

# policy news

the Young Fabian digest of the latest policy publications

**Welcome** to Issue 12 of Policy News, brought to you with a slight election delay from our usual two month cycle. This edition covers policy material from March, April and May this year.

I'd like also to give a very warm welcome to new members of the Young Fabians who have joined since Labour's recent election defeat. It's very important to have you with us as we renew and debate the ideas that will ensure Labour wins back the trust of the electorate and holds office again. I hope you find Policy News a useful tool in helping us to debate and to critique the thinking of our opponents.

Since our last edition the policy world has been in close preparation for the 2010 General Election and reacting to its outcome. Policy organisations on the left and right have responded to the news of a Conservative led government and Liberal organisations are still reacting to the new attention being fostered upon them.

In this context edition 12 of Policy News looks firstly at domestic reports on the economic and political situation. We also have our usual look foreign affairs and security policy from UK and International organisations. We continue our new features by looking at papers on Labour Party thinking and the state of social democracy in the UK and in the wider world. One highlight is Anthony Giddens' robust analysis of the New Labour project. Finally we conclude by training our gaze towards the policies of Labour's opponents in our 'Opposition Policy Watch' section. The report on the 'Lib Con Trick' from the Liberal supporting Centre Forum written just before the election is certainly worth a read.

As we move into opposition it remains vitally important that the Young Fabians should continue to offer ideas to the Labour Party and to deconstruct the policies of our opponents. I hope that you find Policy News a useful tool in that endeavour. Please enjoy reading this selection of papers but mostly I hope that you are stirred towards responding to some of them.

Labour's Leadership election should be a vibrant time for debate and discourse and so to should be the beginnings of Conservative government. Please do feel free to pen an article for the Young Fabians blog or for Anticipations magazine in response to some of the thinking contained here.

Best wishes and happy reading.

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## DOMESTIC POLICY

### 1. The Kings Fund

#### **A High Performing NHS? A review of progress 1997–2010**

This was a key report from just before the election in investigating Labour's performance on the NHS. Since 1997 funding for the NHS has doubled in real terms and this report investigates the impact of this investment on results, using official data, government reports and academic research. It concludes that there is no doubt that there has been considerable progress in the last 13 years with the NHS delivering more care to more people more quickly. Key results are major reductions in waiting times and rates of health care associated infections and progress in reducing smoking rates. From a management perspective there is now far more information about performance in the public domain, accessible to patients, carers and members of the public, than ever before which can only be a good thing.

The report identifies the need for further progress in national and regional variations in access and quality of care even where national guidelines exist and secondly that health inequalities have widened since 1997. Tackling this in an era of fiscal restraint, an ageing population and a rise in obesity and alcohol related illness remain key challenges for the next government.

►► Available at:

[http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/a\\_highperforming\\_nh.html](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/a_highperforming_nh.html)

### 2. IPPR

#### **Exploring the routes of BNP Support**

As the post election debate moves towards how we tackle the thorny challenges such as immigration lppr produce an interesting research into whether or not high levels of immigration do raise communities' support for the BNP, or if other variables – such as political disengagement – are important. With no breakthrough into Westminster for the BNP but a drop in support amongst C2 communities for Labour the findings make for interesting reading. Significantly they suggest that areas that have higher levels of recent immigration than others are not more likely to vote for the BNP.

In fact, the more immigration that an area has experienced, the lower its support for the far right. Rather, the evidence points to political and socio-economic exclusion as drivers of BNP support.

For Labour the response is more nuanced than simply talking about immigration as an issue. We must also focus on building strong communities and strong education systems, and on rebuilding trust and confidence in democratic politics, so that marginalised people do not feel so disconnected. This should allow them to both better serve the interests of these communities, and undercut support for the BNP.

►► Available at:

<http://www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=743>

### **3. Joseph Rowntree Foundation Poorer children's educational attainment**

This report focuses on a range of factors associated with aspirations, attitudes and behaviours, encompassing a wide variety of influences throughout childhood. The study examines attainment gaps between richer and poorer children and explores the influences on these, from pre-school through to secondary school. It also considers the importance of expectations and aspirations for higher education and uses a number of large-scale longitudinal data sources, capturing groups of children in the UK from early childhood through to late adolescence. The report advances some policy conclusions relating to parents and the family home; children's own attitudes and behaviours; and the intergenerational picture.

The findings suggest that attitudes and behaviours are potentially important transmission mechanisms between socioeconomic disadvantage and children's educational attainment.

The evidence presented in this report offers three major areas in which policy may make a contribution to reducing educational inequalities:

1. parents and the family home
2. the child's own attitudes and behaviours, and
3. the school's approach

▶▶ Available at:

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poorer-children-education-full.pdf>

## **FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY**

### **1. Oxfam**

#### **Strengthening Popular Participation in the African Union: A Guide to AU Structures and Processes**

In line with Young Fabians debates on stronger and more effective institutions, Oxfam's report on The African Union (AU) sets out how African organisations can engage with the AU to build an Africa that is 'integrated, prosperous and peaceful'.

It identifies the need for transparency in the AU decision-making process and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the AU institutions. It also contains a sampling of the experiences of those non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that have interacted with the AU.

It also outlines the proposals under discussion for the restructuring of the AU and its organs, to advance the integration of the African continent more rapidly. This guide aims to help those organisations that wish to engage the AU but do not currently know where to start by providing an outline of the key institutions and processes and suggesting ways to influence them. A very interesting read for anyone interested in global governance, civil society and African development, as well as for those committed to multi-national governance.

▶▶ Available at:

[http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/right\\_heard/downloads/african\\_union\\_strengthening\\_popular\\_participation\\_en.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/right_heard/downloads/african_union_strengthening_popular_participation_en.pdf)

### **2. Centre for American Progress**

#### **Development Funding Done Right: How to Ensure Multilateral Development Banks Finance Clean and Renewable Energy Projects to Combat Global Warming**

The Centre of American Progress provide a critique of the World Bank Group's multilateral development bank which provides critical funding across the developing world to fight poverty and boost economic growth and prosperity. It identifies that the World Bank and its affiliates direct more than twice as much financing toward fossil fuel-based energy projects than they do toward clean energy and energy efficiency projects despite the global warming crisis that threatens the developing world most severely.

While the developed nations of the world are shifting away from fossil fuel-based energy towards clean energy in order to contribute to global climate stability, a more secure energy future, and more broad-based economic prosperity, developing countries will require greater assistance in making these transitions.

The report recommends that the World Bank:

1. Support low-carbon economic growth in developing countries through its financing of energy projects
2. Issue an annual report on the entire World Bank Group's energy financing, with clearly defined fuel types and power generation
3. Bring more transparency to its energy project selection process
4. Consider the impact of greenhouse gas emissions in economic analyses of all energy projects

▶▶ Available at:

[http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/03/pdf/world\\_bank.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/03/pdf/world_bank.pdf)

### **3. Security and Defence Agenda**

#### **The new global security landscape: 10 Recommendations from the 2010 Security Jam**

This report comes from a get together of leading defence think-tanks supported by NATO and the EU, as a contribution to their effort to involve a wider audience in the current strategic rethink. The overarching question was 'how can international actors and institutions respond to new security challenges?'

The findings indicate that strategic planning and a comprehensive approach to security will be imperative if the EU and NATO are to maintain stability in their neighbourhood and to build bridges with other protagonists like China, Russia, India and Brazil. The report also identifies that the emerging multi-polar order is composed of some fragile powers which will be even less stable than in the two decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Worryingly it also identifies that interdependence will not automatically produce cooperation, even within the EU or NATO. A shifting balance of power creates uncertainty and in the current climate of economic insecurity could lead to fiercer resource competition.

Previous Young Fabian recommendations such as the expansion of EU and NATO security policies and the improvement of the EU's internal public diplomacy receive support from the discussions.

▶▶ Available at:

[http://www.securitydefenceagenda.org/Portals/7/2010/Publications/SDA\\_JAM\\_Report\\_highres.pdf](http://www.securitydefenceagenda.org/Portals/7/2010/Publications/SDA_JAM_Report_highres.pdf)

## **LABOUR PARTY AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY**

### **1. Anthony Giddens: Policy Network**

#### **What is old and what is new? A balanced assessment of Labour's achievements and failures should inform our ideological reconstruction**

With the era of New Labour government over, Anthony Giddens begins to assess its legacy. He disputes the conventional disparagement of the record of Labour in government over the past thirteen years. Arguing instead a robust defence of many of Labour's core policies and a balanced assessment with a view to charting a future path. He makes an interesting comparison with the fate of Social Democrats in other countries over roughly the same period, such as Bill Clinton and the New Democrats in the US, Lionel Jospin's socialists in France, or the SPD in Germany, led by Gerhard Schröder. Labour managed to stay in power longer than any of these, indeed longer than any other left of centre party in recent times.

Looking at economic growth, constitutional reforms, community policy, foreign affairs and the presentational politics of the Downing Street operation he argues that the other parties have had to follow the New Labour agenda. He concludes that it is time to jettison the term New Labour but not the core social and economic framework which was needed to attract mainstream, affluent, voters, against the background of a changing political field in a post-industrial economy. Perhaps the strongest critique of the New Labour project on offer at the minute and all the stronger for being written by one of its key policy architects.

►► Available at:

[http://www.policy-network.net/uploadedFiles/Articles/Giddens%20New%20Labour\(1\).pdf](http://www.policy-network.net/uploadedFiles/Articles/Giddens%20New%20Labour(1).pdf)

### **2. IPPR**

#### **Poll of Prospective Parliamentary Candidates**

Of all of the polls of PPCs, Ippr's is the most interesting in the context we are now in. It assumed correctly the outcome to be a hung parliament and that a post-election deal between the major parties would be likely.

However, on the analysis of PPCs in winnable seats, it judges that Lib Dem PPCs are closer to Labour PPCs than Tories and that a Labour and Liberal Democrats deal would be "more politically sustainable than a deal between the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives". The survey found that across a range of ideological questions from the role of the welfare state, redistribution, Europe, crime, and climate change prospective Lib Dem and Labour candidates were much closer politically than they are to Conservative PPCs.

For example, while all of the Labour and Lib Dem PCCs agreed that the government should redistribute income from rich to poor, nearly half of Conservative candidates oppose it.

The following results are very striking for the current government:

1. 70 per cent of Labour PPCs and 58 per cent of Liberal Democrats agree that cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people's lives, while 59 per cent of Conservative PPCs disagree.
2. Lib Dem PPCs are the most 'doveish' on foreign policy, with 91 per cent wanting Britain to stop trying to be a major military force in the world, compared to just 27 per cent of Labour PPCs and 6 per cent of Tory PPCs.
3. 59 per cent of Tory PPCs think that the EU is a threat to the UK's national sovereignty, whereas Labour and Lib Dem PPCs overwhelmingly reject this.
4. Whereas all Labour and Lib Dem PPCs agree that climate change is real and man-made, and requires major social changes only 53 per cent of Tory PPCs believe this.

►► Available at:

<http://www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=748>

### **3. Policy Network**

#### **Rise of Right- Social Democracy responding to migration: Social malaise and the failure of mainstream politics**

Following Ippr's research into the presence of BNP support in Britain, this report examines the popularity of new radical right-wing parties with anti-immigrant platforms increased across Europe. This paper outlines the complex set of factors that account for this trend and offers a critical evaluation of the way mainstream parties are responding. The report argues that far from reflecting a short term trend triggered by the current economic downturn, the rise of the new radical right indicates a deep economic and social malaise affecting western European societies and thus presents a challenge for Social Democratic parties.

The paper warns political parties and the wider public not to dismiss the new radical right as fanatical parties operating on the fringe of politics, but rather to embark on careful examination of their political discourse. By combining strong anti-establishment rhetoric with potent demands for democratic reform and identity politics, the radical right is managing to overcome the traditional split between left and right, with potentially serious consequences for the future of our body politic.

The report argues that the strategic response of mainstream political parties should, therefore, further include three important elements including, the democratisation of democracy by restoring voters' confidence in politics, having a fair and balanced approach to migration and thirdly Smart social policies which pay particular attention should be devoted to the white working class and lower middle class citizens who often feel threatened and unable to compete with cheap foreign labour.

►► Available at:

<http://www.policy-network.net/uploadedFiles/Publications/Publications/Migration%20and%20the>

[%20rise%20of%20the%20far%20right.pdf](#)

#### **4. The Fabian Society**

##### **Electoral Opportunities for Labour from a Lib-Tory Pact**

Fabian Society analysis shows that the decision by Nick Clegg to join forces with David Cameron would provide an opportunity for a major electoral revival by Labour at a second election in 2010 – and potentially enough for Labour to regain its majority. It would also place many Lib Dem MPs in danger of being unseated.

This chimes with the research by Ippr on the political preferences of many Liberal MPs as well as the Centre Forum research on the Conservatives.

The analysis notes that, in polling just before the election, 43 per cent of Lib Dem voters described themselves as centre-left or left, compared to 29 per cent who described themselves as centrist and just 9 per cent who described themselves as centre-right or right. Similarly, 39 per cent of Lib Dem voters described the Liberal Democrat party as being centre-left or left, compared to 33 per cent of Lib Dem voters who described the party as being centrist and just 5 per cent who described the party as being centre-right or right

The analysis shows that several Lib Dem MP's would be at risk from such a Labour advance. There are at 15 Lib Dem seats that would fall to Labour if just one-in-five of their voters switched to Labour. These would include all five gains that the Lib Dems made from Labour on May 6th – Norwich South, Bradford East, Brent Central, Burnley, and Redcar. The Lib Dems would be hit in both their university seats like Manchester, Bristol and Cardiff, as well as in seats relying on 'working-class' support, like Bradford, Burnley and Redcar

Just as importantly, the analysis shows that in many other constituencies Labour could take a large number of seats back off the Conservatives with relatively modest defections from the Lib Dems to Labour. There are 25 seats that would swing back from the Conservatives to Labour if just one-in-five Lib Dem voters in these seats switches to Labour. These would include many seats in the South and the Midlands that Labour lost at the General Election, such as Hendon, Thurrock, Broxtowe, Bedford, and Hove, as well as the Tories' prized gain in the North East, Stockton South.

Fifty-five seats would swing back to Labour if one-in-two Lib Dem voters in these seats switched to Labour. Along with seats taken off the Lib Dems, this could be enough for Labour to regain a majority at a possible second election in 2010, so let's see if the coalition lasts!

▶▶ Available at:

[http://www.fabians.org.uk/images/stories/pdfs/REPORT\\_on\\_electoral\\_opportunities\\_for\\_Labour\\_from\\_a\\_LibDem-Tory\\_pact1.pdf](http://www.fabians.org.uk/images/stories/pdfs/REPORT_on_electoral_opportunities_for_Labour_from_a_LibDem-Tory_pact1.pdf)

#### **5. Demos: Anthony Painter and Ali Moussavi The Politics of Perpetual Renewal**

This paper, part of the Open Left project at Demos, forms a core part of Open Left's aim to renew the ideas and agenda of the centre-Left, over a decade after Labour was first elected. The paper considers the ways in which the British electorate has changed over the last two decades and the potential political implications of these changes. While it would be an overstatement to claim that Britain is a fundamentally different country demographically compared to the early 1990s, there have been important shifts.

The British electorate is older, better educated and more diverse. Its class, occupational and household structure is more complex. There is every indication that these changes will continue in the coming years. A very useful read in how shifting demographics impact on the behaviour of political parties, especially in the light of Labour's renewal.

▶▶ Available at:

<http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/the-politics-of-perpetual-renewal>

## OPPOSITION POLICY WATCH

### 1. Centre Forum

#### A Lib Con Trick

Before the close of polls and the negotiations between the Tories and Liberals, Centre Forum take issue with Tory briefing that there is so much common ground between the two parties.

Perhaps firing the gun too early, CentreForum, the liberal think tank, argue that the two parties similarities are wildly overstated and predicted that the chances of them working together in a formal coalition if the Tories are returned as the largest party in a hung parliament are slim. How wrong they were.

A Lib Con trick? points out that although the election of a self-styled liberal Conservative as Tory leader should have increased the likelihood of meaningful co-operation between the two parties, so far, that co-operation has been conspicuous by its absence. They analyse that this is down to a deep rooted mutual mistrust in the culture of the Conservative party by Lib Dems.

It continues to assert that Liberal Democrats do not believe that David Cameron led a fundamental a re-invention of the Tory party as he would like voters to believe. *"The Lib Dem view is that the Conservatives with their regressive inheritance tax policy, their ardent Euro-scepticism, their failure to translate their rhetorical commitment to the environment into hard policy, and their refusal to countenance far-reaching constitutional and political reform are simply not as liberal as they claim."* I couldn't have said it better.

The report concludes that it would be a mistake to assume that the Lib Dems would, in a hung parliament *"remain on the opposition benches, but will increasingly have to think and act like a governing party"*. It seems however that they are on the governing benches, whether they start to behave like an opposition party, remains to be seen!

►► Available at:

<http://www.centreforum.org/assets/pubs/a-lib-con-trick.pdf>

### 2. Centre for Policy Studies

#### A magna carta for localism: Three practical steps to make localism real

The Centre for Policy Studies a centre right think tank argues a traditional conservative view that the UK remains is one of the most centralised states in the developed world, even after devolution.

In what is set to be an interesting debate under the coalition the report investigates local support for the unemployed; local provision of community care; and local prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour and rehabilitation of criminals.

It argues that local administration of benefits and tackling unemployment could reduce fraud and encourage and support individuals back to work while saving the taxpayer and devolving authority to local politicians and authorities.

However the argument that Diversity of supply – also known as the Postcode Lottery – should be regarded as a good thing because it encourages innovation and the spread of best practice sounds more the beginnings of a tiered welfare system and an excuse to fail those in most need to state support.

Just because this programme will reduce government spending by an estimated £13.9 billion a year once implemented on a national scale doesn't mean it's a great new idea that we haven't come across yet. Though the debate on localism is one that Labour should be paying particular attention to.

▶▶ Available at:

[http://www.cps.org.uk/cps\\_catalog/a%20magna%20carta%20for%20localism.pdf](http://www.cps.org.uk/cps_catalog/a%20magna%20carta%20for%20localism.pdf)

### **3. The Tax Payers Alliance TPA Manifesto**

Now the prize for possibly the most regressive manifesto around surely goes to the Tax Payers Alliance. A quick glance reveals manifesto commitments to scrap climate change targets, abandon international development spending, scrap inheritance tax and entirely privatise the Royal Mail.

Under the banner of holding any Government to account and representing taxpayers' interests, the TPA attack public spending and call for huge cuts to the public purse. I hope I'm not the only one that doesn't trust the Tax Payers Alliance to represent me. If there ever was an organisation whose arguments needed rebutting, it's this one.

▶▶ Available at:

<http://www.taxpayersalliance.com/tpamanifesto.pdf>

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