by the left, but the rules of political engagement now state that no party can increase the tax base without facing the wrath of the electorate. Such are the boundaries of political possibility as constructed by the right in the 1980s and 1990s.

Second, the advance of the right required money as well as idealism. There were crucial material foundations to the elaboration of free-market ideology, in particular sustained, long-term financial support from corporate foundations for intellectuals and think tanks engaged in the development and popularisation of free-market alternatives. Sensing that the immediate political circumstances were not propitious for their agenda, the corporate right focused on long-term cultural change rather than short-term electoral battles. The left is unlikely to be able to call upon similar corporate donors, but it does have allies with significant financial resources, in particular the trade unions. It is not clear, however, that the British labour movement has yet appreciated the strategic importance of systematically investing in intellectual infrastructure. As the example of the right shows, to transform the terms of political debate requires a long-term commitment to funding and popularising ideas.

Third, free-market ideas acquired particular political potency because they were sponsored by economists. This point is often under-estimated: for ideas to have serious purchase in policy-making, they have to be endowed with the authority of economic expertise. The success of the free-market right in part stemmed from its appropriation of certain trends internal to the academic discipline of economics and its ability

to channel the elements of academic economics most conducive to a right-wing political agenda to policy-makers via the use of think tanks and sympathetic journalists.

The present economic crisis has to some extent created an opening for fresh economic thinking. The critique of the economic vision that underpinned the Anglo-American growth model of the last thirty years has acquired a new plausibility, and has been authoritatively elaborated by economists such as Amartya Sen, Paul Krugman, Joseph Stiglitz and David Blanchflower. Left activists, think tanks and journalists must ensure that this bracing intellectual scepticism is conveyed to the political elite of the Labour Party, and in particular to the rising generation of Labour politicians who will be shaping party policy over the next two decades. The discipline of economics has never been the desiccated calculating machine that was projected to the political class by the intellectual infrastructure of the right. On the contrary, with sufficient imagination and political will, an agenda for a pragmatic social democracy could be constructed from its intellectual resources.

Fourth, the revival of free-market ideas was an international project right from the very start. A complex transnational network of intellectuals, politicians, business-people and activists was generated from the core neo-liberal organisation, the Mont Pèlerin Society, an elite international discussion group convened by Friedrich Hayek from 1947 onwards to rethink market liberal ideas. The value of this network was partly psychological. At a time when free-market liberals felt marginalised from practical politics, the international solidarities and opportunities cultivated through the Mont Pèlerin Society and other similar organisations helped to build a dedicated cadre of believers ready to enter the political fray whenever a governing elite became primed for the free-market message, whether in Santiago, London or Washington DC. But in addition to this psychological function, it seems likely that the very ideological strength of the free-market right derived from its internationalism and, in particular, from harnessing the energies of the American right to a global political project.

There is no analogue of the Mont Pèlerin Society on the left today and perhaps there is no need for one: the international intellectual exchange fostered by academic and high cultural debate affords left-leaning intellectuals plenty of opportunities to cultivate transnational, especially transatlantic, networks. But the left could do more to strengthen international political alliances and to exploit the openings offered by the left-ward drift of the Democrats during the Bush years. The future of social democracy will eventually have to be hammered out internationally. Decades of neo-liberal reform have created an increasingly integrated but fundamentally unjust global economy. Although the impact of globalisation on the power of national governments has often been exaggerated, the left undoubtedly faces a long, slow struggle to build forms of international regulation and redistribution that can foster stable economic growth and deliver global justice. The left has a lot of catching up to do: the free-market right has been mulling over how to build a global economy in its own ideological image since the 1940s.

Fifth, the free-market right had a clear strategic analysis of how to go about pro-

moting political change. It is in some respects a rather difficult analysis for the left to accept, because it emphasises the mobilisation of elites rather than popular opinion. The free-market right thought the boundaries of political feasibility were determined by a conventional wisdom that was itself the product of 'second-hand dealers in ideas': journalists, teachers, publicists, public intellectuals, novelists, political advisors, etc. These individuals – who had no particular claim to expertise themselves – drew upon what they took to be the most fashionable expert opinions and broadcast them to a wider audience. The key to changing policy, Hayek argued, was therefore to change the minds of this opinion-forming stratum of society. This was why the think tank was such an important weapon in the neo-liberal armoury: it was a crucial instrument for changing the climate of opinion by persuading journalists, commentators and politicians that what they had previously regarded as out of date and intellectually unfashionable was, on the contrary, at the cutting edge of political thinking. The free-market right was therefore extremely serious about identifying sympathetic experts – Hayek, Milton Friedman – and systematically marketing their ideas to elite opinion.

This model of political change naturally invites some scepticism, particularly with respect to the apparent absence of popular opinion as an independent factor in shaping political outcomes. At any rate, it would be a brave left that bet all its chips on trying to persuade British journalists to be more sympathetic to social democracy. But Hayek did have a profound sociological insight into the role played by 'second-hand dealers in ideas' in modern political debate, as students of the recent progress of the self-styled 'Tax-Payers' Alliance' might well ruefully acknowledge.

The free-market publicists were also serious about moving step-by-step towards their broader political goals. In this sense, they were shrewd strategists and tacticians. Faced with a formidable left-leaning political consensus, they probed for where the left's case was weakest, and not that strongly supported even by left-sympathising intellectuals, one famous example being the use of rent controls on private housing. Issues such as these were taken up as wedges that could divide the opposition and illustrate a broader moral about the perverse economic consequences and illiberalism of statist social democracy.

If the left were to take a leaf from this book, it could certainly exploit the ideological contradictions latent within the right. Even within neo-liberal economics there are profound tensions. The radical critique of concentrated economic power that first motivated many neo-liberal thinkers stands in stark contrast to the rather more mundane right-wing outlook that free marketeers now promote: the valourisation of corporate behemoths; the economic utility of banks that are too big to fail; and an intense relaxation about the unlimited riches commanded by the winners in the global market-place. There are tensions here – over corporate governance, the inter-generational distribution of wealth, and the role of global finance – that could be politically salient if an intellectually agile left were to position itself so as to induce splits in the free-market coalition. The use of wedge issues need not be the sole preserve of the right.

Sixth, it is now a political commonplace to note that policy change does not simply reflect ideological change but is rather driven by sporadic economic crises that delegitimise dominant policy norms and force policy-makers to cast around for fresh ideas. This is how the crises of the 1930s and 1970s are often understood in political folk-memory. But matters were far more complex. The arrival of Keynesian and neo-liberal ideas in British economic policy-making required not only an external economic shock, but also the apparent failure of policy-makers to deal with that shock using existing economic techniques. In both cases, it was a second external shock (the Second World War; the winter of discontent and the 1979 general election) that precipitated fundamental change in economic policy.

It is here that analogies with the present break down. There is as yet no widely shared sense that the existing economic policy paradigm is unable to deal with the present crisis – on the contrary, the response of policy-makers has been decisive and pragmatic. The likeliest outcome at present is therefore not a whole-sale policy revolution in the style of the 1940s and 1980s but rather certain modifications to what would remain a broadly neo-liberal economic paradigm. For all the economic heterodoxy now being expressed, it is not clear that there is an authoritative alternative left economic model available on the market-place of ideas, nor that there is a mass movement capable of mobilising support for such an alternative. A discomfiting thought is that the left's rethinking may only be beginning. The free-market right's gestation actually stretched back to the 1930s; it was in effect the product of two capitalist crises. In the 1930s, early free-market thinkers had few clear answers, but by the 1970s they had mapped out a focused and potent response. Perhaps this parallel is a misleading one and the left need not prepare itself for the long march undertaken by the neo-liberals between the 1930s and 1970s. But it can't be ruled out.

These historical reflections therefore raise some hard questions. Does the left currently possess the long-term strategic thinking and economic resources that facilitated the rise of the free-market right? Has the left developed (or refurbished) a core of intellectually authoritative economic ideas that it can transmit to opinion formers and policy-makers? Can the left forge the international alliances that are needed to build global collective action and solidarities?

Ben Jackson is University Lecturer and Tutorial Fellow in Modern History at University College, Oxford. This essay summarises a recent issue of Renewal (Vol. 17, No. 4, 2009) that he edited on learning from the rise of the free-market right.

A crisis of legitimation?

Matthew Kennedy

One could be forgiven for thinking that there was only one issue at stake during this election, and in many ways there was: the economy. "We must secure the recovery" implored Brown. "We must cut the deficit" declaimed Cameron. Brown's national insurance proposal was a "tax on jobs" and one that all by itself would jeopardise Britain's recovery, whilst the Tories' plans to make £6bn of 'efficiency savings' in 2010-2011 risked plunging the UK into the a 'double-dip recession.' No doubt the unbending focus on the economy in part reflected voters' concerns but one might reasonably question to what extent these concerns were sui generis and not amplified greatly by the media and the politicians themselves. There are structural reasons for this obsession with the 'state of the economy' which go beyond the contingencies of recession and a general election: increasingly the government's primary duty is seen as guarantor of economic growth. Economic growth is the tree which bears the fruit of public service, of the NHS, of schools of welfare provision. But we must look to the health of tree first if we wish to have fruit.

The Liberal Democrats' 'Labservatives' campaign sought to capitalise on the public's belief that it doesn't matter who they vote for because all politicians are Machiavellian sophists with their noses in the gravy train, a view compounded by the press's treatment of the 'Expenses Scandal'. Whilst this view is undoubtedly a caricature it must be admitted that at a superficial level there is a kernel of truth and that at times it has been difficult to distinguish between some of the proposals and decisions of NuLabour and the new cuddly conservatives. This is in part due to the personnel of politics. George Walden's New Elites suggested that modern British politicians were professional egalitarians, educated predominantly within the same milieu and entering politics by the same tried and tested routes leaving little scope for divergences of opinions on a fundamental level. A quick survey of the new cabinet confirms this true at least on a level: 70% Oxbridge, 50% privately educated, four women, one Asian. The Professionalisation of the personnel however is only symptomatic of the wider shifts in the structural orientation of the British political system. If this latest election campaign is anything to go by it would seem clear that the one thing that can be agreed on by all parties is that continued economic growth is the object of government. Their differences are a question of means not ends.

Whilst the major parties are keen to present this state of affairs as simply 'the way it is', it is not the only way. It is however characteristic of advanced industrial society in the view of some theorists. Jurgen Habermas' Legitimation Crisis first appeared in English in 1975. Habermas argues that because so much economic activity is administered by the government in conjunction with big business, economic crises quickly turn into political crises which are all the more damaging. This was undoubtedly true of the 'Credit Crunch' and subsequent 'Financial Crash' of 2008. The government's inability to control the economic environment precipitated not

simply an economic crisis – the bailing out of the banks – but more importantly what Habermas would term 'a crisis of legitimation.' The government had failed in its overriding function, that of providing economic growth, and thus had lost legitimacy in the eyes of its opponents: the other political parties and the public. It was over this that both the Tories and Labour fought their election campaigns: the Tories alleging that Labour was not longer fit to rule because it had caused the recession and Labour claiming that the Conservatives were not fit to rule because they would jeopardise 'the recovery' with their plans to cut public spending before 2011. In light of these considerations it seemed that nothing else mattered. The Tory threat to public services was simply symptomatic of its commitment to cut the deficit whilst Labour's commitment to public services posed a threat to the deficit. These claims are simply two sides of the same coin which centres on the respective parties' ability to ensure continued economic growth. Despite the rhetoric of a 'new politics' and 'stable government' we can rest assured that the Conservative-Liberal coalition will live or die on its ability to shows signs of the increasing health of the economy.

There is however a further twist. In his 2009 book Slavoj Zizek posed the question: 'What if the particular malfunctionings of capitalism are not merely accidental disturbances but are rather structurally necessary?' That is to say what if, perversely, it is precisely those 'crises' which de-legitimate the government's ability to rule that actually reinforce its claim to be the only power which can rescue capitalism from itself? It was not banks that saved other banks in the weeks of the autumn of 2008; it was The State. Only the US government could levy hundreds of billions of dollars overnight in order stop Wall Street going under. It confirmed to both the people on Main St. and Wall St. that they still needed the state, if only to protect them from themselves. Thus a cycle develops whereby a crisis of legitimation yields the conditions necessary for the prevailing system of socio-economic organisation. As Thatcher said, 'there is no alternative.'

Thus for all the high-falutin talk of change, of a new politics, of reform, it would seem that for as long as the legitimacy of any British government is predicated solely upon its ability to secure continued economic growth at the expense of equally important political goals - social cohesion, a more equitable society, environmental concerns – the old politics will persist. The neo-liberal acolytes will invoke economic growth as the necessary – if not sufficient – condition of these 'utopian' projects. This is a doxa that must be shattered if there is to be any real progress in British politics and British society. We can't go on like this.

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Keir Hardie's Ethical Socialism

Dr. Jon Cruddas

Hardie inspired total devotion. On his death he was described as the 'Member for Humanity'; Sylvia Pankhurst saw him simply as the 'greatest human being of our time'. He was worshipped by grassroots members of the party and some even considered him a prophet. Yet, simultaneously, many, especially among his parliamentary colleagues, thought him an extremist; impossible, unreliable and ill-disciplined. At times he was isolated and even resembled an outcast.

It is this enduring tension between the radical and orthodox elements of Labour, and not necessarily a right–left split, which has troubled it for 110 years. For Keir Hardie this tension was partly accounted for by his dislike of Westminster political consolidation. Hardie's socialism belonged to a larger canvas than the day to day parliamentary grind. As his biographer Kenneth Morgan states: "for a man of Hardie's poetic, intuitive temperament, this unheroic, constructive labour was not enough. Beyond the day to day tactics there was a profound political, moral, and emotional cause to be defined and fought for".

It was precisely this crusade and its associated idealism that inspired such hope and vitality among the party at large. With Hardie it was not the detail of the policy or programme, it was the 'creed of fraternity and equality' that was the true ideal of Labour: what type of society it sought rather than the tactical calculus of Westminster.

Some have argued he could not accept the responsibilities of office – he held only one major position. Yet to contrast his zeal with the subsequent actions of MacDonald and Snowden is be reminded of what Raymond Williams once said – that 'to be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing'.

For sure Keir Hardie was a man of contradictions. He was an outsider, a lone and solitary figure. He was born into the working class but he was never truly a part of it. In fact he didn't properly fit in anywhere in society. He was never a social conservative, but a dedicated supporter of feminism, and a bohemian in his dress.

His non-conformism made him a brilliant alliance maker and political pragmatist. He supported Welsh nationalism – the red dragon and the red flag. And he was a passionate advocate of women's suffrage, a friend and lover of the feminist socialist Sylvia Pankhurst. TD Benson of the Independent Labour party (ILP) said that Hardie was 'by his very nature, incapable of working with a party'.

He had a prophetic belief in socialism. His politics were romantic and idealistic. He was also a mystic who believed in re-incarnation and faith healing. He valued the druids and the idea of returning to nature. It is this poetic, mystic form that retains a strong Celtic element. Not just in terms of his Scottishness nor his adopted Welshness but also, for example, in the similar retreats of WB Yeats across the Irish Sea.

From 1900, on his return to the House of Commons, Hardie became, as Kenneth Morgan describes it, 'the prophet of radical-socialism in its highly-distinctive Merthyr form'. A composite socialism emerged out of the distinct arc of Merthyr Tydfil history – of early Chartism and the 1868 election of pacifist Henry Richard, of the Trades Council movement in Merthyr and Abedare, of the miners and the 1898 six-month strike, of its Christian traditions with its 'social gospel', and later of course of the ILP. Cumulatively this composite socialism forged a non-doctrinal, radical working class culture and movement, an ethical socialism that owed little to science – of neither right nor left – but much to the politics of progressive alliance.

What can this Hardie of contradictions teach us today? Like Robin Cook, he was never a 'Labour man' at home in the party. The great strength of Hardie's politics was his emotional attunement to working class people. He understood on an intuitive level that a party must give shape to a class and a class must create a party in its image. And that this involves an interdependence of feeling and thought. He expressed this in religious terms: 'Ring out the darkness of the land, ring in the Christ that is to be.' Contrast this with the muscular secularism growing in the modern party.

Hardie spoke in an almost messianic language to the people and mirrored back to them a sense of their value and their capacity to change society. He spoke of a deep humanity, an emotionally charged socialism that men and women must forge in their communities rather than one simply determined by the laws of history. He gave them esteem, confidence and belief. In return they gave him love and loyalty. An ILP member David Farrell wrote to him: 'I have more love and reverence for you than I have for my own father.'

The modern Labour party has lost this empathy and retreated into orthodoxies and doctrines on both right and left; the ties of loyalty, even love, that bound it to the working class are unravelling. Where would Hardie fit today in the modern Labour party? The answer is he probably wouldn't be a part of it. He was ill suited to the type of organisation and party culture we have created.

The consequence of our ruthless organisation, our calculation and indeed our incumbency is that Labour has lost its very identity. What has been lost are those intangibles that can never be measured or accounted for in polls or focus groups – hope, belief, emotional communication; the sense of a journey and an intuitive trust that can weather the difficult business of doing politics. This is not a factional point; think of John Smith or indeed early Blair. The sacrifices that are sometimes demanded will only be accepted if people understand there is a larger vision, a goal to be reached – of building the 'Good Society'; of community, equality and democracy.

This cannot simply be reduced to the positioning of the focus group and genuflection to the shopping and celebratory culture, where we simply exist to help people 'earn and own' more commodities. Our mission was always greater; we always hoped for more. Our neoliberal orthodoxy has drowned out our radicalism, our spirit.

And it is precisely at a time of crisis that such moorings are vital to a party. It is no coincidence that the three crises for Labour – in 1931, 1981 and 2009 – have all followed periods of profound economic rupture and epochal change – where the party proved ill equipped to navigate through the resultant political firestorms due to the effect of incumbency on its confidence and crusading zeal; energy and sense of mission. It lost energy and vitality; people stopped seeing the party as the space to forge a new radical hope.

Hardie as strategist

Hardie's role as a political strategist is often overlooked when considering his legacy. He is well known as the prophet yet he was much more than just a great communicator. He was a transitional figure who played a key role in a period of profound change.

Hardie was not the extremist of caricature but a subtle strategist who moulded the socialism of the emerging party to the contours of British society and wider political and cultural movements within it. For example, he was always willing to make alliances with elements within liberalism to forward his goal of working class emancipation.

By 1903 Hardie had pragmatically come around to accept some form of global agreement with the Liberals for election purposes. They had been revitalised under Campbell- Bannerman and there were signs that the ILP view that Liberals were unable to come to terms with collectivism and social reform were being disproved, especially in the work of radical Liberals like Hobson, Hobhouse or Samuel.

Thus, Hardie's socialism was never rigid, doctrinal nor dogmatic. His search was for a progressive coalition with the ILP as the backbone of this gradualist movement of alliances. He could work with progressive strands within liberalism – as he would with all elements of late 19th-century radical thought – yet would steadfastly oppose its more conservative elements. Later, when party leader, Hardie worked with Sir Charles Dilke, unofficial chair of the 'social radicals' on the Liberal side, on labour and radical issues. Even at the two elections of 1910 he maintained support for the alliance with the Liberals and the radicalism of Asquith and Lloyd George. Yet by 1912 he had badly fallen out with the Liberals, especially Churchill, following the brutal industrial disputes and state responses at Tonypandy and Aberdare.

This conditional, contingent relationship with progressive liberalism was a hallmark of Hardie's tactical brilliance and wider talent at coalition building. He would link his politics into wider, radical social movements that often would include non-socialists. Again this put him on a collision course with more conservative elements within his own party because of his links and passion for women's emancipation and the suffragettes, the anti-imperialist struggles, the peace movements and colonial nationalism. All of these movements were for Hardie part of the broader coalitionist politics which he espoused. It was this fusion of radicalism and Labour – what has been described as his 'dualism of vision' – that was a major contributory factor in the emergence and strength of Labour itself and re-

mained a continuous source of tension with Henderson, MacDonald and Snowden. Again, there was a tension between radicalism and orthodoxy within the party.

What broader social and cultural movements does Labour now stand part of? The environmental and peace movements, the global anti-poverty crusades, fair trade; at home the fight for dignity at work, civil liberties, migrant groups and faith communities; broader cultural movements, generationally, in the arts and music? Has this radicalism been lost? At its best Labour and its leaders operate as a bridge between these sites and our representative democracy; the party distils these movements and refracts them into Westminster. Does it do this now?

Hardie, liberalism and Labour

We celebrate Hardie as the founder of the Labour party. Yet he also operated within and between variants of liberalism itself – between its radical, individualistic strands and a more collective, social liberalism. This is precisely the emerging debate in the Labour party today. One recurring theme, advanced in different ways by thinkers like Richard Reeves and Philip Collins of Demos, is that Labour should return to its ancestral roots and draw inspiration from the ideas and principles of British liberalism. Yet they seek to rehabilitate a restricted, individualised liberalism.

Many of the first generation of Labour leaders, like Keir Hardie himself, had been active in the Liberal party of Gladstone and had broken with it only reluctantly and gradually. Their aim was not to repudiate the liberalism of their youth, but to realise its goals of human freedom and emancipation in the new and more challenging conditions of industrial capitalism.

Fundamentally, liberalism encompasses a broad range of ideas and beliefs, not all reconcilable. In his book The Snake That Swallowed Its Tail, Mark Garnett identified two rival modes of liberal thought; one he described as 'fleshed-out', the other as 'hollowed-out': "The former retains a close resemblance to the ideas of the great liberal thinkers, who were optimistic about human nature and envisaged a society made up of free, rational individuals, respecting themselves and others. The latter, by contrast, satisfies no more than the basic requirements of liberal thought. It reduces the concepts of reason and individual fulfilment to the lowest common denominator, identifying them with the pursuit of short-term material self-interest. For the hollowed-out liberal, other people are either means to an end, or obstacles which must be shunted aside. Instead of equality of respect, this is more like equality of contempt."

The tension runs through the evolution of liberal thought from Adam Smith to the modern day. In its extreme laissez-faire variant, classical liberalism assumes a model of human behaviour that is rational, acquisitive and ruthlessly self-interested. In the phrase made famous by Bernard Mandeville's poem 'The Fable of the Bees', public benefit is achieved by means of private vice.

Its 'fleshed-out' form was led by the English idealist Thomas Green and followed by Leonard Hobhouse and John Hobson, among others. Green rejected the atomistic individualism which represented humans as impermeable, self-contained units enjoying natural rights but owing no corresponding social obligations – the neoliberal human. Instead he saw society and the individuals within it as radically interdependent: 'Without society, no persons; this is as true as that without persons… there could be no such society as we know.'

These New Liberals departed from many of the precepts of classical liberalism in this and a number of other significant respects. They believed in progressive taxation to compensate for the unequal bargaining power of the marketplace and pay for pensions and other forms of social security. They advocated the common ownership of natural monopolies and vital public services. They viewed property rights as conditional and not absolute, subject as they must be to certain public interest restrictions. They called for the limitation of working hours and new regulations to guarantee health and safety in the workplace. They stood behind the vision of a cooperative commonwealth built on explicitly moral foundations. As Hobhouse said: "We want a new spirit in economics – the spirit of mutual help, the sense of a common good. We want each man to feel that his daily work is a service to his kind, and that idleness and anti-social work are a disgrace".

Hobhouse described himself as a liberal socialist and unlike John Stuart Mill he meant it unambiguously. Hobson and several other New Liberals went a stage further and joined the Labour party. Indeed, Green, Hobhouse, Hobson and others like them are rightly considered to be pioneers of the British tradition of ethical socialism. Their influence over the foremost Labour intellectuals of the early 20th century – Richard Tawney, GDH Cole and Harold Laski – was both profound and warmly acknowledged.

The move to uncover and reconnect liberal traditions in our party should not be one of simply returning to a neoliberal tradition. The implication of this approach is that the foundation of an Independent Labour party with a distinctively socialist outlook was a historic wrong turning and that the progressive left would have been better off devoting its energies to building an enduring electoral base for a strong and reformed Liberal party. This conclusion is not stated openly, but is inferred in much contemporary discussion. Hardie would have been appalled. So should we be today.

But if New Labour, at its best, embodied the high aspirations of fleshed-out liberalism, its restricted understanding of the scope for change betrayed the cynical assumptions of its hollowed-out alter ego. It talked quite rightly about the need for the party to broaden its appeal to win the support of 'aspirational' voters, but equated aspiration with nothing more than crude acquisitiveness – to 'earn and to own'.

Philip Gould, in his New Labour bible The Unfinished Revolution, made a revealing distinction when he described his parents as having 'wanted to do what was right, not what was aspirational'. A quite extraordinary statement of what we consider people to aspire to – a fundamentally neoliberal position. The possibility

that these two categories might overlap, even minimally, was never entertained.

As the late GA Cohen argues in a book published posthumously, the problem is one of design. The technology for giving primacy to our acquisitive and selfish desires already exists in the form of a capitalist market economy. But we have not yet adequately devised the social technology capable of giving fullest expression to the generous and altruistic side of our personality. That is the main task of the future left.

Conclusion: ethical socialism

With the demise of New Labour we face an epochal task of constructing a new political economy and philosophy. We must go back to first principles and rebuild a politics of ethical socialism, a radical transfer of political power, social influence, income and wealth from capital to labour. This was Hardie's goal. In his alliance making with liberalism, his pluralism and his non-conformity he held to this task with utter, steely determination. It no doubt shortened his life. It is still the task of today.

How do we rebuild a progressive agenda? What are the building blocks? Let us start by reintroducing a different approach to the individual. Since Thomas Hobbes, a central fault line in economic and political thought has been around how we consider the individual. Is it the world of selfish beasts, selfish genes, atomised exchange, neoclassical economics – the aspiration to 'earn and own', the brutal individualism of the neoliberal world? Or do we locate the social individual, who cares for others, in a world that spans Rousseau, Tawney, ethical and indeed faith-based socialisms? Less scientific, more a language of generosity and obligation.

It is a fault line at work within liberalism and indeed socialism. It spans the divide between Labour's radicalism and its orthodoxy – between Hardie and what became of MacDonald. It accounts for our own history and dividing lines at moments of crisis; at times its vitality at others its hopelessness.

The sociologist Norbert Elias provides a theory of this individuality and dismisses the view that individuals are self-contained, 'closed personalities'. The pursuit of independence as an individualistic project, subject only to rules of just conduct, is an illusion. Humans are social and emotional beings who are dependent on other people throughout their lives. Hobhouse understood the interdependency of individuals. He argued that social progress is: "the development of that rational organization of life in which men freely recognize their interdependence, and the best life for each is understood to be that which is best for those around him".

Hobhouse's social liberalism finds modern day counterparts in the ethical socialism of Paul Ricouer and Charles Taylor. For Hobhouse politics is 'rightfully subordinate to ethics', it exists for the sake of human life. For Ricoeur there must be an 'ethical intention' central to our politics. It is 'the desire to live well with and for others in just institutions'. By living well he means for each person to follow their 'good life' or their 'true

life', which he describes in terms similar to those of Charles Taylor, as 'the nebulous of ideals and dreams of achievements with regard to which a life is held to be more or less fulfilled or unfulfilled'. It touches what Bevan used to call a sense of serenity.

Charles Taylor argues that this desire for self-fulfillment lies deep in our culture. The concern for one's own identity and self-esteem is social rather than individualistic. Ethical socialism involves the right of everyone to achieve their own unique way of being human. To dispute this right in others is to fail to live within its own terms.

Ethical socialism originates in the sphere of personal relationships and extends upward into the wider social realm and the political community. It offers a materialist politics of the individual rooted in the social goods that give meaning to people's lives: home, family, friendships, good work, locality and imaginary communities of belonging. It is the framework that has inspired Labour at its best – it transcends the sterile orthodoxies of left and right and remains the cornerstone of radicalism in the party. It is captured in the genius of Hardie as socialist, strategist, radical and liberal. It is built around a radically different conception of the human condition from that of neoliberalism.

Very much echoing the words of Hardie, Tawney's essay 'The Choice before the Labour Party' remains the best analysis of the current crisis facing Labour today, although it was written in 1932; it is pertinent to all three of Labour's crises, in 1931, 1981 and today. It was written at the high water mark of Labour's first real crisis as a party. As we know, Ramsay MacDonald, the first secretary of the ILP – the man who stands second only to Hardie through that whole period of our party's formation – went the route of national government. Tawney highlights the dilemma at the heart of the party, its tense relationship between orthodoxy and radicalism driven by its lack of creed.

The crises have each been blamed on external events, not least serious, epochal historical moments driven by economic recession. But this is to deny Labour's inability to resolve the contradiction – not so much a broad church as fragments in search of unity.

Tawney – writing about the debacle of the Labour party in 1931, as that ethical hope dies – describes how the government 'did not fall with a crash, in a tornado from the blue. But crawled slowly to its doom.' Tawney's words echo down from the past: "The gravest weakness of British Labour is... its lack of creed. The Labour party is hesitant in action, because divided in mind. It does not achieve what it could, because it does not know what it wants".

He doesn't pull his punches. There is, he says, a 'void in the mind of the Labour party', which leads us into 'intellectual timidity, conservatism, conventionality, which keeps policy trailing tardily in the rear of realities'. Hardie and Tawney were part of a tradition that gives us radical hope and vitality, the way to overcome this trap of orthodoxy. Now is the time for that tradition to be rediscovered.

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Aspiration and Afterwards

Peter Hill

Think of what our Nation stands for,
Books from Boots' and country lanes,
Free speech, free passes, class distinction,
Democracy and proper drains.

John Betjeman, 1940

'Join 'em'

When Gordon Brown announced on 12th April Labour's ambition of creating 'a bigger middle class than ever before', some may have wondered how this related to the 'classless' politics that were supposed to be New Labour's hallmark. Even before the 1997 election that brought them to power, an editorial in the Independent spoke of 'New Labour's bid to have capitalism and all its works without its 'cultural contradictions'. 'Cultural contradictions' included such notions as 'working-class consciousness' and 'class struggle'. These were to be superseded by the new, 'classless' politics, aiming towards a society of equal opportunities and success based on merit. Or so ran the rhetoric. In fact, what was referred to as 'classlessness' might better be described as a universal aspiration to middle-class status. The members of the working class were no longer to demand equality on their own terms, as workers. The way to gain access to success, status and power was now to become part of the new, meritocratic elite – which resembled the old middle class, not only in wealth, but in culture and values. The new message to the working class was: 'if you can't beat 'em... join 'em.'

In a sense, this was a continuation of the self-help part of Thatcherite ideology: the right for individuals and families to better themselves, by (for instance) buying their council house. There is a difference nonetheless. Thatcher never meant this principle to apply, in anything but a theoretical sense, to the majority of the working class: it was obvious that not everyone who lived in a council house would be able to buy it. Even John Major's 'classless society' can be seen as an unconvincing attempt to mask the realities of social division. Yet New Labour seemed to have genuinely adopted aspiration as a universal ideal. It had accepted the economic logic of Thatcherism entirely – that 'capitalism and all its works' was necessary, unavoidable. But because it had what Thatcher did not – a social conscience – it had to find a way of believing that capitalism was genuinely in the interests of all. The universal possibility of upward mobility, freedom of opportunity and competition, was what made the market a good thing. And because this was genuinely believed in, it became an active policy: Thatcher's 'individuals' were to be allowed to rise, by some inscrutable process of the market; Labour's were to be told, encouraged, even made to rise – by the machinery of the state.

Mixed in with this need to justify capitalism was the class ideology of the New Labour leadership itself, which verged, paradoxically for a 'labour' movement, on an active idealization of the middle class and what it stood for – and a corresponding denigration of all things working-class. This was linked to the wholehearted acceptance of the free market – it was, of course, the middle class that made that market, and the old-fashioned working class that obstructed it. The almost Victorian sense of self-worth that Thatcherism had done its best to return to the middle class – not bloated or privileged, but hard-nosed individualists, owing nothing to anyone – was adopted by New Labour along with market ideology. After all, a significant part of the New Labour leadership came from that kind of world. See how Robert Harris describes Tony Blair in 1997: 'He was very normal. He had young children, he took them to school, he had a working wife, he was a sort of aspirational bloke – clever but not super-rich ...' And Blair's formula of 1999 was: 'an expanded middle class with ladders of opportunity for those of all backgrounds'. This 'bigger middle class', indeed, is not a new ambition, but was part of New Labour's programme from the start.

Education, Education, Aspiration

Both the genuine belief in this ideal and its snobbish subservience to traditional models of middle-class activities and values come across clearly in New Labour's policy on Higher (or Further) Education. The universities were naturally associated with the middle class: historically, to have a university degree was to be, by definition, a professional. The polytechnics, on the other hand, had always borne a working-class stigma, an aura of grubby hands, brown overalls and narrow provincialism. The Major government (which also laid claim to classlessness) had attempted to do away with this, in 1992, by re-christening them 'universities'. Labour's reaction to this is instructive. They forgot about the polys, fully embraced the new university system, and, set out to hugely expand access to it, giving 50% of school leavers a university education.

This vast reform sounded and was apparently believed to be highly democratic, and if we can judge by its achievements was almost entirely misguided. For a start, it signally failed to stimulate social mobility. The majority of the extra university places were taken, not by the deprived and aspirational, but by the less academically gifted or inclined from among the relatively comfortable. (The attractiveness of universities to the poor was not improved, incidentally, by the introduction of tuition fees and student debt.) Alan Milburn's report last July revealed that the social gap in universities has hardly changed since the 1960s, while the professions have become more exclusive. A second 'achievement', much talked-about, was the dumbing-down of academic standards. For the purposes of 'democracy', the fact that many of the new or expanded university courses were of far less practical or intellectual value than those offered by the old polys was unimportant. What mattered was that these were 'universities' offering 'university degrees', the magic symbol of middle-class, professional status. Nor did it matter that there were not enough 'professional' jobs for these new graduates to go into; that the only route into work often lay

through badly paid – or unpaid – internships; or that employers no longer trusted university degrees. The state had done its best by the graduates; they were now in the meritocratic 'real world' of employment, and would have to sink or swim. A third, no less great 'achievement' of these reforms, is less widely noted. It was to submerge the cause of proper vocational education in Britain. Underfunded, underadvertised, overtaken by the massive university expansion, the parts of the educational system which were supposed to provide alternatives to the professional, degree-based career path went into eclipse. Those with no particular aptitude or desire for academic training or professional careers were entirely out of place in the university, and second-class citizens anywhere else. GNVQs, BTECs and apprenticeships were all very well, but they represented – and still do – a second-class ticket in education, to a greater extent, if anything, than the old polys. Why are there so few plumbers, cooks, or mechanics in Britain now? We forgot to train any. More importantly: we forgot to tell anyone that these jobs were worth doing.

The indignity of labour

Underlying this massive, failed piece of social engineering was the persistent mantra: university-educated equals professional, equals middle-class, equals good. The kind of work the old-fashioned working class had done, and taken pride in – working with your hands, making things, fixing things – was now seen, by what had once been the labour movement itself, as somehow demeaning. The ideal citizen of the new meritocracy was a career professional: smart, services-industry Britain was infinitely more with-it than outmoded ideas of the dignity of labour. The real suffering of workers under capitalist exploitation had somehow become transmuted into the idea that physical work as such, under any conditions, was fit only for slaves – or perhaps foreign sweatshop workers, or immigrants – certainly not for the British. The only dignity was to be found in joining the middle class, the old exploiters, in becoming more like them. This idea, note, was far more likely to occur to the Islington generation of Labour leaders than to one whose members – or a significant number of them – had actually been manual workers themselves.

Thus the thought of bolstering up the 'vocational' system; of putting real effort into removing the class stigma that hung over it; of encouraging the idea that physical work was just as worthwhile as intellectual work, and that people should do whichever they felt they were best suited to – none of this ever occurred to the government. How would it? It might have been a step towards the abandonment of class distinction itself, whereas New Labour had pinned their hopes on an expanded middle class. Moreover, the idea of giving 'vocational training' and 'a job' equal status with 'university qualifications' and 'a career' would have been subversive. The existing middle class might see not only a decline in status, but also the worrying possibility of their own children having to compete in 'vocational' areas where their inherited advantages might not be so useful. Far safer to carry on believing that all 'they' could aspire to was being like 'us'.

Out and in

But a class, by definition, can never be universal: it keeps some out and others in. However many people may be brought into this ever-expanding middle class, some will always be excluded. Firstly by necessity – because of 'capitalism and all its works', among which economic inequality is, of course, the most prominent. But also – because class involves more than just money – by a kind of choice. Some people, whether they cling to older ideas of 'working-class' identity, or simply do not aspire to the meritocratic pathway to success (university education and 'a career'), will never quite feel at home in a middle-class world. By force or by stubbornness, many end up on the outside. They have nothing like the organisation or coherence of the old working-class movement: according to the prevailing ideology, they are simply unpersons, those who have failed to make it in a nation of opportunities for all – or worse, criminals, sponging off the State. They cannot even claim exclusion or exploitation: the new meritocratic elite, unlike the old middle class of privilege, can simply turn around and say, 'I worked hard to get where I am. The Government says so.'

The fate of those who make it through the aspirational system is perhaps preferable, but far from ideal. Some of them simply end up in the wrong place – for as well as those who, though academically gifted, never make it to the best universities, there are those (from whatever class background) who, having no particular academic talent or inclination, are persuaded by middle-class rhetoric to go through university and then (if they can) to get some mediocre 'professional' job. And the choices of graduates, especially the poorer ones, are distinctly limited. Doing unpaid internships costs money; so does paying back student debt – even those who 'make it', against the odds, into the exclusive professions are at a disadvantage. It is not easy, now, for a graduate without savings or a rich family to turn down a well-paid job for one that is less lucrative (but more attractive for other reasons – perhaps even more principled ones).

After aspiration

This is the kind of world the logic of universal aspiration has led us into. Yet there is a danger that the centre-left orthodoxy will continue to see the basic problem as the failure of aspiration (the lack of social mobility) – rather than the whole class structure on which aspiration is based. It is, of course, manifestly unjust that so many people are excluded from the magic circle of elite occupations and lifestyles – but the solution is not that they should all be given access to those exact same occupations and lifestyles. Rather, we need a change of perspective, based on the ideals of a genuinely classless society, and the dignity of all worthwhile kinds of labour.

So the left – the committed left – needs to do the obvious, practical things: address the massive gap between rich and poor, the hugely different rewards for doing different kinds of work; redress the imbalance between academic and vocational education. But to fight these battles merely in the name of an expand-

ed middle class is to miss the point. Alongside the practical and institutional struggles, a cultural and ideological battle has to be fought: to put an end to class distinction itself, and give people, as well as equality, the choice of what work they want to do. And here there are alternatives to the aspirational ideal.

One possible vision – not the only one – was given to us by William Morris, in News from Nowhere (1890). He describes a future utopia (set, ironically enough, in early 21st-century Britain) where people work because it is a creative task they enjoy, not because compelled to by fear of failure or the need to compete. 'Thus at last' he writes, 'and by slow degrees we got pleasure into our work; then we became conscious of that pleasure, and cultivated it, and took care that we had our fill of it...' The conditions under which work could be made enjoyable were: 'the absence of artificial coercion, and the freedom for every man to do what he can do best, joined to the knowledge of what productions of labour we really wanted.' This means particularly a new status for manual work: the inhabitants of this world look back in amusement at a time 'which despised everybody who could use his hands.'

Other aspects of Morris' vision – his agrarian-ruralist idyll, the women in their proper, domestic place – may seem reactionary or naive. But the principles he suggests for labour: the equal status of all worthwhile kinds of work; the idea that worthwhile labour is enjoyable; the insistence on community and cooperation as against competition – these are still of great value. And practical suggestions which embody these classless ideals do exist – such as the idea of a citizen's income (an 'unconditional, nonwithdrawable income... as a right of citizenship'), as proposed for years by the Citizen's Income Trust , and as more recently adopted as policy by the Green Party. Such a measure, combined with heavy taxes on the wealthy and more support for vocational education, might go a long way towards removing 'artificial coercion', and bringing about a vision like that of Morris: 'the freedom for every man' – and, we must add, every woman – 'to do what he' – or she – 'can do best', without the fear of slipping into debt or poverty. And above all, we must remember that this vision applies not just to some people – the meritocratic winners – but to everyone. In the end, we are all citizens: not only those who have 'made it', but all of us. We cannot have a really just society without that principle, and without forgetting the last of the class propaganda that seeks to deny it.

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Golden Mean, or Kind of Blue:

Principle and power – can we imagine Liberal Democrats with both?

Roberta Klimt

Let me be the first to admit that I went down with a brief and violent bout of Clegg-mania in the run-up to the 2010 election. I couldn't help it – I found so many things to like in the Liberal Democrat leader: his sassy wife, his Europhilia, his endorsement of J.M. Coetzee and W.B. Yeats. Even more captivating than these, if you can believe it, was the fact that Clegg and his party appeared to have upset the apple-cart of every election since the dawn of parliament as we know it. They seemed to be offering the incessant political pendulum a place to stop swinging.

Clegg's argument was a persuasive one: wouldn't it be better for politics to find a path of cool reason, ideology untainted by party bitterness, which would stand a chance at permanence precisely because it was so unprecedented? Shouldn't we seize our chance to 'do things differently,' to cast off the old 'political point-scoring', what Yeats called 'all those antinomies / Of day and night,' in favour of real change?

This is inspirational stuff, and Clegg knew, still knows, how to present it with élan. His style during those television debates was an effective admixture of the Ciceronian and the demotic (he memorably called the Tories' far-right European allies 'a bunch of nutters'); and in rhetoric and likeability, he far outstripped steadfast Gordon Brown and the suddenly staid David Cameron.

For all the scepticism occasioned by Clegg's eerily confident public manner, his poise was refreshing, and the performance set off a long-overdue change in the way his party was viewed. The beleaguered electorate began to feel that this relative newcomer might be a better bet than either the devil they knew, or the one they could well remember. The Guardian came out in support, saying that this was the 'liberal moment': a million sotto voce prayers followed hard upon.

Then something peculiar happened. When time came for the public to cast its vote, a substantial proportion of them lost their nerve. Or so Nick Clegg implied when, after the Liberal Democrats' shockingly poor performance, he said he understood why hardly anyone had voted for them: in uncertain times, people tended back towards the parties they'd always known; real change was scary; so far, so slightly patronizing.

But I would suggest that what really happened was something else, something which evinces both the power of the Liberal Democrats and their essential limitation. The Lib Dems acted, in the 2010 election, less as a viable party than as an energising, almost an artistic principle, which put the electorate back in touch with their deepest, longest-held values.

Here is how it happened for me. When making important decisions, I am a firm believer in the words uttered by Isabella in Shakespeare's Measure for Measure. She advises Angelo to 'Go to your bosom; / Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know.' I did this when I voted: I went to my bosom, knocked there; my heart told me to vote a certain way; Liberal Democrat was not it. And yet it had been Nick Clegg who, Isabella-like, advised the public not to vote tactically but to 'vote with your heart' – advice at which the softie in me melted like the heart of that tasty-looking Lib Dem chocolate bar. I suspect I was not alone in my gratitude to the Lib Dems for reminding me of my political allegiances; but those allegiances were not to them.

During the interregnum, hoist on his own presumptuous petard, Clegg became not prime minister but prime ditherer between the Labour and Conservative parties, with the air of one who, along with his negotiating team, quite enjoyed 'political point-scoring' and was really rather good at it.

By this behaviour, characterised as harlotry by a bang-on-the-money David Blunkett, Clegg proved a point first made four hundred years ago. The likely fate of the Liberal Democrats can best be summed up in this translation of Horace by Sir Philip Sidney, another great multilingual negotiator of his day:

> *The golden mean who loves, lives safely free*
> *From filth of foreworn house, and quiet lives,*
> *Released from court, where envy needs must be.*

In other words, whoever is able to string his tightrope between opposites is also able to free himself from the back-biting and dissembling – and point-scoring, indeed – which characterise politics. But in return, he can play no real part in politics: to be 'released from court', exempted from rivalry and envy, is also to be left out, forever speculative and not active, ineligible for the powers and pleasures of political rule.

Pigmentally apposite in relation to the Lib Dems, the golden mean may be like Clegg's party in another way: attractive only because it is forever prospective. Put it like this: the ability to steer a true course between extremes is an idea with even more purchase, and even less likelihood, than 2010 Britain being led by a man who has read Waiting for Godot one hundred times. Or so we thought.

David Cameron has shown unexpected ingenuity in harnessing the Lib Dems' imaginative power to his own somewhat unimaginative, unreconstructed party. This coalition is the logical extension of Cameron's much-publicised and, I'm inclined to believe, truthfully-meant wish to modernise the Conservatives. Perhaps, under the guise of placating the yeller fellers, he may even hope to sneak some sense of equality past Theresa May.

Outside government, the Lib Dems could be reasoned, insightful, genuinely lofty and well-behaved; now they are right amid that 'filth of foreworn house,' having shacked up with a party some of whose views on immigration, Europe, the environment and

the nuclear threat could not be further from their own. And at the moment we cannot know what will be. All we can do is go with another of Clegg's injunctions, as pronounced during the most bewilderingly fictional-feeling press conference I have ever witnessed. We have to 'keep faith,' even, perhaps, suspend our disbelief, in the best tradition of audiences to the sentimental works of art this development resembles.

To achieve their version of the golden mean, our coalition government will have to balance the scales of excess and asceticism, liberalism and conservatism, surfeit and lack, despair and elation. I fervently hope they can do it. If the Liberal Democrats can use their innate imaginativeness to help the Conservatives to make this country a better place, then I wish them all the luck in the world. If they can't, well, there's always David Miliband.

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Walking the talk, talking the walk – Labour's next steps

Jeremy Cliffe

After the battle, the smoke clears and the landscape unfolds. Where, when all is said and done, does the Labour Party find itself? The picture is mixed. On the one hand, the party chalked up some impressive victories on election night, taking back councils and holding the line in seats such as Birmingham Edgbaston, Hammersmith and our very own Oxford East. But it would not do to pretend that this was a satisfactory result. Labour's national share of the vote fell to its second lowest since 1918, only 1.5% higher than its 1983 nadir. The party has shed 5 million voters since 1997, most of them working class. Where does it go from here?

To answer this, one could do worse than heed the conclusions of the Compass post-election debate, held in London on Wednesday 12th May. The speakers – Neal Lawson, Chuka Umunna, Helena Kennedy, Billy Hayes and Jon Cruddas – addressed the state of the Labour Party from different angles, but all focused their attention on three central points.

The first was that the party must not rush the contest for a new leader; under the capable leadership of Harriet Harman it must take the time to thoroughly evaluate the successes and failures of the past thirteen years. As Neal Lawson noted, social democracy depends on long-term change, on the development over time of a substantial body of ideas. Labour now has a once-in-a-generation chance to evaluate and evolve. Put simply, we ain't having no stitch-ups.

The second was that the election has shown the value of bottom-up campaigning; if the party experienced a non-uniform swing, this was because some CLPs had a stronger grassroots infrastructure than others. Where the party did well it did more than precision bomb messages onto target voters at the push of a button in HQ. It extended its roots into communities through committed teams of local activists, à l'Obama, and this must act as a guiding principle for a more decentralised party structure in the future. Indeed, Jon Cruddas recalled a recent Saturday morning in Dagenham on which over 500 people showed up and delivered 90,000 leaflets for Hope note Hate; Labour must ask how to engage with these groups over the coming years.

The third key point was that Labour must become more confident in the policies and language of social democracy - and ditch the assumption that the electorate has little appetite for centre-left politics. A recent Compass report (Winning on the Doorstep) published polling data on twelve 'leftist' policies. It is worth quoting the results (with levels of public support) in full:

- 68% - Split 'High Street' and investment banks
- 65% - Proportional electoral system
- 58% - Statutory living wage
- 63% - Scrap Trident in favour of army health, training and housing
- 78% - Tax junk mail
- 52% - Replace top-up fees with progressive graduate tax
- 65% - High Pay Commission to tackle excessive pay
- 85% - Enforce gender equal pay through compulsory pay audits
- 89% - Cap interest rates on unsecured credit
- 70% - Bring railways back into public ownership
- 77% - Ban advertising to children
- 53% - Introduce Robin Hood Tax

As Chuka Umunna put it, Labour needs to develop an architecture of policies to give social democracy the 'endurance' of Thatcherism. Helena Kennedy added that the party must return to basics: to the functioning of markets, to the work-life balance and to the difference between a public service run efficiently and one treated as a business.

For my part, the most salient of the various excellent points raised was the following: the need to talk once more about the distribution of income and wealth in the UK. Insofar as the essence of social democracy is the combination of the capacity of markets to generate wealth with the capacity of the state to counterbalance capital's tendency to entrench inequality, New Labour's greatest missed opportunity was its cowardly purge of the word 'redistribution' from the civic lexicon. Stemming from the same fearful mindset that no doubt places the above (patently moderate and popular) policies in the box marked 'loony left', this failure spoke of a belief that equality of outcome would not play well on the doorstep.

And so it came to be that the party's leadership talked endlessly of equality of opportunity and, with a wink to the grassroots, got on with the task of stealth redistribution. As the Independent's Steve Richard recalls, "Mr Blair once observed to me that while Conservative governments could rule from the centre right, Labour could rule only from the centre". New Labour's mistaken belief in a right-wing electorate and its ensuing reluctance to talk about the final share of wealth often left the party rhetorically impotent, talking a desiccated, managerialist language that prohibited it from showcasing successes. Numerous reports from the doorstep tell of an electorate all-too ignorant of such fundamental Labour achievements as the minimum wage, increased investment in local services and tax credits. Yet a recent IFS investigation found that reforms to tax and benefits over the past thirteen years have been overwhelmingly redistributive, leaving the bottom six deciles better-off at a modest cost to the top four.

This rhetorical reticence may also have prevented the party from addressing its failures. Notwithstanding the substantial achievements of the past thirteen years, the UK continues to suffer one of the lowest levels of social mobility in the developed world and, as of 2007, has the worst overall child wellbeing

(UNICEF, An overview of child wellbeing in rich countries). As *The Spirit Level* so damningly revealed, these, and other social ills, are intimately related to levels of economic inequality, higher in the UK than in almost any other country in Western Europe. In short, equality of opportunity and equality of outcome are two sides of the same coin. Could more have been done on these fronts if Labour had been more frank about the need for a fairer distribution of wealth?

We might also speculate as to whether an electorate exposed over thirteen years to more vocal outrage at unearned wealth and privilege might have been more receptive to criticism of the Conservatives' proposed inheritance tax cut. We might speculate as to whether Cameron would have blushed, clucked and stuttered in the face of serious discussion of wealth inequalities. We might speculate as to whether, as Ed Miliband suggests, Labour could have been bolder in reining in the City.

There are strong precedents for such discourse. In a 2008 paper for History and Policy (How to talk about redistribution: a historical perspective), OLR contributor Dr. Ben Jackson showed that in the past, popular support for redistribution has been mobilised not by a fundamentalist language of class war, but by an appeal to majoritarian instincts: the public good, collective responsibility and opportunity.

And to those who claim that redistribution is all rather 'donkey jacket', one can only recommend a glance at the manifestos of Labour's international sister parties. The most recent electoral programme of the German SPD leads with a commitment to "a just distribution of income and wealth". That of the Canadian NDP notes that "The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer and working families are getting squeezed. Jack Layton and the New Democrats will meet this unacceptable trend head-on." Even in the USA, Barack Obama talks repeatedly about the need to more equally slice the 'pie' of prosperity.

Norway's Labour PM Jens Stoltenberg, who gave one of the best speeches of last year's Brighton party conference, was recently reelected on the following platform: "We will put fellowship over tax cuts. Our aim is to reduce economic inequality. […] A just distribution of wealth and equality are fundamental values for this government. To reduce inequalities in living standards we will seek to reduce economic and social differences and fight poverty". The Swedish Social Democrats are set to return to government in this September's election under the eminently moderate Mona Sahlin, but will do so under a statement of values that concludes: "We strive for an economic order where every person as a citizen, a wage earner and consumer can influence the direction and redistribution of production, the organisation and conditions of working life."

Yet New Labour, despite its stealth redistribution and tacit nods to a concern at the wealth gap, failed to use this language. The nearest the 2010 manifesto came to doing so was the almost painfully non-contentious statement "Our aim is to put more wealth in the hands of the British people". And consider other New Labour gems such as the claim by Alan Milburn that the party's primary raison d'être was to help

people "earn and own", or the unabashedly individualist slogans of the 2005 election ('Your family better off'; 'Your child achieving more'), or Philip Gould's complaint that his parents wanted to do "what was right, not what was aspirational".

There was, however, one moment in the 2010 campaign at which Labour rose to a more vital, engaged language: Gordon Brown's speech to Citizens UK. His voice quivering with emotion, the then Prime Minister recalled his father teaching him "that life was about more than self-interest, that work is about more than self-advancement, that service is about more than self-service, that happiness is about more than what you earn and own" [italics mine]. Pundits from all corners of the political spectrum praised the speech, which for some time was the most-watched video on YouTube.

From it arise several questions that speak volumes of the need for change. Why did the party reserve such passionate oratory for the perceived 'friendly audience' of Citizens UK? Why did the language of the speech not pervade the campaign? Does its success not expose an electorate alive to values of reciprocity and common endeavour? As the reality of defeat sets in, and as one generation of party leaders passes the baton on to the next, real reflection is needed, and the likes of these questions may not be a bad place to start. And perhaps, with a certain poetic circularity, the collectivist language of Brown's final and most eloquent stand can form the foundation of a renewed Labour Party.

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[The Compass conference, A New Hope, will be held on Saturday 12th June. For tickets and further information see www.compassonline.org.uk]

Thinking a few steps ahead

Dr. Kaihsu Tai

Political events since mid-2009, especially the parliamentary expenses scandal, accentuated long-standing symptoms in the British body politic, eliciting predictions of doom (in the form of further voter disengagement, among others) and calls for reform. Among these, many an opinion poll suggested the possibility of a hung Parliament, and many a campaign group called for a referendum on reforming the electoral system of first-past-the-post (FPTP). Peter Tatchell outlined the case for electoral reform in the inaugural issue of this Review. Beyond this, the wide Left ought also to think a few more steps ahead.

Politics may be the art of the possible, full of contingencies and often driven by chronological events. In contrast, statesmanship requires identifying turning points, grasping the kairos moment, and making the seemingly-impossible happen. "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste", as Rahm Emanuel said. Rather than simply being pushed by the waves of political events, it is advisable for those of us on the progressive side of the political spectrum – those who still believe in the power of politics to bring about positive change in society - to learn lessons from the consequences of a hung Parliament, and prepare for a referendum on electoral reform.

Hung Parliament

To start, we need to recognize that, as Vernon Bogdanor pointed out in a recent talk in Oxford, the House of Lords is now permanently "hung", A new constitutional convention for Britain is emerging where no party enjoys majority in that chamber of Parliament. Electoral arithmetic has so far produced similar results in the devolved assemblies and the Scottish Parliament. A "hung" Parliament - in truth, a newly-"hung" House of Commons in addition to the other place - presented itself after the general election. In this section, I will deal with what can be learnt by considering hypothetical alternative outcomes. (This will accentuate the issues with FPTP and electoral system reform; that I will treat in the next section.)

The actual scenario left the Tories with the most seats, but without an absolute majority. The Liberal Democrats, or (an)other smaller party(ies), were in a position to be the kingmaker. For the sake of my argument, I will take a hypothetical scenario where the Conservatives win one seat short of majority and - in the hope of forming a coalition Government - offer a Cabinet post to a Green; more complicated exercises are left for the reader, but the point to be made is the same.

The Tories - in this unlikely scenario - then offer a Cabinet post to Caroline Lucas (winning Brighton Pavilion) with a portfolio for the environment (or energy and climate change). Hedging against this, the Tories say the alternative is a post for Nick Griffin (also winning in his Barking constituency) with a portfolio for home affairs. What is this new Green MP to do? Relinquishing this offer means the British National Party will have control over the policing, the state databases, and migration - not an attrac-

tive prospect. But if the Cabinet post were worth taking, where would the red line be in the negotiation? That is to say, under what undesirable circumstances are you willing to threaten to leave Government and/or withdraw supply and confidence?

The Irish Greens recently learnt this lesson the hard way. Their holding (and holding on to) the environment portfolio meant having to endorse new motorways over ecologically-sensitive sites, a decision made under another portfolio but held by Cabinet collective responsibility rules, unless they were open to the prospect of leaving Government and returning the Opposition benches. Reluctant to do this, Irish Greens are at risk of becoming the "Mudguard of the Republic", an unenviable office of State last held by the Irish Labour Party, whose electoral fortunes took a full decade to recover.

There is a feasible workaround to the problem of Westminster-style Cabinet collective responsibility in a coalition Government context. In New Zealand, after the upheaval of electoral reform (see below), the politicians arrived at an arrangement of "confidence and supply", including the possibility of Cabinet posts for minor parties without share in collective responsibility, but rather with direct reporting to the Prime Minister.

A similar arrangement has been common practice in Germany, with the portfolio of foreign affairs given to the junior partner in Government, held variously by the Greens, the Socialists, and now the Liberals. Still, such an arrangement is not necessarily easy for the junior partner in Government: one of the turning points in post-Second World War German history saw Joschka Fischer having to defend his military deployment in Yugoslavia in front of a rowdy conference of his own party.

These German, Irish, and Kiwi experiences should be object lessons for us in Britain: what is the Liberal Democrat foreign policy? It may become the British foreign policy, perhaps even as soon as this summer. And if one were in the position of the junior partner, where would the red line be in the negotiations? Are the electorate and party members at large entitled to know beforehand? How well prepared do we want to be when this happens?

Electoral reform and party realignment

In April 2009, many were worried that the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa would get 67 % of parliamentary seats, thus wielding unchallenged constitution-amending powers. But in Britain, a one-party state is not a far-fetched threat but the status quo. Since there is no entrenched, codified constitution, the governing party - even one elected by a minority of the popular vote - can ram any legislation, even of constitutional importance, through Parliament without consensus from any other party.

Had the ANC won its constitution-amending powers, it would have garnered two-thirds of the popular vote. Not so in Britain: the pathological FPTP electoral system, rather than encouraging consensus, facilitates a minority imposing its unchecked will over the majority with the impunity of a steamroller. (For example, in May 2009, we saw the retention of innocent people's DNA data, pushed through the Commons, which would have been judicially ruled unconstitutional had a written constitution so provided.)

This is the source of the toxic climate of political alienation and apathy now prevailing in Britain. Despite these sorts of hurdles, political breakthrough has come from surprising quarters. The United Kingdom Independence Party (Ukip) emerged as the second-largest British party in the European Parliament election last June, garnering 16.5 % of the popular vote, second only to the Tories at 27.7 % and ahead of Labour's 15.7 %.

Regardless of whether we agree with Ukip, it is a political innovator. To start, it revived and sharpened the traditional Tory-imperial rhetoric, offering an ersatz alignment of the interests of the parochial, jingoistic lumpenproletariat with those of the globalized, Anglospheric elite. More important, Ukip broke away from its Conservative ideological cousin, despite the constraints of the FPTP system for the Westminster elections which has dominated national politics. It took advantage of the more proportional electoral system offered by the elections at the European level, though paradoxically it aimed to dismantle this.

Again, the experience in New Zealand offers an object lesson of what may come in British politics after electoral reform. In 1996, the electoral system for the House of Representatives (the only chamber in the Kiwi parliament) changed from FPTP to an additional-member system (there named 'Mixed Member Proportional'). After some initial partisan discomfort, new alignments emerged with smaller parties which have more ideological clarity.

This process of party realignment, though transiently painful, is ultimately healthy for the body politic. There are two or three 'parties of conviction' within each of the larger existent parties in Britain, waiting for the right time to break out. A realignment similar to that experienced by New Zealand may happen here with small parties of conviction breaking out of existing ones, favouring consensus (internal and external to each party) rather than electoral expediency. Ideological clarity, in a system with fewer 'wasted votes', offers the best prospect of re-engaging the voters and boosting turnout.

In preparation for this process after the upcoming electoral system reform, generous statesmen and stateswomen would do well to start identifying friends across party lines. People they can do business with in other parties - either in a hung Parliament scenario, in the upheaval of partisan realignment, or in the subsequent consensual, coalition Government (or Opposition). Party-internal groups such as Compass, Green Left, the Beveridge Group, Green Liberal Democrats, and the Co-operative Party will play important roles in this scheme. It would be good to seize the opportunity and sketch out some plans for it: on the other side of the political spectrum, they seem to be doing this already (e.g. Ukip).

Consensus Parliament with power-sharing

Partisan realignment does not occur without labour pains. Loyalty to one's own party, in the right measure, ensures strategic coherence and is often admirable. But, as I hope I have sketched out, a time may come when the greater goal of national and societal Common Good calls for - and warrants - the sacrifice of such loyalty for a time.

The actual fissures within each existent party during such a realignment process

are still to be determined. They are not random, but have deep ideological roots. These are to be called by the most astute stateswomen and statesmen with foresight in each party, if they are not merely to be driven by haphazard events. Take my own political party - the Greens - as an example: the ideological differences between Realo and Fundi, or (vulgo) 'spikes' and 'fluffs', has more than one time rent Green parties apart: in Germany, in the Netherlands, in Mexico, and now in Ireland.

Such ideological undercurrents are not absent in other parties. Taking the other two from the wide Left: the oft-heard accusations of Liberal Democrat 'fence-sitting' may come from the ideological dialectic between internal factions: one with neoliberal/libertarian instincts, the other social democratic. Within the Labour Party, various configuration are possible: New and Old, Third Way versus Civil Republican, Mainstream against Militant; this dynamically changing landscape awaits able and adroit hands to mould and then to hold.

The realignment may be a scary prospect for partisans, but the outcome for the whole of Britain can be better than the status quo. The adversarial nature of the Westminster Parliament, stemming from the incidental architectural heritage of Saint Stephen's Chapel and reinforced by the FPTP electoral system, has sometimes become a gratuitous two-sided shouting match, caricatured as a Punch and Judy show. This contrasts (as Norman Davies explained in an appendix of his work of haute vulgarisation, "Europe: A History") with the European continental political culture of the Hemicycle, expressed (again) architecturally in the layout of the debating chamber of the European Parliament - and in these isles, the Dáil and the Scottish Parliament.

As the Peace Process in Northern Ireland rolled on, the new U-shaped chamber in Stormont prophesied a move away from sectarian two-sidedness. An otherwise-unlikely but constitutionally mandated permanent coalition Government, holding two parties from the extremes of the political spectrum, projects the peculiar effect of holding the society together. Britain can borrow from this culture of consensus and power-sharing in the neighbouring island. The new-format Westminster Hall debates in Parliament herald such a move, both architecturally and politically, to a more hemicyclical arrangement.

This is what a constitution ought to do: to hold the society together, no matter who is in Government. A hung Parliament would give us an opening to consider - with due care - not only the designs of our electoral system, but also the wider scheme for this constitutional telos. Imagine a more generous, more vibrant politics in Britain. More diversity of opinions with smaller, coherent parties; accompanied with ideological conviction on the one hand, and consensus-building on the other. In all, much less partisan bickering and decisions driven by triangulation and crude expediency. A Britain where a 'Government of All Talents' is no longer a contrived piece of rhetoric, but naturally unfolds from the healthy constitution of the body politic. For the good of our country, let's prepare for it. Let's work towards it.

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Electoral reform and the Left: Lessons from Germany

Brian Melican

In the run up to the recent general election and betting on a hung parliament, Timothy Garton Ash wrote about how "British politicians will need to act more like the Germans" – and turned out to be completely right. Just like Germany has done for almost all of its recent history, Britain awoke on the day after the general election to find that no one party had a clear majority in parliament; and despite the sibylline warnings of neo-liberal doom-and-gloom-mongerers, this astonishing event did not cause the end of the world as we know it.

No: just like in Germany, the heads of the various parties negotiated with each other to form a coalition. Just like in Germany, this was all subject to the structural power dynamics of all negotiation situations, involving a considerable amount of guile, bravado and amateur dramatics on all sides. And just like so often in Germany, a coalition was forged which much of the electorate (and the parliamentary parties involved) had not expected. This is the major lesson that Britain, and especially the left in Britain, has had to learn: coalition negotiations in parliaments with no clear majority very quickly lead to a mathematical, pragmatical and distinctly un-ideological attitude. Who has which number of seats? Where are there anything approaching policy similarities? What are the deal-breakers? Anything else simply gets in the way.

Germans know this, since they are confronted with it not just every four years at the general election for the Bundestag, but at regular intervals whenever there is a round of state elections (on average every two years): a parliament with a full majority for one party is to the Germans what a hung parliament was to the British until 2010 – i.e. practically unthinkable.

What will be interesting is to see how Britain responds to the coalition, and whether this is a historical exception or the beginning of a new phase in British politics. Much depends, of course, on whether the Liberal Democrats manage to convince the country about their plans for a distinctly German form of electoral reform: if they do, the 2005 election may well be the last one in which there was a non-hung parliament in Westminster and coalitions will become standard.

Yet even if they do not secure electoral reform, Britain may well have to get used to hung parliaments as long as voters and/or the creaking voting system do not produce a clear majority for any one party. What would this scenario mean for progressive politics in Britain?

A look at Germany tells us that the news for the left is ambivalent. Throughout the

fifties, sixties and seventies, Germany too was essentially a three-party democracy, with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) right-of-centre, the Social Democrats (SPD) to the left and the Free Democrats (FDP) roughly in the centre, but focussing far more on civil liberties than on left-right politics. The FDP of that time bore little resemblance to the neo-liberal market ideologues currently in government in Berlin, being very much in the liberal tradition which also gave birth to Britain's Liberal Democrats. In a parliament in which both the CDU and SPD were continuously falling short of a clear majority, the FDP's lack of strong left or right convictions in terms of economic policy made them the ideal coalition partners for whichever of the other two parties seemed to have carried the day: their conditions for cooperation on the economy were mainly concessions on state power and civil liberties.

This comfortable stance saw them almost continuously in government, lynchpins of power supporting alternatively Adenauer's conservatives, Brandt's social democrats and then Kohl's conservatives again – and spending just 8 of the 49 years from 1949 to 1998 in opposition.

The parallels to the current dynamics in Westminster are clear: a large conservative and a large left-wing party unable to secure a clear majority - and a small liberal democratic party as the kingmakers. The only problem is that in Britain, the Liberal Democrats have, in a mirror-image of their German counterparts, moved ever more to the Left over the past twenty years. This is largely to do with the first-past-the-post system, which requires tactical voting and, in the 1990s, led significant portions of the electorate to view the LibDems as a left-wing party by virtue of the fact that they were less right-wing than the Tories and more likely to get in than Labour. This, in turn, affected the way the LibDems viewed themselves and sent the more ambitious of them looking for votes on the left; a trend that was only accelerated by New Labour's move to the right, leaving inviting territory that LibDems were only too happy to lay claim to.

This means that, whilst current Westminster parliamentary dynamics and the origins of their party may dictate that the Liberal Democrats should act as un-ideological coalition partners, pursuing a civil liberties agenda as the price for their votes, they are politically no longer free to do so, having gained an ever-increasing proportion of their votes from people who essentially see them as Labour Mk. II. Whereas German FDP-voters over the years voted actively for liberal democratic policy – and where happy to see it implemented either through a left- or right-wing majority – LibDem voters in Britain often vote against right-wing politics and will have little understanding for Clegg's completing Cameron's majority. The LibDems will have to be sure to implement as much progressive left-wing policy as possible and to profile themselves wherever possible against their Tory partners; otherwise, under the current electoral system, they risk a wipe-out in 2015 that would then leave many traditionally non-Labour constituencies in the hands of the Tories for decades to come. The FDP were for years respected as kingmakers; the LibDems risk being viewed as pawns, or at the very worst, whores.

Indeed, the sexual imagery of coalition government – enthusiastically alighted on by the press after the Clegg-Cameron "nuptials" in the Downing Street garden – is another thing Germans are more used to than the British. With the diversification of the German political system from a three- into a five-party landscape, the press frequently describes negotiations in terms of "speed-dating", "hopping into bed with" and "two-timing". The more colourful descriptions sound somewhat akin to a drunken Oxford bop, with jeder mit jedem – or "everyone doing everyone" – written when the negotiating parties lose all inhibitions and start to form coalitions far more unusual than Lib-Con.

This is what may await Britain if the Liberal Democrats do manage to secure real electoral reform. In this second scenario – using Germany once again as an example – there are considerably more opportunities for the progressive left.

This is because, firstly, in PR systems like Germany, voting intentions correlate far more to parties and their policies than to tactics: people are free to vote for parties, and not just against them. The way would be open for both Labour and the Liberal Democrats to stop playing the bizarre mixture of charades and blind man's bluff that characterises tactical electioneering in a first-past-the-post system and be honest both with the country and with themselves as to what they want. This can only be a gain for the Left in psychological terms.

Secondly, PR would most likely translate into more votes for the progressive majority in the British population who voted LibDem or Labour at the last election: having polled a combined 42% of the vote to the Conservatives' 36%, for example, Labour and the LibDems would have had a clear lead in the House of Commons. In PR the spread might look different, as natural Labour voters in currently Tory-LidDem constituencies return to the fold and the LibDems possibly move back to the centre ground, losing progressive votes and picking up left-leaning Conservative ones as they go: but the party least likely to profit from any of this would, of course, be the Conservatives.

What Germany also teaches us is that true proportional representation allows minority parties into parliament in a far greater measure than is currently the case in the UK; and that these minority parties are usually more willing to throw their weight behind a progressive coalition. This is because, as we have seen both in Britain and Germany, centre-left parties in government, unlike right-wing ones, have a tendency to drop more radical points of policy and leave unoccupied space to their left. Yet while in Britain no new party was able to fill the space left by New Labour and the LibDems struggled to turn the votes they got from it into seats, the German political system makes sure that the far left of the political spectrum remains represented in parliament. As social-democratic parties move to the right, their old left is taken by new parties who keep that part of the vote mobilised and who – admittedly after a few years of chaos and angry recrimination – are ready for a progressive coalition.

In Germany, this happened first under Helmut Schmidt, whose disregard for the far left created the space for the Greens, founded in 1980. Originally bit-

terly opposed to all parties and the idea of government in itself (they famously arrived for their first ever parliament session in t-shirts and trainers), by the 90s the Greens were in coalitions in several states and in 1998 moved with the SPD into national government. Then, the same thing happened again as the new SPD chancellor Schröder's increasingly Blairite behaviour opened up space on the far left. This was filled by a new party, Die Linke ("The Left"). As with the Greens at first, Die Linke have so far been hostile to compromise and thus too radical for government, but with the results from North-Rhine Westpahlia's recent state elections giving the SPD, Greens and Left a clear majority, the bad feeling that stopped previous coalition attempts in Hesse in 2008 is already starting to fade.

This is good news for the progressive left in Britain. Rather than causing disenchantment and horrifically low voter turn-out like in 2001, a characteristic move to the right by the major left-wing party simply pushes the boundary of an overall progressive majority further out into conservative territory as a smaller, more radical party steps into the breach and covers the bigger party's rear flank.

In fact, once these radicals have settled down and, like the German Greens, traded in their trainers for ties, they can prove to be far more practical and results-orientated than the bigger parties. The Greens have now, on a state level, taken over the job of the FDP as everyone's favourite cool, calm and collected coalition partner. Despite being emotionally closer to the SPD, the Greens have in several of Germany's state parliaments entered into coalitions with the conservative CDU: after all, with the left-wing vote still split and the SPD and Linke only just beginning to cooperate, there has been little other choice for the Greens recently to get their policies implemented. In Hamburg, for example, this has meant the CDU leaving their junior partner a free hand to reform the school system in exchange for them allowing a new coal-fired power plant at Moorfleet. This is a high-risk strategy, with CDU voters disgusted by their party tolerating the Green's attempts to close their grammar schools and the Green party grass-roots equally angry at their leaders for buying this unpopular social-policy move with a large chunk of their gold-standard political currency, the environment.

In fact, the Greens' situation is similar to the one that Clegg now faces: how to implement progressive policies in coalition with a party whose leader may be willing to work un-ideologically, but whose back-benches contain some robustly conservative voices. The German experience has shown that, on a national level, this kind of left-right coalition can be deadly – the four-year coalition between the SPD and CDU from 2005 to 2009 led to heavy losses for both from traditional supporters. After all, what the logic of parliamentary seat distribution dictates is not always in accordance with the way the electorate cast their votes.

Nevertheless, in 2005 it just so happened that mathematically, SPD-CDU was nigh-on the only practicable combination. Furthermore, once the parties actually negotiated with each other in the cool light of day, they found more common ground than anyone would have expected. The consensual nature of their government was, in hindsight, a blessing for Germany in the first phase of the financial crisis in 2008; this has become

clear now that a purely right-wing coalition of the ideologically better-suited CDU and FDP is in charge and has reacted so poorly to the weakness of Greece and the Euro.

So what Germany shows us is that proportional representation forces a refocusing away from parties onto policies. Parties have to become more flexible, more willing to be un-ideological and to trade on their agendas – and this is often difficult, both for the politicians involved and their most loyal voters. If Britain does get PR, the Left should get ready for a wider range of opportunities to govern, but steel themselves for the uninviting prospect of doing it through negotiation with Tory backbenchers. Nevertheless, this wouldn't be the end of the world, and would almost certainly prevent extreme swings to the right such as that in the 1980s. To borrow once again from Garton-Ash's article, the choice between German and British electoral systems is essentially the choice between allowing radical Thatcherism and favouring consensus à la Merkel.

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Foreign policy and the Left: the "ethical dimension" revisited.

Leonie Northedge

There is no doubt that this year's election campaign has been, understandably, almost completely concerned with domestic politics; the bread and butter issues of jobs, taxes and welfare services which have the most tangible impact on our day to day lives. This was reflected in the topics covered by the much-discussed televised debates between the leaders of the three major parties: of the three hour and a half long debates, only forty five minutes was allotted for "foreign policy" debate, which had to encompass the UK's place in Europe, the parties' policies on Europe, and what we might call the "security" centred discussion about the role of the armed forces and Britain's nuclear deterrent. Even if we accept that this election should be primarily fought on domestic policy because of the economic crisis – and arguably we should not accept this given the staggering cost of the military operations conducted in Afghanistan and Iraq - this does not mean that the progressive Left should allow foreign policy issues to fall off the agenda.

And yet, in many ways this is what has been allowed to happen. Despite the massive momentum behind the anti-war movement in 2003 which united many elements of the Left, British foreign policy in the last decade of the Labour government has been dominated by costly expeditions to enact regime change in far-flung destinations (which happen to be Muslim-majority countries). The stunted nature of the debate which took place on our television screens last month was representative of how difficult it has become to challenge the "security" oriented orthodoxy predicated on fear of an unpredictable, amorphous, Muslim threat to the safety of British lives on British streets. This is coupled with an obligation to always pay due respect to the bravery of "our boys" - an obligation that has now become extended and distorted to the point where it is difficult to criticise a war which our troops are engaged in for fear of being accused of denying the bravery and dedication of the troops themselves.

Barring the issue of whether to renew Trident (where the Lib Dems have dared to challenge the Labour-Tory consensus), the differences between the three leaders on Britain's military role in Afghanistan and elsewhere were almost non-existent. Brown defended his government's record on how the Afghan war has been prosecuted; Clegg and Cameron mostly attacked the government's failure to provide sufficient equipment for British troops. Interestingly, Cameron perhaps came closest to offering a critique of the Afghan war itself, by highlighting the unrepresentative nature of the current Afghan government which is being propped up by NATO, and emphasising the need for a political settlement. Clegg failed to make any capital out of his party's opposition to the Iraq war, and Iraq was only mentioned briefly in his opening remarks. Neither of the opposition leaders, then, could or would

challenge in any meaningful way Gordon Brown's forceful assertion that we must remain in Afghanistan – and potentially go into Yemen or Somalia – in order to face down the "chain of terror" about which "we have got to be vigilant all the time".

Whilst the Obama administration has made an effort to retire the scaremongering rhetoric of the "war on terror", it lives on and reigns in our own political discourse. Perhaps it is merely the desperate clutching at straws of a weak incumbent prime minister seeking to grasp whatever advantage he might have over the opposition through his insider knowledge of security intelligence. But we know that this kind of rhetoric has been used by Brown (and Blair before him) and successive ministers in Whitehall to justify any number of policies over the years since 9/11, particularly restrictions on our domestic civil liberties and the prosecution of ethically dubious wars abroad. Yet did the New Labour government elected in 1997 not begin with the best of intentions? Robin Cook famously inaugurated the Blair government's foreign policy with a much-vaunted speech about the necessity of an "ethical dimension" to that foreign policy. Many people might see the subsequent sidelining of Cook (he was demoted to Leader of the Commons after the 2001 general election) as symbolic of Blair's (and New Labour's) descent from principled beginnings to the morally dubious lows of the Iraq war.

However, the so-called "ethical" foreign policy never rested on particularly firm foundations. Cook's speech was certainly unprecedented in the history of the Foreign Office, and it was delivered in typical New Labour style: "Every modern business," he declared, "starts from a Mission Statement that sets clear objectives. New Labour is determined to bring a businesslike approach to Government and today, only ten days into our term of office, I am launching a New Mission Statement for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office." This "Mission Statement" consisted of four main objectives: security for nations; the prosperity of Britain; the quality of life in Britain (with regards to the environment); and finally, to "secure the respect of other nations for Britain's contribution to keeping the peace of the world and promoting democracy around the world." This was the "ethical dimension", which would also entail "putting human rights at the heart of our foreign policy." Nevertheless in the following weeks and years the contradictions present in these admirable-sounding statements would become apparent, as well as the lack of a truly coherent conceptual framework for executing the goal of an "ethical foreign policy".

Predictably, perhaps, the first stumbling block to face the new, re-oriented Foreign Office was that of commercial interests, and it appeared to many observers that the New Labour administration had fallen at the first hurdle by supplying weapons to the grossly repressive regime of Suharto in Indonesia. But following this, the thorniest contradiction would be between the commitment to promoting democracy with the preservation of human rights – though it may not be immediately apparent that these would be contradictory. Here we see that Blair's vision of the "ethical" dimension of foreign policy extended beyond acknowledging the responsibility of engaging in "humanitarian intervention" to prevent dire humanitarian crises (Rwanda being the most oft-cited example of when the in-

ternational community should have intervened). For Blair, military powers such as Britain not only had the responsibility to intervene to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe, but also had the right to reshape states through "regime change".

During Blair's tenure as Prime Minister, the British government engaged in four major interventions abroad: Sierra Leone, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. It is clear that from the very beginning that "liberal interventionism" - which justified military intervention not only on a humanitarian basis but also under the auspices of promoting "our" values – was part and parcel of the Blair administration's foreign policy outlook. As early as 1998 Blair argued in an article for the Observer that it was necessary to use force against Saddam's regime in Baghdad. But whilst the operations carried out in Sierra Leone and Kosovo were generally considered to have been successful and remained mostly within the "humanitarian intervention" paradigm, the results of Blair's particular conception of "liberal interventionism" in Iraq and Afghanistan would turn out to be nothing less than horrific. Britain became embroiled in two incredibly complex and bloody conflicts, where it gradually became apparent that the external forces brought in to supposedly "fix" these problematic states were in many ways aggravating and entrenching the conflicts.

Of course, neither of these were simple conflicts, and when we look at the failure of the anti-war movement and the stunted debate taking place around Afghanistan today the unfamiliarity and sheer complexity of Iraqi and Afghan politics – the multiplicity of religious denominations, ethnic groups and fluid political factions is challenging to keep track of even for the keen observer – must surely be an important factor. The truth is that the anti-war movement could no longer be as effective in opposing the Iraq war once the invasion had been launched, not only because of the need to "support our boys", but also because its slogans were simple and could be easily brushed aside as naïve. However, it is also arguable that the progressive Left never produced a coherent alternative framework within which to see British foreign policy, and to provide firmer ground upon which to argue in favour of foreign policy strategies that escape some of the contradictions inherent in the "Mission Statement" of the Blair years. Because the much-vaunted "ethical dimension" was in fact heavily qualified in Robin Cook's speech, and it is notable that "the security of nations" is the first goal of the "Mission Statement".

A mention of the "ethical dimension" may have been a step forward in the attempt to bring the values of the progressive Left into British foreign policy, but the arena of international politics is still dominated by the discourse of "security", where human rights are ultimately subordinated to "national interest" - as Gordon Brown constantly reminds us, we are fighting in Afghanistan to "keep British streets safe". Of course, paradoxically it seems that we are chasing our own tail in the name of "security": the week-on-week death toll of Afghan civilians killed in drone strikes and checkpoint shootings by foreign forces does nothing to enhance the security of British citizens. The battle for "hearts and minds" cannot be won whilst NATO forces are propping up a regime with no popular mandate (thanks to the wide scale electoral fraud committed by Hamid Karzai's supporters, and largely ignored by his

foreign backers), and extremist ideologues continue to find an audience when they can point to the excessive and continual violence inflicted upon Afghan civilians. So here the security discourse has served to shut down the possibility of an open, honest and free-ranging public debate about the role of British forces in Afghanistan.

But we must challenge the discourse of "security" on more than just a practical level: we need to reformulate the "ethical dimension" of New Labour's vision and attempt to escape from the crippling contradictions it suffered from, by affirming a coherent framework of principles on which to base an alternative vision of foreign policy that truly expresses the values of the progressive Left. This is desperately needed not only in order to enable foreign policy to be more widely scrutinised in mainstream political discourse, but also to prevent a repeat of the mistakes of the past: lest we forget, it was not just Tony Blair who took us into Iraq, but it was also the parliamentary Labour Party which supported him. One of the greatest disappointments of the Labour government is that it has achieved so much domestically in the last decade, yet has been party to some of the most heinous crimes in its foreign policy. Justice in international politics should be as much of a priority as social justice at home, because no Iraqi or Afghani life should be worth less than a British one.

The importance of human rights; the affirmation of multilateralism; the upholding of international law; the commitment to international institutions such as the UN; the respect for our shared humanity. These are all fundamental principles which we are familiar with, but which in the realm of foreign policy we have frequently lost sight of how to apply and how to articulate our opposition when they are violated. It is perhaps the last of these principles – the respect for our shared humanity – that we have lost sight of most of all: the cavalier fashion in which the Iraq war was entered into (with, as is well-known, absolutely no "post-war" planning) was perhaps the most shameful thing of all about that ethically dubious venture. Iraqi lives, of which tens of thousands were lost in the ensuing violence, were seen as the acceptable price to pay for "regime change" in Iraq. The war was depicted as the necessary bitter pill which Iraqis should swallow for their own good: this kind of argument was the logical consequence of the Blair administration's conception of an "ethical foreign policy", and it is one that should be rejected absolutely by any truly progressive alternative.

Although at the time of writing it is still up in the air what government will result from the general election, it is clear from the vote share won by the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats that Britain is still a country with a "progressive majority". Whatever the final outcome of this election, the Labour Party will certainly be moving into a new era, leaving behind that of Blair and Brown. It is to be hoped that this will provide a window for reflection and adjustment in a number of policy areas, including foreign policy. It will provide a good opportunity to push for the adoption of an alternative vision of foreign policy, and ensure that Britain's progressive majority will finally have a voice on the international stage as well as the domestic.

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Basic Income; A Brief History

Scott Carless

Basic income is a simple yet revolutionary economic proposal which would provide an income for every man, woman and child, paid to all without work requirement or means test. Basic income, which has also been referred to variously as a 'citizen's income', 'national dividend' or 'state bonus' over the years of its development, is by no means a new idea; the beginnings of such a scheme can be traced back, perhaps unsurprisingly, to Thomas More's Utopia, published in Louvain in 1516. Over the intervening five centuries it has been the subject of much sidelined political debate and has had the support of individuals as far ranging as Thomas Paine, Bertrand Russell and J.K. Galbrieth.

At the time of writing the only main political party in the UK to include such a policy in their manifesto is the Green Party. However, there has been an increasing level of support for the idea of Basic Income over the past few years, as other means of attempting to tackle inequality, poverty and unemployment have failed to achieve their objectives. One of the most enthusiastic supporters of Basic Income, Philip Van Parijs, stated in a paper written for the Basic Income European Network 8th International Congress held in Berlin, October 2000 that "Basic income is one of those few simple ideas that must and will powerfully shape, first the debate, and next the reality, of the new century." For those on the Left, Basic Income is an exciting concept for its implementation would be a move towards a much more equal state of affairs, redistributing income on a universal basis and providing hundreds of thousands of people with an unprecedented level of freedom and scope for personal development. As such its role in the Social Democratic movement must not be overlooked. This article for will chart the history of Basic Income; in later articles I will go into some of the arguments in greater detail for this remarkably simple yet inspiring concept.

One mention of a minimal income provided by a political community can be found, as stated above, in Thomas More's Utopia in which the unfortunately named Portuguese Traveller Raphael Nonsenso recounts a conversation that he had with the Archbishop of Canterbury regarding the barbaric punishment meted out to those caught thieving:

"[N]o penalty on earth will stop people from stealing, if it's their only way of getting food. In this respect, you English, like most other nations, remind me of these incompetent schoolmasters, who prefer caning their pupils to teaching them. Instead of inflicting these horrible punishments, it would be far more to the point to provide everyone with some means of livelihood, so that nobody's under the frightful necessity of becoming, first a thief, and then a corpse."

Nonsenso's cure for thieving bears little resemblance to his name, indeed it provides one of the most basic arguments for attempting to ameliorate the terrible conditions experienced by the poor rather than simply punish them for acting out of the des-

peration of their circumstances. Whilst More mentioned the concept of a minimum income it was his friend Johannes Ludovicus Vives who detailed an effective plan for putting such a scheme into action. Vives, who briefly taught at Corpus Christi, Oxford, believed that support should be given before an individual was forced by need to take it by whatever means. He did, however, stop short of suggesting that support be given before the need arose. Nonetheless Vives' theological argument for providing individuals with support was simple: God created the earth devoid of walls and gates, and property and possessions were intended to be held in common. This important thought in the development of Basic Income is also to be found in the comments of the Republican and Enlightenment thinker Thomas Paine who in 1796 wrote that:

"the earth, in its natural, uncultivated state was, and ever would have continued to be, the common property of the human race... [The] system of landed property...has absorbed the property of all those whom it dispossessed, without providing, as ought to have been done, an indemnification for that loss"

Paine and his close friend Antoine Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, a mathematician and political activist who took part in the French Revolution, were both proponents of a form of basic income known as basic endowment which provided a sum of money to be paid to an individual upon reaching the age of twenty one years. Paine described this endowment as being in lieu of the property the individual had lost due to the pre-existence of a system of private property. However what Paine proposed was not a guaranteed minimal income but an unconditional endowment, a subtle but important difference. Therefore the first formulation of a genuine basic income was not until the publication of Joseph Charlier's Solution du problème social ou constitution humanitaire in 1848. Charlier used the idea of an equal right to ownership of the land as the basis to an entitlement to some form of recompense. This recompense, he decided, should come in the form of an unconditional quarterly payment based upon land rents and fixed annually by a national council. Charlier believed that this was a method of ending the domination of capital over labour since the dispossessed, once recompensed for their share of the land owed to them, would be given greater flexibility and freedom in choosing the nature of their employment.

After Charlier there was precious little discussion of the idea of basic income until the early 20th century. The philosopher Bertrand Russell, in his book Roads to Freedom published in 1918, attempted to set forth a social model which combined the advantages of both anarchism and socialism. One central part of this social model was a Universal Basic Income described thus:

"Stated in more familiar terms, the plan we are advocating amounts essentially to this: that a certain small income, sufficient for necessaries, should be secured to all, whether they work or not, and that a larger income – as much larger as might be warranted by the total amount of commodities produced – should be given to those who are willing to engage in some work which the community recognizes as useful…When education is finished, no one should be

compelled to work, and those who choose not to work should receive a bare livelihood and be left completely free."

One can almost hear the modern electorate choking on its collective packet of cornflakes in a state of Daily Mail induced apoplexy at that one; for Russell's suggestion clearly states that should an individual choose to do no work, then they should not be compelled to do so, and may even live a life of modest means until the end of their days. Russell was not alone in his suggestions. In the same year Labour member Dennis Milner brought out a pamphlet entitled "Scheme for a State Bonus" in which he suggested a very similar idea and agreed with Russell that since everyone was morally entitled to means of subsistence they were not obligated to work through the threat of having such means withdrawn. Milner's proposal found support in the State Bonus League and was even discussed at the 1920 Labour Party conference before being unceremoniously dumped in 1921.

Not long after, one Clifford H Douglas took up the cause and argued that overproduction had caused a surplus of goods that individuals could not purchase due to a lack of disposable income. His solution was to pay each household a 'national dividend' every month. Again this failed miserably within the UK but in Canada it appeared to excite enough people to ensure that a Social Credit Party governed the province of Alberta from 1935-1971 (although the notion of a national dividend was disappointingly dropped very soon after the party came to power). It was during this period as the fortunes of the Social Credit Party waxed and quickly waned that the economist George D.H. Cole, who held the Chichele Chair of Social and Political Theory at Oxford University, published a series of books defending the "social dividend." Cole elaborated upon the previous arguments put forth by Vives, Paine and Charlier regarding the necessity for individuals to be recompensed for the land they had lost due to others having previously claimed it. The current state of humanity, Cole argued, was the product of a vast collective endeavour and all individuals should be able to share the profits, it was only after this allocation that people should then be rewarded for what they did. Cole was also the first to begin using the term "Basic Income" and this became more popular as the debate widened.

The big decision over Basic Income came with the publication of the Beveridge report in 1942, which as we know led to the establishment of the Welfare State. This followed from an inter-war discussion as to the nature of Social Insurance policy which was slowly becoming accepted as a necessity. However the debate as to what form it was to take appeared to be split between that of the liberal peer Juliet Rhys-Williams who suggested drawing up a "new social contract" in which Basic income would be a main component and the much broader program of social insurance proposed by William Beveridge. It was Beveridge's proposal that won out and as a consequence Basic Income disappeared from mainstream political discussion in the UK and the debate, it seemed, was over.

Nevertheless the political upheavals of 1960's America saw a re-emergence of Basic Income arguments; one particularly prevalent one coming from Robert The-

obold who drew attention to the problem of automation replacing paid labour. Theobald, in a similar vein to the earlier Douglas, stressed the need to provide an income to citizens in order that they might be able to purchase the goods that were being produced en masse by automated industry. Economist Milton Freidman also gave support to the idea of Basic Income with his proposal to simplify Welfare Systems with a Negative Income Tax but this was aimed at eliminating the Welfare department altogether and advancing further toward a transfer free Capitalist economy. Consequently it was liberal economists such as James Tobin and John Kenneth Galbraith who provided a series of defences of a guaranteed minimal income to ensure a more generous, less conditional and less dependency-creating method of providing Welfare which would stand alongside the existing Welfare system and raise the incomes of the poorest people. In 1967 Tobin, along with Colleagues Pechman and Miezkowski, published a series of articles arguing for a basic credit to be paid to each family. Pechman referred to this payment as a 'demogrant' it was to be paid according to family arrangement and could be supplemented by income earned in the usual way and taxed at a uniform rate.

The demogrant proposals reached their peak in the early 1970's with over one thousand economists supporting a petition in 1968 calling for the US Congress "to adopt this year a system of income guarantees and supplements". This led to the Family Assistance Plan (FAP), a social welfare program incorporating a guaranteed income with financial supplements for workers and put together by the democrat senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan on behalf of Republican President Richard Nixon's administration. Sitting unhappily in the no man's land of compromise the FAP was definitively rejected by congress in 1972 and limped on in a short half life on the platform of the Democrat presidential candidate George McGovern before his defeat in November, 1972. As a result the discussion slunk away from the political sphere and retreated to the more comfortable world of Academia.

Quite independently of events in the United States the debate over Basic Income sprang up afresh in several European countries. In the late 1970's Professor of social medicine at the Free University of Amsterdam described the situation he saw of people making themselves sick through overwork and sick because they couldn't get work and recommended a separation of employment and income combined with a guaranteed income as a means of helping people develop independently without half-killing themselves through work. In 1977 the Politieke Partij Radicalen included a basisinkomen (Basic Income) in its manifesto and as the movement gained momentum the Scientific Council for Government Policy published a report in 1985 recommending the introduction of a "partial basic income".

Closer to home Basic Income didn't enjoy quite the same success and remained on the fringe of British political debate. Despite the 1984 gathering of academics and the formation of the Basic Income Research Group (BIRG), as well as the sympathy shown for the idea by the newly formed Liberal Democrat party, mainstream politics remained unconcerned with Basic Income. Up until this point Basic Income movements had been limited to individual nations. Indeed, as is demon-

strated above, the debate in the Netherlands began and continued with no real knowledge of the US debate, or the UK debate, or the very similar debates that were taking place in Germany and France at around the same time. However after the publication of a Basic Income scenario under the pseudonym "Collectif Charles Fourier" Basic Income supporters from several countries met in Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium) in September 1986. The meeting resulted in the organisation now known as the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN), which describes itself as

"an international network that serves as a link between individuals and groups committed to or interested in basic income, and fosters informed discussion of the topic throughout the world."

Whilst today Basic Income remains on the fringe of British Political debate it is by no means a defunct idea. With both Labour and the Conservatives making a great deal of noise about 'tightening up' on benefits and with a large section of the UK media hostile to state handouts it is exceptionally important that the Left go beyond the increasingly stale debate and defend redistributive policies in a manner that is both progressive and principled. Basic Income is a way of tackling inequality and poverty in the UK and ensuring that all citizens are provided with the minimum standard of living. As an unconditional payment it can help generate greater equality across gender, race, age and location as well as help foster a greater sense of universalism within our welfare system and our society. It is a shot in the arm that social democracy in the UK would greatly benefit from.

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Models for Cooperation

Cailean Gallagher

"[T]he premium is not just on individual innovative and entrepreneurial flair but also on the skills, adaptability and collective effort of us all." This "will necessitate a greater role for organised and supportive interventions by the state."

Gordon Brown: "Where There's Greed: Margaret Thatcher and the Betrayel of Britain's Future" 1989

During its thirteen years New Labour had no commitment to any form of radical economic change, and of the many missed opportunities, the failure to begin to tackle Thatcherite selfishness was the most significant. Fearful of the conservatism of their 'middle England' electorate, the great economic ideologies of the left tended to be locked away in a think-tank, and squeezed occasionally to produce some policy, vaguely inspired by the principles, but certainly not based on them.

Mutualism is a case in point – it is an economic model which gives each person in the mutual a means of production. It was described by its founder, the anarchist Proudhon, as a way of creating "cellular units of a socialist alternative to capitalism." And the establishment of worker (and consumer) mutuals has long been an aspiration of parts of the left. Mutualism is an economic model based not solely on profit; one that shares the proceeds of growth; which ensures fair wages and worker ownership of the means of production; and which is equitable and fair for workers. Because of the worker-ownership and the democratic participation, workers' investment in co-operatives is greater than simple labour-hours. In theory workers will have a much stronger connection to their work-place.

One sort of mutual is a worker cooperative – a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled businesses which serves the needs of its voluntary members, and is based on principles of equality, democracy and community contribution. Typically small, they require the skills, adaptability and collective effort of all members.

Worker coops tend to face three main problems. First, they compete in a capitalist market with firms whose purpose is only to make profit, and which are able to poach certain members of the cooperative through offering higher salaries and (due to the lack of democratic procedure) simpler jobs. Secondly, it is more difficult for a cooperative to secure finance from banks, and even once secured, interest will have to be paid which will limit the possibilities for social enterprise. Thirdly, cooperatives tend to be small, and when they expand the tend to become more like capitalist companies. For example, the Cooperative Bank, although democratic, is an environment very far removed from the idea cooperative model.

Such obstacles as these surely provide the space for Brown's endorsement of "organized and supportive interventions by the state" to intervene, whether through providing finance, or initial support for new cooperatives.

Rather than such direct intervention, the main (albeit significant) step taken by government related to mutuals was to pass the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies and Credit Unions Act 2010, which guarantees equal treatment for cooperatives and business. Yet if the Cooperative Act passed, it had a quiet reception. It was a classic example of a major achievement which passed unnoticed and unpublicized; and of New Labour's priorities.

Just as we have a Labour Party without a clear direction, the election was largely void of ideology; mutualism was one of the only 'isms' to feature in the election. A central reason for this was the influence of the Cooperative Party, the sister party of Labour which shares 29 MPs, and campaigns on behalf of co-operators. The Cooperative Party launched a manifesto detailing proposals for schools, health and other services.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives decided to join in the cooperative connection through their patronizing "invitation to join the government of Britain", which contained proposals for millions of public-sector workers to set up co-operatives and sell their services back to the state. Conservatives appropriated mutualism, and used it to inform their ideas for local government services.

As the concept of mutualism entered mainstream political discourse, the ideas surrounding it, and the meaning of the concept itself, began to change. First, it was neutralized, and even if the Tories got little political capital from it, it reduced the media attention given to Labour for a plan that was no longer exclusive.

It also meant that mutuals became an equivalent of voluntary participation, and one which concerns itself only with the public sector. Ed Mayo, Secretary General of Cooperatives UK, is clearly sceptical of the role of mutuals in public services, particularly Tories' plans: "If they can now find ways to combine a sense of service but also to create space for staff to own their own solutions then that has to be a good thing. If it's done as an excuse for cost cutting, however, it won't work."

The lesson to be learnt is that the left must refamiliarise itself with the ideologies and economic models that have been with is since the beginnings of socialism. If Conservatives purport to be assuming left-wing ideology, then it is sure to be either an attempt to neutralize an ideology, or to experiment with ways of finding 'efficiency savings'. Ideology must be familiar within a movement, and it must not lose its meaning when it is contorted by politicians.

As Jackson makes clear in his article, it is the right-wing academics who make it, so it is the Right that manages to set the agenda on economics. This is the reason why Labour must switch its focus to economics. Economics is the source of the income inequality from which so much trouble comes. Cooperatives

and mutuals are examples of the better alternatives, that shoud be supported and encouraged by becoming central to the policy and ideology of the left.

Gordon Brown failed to live up to his pledge of 1989, to use the state to support different models of economic enterprise. Perhaps the next leader of the Labour party will heed Brown's words, not his actions, and commit to the sort of radical economic change unimagined under thirteen years of New Labour government.

In the meantime, re-engagement with ideas rooted in the left must be a central to the challenge of rebuilding the Labour party, and cooperating with our fellows on the Left. Through knowledge of diverse alternative economic models, as well as an interaction with existing examples, the Left can equip itself to work for an environment of higher job satisfaction, better conditions and wages, and, eventually, real alternatives to profit-making business in the form of worker-owned social enterprises.

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Review: 'What's Next for the Left'

Samuel Burt

Review of 'Future of the Left,' a Compass Oxford-OULC event held on Thursday 18th April to which we invited four leading think tank representatives.
They were:
Gavin Hayes, Compass General Secretary
Jessica Asato, Acting Director of Progress
David Chaplin, Chair of Young Fabians
Graeme Cooke, Head of Open Left (Demos)
The event was moderated by Dr. Stuart White, Jesus College

Lefties love nothing more than a bit of factional infighting. So the aphorism goes. This is what I was expecting/hoping for on my way to the 'Future of the Left' last term, hoping to emerge from a typically drizzly Hilary evening to the warming heat of a good old-fashioned punch-up.

There was more consensus than I had bargained for. The tenor of the debate, and the theoretical consensus that surfaced (if you squinted a bit) suggested to me that Labour was taking its future seriously. I was reminded of Henry Kissinger's remark that student politics is so vitriolic and faction-riven because there is so little at stake. This time, everything is at stake, and there appears to be a serious debate taking place within the party in pursuit of a substantive consensus.

Graeme Cooke (of Demos' 'Open Left' project) spoke of the need for the left to transcend the outdated dichotomy of individualism/collectivism by placing the quality of relationships at the centre of political debate. In doing so, the left would be able to focus on issues of individual agency, which has not traditionally found a space within that old dichotomy – we know that individual autonomy is furthered through free collaboration, but also that strong communities can become claustrophobic and stifle individual freedom. What matters is how, and on what basis, individuals relate to one another and can cooperate to achieve shared goals. The qualitative dimension of relationships is irreducibly intersubjective, and touches directly on the question of agency.

He then drew a connection between agency and equality, and questions about the relative positions that we, as a society, want to establish as the basis for our mutual relations. But equality of what? Resources, opportunities, treatment, outcomes and other options were all mentioned. Perhaps the ambiguity on this question should not be so surprising, given the long tradition of being in favour of "equality of something-or-other" on the British left. He also stressed the need to overcome another outmoded dichotomy, between equality of outcome and of opportunity (and, presumably, also to go beyond a policy of muddle between the two). Sen's idea of 'capabilities' was praised, which places the emphasis less on what resources someone has, or even that there are limits to discrimination, and more about whether people are really free to

exercise those liberties if they so wished. As Stuart White somewhat wryly observed, the "relative importance of redistribution" was an important feature of these different approaches, although Gavin Hayes had the most radical ideas on that front.

Like Cooke, David Chaplin (Young Fabians) also mentioned the need for Labour to draw on its past traditions, albeit from its more recent past. For him, Labour had lost its way from being a vibrant, community-based organization before 1997, through organizational centralization and, more fundamentally, a failure of both communication and policy (with the government's recalcitrance over issues of "Britishness" and national identity mentioned). He railed against Brown's "statist" language, which only served to alienate further the already alienated and excluded amongst us, those who a Labour Party should seek to include.

In fact, there was a curious sense of vulnerability that hung over the proceedings. Jessica Asato referred to the recent British Attitudes Survey and an OECD report on equality as evidence that government policy had left lasting improvements in the social fabric. And yet she couldn't remove the anxiety that, as more people have disengaged from mainstream politics on the last 13 years, people seem to feel less of a sense of ownership of these policies. For me, this is important because it's through a really connected, participatory politics that we cultivate citizens who feel that they contribute towards positive achievements, and thus feel a stake in defending them when Labour is out of office. But how many people know what we have actually achieved? What proportion of those people knew they were Labour achievements? Surely not enough. Chaplin sounded exasperated when he mocked the Tories' claims to be the new party of cooperatives, yet he did not seem committed to what was the most surprising consensus to emerge from the debate: Labour needs an ideology.

Why does Labour need an ideology? After all, New Labour was built on the pragmatic philosophy that "what matters is what works", and it won us an unprecedented three general elections. The answer probably lies in this question of the durability of our achievements when out of office. There are some of our achievements that the Tories would probably not dare to reverse, like civil partnerships, the minimum wage and constitutional reforms like devolution. But the rest are either unknown or else supported by too disparate a coalition. In this sense, I concur with Chaplin on the need for Labour to be a community-based organization. But that doesn't just come out of thin air. It's no use developing those roots in opposition only to watch them wither and die in office. Labour needs an ideology (somewhat paradoxically, given its history) to neutralise the charge of betrayal. Past Labour governments were attacked for abandoning their Socialist creed. Today, they're attacked for lacking any creed, and for making incomprehensibly bad decisions in office. An ideology provides signposts; as Jessica said, it would have allowed us to better prioritize our goals, providing a basis for guiding policy choices and making those choices comprehensible to our supporters, by situating them within an overall aspiration for building a good society. It would allow us to maintain our roots whilst in office, and allow us to better defend our achievements from a Tory onslaught whilst in opposition. An ideology is surely what the Open Left is now trying to articulate.

Alongside the ideology, there was some discussion of other ways to further devolve power and democratise society more generally. Cooke emphasised the need to democratise public services in order to give citizens greater independence both from market forces and central state diktat (though he didn't elaborate what this would involve). Asato wanted primaries for the party leadership election, and more space for dissent within the party structure, including more power given to the NPF, and more public debates at the CLP-level. Hayes proclaimed that Labour's ideology should be built around the values of "democracy, equality and sustainability." He wanted a national living wage, broader ownership of wealth, a maximum APR and extensive mutualisation as a new model for delivering certain public services. He claimed that polls conducted by Compass had shown widespread public support for such policies, which he said amounted to a "moral crusade" as much as a political platform. In a limited sense, the emphasis on wealth redistribution chimed with Cooke's strategy of tackling inequality at source and so reducing the role of the state in income redistribution along the line.

Although Hayes had gone the furthest of the four in concrete policies aimed at dramatically reducing material inequality, I did feel that the package of measures he put forward felt a bit of a patchwork quilt. Perhaps here is where Compass' emphasis on policy formulation can be complemented by Demos' and Progress' work on building a philosophical consensus around values. All in all, it was a thought-provoking evening, and I came away from it feeling curiously optimistic. More diversity of organized opinion is no bad thing inside the party. On the basis of this discussion they are clearly taking the task ahead seriously enough to focus on searching for the common ground amongst them (despite Stuart White's valiant efforts to kick up a brawl).

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'Amateur Future' -
THE FUTURE OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

Alex Niven

Between 2007 and 2009 I was in an indie guitar band that has since signed a record deal and achieved a degree of national attention. Before I left last summer, we had a number of heated discussions, which almost always boiled down to me saying that I felt that too much industry line-toeing was seen to be an inevitable part of 'making it'. On one occasion, one of my band members turned round in exasperation and said, 'so what do you want us to do, all get day jobs on the side?'

His point was that, in a very uncertain musical-economic climate, we couldn't afford to be getting all fussy and principled. Instead he said, in an unforgettable phrase, 'we should be doing what's expected of us'. I was slightly appalled by this attitude, but the suggestion about getting a day job stuck in my mind. I started thinking to myself: wouldn't it be fantastic not to have to rely on the financial support of a record label, with all the compromise that entails?

This might sound like a romantic notion, but the more you look at the situation, the less far-fetched it seems. For a number of reasons, I believe that we're heading for a total overhaul of how music and art generally is funded. More specifically, I believe that the future of music will be one in which semi-professional and amateur musicianship is the norm. And this might actually be a very good thing.

Over the years, since those first magical 45rpm singles of the 1950s, we've become used to the idea that pop music is only truly legitimate and worthy of attention when it is packaged, marketed, and sold back to us by the record industry. But now, as most people are surely aware, the music business is in deep trouble. The physical media of pop music – records, tapes, CDs – are rapidly passing into history. What will take their place?

In the last decade, record companies began to shift their focus onto internet downloads, which now dominate the market. However, illegal acquisition presents a perhaps insurmountable threat to this method of distribution and its long-term financial prospects. It seems probable that, for every record label attempt to limit illegal downloads and force consumers to acquire music by more legitimate means – monthly subscriptions, 'pay-walls' etc – a new way of getting around these controls will quickly materialize.

Many point to the resurgence in live music over the last decade and see this as the way forward for the industry, but this too looks doubtful as a long-term solution. Touring is a famously expensive beast, and besides, pop music's commercial success over the last fifty years was largely a result of its use of mechanical reproduction; whereas performances have always been expensive and time-consuming, the record was relatively cheap to make and easy to distribute in vast quantities. The so-called 'live boom' of the past few years has not been nearly big enough to change this fundamental principle.

The likelihood is, that with traditional means of generating revenue from music falling by the wayside, we will be forced to think of more radical alternative ways of guaranteeing a regular income for the average musician. One possibility is that, with the industry going into freefall, there will be a wider public realization that music will have to be subsidized somehow, which might lead to an increased public sector role in the funding of pop music. As with the recent banking crisis, a record industry in rapid decline could look to the government for bail-out.

The big caveat to this potential development, of course, is that it would have to be accompanied by a much wider political sea change, one that would reverse the long-running trend away from centralization in all sectors of society.

The other, to my mind more plausible outcome, is that we will see a reordering of the pop-musical landscape on a microcosmic level. We need to harness home recording technology so that it is put to better use than Guitar Hero-style leisure activities. There has been a growing sense over the last few years that DIY recording and distribution via the internet is becoming a definite reality, but with the total lack of an alternative ethos and infrastructure outside the mainstream, most people still don't really know what to do with the new capabilities.

At the moment, the average bedroom or internet musician still prays to be noticed and turned into a success story via traditional record company avenues. The shattering of the 'X factor mentality' and the end of the notion of music as a feasible 'dream career', could change all this.

As with our collectivist politics, there is a pressing need to rebuild our musical culture from the bottom up. A revival of music production and dissemination at community level, aiming it first and foremost at family members, friends, schoolmates, even online 'virtual communities' to me seems like the only way forward. The technology is there. It needs to be accompanied by a change of attitudes, starting with the basic premise that even a single other person listening to your music without a thought to its potential for commercial value constitutes a receptive audience. That music can and should act in this way, as a fundamental means of individual expression and humanistic conversation, could be the great lesson that emerges from the crisis. The really important thing is that we all begin to factor into our lives times and places where, to quote W.H. Auden, 'executives would never dare to tamper', where collective, non-commercial activities can be undertaken with at least some degree of uncompromised autonomy.

The imminent collapse of a centralized record industry will inevitably lead to a basic rethink about what music is for, and might cause the average musician to conclude that he or she is better off abandoning the fool's paradise of 'making it' in the music biz, for a revived communitarian amateur culture in which it's possible to make music and be appreciated on one's own terms. If you have to get an ordinary day job to enable you to do this, then so be it. The alternative, of doing whatever the record industry expects of you, to increasingly diminishing returns, will not be an option for very much longer.

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The Conservative's continued queer-bashing and the far-right

Hannah Thomson

The Tories' recent attempts at pandering to the LGBTQ community shouldn't fool anyone into thinking that the party can address LGBTQ liberation in any meaningful way. Gay rights campaigners schmoozing to the right in light of the new Conservative government have clearly lost sight of the rights of the people they claim to represent.

The last Tory parliament made no secret about its social conservatism; Major and Thatcher's backlash against the 'permissiveness' of the sexual liberation movements characteristic of the period should not be forgotten. A government that saw the legalisation of abortion, homosexuality, free contraception and sexual health provision as contradictory to the 'morality' of British society characterised the Conservatives as much as its crushing of the unions – it has not abandoned this stance.

The act the best summarised the Tory attitude to gay rights was the premise upon which Stonewall UK was founded – Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act. The act stated that no local authority 'shall intentionally promote homosexuality' or 'promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.' The Labour government did not repeal the act till as late as 2003; a vote which Cameron took against the repeal – his 2009 apology for the implementation of the act on behalf of his party paid little but lip-service to Cameron's ongoing hypocrisy on this issue.

It is not merely previous policy for which the Conservatives have appalling voting records, but their proposal to replace the 1998 Human Rights Act with a 'British Bill of Rights' demonstrates an ongoing indifference to the defence of civil liberties in the name of protecting 'national security'. Tory MPs and MEPs are given 'free votes' on issues of equality; in Britain this means votes against repeals of homophobic laws such as Section 28, abortion rights and civil partnerships; and in Europe against condemnation of similar homophobic laws such as those on education in Lithuania.

The Conservative's attitude to Human Rights has not been to consider them as fundamental values to society, but as bureaucratic 'red tape' preventing further state authoritarianism. A handful of 'openly' gay MPs and empty gestures to the LGBTQ vote are not enough to overcome a century of queer-bashing which its MPs and European party alliances continue to maintain.

The Human Rights Act doesn't just protect the individual from discrimination in the workplace and on the street, but it protects the individual's right to join a union. Trade unions are essential for the enforcement of equal opportunities legisla-

tion – they don't just fight against redundancies, poor conditions and wage cuts for the 'majorities' within their workforce, they provide workers with their legal rights where it is not in the employer's interest to do so, and address the grievances of minorities in a collective manner that gives defendants real force in winning battles against their bosses. The Tories and Liberal Democrats both promise to increase legislation against union powers, but all attacks on unions strip the ability of workers to enforce their demands for equality on their own terms, in effect depriving equal opportunities legislation of any meaningful implementation.

As part of their affiliation to far-right European Parties in the European Conservative & Reformist coalition established last year, the Tories have connected themselves ideologically with parties with the worst record of racism, sexism, anti-Semitism and homophobia, and voted for their policies in the European Parliament. Parties such as the Danish People's Party, which advocates drastic reductions in immigration, and targets 'multiculturalism' and the 'Islamisation' of Denmark as a pressing threat to national security. One of the Dutch members of the coalition, the Christian Union, proposes the 'phasing out' of abortion rights and the aggressive combat of pornography and sex work, defends religious schools, and wishes to allow civil servants to avoid performing same-sex marriages.

The Latvian 'For Fatherland and Freedom' party periodically celebrates the efforts of the Waffen-SS and has failed to criticise Nazi offences. The leader of the Czech coalition member Civil Democratic Party, Mirek Topolanek, was forced to resign this March for making homophobic and anti-Semitic comments about the Polish PM and Minister for Transport.

Most notorious of this party coalition for LGBTQ rights are the Polish Law and Justice Party. Their policies oppose all forms of legal representation for homosexuals, a stance best summarised by the declaration made by the former Polish Prime Minister and chair of the party, Jarosław Kaczyński: 'The affirmation of homosexuality will lead to the downfall of civilisation. We can't agree to it.'

Social conservatism does not emerge from ignorance alone; it is a 'moral code' that glosses over real socio-economic problems to the benefit of those who can afford to buy their way out of them. Homosexuality is not a new component of Tory membership, but it is only very recently that gay rights was considered anything but a suitable scapegoat for initiatives such as the current 'Mending Our Broken Society', and voting patterns and policies do little to counteract this. The Conservatives continue to blame the move away from 'traditional' family structures and immigration for the problems caused by aggressive capitalism; they base their social policy around reinforcing these structures and 'disciplining' or 'rewarding' families for their adherence to these, while ignoring the oppressions that go with them.

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In defence of our new parliament

Matthew Honeyman

In the aftermath of this election, it seemed commentators would have you believe that a hung parliament, the kind that was returned on Thursday, would lead to undemocratic and undesirable outcomes. This was also a common theme throughout the campaign as well. Those who hold this view argue that any deals done in private by Messrs Cameron, Clegg and possibly Brown will not reflect the will of the British people. Of course, an aversion to hidden horse-trading and politicking is natural and the utmost transparency in the coming days and weeks should be encouraged, but the results of this election will have a different and more positive effect: Parliament will matter.

This is not normally the case; governments are able to force through their programme despite it never being explicitly endorsed by a majority of the electorate. They can do this because they enjoy comfortable, large majorities consisting of party members who are generally afraid to anger the party leadership too much. Around 180 members of the previous parliament were on the government's payroll, decreasing the likelihood of meaningful scrutiny and consultation as career considerations take priority. Whips have an easy job under these conditions. Thatcher suffered only four defeats in more than 10 years as Prime Minister; Blair suffered no defeats until the ninth year of his premiership, only losing five in total. Even the unpopular Brown government has suffered only one defeat. What results from conditions such as these is legislation that is only desired by those in power passing through Parliament and distortion of the public's will. Examples of this litter history: the poll tax in the Local Government Finance Act 1988; the Identity Cards Act 2006 and the recent Digital Economy Act 2010. Parliamentary weakness allowed these pieces of legislation to pass despite opposition from parties that, when combined, enjoyed more popular support from the electorate than the governing party at the previous election.

Whatever the make-up of the next government, due to the knife-edge balance of distribution of seats among the political parties, proposed legislation that might enjoy reasonable support among government MPs while being unpalatable to MPs of other parties will not be enacted. One likely consequence of this state of affairs will be that the Tories' promise of a repeal of the fox-hunting ban will not be fulfilled. Even in the event of a coalition, only policies where the two parties know they can rely on the support of their MPs will achieve success. Indeed, the 'other' parties, long reduced to insignificance, will also be listened to and hold real power over the fate of legislation. All of this means that the influence of Parliament on policy-making will be increased. Dictation from a small, elite group at the head of the party in power will no longer be the order of the day; consultation will replace it as every member's vote becomes crucial to the passage of legislation. Far from our will not being represented as a result of whatever deal comes out of the negotiations, we the people will in fact be beneficiaries of a culture of greater discussion, scrutiny and consensus that will emerge in

this hung parliament. This is how a legislature should influence the business of government. It should not be reduced to a decorative, rubber-stamping side-show.

In a Conservative press conference just over a week before the election, Jeremy Hunt outlined the political fears that were shown to be misguided above - that a hung parliament would result in back-room dealing and undemocratic outcomes. At the same event, George Osbourne advanced the complementary argument that a hung parliament would also be detrimental to the economic performance of the country. As of March 31 2010, the ONS put the deficit at £160bn for the year 2009 (11.4% of GDP) and the government debt position at £950bn (68.1% of GDP). Osbourne and other commentators contend that a hung parliament would pose a risk to the government being able to sustain its borrowing and to continue to service its debt. They argue that the uncertainty created by the hung parliament would cause government bonds to become unattractive and thus force the interest the government paid out on them upwards. This argument was set back somewhat when the respected credit-rating agency Moody's declared that a hung parliament would not necessarily result in it downgrading British government debt from the highest AAA-rating as all the parties were agreed on the need to drastically reduce the deficit. Thus, whatever government was eventually formed would take similar courses of action to allay market fears. Even if it were the case that there were greater differences of opinion among the parties on the right level of government spending, is it right that the British electorate be effectively told for whom to cast their vote by 'the markets'? A final consideration of the economic consequences of hung parliaments is whether they are bad for economies in the long run. It is clear however, that there is no correlation between bad economic performance and the permanently hung parliaments that result from proportional systems. A good example to show that this is patently not the case is the German economy, the strongest in Europe. As the economic arguments against hung parliaments are also apparently unfounded, the country should be far from fearful of this new parliamentary composition; in fact, it should be pleased with it.

This essay started out merely as a defence of hung parliaments against a view that had been advanced during the campaign that a result such as that which has occurred would have disastrous political consequences. After much thought however, the new situation cannot convincingly be defended without endorsing it in the long-term. Electoral reform, implementing a system of Proportional Representation, would ensure that every government would be more accountable to all of the representatives that we elect. By extension, this would mean they become more accountable to the electorate.

Given the poor performance of the Liberal Democrats in the election and the consequent minority status of any Liberal Democrat-Labour coalition, the hopes of the next general election being conducted on a new, proportional voting system are slim. The Conservative party manifesto included an explicit commitment to first-past-the-post and Labour's half-hearted, death-bed conversion to the Alternative Vote system resulted in a manifesto commitment to a referendum on that system. Both the current method and that which was proposed by Labour are not proportional, so it remains

easy for opponents to argue against the case that a majority in this country desires a proportionally elected Commons. The unlikelihood of successful electoral reform is perhaps the worst consequence of the Commons make-up that the country returned.

When normal service is resumed, we will look back on this hung parliament with mixed opinions. It is a shame that the pain necessitated by the gaping deficit will likely be borne in this Parliament, whatever deal is reached between the parties. There is a consensus among all parties that the public finances must be put in order, this means 'swingeing' cuts are on the horizon. According to the eminent Institute for Fiscal Studies, the greatest retrenchment of public spending since the 1970s is necessitated to meet all of the parties' targets. This pain will partly cloud our view in much the same way as that of the latter half of the 1970s did for the last hung parliament. The silver lining comes from the way our politicians will be forced to operate. Every woman and man of the 650 occupying the Commons will be valued and listened to. This isn't just a pleasant, temporary experiment to be repeated once every thirty years. This is how it should be.

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New Labour's Ideology

Robin Max McGhee

'It is fatal for any Government or party or person to seek to govern in direct opposition to the principles on which they were entrusted with the right to govern.' - Enoch Powell

'He thinks like a Tory, and talks like a Radical, and that's so important nowadays.'- Oscar Wilde

New Labour is a faction, which follows the ideology of the 'Radical Centre', otherwise known as the 'Third Way'. This means it combines elements of both far-left and far-right ideology which create centrism by virtue of their conjoined extremities. New Labour is basically Thatcherite with expanded public spending. It is also content to support some less partisan ideas associated with the left, such as constitutional reform. So it is not left-wing. It is not strictly right-wing either, but I will argue that in practice it has followed this path most.

Labour is not a utopian party. Only once, under Attlee, did it achieve the sort of brilliance which New Labour has often trumpeted but never wanted, let alone achieved. Attlee's greatness, like Thatcher's, lay not in his achievements but in the achievements of his successors. He established a consensus; one based on the welfare state, and one which was sustained between 1945 and 1979. In the post-war consensus the Conservatives were all about the unions, and state control. This position is exactly replicated today, only reversed. New Labour has barely anything to do with the Labour party, and everything to do with the Thatcherite consensus. It is therefore fruitless to talk only in terms of parties. Understanding this historical precedent is essential to understanding New Labour.

The origins of radical centrism are lost in the now-distant past. Its high-level practitioners from the older generation were brought up as hard socialists. Blair and Brown were first elected in 1983, on the most left-wing manifesto of a major party in British history. The old left had a superficially strong influence, but it was out of date and old fashioned. Thatcherism by contrast was very attractive to the radical politicians, and formed the primary influence of New Labour.

New Labour was controlled from its inception by the same three men. Blair, Brown and Mandelson have each run the country at some point, and each conducted himself with a heavy Thatcherism. They are the Boggis, Bunce and Bean of British politics - these terrible crooks, though so different in looks, are nonetheless equally mean. (I don't know who Fantastic Mr Fox is. Robin Cook perhaps.) While this might be an exaggeration in personal terms, ideologically it is basically true. Blair genuinely cares, or cared, about the lives of the man on the street; but he thought the solution was 'choice'. Mandelson doesn't care about the people and never did, but

at least he gives a fig for the economy. Brown cares about everything and nothing, with a strong attachment to principles but no defining aims or views. Labour surrendered its soul to these men for power. This was the principle cause of its failure.

The 'Thatcherism' which informed it consists, quite simply, of the classically right-wing ideas of reducing the size of government in the economic sphere while increasing its size in the political sphere. Taxation is the main way most people interact with the government. New Labour has kept it low, despite the protestations of the right-wing media. And not merely has it kept it low. It has conducted a policy of regressive taxation. The claim that the richest pay less tax as a proportion of their income than the poorest, is true. One of Gordon Brown's countless mistakes was to double the rate of income tax on the poorest; this had a calamitous impact on unemployment, pushing many thousands back into benefits. Likewise the rate of tax has, until this year, failed to increase on the highest paid. And all the while the wealthy get away with paying hardly anything at all. It is an outrageous state of affairs. But tax is not the end of the story. The Thatcherites believe, more or less blindly, in the ability of the free-market to solve problems and rectify mistakes. This is the dogma which explains Blair's quite fantastic mania for privatisation. So long as there was 'choice', there was improvement. I do not know whether the attempt to privatise the National Health Service has improved standards for patients. Certainly what is true is that there is less of a charitable ethos, less of a sense of public service, when the roles of government are undertaken by businesses which exist to make money. The idea of service has never been grasped by New Labour's wonks any more than by its MPs.

Yet it would be unfair to contend, as some have, that New Labour was dedicated solely to courting the rich. It has, in fact, been a very great source of social equality. Gordon Brown believed firmly in the right of businessmen to make as much money as they liked. He believed equally firmly in the right of the poor to have something approaching a fair start in life. Thus New Labour massively extended the size of public spending. It has done so with monumental inefficiency, partly caused by large state-centred bureaucracy, and partly by PFI. However, when combined with a reasonably good welfare policy and the Minimum Wage, such huge increases have achieved a relatively improved standard of living for many of the poorest Britons. But how does that relate to Thatcherism? A politician's ideology is determined not by his public stances but by his private actions. New Labour has made some valiant attempts at redistribution of wealth to the very poor, yet has simultaneously funnelled money to the uber-wealthy. In public, it is the party of the lower and lower-upper middle classes; and yet in practice, it has benefited the very rich and (to a smaller extent) the very poor. The reason for this is its fusion of unreconstructed socialism and Thatcherism, neither of which were designed to benefit the £25,000 a year middle-class office worker. These are the people who have lost out the most. The 'radical centre' has helped the rich and helped the poor, but not society in general.

There are other and more subtle ways that the radical centre has made its mark. In general, New Labour has admirably pursued some policies which are traditionally associated with the left. It devolved power to Scotland and the Welsh - its greatest

legacy. It reformed the House of Peers. It has pursued greenness, and it has done so with a hypocrisy which only occasionally lapses into the deplorable. But it has also pursued with rigorous and concentrated barbarism the gradual but accelerating erosion of civil liberties which Englishmen (though not Celts) had enjoyed, with reasonable certainty, since the fall of James II. Quite why it did this is evident in the origins of its thought. New Labour sprang from both the far left and Thatcherism, both of which are deeply illiberal ideologies. So New Labour did not just inherit one strand of authoritarianism; it received a double dose. There is another twist. At exactly the same time it had done this, New Labour had also put in statute numerous rights and liberties we were only dimly aware we possessed. The Human Rights Act has been flagrantly ignored, but still stands. The ability to pursue two mutually contradictory ideas is uncannily similar to doublethink. It is, however, just yet another expression of the confused way in which New Labour got its ideology.

Remaining is the important question of the character of New Labour. This is a very nasty thing. It is based primarily on lies and obfuscation. Yet again the reason for this lies in ideology - to conceal the inherent instability of radical centrism, New Labour resorted to PR in an attempt to artificially mould its beliefs into a coherent set of principles. Blair's problem is not that he had too few ideas, but that he had too many. His ideology was simply too broad to allow him to prioritise. He filled the gaps by spin. The story of Alistair Campbell and his satrapies in the media has been told again and again. If anything it has been underplayed. It is seen as a purely presentational phenomenon, but it was far more. In fact Blair followed this cultic doctrine of psychological delusion as part of his own personal philosophy - viz. Iraq. In general the more radical New Labour claims it has been, the less radical it has been in practice; and its true radicalism has been concealed through lack of publicity.

But of course not all this derives from ideological positions. For the most part New Labour has been synonymous with the Political Class. The Oligarchy does not look kindly to life in a political man. This suits the suits. They are not interested in being in any way original. They go along with the Thatcherite consensus. Cushioned by decades of education and privilege, the Oligarchs are suited only to the corridors of power, starting out as Special Advisors and scuttling up to Cabinet like bespectacled weasels. This is where many of New Labour's problems come from. As a core part of the Political Class, its psychology is geared towards fakery. Its policy, like its ideology, is concocted artificially by professionals. Think-tanks, focus groups, and PPE - from here spring the policies with which elections are fought. No wonder the electorate is disengaged. Conference, the Unions, even party members are hardly consulted, except in once-decadal leadership elections. Indeed party members are treated with the combination of contempt and fear unique to the Political Class. So because real people do not get a say in party policy, it stagnates. The result is that the radical centre remains intact.

This issue of the 'base' brings us to the crux of the matter. Does New Labour have a future? It does not sadden me to say that I don't think so. It was a construct of the Thatcherite consensus, which is now discredited, if not lost. In my opinion the

Labour party should admit defeat. There must be a banishment of the neoliberals to the Conservative party, and a merger with the Liberal Democrats. Only through unity can the left stay strong. It is a question of historical inevitability. Liberal and Labour were meant to be together. Once final unification is achieved can we achieve our mutual aim, and smash the Tory party forever. But this is all fantasy, because New Labour will not allow it. The Labour party membership is pitifully weak, making it very unlikely they will have the strength to launch an ideological putsch. The bureaucrats, the technocrats, the geeks; they are the future now, and indeed the present. Their chief might be a fool (Miliband or Miliband 2) or a lord of fools (Harman). Either way their ideology is doomed. If only there were something to replace it.

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America's Lost Soul - a tribute to Bobby Kennedy

Tim Wigmore

Bobby Kennedy's death, coming just two months after that of Martin Luther King, engulfed millions of Americans in a sense of profound, almost-nihilistic despair. American was robbed of hope and spirit. The '60s, and all the hopes and dreams they promised, were over. For American idealists and dreamers, 1968 became 1969 with two most depressing sights: the war in Vietnam, which Bobby had made it his mission to end, as rampant as ever. And one Richard Nixon – a bit shifty, apparently, but elected nonetheless – about to be inaugurated into the White House.

The tale of Bobby Kennedy in 1968 deserves not to be forgotten. A man wrestling with his conscience and his brother's legacy vacillated over whether he wanted to make a push for the presidency. Eventually, he entered the Democratic primary campaign, to the anger of many of the most ardent anti-war campaigners. Eugene McCarthy had been the one with the gumption to challenge the sitting President Lyndon B Johnson, principally on the basis of opposing further military involvement in Vietnam. Was dividing the anti-war voters into two blocks not a selfish, power-hungry thing to do? But Bobby was viewed as the last, best hope by many and finally, on March 16th 1968, officially announced his candidacy with the words, "I run because I am convinced that this country is on a perilous course and because I have such strong feelings about what must be done, and I feel that I'm obliged to do all I can".

Kennedy's campaign was extraordinary, even unprecedented, in the emphasis it placed upon physical human contact. Politicians like to be seen as 'men of the people': Bobby was a man of the people in the most literal sense. On the campaign trail, he interacted with everyone, shaking hands, giving high-fives and engaging in discussion with anyone who so wanted. He repeatedly stood on the seat in his campaign car, where he addressed those who came to see him. And hundreds of thousands did. His car moved so slowly it seemed barely to move at all. The symbolism was powerful: that here was a man who would make decision not in remote White House rooms but with the people alongside him.

For all his doubts and torment, Bobby seemed ready to inherit the mantle of Kennedy President from older brother John, so unforgettably killed five years earlier. But in a sense it went much further back: Joe Kennedy, the oldest in the family, had been the true political natural, the boy who would be king until he was killed in action in the Second World War. One can only imagine the constant grief and strain he felt, from their deaths and feeling a certain duty to become President in their place.

Paradoxically, however, he seemed liberated by the personal tragedy he had known.

When he had served in JFK's administration as Attorney General, Bobby had not been his own man. In truth, his appointment to such a prominent position amounted to barely believable nepotism: he was 35 but had never won any election before. Any reputation that he had was based on two things. Firstly, he was a member of the Kennedy political clan. Secondly, he had briefly worked for the notorious Senator Joe McCarthy during the spell of communist witch-hunts. There, Bobby gained a reputation for being vicious and ruthless in achieving his goals. Such character traits were on display once more during JFK's successful 1960 election campaign, when he was campaign manager. In short, Bobby was not regarded as a particularly nice man.

The assassination of JFK changed everything, however. Suddenly, Bobby was no longer a key adviser to his brother. No longer did he want to be seen as a man whose power – he is regarded as one of the most powerful Attorney Generals in history – was down to family name and links alone. He needed, at last, to stand on his own two feet.

The turning point in Bobby Kennedy's life came when he decided to stand for the US Senate in the 1964 elections, as a Senator for New York. Senate campaigns are huge operations, requiring tremendous amounts of both staff and finance. But, for all that, Bobby was alone at last. He was running for an election – something he had never done before. He was not working for, or relying on favour from, anyone else. And, for the first time, his voice, emphatically, was his own. He was not speaking on behalf of anyone. Bobby, and Bobby alone, had to convince the voters. He had to defeat the Republican incumbent – something extremely difficult to do in the American political system because of the perks and campaign finance that comes with already being in office. But he emerged triumphant after a brutal campaign. Though Kennedy received nearly four million votes, this was over a million less than Lyndon B Johnson received in New York on the same day. Nonetheless, it was enough: Bobby was finally "a voice and leader in his own right", as Arthur Schlesinger Jr said. Liberals had tremendous hopes his energy, drive and charisma would make him a brilliant Senator.

He was not. Unlike his younger brother Ted, elected to the Senate from Massachusetts in 1962, Bobby was no 'natural' in Congress. A good Senator has brilliant skills of negotiation, the ability to compromise and to back-scratch. Bobby simply lacked these. He found the day-to-day business of the Senate all too mundane. Bobby needed things to capture his imagination. Sifting through the minutiae of sub-clauses in bills did not appeal to his idealism.

The utility of his visit to South Africa in the context of Bobby helping the people of New York, as he had been elected to do, is somewhat dubious. What is not is that it helped influence his ultimate decision to run for the presidency in 1968. This marked the culmination of Bobby's profound transformation, from ruthless advancer of his father and brother's ambitions to a man of intense idealism, vision and compassion. Robert Kennedy's life sheds light on so many things: the ability of men to evolve, develop and improve as human beings is just one of them.

Vietnam was at the forefront of Bobby's motives for running for the presidency. This

was particularly traumatic for him because, in a sense, he was running against his own brother's record. Johnson had been destroyed by Vietnam, but America's involvement there had been heavily deepened by JFK. Bobby dreamed of a 'war on poverty', funded by funds diverted from the one in far-east Asia. His was a truly progressive campaign.

It inspired Americans in a way that even JFK's 1960 campaign had not. Bobby's campaigning focussed upon inner-city slums, where he engaged with people who previously had no voice. America was, and still is, awash with injustice. Bobby's great driving force was his wish to bring fairness to American society – to end the abomination of so many people in the richest country on earth living in horrific poverty. How can a country which has such a huge, gaping 'underclass' claim to be the greatest on earth? Bobby railed against these injustices, and he did so with a frankness that is seemingly anathema to modern politicians. On the campaign trail, after Bobby had emphasised his radical dreams of achieving social justice, he was asked "And who's going to pay for all this, Senator?" Bobby replied simply "You are". He believed his country needed to be less focused on materialism if it was to become a place of fairness.

As Arthur Schlesinger Jr wrote in 2002, JFK now seems a "historical figure" while "Robert Francis Kennedy has a contemporary feel about him, a sense of identification with the woes and injustices of today's world." Namely, the multifarious inequalities that have only been exacerbated in American society since 1968; an unpopular, legally dubious War – for Vietnam in '68, read Iraq today; and the appalling response to the New Orleans hurricane in 2005, which highlighted how so many Americans still live in abject condition. Sadly, Bobby Kennedy, what he stood for, why and how he sought to change America are as relevant – perhaps even more so – today than they were when he was alive.

The last two months of Robert Kennedy's life contain enough material to fill books, as indeed they have. On April 4th, whilst giving a speech in Indiana, he was informed of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr, which he announced to a horrified audience who would now seek hope, more than ever, in Bobby himself. Exactly two months later, a bullet would hit him too.

Having gained momentum in the primary campaign after his late entrance, and just won the key state of California, Bobby had an excellent chance of the Democratic Party presidential nomination. Like his brother in 1960, he would have faced Nixon – a prospect that terrified 'Tricky Dick'. Even had he not won in 1968, Bobby would surely have been President one day. But as June 4th became June 5th, Bobby's victory speech in a Los Angeles hotel was ended by a bullet from the ardent Palestinian nationalist Sirhan Sirhan, angered by his Israeli sympathies in the 1967 War, which had begun a year to the day earlier.

In many ways, JFK's dreams – civil rights and healthcare – were put in place by his vice-President Lyndon B Johnson. But no one has achieved Bobby's goals of true social equality, which in their scope far outweighed JFK's ambitions. America was a hugely unfair society in 1968; it is a grotesquely unfair one in 2010, and even Barack Obama

Even in the presidency of Ricard Nixon, the 'liberal tide' could be seen in a range of legislation that saw defence spending fall considerably, paying for a sharp rise in benefits for the poor. Indeed, Noam Chomsky described Nixon as "the last liberal president". So the possibilities had a true liberal been in charge at this time would have been tremendous. America would still be feeling the effects of a Robert Kennedy presidency today.

Obama, seen reading books about Bobby during his campaign, did at least learn one thing from him: the importance of engaging the youth. Obama was seen as a trailblazer in activising young people; but really, he was just learning from Kennedy, whose combination of a forthright campaigning style – and one awash with positive solutions rather than negative politics and attacks on rivals – youth and constant willingness to engage with people face-to-face, as equals, was truly captivating. Poignantly, Bobby was even warned that such close interaction with people left him at exceptional risk. But, in an almost cavalier manner, he refused to change his campaigning style.

When Bobby Kennedy died, a little part of America died with him. For all the hopes attached to Obama, America has not seen nearly as progressive a candidate with any viable chance of winning the presidency since. After his funeral, his coffin was transferred from New York to Washington, where he would be buried, by special private train, draped in an American flag. On an oppressively hot day, nearly one million people, including large swathes of blacks and the downtrodden he had so inspired, lined the tracks to mourn his premature passing. These people, who had channelled all their hopes and dreams through Bobby, especially after King's death, felt a profound sense of betrayal. They had been cheated, both of an incredible man and of the quality of life that was rightly theirs. A senator who witnessed the scenes "looked into their faces. I saw sorrow … bewilderment. I saw fury and I saw fright."

Bobby Kennedy sought to bring true justice to America. The country is still waiting. In his election campaign he lamented, "Today in America, we are two worlds." The tragedy is that today his words resonate more strongly than ever.

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Gender and power in dystopian fiction

Marielle Cottee

"Sexual difference – is it to be thought of as a framework by which we are defeated in advance?" (Judith Butler)

"A civilisation in which military values prevail is always hostile to women's interests, " wrote Vera Brittain in 1934. The Nazi regime lent this quotation veracity: their wish was to create a male-dominated, militaristic society, and with this to attain what Gottfried Feder, one of the chief 'thinkers' of the Nazi Party, called, "the most holy thing in the world, the woman as maid and servant ". Three years later, still before the outbreak of war and well before the breadth of Nazi atrocities had been made public, Katherine Burdekin described a fictional dystopian future under the Nazi regime in which women "have no souls and are not human," "women's only reason for existence [was] to bear boys and nurse them to 18 months," and "the most important thing was to get it firmly fixed in the heads of the younger women that they must not mind being raped. "

The genre of dystopia works by what Chris Ferns terms an "active interplay" in the reader's mind between "actual and imaginary worlds", and holds its power in the fact that, unlike utopia, it seems to be "a possible destination of present society…no more than a logical conclusion derived from the premises of the existing order ." This genre is thus also fallow ground for a discussion of gender and power: science fiction, argues Sara Lefanu, "offers a language for the…interrogation of gender roles. " The representation in this genre of women as subjugated, embodying "humility, blind obedience and submission to men, " is emblematic of the efforts of the fictional totalitarian regimes to resolve and settle the arguments of gender difference, much as the 'separate spheres' argument of the Victorian era attempted to. Ferns et al have already discussed the parallel between dystopian literature and male subjugation of women; Virginia Woolf, likewise, saw this as "the egg of the very same worm that we know under other names in other countries. "

What is often omitted in the discussion of sexual difference in dystopian fiction, however, is the aspect in which women are "defeated in advance" in both the fictional and actual spheres by misguided notions of femininity, female power, and feminism within the female mind, as well as by the discriminatory attitudes of males. Particularly in works written by women, such as Burdekin's Swastika Night , and Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale , the subtext of female subjugation can be analysed within the framework of "victim feminism" - discussed by Naomi Wolf in apposition to "power feminism" , and embodied by Virginia Woolf's Three Guineas. Here, the abuse of power over women is propagated not only by men and a totalitarian Society, but also by other women, both in the perverted hierarchies of dystopia and the real hierarchies of Western society.

It is important, firstly, to acknowledge that roles played by women in dystopian

fiction can vary according to a number of factors, including the gender of the author. Male-authored dystopia portrays women as equally subjugated as in its female-authored equivalent; the mentality and development of these women, particularly in terms of their relation to other women, can, however, be different to that of women in female-authored dystopia. Dystopias written by men tend both to reflect and to establish the cultural paradigm of patriarchal hierarchy with which an analysis of sexual difference and its ability to "defeat in advance." These works split "sexual difference" into two dichotomous parts: that of gender roles, and that of sexuality. The women in male-authored dystopia tend to use sexuality as a form of rebellion – Julia, in George Orwell's 1984 , is primarily attractive to Winston because "the sexual act, successfully performed, was rebellion", and she had thus rebelled "scores of times." Winston believes that this maverick sexual streak in Julia – the "simple, undifferentiated desire" between them – will be "the force that would tear the Party to pieces." Orwell, however, does not bring this rebellious tendency full circle: once Winston and Julia have begun to act subversively through their love-making, the relationship begins, as Lee Horsley notes, to "reinscribe traditional stereotypes" . She wants to "wear stockings and high-heeled shoes," and be "a woman, not a Party comrade." Whilst this could, on its own, be seen as the ultimate act of rebellion – noting the hope Winston invests in the red-armed prole and her potential reproductive prowess as a challenge to the Party – Julia's regression to the past in fact has an inverse effect on her rebellious tendencies. She falls asleep during the reading of Goldstein's book, and describes "any kind of organised revolt against the Party…as stupid." Orwell's 'rebellious woman' remains relegated to her own sphere in her traditional gender role, without making any attempt to question or alter her situation on a political level, before she is ultimately forgotten altogether by the man she risked everything for.

Conversely, Margaret Atwood does not cease to question the origins of women's subjugation under an anti-feminist, theocratic regime, founded years after the women's movement gained momentum. The key question her novel asks is the the extent to which women believe they are responsible for their own oppression; when Offred describes the day the new regime began to remove women's rights by preventing them from working, she notes, despite the fact that the men in uniform appear to be "sudden apparitions, like Martians…at odds with their surroundings", the women feel "a certain shame, as if we'd been caught doing something we shouldn't" as they are frogmarched from their desks: "It's outrageous, one woman said, but without belief. What was it about this that made us feel we deserved it?"

This apparent paradox is, in fact, not anomalous in the context of the women's movement, and is prevalent in both Atwood and Burdekin's novels. Both novels were written after a surge in feminism, in the context of an ensuing backlash against women. Both novels, therefore, question women's culpability in their own demise, even in the hierarchical patriarchies in which they are set. This idea mirrors that set out by Naomi Wolf of "victim feminism," "a set of beliefs that cast women as beleaguered, fragile, intuitive angels", which "urges women to identify with powerlessness even at the expense of taking responsibility for the power they do possess." This concep-

tion of feminism appropriates a number of traditionally chauvinistic views, including a reinforcement of the Victorian ideal of separate spheres. Wolf argues that victim feminism is "sexually judgemental, even anti-sexual", "idealises women's childrearing capacity", and "tends towards group-think, as well as towards hostility to individual achievement." Applying these ideas to the social framework of the Republic of Gilead, we can see a number of interesting parallels. The totalitarian theocracy, in which The Handmaid's Tale is set, purports to be a pro-feminist society, saving women from the sexual dangers of late twentieth century life: "There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it."

The sexual enslavement of women is therefore justified by its difference from propagandised extremes of pre-Gilead life: "Sometimes the movie…would be an old porno film, from the seventies or eighties. Women kneeling, sucking penises or guns, women tied up or chained with dog collars around their necks, women hanging from trees, or upside-down, naked, with their legs held apart, women being raped, beaten up, killed." The undignified mating ritual – The Ceremony – to which the Handmaids are subjected to on a monthly basis is offset with this extreme example of life in a sexual free market, yet it cannot be denied that this, too, denies both the Handmaid and the Wife agency and respect: "My red skirt is hitched up to my waist, though no higher. Below it the Commander is fucking. What he is fucking is the lower part of my body. I do not say making love, because this is not what he's doing. Copulating too would be inaccurate, because it would imply two people and only one is involved. Nor does rape cover it: nothing is going on here that I haven't signed up for." This juxtaposition embodies the notion of victim feminism: whilst Offred longs for the past, and considers herself an opponent of the regime, it has indoctrinated her to such an extent that she no longer questions it in action, and is resigned to a powerless life. Wolf points out that attitudes such as this reflect "outdated Victorian assumptions" such as the fact that "women, especially if they are mothers, are really powerless over their circumstances."

What makes this subjugation of women particularly problematic, however, is the extent to which women are involved in creating and perpetuating the male-dominant hierarchy, both through ambiguous complicity such as Offred's, and through women like the Aunts, who assume patriarchal roles to strip other women of their agency. As such, the patriarchal regime of Gilead abdicates responsibility, reacting against the feminist movement of the 1980s by making women both responsible for their own subjugation, and the key players in its continuation. The means by which this is achieved is a combination not only of anti-male conditioning, such as the Salvaging, in which the women are set like dogs upon a rapist, but also by pitting the women against each other, so that no network of trust between the women exists, and the women adopt traditionally male characteristics, such as competitiveness, aggression and power-seeking. Indeed, one of the people responsible for the launch of the regime, Serena Joy, used her professional power to campaign for the return of women to the domestic sphere: "Her speeches were about the sanctity of the home, about how women should stay home. Serena Joy didn't do this herself, she made

speeches instead, but she presented this failure of hers as a sacrifice she was making for the good of all." Yet Serena Joy is presented as "obviously dried-up and unhappy".

It is implied that she did not realise the consequences the revolution would have on her own life, and takes her anger out on fertile beings around her: Offred, who she claws with her fingernails during the Ceremony, and her garden, which seems to act as a symbol of unspoken knowledge, like the Garden of Eden: "There is something subversive about this garden of Serena's, a sense of buried things bursting upwards…as if to point, to say: 'Whatever is silenced with clamour to be heard'."

Yet Serena, as if acknowledging the truth about the failure of women's redomestification to bring the freedom from objectification and sin that she sought, acts violently towards her garden, even as she nutures it: "She was aiming, positioning the blades of the shears, the cutting with a convulsive jerk of the hands. Was it … some blitzkrieg, some kamikaze, committed on the swelling genitalia of the flowers?" Serena typifies Wolf's victim feminist (as, incidentally, does Offred's mother) – this cutting of the flowers may well signify an attack on men, or, indeed on the women who can achieve what she is unable to – fertility and childbirth. This undertone of vicious potential, seen also in the Aunts, who are matronly in appearance, but responsible for whipping and oppression of the Handmaids, signifies an inverted power role. Gloria Steinem described twentieth century social organisation as creating a structure where "Men punish the weak, while women punish the strong" . In a dystopian world, this is extended so that women are made complicit in their own downfall by a paralysis of self-belief in times of freedom. In other words, they "defeat themselves in advance" by believing only in received stereotypes and not trusting each other.

Dystopian men, on the other hand, are portrayed as outwardly powerful – like the "Man himself" described as the "quintessence of virility" in Woolf's Three Guineas, they are given the appearance of strength and potency by uniforms and their decorations. However, in contrast to the women, men are exposed beneath their uniforms as weak, or impotent. The spectrum of this weakness ranges from the Commander's sad appearance when naked: "Without his uniform, he looks smaller, older, like something being dried," to homosexuality or unfulfilled sexual or actual potency – or, indeed, a combination of the above. 1984's Winston, for example, obviates the possibility of any further resistance to the Party when he appears to fall in love with O'Brien, who then replaces both Julia and Winston's mother in his affections. Furthermore, the men in Burdekin's Swastika Night live off a surge of homoerotic desire, which Carlo Pagetti et al describe, "as the necessary result of contempt for women. " Crucially, as Pagetti points out, this brings with it "frailty and mental confusion", augmenting the men's potential weakness, and in fact opening the possibility of them sliding into traditional women's roles. It is interesting at this stage to note that Burdekin's men, for all their "fascist violence and machismo", in fact model their idea of beauty upon the feminine. The "young Hero-Angel" described in the opening paragraphs of the novel has "long fair silky hair" and who is "smooth-skinned and rosy, [and] combined a voice of earthly purity and tone." This

description bears more resemblance to Coventry Padmore's Angel in the House than to traditional images of masculinity, and, to consolidate this point, Burdekin reveals the young man standing next to Hitler in a picture as a young girl. This indicates that women are potentially as powerful as men, if only their power is harnessed and used appropriately: an approach to feminism Wolf terms "power feminism."

Wolf claims that young girls "start out with a desire to rule the world"; she argues that women have allowed themselves to be conditioned into disavowing their sense of entitlement and resenting other women who achieve power. This model is followed, as this essay has shown, by projections of women's life in a dystopian future: women are possessed with a power which is forced by an inwardly weak patriarchal system to remain suppressed. Yet this situation is avoidable: Lucy Stone wrote in a 1855 pamphlet that "it is very little to me to have the right to vote, to own property, etcetera, if I may not keep my body, and its uses, in my own right. " Wolf's power feminism suggests a similar principle: if women take control and ownership of their own bodies, and refuse to believe that they are not entitled to equal power in society, this dystopian future can be avoided. This, too, is the feminist subtext of Atwood's and Burdekin's novels: no sex is altogether stronger or more potent than the other, and a mutual effort, such as the Mayday resistance, or more women choosing to follow the "loose woman" path of Moira, in The Handmaid's Tale, or even Burdekin's women choosing to believe in the Knight's slip of the tongue: "to be fruitful and bear strong daughters," could derail the train of power on which these dystopian hierarchies travel. Wolf describes power feminism as a system in where if "the system works unfairly, women should use their resources to force it to change, rather than pleading for kinder treatment on the basis of victim status." Atwood's and Burdekin's emphasis on the downsides of a world without women – neither Burdekin's Germany nor Atwood's Gilead can sustain themselves without both sexes – indicate a belief in this idea, and their dystopias act as a warning to women, and to men, of the dangers of accepting sexual difference and its negative consequences at face value. Neither of these female-authored dystopias, nor 1984, resolve the questions of sexual difference, but encourage a worldview in which the differences no longer act as unbalancing questions, but are used by each sex to a common advantage.

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