

## Young Fabian Manifesto Policy Submission

The Young Fabians have formed six policy commissions to mirror the Labour Party commissions in the 'Partnership in Power' process. Each is chaired by a Young Fabian Executive member and consists of around 20 Young Fabian members. The commissions have met with the MP manifesto group chairs and have held two policy surgeries with Ed Miliband MP. This paper summarises the results of those meetings, and of internal discussions within the commissions themselves. It is presented to Ed Miliband to help inform his work in writing Labour's next manifesto.

Participants in the meetings were very supportive of the openness of the manifesto process, which was seen as being accessible to all sections of the Party, and it is hoped that this will result in a strong manifesto over which Labour members can have a positive sense of ownership. One theme that was mentioned throughout our discussions was the concept of co-decision making, with individuals taking responsibility for their decisions on health, education and other issues in conjunction with government. It was felt that this was a realistic way for government to work with individuals to improve their lives, while also acknowledging that government cannot act alone in these areas.

It was also felt that the Government has not always been as positive about its achievements as it could have been. The manifesto should acknowledge where more work needs to be done to achieve Labour's aims, but should also be open about where Labour has made positive changes since 1997.

The need to concentrate on alleviating inequalities of income and wealth was discussed at length. Wealth inequality was particularly felt to be perpetuated through generations, creating real barriers to individuals achieving their full potential. This was linked to problems in the housing market. Tax hypothecation was broadly supported, although it was suggested that hypothecation would only work for services which are used by everybody, rather than for more selective issues, which might be more politically divisive.

It was strongly felt that, from all the policies in the manifesto, Labour should select five high-profile and memorable promises on issues such as housing and health to deliver in a pledge-card format, as happened in 1997. This would help to answer the question of 'what is Labour for?'. Many Young Fabian members travelled to Sweden in 2006 to campaign for the Swedish Social Democrats. It was felt that part of the reason why the Social Democrats lost that election was that the party leadership focussed too greatly on what they had achieved in the past, and too little on what the Party would do in the future if re-elected.

Labour must not make the same mistake. The manifesto must be positive and forward-looking. It must not shy from addressing the genuine difficulties affecting the UK at the moment but must address these in a positive manner by showing how Labour would deal with the issues. For example, on foreign policy, there is a danger of appearing too negative over threats such as terrorism, climate change and resource scarcity. While acknowledging that these threats are dangerous, the manifesto must show that, working through international institutions and in concert with allies, they can be defeated.

It was also felt that the Government's and Party's use of the internet and Web 2.0 technologies is unimaginative at best and we do not make the most of the opportunities presented by these media. There are many lessons to be learnt from the ways in which the Obama and Clinton campaigns made use of the internet during the Democratic primaries in 2008. An enhanced Labour presence

on the internet would allow elected representatives to interact more usefully with their voters and would increase participation among Labour members.

Overall, while Young Fabian members recognised the political difficulties currently faced by the Government, there was still a genuine readiness to contribute to the Party's policy process. This reflects the fact that most of us believe that it is possible for Labour to win the next election. It also shows that there is no appetite at all for a return to the in-fighting between different Labour factions which has marred the Party's relationship with voters in the past. There is still – among Young Fabian members, at least – an overwhelming desire to see the Labour Party in government, exercising power to improve the lives of all people in the UK, particularly those who are born with the least advantage. Labour's next manifesto should empower all sections of the Party to achieve that goal.

**Mark Rusling, July 2008**  
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## Britain in the World by Mark Rusling

### Europe

- There is a real need to expose the Conservatives as generally hostile to British membership of the EU. This makes them unable to fulfill their claims to be a 'new, green' party. Only through the European Emissions Trading Scheme can progress on climate change be made – the Conservatives must choose between being green or being anti-European.
- Labour is the party of internationalism and multilateralism and needs to be much clearer on its support for Britain's positive engagement within the EU – we appear to have lost confidence in our pro-European credentials. Labour should introduce a 'European pledge card', with five points on the front of 'what Europe has done for you' and five points on the rear of 'what Europe will do in the future under a Labour government'.
- Labour should concentrate on the day-to-day improvements that the EU has made in the quality of British people's lives, such as consumer protection, rather than reducing European issues to ideological arguments.
- Labour must be much more explicit about the role of the EU in protecting workers' rights. A common European bank holiday could be a populist measure to improve voters' views of the EU.
- The European dimension of the Citizenship curriculum should be emphasised, and the Government should encourage language-learning in schools and universities.
- The EU should work towards making academic qualifications fully transferable throughout Europe. European universities should aim for closer cooperation and linking through academic exchanges and the use of technology. European universities should aim for closer cooperation with suitable institutions in emerging countries such as China and India.
- The manifesto should highlight the EU's global role in the fields of international aid and development.
- The manifesto should address the issue of resource security. Labour should emphasise the benefits of a collective European position when negotiating with emerging powers such as China or Russia over resource issues. EU energy markets must be transparent and stable and must mitigate the environmental impact of EU energy use.
- There was strong agreement on the need to reform the Common Agricultural Policy and to ensure that the money saved is used to develop the poorer regions of the EU, in the UK as well as elsewhere. A popular suggestion was to use the money saved through reform of the CAP to pay for enhanced education, employment and skills provision. This could include improving the Erasmus programme to target disadvantaged students.
- The Europe section of the manifesto should focus less on British policy towards Europe, and more on what Labour MEPs do that MEPs from other parties do not do.

### International institutions

- Only through active engagement with international institutions such as the UN, NATO and the EU, can the threats to the UK's security be addressed. The manifesto must focus on what international bodies can achieve for the UK, rather than on an inward-looking focus on the institutions per se.
- The UK should support the expansion of the UN Security Council to include permanent seats for states from Africa and Latin America, but without veto powers. The UK should consider proposals to increase the number of vetoes needed to block a Security Council resolution, as well as the introduction of indicative voting, whereby Security Council members have to show how they planned to vote even if another state uses its veto.

## Humanitarian intervention and armed forces

- The manifesto should emphasise human and environmental security over national security.
- The UK should clarify what circumstances constitute a “threat to peace or breach of peace” under Article 39 of the UN Charter. This would include the peace and security issues caused by increasingly scarce water resources.
- Labour should set out clear guidelines on the factors that would govern future ‘humanitarian’ military intervention. These would lend coherence to foreign policy and would make it easier for the Government to justify intervention and non-intervention in different circumstances. The guidelines would facilitate faster intervention by providing a mutually agreed framework upon which decisions could be based. UK military action not satisfying the guidelines could not be characterised as ‘humanitarian’. The guidelines would not necessitate action in every situation that met the tests, but the Government would be required to justify why no action had been taken at such a time. The guidelines would cover:
  - *The reason for the intervention.* Military action must address aggression by a people against another people within a state, or aggression by that state’s government, or must support the self-determination of a people. The UK must be best-placed to make the intervention.
  - *The quality of the intervention.* The Government must be able to commit the necessary resources to carry out the intervention successfully. Benefits to the UK must not be the prime motivation for the intervention and the gains accruing to civilians must be likely to outweigh any losses of life or property.
  - *The quality of exit.* The Government must present clear strategies of how the intervention’s success will be measured, as well as a clear exit strategy for when this success is achieved.
- Labour should advocate a ‘fair deal for the armed forces’, based on improved training, equipment and housing for military personnel and their families.

## Creating Sustainable Communities by Patrick Woodman

### Transport

The manifesto should include a promise to subsidise public transport to a greater degree so that it is financially sensible for everybody to use public transport, particularly trains and buses. This would correspond to Labour's vision of a more equal society, as the poorest members of society use public transport the most.

Reflecting the positive views of tax hypothecation expressed in many sessions, it was felt by many that revenue raised through an increase in duties levied on aviation fuel could be directed towards investment in public transport, including rail.

### Environment

The Government should introduce an Environmental Sustainability Bill, reaffirming its commitment to stringent environmental standards across all new housing and commercial property, including the following:

- A requirement for all domestic light bulbs to be of the energy saving variety and a commitment that old domestic light bulbs will be entirely phased out over the course of the next parliament.
- A 'lights off' clause, requiring all private sector and government buildings to have 'lights off' when not occupied. Buildings account for 40% of the EU's energy requirements and the EU has a target of using 20% less energy by 2020. 'Lights off' and tighter standards for buildings' heating and water emissions have the potential to cut energy consumption by 28% by 2020.
- Incentives to encourage landlords to improve the environmental performance of rented accommodation through measures such as insulation and the provision of modern boilers and double-glazing.
- Making the consultation process less stringent for eco-towns.

The Government should introduce a requirement to phase out all non-biodegradable food packaging.

The UK should lobby for the abolition of the European Commission's target of 10% of EU energy to be derived from biofuels, which has increased world food prices and increased poverty in the developing world.

### Housing

The Government's excellent investment in shared equity schemes should be better publicised, and should form a bigger role in Labour campaigns aimed at young people. It was also felt by many Young Fabians that, if a council could prove its housing management ability, it should not be denied the ability to manage its own housing stock. It was strongly felt that the system of 'land banking' favoured large house builders, removing incentives to build more houses. The Government should investigate instituting penalties for not using land. There was strong support for Ken Livingstone's requirements for new private developments in London to include a proportion of social housing. It was felt that this requirement could be instituted throughout the UK.

The Government should pledge to eradicate homelessness by 2020, and should establish a commission to report on the best ways to do this.

## Local government

There was concern about the ability of local government to deliver high quality services.

Government should commit to improving local government by:

- Making a commitment to provide training for councillors and council staff, who are increasingly faced with the need to work in partnership with a large number of agencies in tackling complex social problems.
- Redefining the role of councillors to enhance their power and providing a clearer set of responsibilities.
- Supporting better communication between councils and citizens, enabling better signposting and access to local councillors and information about how councillors can help with problems.
- Encouraging the adoption of new online technologies. An e-petition page for each local council – as introduced for 10 Downing Street – could boost citizen engagement and raise interest in the role of local politics.
- Enabling citizens to have more opportunity to influence the small-scale decisions that affect them, for instance on local park maintenance or traffic calming measures.
- Introducing incentives to reward and encourage civic engagement such as voluntary work, e.g. in the form of council tax reductions.
- Reforming the audit and assessment processes for local government in order to change councils' attitude to risk. Councils should be encouraged to innovate to solve communities' problems, but a risk-averse culture and heavily regulated system discourages innovation.

## Crime, Justice, Citizenship and Equalities by Kate Groucutt

Members felt that these areas comprise much of the core Labour territory and could form the basis of clear policy differences between Labour and the Conservatives.

### **Crime**

During our discussion with John Mann MP on drugs and alcohol policy, members felt that a more coercive treatment regime could be a popular policy with the electorate, but that it must be backed up with well-resourced treatment facilities which tackle the multiple problems faced by drug addicts and are tailored for different people's needs. However there was concern that offering treatment instead of criminal proceedings could appear to be effectively decriminalising drugs, despite its likely reduction of crime, therefore careful communication would be required.

It was felt that increased investment in youth services would help to reduce crime among young people. Services needed to be well resourced, with funding guaranteed for more than 12 months. School buildings could be used, as these are usually empty in the weekends and evenings.

### **Justice and citizenship**

During our discussion with Chris Bryant MP on constitutional reform, members felt that any future written constitution must have at its heart the objective of improving access to justice and human rights, and that it must be made relevant to people's ordinary lives if it is to be politically salient at the next election.

Members felt that the continued attacks on the Human Rights Act meant that there should be an attempt to re-communicate the aims of the HRA as something that protects citizens from government and isn't just something that applies to criminals.

Low voter turnout - particularly among young people - is a concern to Young Fabian members. A solution in terms of electoral reform was put forward by one member:

*Labour could recommend the inclusion of a constitutional duty to vote in the forthcoming Bill of British rights and duties, although this "responsibility" should be balanced by the "right" to an effective vote regardless of postcode. Whilst recognising the need for an ongoing debate on voting reform for the House of Commons, sufficient consensus exists to introduce the Alternative Vote in the next manifesto. Allied to this should be a commitment to a reformed Second Chamber with at least an 80% element elected by proportional representation, and elections in local government in England and Wales should be rationalised by introducing the Single Transferable Vote system already employed in Northern Ireland and Scotland, giving fairer representation and greater voter choice. Research suggests that voting systems that allow each party to field more than one candidate produce greater levels of representation for women and ethnic minority candidates, so this could be measured in terms of the effect of STV in producing more representative local councils.*

Michael Calderbank, Young Fabian

A further idea to enhance local accountability and to engage voters is to create elected Mayors for all our towns and cities. This idea has been outlined in more detail in Progress magazine by former Young Fabian Chair, Guy Lodge.

Members felt that there was a clear case for some reform of the monarchy, such as removing the discrimination in terms of gender and religion for succession. However there was concern that this could cause internal party divisions and could lead to the election being seen as a referendum on the monarchy. It would need to be proposed as part of a clear constitutional settlement promoting equality and making clear the rights of citizens.

There was broad support for completing the process of House of Lords reform although, as has occurred in House of Commons votes on the issue, no consensus on what a reformed House of Lords would look like.

### **Equalities**

Members felt that Labour should undertake decisive action to close the gender pay gap, since this is an issue on which the Conservatives could try and steal Labour's ground, without having genuine policy solutions. Labour should reclaim the idea of the family (in whatever form people wish to live) by actively promoting flexibility at work (as opposed to merely tolerating it), giving fathers more paternity leave paid at a higher level and providing additional support for carers.

There was agreement that social care could not be publicly funded – this could be justified, as much of the cost, particularly for elderly people, is simply the cost of living. It was felt that the Government could justify inheritance tax in terms of funding care for elderly people. Personal care budgets would empower patients, and would be very popular.

## Education and Skills by Tom Flynn

### **Post 16 education**

There was some support for compulsory sixth form education dedicated to helping students explore multiple career options. The two years should encompass core academic skills, career preparation skills and world preparation skills. These would consist of:

Academic: Maths, English, Science

Career: Technology, IT, Economics

World: Foreign Languages, International Politics & Policy, Art Education.

In the second half of the second year, students would undertake internships after completing research-based coursework designed to ensure that the student understands the training requirements, potential salary and career path involved in their chosen career.

There should be a greater emphasis on making bright pupils from schools which have traditionally not sent many (if any) pupils to university aware of the post-18 educational opportunities open to them.

### **Selection**

The system for school catchment areas should be changed to prevent wealthier parents from pricing others out of the market in areas with good schools. Catchment areas should be made much larger and all pupils within them should be guaranteed free transport to their allocated school. Allocation of places should be by ballot only to ensure a fair chance for all pupils. This would give parents an incentive to demand that all schools are performing well and would encourage parental participation in improving standards for all children.

### **Testing and examinations**

The number of tests should be reduced to alleviate stress in the classroom. This would create a more positive learning environment for children, especially those of primary school age.

### **Lifelong learning**

Schools in troubled communities should open in the evenings in order to deliver adult basic skills classes, family learning sessions and parenting classes etc. This reflects evidence from social policy experts that a major factor behind the inter-generational inheritance of poor academic achievement is the low skill of parents, and their negative attitudes towards school, teachers and formal learning based on their own negative experiences as a child. This makes them less able and/or willing to help their children with homework and lowers their children's aspirations as well as attainment. Extended schools would help to improve attitudes to school among these parents, raise their ability to follow their child's curriculum and help with homework, and would use existing community infrastructure to save on cost and also place the local school more firmly at the heart of the community.

Government should work with employers to encourage them to take a greater responsibility for the continuing education of their workforce.

A separate paper on adult education has been prepared by Young Fabian Executive member, Alex Baker. This was submitted following our meeting with Ed on 27 March 2008.

### **University fees**

Although the concept of charging for university education was broadly supported, there was some opposition to basing fees on students' parental income, rather than on the future earnings of the students themselves.

### **Curriculum**

Lessons on money management should be added to the National Curriculum. There are many students leaving school with impressive academic results but very little understanding of how to deal with their money appropriately. The benefits of a greater emphasis on financial skills at school would be universal and would not be limited to one particular demographic.

There should be a greater emphasis on physical education in schools and the Government should pledge that every school should have its own 'on site' playing field.

## Health – Emma Carr

### **Greater public engagement and trust in the NHS**

- To encourage more public involvement in the NHS and engagement with NHS policy, there should be a publicity campaign aimed at reinforcing the idea of a relationship between the public and the NHS.
- Easy and transparent methods of people expressing concerns should be developed and encouraged. This could include a [www.myhospital.com](http://www.myhospital.com) website that allows people to vent their frustrations, read policy documents and plans, see who works in their local hospitals and have a say on the services of the hospitals, clinics etc. People should have a right to a response to their queries.
- Strengthen the voice of local communities by creating stronger roles for organisations of local people to get access to local authority funds to help improve services. This should be contractually guaranteed.
- There should be a stronger role for Local Involvement Networks in the planning, purchasing and improving of services. These locally based and voluntary organisations should play a vital role in delivering local voice to planning decisions for health and social care services. They should have strong access to councils' Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Through these and other initiatives, people should be more involved in the commissioning of services.
- There should be an independent board for the Department of Health (appointed by the Secretary of State with Parliamentary Committee approval) to manage the day-to-day running of the NSH and to take the politics out of healthcare. The Department of Health should retain oversight and national policy guidance and direction and the Secretary of State should chair the new board.

### **Primary care**

- The Government should review the GMS contract and evaluate whether it delivers optimal outcomes for patients.
- Targets for GPs should be less process based and organisational. Instead they should focus on health gain and outcomes. The targets should encourage/incentivise PCTs to pressurise and incentivise GPs into doing more health promotion and prevention and to work more closely with the local community and patient groups to pursue effective public health strategies.

### **Health promotion and health equality**

- Government needs a bolder alcohol strategy that invests more money in treatment, prevention, education and intervention. The same should be the case for smoking and drugs.
- Health checks should be available for all adults aged 46-74, prioritising areas of disadvantage and at-risk groups.
- There was real concern at the impact of the 'postcode lottery' in health care provision. There was strong support for a 'national guarantee' of certain care standards.

### **Vulnerable groups**

- Older and disabled people should be prioritised in health and social care service planning. The success of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment should be built upon, requiring PCTs and Local Authorities to work together to ensure that older and disabled people and their carers are prioritised for assessment of their needs to ensure early action is taken.
- There should be minimum entitlements to support available across England, with everyone who needs care support having access to quality information services and Personal Budgets to purchase the care they need. This should include people with mental health needs.
- DCLG should have a strengthened role to deliver a full social inclusion agenda and provide national responsibility for social care services.
- There was particular concern that a large number of people are addicted to prescription and over the counter drugs, yet they are often not picked up by GPs and do not have access to appropriate treatment which they feel comfortable using.
- There was concern that government had not focussed enough on mental health provision. Too many mentally ill people are in prison rather than in care. There should be more money invested in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, and less focus on using drugs to treat mentally ill patients.

### Information and support

- There should be a care manager system where one named person oversees the service user's interaction with health and social care services. The care manager should have good links with benefits agencies, housing services, PALS as well as health and social care services. (A model for this would be the Sedgefield Integrated Teams).

### Organ donation

- There was strong agreement on the need for an 'opt-out' organ donation system to relieve the current shortage of organs for transplant.

#### Work and Prosperity – Rebecca Rennison

### Competing with the best in the world

To improve the numbers of women in the workplace, Labour should commit to further develop paternity pay and paternity leave and introduce a stronger transferable element of parental leave and pay. This would ensure that families are presented with a real choice when it comes to determining which parent takes a career break at the birth of their child.

Improved access to flexible working can also make a real difference to the lives of working parents.

*"The right to request flexible working should be extended and extended to both parents to further work-life balance and gender equality."* Joseph Fagan, Young Fabian

### Fairness for families

*"Tax Credits can be seen as Labour's flagship economic policy and a huge success, for fairness and for encouraging people to work."* Kieron Merrett, Young Fabian

However, not enough people are receiving the support that they deserve through the tax credits system and Labour should look at ways of simplifying tax credits and should investigate the

possibility of automatic enrolment. There is also the challenge posed by rising average earnings.

*"Thought should be given to developing a mechanism for uprating the Child Tax Credit in line with average earnings."* Joseph Fagan, Young Fabian

### **Dignity and security in retirement**

Increasing numbers of people will need support from a carer in their retirement; in many cases this care will come from working age relatives. Labour should commit to introducing a care voucher system that enables working age carers to balance work and caring responsibilities.

### **Achieving full employment**

*"By putting together a comprehensive strategy to help cut child poverty we can give the next generation a better chance in life, whilst also improving the lot of current generations."* Omar Salem, Young Fabian

Achieving full employment would enable Labour to eradicate child poverty. There are over 6 million carers in the UK, many of whom would like the support to work. Labour should introduce a New Deal aimed at helping carers gain and retain work.

### **Better workplaces**

The National Minimum Wage allows a 16 year old carrying out the same work as a 35 year old to be paid £2.12 less an hour. Labour should commit to raising the minimum wage for young workers or introduce a tax credit that compensates them for their lower earnings.

### **Equality**

Labour should introduce 12 months of fully transferable maternity/paternity leave, with no restrictions on how it is divided between the parents. This has been very successful in other countries – notably Iceland – in reducing workplace inequalities between men and women. This policy should be considered as part of a comprehensive gender equality programme, with other radical ideas considered, such as a 40% target for women in company boardrooms, as happens in Norway.