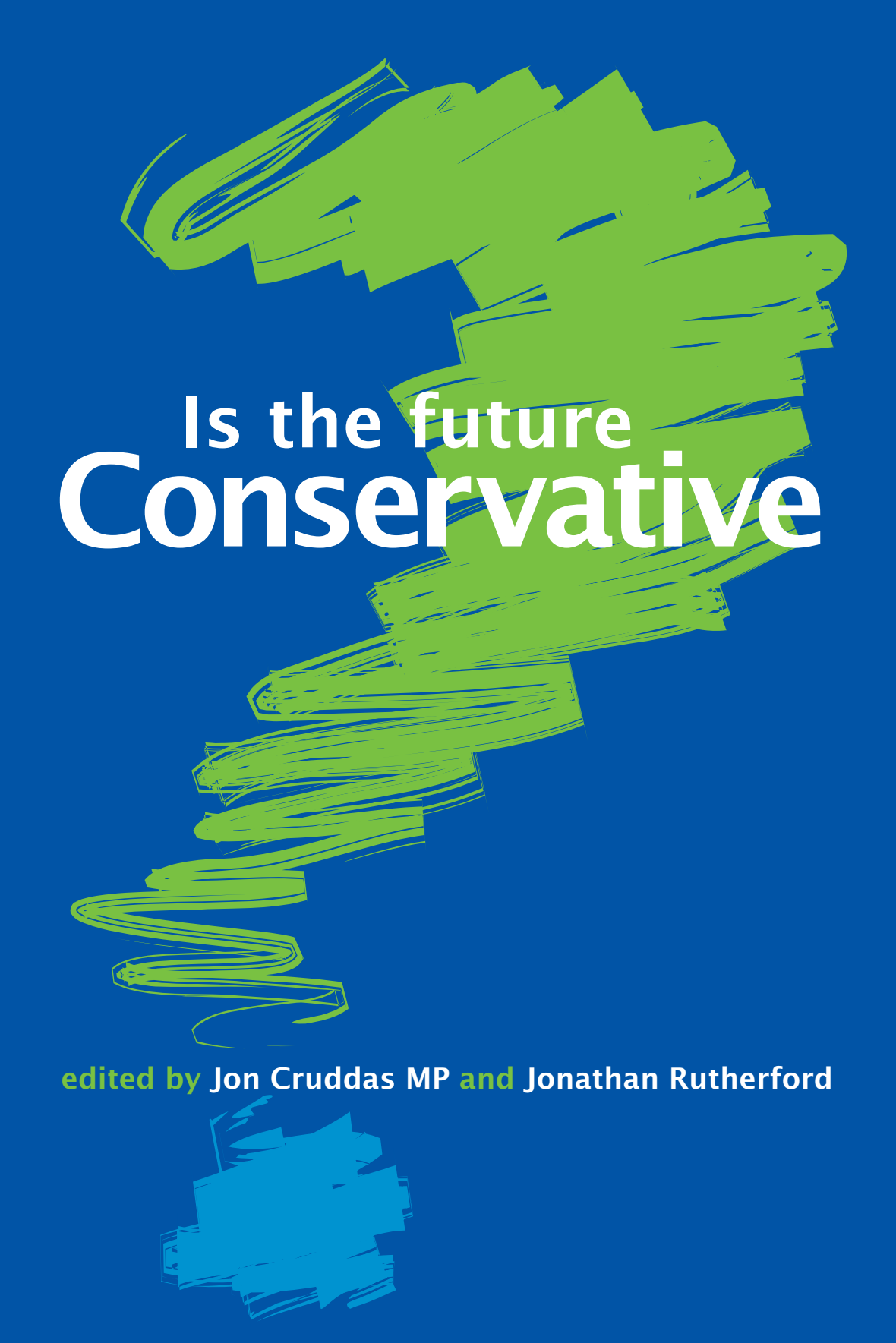

Is the future
Conservative
edited by Jon Cruddas MP and Jonathan Rutherford

Is the future conservative?

The British economy is tipping into a recession. After three election victories, the New Labour project is exhausted. The Conservative Party is now resurgent, attempting to reinvent its political traditions and preparing for power. Britain is at a possible turning point. This book critically engages with the ideas of the New Conservatives. Do their politics provide any answers to the challenges that lie ahead? What political direction might they take if they win the next election?

The left needs to take on the New Conservatism. It needs to expose the weaknesses of its notion of a post-bureaucratic age. The limited nature of its family policy and its contradictory ideas around education must be challenged. Behind its self-confident image the New Conservatism faces a crisis in its unionist politics, and it lacks a coherent political economy to enact its pro-social politics. Political schisms in the party are waiting to erupt, and it has already begun to retreat from its earlier, bolder politics.

But the New Conservatives cannot be reduced to 'Tory toffs'; nor can Cameron be dismissed as a 'shallow salesman'. This is a serious attempt to define a new communitarian politics of the right. If it succeeds, it will bring yet more insecurity and inequality. The New Conservatives pose a significant challenge not only to a demoralised Labour Party but to the wider progressive movement as a whole. To meet this challenge Labour must reassert its own social and ethical values and find its own alternatives to neoliberalism.

Jon Cruddas
Jonathan Rutherford

Is the future Conservative? is edited by Jon Cruddas and Jonathan Rutherford and published by *Soundings*, in association with Compass and *Renewal* and supported by Media Department, Middlesex University and the Amiel Trust.

Soundings
A journal of politics and culture

LW

compass
DIRECTION FOR THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT

RENEWAL

Middlesex University

Barry Amiel & Norman Melburn trust

Contents

Foreword

Neal Lawson

The left ignores the right at its peril. The last time we did, in the late 1970s, it led to eighteen years in the wilderness, and much of the social democratic consensus of the post-war years was left in tatters. Today many dismiss David Cameron's 'New' Conservatives as either the same old Tories or just PR wide-boys. There are partial truths in both accusations but more is going on. A deeper analysis is required of the new New Right so that we can understand our successes and failures better and recalibrate our politics accordingly. *Is the future Conservative?* makes a start on this analysis.

As Skills Minister David Lammy said recently, Cameron has 'touched a nerve reflecting a big gap in our political narrative'.[1] As well as a critique of the Conservatives, we need an understanding of how our own weaknesses have helped to open a space for Cameron.

There can be no doubt that Cameron poses a serious threat to the left – not least because he is attempting to change. Though it is always governments that lose elections, oppositions need to look competent and ready to rule. The Tory brand has been decontaminated. But what is left after all the changes? The New Conservativism, like every political project, is a contradictory beast.

The Cameron project

Cameron's most notable and important soundbite is that 'there is such thing as society – it just isn't the same thing as the state'. In this one bound he frees himself from Thatcherism – but then walks straight back into the trap of denying the state a leading role in addressing the symptoms and causes of the social recession. Instead he looks to the voluntary sector to fill the gap.

This is flawed for two reasons. First, the Women's Institute is a wonderful institution but with the best will in the world it is not going to eradicate child poverty. There is a big role for the third sector but there are jobs only the state can do. Second, while denying the state Cameron has promised to keep funding it to the same level as Labour because he knows people put public services before tax cuts. He is putting his money where his mouth isn't.

This is a huge political victory for the left but New Labour cannot claim it – partly because it insists that the Tories aren't changing at all, and partly because its own public investment operates by stealth. The likelihood is that a Tory victory will not lead to an immediate and dramatic end to policies like the minimum wage, tax credits and SureStart; instead they will be allowed to die slowly and quietly through lack of funding – this time killed off by stealth.

The second most important Cameron line is that in the 1980s they reformed the economy, and now it is time for them to save society. But the market and society are of course inextricably linked. It was the unleashing of free market forces in the 1980s that caused the social recession. A truly new Conservativism would have to renounce Thatcherism. That would be their Clause 4 moment.

The third important framing message of their project is that Cameronism will 'use conservative means to achieve progressive ends'. Again this is wholly flawed. Means always shape ends. Look at the experience of New Labour. It had to persuade business that it was on their side. But this element of the shift from old to new led to its exponents convincing themselves that they were for capital and not labour. The legacy is a Labour Party hierarchy that cannot make any critique of markets, or address market failure. Only progressive means achieve progressive ends.

A doomed project?

Cameron looks like an interesting but contradictory and limited response to the failures and weaknesses of New Labour, who were

themselves attempting to get to grips with the failures and weaknesses of Thatcherism. But in the gap between the death of New Labour and the rise of a new democratic, decentralising and more egalitarian centre-left project, there is a danger that Cameron will take power. If New Labour hands the New Conservatives one term in office that will be bad enough. If they manage two they will have time to dig in, and that will be a disaster.

Tony Blair headed off to the centre and kept going. This wasn't just to win. He really believed in centre-right politics and the role of the market. But a combination of conditions – such as the lobbying power of vested interest, and the lack of alternative models or an organisational force outside of parliament – made his journey smoother and easier. We cannot look into David Cameron's heart and tell what sort of man he is: he may try to continue in a progressive direction if he wins. But all the forces around him, in the Conservative Party, the City and media, will be pushing him back to the right.

There are many corners to look round, but Cameronism already feels like a doomed project. People want and need a politics of security to protect them from the social consequences of a neoliberal project that is now in crisis. Set against that task Cameronism is bound to disappoint. What matters now is whether the centre-left, inside and outside of Labour, can construct a body of ideas and a set of alliances that can deal with state failure, so that we can once more address market failure.

Notes

1. David Lammy, 'Broken Record', *Progress*, September 2008; http://www.progressonline.org.uk/Magazine/article.asp?a=3206.

Is the future Conservative?

Jon Cruddas and Jonathan Rutherford

The left needs to take on the New Conservatives and rethink its own politics.

The British economy is tipping into a recession. After three election victories, the New Labour project is exhausted, and at the time of writing Gordon Brown's hold on power is precarious. In 1997 New Labour delivered a decisive blow to a Tory elite who believed in their entitlement to rule. But they are now resurgent, reinventing the Conservative tradition and preparing for power. Britain is at a possible turning point.

Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives created a new hegemony that transformed the economic life of the country in the 1980s – a time when Britain's old model of industrial production was failing and business was suffering a collapse in profitability. The Conservative government, energized by Friedrich von Hayek's liberal philosophy, engineered the deregulation and restructuring of the economy, opening it up to global market forces. The influence of the trade unions was destroyed and the public language of socialism eradicated. London and Southern England boomed with new service, financial and high tech industries, while the de-industrialising North disintegrated into poverty. Britain entered a new stage of economic development.

New Labour was a project conceived out of this right-wing hegemony. Its promise of change in 1997 was greeted with optimism – 'things can only get better'. A decade on, and that change has become associated with the turbulence of global capitalism – fear of immigration, economic insecurity and loss of the familiar. New Labour has created a more individualised and wealthier society, but not a freer or more equal one. Despite its

extraordinary electoral successes it has failed to build a lasting coalition for transformational change. By the 2005 election it had lost 4 million voters. The 2008 local elections witnessed core Labour voters deserting it 'in droves'. It is apparently being outflanked to its left by the new Conservatism. As John Harris argues in his chapter, on everything from executive pay to social exclusion, the New Conservatives have wrong-footed the Brown government – on issues that sit well within what might be considered orthodox Labour territory.

Meanwhile the Brown government has lost any sense of political purpose. Faced with a crisis it has triangulated rightward. Initiative after initiative has been targeted at specific key groups, without any thought as to their political coherence or to their outcomes. In its neglect of its core working-class support, New Labour has ignored the potentially fatal consequences of this for the survival of the Labour Party. Without roots and ideological purpose, and faced with historical changes in class and culture, it is losing the political means and the intellectual resources to rebuild long-term constituencies of support.

Three turbulent decades of economic restructuring and liberalisation have now come to an end. The financial bubbles created in the system make it structurally unsustainable. With the onset of a recession, Britain faces acute problems in creating a more equal and sustainable economy. Large areas of the country have lost their economic base. Both Conservative and New Labour governments, heavily influenced by economic liberalism, have driven this process of restructuring the economy and society – further and deeper than other European countries. Manufacturing industry has been neglected and overshadowed by the financial industries. Institutions in education, health and welfare, required for social recovery, have been depleted by privatisation, outsourcing and marketisation. Centralised micro-management has left many public sector workers demoralised and their organisational cultures risk averse. This low synergy between individuals and public

institutions is reproduced in the political sphere, where there is widespread popular disaffection from political parties and the formal institutions of representative democracy.

The New Conservatism

This is the condition of Britain we now face. David Cameron has shaped the Conservative revival around the need to renew society. And Oliver Letwin argues that: 'the social revolution we now need to achieve is as great as the economic revolution that was required in the 1980s and 1990s' (see interview on p71).

In November 2005, a month before his election as leader, Cameron signalled a break with Thatcher's Hayek-inspired statement that 'there is no such thing as society'. In a speech to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations he called for the restoration of trust in society. We must, he said, recognise that 'we're all in this together'. Politicians have to trust people: 'I want my Party to be one that says, loudly and proudly, that there is such a thing as society – it's just not the same thing as the state.'

Following his election, Cameron announced the setting up of a number of policy groups to review Conservative political strategy. In July 2007 the Social Justice Policy Group under Iain Duncan Smith published its *Breakthrough Britain. Ending the costs of social breakdown*. The report faithfully mirrors Cameron's pro-social Conservatism. It defines the five key 'paths to poverty' – family breakdown; serious personal debt; drug and alcohol addiction; failed education; worklessness and dependency. The solution to these problems is not the welfare state but reinforcing the welfare society. A welfare society is not the same as a laissez faire approach, which blames poverty on poor individual choices. But nor does it think that eliminating poverty is solely the job of government. 'Our approach is based on the belief that people must take responsibility for their own choices but that government has a responsibility to help people make the right choices.'

Jesse Norman, one of the founders of the think tank Policy Exchange, argues a similar position. 'After 54 quarters of unbroken economic growth we are in, not an economic recession, but a serious "social recession"'. Beveridge's five giants of illness, ignorance, disease, squalor and want remained, but they were in abeyance: 'However, we face two new and rather different problems: a problem of security and a problem of trust.'[1]

The blame for the condition of society is cast wide. In his book *Mind the Gap* (2004), Ferdinand Mount, one of the fathers of the New Conservatism, owns up to the social damage caused by his own class and party:

> How can someone like me pretend to know what life is like for the worst-off of my fellow countrymen? My answer is that it is People Like Us who are largely responsible for the present state of the lower classes in Britain … My argument is that we did the damage, or most of it. It is the least we can do to try and understand what we have done and help to undo it where we can (p12).

Cameron has taken up this paternal concern and made the theme of 'Breakdown Britain' central to his politics: 'the greatest challenge of the 1970s and 1980s was economic revival. The great challenge in this decade and the next is social revival'. In a speech in Gallowgate, Scotland, in July 2008 Cameron set out his mission 'to repair our broken society – to heal the wounds of poverty, crime, social disorder and deprivation that are steadily making this country a grim and joyless place to live for far too many people'. And, riding high in the polls, he also tested out a more conventional Tory paternalism. We are, he argued, in danger of losing our 'sense of personal responsibility, social responsibility, common decency and, yes, even public morality'. As Alan Finlayson discusses with Oliver Letwin, this turn to traditional Tory morality is underpinned by the philosophy of Michael Oakeshott.

Conservatism, argues Oakeshott in his essay 'On being Conservative', is a disposition.[2] It is neither a politics nor an ideology, but a mode of engaging with the world. Conservatism is averse to change because it destroys attachments, and deprives us of what is known and familiar. Oakeshott viewed modernity, with its mantra of 'progress' and its 'lust for change', with scepticism. In its maelstrom, nothing can be accepted for what it is, only for what it might become: 'Pieties are fleeting, loyalties evanescent, and the pace of change warns us against too deep attachments'. Change is an emblem of extinction. It is, however, inescapable, and so the 'man of conservative temperament' must conduct a kind of fighting retreat, holding fast to familiarities that are unthreatened and assimilating what is new, in order to preserve his identity. Applying the brake was far from Hayek's idea of political activity however. In his essay 'Why I am not a Conservative' he accuses Conservatism of a fear of change and a failure to challenge the progressive encroachments on individual liberty. 'What the liberal must ask, first of all, is not how fast or how far we should move, but where we should move'.[3]

In their book *Compassionate Conservatism* (2006), Jesse Norman and Janan Ganesh identify these two rival traditions as central to modern Conservatism: a 'liberal or libertarian conservatism concerned with free markets, localism and private property, and a paternalist conservatism that has prioritised community and social stability' (p29). Which tradition holds sway is contingent upon historical circumstances. In the new conjuncture it is Oakeshott, not Hayek, who speaks to people's insecurities and the need for social renewal.

Labour's response to the pro-social rhetoric of the New Conservatives has been dismissive. James Purnell has been one of its most vociferous critics: 'What a strange rallying cry: stop the world, I want to get on. I can't stress enough what an inadequate response to the modern world this is. In an era in which whole industries rise and fall within a generation, in which capital

traverses the globe in an instant and labour crosses borders to meet the urgent request from employers for high skills, what is the value of conservatism?'[4] However Purnell makes the error of failing to see the appeal of this approach in the harsh and insecure world he describes. And he ignores New Labour's own political crisis, claiming that 'we have a vision of the good society that the Conservatives cannot match'. But this is precisely what Labour does not have. It offers no coherent alternative.

In its reinvention in the 1990s New Labour jettisoned the language of ethical socialism, and so lost its capacity to match Cameron's pro-social rhetoric and usurp his claim to value politics. It no longer knows how to talk about relationships, values, or even social justice. It doesn't know how to talk about a culture of care and empathy, nor how to speak to people's insecurities. Its silence over the super rich is matched only by the harsh language deployed against migrants or welfare recipients. It has become a politics without sympathy, unable to engage with everyday life. In contrast, Cameron's ethical language of social life has resonated amongst many who in the past would never have considered voting for the economic liberalism of Thatcherism.

Conservative contradictions

But how much has the Conservative Party changed? What is the balance of power between the neoliberal, Whiggish current within the party and those who have been reinventing the Tory tradition? The degree of vagueness and uncertainty surrounding these questions, not only in public but also within the party, is a tactic to avoid political exposure and the internal schisms that are waiting to erupt. The New Conservatives have adroitly spun an image of themselves as sympathetic, human and 'in touch'. They have cultivated an aura of intellectual ferment and political renascence. Their benign social values and rhetoric of social justice promise a new beginning. But the ferment remains shallow and narrowly

defined. Old prejudices remain. In recent months the interesting New Conservatism has given way to the punitive politics of more prisons, more police surveillance, more bail denied. Kate Stanley, in her article on Conservative family policy, offers a more realistic picture to the Tory spin: 'Within the Conservative story there is something old, something new, something borrowed and, naturally, something blue'.

The New Conservatives show no sign of being able to give up the market dogma inspired by Hayek's liberalism. Climate change, as Sir Nicholas Stern has said, is the biggest market failure the world has ever seen, and the Quality of Life Policy Group under Zac Goldsmith and John Gummer acknowledged this fact in *Blueprint for a Green Economy* (2007). Unrestrained, the market, 'will catch till the last fish is landed, drill till there is no more oil, and pollute till the planet is destroyed'. However, their argument for government intervention to ensure that markets keep their place as servants, not masters, was ridiculed by the right-wing media. *The Blueprint* has been banished. (For more on Tory environmentalism see Tony Jupiter's chapter.)

Confronted by the credit crunch and the collapse of Bear Stearns, Martin Wolf of the *Financial Times* announced in March 2008 that the dream of global free market capitalism was dead. Bank of England Chairman Mervyn King agreed – Wolf's comment 'strikes a chord'. The era of neoliberal economics is coming to an end. In contrast, the third of the Conservatives' policy review documents, John Redwood's *Freeing Britain to Compete* (2007), was dominated by liberal proposals for £14bn of tax cuts. It is fair to say that the New Conservatives have no coherent political economy – and their much publicised interest in Thaler and Sunstein's faddish *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, And Happiness* (2008) cannot disguise this fact. They have no economic strategy by means of which to enact their pro-social politics and rhetoric of social justice.

Labour cannot easily exploit this contradiction, however,

because neoliberal economics has been its own blind faith. And its silence has also been tactical. Cameron's social evangelism arouses the suspicion of business. He has yet to convince big finance and big business that their interests will be safe in his hands. As the *Financial Times* editorial of 4 July 2008 suggested, these two constituencies, almost alone in the country, have remained in support of Gordon Brown: 'While the Brown government has taken firm decisions on a range of issues – such as the need to develop nuclear energy, the need to expand London's Heathrow airport and the need to streamline planning laws – the Conservatives sit on the fence.' *The Economist* Leader of 5 July 2008 repeated the concern that Cameron's focus 'has been on social policy, not economics'.

While the New Conservatives may seem too vague, and perhaps too compassionate, to some, they continue to retain their traditional hostility to the social activist state. Yet in the wake of casino capitalism, and with the onset of recession, the state is the only means society has of protecting itself from the destructive forces of global capitalism. It provides the only feasible agency for integrating transport, managing energy and water security, tackling climate change, building a renewable technologies industry, developing a national strategy for agriculture production, and coordinating and redistributing resources to create a more equitable and sustainable economic development. Decades of privatisation and outsourcing have already undermined its capacity for strategic coordination and development. In spite of all this – as Matthew Pennycook argues in his chapter – the Conservatives are intent on retrenching the state rather than attempting to democratise it.

Without systemic, institutional and economic support, the Conservative proposal for a 'welfare society' is less an embrace of mutualism and more a revival of Thatcher's thwarted ambition to create a minimal state. Its Green Paper *A Stronger Society* promises that: 'One of the most important ambitions of the next Conservative Government will be to expand the role and the influence of charities, social enterprises and voluntary bodies in our society'

(p7). The Green Paper argues that the Labour government has undermined the social attunement and cultural pluralism of the voluntary sector by devolving onto it service delivery functions, and seeking to mould it in its own corporate, managerialist image. The Conservative plans would fundamentally differ from this – by reversing the power relation between state and civil society. The voluntary sector will change the government itself. The tail will wag the dog.

It would be a serious miscalculation, however, to imagine that the voluntary sector could shoulder this kind of burden and initiate the kinds of structural change proposed by the Conservatives. Who and what will ensure the democratic and accountable distribution of resources necessary for all to flourish – Oxfam, the local food co-op? As Matthew Pennycook writes, the Conservatives have no answers to the question of how their model of service provision will manage to lead us to 'the broad uplands of a post-bureaucratic age without sacrificing collective democratic accountability'.

One concrete example of what may be in store is Boris Johnson's London Mayor's Fund. He has described it as a streamlined vehicle to enable wealth creators to give to communities facing deprivation. Here then is a small but tangible step in David Cameron's plan to make poverty in Britain history, by drawing on the resources of civil society. Who will be the new Guardians of the Poor? The chair of the Fund is Bob Diamond, head of Barclays Capital, who last year earned £22million. He's joined by Sir Trevor Chinn, knighted by the Tories in 1990 (after which he became a big donor to Tony Blair). Then there is Richard Sharp, a retired Goldman Sachs banker, and former Tory Treasurer Jonathan Marland – a man who enjoys his Wiltshire as a 'hearty dog loving squire'.

The Mayor's Fund is strongly reminiscent of Victorian philanthropy's tinkering with social deprivation. And it highlights the weaknesses of the New Conservatives' economic strategy for social justice. The 'Top twenty policy pledges' of *A Stronger Society* fail to match all the rhetoric of the promised social revolution. They

are like the story of the Dutch boy who put his finger in the hole in the dyke. They will not stem the economic dynamic that continually creates greater inequality and insecurity.

Labour politicians have rightly focused on the proposed devolution of state functions, in an attempt to expose the hollowness of Conservative pro-social rhetoric. However, their own centralising instincts and micromanagement of people have allowed the Conservatives to strike a popular chord with their criticism of state control. They have been able to portray state intervention – which has to be part of any redistributive politics – as an undesirable intrusion into people's lives. Labour has little to offer in answer to this.

Yet, despite its currently robust public face, the New Conservatism remains a tentative political project. Its intellectual foundations, drawing on the paternalist Oakeshott and the neoliberal Hayek, encourage political tensions and contradiction. As Hayek himself has noted, Conservatism is suspicious of theory and new ideas. Stephen Ball in his chapter on Conservative education policy provides a powerful criticism of its outdated ideas – and impatience with educational research. Ball draws attention to the contradictions in their policy: for example between their modernising rhetoric of making education an adventure, giving children 'the chance to take risks, push boundaries and test themselves outside their comfort zone' and their prescriptions of traditional forms of discipline and curriculum. Gerry Hassan, in his chapter on post-union politics, exposes the political difficulties the Conservatives face now that they have almost no representation outside England. Despite their unionist history and David Cameron's belief in Britain, they could become the party that presides over the disintegration of the United Kingdom.

The current success of the Conservative Party has much to do with the political failure of Labour. It has hugged the government closely and forced it into political complicity through its own cynical triangulations and compromise with its traditions. Nowhere

is the government's failure to counter the New Conservatives more abject than in the field of welfare reform. In a speech in Liverpool in July 2008, Chris Grayling, the Shadow Minister for Work and Pensions, welcomed the government Green Paper on Welfare Reform. 'I was delighted last week when James Purnell, on behalf of the Government, accepted Conservative proposals for radical welfare reform.' The government triangulates rightward and the Conservatives praise it for promoting one of their main electoral themes.

Is the future Conservative?

In the 1990s New Labour incorporated economic liberalism into its politics and so redefined social democracy. It repositioned itself to the right, adopted a more populist authoritarian tone and defeated the Conservative Party of Thatcherism. But what was New Labour's electoral strength then has become its weakness. It has become both the party of the establishment and the party of insecurity. The roles are now reversed: the Conservatives have mined their philosophical traditions and created a pro-social language to undermine New Labour. Security is the new progressive politics, trust in people the new political virtue. The New Conservatives lay claim to both. 'People are just incredibly worried – worried about their families and worried about their future', Cameron told the CBI in July 2008. But despite this politics of empathy, the Conservatives still lack a political economy capable of enacting their pro-social rhetoric. The nineteenth-century Whig politician Thomas Macaulay said that the work of Conservatism was guarding the Whig achievements of the previous generation. Is this what a Cameron government will amount to? If so, it will create widespread hardship and its fortunes will be short lived.

Despite David Cameron's early bold politics, the New Conservatives cannot find a way out of the orthodoxies of the 1990s. As an election approaches and they recover lost

constituencies of support, the instinct is to retreat from the search for a new political paradigm. In his speech in Gallowgate Cameron regressed back into the old Thatcher language of blaming individuals for their poverty and ill health:

> We talk about people being 'at risk of obesity' instead of talking about people who eat too much and take too little exercise. We talk about people being at risk of poverty, or social exclusion: it's as if these things – obesity, alcohol abuse, drug addiction – are purely external events like a plague or bad weather.

This political timidity is in evidence in Conservative policy on the family. As Kate Stanley points out in her chapter, while the rhetoric has been on promoting the value of good relationships, policy has focused narrowly on the promotion of marriage as an end in itself. But – as Kate argues – good enough parenting, stability, love and commitment are neither inevitable nor exclusive to marriage: 'Marriage promotion is fundamentally a simple solution to a complex problem. It is a pathological, individual approach, with a bizarre nanny-state twist'.

In his trenchant criticism of liberalism, Phillip Blond offers a more radical direction for Conservatism. He argues that we are entering a new post-liberal political paradigm. There is, he says, 'nothing left in the left'. It lost its claim on fraternity and society when it embraced equality through the state and liberty through the individual. But, equally, Thatcherism was responsible for a Conservative betrayal of society. If the New Conservatives can create a post-liberal political economy, they have an historic opportunity to enact their pro-social politics.

Whether or not the Conservatives win the next election, the future will not be a re-run of the economic liberalism of the 1980s. The electorate will not tolerate growing levels of inequality, social dislocation and insecurity. Prices are rising and wage levels are stagnating or falling. Benefit levels continue to fall behind earnings,

unemployment will rise. Welfare reform will see an increasing number of the ill and disabled excluded from all forms of financial support. The trend towards inequality and poverty will intensify. In the longer term there will be the impact of the global problems of food insecurity and water scarcity. The fear of impoverishment in old age, and the burdens of caring for aged relatives, extend across the population. The threat of climate change and peak oil compounds these anxieties. For the great majority of people, there are no individual, market solutions to these problems.

It is time for the left to take on the New Conservatism, politically, culturally, and philosophically. And this challenge cannot be separated from the need to address the political and philosophical problems facing post-New Labour social democracy. By critically engaging with the New Conservatives the left can rethink its principles and renew itself. The future does not belong to the Conservative Party. Right now it belongs to a social democracy that is willing to bring liberal free market capitalism and corporate power back under control. The debate is about how we secure this post-neoliberal politics. The left needs to recover its ethical socialism and commitment to equality. It needs the political will to realise ideas for democratising public services and building an accountable, redistributive state. Power needs to be devolved to local government. There has to be a renewed argument for constitutional and electoral reform and the protection and extension of individual civil liberties. The conditions for trade unionism have to be improved and a new internationalism established. Perhaps most of all, and most difficult, the left needs an ecologically sustainable, pro-social political economy capable of generating both wealth and equitable development. The future is for the left to lose.

Jon Cruddas is MP for Dagenham.
Jonathan Rutherford is Editor of *Soundings* and Professor of Cultural Studies at Middlesex University.

Notes

Conservative speeches, Green Papers and Policy Reviews are all available at http://www.conservatives.com.

1. Jesse Norman, *From here to fraternity*, http://www.centreforum.org.
2. Michael Oakeshott, 'On Conservatism', http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/4887/conservative.html.
3. Theodor von Hayek, 'Why I am Not a Conservative', http://www.fahayek.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=46.
4. James Purnell, Speech to Progress, http://www.progressonline.org.uk/magazine/article.asp?a=2921.

Staggering backwards to the future: Conservative Party education policy

Stephen J Ball

How can 'putting adventure into learning' be achieved through uniforms, exclusions and a traditional curriculum?

> 'Ever tried. Ever Failed. No matter. Fail again. Fail better'
>
> Samuel Beckett

For an educational researcher, trying to make sense of Conservative Party education policy (CPEP) proposals is both an unedifying and thoroughly depressing task. Indeed the idea that they should 'make sense' is problematic. They are not intended to 'make sense' in educational terms; they are intended to attract votes to the party and they are concocted with that in mind. But in another sense, as one might expect, these are sophisticated texts. In particular there is a concerted, if politically perverse, attempt to fill the political vacuum of social justice and equality left by Labour, articulated through 'a vision of education driven by a passion for social justice' (*Raising the bar, closing the gap*, Conservative Party 2007, p10); and a commitment to 'a society made more equal by dispersing opportunity more widely, and more fairly' (*Rtbctg*, p10), and by insisting that 'schools should exist to reverse inequality, advance social mobility' (*Rtbctg*, p13). The Bow Group pamphlet *A Failed Generation* (20.4.08) talks of an 'urgent need to address the widening gap between rich and poor'. That the Conservatives can seek to claim this political territory is an indictment of Labour's failure to take equity seriously in its education policies.

Nothing new

Despite the new rhetoric, perhaps the most astonishing thing about CPEP is how familiar it all is, how little has changed from before – from New Labour and before New Labour. That is to say, much of CPEP draws from, reinforces and sounds like New Labour education policy, just 'more so', and much of it draws from and sounds like the Conservative policies of the 1980s, upon which New Labour drew heavily. There are tweaks here and nuances there, and something called a 'modern compassionate Conservative education policy', but there is hardly anything of substance that might be termed New Conservatism. However, there is a strident re-articulation of Labour's individualism and its meritocratic agenda – and there are even traces of Beck and Giddens in some of the Conservative documents that outline an approach to 'helping every child to acquire a more comprehensive array of skills and providing them with the knowledge to become authors of their own life stories' (*Rtbctg*, p10). But in policy terms the 'passion for social justice' is merely 'sound-bite-deep', and in the nitty gritty of policy commitments it is very much a matter of business as usual – choice, diversity, autonomy and academic traditionalism – thrown together in a mess of contradictions, non-sequiturs, fuzzy thinking, highly selective use of evidence and systematic absences. As Norman Fairclough has pointed out, in reference to New Labour, clarity and coherence are not important in policy texts; it is reiteration and the sometimes fantastical play around key binaries that define such texts and make them 'work'.[1] CPEP texts link together a whole array of 'impossible alternatives':

- Globalization/ social justice
- One nation/ choice
- Adventure/ rigour
- Experiment and inspiration/ prescribed teaching arrangements (setting by ability and 'traditional' pedagogies) and a curriculum founded on 'knowledge of our nation's past'.

The Conservative texts espouse choice, freedom and adventure, but also tell us that 'they' know 'what works'. How they know these things is not often clear but some very few carefully selected examples of practice and research, rather than research syntheses, are referenced. *Raising the bar, closing the gap* cites the Mossbourne Academy, and literacy work in Clackmannanshire and West Dunbartonshire (Synthetic phonics[2]); and claims that the US 'Project Follow Through' (and what was called the 'direct instructional method') and KIPP schools (Knowledge is Power Program) demonstrate that traditional and 'tried and tested' teaching methods work. What is not evident is how different this is from the 'teaching to the test' approaches that have become so prevalent under New Labour's testing regime. The Direct Instructional Method appeared to get results because it concentrated exclusively on inculcating basic skills. Not much room here for putting 'adventure into learning' (*Rtbctg,* p11) and giving children 'the chance to take risks, push boundaries and test themselves outside their comfort zone' (*Rtbctg*, p11). Research by Kulik (1982) is offered to support setting and curriculum differentiation, but none of the recent UK overviews of ability grouping research are mentioned.

New freedoms

In effect, schools are to be given freedom and autonomy and can do what they think best for their students, and parents can choose among alternative providers who offer different possibilities, as long as:

- 'They have strict uniform and behaviour policies' … and 'clear boundaries and instant sanctions' (with schools given the 'automatic right to exclude')[3]
- They set by ability from an early stage – what David Cameron calls 'aggressive setting by ability – in effect a "grammar stream" in every subject in every school'

- And have an 'academic curriculum – built around traditional subjects – [which] can be accessible to a wide range of pupils if they are well taught and challenged to succeed' (Michael Gove, Speech to CP Conference 01.09.07).

That is, any form of schooling is possible in the education market as long as it displays these 'Conservative principles' (so well represented by Melanie Phillips in her *Daily Mail* column); and 'schools which shun best practice and also fail to deliver high standards should lose their alibis for failure' (*Rtbctg*, p31). Despite all of this David Cameron (foreword to *Rtbctg*) is promising a stark contrast to Labour's 'top-down centralization and endless short-term tricks'. But it is difficult to discern what significant areas of freedom might be left for schools. In the Conservatives' bizarre rhetoric, 'Labour are stuck in the past' (*Rtbctg*, p4) – while prefects, setting, strict uniform policies and direct instruction are the new ways forward. All as evidenced by the Conservative Party's 'investigation (sic) into the top performing comprehensive schools' (*Rtbctg*, p31).

The 'freedoms' and 'adventures' of schools are also to be monitored by 'Restoring Accountability' through more rigorous, 'more detailed' and 'longer' Inspections, with the possibility also of 'lightning inspections'. This is written as though English education were not already the most constantly accountable system in the world.[4] Again, presumably we are not meant to notice the contradictions between these prescriptive policies and Cameron's commitment to 'trust' teachers and headteachers.

Education markets

On the other side of all this, both quality and choice will be enhanced by loosening up the supply of schooling through the extension of the Academies programme, beyond Labour's 400 schools, and by allowing new kinds of providers to open new

schools or take over existing under-performing schools. So the Conservatives are 'committed to handing over the running of the 638 worse schools…' (Gove, Telegraph.co.uk 25.03.2008) [it should be noted here that this figure includes 26 Academies]; and to 'radically dismantling the barriers to entry' (Cameron article 20.05.2007, http://www.conservatives.com/), opening them to 'Any individual, company, charity, church, community group teacher or parent cooperative who wants to set up and run a school providing they meet certain minimal standards' (ibid). There are no indications as to what these standards might be or who or what kind of organization might not be acceptable as a school provider. The Conservatives are attracted to the Swedish model of contracting-out state schooling to private providers, but the emerging problems of social segregation in the Swedish school system are ignored[5] (in fact Kunskapsskolan, the leading Swedish private school provider, has been announced as a sponsor of two Academies in Richmond). In addition to the policy of targeting more of the Building Schools for the Future monies on Academies, they argue that such schools should be able to elicit capital funding from sponsors and philanthropists (though Michael Gove is also wary of philanthropic activity, what he calls the 'Oliver Twist solution').

That virtually all of these possibilities already exist in Labour's educational legislation is systematically ignored. The practical problems involved in setting up parent-led schools, or the fact that the Academies and Trust schools programmes are running out of sponsors and that LEAs increasingly have a role in Academy proposals, are conveniently unaddressed. (Though, worryingly, there are a number of for-profit education businesses waiting in the wings to move into state school management given the right conditions. That is, the out-sourcing of groups of schools (25+), which would enable economies of scale and the generation of profit from the difference between state funding and costs (see Ball 2007)).

Old tensions

Running through all this are the political tensions between the neo-conservative and neoliberal wings of Conservative thinking (they reproduce almost intact the tensions that were built into the 1988 Education Reform Act, which, for example, led neoliberal Keith Joseph to vote against the government's National Curriculum measures). It remains to be seen whether David Cameron can 'constructively' manage these tensions. But clearly, as before, the Conservatives want it both ways; to free up schools and constrain them; to have diversity and uniformity; to develop further the market in schooling while making schools into vehicles for fostering nationhood and political authority.

But perhaps in one respect the dualities and incoherences in CPEP can be seen as reflecting the need to address different electoral constituencies – national and post-national, global and local – with different sensibilities, interests and preferences. One possible way of 'making sense' of some of this incoherence is to understand it in terms of both the diverse challenges faced by the state and the different core constituencies of Conservative support. On the one hand there is the forward looking version of education policy, which engages with the demands of global economic competitiveness and the preparation of citizens able to take advantage of the new opportunities of globalism and cosmopolitanism; this approach appeals to the emerging post-national 'global middle class' and fractions of transnational capital. On the other hand there is the national and local and more traditional middle class, who see their social reproduction in terms of traditional occupations and labour markets, and whose sensibilities rest on a more stable English identity.

Choice

Choice itself is a taken-for-granted: everything we know from research studies in different countries around the world about its

inefficiencies and inequalities is simply unaddressed. Choice will be given and families will be left to make best use of it. Lotteries would be banned – 'They're completely inequitable and unfair' (MG interview *The Politics Show* 02.03.2008). It is assumed that markets will 'clear', or the conditions for such clearing can be easily created – by creating 220,000 new schools places (while the number of school-age children is falling). A 'pupil premium' will also be introduced, as a direct add-on to the per-capita value of disadvantaged students, so as to make them more attractive to providers (though what evidence there is suggests that such incentives do not work).

As with New Labour, the relational and positional aspects of choosing, especially for middle-class families – the escape from untoward 'others' and the search for advantageous trajectories through education – are unaddressed. The idea that families might bring values other than those of rational instrumentalism to bear in choice-making is never considered. Just like Labour, the Conservatives fail to consider that the origins and solutions of educational inequalities may not lie entirely within schools, and that most of the variation in student attainment cannot be accounted for by school effects. Social and material conditions in the home, parents' work commitments, the growth in use of personal tutoring and storefront schools and accelerated learning programmes and enrichment activities, and the role of educational toys, games and software – all have their bases in economic and labour market inequalities.

If the Conservatives get elected there will be more privatization and a concomitant further disarticulation of state provision, and further displacement of residual local democratic accountability and controls. The number and range of types of education providers will expand. The system will become even more diverse, and even more selective and unequal than it is already. There will be more and earlier differentiation of routes through the system – selection as meritocracy. Attempts to address and remedy inequalities will

rest on the miracle of the market and new recruitment incentives, traditional teaching practices, and the magic of Academies. CPEP remains rooted in a fundamental belief in market competition and cultural traditionalism, with educational research seen as an unhelpful irritant.

Stephen Ball is Karl Mannheim Professor of Sociology of Education at the Institute of Education, University of London.

Notes

1. N. Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language*, Routledge 2000.
2. Phonics are already embedded in the National Literacy Strategy, and got there and into Conservative policies much more by the effects of lobbying than on the basis of reliable evidence. Such evidence there is of the effectiveness of phonics is very limited and very fragile.
3. *Rtbctg* quotes exclusions figures but never addresses the question as to which students get excluded most. There is no mention at all of educational inequalities as related to ethnicity in CPEP texts. Given the inevitable rise in exclusions which would ensue, PRUs will be reformed and third sector organisations brought in to work with the excluded.
4. And these policies are specifically English – the other parts of the UK are following different educational paths.
5. See E. Myrberg, 'Independent school in Sweden – effects on third-graders reading achievement', Goteborg Studies in Educational Sciences, University of Goteborg 2006; and Johann Hari, 'The ideological tug of war over our schools', *The Independent*, 10.4.08.

After the Conservative nation: the state of the union and post-unionist politics

Gerry Hassan

In spite of their history as a pillar of the nation, will the Conservatives become the party which presides over the disintegration of the United Kingdom?

> We should not forget that Alex Salmond couldn't ask for more effective allies in his campaign to break up the Union than sour Little Englanders who cry 'good riddance' when independence for Scotland is suggested. I'll fight them all the way. No one is prouder of being English than I am. But I am also passionately attached to the idea of Britain.
>
> David Cameron, Glasgow, 15.9.06[1]

> He [Brown] talks about values but Britishness isn't just about values – liberty, fair play, openness are general, unspecific, almost universal. They are virtues which could be as easily associated with Denmark, say, or Holland. Britishness is also about institutions, attachment to our monarchy, admiration for our armed forces, understanding of our history, recognising that our liberty is rooted in the rule of law and respect for Parliament.
>
> David Cameron, Edinburgh, 10.12.07[2]

The Conservative nation

Ideas of the nation, nation-state and nationhood have been fundamental tenets of the Conservative Party for over a century;

they can be seen in their identification as the party of patriotism, of the Union, of Empire and of imperialism. These have coalesced into an over-arching story of Britain and Britishness that has provided the dominant political account of our times: 'the Conservative nation'.[3]

'The Conservative nation' proved to be a very successful and inclusive political concept – more than a match for the declining 'Liberal nation' and subsequent 'Labour nation'. The Conservatives had constructed an idea of the nation which had at its centre the concept of authority; the importance of the Crown as political symbol and power; deference, social duty and order; and social reform to integrate the working class into society.

Conservative unionism was one of the main pillars of the Conservative nation. Ireland became central to the Conservatives from 1886 onwards, after Gladstone's Irish Home Rule Bills and the resulting split in the Liberal Party. In 1927 Lord Balfour, explaining his preference for Unionism, argued that a 'very large fraction of the future felicity of the world depends upon the union of classes within the Empire'.[4]

One of the central strengths and tensions within Conservatism – just as it was within the United Kingdom – was that between Englishness and Britishness. In 1924 Stanley Baldwin spoke of his feeling 'of satisfaction and profound thankfulness that I may use the word "English" without some fellow at the back of the room shouting out "Britain"'.[5] Conservatism was able to successfully balance the relationship between the evocativeness of an Englishness that touched a raw, emotional nerve, and a Britishness which was much more reserved, and preserved for the politics of statecraft.

Nearly seventy years later it became apparent just how far this carefully negotiated politics had disappeared, when John Major made his famous declaration that: 'Fifty years from now, Britain will still be the country of long shadows on county grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and pools fillers and – as George Orwell said "old maids cycling to high communion through

the morning mist"'. The intention of this speech had been to underline Major's patriotism and opposition to European integration, but instead it produced ridicule – his imagery was felt to be completely English, rather than British, and it was evocative of a lost, rural England that had long since disappeared.

The increasing difficulty that the Conservatives have experienced in managing the tensions between Englishness and Britishness has gradually eroded their ability to claim the politics of the nation. There has been a long, slow process of attrition, steadily undermining the basis of the Conservative nation. The politics of Tory unionism was gravely weakened by Irish secession and independence, the long experience of decolonisation, the challenge of Scottish and Welsh nationalism, and the process of European integration. But the defining myths of Union, Empire and Britain as a great power continued to hold sway in Tory circles, long after the rest of the world had moved on.

Thatcherism: a new Conservative story for Britain

The Conservatives recognised in the 1960s and 1970s that the changing nature of British society, economy and nation-state posed fundamental challenges to their outlook and politics. These changes included declining deference, increasing secularisation and the emergence of a more diverse, fragmented society; relative economic decline; and the need to find a post-Empire role and identity. These were major factors in the demise of traditional Conservatism and Tory unionism, and led the way directly to the rise of Thatcherism.

It is no accident that this crisis of Conservatism happened at the same time as British social democracy began to be buffeted about – by internal pressures such as the rise of Scottish and Welsh nationalism, and external pressures such as the economy's relative decline in the world economy which led to the devaluation of the pound in 1967. The emergence of Thatcherism was an attempt to answer these challenges: to reverse economic decline, to find a new

role for the state, and to map out a new place for the UK in the Second Cold War. This was an attempt to outline a new Conservative story for Britain that was very different from the One-Nation Toryism that came before.

Thatcherism aspired to, and partly achieved, a radical reconfiguration of British politics and the nature of the state, but could not find permanent answers to the territorial challenges to the British state, whether in relation to local government, Scotland or Europe. Instead all it could offer was an intransigent unionism, which had very fixed and inflexible ideas of sovereignty and Parliament, and flew in the face of many of the tenets of traditional Conservatism.

Post-Thatcherite/Post-Blairite politics: a new Conservatism?

During the post-1997 decade the Conservatives faced greater difficulties than at any time since the Gladstone period in speaking unchallenged for Britain. The nature of New Labour and Tony Blair has seen Labour lay claim to what were once traditional Tory areas such as patriotism and national identity.

The Conservatives have struggled on a number of fronts to come to terms with this, but finally David Cameron's leadership has begun to articulate a new narrative. Tony Blair was the continuation of Thatcherism with a human face, and the Tories had to operate on a post-Thatcherite/post-Blairite environment to win back the centre ground. This entailed embracing a politics of the re-configured Thatcherite state within a very different United Kingdom, with devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and new centres of power across these isles.

Cameron's Conservatism in relation to the nation-state and nationhood can be seen as:

- Not a return to the Thatcherite era and an abrasive, harsh unionism. An English nationalism that hectored everyone is

viewed by Tories as being one of the biggest mistakes of the Thatcher years;
- Not the re-emergence of old fashioned One-Nation Toryism in a modern garb. This perspective was previously characterised by its benign nature and patrician qualities that were central to its ideas of social order, duty and deference;
- Nor is it yet a fully-fledged new unionism at ease with, and going with the grain of, a United Kingdom that has been changed by devolution and constitutional reform.

Instead, what Conservatism seems to be is an emerging, hesitant, contingent politics of the UK, which is still evolving and unsure of its final form.

The future of Conservative unionism

This ambiguity and hesitancy has not stopped the Conservatives from beginning to think about the changing nature of the UK across a number of areas:

(a) 'English votes for English laws'

The Conservatives supported the idea of 'English votes for English laws' in the 2001 and 2005 general elections. Such a stance was unprecedented in modern times for a mainstream British party. Their current position is the result of a Kenneth Clarke-led review, which has concluded that when it is decided that a bill is 'English', Scottish MPs would still be able to vote on bills at their second and third reading stages, but votes would be restricted to MPs with English seats when the detail of laws is debated at committee stage. It would become a convention that Scots MPs would not overturn amendments agreed by English MPs at third reading.[6]

This stance is a variant of the simpler form of 'English votes for English laws' that the Conservatives previously supported, and if anything it is even more complex. It still raises the same difficulties

as before: the problems of deciding what is and is not an 'English' issue; the creation of two classes of MPs – English and non-English; and the potential for the existence of two governments and two different majorities within one Parliament. There are also a host of other issues, such as what to do about 'Welsh' issues and Welsh MPs' voting rights.

The Tories' consideration of 'English votes for English laws' would be a recipe for constitutional instability and chaos. While this position will undoubtedly diminish if they win an election and form a government, the English nature of the Tories' representation will continue to encourage significant elements of the party to want to pursue this agenda and cause mischief.

(b) The Barnett Formula

The Barnett Formula is the financial mechanism that agrees the dispersal of monies to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Barnett has little support left across the UK – it is losing support in Northern Ireland and Wales and is the subject of increasing resentment in the English regions. Scotland stands as its last defender – in a Union where Scotland and London, for very different reasons, have more public expenditure per head than the English regions.[7] At the same time, not surprisingly, there is an increasing consensus across all the main parties in the Scottish Parliament about the need for more fiscal autonomy.

There are two main reasons for the continuation of Barnett: the interests of Treasury centralism in maintaining the status quo, including financial dependency in the devolved territories; and the instability and uncertainty that would be caused by any fundamental change.

The Conservative position is to abolish Barnett and adopt an approach that combines a needs-based formula across the UK with more fiscal autonomy in Scotland, though the details have yet to be worked out. There is logic and equity in embarking on such a reform, but the politics of this will be important. David Cameron

has talked of change being 'consensual' and 'non-inflammatory'.[8] But a future Conservative government abolition of Barnett will be seen as an attack on Scotland's public finances by all the parties north of the border bar the Tories, and will have huge political consequences. Barnett is indefensible and – given that it is based on per capita public spending rather than needs – a progressive case for its retention cannot be made. Despite this, a future Conservative government's abolition of it in an unreformed UK will be perceived as being anti-Scottish north of the border.

(c) Westminster passing laws in devolved areas

Since devolution, Westminster has continued to legislate for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in both reserved and devolved areas. It has done this partly because of the character of the Welsh settlement and Northern Irish politics, and partly because the Commons still sees itself as the supreme political authority in the UK, unchanged by devolution, and informed by the principle of parliamentary sovereignty.[9]

The Conservatives certainly continue to see Westminster in this light, and have set up a front bench commission led by Michael Gove to examine what legislation a future UK Conservative government can identify and pass in devolved areas and in particular for Scotland.[10] They are questioning whether Scotland should be excluded from all 'the good ideas' the Tories have, such as academy schools and the wider public sector 'choice' agenda. This has the potential to be politically explosive, and to develop new faultlines and conflicts between the UK government and the Scottish government and parliament.

(d) A Scottish independence referendum

One of the central issues in Scottish politics is the practicality of a Scottish independence referendum; Wendy Alexander, that ill-fated and short-lived leader of Scottish Labour, got into very hot political water when she challenged the Nationalists to 'bring on' a

referendum. It is a bizarre paradox at the moment that, though Scottish surveys consistently show that a majority of Scots would vote against independence, all of the three main unionist parties are content to try to put off a vote and deny the Scots their democratic right of determining their future. Such a position gives the SNP the moral and democratic high ground to embarrass the other parties.

The SNP intention is to have an independence referendum in 2010. One of the aims of waiting is the prospect of a UK Conservative government by this point, as a result of a UK general election: there is the chance this will enhance the pro-independence vote.

An independence referendum can only come about in two ways: a majority vote of the Scottish Parliament, or a decision by the UK government. A referendum could therefore come about either by the Conservatives voting for one in the Scottish Parliament with the SNP, or by their deciding at UK government level to bring the issue to a head. This would have numerous advantages for the Conservatives: it would identify them with a pro-unionist, pro-democratic position – different from Labour.

However, the result of an independence referendum held under the auspices of an UK Conservative government would be – to put it mildly – open to doubt. One crucial factor in the result will be the attitudes, language and policies of a UK Conservative government. If it embarks on some of the stances outlined above, there is a significant chance that Scottish opinion will vote for independence and the end of the Union.

Post-unionist Conservatism?

The Conservatives no longer have a convincing story to tell for Britain. Nor do Labour. This means that we are living in a political vacuum, with all that this entails. This is a much more dramatic shift for the Conservatives than Labour: for more than a hundred years they have been the party of Britain and Britishness, appropriating a

host of national symbols and meanings for their cause, from the Union Jack to the idea of patriotism.

In many aspects there is little unique about the party's language. Cameron's defence of the Union, and such phrases as 'we are stronger together' and 'Stronger together, weaker apart', are identical to the arguments of Gordon Brown and Douglas Alexander for the Union and against 'separatism'.[11]

The current Conservative stance is a conditional, instrumental unionism, which will be hugely influenced by events and the balance of political forces in the next and future UK governments. The party's shifting positioning on such issues as English votes for English laws, Barnett, and devolved areas for Westminster legislation, already shows how it is influenced by the balance of power and patterns of geographical representation, and this will continue in government.

After the next general election, a UK Conservative government would still have little or no Scottish or Welsh representation, a near complete absence from large parts of the North of England, and a derisory representation in most of England's big northern cities (across Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle, the party currently has one councillor). The Conservatives' base would be nearly entirely English, and a very narrow band of England at that, concentrated on the shires, London and the South.

The Conservatives are ultra-conscious of this and it is one reason for their discussions about forming an alliance with the Ulster Unionists, which would see the Conservatives enter Northern Irish politics for the first time since 1972. This initiative could also be seen as an attempt to find a new pan-British unionism. Ulster Unionist leader Sir Reg Empey sees it this way: 'I think if you look at what's happening to the Union as a whole, there are threats coming from areas that have never come before. There's a nationalist government in Scotland, we've nationalists in coalition in Wales, we've nationalists here in Northern Ireland'.[12]

These moves are indicative of the weakness of the Conservatives

as a British political force. The historic Conservative balancing act between Englishness and Britishness is no longer possible. The party faces pressures not only from having next to no non-English representation, but from the anger, fury and disgruntlement of a wide spectrum of right-wing and English nationalist opinion. These range from significant elements within the party to UKIP, the English Democrats and the Conservative press, who believe the Tories have 'sold England out'.

The question of England has shifted dramatically – once at the centre of Tory ideas of Britishness, in its place there is now a vacuum: the nation that dare not speak its name for fear of giving offence (this perspective can be found on Conservative blogs).[13] This points to the ways in which devolution has changed the political balance of the UK, and undermined the once powerful coalition of 'the Conservative nation'.

Instead there is now an allegiance by many to a very brittle, potentially explosive 'England': one seen by some as faced with two major challenges – from devolution within the UK, and from the project of European integration without. Both of these strike at right-wing ideas of sovereignty and Parliament. When the Conservatives became obsessed with Europe as a threat to parliamentary sovereignty they began dreaming of a multi-speed European Union. Now their answer to the United Kingdom is to pose an equally implausible multi-speed union.

Where this will lead is clear. The Conservatives are no longer a British party, but their transition to become a predominantly English party carries with it all kinds of tensions and problems. This new terrain has huge dangers for the Conservatives and the future of the Union. It is not beyond the realm of the possible that the Conservatives, for all their history, intentions and David Cameron's undoubted belief in Britain and the Union, could ultimately become the party which presides over the final imperial retreat: the disintegration of the United Kingdom, and the Conservatives' establishment as a post-unionist party.

Gerry Hassan is a writer, commentator and policy analyst and author and editor of numerous books on Scottish and UK politics including *The Scottish Labour Party: History, Institutions and Ideas*, *After Blair: Politics after the New Labour Decade* and *The Political Guide to Modern Scotland*. He can be contacted on: gerry.hassan@virgin.net

Notes

1. http://www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.story.page&obj_id=132019
2. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1572059/David-Cameron's-'Union'-Speech-in-full.html?pageNum=1
3. See Philip Lynch, 'The Conservative Party and Nationhood', *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 71 No. 1, January-March 2000; Andrew Gamble, *The Conservative Nation*, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1974; Alan Clark, *The Tories: Conservatives and the Nation State 1922-1997*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1998.
4. Quoted in James Mitchell, *Conservatives and the Union: A Study of Conservative Party Attitudes to Scotland*, Edinburgh University Press 1990, p9.
5. Quoted in Arthur Aughey, *Nationalism, Devolution and the Challenge to the United Kingdom State*, Pluto Press 2001, p65.
6. *The Independent*, 1.7.08.
7. Iain MacLean and Alistair McMillan, *State of the Union: Unionism and the Alternatives in the United Kingdom since 1707*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2005.
8. *The Herald*, 23.5.08.
9. The Welsh experience of devolution and Westminster has been defined by the Government of Wales Act, which confers no primary legislative powers on the Welsh Assembly, so that primary legislation affecting Wales has to pass through Westminster. The Northern Irish situation has been shaped by the several suspensions of the Northern Irish Assembly that have taken place since 1998, and the consequent reimpositions of direct rule.
10. Private information.
11. David Cameron, 10.12.07, op. cit.; Gordon Brown and Douglas Alexander, *New Scotland, New Scotland*, Smith Institute 1999; *Stronger Together: The 21st century case for Scotland and Britain*, Fabian Society 2007.
12. *BBC News*, 'Tories talk to UUP on closer ties', 247.07, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/7522326.stm.
13. For example see Iain Dale's Diary and in particular the comments on the 'Guest Blog' by the leader of the English Democrats Robin Tilbrook, 'For An English Parliament', 5 August 2008, http://www.iaindale.blogspot.com/.

The New Conservatives and family policy

Kate Stanley

The Tory promotion of marriage is a pathological and individual approach to the family – with a bizarre nanny-state twist.

Family policy defines the heart of a political party, and politicians from left to right are locked in a battle to be seen as the most 'pro-family'. Labour has its' 'hard working families', the Conservatives have their story of 'breakdown Britain'. But beyond the partisan tug of war, all are struggling to present a case that is both compelling and sound. Labour has done much over the last decade to support families through substantial rises in child-related benefits, the introduction of new rights to flexible working and parental leave, and huge advances in formal childcare. However, age-old concerns about families remain, and newer ones around family fracture, 'problem families' and work-life balance have come to the fore.

David Cameron has adopted many of the recommendations of Iain Duncan Smith's policy review group, and in so doing has placed marriage once again at the centre of Conservative family policy. While families are increasingly diverse and constantly changing, the Conservatives' notion of a society on the brink of 'breakdown' sits ill at ease with the reality of life for most people.

The government, on the other hand, has struggled to defend itself against accusations of rewarding family breakdown, and an 'anything-goes' approach to family life, and – by extension – of being 'anti-marriage'. Too often it appears on the defensive, and without a compelling, positive narrative on the family. The challenge for social democrats is to develop a story about families

and the role of the public realm that is optimistic, inclusive and soundly rooted in evidence, and in the realities of modern life.

This chapter takes the leitmotif of Conservative family policy – support for marriage – as an example through which to examine the language and promise of Cameron's Conservatives on the family. Its main argument is that orientating family policy around the promotion of marriage risks confusing means with ends, while distracting from some of the actions that would make a tangible difference to supporting all families – particularly the most disadvantaged – to thrive. Nonetheless, it is also the case that in the absence of a persuasive and positive alternative vision of the family, the current Conservative approach is likely to continue to find considerable resonance.

Is marriage the key to happy families?

Social democrats make a mistake if they give the impression of hostility towards the institution of marriage. Marriage provides many people with a positive framework for their relationships and an environment in which their children can thrive. There is also a body of evidence, particularly from the US, which reports a consistent and overarching finding that children who grow up in an 'intact, two-parent family' with both biological parents do better on a wide range of outcomes than those who grow up in a single parent family (although many, if not most, children who grow up in a single parent family also do well).[1] The Bush administration has drawn on this research to support its pro-marriage agenda, spending $1.5 billion in 2005/06 on programmes to promote 'healthy marriage' among low-income couples.

However, the messages emerging from this kind of evidence – especially for policy-makers – are not that straightforward. Much of the evidence itself has significant limitations. For example, few studies have looked at child well-being or have been longitudinal, and most studies in the US have focused on white middle-class families to the exclusion of other groups, although class continues

to play a crucial role in family life. Findings that tell us that children in intact two-parent families do better than others do *not* tell us that it is marriage itself that confers these benefits. Instead, the benefits to the children in these studies may be derived from the presence of two incomes or because those people with better relationships are more likely to get married in the first place.[2]

The evidence fails to illuminate whether or not it is marriage itself that makes the difference. It is in this vital distinction that straightforward cash incentives to promote marriage as advocated by the Conservatives lose their easy appeal. For example, in many cases marriage will be a consequence of stability, not its cause.[3] Put another way, couples get married precisely because they have reached a point of stability in their relationship. It is far from clear that walking down the aisle would make things better for couples facing difficulties (or indeed their children). So while a superficial examination of the research appears to point towards a marriage promotion policy agenda, a closer look suggests this might not be the most effective approach to supporting families.

Good relationships

There is compelling evidence that it is the nature of relationships and parenting, not the structure of relationships between parents, that really matter for children's well-being.[4] Relationships between family members have been shown to impact on both the individuals concerned and other family relationships in many ways, through 'spill-over' effects. Family processes, such as the manner in which conflict is handled, can explain children's mental health better than the family structures themselves, and poorly handled conflict can have a detrimental effect on children's sense of well-being. Furthermore, multiple problems and factors well beyond relationship-type, such as struggling to make ends meet, can exacerbate the effect of conflict on children.[5]

None of this implies there is no role for public policy in promoting

stronger and more successful families and, through this, supporting more children to thrive and reach their potential. An extensive literature shows that the quality of relationships between parents is linked to positive parenting and better outcomes for children.[6] This is where government – and everyone in our society – has a responsibility to act, and where appropriate public action can make a difference.

The role of public policy should be to take action to enable families to thrive and to ensure that parents meet their enduring responsibilities to their children. Parents' relationships (whether they live together as a couple or not) are an important part of this, as their impact on their children is profound. We should never be agnostic about relationship formation and separation: far from it – after all, we all have a stake, especially in the relationships of people closest to us. This is what the Conservatives have appreciated and articulated.

Similarly, none of this is to suggest that the state has all the answers. The best source of expertise and experience of parenting and relationships often resides in the extended family and community. For some, these networks and resources are easily drawn upon – but for others, they represent an untapped or unobtainable resource. Acknowledging these resources, while recognising that they are not available to all, alongside providing high quality, personalised public services, would demonstrate a powerful partnership of public and community action. Once again, it is the Conservatives who have been most vocal about the role of the community and voluntary sector in supporting family life.

So while the Conservative narrative and policy proposals have a beguiling appeal, policy needs to be based on the needs and experiences of real families in all their diversity and helping them to negotiate conflict and change. Ultimately, what children need is stability, love, commitment and good-enough parenting. These are often found within marriages, but also in many other relationships – they're neither inevitable within nor exclusive to marriage. Policy must be crystal clear about the difference between marriage as a means and these relationship and family qualities as ends. Social

democrats therefore need to be confidently pro-family, stable relationships, commitment and care.

It is also important to note that even if marriage was the 'silver bullet' for achieving the best outcomes for children, it is highly questionable whether or not government has the power to influence such decisions between adults. As it happens, the introduction of tax breaks for married couples in the 1970s famously coincided with the sharpest increase in divorce seen in the UK (in contrast the latest figures show that divorce rates are now at their lowest level since 1984).[7]

Conclusion

Families and family life are under strain in the modern world. In particular, a sense of insecurity and a lack of control, invidious trade-offs between money and time, some poor parenting, and persistent educational under-achievement, are all contributing to a failure to turn things around for children who face the most difficult start in their lives.

It could be argued that marriage promotion is a marginal issue in the maelstrom of modern politics, and that it should be seen as more significant that the Conservatives have abandoned their attacks on lone parents and homosexuality.[8] But this would be to underestimate the emblematic power of a marriage promotion agenda. Within the Conservative story there is something old, something new, something borrowed and, naturally, something blue:

- *Something old:* The moral panic, cultivated by the narrative of 'breakdown Britain', which has led to the emphasis on family structure and marriage.
- *Something new:* The rhetoric about an updated view of family, as manifested through support for civil partnerships.
- *Something borrowed*: The evidence from the US and the explicit adoption of a marriage promotion agenda.

- *Something blue:* The traditional Conservative solution that says that the way to help the poor is to tell them to do better. This gives no role to the state in protecting families from negative aspects of market capitalism, or to take action to enlarge the control and agency of families who do not otherwise have it.

Marriage promotion is, fundamentally, a simple solution to a complex problem. It is a pathological, individual approach, with a bizarre nanny-state twist. However, Labour has been a long way from getting it right: it has confused the narrative; displayed timidity in the face of vested interests; and demonstrated a dearth of argument about inequality and the need for public action in private realms in the interests of all societies' families.

Labour must be clear about the political objectives in this realm of policy, disentangling means from ends and understanding the respective roles of government and individuals. Family structure is not inconsequential, but it is not as important as what families actually do; and it requires imagination for politicians, policy-makers or professionals to influence. Families are changing – as they always have done – but the desire for commitment and connectedness are not. This is the enduring truth, and hope, on which the social democratic politics of the family rests.

This chapter draws on a paper published as G. Cooke and K. Stanley, 'Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue', in Public Policy Review, *Blackwell Publishing, December 2007.*

Kate Stanley is Head of Social Policy at the Institute of Public Policy Research.

Notes

1. P. Cowan and C. Cowan, 'Strengthening couples to improve children's wellbeing', *Poverty Research News* 3, 2002.
2. K. Stanley and F. Williams, 'Relationships between parents', in *Daddy Dearest: active fatherhood and public role*, ippr 2005.

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid; and B. Hughes and G. Cooke, 'Children, Parenting and Families: Renewing the Progressive Story', in N. Pearce and J. Margo (ed), *Politics for a New Generation: The Progressive Moment*, Palgrave Macmillan 2007.
5. Stanley and Williams, op. cit.
6. See for example R. Emery, *Marriage, divorce and children's adjustment*, Sage 1999.
7. Margo et al, *Freedom's Orphans: Raising youth in a changing world*, ippr 2006.
8. Brighouse and Swift, 'The end of the Tory war on single parents?', *Public Policy Review* 14(3), 2007.

State, society and the New Conservatism

Matthew Pennycook

The New Conservative notion of a post-bureaucratic age is deeply flawed.

Three decades ago, rolling back the frontiers of the state was a goal confined to the partisan gatherings of the New Right. Today it is fast becoming political orthodoxy. David Cameron's heralding of a 'post-bureaucratic age' finds an echo in the prominent Liberal Democrat and Labour figures who have lined up in pressing for the state to withdraw from people's lives.

This approaching consensus has many sources. And one of them is undoubtedly the centrality of state retrenchment in the agenda of a reshaped and – if recent electoral trends are indicative – increasingly acceptable Conservatism. This New Conservatism, ascendant since Cameron's leadership victory in December 2005, is not simply an unreconstructed Thatcherism cloaked in the seductive language of compassion. Nor is it simply an exercise in crude political posturing designed to 'decontaminate' the Conservative brand – although 'selling' old policies on the back of a Tory detoxification remains an essential goal (see http://conservativehome.blogs.com/torystrategy/and_theory_of_conservatism/index.html).

New Conservatism

The New Conservatism does not repudiate the legacy of its predecessors. It remains, for example, wholeheartedly wedded to neoliberal economics and draconian stances on crime and

immigration. Importantly, the perennial desire to shrink the state still sits at its core, wrapped in a populist critique lambasting the inadequacies of a pervasive state and the failings of a 'broken society'. Yet in significant ways the New Conservatism has moved decisively beyond the Thatcherite legacy. The key intellectual shift lies in what its proponents have decided can, and should, replace Britain's reputedly failing state.

Gone is the vocal Thatcherite adherence to rampant individualism and the Lady's depiction of society as nothing more than an atomised collection of individuals and families. In its place there now stands *society* – conceived of as an organic fraternity independent from and fundamentally at odds with the state. Thus, social responsibility now occupies the ground where naked self-help once stood. Rolling back the frontiers of the state will now be accompanied by the rolling forward of society. The shift is captured in one of Cameron's most prominent slogans: 'There is such a thing as society; it's just not the same thing as the state'.[1]

While many of the specifics of the New Conservative agenda remain opaque, its outline is clear. It is a vision in which the institutions of civil society take over many of the social and welfare burdens currently borne by government. Civil society will be the magic bullet for remedying deep-seated social injustices and improving the quality of life – and a new means of dismantling large chunks of the state. Consequently, the policy implications of this shift are profound.

The scale of the move towards what Chairman of the Conservative Policy Review Oliver Letwin labels 'non-state collective action'[2] will dwarf the embryonic moves made in this direction by the present government. Expect in the coming years a raft of policy proposals aimed at contracting out state-based public service and welfare provision to a range of private institutions, local community groups, charities, and businesses. These bodies, the New Conservatives believe, will deliver high-quality public services while also halting social breakdown and solving public sector

productivity problems.[3] Furthermore, they will do all this while progressively reducing costs.[4]

Responding to the challenge

Faced with this refashioned Conservatism, the government has derided the opposition's lack of policy detail, scorned it for an apparent fidelity to Thatcherism, and ridiculed the privileged backgrounds of prominent Conservatives. As comforting as these responses are, they are inadequate. They are likely to fail because they do not address the real shifts which have occurred in contemporary British Conservatism. As a result, Labour and the wider democratic left lack a sophisticated response to the rise of the New Conservatism. One must be urgently constructed. Short-term responses to Tory strategy are no longer enough. We must expose the contradictions and weaknesses of the reshaped Conservatism, come to terms with the reasons for the apparent resonance of elements of its message with the public, and build a progressive response on this basis.

The first concrete step in such a response must be the reconstruction of a basic case for the activist state. We must confront the notion that economic and social security can be guaranteed for the most vulnerable in our society without some form of state intervention. While recognising the undoubted limitations of the state, and the undeniably malignant historical consequences of arbitrary state control, we must not altogether disown the good that can flow from state intervention.

Current political trends lend themselves to such a case. In an increasingly integrated and inter-connected world, an activist state is more necessary than ever as a protector of the disadvantaged – a necessary shield against the harsh winds of global markets and the movements of global capital. Nor will such a platform simply appeal to core Labour voters. Confronted by the kinds of economic and social pressure usually felt only by the poorest sections of our society, many other social groups will find such a case compelling.

However, the main thrust of our case for an activist state must revolve around exposing the weaknesses and dangers inherent in the New Conservative belief that social institutions can replace the state. Sadly, the government is hampered in this regard by its own drift toward private sector provision of social and welfare services. Yet it is the task of the wider democratic left to make clear to the British people that the New Conservative agenda cannot cure the inefficiency and bureaucracy they view as intrinsic to state apparatus[5] without severely undermining collectively financed public service provision.

Inefficiency and bureaucracy are easy phenomena to target. It is true that productivity in our public services over the last decade has decreased in line with additional investment and expanding output. Likewise, bureaucracy is an inherent product of public social and welfare mechanisms. Yet both phenomena can only be managed – not eradicated – if we wish to sustain fair and accountable collective public service provision. If you will the ends you must will the means; even if those means generate challenging side-effects.

The New Conservatives profess their commitment to sustaining fair and accountable collective public services, yet deride the very mechanisms – with all their flaws – which ensure their delivery. As a result, their proposed solution for the challenges confronting our public services and welfare system cannot succeed without harming the availability and quality of services throughout our country, and exacerbating the postcode lottery allocation of resources that voters continually condemn.

The democratic left must exploit this central contradiction. We must force the New Conservatives to explain why they think the social institutions they champion will actually increase service productivity and buck the law of diminishing returns. We must question them over how it is that their model of service provision will manage to lead us to the broad uplands of a post-bureaucratic age without sacrificing collective democratic accountability.

An agenda built on society as a *replacement* for the state cannot

answer such questions. Yet I believe the New Conservatives are willing to contemplate undermining the very foundations of fair and accountable collective provision. They are willing to contemplate it because, despite protestations to the contrary, their agenda is driven by ideology and not by a genuine concern for the most disadvantaged in our society. In reality their vision of civil society as panacea represents nothing more than an attempt to return Britain to a Victorian social model in which a haphazard network of philanthropic and private organisations were left to cope – tragically – with acute social dilemmas. Whatever else the experience of state governance in the twentieth century teaches us, it is certainly not that we should return to the nineteenth.

The hollowness of New Conservative social justice

The left – despite Conservative attempts to associate their opponents with a distant state – has never denied the role of non-state institutions in sustaining a healthy society. Yet there remains a real division over the nature of this role. And this division in turn exposes divergent understands of social justice. For the democratic left, equality is the *essence* of social justice. Where New Conservatives would argue that society and its institutions can only flourish free *from* the grip of the state, we believe they can flourish only if every citizen possesses the freedom *to* build and sustain the communities and institutions which comprise that society. This positive freedom depends on every citizen having the capacity to participate fully in society.

Only an activist state can ensure the basic fairness and equity needed to provide such empowerment. How, for example, can a single parent struggling to provide the basic necessities of life for their child find the time to contribute to their local school, devote time to their community centre or participate in any of the other institutions necessary to build strong communities?

The belief that without a pre-requisite degree of socio-economic

equality those institutions, communities and individuals that make up society cannot truly flourish remains alien to the New Conservatives. As a consequence, and despite their intellectual repositioning, their conception of social justice is hollow. The fluffy rhetoric surrounding their championing of society – their talk of fraternity[6], well-being, relationships and belonging – remains just that: vague platitudes about 'right relationships' and 'affection', which, bereft of a commitment to equality, cannot deliver real empowerment. It remains a conception of social justice forged on the belief that moral concern, duty and obligation are enough to *persuade* those with wealth and power to help lift the disadvantaged and marginalised out of deprivation.

A progressive state and society for the twenty-first century

While exposing the flaws of the New Conservatism is a necessary first step, it cannot be the end of our task over the coming months and years. The democratic left must begin to build a coherent case for a rejuvenated twenty-first century activist state, working in harmony with a healthy society. This case must be built on the knowledge that society alone cannot provide the collective democratic forum needed to choose between competing national demands, interests and goods in a fair manner. However, it must also recognise that the state as it now stands cannot ensure we achieve social justice. We must therefore make the case for a different *kind* of state structure, which will work in harmony with a flourishing society and entrench social justice across Britain.

The necessity of moving towards a new type of state model is highlighted by recent electoral developments. The improvement in Conservative Party fortunes over the last year is not simply the result of government error. Elements of the New Conservative agenda appear to be truly resonating with sections of the British public. Their rhetoric is successfully responding to a widespread feeling among the electorate that we live in a country which is over-

centralised, which is suffering from social recession, and whose political system is wracked by a growing crisis of legitimacy. The democratic left must understand the concerns which lie behind these developments and mould a strong response, before the New Conservative agenda becomes the sole option for a disgruntled electorate.

Many of the public's concerns are valid. They stem from the creation of a certain *type* of state over the last three decades, whose defining characterised is managerialism. It is a state model in which government is paymaster not provider; public service provision is siphoned off to the private sector through proliferating contracts; public space is increasingly subject to the dynamics of the market; and it relies *exclusively* on targeted means-tested benefits to tackle poverty and social exclusion. The managerial state has failed to significantly reverse the trend towards higher poverty rates; to increase social mobility; or to reverse the slow thirty-year slide towards greater inequality. It is anger with the manifest failures of this type of state model that the New Conservatives are harnessing for electoral gain.

Acknowledging the failures of the managerial state does not mean sounding the death-knell of the activist state. The democratic left must make the case for a state model fit for Britain in the new century. It must be a model that facilitates a more equitable distribution of power and wealth through central intervention, and thus empowers citizens by providing them with the capacity to shape the social and economic institutions which impact on their lives. However, it must also be a model in which public services are made responsive and accountable to individuals at the most local level, and which institutionalises democratic involvement *all the way down* the state apparatus.

An activist state constructed along these lines will not force us into a false choice between the state and society, as the New Conservatives would have it. It thus provides a means to counter the New Conservative agenda without ignoring the need to introduce

radical ways of combating the persistent and very real social dilemmas which confront us.

On the basis of a remodelled state-society relationship, the democratic left can also begin to reclaim civil society as a fundamental component of progressive politics. We need to rediscover and encourage the values, aims and language of the thousands of progressive co-operative movements, local guilds, mechanics institutes and mutual aid societies that blossomed before the advent of the welfare state. We must outline our own vision of a country in which such institutions work with a more democratic, decentralised and responsive state to aid the empowerment of the disadvantaged; a vision in which non-state institutions become true partners of, not replacements for, an activist state.

Only a vibrant progressive society working in harmony with a remodelled and responsive activist state fit for the twenty-first century can ensure both economic efficiency and meaningful social justice for all our citizens. Civil society cannot be a replacement for the activist state but can and must be its partner. It is on this basis that we must ruthlessly expose the contradictions and weaknesses of the New Conservatism and build our response. In doing so we will remind those who may have forgotten, living in the affluence of the last half century, that the benevolence of private institutions can never be a substitute for collective justice.

Mathew Pennycook works for the Fair Pay Network.

Notes

1. Francis Elliot & James Hanning, *Cameron: The rise of the New Conservative*, HarperCollins 2007, p290.
2. Oliver Letwin, 'Bring on the scrutiny', *The Guardian*, 3.6.08.
3. Jesse Norman & Janan Ganesh, *Compassionate Conservatism*, Policy Exchange 2006, pp16-22.
4. Steve Richards, 'The Tories want to deliver improved public services. But does their approach add up?', *The Independent*, 19.6.08.
5. Jesse Norman & Janan Ganesh, *Compassionate Conservatism*.
6. Danny Kruger, 'The Right Dialectic', *Prospect*, Issue 126, September 2006.

Green blues?

Tony Juniper

There are challenges to Conservative values in environmental politics, but Cameron may succeed in positioning the party as more green than Labour.

Although economic difficulties have recently changed the political agenda, environmental issues remain high profile and look set to feature in the run-up to the next general election. This is not least because the economic hardship now felt by many millions is embedded in a set of sustainability and resource issues. These relate to food prices and the impact of climate change on agricultural output, as well as the additional demand for land arising from biofuels production – itself a climate change policy response. The rising price of energy is closely linked to environmental questions, both in terms of resource availability in the face of rising global demand and because many of the responses necessary to fight global warming are the same as those needed to cut carbon emissions.

Under these circumstances the green policies of the main parties have to be more substantial and joined up than they have been in many previous initiatives. No longer can economic and social goals, such as cheaper food and power, be traded off against environmental goals (as has been the case for decades). This time a far more integrated and strategic response is needed.

David Cameron's high profile embrace of the green agenda has been one of the most important recent factors in British green politics. His interventions have helped to secure new climate change legislation, the first of its kind in the world, and have assisted in placing the green agenda even more firmly in the mainstream. But what can we expect should the Conservative Party win the next

general election: will there be the level of strategic response demanded by the circumstances we face? As I see it, the question is not so much about David Cameron – I believe he is sincere about this agenda and wants to make a decisive difference – it is more about the party he leads.

In the past quite a lot of leading Conservatives have been sceptical about environmental issues, and it seems there might still be a problem in this regard. In a recent survey carried out for the Local Government Association, some two-thirds of the 55 Conservative MPs who responded said tackling climate change should not be a priority for local councils. It also found that about a third of these MPs even doubted the reality of human-induced climate change, a higher proportion than for the other two main parties (about a fifth of the MPs across the party spectrum believed this to be the case). One of the most quoted cheerleaders for the climate science sceptics is former Conservative Chancellor Nigel Lawson.

One reason for the Conservatives' greater inclination to a sceptical reaction is that the implications of the environmental agenda are more challenging to their ideological roots than they are for some other political groups. Dealing with pressing global issues requires interventions that in some respects go against the conservative grain, and this, I think, is the main challenge that David Cameron faces in placing a clearer green streak through the heart of his blue party's ambitions.

For example, the Conservatives, more than the other main parties, champion the personal freedoms of citizens. This basic value can sometimes clash with meeting environmental goals. For example, will it be acceptable in Conservative policy for people to continue wasting resources when recycling facilities are available, to use fossil energy to power unnecessary products or to drive huge inefficient vehicles? Survey after survey shows that only a minority will go green voluntarily, thus confirming that a mixture of incentives, pressure and compulsion will be needed to shift the rest.

What level of intervention will Conservatives regard as acceptable in influencing behaviour?

And then of course there is the issue of regulation and the question of what level of state intervention is needed at different levels to secure environmental outcomes. The Conservatives have been consistent critics of 'red tape'; but to be credible on the environment they will need to review what has sometimes appeared to green campaigners as a knee-jerk anti-regulation approach. Voluntary action in a deregulated economy won't work on its own. On issues like climate change we will need stronger regulatory controls ranging from product standards to an effective planning system. This reality will require the Conservatives make a shift from seeing the 'free market' as an end in itself, to emphasise instead how regulated markets and competition will be used to deliver certain desirable outcomes, such as a low carbon economy. The market on its own can't and won't work, and that may not be welcome news to a lot of Conservatives.

In relation to broader economic liberalisation and so called 'free trade' policies, again the Conservatives will need to delve deep into their belief base to find a credible way ahead. There is a huge body of evidence confirming the many negative impacts of trade liberalisation policies on the environment, and these will need to be dealt with if green commentators and campaigners are to find credibility in the Conservatives' policies. Holding up 'free trade' as some magic means to end poverty while assuming it will be simultaneously beneficial for the environment was never convincing; and if this is the ideological approach at the heart of the Conservatives' policies on the future of economic multilateralism, they will attract ridicule from environment and development groups.

Paradoxically, it is on tax where Conservatives might find it easiest to make what appear to be radical shifts in position. Ecological taxation shouldn't necessarily be about increasing taxes (although Labour has earned a reputation for using green taxes to

do just that); it is, rather, about shifting the areas from which governments raise their money. By taxing income and employment less, and pollution, waste and fossil energy sources more, government can maintain revenues while simultaneously changing behaviour. Labour has done relatively little in this area since the high point of ecological tax reform in their early years in government. Certainly Labour has lost interest and momentum in the years since the fuel tax protests of 2000, and this has left the field open for George Osborne to make strong statements about the potential for ecological taxation; his stated intention if in office is to increase the relative proportion of the overall tax take from environmental levies. If this can be done in ways that promote social justice then a real breakthrough could take place.

We have had a few other clues as to the overall direction of the Conservatives' new environmentalism, and a lot of it is quite good. For example, the report of the Quality of Life Commission, published last October, set out a convincing overview of the issues, and put forward a lot of specific proposals that would make a positive difference. As yet, however, it is not clear which bits of this will make it into the next manifesto.

So, for me, there are promising signs that there is a genuine embrace of the green agenda from the party leadership, but still some scepticism more widely in the party. On top of this there are some fundamental questions linked to how the Conservatives' values base can map itself across a substantial green agenda, and relatively few clear signals as yet as to what this could look like.

While there are clearly challenges for David Cameron in coming forward with a sustainability agenda that is strategic, sufficient and internally supported by his party, it is also the case that for many green campaigners the Conservatives are no longer seen as automatically hostile to making change for a more sustainable society. That is a major repositioning achievement – but it is not only down to them: Labour must take some of the credit as well. Labour action on the environment has included some welcome

improvements to policy and law, but the level of action has been nowhere near what is necessary, or indeed what is politically possible. The relative lack of engagement and imagination demonstrated by the present party of government has made the emergence of a 'green' Conservative Party all the more likely and politically effective. A lot of people want stronger action for the environment and sustainability, and despite the present economic difficulties this looks set to be a key battleground for the next general election. If I was Gordon Brown, I'd be more than a little worried.

Tony Juniper writes, speaks, comments and advises on environmental and sustainability issues. He is the former executive director of Friends of the Earth. http://www.tonyjuniper.com

‘Do you live in a big mansion house?’

A very New Labour pathology

John Harris

Labour authoritarianism is no answer to Tory liberalism.

In May this year an email from a Labour Party contact arrived in my inbox. It contained a reproduction of a leaflet apparently being used in that month’s Crewe and Nantwich by-election: a mocked-up ‘Tory candidate application form’, built around five rhetorical questions aimed at the Conservative hopeful, Edward Timpson. They were not a pretty sight. Only one (‘Do you want to cut the funding going to our schools and children’s centres?’) played to traditional Labour policy strengths, while the other four were split between pantomimic class war and authoritarian tub-thumping. They ran as follows: ‘Do you live in a big mansion house?’; ‘Do you think regeneration is adding a new wing to your mansion?’; ‘Have you and your Tory mates on the council been soft on yobs and failed to make our streets safer’; and, most remarkably of all, ‘Do you oppose making foreign nationals carry an ID card?’

This last point – a cynical recasting of the fact that the Conservative Party now opposes the government’s ID card and identity database scheme – went straight to the heart of the sinister logic underlying the Labour campaign. Though Crewe has a long-standing Polish community who arrived in the wake of the Second World War, as many as 6000 new Polish arrivals have settled there over the last four years, feeding into a very modern set of worries about pressure on public services, the allocation of housing, and the undercutting of local wage rates. Timpson, Labour claimed, was the

epitome of a Cameroonian conservative: aristocratic, aloof, and a devotee of metropolitan 'hug a hoodie' liberalism, as the absence of immigration as a top-line Tory campaign issue perhaps proved. The Labour operation thus saw its chance, but a flurry of press stories charged it with flirting with the worst kind of prejudice – and with the Brown government hobbling from one crisis to the next, the shrill and desperate Crewe campaign only compounded the sense of a party that had lost its way. Needless to say, Labour – now successors to the 'nasty party' brand – lost Crewe and Nantwich on a 17.6 per cent swing.

Looking at the Tory-Labour battle over the last three years, there have been some interesting new stereotypes. It has become an established aspect of liberal-left discourse to suggest that David Cameron's supposed 'decontamination' of the Conservatives has revealed them to be more 'progressive' than a Labour Party which has been relentlessly pushed to the right. But the reality on the Tory side is surely more convoluted: an ever-changing and occasionally awkward bundle of generalised messages and hardened policies – tied together using much the same opportunistic ear for the public mood that characterised New Labour's initial insurgency – and a sure grasp of how to convey the promise of 'change'. (This, of course, has as much to do with Cameron's deft use of rhetoric and photo-op semiotics as anything substantial.)

With the exception of their consistent opposition to the government on some crucial civil liberties issues, the Tories have tended to keep their political options open – and, as their lead over Labour has increased, they have rebuilt aspects of old-school Conservatism into their appeal, as evidenced by the recent return of talk of tax cuts, and the Glasgow speech in which Cameron departed from his early communitarian tone on social exclusion, prompting such headlines as 'Cameron tells the fat and poor: take responsibility'. At the heart of the Tory machine, such tensions and ambiguities are reflected in delicate balances. The touchy-feely paternalism sincerely purveyed by the likes of Michael Gove and

Oliver Letwin, for example, is offset by the serrated neo-Thatcherism one associates with George Osborne and, say, Liam Fox. Within Cameron's inner circle, the leader draws on the advice of both the iconoclastic moderniser Steve Hilton and the ex-*News Of The World* editor and apparently orthodox Thatcherite Andy Coulson.

Consistency and coherence, it is fair to say, are qualities that internal divisions often rule out, that the modern political game devalues, and that many politicians will want to keep at arm's length. That said, if ascribing any grand ideological plan to modern Conservatism is a fool's game, one can see altogether more consistency in aspects of the government's response to it – and in particular, a hectoring, doom-laden politics that seems to be an ingrained aspect of New Labour's DNA. This amounts not so much to a set of ideas as to a pathology, which the Crewe campaign revealed in all its ugliness, and which may yet contribute to Labour's likely defeat at the next election turning into a calamitous wipe-out.

****

During 2004 I wrote a book entitled *So Now Who Do We Vote For?*, a primer for disaffected Labour supporters that was published in the run-up to the following year's General Election. As part of my research I renewed my acquaintance with Hazel Blears, then a minister at the Home Office. We had not met since the late 1980s, when I was a young Labour activist, and she was the doughty Prospective Candidate for the constituency of Tatton (held back then by the infamous Neil Hamilton, and these days – after the brief reign of Martin Bell – the stamping ground of the aforementioned Osborne). We disagreed on just about everything we discussed, and my account of our meeting focused on one of her most interesting aspects:

> a warped, flatly surreal kind of class politics, uprooted from their centuries-old foundation in such old-fashioned notions as redistributive taxation, free education for all and the idea that no-one should wring a profit out of the old and infirm, and transplanted into the topsy-turvy world created by New Labour … Such, it seemed, was her strikingly un-Blairite habit of referring to the working class and – perhaps – the fact that, at crucial parts of particular arguments, her Mancunian accent seemed to get a lot stronger.

In a deluge of clichés about the politics of Middle England, this element of New Labour has always been rather overlooked. As well as Blears, its key figureheads have included the likes of David Blunkett and John Reid, whose respective tenures as Home Secretary have pointed up the issues with which this strand have sought to make hay: the bread-and-butter topics routinely bundled up into the category of 'crime and anti-social behaviour', and vigilantly maintained at the centre of Labour's thoughts ever since Tony Blair's watershed spell as Shadow Home Secretary. Paying heed to the economic interests of the working class may have been ruled out by New Labour's obeisance to globalisation and its fixation with supposedly affluent marginal seats, but it has sought to keep in with working-class voters (the people one voguish New Labour voting model terms 'Morrisons' people, as opposed to more upscale 'Waitrose' types) by emphasising a hard line on law and order, talking up legal (rather than economic) solutions to the problems thrown up by immigration, and citing the oft-parroted idea that rights necessarily imply responsibilities. A quote from a Labour councillor I met in 2006 crystallises the basic approach: 'We were hijacked by some sort of liberal intellectualism that Blair has absolutely smashed. And I'm unbelievably grateful for that. It used to be, "Oh, these poor people, they live in awful council houses, and they wreck the place. We must help them." Well, we won't any more.'

At the start, such thinking arguably had its merits, but it has long since been degraded into a shrill politics that routinely demonises Labour's opponents as 'soft'. The old idea of triangulation involved jumping into one's opponents' territory to force them out to their own ideological fringes, but the Tories' tentative shifts towards a more liberal outlook have resulted in something altogether more remarkable: Labour is leapfrogging them, and gleefully opposing their ideas from the right. Worse still, a Labour instinct focused primarily on social issues seems to have blurred over into a general disposition reflected in all kinds of policy areas. It is chiefly thanks to this way of thinking that the government's responses to the Conservatives' more enlightened pronouncements have looked crabby and mean-spirited – which, given that optimism is a crucial quality for any successful modern politician, may well doom the Brown government yet further.

A couple of examples prove the point. In July 2006 David Cameron made a now-infamous speech to Iain Duncan Smith's Centre For Social Justice about youth crime, headlined 'Making our country a safe and civilised place for everyone'. Its essential message could have been dispensed by Tony Blair circa 1993:

> Too often, the debate is about short-term solutions: ASBOs, curfews, and criminal justice. Of course, we need these things to protect the public from anti-social behaviour today. But my aim is a society where we need them less and less … Individuals are responsible for their actions, and every individual has the choice between doing right and wrong. But there are connections between circumstances and behaviour … For young people, hoodies are often more defensive than offensive – they're a way to stay invisible in the street.

If all this sounded reasonable enough, three lines sealed Cameron's fate. 'If the consequence of stepping over the line should be painful, then staying within the bounds of good behaviour should be

pleasant,' he said. 'And I believe that inside those boundaries we have to show a lot more love.' The Home Office minister Tony McNulty quickly maligned his shtick as 'Hug a hoodie'; when Cameron returned to the same theme a few months later, this was updated to 'love a lout'. This was crudely effective enough politics, but in retrospect, it served notice of a depressing New Labour rule: that when the Tories threatened to open up space for a more enlightened argument than tends to follow from the hang-'em-and-flog-'em imperatives of the red-top newspapers, Labour would malign them as cosseted bleeding-hearts. Moreover, it highlighted a refusal to step outside authoritarian populism that still goes right to the heart of government: in July 2008, for example, one Labour insider told me of an attempt to publicise the party's positive record on the funding of youth centres that was sidelined by the Number 10 machine because it departed from the government's usually hardline tone on 'yobs'. 'Hug a hoodie', it seems, was not just an opportunistic jibe at the Tories, but a byword for the kind of thinking that Labour must always avoid – a very strange turn for a supposedly progressive party.

The other episode that has sharply pointed up the drawbacks of Labour's fondness for attacking the Tories via hardline posturing was the parliamentary imbroglio over the extension of 'pre-charge' detention for terrorist suspects to 42 days. This move, it seems, was intended to harden up Gordon Brown's prime ministerial credentials by accomplishing the kind of addition to permissible detention without charge that Tony Blair had not managed; to renew Labour's credibility with the red-top press (and the *Sun* in particular); and, most important of all, to once again characterise the Conservatives as being 'soft on terrorism'. From a simplistic perspective, the apparent popularity of the move might have suggested an easy success for the government, but – as the Tories well knew – the large element of liberal Labour thinking meant that the story resolved itself as one of internal deadlock, alleged deal-making, and legislation so ridden with caveats that it served to

undermine the intended impression of some bold, no-nonsense initiative. In short, the key issues became not Brown's supposed courage and the Tories' alleged softness, but a divided Labour Party, weakened by a move that was simply not necessary. (By way of a bathetic punchline, the only Tory who voted with the government was that poster-girl for the Conservatives' old law-and-order agenda Anne Widdecombe).

While we are here, it also worth looking at the recent etymology of the word 'toff'. Though noises from within Downing Street have suggested that Gordon Brown's senior advisers – and in particular, his de facto chief of staff Stephen Carter – have advised senior Labour figures that the silver-spooned backgrounds of high-ranking Tories represent a no-go area, the 'T' word has sporadically found its way into government rhetoric. At Labour's 2007 conference, the schools secretary Ed Balls used it in an attack on Boris Johnson; when David Cameron visited her Salford constituency in January this year, Hazel Blears organised a gathering of Labour activists outside Salford Lads' Club (the location of an iconic photograph of Cameron's beloved rock group The Smiths), who carried placards featuring such slogans as 'Salford Lads not Eton snobs' and 'Oi Dave – Eton Toffs' club is 300 miles that way'. Such foot-soldiers were doubtless persuaded by Blears's claims that they were highlighting what had happened to the area under the Thatcher and Major governments, but one wonders: lurking within the demonisation of 'toffs', is there also an attack on the return of Conservative noblesse oblige, and the idea that its adherents sympathise with people – migrants, terrorists, the undeserving poor – whom Labour's more streetwise and hardline figures place beyond the pale?

Within such Labour attacks, there lurks proof of how contorted and hobbled the party's politics have become. Plenty of new Conservative policy ideas might be open to criticism, were it not for the way that New Labour's ideological gymnastics have so muddied the waters: for example, though the Conservatives have proposed

encouraging profit-making companies to run state schools and widening the marketisation of the National Health Service, the fact that such ideas represent a development of existing policies rather than a sharp break with them apparently rules out any clear attacks. Thus, in the absence of obvious dividing lines on those elemental issues, New Labour is left with precious little with which to hit the Opposition. There again, given the government's habit of pointing out that the Conservatives were against such policies as the National Minimum Wage and Sure Start, Labour's best bet would surely be to question the Tories' alleged transformation into socially-concerned centrists by decisively extending these schemes and once again challenging them to either support or oppose them – but though voices within government are apparently calling for exactly that approach, there is precious little sign of it. Perhaps ministers' habitual maligning of some of society's most vulnerable people rules out turning up the volume on matters of inequality and social justice; maybe the habit of chiefly attacking the Tories as shallow salesmen, out-of-touch bluebloods and liberal softies is too ingrained to make way for anything more forward-looking.

The Crewe and Nantwich campaign was all this in microcosm. Edward Timpson's campaign was decisively buoyed by the government's disastrous abolition of the 10p tax band. Labour accusations that he was a privileged and self-seeking 'toff' were fatally undermined by his family's tradition of altruism, which had seen his parents act as foster carers to over eighty children. As well as attacks on his stance on 'yobs' and ID cards for foreigners, at one point the fact that Timpson's work as a barrister had seen him defending alleged sex offenders brought the poisonous charge that he was a 'friend of the paedophile'. One would like to think that Labour's loss of a once-safe seat would send such tactics towards the political dustbin, but that is by no means clear.

Looking ahead, one very sobering question arises. In all likelihood, at the next general election Labour will be faced with defeat, and the prospect of having to belatedly rebuild its strength in

the country, its policy platform, and its morale. Plenty of people within the party are urging those at the top to bear all that in mind, and build a positive, principled campaign that will lay the ground for the party's future – but the Crewe fiasco suggests that Labour may feel it has been backed into a corner, panic, and desperately lash out. If it does, the Conservatives may find victory sweetened by the fact that Labour will have lost not in the name of progressive ideas, but in a desperation and ugliness that will leave little besides political scorched earth.

John Harris writes for *The Guardian.*

From economic revolution to social revolution

Alan Finlayson interviews Oliver Letwin MP

The New Conservatives are leading the way into a new era.

I want to begin by asking you what is Conservatism today.

Well, there is a recognisable Conservative disposition. For us politics is not a question of translating an ideology into results, but a question of identifying what are the real life problems facing people and how they are to be addressed.

You're speaking the language of Michael Oakeshott. A recent history of the Conservative Party might describe how it has moved away from its Oakeshottian disposition towards a more rationalist, Hayekian approach.

I don't think it was ever the case that we became Hayekians. In the 1970s, and cumulatively up to then, Britain had an overwhelming challenge – we were bust. Our economy was in bad shape. Not just in the sense it is in bad shape today. There was a profound sense that the whole economy didn't work. The problem that needed to be addressed then was economic, and so the solutions had to be economic.

By contrast, despite the country's current economic and fiscal difficulties, the biggest long-term challenge we face today is a social one. Conservatives adopt the same underlying attitude – let's find out what the problems are and try to cure them. We adopt a different approach because we are dealing with a different problem. It's the same attitude.

I don't recognise your view that there was one kind of Conservatism then, and now there's another. I think that the social revolution we now need to achieve is as great as the economic revolution that was required in the 1980s and 1990s – and the Conservative disposition in favour of personal opportunity and social responsibility persists.

But with this disposition you do come at problems from within a framework.

Oh yes. A Conservative disposition means approaching problems with some abiding intuitions about how things are most likely to work well. In trying to achieve certain progressive goals, Conservatism means the encouragement of social responsibility, the opening up of choice for individuals, the effort to harness the energies of society more widely and not just of the state, and the belief that certain social institutions can play an enormously powerful role in addressing certain social problems. For example, David Cameron's statement that the family is the best welfare system of all is a very Conservative statement.

A Conservative disposition is also sceptical about the ability of the state to pull levers and make things happen; and it means always trying to address what is conceived as the present rather than some millenarian dream.

So the present problem is the social problem?

Because of the Thatcher economic reforms, we are now a rich country again. Yet a worrying proportion of the population has been left behind. Some people are living in conditions that are not just poor in monetary terms but also involve worklessness, poor housing and schooling, indebtedness, addictions of various kinds, and family breakdown. This is a crisis for the individuals involved.

Is it a crisis for society as a whole?

Yes it is. It is a crisis for the individuals and families concerned, and a real problem for society as a whole. You could get 99 per cent of people in Britain to agree that there is something morally wrong with the great majority being reasonably or very well off, and a section of the population living in multiple deprivation. 'No man is an island'. We're all affected.

You start with the moral issue?

I think that's the biggest. Even if no crime was ever committed by someone who was on drugs. Even if we had a magical way whereby people did not have to pay any extra tax to support those in multiple deprivation. It would still be the case that something was wrong with a large number getting along and another group who really aren't. I would think this is common ground across left and right. The issue is what you do about it.

Some people might be surprised that you're placing this moral obligation to others at the forefront of your politics. Many people think the Conservative Party is about individuals getting on and doing well for themselves.

I think this represents the biggest problem about out political discourse. There is a huge tendency – and I'm not being partisan here – to parody the other and then get to the point where the parody is believed. Conservatives have always been extraordinarily concerned with the moral issues of politics. Keith Joseph, who was a man of unyielding honesty – sometimes to his own great disadvantage – always began his speeches in the late 1970s with the absolutely true statement that he'd come into politics to overcome poverty. This does not fit the stereotype invented for him, but it is what he believed.

I think there is more of a tension in Conservatism than you're accepting. On the one hand there was the dominant aim of the Conservatism of the 1980s to push back certain social institutions and change economic institutions, and promote an economic, rationalist individualism. And on the other hand there is that other part of Conservatism which is about a care for the organic whole of society. I know how they can be theoretically reconciled, but …

It's not a question of theory. It's fundamentally practical. A large part of the problem of being nationally close to bust in the late 1970s was that we could not support public services and transfers of income. I don't buy the argument that the purpose of economic reform then was merely to enrich the rich. It was to create the basis for dealing with the problems we faced. What we've discovered since is that economics is not enough. It's the necessary precondition that there be a vibrant market economy if you're to provide for those least advantaged, but it's not enough. The last ten years has proved this.

I think the government has genuinely intended to improve the lot of the disadvantaged over the last ten years. But it's a complicated proposition, and just having the money to do it is not enough. Just having a large bureaucratic effort to do it is not enough. They've made relatively little progress despite these quantities of money and bureaucracy. I'm certain from personal experience, because I was involved in it, that the purpose of the reforms of the 1980s was not only to create a vibrant economy and thereby elevate the condition of those relatively well off. It was also crucially about elevating the conditions of those who were least well off.

The means were economic, the purpose was to change the soul, was one of Margaret Thatcher's remarks. I'm going to press you on this point again. One could make a Conservative case that says that the over-concentration of the reform of the economy led to a lack of care for

institutions. I come from Swansea, and the South Wales valleys have suffered immensely from the destruction of social institutions in the 1980s and 1990s.

Now I do see what you're saying and I do accept there is always a tension between the social, the cultural and the economic. These tensions involve a very difficult balancing act because each underpins the other. This is a point that David Willetts has frequently made. The underpinnings of the market economy are a set of social institutions. For example, it's because we're able to rely on one another's word that the market economy works. So society comes first, but it's the existence of widespread prosperity that enables a functioning liberal democracy and hence the preservation of social institutions and the ability to achieve environmental, social and cultural goals. Between the social, the cultural and the economic, there are tensions and mutual supports. It is a contradictory affair that we are always going to wrestle with. There is no single answer.

This area of contradiction is the crucial one for the current Conservative Party. The shift towards a concern for social responsibility and repair of a 'broken society' must mean the need for some measure of regulation of certain kinds of private economic activity.

But let's move away from the parody. There is, rightly, a huge amount of regulation of all sorts of activity. This existed in the 1970s, it still exists today, and will go on existing. No functioning economy can exist without it – there would be anarchy. There isn't now suddenly a need for more regulation. Our encouragement of new ways of lifting people out of multiple social deprivation – which I regard as the biggest social ill – is not in tension with the desire for prosperity. If the 4 million people currently workless were in work, they themselves would be much better off. It's also a huge benefit to the economy as a whole to have a higher proportion of people in work.

We talk a lot about the people at the bottom and how they should take responsibility for themselves. But is there not also a need to get others to take responsibility and not do things that keep people in poverty?

Yes. Our policy reviews and our Green Papers provide ample evidence that the responsibility of the state is to encourage corporations, individuals and communities to do things that are pro-social to help solve the problem of multiple deprivation. The kind of society we seek is going to require making frameworks that do persuade corporations to behave in a socially responsible way.

You have spoken about the moral problem of multiple deprivation. But would you talk about the moral problem of the wealthy who can evade certain kinds of social responsibility?

I'd like to distinguish between two possible meanings in your question. You might be asking if there is something immoral about people being very rich. The answer is no, I don't think there is, though I do think there is something immoral about people being left behind. The second possible meaning is that you are asking if the very rich have an obligation to participate in society as a whole, to which my answer is yes.

George Osborne proposed imposing a tax on non-domicile residents. This was quite in tune with Conservatism. People who live in this country have an obligation to participate by making a contribution. Greg Clark has done work around this in the voluntary sector.[1] He's looked at how to encourage the social norms of giving. We've been interested in 'nudge economics', because it opens up new possibilities in this area.[2] It's about giving a gentle push to society to move in a direction of greater responsibility, or greater coherence, or more stability, or kindliness, or better health. Greg argues that by doing this we can establish a social norm which isn't a law – you don't get put in prison if you don't do it – but which is a widely accepted attitude and behaviour.

It's a recognition that trying to build the kind of society we want is about encouraging a culture in which people do feel they are part of one society.

If we want to encourage this kind of culture and we don't want to pass laws, it's going to be limited in its effect. There are forces – like media culture for example – that foster a self-regarding individual orientation toward life. This is surely part of the broader problem of 'social breakdown' and it is being actively encouraged by various agencies. What can we do about it?

Your question is one of the central questions of our time. We recognise that while regulation has a place it also has its limits. While incentives have their place they also have limits. We therefore seek some wider set of cues to encourage people to change their behaviour. This is why we've taken such an interest in the 'nudge' idea, because it is about trying to understand something about citizen reaction rather than just government action. By beginning slowly and gathering social momentum, one may be able to achieve great change that is lasting and more significant that what could be achieved with just the law. You need a judicious mixture of interventions to achieve cultural change and your social goal.

We know if people get together and do things together, the relationships they build up affect how they deal with one another thereafter. They treat one another as they are, and not as 'the other', or as someone to be despised. If we give local communities vastly more power over their own evolution, people will tend to engage in projects together.

Can government do something which isn't preaching at people to be nice, but is facilitating forms of human intercourse which will lead to a stronger society? I think government can. I think there are all sorts of ways we can encourage pro-social attitudes, not by preaching, nor by law-giving, but by being imaginative and creating frameworks in which these things naturally come to evolve.

It's interesting that you come round to the localism agenda. It's a fundamental part of Conservative thinking.

It is. Just as in the 1980s it was urgently necessary to allow British industry to run its own affairs and for it to become more efficient, so today it is urgently necessary to let people run their own lives to a much greater degree. And I don't think we will achieve the kind of society we want unless we do this. We have to let people make more choices for themselves, and one extremely important manifestation of this is letting people gather together to make choices about their own communities. I think there is a tide of history here which is created by an open network society and fostered by the technological revolution. I think one of the great things about the Conservative Party in the last couple of years is our beginning to recognise and grapple with this fact. I think all the parties will have to do this, we're just leading the way. It leads you in the direction of more choice and more localism, more local accountability and less centralised bureaucracy.

The full-length version of this interview can be read in issue 40 of *Soundings* journal, due out in November 2008.

Oliver Letwin is MP for West Dorset. He is a member of the Shadow Cabinet and Chairman of the Policy Review and the Conservative Research Department.

Alan Finlayson is Reader in Politics at Swansea University, and a member of the Management Committee of Compass.

Notes

1. See Conservative Green Paper, *A Stronger Society – Voluntary Action in the 21st Century,* 2008, http://www.conservatives.com.
2. Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, And Happiness*, Yale University Press, 2008.

Red Tory

Phillip Blond

The Conservatives are now in a position to define a post-neoliberal direction for Britain.

There is nothing left in the left. The liberal left is now dominant; and by any objective ascertainable measure this ascendancy has been a miserable and manifest failure. Inequality is approaching levels last seen in the Edwardian age, social mobility is at pre-war levels, and ordinary workers are getting a lower percentage share of GDP than they did under Macmillan. Everywhere the economy tends to the monopoly benefit of the very few at the expense and dispossession of an increasing many. Furthermore, Labour has pursued ineffective authoritarianism at every opportunity, including its attempts to end habeas corpus and recapitulate the power of the executive over judicial and civic authority – not least, perhaps, because of its clandestine cooperation with foreign powers in acts of torture and extraordinary rendition.

The question of why this has happened must occur to those of a more traditional socialist disposition. The answer lies in an original and gradual abandonment of its own key principal: community.

The problem with liberalism

The left-wing loss of society takes place in two stages: the post 1945 embrace of the state and the post 1968 embrace of the individual. This double act of infidelity originates in a coupling with a tradition entirely foreign to the earlier more nuanced communal traditions of civic and religious socialism – liberalism. And it is the resultant concord with liberalism that has helped to produce the real legacy

of the post-war left: an authoritarian state and an atomised society. Why has liberalism produced these two outcomes?

To understand this we need to briefly examine the ruinous consequences of the French and American revolutions. Both of course arose from a legitimate critique of absolute aristocratic power. However, the liberal philosophy that replaced a decadent aristocracy produced, as De Tocqueville recognised, the centralised and absolutist French state and American society, where each man is separated from his fellows and 'narrowly shut in himself'. This oscillation between public autocracy and private solipsism occurs because liberalism has no philosophy of community. Without an account of the social, liberalism follows an empty subjective logic of individual assertion and an objective logic of an equally empty enforced universality.

Modern liberalism is committed to the idea that no substantive objective norms exist, and that all value claims are therefore equally subjective, equally valid and equally empty. Liberalism is therefore really a philosophy of power. For if there are no objective limits to human volition (which is all that liberal freedom means), then for liberals will and self-grounding and self-validating choice is all there is. In a society without objective values, will and power become the only source of value. Finding itself confronted with the competing claims of isolated and potentially warring individuals, the liberal state thus takes the only path it can to ensure peace. It enforces a purely formal contractualist and utilitarian order, void of any notion of an inherent good or a guiding telos. This in turn ensures that the price of individual liberty is a purely notional equality, which cashes out as a liberal indifference to difference and the formal erasure of any cultural distinction in favour of an enforced judicial uniformity.

For example, the liberal state claims a purely formal equality without accounting for the real differences of culture, character or wealth. Failing to account for the latter ensures that all substantive issues are left to private contractual resolution – a relationship where the most powerful individual is always dominant. This is why

liberal democratic states which promise a formal equality of opportunity are also synonymous with material inequality, the destruction of a plural and a high culture and the increasing rule of unprincipled elites. The liberal failure to think about community leaves less powerful individuals at the contractual mercy of the more potent; just as the liberal state destroys differential communities, as it believes that in order to secure equal rights we all have to be the same.

The state – the first left-wing loss of society

Of course the post 1945 welfare state is to be welcomed on many levels. Indisputably there is a proper and just role for the state, and one of those will be ensuring the health and welfare of its citizens. However, there were unintended but nonetheless serious consequences for the left of its embrace of statism. Over time the more reciprocal and exchangeist working-class understanding of universal welfare became supplanted by an authoritarian state that through claims of efficiency and efficacy rendered superfluous all the intermediate working-class associations based around co-operatives, trade unions, churches, local democracy, mutual insurance and friendly societies.

This separation out of managers from managed withdrew power from working-class communities and made concrete the abandonment of the earlier paleo-corporatist alternative: a Christian influenced model of joint cooperation around a common good. Despite this being the original inspiration of the welfare state, the statist view of the new compact prevailed and ordinary people were progressively denied a role in their own institutions. Instead there was a redrawing of the post-war settlement around the oppositional lines of class. Denied power to help shape and participate in shared notions of a common goal for the country and the industrial enterprise, workers were left with the oppositional power of collective bargaining. The promise of nationalisation was a red herring, offering a proxy form of public ownership that

disempowered the workers through administrative bureaucracy, and enshrined a permanent managerial inefficiency in industry. With both sides embracing entirely sectarian interests, trade unions and managers were unable to strike a common bargain and create joint notions of investment, wages and profit. With conflict enshrined at the heart of the industrial order, ineffectual management and restrictive working practices, coupled with ever higher wage demands and inappropriate profit-taking, led to a fall in investment from the late 1960s onwards. Since investment began to fall so did innovation, exports and market share. Against the background of falling profits, British workers began to demand more and more of less and less. Consequently when Keynesianism, which lasted from 1945 to the oil shocks of 1973, finally collapsed it was because the state subsidy for the failure of the British model could no longer sustain itself – the wage price spiral meant that the state had to borrow money to borrow money. Then as we know the miserable pragmatism of Callaghan ushered in the economic neo-liberalism of Mrs Thatcher.

The individual – the second left-wing loss of society

I do not want to pretend that all was wrong in the late 1960s left. The opposition to the war in Vietnam seems just and noble, as does the campaign for civil rights and the advancement and liberation of women. Moreover, many of those on the new left were not cultural iconoclasts; they also wished to preserve high culture and extend its benefit to all. However, what requires analysis is how this legacy decayed into mindless consumerism and an aggressive low culture founded on the hedonism of a relentless and mindless sexualisation of culture. A development that has robbed children of their childhood, freed men from any responsibility to women and condemned women to a male model of advancement at great cost to themselves and their offspring.

The victory of economic liberalism in 1979 could not have happened without the New Left's cultural libertarianism of the late

1960s. The cultural politics of the left was (and still is) in covert and complicit alliance with the neoliberal right. Through the late 1960s politics of desire, the left constructed the political anthropology of a wholly self-interested libertarian self. Not content with sidelining the autonomous institutions of the working class through the medium of the state, new left liberals set about destroying their collective culture of mutual and reciprocal virtue. Decrying the white working class as unfashionable, religious and reactionary, decadent middle-class elites looked with disdain on settled patterns of sexual codes, moral responsibilities and extended families. In the name of individual liberty, the avant garde licensed pornography, drugs and sexual experimentation as aesthetic forms of self-expression. But in so doing they commodified the human body and allowed the most exploitative forms of capitalism to shape and define sexuality, desire and human relationships. Such that at the end of the 1960s a new a-social being was created. Self-enclosed and relentlessly in search of glamour and stimulation, this new left creation sought a politics of limitless self interest. Defining all others by reference to itself, it considered any restriction on freedom as a violation of choice and a restriction of will. It was thought that both will and choice should be thoroughly unconstrained, and here we can see that left-wing values were already proto-thatcherite and entirely neoliberal.

The left was fatally undermined when it embraced equality through the state and liberty through the individual – a paradigm that is liberal in origin and fatal to the idea of the communal. For unless community is thought of as the primary category, equality and liberty conspire against fraternity.

The economy – the Conservative loss of society

Some of what Mrs Thatcher attempted was in hindsight justifiable. It was clear that what passed for corporatism at this juncture was anything but a discernment of the common interest – ineffective

industry was being subsidised by the state which in turn was enshrining a model that had already failed. Mrs Thatcher decided to dispense with the entire post-war settlement and side with management and shareholders against, as she saw, it the restrictive practices and unwarranted wage demands of unionised workers. It was an unprecedented rejection of the Keynesian commitment to full employment and effectively ended the wage price spiral of the 1970s. The refusal to bail out this bankrupt model with public expenditure was an important contributory factor in the extended recession of 1979-81. The downturn was exacerbated but not caused by Thatcherism. Macro-economically, an indiscriminate policy of free market natural selection forced each productive unit of the economy to modernise or die.

Unfortunately this was too ideological a conversion to free market fundamentalism, and it meant that much of Britain's valuable manufacturing industrial base and many viable companies were eradicated in the firestorm that eschewed both supply-side investment and a demand-side commitment to employment. Britain had made an egregious error – it had sided with finance capital against all other forms of investment, and needlessly abandoned an industrial base that, though in need of extensive and selective outlay, was capable of modernisation. Between 1979 and 1987, whilst Japanese manufacturing output rose by 67 per cent, UK manufacturing output was at a zero growth rate. Indeed, during the recession of 1979-981 the manufacturing sector fell by 19.6 per cent in the UK and nearly 1.7 million jobs were unnecessarily lost.

This helps to explain how Britain created its desolate post-industrial areas of poverty and welfare dependency. For many working-class areas, socially weakened by left libertarianism and economically exposed as a result of a lack of investment and an oppositional legacy of union activity, this recession was the last straw. It propelled generations of working-class families into permanent unemployment and perpetual poverty. But this was only a local instantiation of a wider economic shift. Most crucially, Mrs

Thatcher dispensed with the idea that a nation's private capital surplus should commit itself to the realm in which it was generated. She severed completely the notion of a 'national capital', loyal to locality, community and country. There was a systematic erosion of all subsistent mutual relationships in the national economy.

What conservatives forget, or seem unable to acknowledge, is quite how damaging an entirely individualist economy is to society. A rootless market that focuses only on a profit that it subsequently offshores is, outside of cost efficiency, wholly indifferent to how or where this surplus is produced. An economy so construed disregards all other relationships and in the end undermines productivity innovation and indeed society itself. However this was the ideology that became hegemonic during the 1980s. Notions of mutuality and a shared business ethic were seen as an archaic overhang, a dispensable obstruction to profitability. Thus the relationships necessary for a long-term ethic of work were undermined. The obliteration of work as a shared endeavour is exactly what led to the disastrous target-setting agenda of New Labour, which attempted to manage the resulting and ongoing collapse of British productivity through an intensification of unilateral managerialism.

All of this took place against the background of a rapidly changing political economy. Capital became almost exclusively short-term and speculative, dedicated only to itself and whatever place offered it the greatest return. Claiming that this was the only future shape of globalisation, the Thatcherites decided (and of course New Labour subsequently concurred) that the City of London was central to the strategic future of the UK. Since other options (such as advanced manufacturing) are difficult and require long-term investment, and of course a new compact between labour and management, all of these were eschewed as Britain became an economic monoculture, with much of the domestic economy forced into a deregulated regime of credit and financial services. This had a short-term growth benefit. Credit replaced wages as a means of

inflating demand, as Mrs Thatcher restricted public expenditure while boosting private consumption. In a sense Mrs Thatcher was a public monetarist – reducing inflation and wage pressure through restricting the demands of labour – but a private Keynesian – inflating demand by slashing interest rates in half and devaluing sterling – a dual policy which increased aggregate demand and revived a hitherto flagging British economy. But since growth now took place without any 'capital labour accord', there was no basis on which the proceeds of this growth would be distributed widely. Thus, while it can be argued that Mrs Thatcher created a short-term environment for growth, outside of trickle-down economics there was no mechanism to ensure that the proceeds of this growth would be distributed at all.

Under the guise of free market rhetoric Britain began to develop a form of monopoly capitalism, an economic system that hugely benefits the already rich at the cost of the dispossession and expropriation of the poor. Thus, according to the Office of National Statistics, the percentage share of wealth (excluding property, which means predominantly income and savings etc) enjoyed by the bottom 50 per cent of society was 12 per cent in 1976, but by 1999 had declined to 3 per cent, while in 2003 it was just 1 per cent. Contrast this with the top 10 per cent who over the same period saw their share of wealth rise from 57 per cent in 1976 to 72 per cent in 1999.

Mrs Thatcher seemed unaware of the ways in which advanced capitalism can manipulate a market through asset capture, leverage and economies of scale to serve monopoly interests. At the end of her premiership, despite the revival of entrepreneurship the investment base for such activity had vanished; speculation had increased ten-fold, poverty had doubled and the process of the concentration of wealth was systemically cemented. The fact that New Labour intensified these trends speaks only to the ascendancy of the Thatcherite model (now finally unravelling), and to the bankruptcy of the left. Conservatives have to finally draw a line

under Thatcherism, for it is the Thatcherite and neoliberal paradigm that is presently collapsing all about us – and it has taken the pale acolytes of New Labour with it. If the Conservatives wish to avoid a similar fate, and if they really want to recover British society and the British economy, they will have to establish a new concord between capital and labour and between the economy and society. To address the current crisis they will have to reach back into their traditions for earlier and more radical 'one nation' solutions, and that, I believe, is what they are currently attempting to do.

The New Conservatism

If socialists have abandoned the social because of an alliance with liberalism, it is also true that the conservatives have extended that individualist liberal legacy by adopting a wholly liberal account of the economic sphere. The fact that both traditions became conflated in New Labour only serves to explain quite why the present government is so awful.

Initially, however, Cameron and his shadow chancellor George Osborne tried to brand the Conservatives as a more successful variant of New Labour. They repudiated Thatcherism but only so as to embrace its Blairite correlate. However, a truly distinctive and critical conservatism was starting to take shape, and it was doing so at the behest of former leader Iain Duncan Smith, who had felt the need to produce a conservatism radical enough to alleviate the poverty of inner-city Britain. 'Breakdown Britain' came out in December 2006, and refocused conservatism around a new agenda. The thesis of 'the broken society' (the original insight of Dr Liam Fox) was reborn, to produce a nascent form of the first post-Thatcherite vision of conservatism. A genuine conservatism was born around an account of the origins and nature of this broken society. It is the Conservatives who now wish to resurrect the communal and restore the social. The Tory logic of family, locality and civil and voluntary society is a truly radical agenda. Moreover,

the attempted restoration of society is founded upon a successful critique of the centralised state and to a lesser extent the libertarian individual.

Practical and institutional plans are still in the process of formulation and construction. The most developed policies draw on the recognition of the damage done to society by the state and they attempt a redirection of funding from an act of central imposition to a response to local need and initiative. In terms of funding and laws, the aim will be to allow ordinary citizens the opportunity to group together under the auspices of a common interest and apply for funds that otherwise would be circulated down the slow bureaucracy of the system to induce another ineffective state outcome. It is envisaged that schools and the voluntary sector will be among the first to be opened up, but this could be extended to other areas of provision. The logic of central support for local government and regional or city ventures will be disaggregated and decentralised down to neighbourhood groups and applicants. On the family more development is required: parental leave is welcome, but more radical proposals, such as allowing the transfer of the marriage tax allowance from a non-working partner to the wage-earner would allow a mother to care for young children. Perhaps most liberatingly, the centralised target agenda of Labour's audit state will, hopefully, vanish. It represents a left Thatcherite elimination of ethos and trust, and has proved fatal to effective management and the wider augmentation of performance.

But if conservatism is to be more than just moralism plus the market, the logic of a revivified conservatism must also be applied to the economic sphere. The development of an economy that genuinely shares the benefits of growth is a precondition for transforming the lives of us all. The primary economic basis of a new conservatism is that all should be owners of some realisable or tradable asset. For an increasing number wages are no longer enough to secure the fundamentals of life. In some diverse and yet to be achieved manner, everybody needs an alternate source of

income, be it share ownership, employee share options, or an equity stake in a local mutual enterprise. Conservatives need to acknowledge that poor people are poor not just because of dysfunctional behaviour but also because they lack capital and therefore the ability to invest and transform their lives. So ending poverty must mean tackling income dispossession (perpetually low wages which force people into debt is a form of indentured servitude) and lack of initial possession. Asset welfare could initially accompany and then replace income welfare, and then end altogether, since self-subsistence would have been achieved. Mortgages need to be provided, in a mixture of at-cost loans and shared equity, to the most blighted areas of Britain, to ensure a property-owning democracy extends to those who lack this most primary form of stabilisation and security.

Local economies should be developed and encouraged, rather than the current situation of regional clone towns where every shopping centre is the same. Monopoly capitalism, especially in our local retail centres, needs to be penalised, with differential tax and rate benefits accruing to the producers and retailers of local markets. Likewise, decentred regional and central funds could help neighbourhood entrepreneurs to secure a family business and change a street and its environs. In this regard, Conservatives need to realise that in the end the free market is unpatriotic. A disengaged capital has no loyalty to Britain, its people, its history or its future. Conservatives must recover the notion of 'patriotic capital' – a resource dedicated to a renewed Britain of real investment and widely distributed property.

The current tax burden needs to be redistributed so that corporations and the individually wealthy pay a far fairer share of their income to the Treasury so that everybody else pays substantially less. At the latest estimate, the tax loss to the treasury of the amount held in offshore tax havens by the individually rich amounts to at least £110 billion a year – roughly what it costs to finance the whole of the NHS. The loss from corporate tax

avoidance is probably twice this figure. Instead of relentlessly agreeing to big money bidding down the local tax regimes, we could initiate a general agreement on tax – and since we already do this under the auspices of GATT for tax on trade, I see no good conceptual reason (except ideology) as to why similar concords cannot be struck in this area.

Perhaps the least developed aspect of the current conservative renaissance is the most important: culture itself. Conservatism may well provide the institutions and funding for a revival of civil society, and if it limits the state to achieve this, then it might also, to attain a similar end, constrain the market. But what is most crucial is that we have a culture of interactivity and mutuality to fill this vacated space. Currently, with our emphasis on glamour and sedentary pleasure, we wholly lack any defenders of a high culture. Instead we have a debased public realm of constructed gratification and unreflective demand. High culture is high not because of any perceived elitism on the basis of class, but because the better is superior to the worse, and the good is desirable over and above any evil. We can have any form of public space we want, but unless the Conservatives really go back to the future and try to restore a common but high civilization, one that binds all Britons together in a vision of a culture worth participating and believing in, then we will fragment into the self-interested libertarian subjects that we so very nearly already are. A recovery of a national virtue culture is required. One that allows all the different cultures, races and creeds of modern Britain to eschew multi-culturalism and create a new binding common way of life of shared values and higher belief. For it is only on this basis that something called society can be restored.

Phillip Blond is a Senior Lecturer in Theology and Philosophy at the University of Cumbria. He is currently writing a book entitled *Red Tory* on radical conservatism.

WHO OWNS THE PROGRESSIVE AGENDA?

IS THE FUTURE CONSERVATIVE?
7pm Monday 6 October
With Jesse Norman, Ferdinand Mount, Anastasia de Waal, Janet Daley

AFTER NEW LABOUR
7pm Monday 3 November
With Jon Cruddas, Jeremy Gilbert, Chuka Umunna. Chair Madeleine Bunting

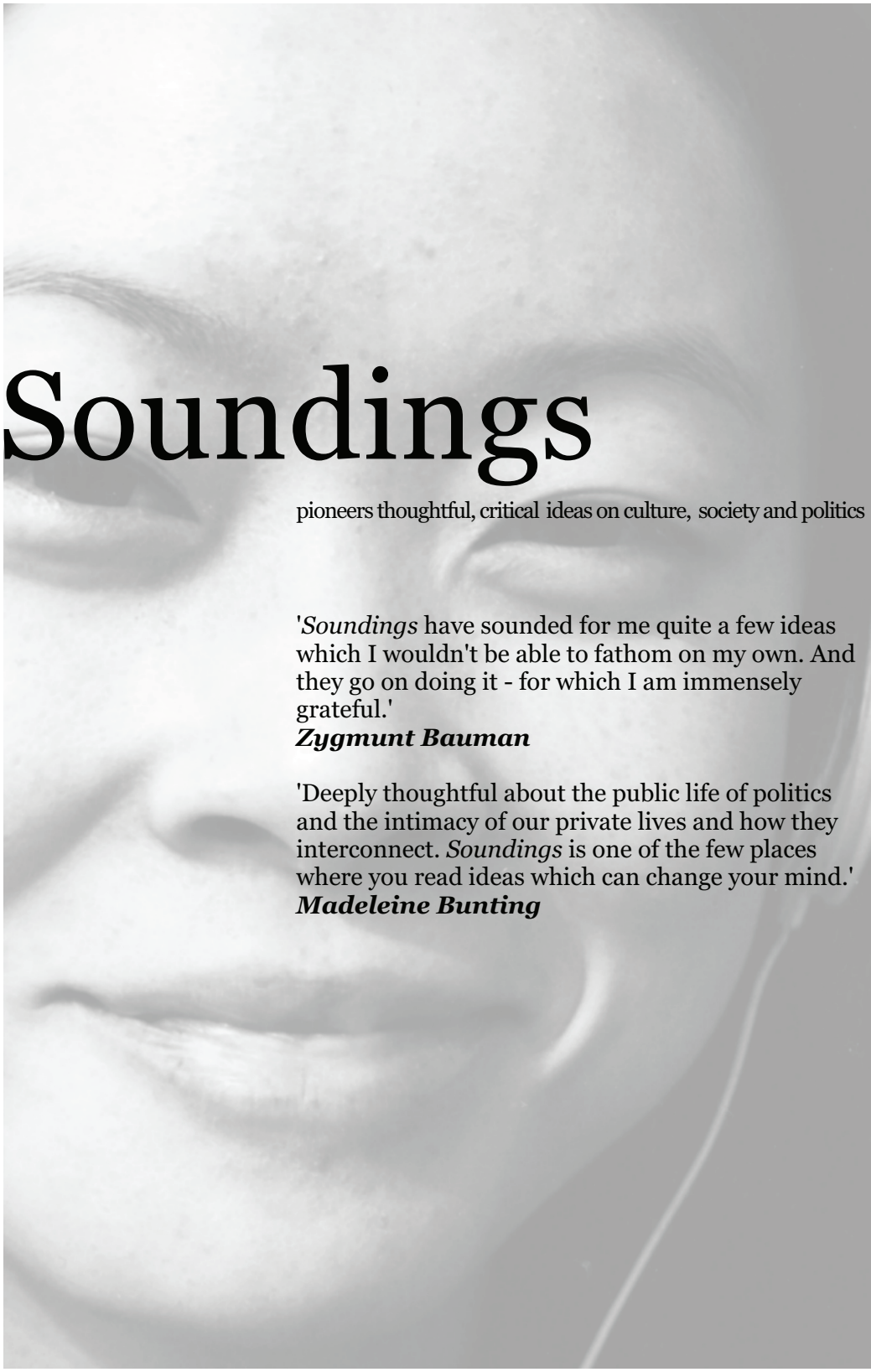
WHO OWNS THE PROGRESSIVE FUTURE?
7pm Monday 1 December
With Aditya Chakrabortty, Beatrix Campbell, Caroline Lucas, Ken Livingstone. Chair Neal Lawson

British politics is at a turning point. The electoral alliance that brought New Labour to power is disintegrating. The popularity of Cameron's Conservatives is growing. What is the condition of Britain and what will come next in the political life of the country? Come and join in the discussion at our three autumn debates at the new Kings Place centre in London's Kings Cross.

AUTUMN DEBATES KINGS PLACE, LONDON

Soundings
commentisfree...

TICKET PRICE :	£11.50 £9.50 booked on-line
BOOK TICKETS	at Kings Place box office by phoning 0844 264 0321 online: www.kingsplace.co.uk



Soundings

pioneers thoughtful, critical ideas on culture, society and politics

'*Soundings* have sounded for me quite a few ideas which I wouldn't be able to fathom on my own. And they go on doing it - for which I am immensely grateful.'
Zygmunt Bauman

'Deeply thoughtful about the public life of politics and the intimacy of our private lives and how they interconnect. *Soundings* is one of the few places where you read ideas which can change your mind.'
Madeleine Bunting

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER TO NEW SOUNDINGS SUBSCRIBERS SUBSCRIBE TODAY
FOR JUST £20 IF YOU SUBSCRIBE BY STANDING ORDER
OR FOR £25 BY CREDIT CARD
(subscription is for three book-length issues)

PLEASE START MY SUBSCRIPTION TO SOUNDINGS, BEGINNING WITH ISSUE 39

Name.....

Address*.....

.....

Postcode.....

Email address.....

* If paying by credit card please give your statement address

PLEASE FILL IN THIS PART FOR STANDING ORDER SUBSCRIPTION

To: (your bank).....

Bank's address: ....

.....

.....

Your account no: ..... **Sort code:** .....

Name of account holder: .....

Please pay by standing order to the account of Lawrence & Wishart at National Westminster Bank, Stockwell, London Sw8,

sort Code 60-20-31, account number 64716465, the sum of £20.00 immediately and £35 annually thereafter on July 1st each year.

PLEASE FILL IN THIS PART FOR CREDIT CARD SUBSCRIPTION

Please charge my credit card the sum of £25

Card no.....Expiry date .....

Start date/issue no (if appropriate).....

Security code (last 3 digits above signature strip) .....

Join Compass today and you can help change the world of tomorrow

Please contribute generously. Compass is funded solely by organisations and individuals that support our aim of greater equality and democracy. We rely heavily on individual members for funding. Minimum joining rates are suggested below. To join, simply complete and return this form to Compass, **FREEPOST LON15823, London, E9 5BR**. Paying by Standing Order or Paypal means we have a regular income to count on, consequently we are offering new members a discount for paying their membership in this way. To join by Paypal you will need to go to the Join Us section of the Compass website at www.compassonline.org.uk/join.asp.

- ☐ Waged (SO / Paypal) – min £27.50
- ☐ Waged (Cheque / PO) – min £32.50
- ☐ Unwaged (SO / Paypal) – min £12.50
- ☐ Unwaged (Cheque / PO) – min £17.50
- ☐ Organisation (i.e. CLP; think-tank; NGO) – min £42.50

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Email

If you're already a Labour member what is your CLP?

Positions held

Standing order instructions

Please pay immediately by standing order to Compass' account, Lloyds TSB, 32 Oxford Street, London, W1A 2LD (a/c 2227769, sort code 30-98-71) the sum of £10 / £25 / £40 / Other £ (please delete as appropriate) and then annually, unless cancelled by me in writing.

Bank / Building Society

Bank Address

Account Name

Account Number

Sort Code

Signature

☐ I'm not eligible to be a member of the Labour Party (i.e. you're a member of another political party in the UK) and I would like to become an Associate Member of Compass (with no voting rights).

About Compass

Compass is the democratic left pressure group whose goal is both to debate and develop the ideas for a more equal and democratic society, then campaign and organise to help ensure they become reality. We organise regular events and conferences that provide real space to discuss policy, we produce thought-provoking pamphlets, and we encourage debate through online discussions on our website. We campaign, take positions and lead the debate on key issues facing the democratic left. We're developing a coherent and strong voice for those that believe in greater equality and democracy as the means to achieve radical social change.

We are:

- An umbrella grouping of the progressive left whose sum is greater than its parts.
- A strategic political voice – unlike thinktanks and single-issue pressure groups Compass can develop a politically coherent position based on the values of equality and democracy.
- An organising force – Compass recognises that ideas need to be organised for, and will seek to recruit, mobilise and encourage to be active a membership across the UK to work in pursuit of greater equality and democracy.
- A pressure group focused on changing Labour – but Compass recognises that energy and ideas can come from outside the party, not least from the 200,000 who have left since 1997.
- The central belief of Compass is that things will only change when people believe they can and must make a difference themselves. In the words of Gandhi, 'Be the change you wish to see in the world'.

Compass
FREEPOST LON15823
London
E9 5BR
t: 020 7463 0633
e: info@compassonline.org.uk
w: www.compassonline.org.uk

compass
DIRECTION FOR THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT