

COLL P

S 166

# FABIAN

SOCIETY



FABIAN PAMPHLET 571

PAMPHLET COLLECTION

## Let Us Face the Future –

the 1945 anniversary  
lecture



*by Tony Blair*



---

# Let Us Face The Future— the 1945 anniversary lecture

---

1	Introduction	1
2	Labour past, present and future	2
3	The lessons of 1945	6
4	New Labour, eternal values	10
5	Our objectives	14
6	The long haul	16

This pamphlet is based on a lecture given by Tony Blair at the start of a day of celebrations organised by the Fabian Society to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the election of the 1945 Labour Government, held at the Institution of Civil Engineers, One Great George Street, London, SW1 on 5th July 1995.

Rt. Hon. Tony Blair M.P. is Leader of the Labour Party.

This pamphlet, like all publications of the Fabian Society, represents not the collective views of the Society but only the views of the author. The responsibility of the Society is limited to approving its publications as worthy of consideration within the Labour movement.

Design: Tony Garrett

August 1995

ISBN 0 7163 0571 2

ISSN 0307 7523

Published by the Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth St, London SW1H 9BN

# Introduction

BLPES



21 0336026 1

1

In 1945, as now, we faced enormous changes in the global economy and in society. Then, as now, Labour spoke for the national interest and offered hope for the future; the Tories spoke for sectional interest and represented the past. Then, as now, Britain needed rebuilding and the voters turned to Labour to take on that task; because, then as now, the people knew that market dogma and crude individualism could not solve the nation's problems. That is why I honour the 1945 generation: to learn the lessons of their victory and their achievements, and to set out how the enduring values of 1945 can be applied to the very different world of 1995.

**I**t is also appropriate to do this under the auspices of the Fabian Society, which holds a special place in Labour history. It was founded before the party itself. Before the second world war, the Society's summer schools had an enviable reputation – for parties as much as or more than for politics. In 1945, the Society boasted Guild socialist GDH Cole as its Chair. On its Executive Committee were Michael Young (now Lord Young of Dartington), the author of the 1945 manifesto and much else. Also on the Committee was Evan Durbin MP, author of the important book *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*. Today, the Society is again a source of political education and new ideas. The Fabians have undergone a real revival in the past few years – for example, the pamphlets in the *Southern Discomfort* series have been important in turning the attention of the party towards lost voters in the South.

## 2 Labour past, present and future

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of a quite momentous date in the history of the Labour Party and of our country, I have no hesitation whatsoever in describing the 1945 Labour government as the greatest peacetime government this century. It was led by statesmen of enduring stature: Attlee, Morrison, Bevin, Bevan. Its achievements were immense: demobilisation and full employment, the welfare state, the NHS, as well as significant contributions to international relations. And it was so secure in the affections of the British people that it lost no by-elections, gained votes on its re-election in 1950, and gained votes again in 1951 when it won more votes but fewer seats than the Tories.

**T**he record of that government makes me proud to call myself a democratic socialist. Its confidence, exuberance and commitment to the jobs that needed to be done are an inspiration to all in the Labour movement. 26th July 1945: 393 Labour seats, 209 gains, overall majority 146.

This speech has two constant themes. First, I wish to highlight both the achievements of the 1945 government, and the lessons we can learn from it. Second, I want to put today's modernisation of the Labour Party in its historical context.

## *With the grain*

In respect of the 1945 Government itself, I shall argue that its achievements were enormous, its impact enduring. But it is important to understand where its strength came from, what it really represented as well as what it didn't. The reality, I shall try to show, is that the Labour Government's agenda grew out of the coalition government of the war; that it cut decisively with not against the grain of political thinking; and that its prospectus at the election was strongest in the new direction it offered, not the minutiae of policy detail.

The real radical strength of the 1945 Government was the utter clarity and determination with which its purposes were defined and carried through. Its objectives – jobs for all, decent housing, proper health and education services – were magnificent. It was a Government massively driven by a sense of national purpose and renewal, extraordinary unified in its aims, and entirely unashamed of building a broad consensus to achieve them.

It was truly a government that changed the agenda for a generation. But the government did not emerge out of the blue. Wartime experience was critical to the election result. The genius of Labour leaders was to capture the national mood, and at the same time lead that national mood. Labour was judged as the party best able to give legislative expression to popular hope. The country judged that the Conservatives, because of their historic failure to meet the challenges of the 1930s, could not deliver renewal in the 1940s. But in terms of its programme too, the 1945 government built on what had gone before. Earlier progressive social and economic reform laid the legislative and intellectual foundations. The debates of the 1930s helped shape the outlook of a generation of leaders. And wartime experience in government gave them the skills to implement their programme. They were elected ready to govern, and they did.

Our challenge is not to return to the 1940s but instead to take the values that motivated that government and apply them afresh to our time. I passionately want to lead a party which once again embodies and leads the national mood for change and renewal.

## *The end of Labour's consensus*

That links to my second theme, the challenge of modernisation today, which arises from the fact that with the possible exception of 1964, Labour has been unable to recreate the strong political consensus of 1945. The truth that we must take seriously is that 1945 was the exception and not the rule. Labour in 1945 overcame but did not resolve fundamental issues of ideology and organisation facing the Labour Party. In wartime, these became obscured. But later they reasserted themselves. In the late 1970s and early 1980s they were almost fatal. Essentially both ideology and organisation became out of date. What Neil Kinnock, John Smith and I have sought to do is to cure these weaknesses and so transform the left-of-centre in British politics.

2

By reason of the need to distinguish itself from the Liberal reformers, the Labour constitution identified itself with one particular strand of socialist thinking, namely state ownership. This meant that its ideology came to be governed by too narrow a view of democratic socialism. Over time, Clause IV took on the status of a totem. Our agenda was misrepresented. And as statist socialism lost credibility, so did we lose support.

Further, the gap between our stated aims and policies in government fed the constant charge of betrayal – the view that our problem was that the leadership was too timid to tread the real path to true socialism. This did immense harm to the party. And it was compounded by our organisational weakness.

The Party grew out of the trade unions' legitimate desire to defend their interests and their members in Parliament. As a result, Labour's organisation has traditionally been dominated by its large affiliated membership and a strictly activist-based structure of democracy. Of course, a party of ordinary working people should by definition have at its heart the interests of the majority. But producer interests have over the century become increasingly varied and diffuse. And in any event they need to be balanced by the needs of consumers. In terms of democratic organisation, as mass activism died and people stopped turning up in large numbers to union or party meetings, so the Party machine became a shell, prey to factionalism and sectarianism. It looked democratic but it wasn't. The key democratic link – which should be that between the Party and the real people it seeks to represent – disappeared.

Members of a 1970s CLP general committee might say they represented the membership; union executive members might say they represented their members; but the truth was that often they didn't.

### *Building a new consensus*

So the ideology was out of date; and yet the structures of the Party had no means of bringing that home. In the end, of course, the country brought it home, by rejecting – repeatedly – the prospect of a Labour government. The task today is to reconstruct our ideology around the strength of our values and the way they are expressed. And then to create an organisation to match and reflect the ideology.

We are well on our way. The first task came to fruition in the rewriting of Clause IV, in which far from escaping our traditions, we recaptured them. The second is proceeding too. The ultimate objective is a new political consensus of the left-of-centre, based around the key values of democratic socialism and European social democracy, firm in its principles but capable of responding to changing times, so that those values may be put into practice and secure broad support to govern for long periods of time. To reach that consensus we must value the contribution of Lloyd George, Beveridge and Keynes and not just Attlee, Bevan or Crosland. We should start to explore our own history with fresh understanding and an absence of preconceptions.

July 1995 saw a Conservative Party afraid to ask and answer hard questions about itself, its character and its direction. The debate began, but was so painful, it had to be abandoned. We should not flinch, and we need not do so, because we are so much stronger, so much more liberated by our voyage of rediscovery. Part of that rediscovery is to welcome the radical left-of-centre tradition outside of our own Party, as well as celebrate the achievements of that tradition within it. The strength of the latter was its attack upon the abuses of economic power, its commitment to social justice and its ability to mobilise the country for change. The strength of the former has been in its sensitivity to the abuse of political as well as economic power and its independent free thinking which has this century helped to promote our economic objectives. The task of the left-of-centre today is to put these two strengths together, led by Labour and providing the same broad consensus for change that a previous generation did in 1945.

I am not interested in governing for a term, coming to power on a wave of euphoria, a magnificent edifice of expectations, which dazzles for a while before collapse. I want to rebuild this Party from its foundations, making sure every stone is put in its rightful place, every design crafted not just for effect but to a useful purpose.

# 3 The lessons of 1945

There is of course dual significance in the year 1945: the end of the Second World War, and Labour's first absolute parliamentary majority. The two events are intimately connected because Labour's crushing victory was testimony to the fact that it embodied the hopes of war-torn Britain better than the Tories. Labour's vision chimed with the vision for which the British people had been fighting. Labour became the voice of the nation, in a sense never recognised as true before and rarely accepted as true since.

**T**he 1945 election, and the government which followed, are therefore a source of immense pride for the Labour Party. By 1945, the people of Britain wanted national renewal: change from the depression years of the 1930s, change from the war years of the early 1940s. And they trusted Labour, whose leaders played a central part in the wartime coalition, to deliver that renewal. Labour promised to build a future for all the people. As Barbara Castle recently described it: "We were washed into Westminster on a wave of popularity, acceptability, hope and faith that we would have a new society."

It was not a raft of detailed policies that took that government to power, but a clear sense of purpose and direction. There was, of course, Beveridge, and the Labour plans for social security developed during the War. And the coalition government had passed the 1944 Education Act. But the debate on economic policy and the role of planning in the 1930s, though long, was rather confused. Other things were done on the hoof – for example, Aneurin Bevan and the structure of the health service. What the 1945 government did have, however, was a very strong sense of direction based on core Labour values – fairness, freedom from want, social equality.



## *Renewal*

In 1945, Labour was the patriotic party, as it is today. It embodied national purpose and personal advancement, nowhere more so than in its slogan, 'Now Let us Win the Peace'. The Second World War was a people's war. On the battlefield men of all classes fought together. On the home front, the evacuation of the cities brought people together in a way not seen before or since. To follow the people's war, Labour pledged to build a people's peace. It spoke for the people's vision of what Britain ought to be – a generous, brave, forward-looking bastion of decency and social justice. National unity and patriotic purpose were brought together to build a better society.

Labour put itself at the head of a movement for national renewal spanning classes, age groups and regions. Labour made gains right across the country. George Wallace, elected MP for Chislehurst – yes, Chislehurst in Kent – explains in Austin Mitchell's fascinating account of the 1945 election (published by the Fabian Society) that he ran into Ellen Wilkinson at the first meeting of the new PLP. "You won then" she said to him. "What was the seat?" "Chislehurst" he replied. She said: "My God, the revolution has arrived."

What is more, Labour did not just promise change, it delivered it, combining idealism and practicality in equal measure. The achievements were immense:

- Labour engineered the transition from wartime to peacetime economy without a reversion to mass unemployment or the re-emergence of depressed areas.
- Labour implemented the Beveridge report, abolishing the hated means-test, raising old age pensions from 10 shillings to 26 shillings a week, setting up a universal system of national insurance to cover sickness, unemployment and retirement, and supporting children and families with a welfare system that was at the time the envy of the world.
- Labour set up the NHS three years after its election, 47 years ago today. For the first time, the fear of illness was removed from the great mass of people. Defying the great Tory lie that equality meant levelling down, the government showed that socialism is about the abolition of second class status, not attacking excellence but making it available to all.
- Overseas, Labour also made its contribution. Attlee's determination to grant independence to India signalled a readiness to reconsider the role of Empire, and Ernest Bevin's contribution was central to the Marshall Plan, to NATO and to the UN, which finally gave proper expression to the bonds of interdependence and mutuality that exist between peoples. Nor should we forget the role the Party played in helping socialist and progressive forces all round the world: Denis Healey was not International Secretary for nothing.

By 1950, Sam Watson, the Durham Miners' Leader claimed at party conference: "Poverty has been abolished. Hunger is unknown. The sick are tended. The old folks are cherished, our children are growing up in a land of opportunity." The Tories were constantly on the defensive. They tried to bury the Beveridge Report. They said full employment was impossible. They voted against the 2nd and 3rd Readings of the NHS Bill. But the public mood turned against them. Labour did not just embody a new consensus: it helped to create it and sustain it.

In retrospect, of course, we can see that there were some mistakes and omissions. Peter Hennessy, a sympathetic biographer of that government, highlights three: a failure to recognise fully the realities of the new world order, manifested in the attitude of the government towards Europe; second, a reluctance to modernise the institutions of government itself – what Kenneth Morgan calls the Labour government's "stern centralism"; and third a tendency to look back to the problems of the 1930s not forward to the challenges of the 1950s.

Unsympathetic biographers – Corelli Barnett leading amongst them – argue that by trying to build a New Jerusalem, Labour and Britain chose social comfort over economic gain. The reality is different. The 1945 government did pursue the goal of social justice. But it also laid enormous emphasis on economic modernisation. What is more, by pursuing social and economic goals together, it laid the basis for the most rapid period of economic growth in Britain's history. And because it got employment up and poverty down, the government was good value. Little wonder a nine year old Neil Kinnock watched his grandfather weep as the news came through that Labour had lost the 1951 election.

The truth is that the 1945 government had intellectual vitality, moral courage and organisational effectiveness. It was a government that was willing to draw on the resources of the whole progressive tradition. The ideas of Keynes and Beveridge were the cornerstone of reform. Attlee proclaimed that "the aim of Socialism is to give greater freedom to the individual." And the political philosopher TH Marshall avowedly linked the socialist project with its political ancestry. He divided the history of 300 years of political reform into three phases:

- the struggles for civil citizenship – liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith and the right to justice – in the 18th century;
- the campaigns for political citizenship – above all the right to vote – in the 19th century;
- and the enactment of social citizenship – above all minimum standards of economic welfare and social security – in the twentieth century.

Democratic socialism in Britain was indeed the political heir of the radical Liberal tradition: distinctive for its own roots, priorities, principles and practices, but with recognisable affinity when put next to its progressive liberal

cousin. What is more, the 1945 Labour Party backed up intellect with organisation. The party had 500,000 members in 1945. By 1951 it had over a million. It appealed and gained support throughout the country. And Labour won in 1945 because it reached beyond its traditional base, especially in the south. The electoral map of 1945 is remarkably similar to that of the 1994 European elections. We won six of seven seats in Norfolk, seven of nine in Essex, four of five in Northamptonshire and two in Somerset. Labour single-mindedly set out to reach beyond the traditional industrial areas, no one more so than Herbert Morrison who gave up safe Hackney and fought marginal Lewisham East. He won by 15,000 votes. Outer London swung dramatically to Labour. These were the new owner-occupied suburbs of Metroland and the Southern railway, as well as the industrial areas of west London. Labour, in the form of Ashley Bramall, won Bexley in a by-election. That is Edward Heath's seat now. We won Enfield: Michael Portillo take note. And we gained Barnet – the home of Mrs. Thatcher. None of these are Labour seats today.

### *Building on the lessons*

We should therefore feel pride as we celebrate those achievements. But we should also feel humility. Our moment of greatest success remained just that – a moment. Since 1945, Labour in government has achieved a great deal, often in very difficult circumstances. These are real achievements. But looking back over the years since that great post-war government, it is clear that the coalition forged in 1945 has not been maintained: since 1951, we have been out of power for 33 of 44 years.

The 1964 government expanded higher education and created the Open University, reformed social legislation, kept unemployment down, spent more on education than defence and carried forward the attack on class barriers and prejudice started in 1945. In the 1970s, Labour dealt with the consequences of the world financial crisis of 1973, without the benefit of North Sea Oil. It consolidated progress in the fields of pensions with the introduction of SERPs and women's rights with the passage of the Sex Discrimination Act. It passed the pioneering Race Relations Act, which still sets a standard across Europe for legislative action against racial discrimination.

But despite the high hopes, especially of Harold Wilson's first government, Labour did not succeed in establishing itself as a natural party of government. To create the conditions in which Labour is once again capable of leading a governing consensus – in which it is truly the 'people's party' – we have to learn the lessons of 1945. For me these are:

- the need for a clear sense of national purpose
- the need to win the battle of ideas
- the need to mobilise all people of progressive mind around a party always outward-looking, seeking new supporters and members.

# 4 New Labour, eternal values

Since 1945, elections have been lost for reasons of bad luck, bad timing or bad policies. But the historical record demands something more than an election-by-election analysis of contingent factors. We need a systematic analysis. As early as 1952, Peter Shore was asking the right question: "How is it that so large a proportion of the electorate, many of whom are neither wealthy or privileged, have been recruited for a cause which is not their own?"

**T**hat question is as relevant today as it was then. I believe it goes to the heart of what has been termed the 'progressive dilemma', defined by David Marquand as follows: "The Labour Party has faced essentially the same problem since the 1920s: how to transcend Labourism without betraying the labour interest; how to bridge the gap between the old Labour fortresses and the potentially anti-Conservative, but non-Labour hinterland; how to construct a broad-based and enduring social coalition capable, not just of giving it a temporary majority in the House of Commons, but of sustaining a reforming government thereafter."

One part of the explanation is obvious: our very success in 1945 forced the Conservative Party to adapt and change, to embrace the key components of the welfare state and the mixed economy. The 1945 government built a durable post-war settlement that forced the Tories to move onto our ground. The historian Peter Clarke puts it as follows: by the 1950s, "much of the 1945 agenda was no longer radical and contentious; it had become part of the political furniture which both parties were now competing to rearrange rather than replace." Even during Mrs Thatcher's counter-revolution in the 1980s, the Conservatives pulled back from a full-frontal assault on the enduring legacies of the 1945 settlement.

## *New Liberals*

However, the record of Conservative adaptation is only part of the story. The 'progressive dilemma' is rooted in the history of social and economic reform in

Britain. Up to 1914, that history was defined by the Liberal Party's efforts to adapt to working class demands. This involved the gradual replacement of the classical liberal ideology based on non-intervention and 'negative freedom' with a credo of social reform and state action to emancipate individuals from the vagaries and oppressions of personal circumstance. Following the growing assertiveness of trade unions from the 1860s and after the foundation of the Labour Representation Committee in February 1900, working people were able to put new demands on the Liberal Party. These were the forces that were eventually to swamp the Liberals, but for a time they found political manifestation inside that party in the rise of new Liberalism. Radical liberals saw that the electorate was growing and changing, and realised that liberalism could only survive if it responded to the new demands.

The intellectual bridgehead was established by Hobhouse and others. They saw the 19th century conception of liberty as too thin for the purposes of social and economic reform, so they enlarged it. They realised that theoretical liberty was of little use if people did not have the ability to exercise it. So they argued for collective action, including state action, to achieve positive freedom, even if it infringed traditional laissez-faire liberal orthodoxy. They recognised that socially created wealth could legitimately be used for social purposes, even if this required change in the existing order of property rights. They did not call themselves socialists, though Hobhouse coined the term 'liberal socialism', but they shared the short term goals of those in the Labour Party – itself then not yet an avowedly socialist party.

This became clear after the crushing defeat of the Balfour administration in 1905. The Liberal-led majority of 1906 to 1914 spanned a wide divergence of political views. On the Left, Labour MPs gave it their support. On the Right, relics of Gladstonian liberalism, still espousing the agenda of 19th century liberal laissez-faire, were kept on board. But the intellectual energy came from the New Liberals. Their ideas drove the 1910 government, which legislated for reform of the House of Lords, improved working conditions, an embryonic welfare system and progressive taxation.

The New Liberals were people who were both liberals with a small 'l' and social democrats, also in lower case, living on the cusp of a new political age, transitional figures spanning the period from one dominant ethic to another. All sought far-reaching social reform. However, the Liberal coalition disintegrated after the 1916 split, and by 1918 the Tories had captured Lloyd George and wiped out Asquith's Liberals. It was therefore the Labour Party which began to take the lead. But the ideas of the pre-war reformers lived on, sometimes in the Labour Party, sometimes in the Liberal Party, sometimes beyond party. J.A. Hobson was probably the most famous Liberal convert to what was then literally 'new Labour'. But Labour never fully absorbed the whole tradition: we had our own agenda.

## *Clause IV*

Labour's ideological compass was set in 1918, when it adopted its first statement of objects. At the behest of Sidney Webb, the party established 'clear red water' between itself and the Liberals, in the form of clause IV of the party constitution. Seventy years on, Clause IV has assumed a particular meaning, but at the time Sidney Webb saw the 'socialist clause' as a fudge. He would have been astonished to learn that Clause IV was still in existence 75 years later. He would have been amused that his clause had assumed totemic status on the left of the party. And he would have been appalled that the party's whole economic and social debate was subsumed for so long under the question of ownership.

The organisational structures of the party are also important, and I will address them soon. Quite naturally, as a party born out of the trade unions and formed largely to represent people at work, the trade unions had a major say in party structures. As the class contours of society changed, however, this has meant that the party has struggled against a perception that it had too narrow a base in its membership, finance and decision-making.

## *Social-ism*

The phrase New Labour New Britain which the party is using today is therefore intended to be more than a slogan. It describes where we are in British politics today. It embodies a concept of national renewal led by a renewed Labour Party. It has three elements: ideology, organisation and programme.

The ideological re-foundation of the party took place through the revision of Clause IV. The party clearly said that we are in politics to pursue certain values, not implement an economic dogma. Since the collapse of communism, the ethical basis of socialism is the only one that has stood the test of time. This socialism is based on a moral assertion that individuals are interdependent, that they owe duties to one another as well as themselves, that the good society backs up the efforts of the individuals within it, and that common humanity demands that everyone be given a platform on which to stand. It has objective basis too, rooted in the belief that only by recognising their interdependence will individuals flourish, because the good of each does depend on the good of all. This concept of socialism requires a form of politics in which we share responsibility both to fight poverty, prejudice and unemployment, and to create the conditions in which we can truly build one nation – tolerant, fair, enterprising, inclusive. That, fundamentally, was Attlee's kind of socialism, and it is also mine.

Once socialism is defined in this way – as social-ism – we can be liberated from our history and not chained by it. We can avoid the confusion of means and ends inherent in the 1918 definition of socialist purpose. Most important, by re-establishing our identity on our terms, we can regain the intellectual

confidence to take on and win the battle of ideas, because as I have said again and again since becoming leader, the choice is not between principle and power. That was the foolishness of the early 1980s.

## *One Member, One Vote*

But to be a people's party we must also look at the kind of party we are. The party was born out of the desire of working people to gain a voice in the government of the country. That is why Labour was founded as the Labour Representation Committee. But the bedrock of the party in the hopes and aspirations of trade unionists was quickly broadened to include people who joined out of belief in Labour's aims and values.

In organisational terms the consequence of the origins of the party was the block vote, which sustained the leadership of the party until the 1960s and 1970s, when the structure of the accountability and organisation broke down. The party lost contact with the electorate, and in the name of internal party democracy gave away its ultimate source of accountability – the people at large. That is why the change to One Member One Vote, and the changes in the organisation of party conference are so important.

The nature of the party – who is in it, how their interests are articulated, how the decisions are made, the boundaries of what is possible and desirable, even how we behave towards each other – helps define the politics and the policies of the party. That is why I attach such importance to mass membership. In 1945 we were truly representative of the country at large: we had candidates from all classes, all professions, all regions. George Orwell spoke of the "skilled workers, technical experts, airmen, scientists, architects and journalists, the people who feel at home in the radio and ferro-concrete age" who would lead Labour's drive for change after the War. Today, I want Labour to be a party which has in its membership the self-employed and the unemployed, small business people and their customers, managers and workers, home-owners and council tenants, skilled engineers as well as skilled doctors and teachers.

In addition to having more members, plans are in hand to give them greater say in conference decisions. We shouldn't forget that it was the unions themselves that have proposed gradually reducing the block vote. We want to repeat the success of the clause IV consultation exercise, except this time on policy issues. We want the Policy Forum to establish itself as a platform for more open and constructive discussion than is possible on the floor of Conference.

On the basis of values and organisation we can develop our programme. Socialists have to be both moralists and empiricists. Values are fundamental. But if socialism is not be merely an abstract moralism, it has to be made real in the world as it is and not as we would like it to be. As Tony Wright put it in his book *Socialisms*: "If a socialism without a moral doctrine is impossible, then a socialism without an empirical theory can become a mere fantasy".

# 5 Our objectives

Our values do not change. Our commitment to a different vision of society stands intact. But the ways of achieving that vision must change. The programme we are in the process of constructing entirely reflects our values. Its objectives would be instantly recognisable to our founders:

- to equip our country for massive economic and technological change;
- to provide jobs and security for all in this new world;
- to ensure that there are available to all strong public services that depend on the needs and not the wealth of those who use them;
- to attack poverty by reform of the welfare state and the labour market;
- to rebuild a sense of civic pride and responsibility out of the chaos of lawlessness and social breakdown around us;
- and to define Britain's place in the world, not in isolation but as a leader among a community of nations.

What have changed are the means of achieving these objectives. Those should and will cross the old boundaries between left and right, progressive and conservative. They did in 1945. What marks us out are the objectives and the sense of unity and national purpose by which we are driven.

On the economy, we move beyond the old battles between public and private sector. Instead we promote a modern industrial partnership between government and industry and at the workplace to achieve sustainable growth and high employment.

On welfare, the Labour objective is not to keep people on benefit, but to grant the financial independence that comes from employment. The world has changed since Beveridge – unemployment is often long term, the family is changing as women go out to work, and many pensioners live long enough to need care and not just income. We need a new settlement on welfare for a new age, where opportunity and responsibility go together.

On education, we seek excellence for all and not just a few, because Britain's problem has never been the education of an elite: quality education for all is



our goal. An end to top-down bureaucracy. Schools should be free to run their own affairs. Local Education Authorities should be judged by whether they raise standards. And parents should have more say in the education of their children.

But beyond that we must tackle the third of schools that are poor or failing, changing our outdated system of divided vocational and academic studies, and start to put in place the goal of lifelong learning that is crucial in a modern world. Schools need pressure and support, and under Labour they will get both.

On crime, hardly mentioned in the 1945 campaign – though who can doubt that the securities and solidarities of the post-war settlement contributed to the tranquillity of the post-war decades – we must recognise that it is traditional Labour voters who are most vulnerable to the terror of gangs and burglars and muggers. We all know some of the sources of anti-social behaviour: social decay, unemployment, lack of opportunity. But we know too that alienation is no excuse for crime, which is why Labour in government will be committed to attack crime itself and its causes.

On health, Labour's objective is a public health system that promotes good health and an NHS rebuilt as a people's service, free of market dogma, but also free of the old and new bureaucratic constraints, serving all the people, with doctors, nurses and administrators working as part of a unified system. That means GPs and health authorities teaming up to plan care, hospitals with operational freedom, and resources directed to meet need.

On the constitution, we face a massive task that the 1945 government did not address: to modernise our institutions of government to make them fit for the 21st century. There is no place for hereditary voting peers in the House of Lords. There should be no assumption of government secrecy, which is why a Freedom of Information Act is essential. And there should be no scope for the abuse of people's rights, which is why we are committed to a Bill of Rights. The trust that the British people had in the virtue of government fifty years ago does not exist today, and that is why we must reinvent government to reform Britain. Political renewal is an essential part of the economic and social renewal we all seek.

And on Europe, our objective must surely be international cooperation for mutual benefit. That benefit should come in the form of better economic performance, environmental improvement and secure defence. Labour will work for these goals, driven by the knowledge that the peoples of Europe prosper when they work together.

## 6 The long haul

I hope I have made it clear that I am in this for the long haul. We were set up as a majority party in Britain, and the time has come to fulfil that destiny in government.

**I**t is not enough to win an election, or even push through important changes after winning, or even force other parties to adapt to the political parameters that you establish. The 1945 government did these things: its great glory was that unlike other progressive or left-of-centre governments this century, it did establish an enduring social and economic settlement. But the 1945 government did not presage a further period of Labour rule.

Our task now is nothing less than national renewal, rebuilding our country as a strong and active civil society backing up the efforts of the individuals within it. That requires economic renewal, social renewal, and political renewal. But in setting out on our project, we should gain confidence from the government of 1945.

Confidence in our values. Confidence in our insights. Confidence in our ability not just to promise change but to deliver it. For that and many other reasons, I am delighted to honour the generation of 1945. They have set an example which it is an honour to follow.

## *Recent Fabian Publications*

**Any Southern Comfort?** *Giles Radice and Stephen Pollard.* Pamphlet No 568 £3.50. September 1994. Looks at attitudes to the Labour Party in the South of England and proposes ways of attracting floating voters back to the party.

**The Nation's Health.** *Hugh Bayley.* Pamphlet 570. £5.00 June 1995. Argues that health delivery should be the prime concern of the next Labour government and provides new evidence of the failure of the Conservative's reforms to the NHS.

**Beyond the patronage state.** *Tony Wright.* Pamphlet 569. £3.50 February 1995. Argues that that growth of the 'patronage state' has repercussions not merely for issues of accountability and equity but for the future of democracy.

**Reforming Welfare: American lessons.** *Simon Crine.* Pamphlet No. 567 £3.50 September 1994 Examines recent American welfare proposals and draws relevant British conclusions.

**Towards a social economy – trading for a social purpose.** *Peter Welch and Malcolm Coles.* Pamphlet No 564 £3.50 May 1994 Outlines the European concept of the 'economie sociale' and argues that it is a useful tool for the Left in escaping from the public/private debate.

**Fair Is Efficient – a socialist agenda for fairness.** *Gordon Brown MP.* Pamphlet No 563 £3.50 April 1994 Analyses inequality in Britain and concludes that socialism and equality are the pre-requisites of economic efficiency.

**What Price a Safe Society?** *Proceedings of the 1994 New Year Conference.* Pamphlet No. 562 £5.00 April 1994. Collected essays on crime and punishment.

**Beyond the Town Hall: reinventing local government.** *Margaret Hodge and Wendy Thomson.* Pamphlet No 561 £3.50 February 1994. Argues that local government should once act as a conduit for change and a focus for local pride.

**All for one: the future of the unions.** *Philip Bassett and Alan Cave.* Pamphlet No. 559 £3.50 August 1993. Argues that unions must emphasise the individual rather than the collective if they are to survive.

**Available from the Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London, SW1H 9BN. Please make cheques payable to the Fabian Society.**

## Let Us Face the Future – the 1945 anniversary lecture

---

"In 1945, as now, we faced enormous changes in the global economy and in society. Then, as now, Labour spoke for the national interest and offered hope for the future; the Tories spoke for sectional interest and represented the past. Then, as now, Britain needed rebuilding and the voters turned to Labour to take on that task... This speech has two constant themes. First, I wish to highlight both the achievements of the 1945 government and the lessons we can learn from it. Second, I want to put today's modernisation of the Labour Party in its historical context."

Delivered as part of the Fabian Society's celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the election of the 1945 government, this speech by Tony Blair, Leader of the Labour Party, outlines the philosophical developments in progressive political thought over the twentieth century, links these to the practical measures undertaken by past Labour governments, and considers how the modern Labour Party can take these ideas and deliver a successful Britain in the twenty-first century.

£5.00

The Fabian Society brings together those who wish to relate democratic socialism to practical plans for building a better society in a changing world. It is affiliated to the Labour Party, and anyone who is eligible for membership of the Labour Party can join; others may become associate members. For details of Fabian membership, publications and activities, write to: Simon Crine, General Secretary, Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth St, London SW1H 9BN.