

Anticipations

"A conference is a
gathering of people who
singly can do nothing, but
together can decide that
nothing can be done."

Fred Allen, Comedian

New beginnings

Editorial by Emma Carr

Welcome to another fun-filled edition of Anticipations. A lot has happened since the last edition and I'm sure you've been chomping at the bit to get your hands on this one. The suspense has been killing you, hasn't it?

Well, the Labour Party conference – you know, the *other* most wonderful time of the year – has been and gone. As the theme of this edition, the subject of Labour Party Conference has sparked some interesting commentary.

This year's conference was in Manchester – which, I think you'll notice, is neither a seaside town nor does it begin with the letter 'b'; who knew it could happen to a political conference? Of course, the downside of this – other than the complete lack of 'kiss me quick' caps and multi-coloured sticks of sugar rock – was that I couldn't decide whether to attend the conference or go shopping. Thankfully I managed to find a happy compromise in the shape of a pub near the conference venue.

The Party Conference, as the main theme of this edition of Anticipations, is a subject tackled by several of our writers this time. And, unsurprisingly, the location is a recurring theme.

However, its being in Manchester was not the only remarkable thing about this conference; it was also Tony Blair's final conference as Prime Minister. Blair's speech to the conference, which received a nine minute ovation, focussed on what the Party has achieved in his time as Prime Minister and what challenges are ahead. It was an emotional farewell which left some of the most unlikely looking spectators with tears in their eyes – many of whom, I'm sure, would not care to admit to that now.

Carrying on with the theme of conference, in this edition there is a series of mini-interviews with Labour MPs – basically any of them who were silly enough to stand still long enough for one of our interviewers to get their voice recorders out and start asking questions.

We have interviews with Meg Munn, Dr Howard Stoate, Ivan Lewis, John Hutton, Liam Byrne, Jack Straw and Kitty Ussher. We asked them about the success of the conference, their opinions or predictions on Blair's speech and, to keep them on their toes, something unknown but interesting about themselves.

They were very good sports; I'll leave you to find out for yourselves which of them used to have a Mohican and who got themselves into trouble with a pair of knitting needles and a ball of wool.

Of course, the Conference and the in-fighting which preceded it are only the tip of the iceberg. Since the last edition there has also been the monumental and life-changing event that is the Young Fabian executive elections.

Our much loved chair, Prema Gurunathan, has stood down and been replaced by our new much loved chair, Conor McGinn (what can I say, we're a very loving bunch).

There is also a brand new executive – although, you do seem to have voted in many of the same people as last year, so it is a new executive in a very limited sense. Some people didn't stand again, of course, and they will be sorely missed. And Nisha Taylor was forced to stand down – after being duly elected – because of time pressures.

Our newest member of the executive, Yue-Ting Cheng, also now holds our newest executive position, Universities Officer.

To find out more about the new executive, their roles and how to contact them see the feature on pages 14 -15.

I guess all that remains is to thank you for voting in the election, I hope you got the executive you wanted. If you didn't, give us time, I'm sure we do alright in the end. The coming year looks likely to be an interesting one with a new leader to be elected and all that involves, there will be Scottish elections and local elections as well as some interesting elections going on outside of the UK – see Alex Barker's piece on the upcoming French presidential elections. I am pleased to have the opportunity to edit Anticipations for another year and I look forward to reading all your articles. Remember to get involved and to get in touch if you have any ideas for articles, interviews or other features.

And so, for the last time this year, we give you Anticipations. I hope you enjoy it.

To contribute to the next edition of Anticipations, please email Emma Carr on ecarr@youngfabians.org.uk or Angela Green on agreen@youngfabians.org.uk.

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Emma and Angela would like to thank: Kevin Bonavia, Tom Flynn and Prema Gurunathan

The end of an era

Tom Flynn, Young Fabian International Officer, felt lost at conference, and it wasn't just because of the new location.

For many delegates attending the Labour Party Conference 2007, the mood was one of change, the end of an era and the start of something new. Some embraced the change, the chance for a change of direction, an opportunity to explore new territory. Others, including myself, felt lost, unsure of the way forward, nervous about the obstacles that lay ahead. The reason for this was that this year's annual conference was held, for the first time, in Manchester, and having never been there before I genuinely was lost, unsure of the way forward and the obstacles that made me nervous were tram shaped and appeared from nowhere at regular intervals, sending delegates scrambling for cover.

Once the conference was underway, the mood of change continued, but for very different reasons. This conference would be the last under the current leadership, a chance to say goodbye or good riddance to our retiring Prime Minister, depending on your point of view, but also a chance for renewal, an opportunity to search deep into the party's soul and assess the direction in which we are heading. One thing was painfully clear from the speeches heard in the main auditorium and the many others given at receptions and fringe meetings long into the night – when it comes to delivery of a political speech, there were two people at this conference who are in a league of their own. One of those is Tony Blair. Love him or hate him, his delivery, his choice of words and the usual scripted jokes (that we all have to laugh at because the TV cameras are watching) combined to produce a phenomenal display of political theatre that left many in tears and wondering what would fill the Tony-shaped hole now starting to form at the top of our party. The other great orator, unfortunately, is not eligible to stand for Labour leadership, being from Arkansas and having not been a member of the party for the required six months before eligibility for office.

The last time that Bill Clinton appeared at our annual gathering he visited a well known fast food chain on Blackpool High Street before buying a 'kiss me quick' hat and a stick of rock for Hilary (probably). That was 2002, the last time we held the event in that part of the world, when his speech lit up an otherwise fairly average week at the seaside. This year he blew us away again in the vibrant metropolis that is Manchester – a city thriving from the hard work and

dedication of a Labour Council working in partnership with a Labour Government. The city of Manchester gave us a glimpse of what is possible, what we have achieved as a party in 9 years of Government – a much needed chance

to take pride in our efforts to ensure our Labour government has remained in office for an unprecedented third term. It also gave us the chance to reflect on what comes next.

Gordon Brown, or whoever else inherits the mantle next summer, will simply not be able to perform in the way that Blair could. But that is not necessarily a bad thing. A major criticism of the Blair years has often been the prioritisation of style over substance. This option will not be available to the next leader, and it is possible that in order to survive, the party will have to seize the initiative and attempt to steer the debate towards concrete policies and away from vacuous meaningless politician speak, as perfected in recent times by the David Brent of politics, 'Dave' Cameron and his 'inner tosser'.

It is time to elect a leadership team which reflects the direction in which the Party wants to go and for those who are unsuccessful in their quest for the crown to accept the decision of the grass roots members and give their full support to ensuring another Labour victory on a manifesto which shows that we, not the Tories, are the party of change, the party of the people. One thing that the Blair speech showed was that we have our arguments in private, but when the world is watching we clap, cheer and unite around our leader to fight the common enemy of conservatism. If those who represent us at the highest level of Government can manage to stick to that winning formula then the future could be bright for the next Labour Prime Minister when he or she enters number 10 next year.



Conference Vox Pops

For this edition we opted to take advantage of the situation at annual conference - lots of MPs with very little place to run - and instead decided to do lots of little interviews, or Vox Pops.

We asked a series of MPs the same three questions:

At the end of the conference, what will have made it a success?

What would you like to see in Tony Blair's speech?

What is the country's biggest policy challenge in the coming years?

And then just for fun, we asked them to tell us something interesting about themselves that we wouldn't already know. We got some very interesting answers.

The interviews - with Meg Munn, Dr Howard Stodate, Ivan Lewis, John Hutton, Liam Byrne, Jack Straw and Kitty Ussher - are spread over the next few pages.

The interviews were conducted by Emma Carr and Patrick Woodman.

Vox Pop: Meg Munn MP



At the end of this week what would make you say that this conference has been a success?

It will be a success if we come out of it with a sense of a party that is focused on the future, a party which is focused on what we need to do to take us forward into the next year and right up to the next election. One which is realistic that there is going to be a leadership campaign but one which isn't tearing each other apart over the personalities.

What would you most like to hear in the leader's speech tomorrow?

That's a really good question because I've no

doubt that Tony will make an excellent speech, he always does. I mean the more difficult the circumstances, the better speech he makes so you're asking me to be as good as our leader in what he's going to say.

But what I think is important is that he gives a big vision. I think Gordon's speech today gave a big vision and he needs to do that as well. I think in doing that if he has that big vision he will effectively establish that although he won't be taking it forward, it's not the end of the process but the beginning of the next phase.

What do you think is the country's biggest policy challenge in the coming years?

I think that the temptation is to say climate change because that is kind of the issue of the moment that everyone is talking about. But I think what you have to do is set that alongside what can we do in terms of the economy, and people's commitment to involvement in the economy, while dealing with the problems of climate change in the context of globalisation.

Can you tell us something interesting about yourself that we don't know?

Would you know this or would you not? I was once told off for knitting in a council meeting.

Exclusively Labour

Sam Strudwick explains why a little bit of exclusivity goes a long way at Labour Party Conference

The best thing about conference this year was its exclusivity. Like me you probably believe being an inclusive party, open to all, is all well and good in this age of political correctness gone mad, but at conference time it does rather result in a lot of riff-raff getting in.

Not this year however. Thanks to the meticulous hard work of the conference staff and Manchester Police a lot of the undesirables, who arrogantly presumed their pass would turn up on time, were filtered out. Hopefully, with the long overdue introduction of ID cards, this process will become easier.

Despite the tiresome clapping, the conference hall remains a nice place to sit, read the papers and eat a few biscuits. However for many, I included, the real reason for going to conference is that it affords one the opportunity to meet new people, often without their partners. Which is why, I for one, was a little miffed that the greatest networking opportunity of the entire week was omitted from the conference guide. Apparently large queues of members, delegates, lobbyists and the odd MP were networking for literally hours on end at somewhere called the conference services office. Come on, I didn't get all these cards printed for nothing.

So what were the hot topics? Well obviously the environment was preying on everybody's mind. There seems to be a common misconception that the Conservatives have stolen a march on Labour over the Environment. Poppycock. They may have their tree, their hollow words and their unfounded policies, but if anybody doubts which party is really committed to delivering on the environmental agenda, they only needed to

walk around the exhibition stands in Manchester. I've now got so many free bags I'll be able to fly to Bournemouth next year on AirMiles paid for entirely by my green Clubcard points. And no, you can't armour plate a Toyota Prius. They barely get up hills as it is.

Another sizzling topic was local government. It's all I heard anybody talking about as I walked around the Local Government Zone. It's so glamorous that it's often overlooked for more frivolous talk of leadership contests etc. However local government is much more than just bins and bogs. It's the national governments most important tool for delivering its policies and its most important scapegoat when the cash runs out.

Salacious talk of "double devolution" and "place shaping", which had been giving councillors and public servants the horn in town halls up and down the country for months, exploded at conference with frenzied, almost uncontrollable, speculation about the contents of the Local Government White Paper. After one particular session on the Lyons Review I had to dash back to my hotel for a cold shower just to calm down. Or was that just the thought of Anna Randel? Still time moves on and of course the White Paper has now been published, and in what is generally a stunning piece of forward thinking my favourite paragraph has to be 3.28.

Finally what about Manchester itself. All I can say is that as far as cities go it is outstanding. The locals were so welcoming, I'm sure everyone has a story of a Manc coming up to them to say how happy they were to be hosting the conference. Like them, I can't wait for it to return.



And we thought the riff-raff were being kept out: the Fabian Society reception proved a hit for all, Fabian Society General Secretary Sunder Katwala included.

Vox Pop: Ivan Lewis MP

At the end of the week what would you make you say this conference has been a success?

Unity. Complete and utter unity. And a belief that the government is back, focused on the day-to-day issues which concern the British people. And more than that, we have a brighter, better vision for the future of the country than our political opponents.

What would you most like to hear in the leader's speech today?

I'd like to hear of his personal and the government's massive achievements since 1997; I think he should remind people of what Britain was like when we came into government, what Britain is like now. Finally, an identification of what the future challenges are and a total commitment to work with Gordon Brown on a stable transition.

And talking of challenges, what do you think is the country's biggest policy challenge in the coming years?

I think one of the great moral purposes has to be ending child and pensioner poverty in Britain - equal energy to the amazing work that has been done on the international Make Poverty History campaign. I think the other big issue is: what can the state do to enhance quality of life? Now I think that now that the standard of living on the whole for many families is greatly enhanced, many families however are really worried and insecure and anxious about quality of life-type issues. We need to be much clearer about what we can do as government on those issues but also what we need from individuals and communities in terms of both their empowerment and their responsibilities.



So can you now tell us something interesting about yourself that our readers might not know?

As we are in Manchester, I'm one of the few MPs, probably, who was born, raised, and have lived all of my life in the constituency that I represent. Now some people may regard that as boring, but it's something that makes the relationship I have with my constituency very special. I think there are many people who have lived in the constituency they represent for many, many years before they become the MP but I think there's probably not many were born, raised, and have never ever left - in my case not even to go to University, do you know what I mean? So I literally have lived there all of my life. Probably interesting.

The Next Issue of Anticipations

The theme for the next issue of Anticipations, the first of 2007, will be about the policies that Labour should introduce but can't. Basically, imagine that there's a General Election around the corner and Labour is about to, no matter what happens, lose control of the Government - it's a horrible thought, but use your imagination. There's time to implement a few choice policies and there are no political implications - the election is lost anyway, what could you lose? - what would you introduce? Basically, we want to know what the policies are that you think Labour should introduce but can't for political reasons - the ones that you think are the right thing to do but which are the hard choice to make.

Please email your ideas for articles to Emma Carr at ecarr@youngfabians.org.uk or Angela Green at agreen@youngfabians.org.uk as soon as possible.

The deadline for final submissions is Wednesday 31st January 2007.

Vox Pop: Dr Howard Stoate MP



At the end of this week what would make you say that this conference has been a success?

I want to hear some great speeches from the leadership. I want to hear that the Party is entirely united. I want to hear that what we are in the business of is running the country and not squabbling over who runs the Party. And I want to see meaningful reform of public services on the agenda for the next year and I think, if we can do that, then it'll have been a great conference.

What would you most like to hear in the leader's speech today?

I want to hear that unity is on the agenda. I want to hear that the delivery of public services is the only thing that matters for this country; that we do not want to get ourselves bogged down with internal squabbles which dogged us in the 80s. So I want Tony to come out with a positive, hard-hitting reform speech saying that the agenda continues. Ten years: we're still not tired, we've got plenty to offer.

What do you think the country's biggest policy challenge is in the coming years?

Well, in broad terms it's the reform of public services because public services have had all the money going into them, they haven't yet reformed in the way I want to see. So reform of public services has to be the biggest challenge.

Can you tell us something interesting about you that we might not already know?

There's very little interesting about me. I'm a workaday backbench MP, who does me job and does the best I can for my constituents.

Vox Pop: Rt Hon. John Hutton MP



At the end of the week what would you make you say this conference has been a success?

That we've been able to reconnect with the public, with the people out there, that they see us talking about their problems and not talking about ourselves. That would be important.

new challenges that are facing our country and our people. I'm quite sure Tony will set out his vision of that future and I'm sure the Party will want to follow it.

What do you think is the country's biggest policy challenge in the coming years?

Helping people to succeed, to make sure that, when people go through times of change in their lives, that a proper safety net and proper support for them there when they go through that and we help people not just get by but get on.

Can you tell our readers something interesting about yourself that they might not already know?

Well, I'm a Cabinet Minister, you know, there's never very much interesting about us. I'm writing a book about the First World War, which I hope to get published next year

What would you most like to hear in the leader's speech today?

A sense of the future, where New Labour is going – we've got to stay New Labour if we want to win. And we've got to wake up to the

Well, excellent. We'll look out for it.
Great. Buy 50 copies.

Vox Pop: Liam Byrne MP



Of those challenges Tony laid out what do you think is the biggest policy challenge in the coming years? Or is there something else that is going to come up?

Well, it basically comes down to this simple question about how we as the Labour Party use collective power to help make globalisation work for ordinary working families. You know, very often today globalisation means jobs shifted offshore; it can mean high levels of immigration, and very often there are great benefits from that, but often the benefits come to middle-class families or business. Our job is to make sure globalisation actually works for every family in Britain. We have to make sure that we have the policy in place so that aspirational families can look forward to a better future both for them, their parents, and their kids too. You know, that's hard, it's tough, the challenges and the obstacles are changing really rapidly, and we've got to navigate them on behalf of Britain.

Has this conference been a success?

If so, why?

It's been a great success this week. What we've seen is how quickly Labour has recovered its balance after a couple of weeks of mucking about. What we've seen this week is quite a lot of coherence and unity around, not just an analysis of what Labour needs to do today, but what the challenges are over the next four or five years. I think Bill Clinton actually put it very well today; he said Labour needs to get back to work, and that kind of summed it up for me.

In terms of Tony Blair's speech what were you looking to get from that? Do you think he delivered?

Yeah, I mean it was one of the most incredible speeches that I've seen in 20 years worth of membership of the Labour Party. What was most extraordinary about it for Ministers is that it presented an incredibly clear and concise analysis of the kind of things that Labour needs to sort out over the next few years. And what he was able to do was offer a lot of benefit of his experiences as nearly ten years as Prime Minister – that kind of experience is invaluable, but that kind of insight is even more precious.

After nearly 10 years of government under Tony – and we're looking at the change now – do you think Labour has the credibility with the public to move forwards and secure government in the longer term?

To be honest, I think we've got a bit of work to do to get that credibility back to the levels it needs to be. I think a lot of people will have looked at the last couple of weeks and wondered, "Are these guys interested in me and my family's future, or are they more interested in who runs the Labour Party?". So we have got a lot of work to do over the next six months to get back out there, to spend time with local residents talking to them about our ideas for the future and also listening to their concerns. So, you know, I don't think our credibility is as high as it needs to be and I think, to be blunt, we've got a lot of work to do to get it back up to the levels that are needed.

Finally, tell us something interesting about yourself.

(laughs) Well, this is going to sound very strange coming from a man who has very little hair but I once had a Mohican.

Young Fabian Website

If you'd like to respond to any of the articles or interviews featured in this edition of *Anticipations* or continue any of the debates, please visit the Young Fabian message board on the website at www.youngfabians.org.uk.

An Ode to Manchester

Tom Miller explains why Manchester was the perfect locations for this year's Labour Conference

I was lucky enough to attend Labour's annual conference in Manchester this year as a volunteer helper for Compass, an organisation hoping to steer the direction of the democratic left. I can only speak for myself, but I do wonder if anyone else is still, even now, surfing on that post-conference buzz? Commiserations to those of you who couldn't take the time out to join us for our annual gathering – you missed a great week.

Conference is an excellent opportunity to escape the clutch of Westminster politics, and meet Labour activists from across the UK, as government ministers and activists come together in an environment which feels a million miles away from the capital, giving politics a less London-centric feel.

My adopted home city of Manchester hosted this year's conference; what a show it was.

Manchester, a real Labour heartland, was afforded the opportunity to show delegates from across the UK that it has so much to offer. A successful period of regeneration, providing excellent social facilities, is the result of a highly progressive Labour council and serves to remind me of the reasons I became, and remain, a Labour activist.

The conference venue itself was appropriately steeped in Labour history, the site having been the location of the infamous Peterloo massacre, where radicals and socialists, demonstrating against the grossly unfair Corn Laws, and for Parliamentary reform, were cruelly cut down by Yeoman cavalry. Here, the radicals who would later become the Chartists suffered a stinging early defeat, and standing at the place where such a cruel massacre took place, served only as a reminder of why we fight for a fairer society.

In my opinion this year's Conference was the most successful for many years. Despite media attempts to portray our Conference as a struggle for power between warring factions, an admirable display of unity on the conference floor helped to dispel the rumours of petty infighting which had dominated the headlines in preceding weeks and provided a welcome bounce in the opinion polls.

Perhaps this was down to Mr Blair's speech. I am by no means 'Blairite', where labels apply; many of you, like myself, believe that the party needs a radical policy rethink, and a

good old-fashioned Fabian style debate on direction. But no-one can deny the mastery Blair displays, captivating audiences with his unique display of political theatre. It will be sad to see such a loss of skill when he leaves. His speech had a palpable effect on the public and many delegates bought copies from the Labour Students stall soon afterwards as a reminder of the last performance by the outgoing PM.

On a more negative note, conference was tainted for many delegates by the chaos of the late accreditation office, which saw huge queues of people waiting for hours, even days, for their conference pass – without which access to the secure zone is impossible, regardless of status or rank. There were also complaints about the Conference Arrangements Committee, as countless delegates saw resolutions ruled out of order. Despite this, the Government suffered a couple of defeats.

Many attendees found themselves pleasantly surprised with Manchester, the bars especially providing a welcome change from the usual £3 a pint of the capital, according to one delighted London trade unionist. He clearly hadn't been to the Labour Students event in the Baby Grand bar the previous night.

For all the quaint charm of the normal seaside locations, Manchester seemed to provide an altogether more suitable location for a gathering of this size and significance, providing a vibrant backdrop to the main proceedings, with all parts of the conference conveniently close together. It also showed that London is not the only English city capable of 'doing politics' on a large scale.

The beneficiaries among local businesses were many, from the countless bars and restaurants doing a roaring trade, to the happy hoteliers for whom Christmas came early in 2006. Many Mancunians were amused and impressed by the sight of famous politicians and other assorted celebrities wandering the streets of their city on the way to and from the fringe meetings and receptions which provide the true conference experience away from the main hall.

So let's hope that the first time in Manchester won't be the last. Come back another year and help to promote and support the regeneration of this fine Labour city.

Vox Pop: Rt Hon. Jack Straw MP



At the end of this week what would you say has made this conference a success or not?

I think it has been a success. I was slightly worried about it at the beginning of the week, but I think the quarters have come together. No question that the top of the conference for everybody was Tony Blair's speech on Tuesday, but also a very thoughtful and powerful speech from Gordon Brown on Monday. I think that the public have been able to see that this concoction about other matters cannot submerge the substance of the Labour Party and the substance of what the leadership are trying to do for the Labour Party and at their request.

What did you most want to hear in Tony's speech? And did you hear it?

I thought it was the best speech that he has ever made and that's a very, very high bar let me tell you. Well, I think you heard everything you wanted to hear and a lot more. The most important part of that speech was to say to people that though your parties have to link the past, the present, and the future together in a very imaginative way,

you've got to both provide people with a sense of security and safety – because the future is a journey into the unknown – but you've also got responsibilities to see where the future is going and make the best assessment you can and take people there again as safely as possible. That's one set of things. The second is absolute overwhelming ambition that Tony has, and the Party should have, for this country. We've pulled the country out of where it was ten years ago but there is no reason why we can't be the best and most successful country in the world and that is what we need to do.

What is the biggest policy challenge for the coming year?

Well, the biggest policy challenge really for everybody is the combined issue of climate change and instability in the Middle East at an international level. And they are linked because a lot of the instability in the Middle East is to do with the high price of oil and the over-dominance of fossil fuels in the economies of those countries. Dealing with climate change is absolutely fundamental to the future. Domestically, it is about staying on top of the astonishing change and the nature of our economies and we can't get caught out.

And on that point do you think that Labour can win the argument on the environment?

Yes, I do. And I think the public is with us and can see the leadership that Tony has exercised.

Tell us something interesting about yourself? We've heard about Meg knitting in council.

Well, things that people may think are interesting about myself, some of them I try to talk about. About my family background, which is about coming from, as it were, a tribal Labour family. Delivering leaflets at an early age. My father being a conscientious objector and getting jailed for that. But one of the things I missed in my speech was the importance of ensuring we get converts to the Labour Party as well as people who happened to be born into it.

Fabian New Year Conference 2007 - The Next Decade

When - Saturday 13th January, 2007

Where - Imperial College, Exhibition Road, London, SW7

Who - Ed Balls, Hilary Benn, David Miliband, Polly Toynbee and many more...

To attend, please download the booking form at www.fabian-society.org.uk

Welcome in my back yard

Noel Hatch explains why we need to develop from being a joined-up state to being a join-in society

So what did we learn from the party conferences of 2006? We learnt that we are still "we will always strive to be on your side" and that life is no longer "just about me, me, me any more". From Brown's emphasis on social conscience to Cameron's cajoling of social responsibility, the mantra has moved from the "I choose, therefore I am" to the "I join in, therefore I am" - that we all have a common endeavour in defining what we want the good society to be. From a joined-up state of individual choices to a join-in society of mutual belonging.

The tectonic plates have shifted in the relationship between the state and the people it serves. From an era in which this relationship was defined by the state's structures - parliament, the town hall, the local park - these structures now must be redefined by the fluctuating and interdependent relationships between the state and its people as users, consumers and citizens.

The new era which is defined by the "fragmengranted" society - relationships are dominated by a dual paradox of fragmentation and integration: brand infidelity versus fairtrade evangelism, outsourcing versus freedom of movement, ghettos and gated communities versus neighbourhood associations, etc. These patterns of relationships, (previously predictable and institutionally managed) are now increasingly fluctuating and interdependent of one another. Shaping these social interactions has become easier than keeping them in shape, which is why single-issue groups are stealing the wider political ground. Only "bottom up" local democracy can provide the opportunity for creating consensus across the community and nurture active local citizenship.

Creating a consensus has always been a key challenge for democracy. More than ever, the public space is riven by both conflict and stagnation - refusal of the other and refusal of change. And yet, consensus is ever more critical at a time when difficult decisions need to be made about how to tackle pensions, climate change, national identity, etc. We need a joined-up society, but more importantly a join-in society.

How do we create this join-in society? Lack of interest in participating in democratic activity



derives partly from a lack of confidence in being able to make a difference. It also derives from the inappropriateness of traditional structure-led, democratic activity with the remote-controlled society that we live in.

General interest should not be cynically viewed as a repository of mutual fears, at best, drawn together by shared worries and at worst mutual hatred of each other. Some communities do have a strong sense of identity; some people may rarely vote in local elections; but many are already making a vital difference through statutory caring, young enterprise and mentoring. Involvement, exchange and redistribution of experiences and knowledge all build social capital.

Naturally, there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution. We need to look on the ground to see what fits best. Some communities may already have a strong democratic vitality, while others may benefit from capacity building for a more gradualist approach.

We need to reinvigorate the concept of general interest and common good through refashioning the relationship between the citizen and those who represent the general interest, our politicians and our government. Everyone needs to reconnect with each other and confront together the new realities

First, politicians need to enhance their legitimacy by spreading a civic gospel which gives citizens greater voice in the decisions that are made on their behest and also greater diversity of arenas in which they can express their political motivations

Second, both citizens and politicians need to accept their shared responsibilities in finding adaptable solutions to the competing demands.

This requires both tangible change and behavioural change to break the status quo and foster civic renewal, where people do not participate more for the sake of participating, but engage in making communities better places both for themselves and for those around them.

We cannot expect people to assume shared responsibilities in rebuilding the public realm if their communities are vacant of opportunity. We need to go to all communities, especially the most isolated and excluded, to feel the democratic pulse. To renew democracy, we need relationships and local institutions that integrate the diversity of challenges and opportunities, but also which integrate people's daily lives, so that people can practise democracy through getting informed, getting inspired, taking action and thereby improving their communities.

We need local public services to lead by example more than by authority. They must mobilise involvement and work in partnership

with all those who have a stake in the community. We therefore need local partners to be ambitious and risk-taking; brave and courageous in providing the necessary glue for social cohesion; communicating a clearer vision of how they want to improve the quality of life-chances for their residents. Citizens should be enabled to scrutinise the powers-that-be. We need local champions to come together to bring clarity and edge to the local conversation – that choreograph a local narrative that is inclusive and community-driven.

Empowering people to contribute to the common good should therefore be about giving people access to opportunities and confidence to access these opportunities. This needs to be deeply rooted in an ethos of mutuality and shared responsibilities. Active citizenship can only be formed through enabling a reciprocal relationship between citizens and between citizens and their representatives. Double devolution can therefore only be possible through a grass-roots WIMBYist* renaissance.

*Welcome In My Back Yard

Vox Pop: Kitty Ussher MP



Can you tell me at the end of this week what would make you say that this conference has been a success?

A new, renewed spirit of hope and confidence and unity in the Labour Party – I think we are there. And also lots of people having a great time and networking.

What did you most want to hear in the leader's speech today and did you get it?

I did get it. I wanted honesty and an assessment of the current situation and a clarity as to what is going on – and I got that completely. I think he showed us what a fantastic leader he is and has been. I was crying, I think, three seconds into it and most of the way through so yes, I think I got it.

Can you tell us what do you think is Britain's biggest policy challenge in the coming year?

Global warming.

Can you tell me something interesting about yourself that our readers don't know yet?

I've got Grade A trombone.

Your New Young



Conor McGinn -Chair

As Chair of the Young Fabians I hope to oversee a year of stimulating and topical debate on topics such as the recent seminar examining how Labour can reconnect with the working class. Having established the idea of a nominated Chair's Charity, I will be organising fundraising events for the South West Miners' Convalescence Home in Bournemouth.

[**cmcginn@youngfabians.org.uk**](mailto:cmcginn@youngfabians.org.uk)



Kate Groucutt Secretary

As Secretary I aim to communicate with the membership of the Young Fabians and administer meetings of the Executive. I hope to examine several policy issues this year including the leadership/deputy leadership of the Labour Party and the use of positive discrimination in the political selection system.

[**kgroucutt@youngfabians.org.uk**](mailto:kgroucutt@youngfabians.org.uk)



Rebecca Rennison Treasurer

As Treasurer I will be organising the financing of Young Fabian events over the year, including our reception at Labour Party Conference. I also hope to organise an event examining current climate change issues and contributing to an event on the role of positive discrimination in promoting equality in UK politics.

[**rrennison@youngfabians.org.uk**](mailto:rrennison@youngfabians.org.uk)



Fred Grindrod Policy and Publications Officer

Over the forthcoming year, I will be seeking to coordinate the writing of pamphlets and organise events on a variety of topics including racial equality and Labour values. I will be working with various organisations to secure funding for the publication of Young Fabian pamphlets.

[**fgrindrod@youngfabians.org.uk**](mailto:fgrindrod@youngfabians.org.uk)



David Floyd Website Officer

Having spent the past few months working on a pamphlet, I am pleased to say that it will be out soon. In my new role I plan to develop new and innovative technologies to make the website a forum for stimulating political discussion.

[**dfloyd@youngfabians.org.uk**](mailto:dfloyd@youngfabians.org.uk)



Patrick Woodman Parliamentary Officer

As Parliamentary Officer, I will be arranging a number of policy seminars relating to the Parliamentary and legislative agenda. I am also organising an event on UK/Iran relations.

[**pwoodman@youngfabians.org.uk**](mailto:pwoodman@youngfabians.org.uk)

Fabian Executive



Mark Rusling - Vice Chair

As well as assisting the Chair with the day-to-day running of the Young Fabians, I will be following up on our links with Labour's French and Irish sister parties during those countries' elections. 2007 is also an important year of Party, local and regional elections, and we must be at the forefront of the debates over ideas and policies. I will work hard to ensure that this is the case.

mrusling@youngfabians.org.uk



Tom Flynn International Officer

As International Officer I hope to organise topical policy debates with the representatives of a wide range of different countries and cultures to promote understanding. I would also like to organise a seminar to examine the choices for Labour in the forthcoming leadership & deputy leadership elections.

tflynn@youngfabians.org.uk



Emma Carr Editor, *Anticipations*

As Editor, I aim to produce four editions of *Anticipations* over the coming year. We are also intending to redesign the magazine and introduce new ways for members to get involved. I will also be organising the annual trip to Edinburgh again and hopefully other events throughout the year.

ecarr@youngfabians.org.uk



Angela Green Media and Publicity Officer

I hope to build upon the work of previous media officers and continue to raise our media profile through the better promotion of our events and publications. In addition to organising the book club I also hope to write more for *Anticipations* and organise an event in the new year.

agreen@youngfabians.org.uk



Will Martindale Party and TU Liaison Officer

I will be working closely with the Labour Party to forge links between the Young Fabians, Young Labour and Labour Students. I will also seek to develop the Young Fabian candidates' network.

wmartindale@youngfabians.org.uk



Yue-Ting Cheng Universities Officer

As Universities Officer I aim to develop and promote the Young Fabians within higher educational establishments and work with other groups to involve and engage young people into politics.

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Time to move on?

With the Bush agenda collapsing, the left must renew its foreign policy says Jessica Studdert

Nothing has damaged the Blair government more than the Iraq war. Regardless of whether one supported the original war, the folly of intervening without a realistic plan to win the peace has become increasingly clear. Yet critics have not gone far enough beyond issuing a collective 'told you so' to Blair and Bush. Three and a half years on, progressives are still fighting a political battle that was lost the day our troops entered Iraq.

If we can't do better than this, we risk missing a major opportunity when the neo-cons are in sharp retreat. Politically, scandal, lies and the Iraq aftermath have weakened the Republicans. In foreign policy, the North Korea crisis has left the world's hyperpower looking like a lame duck, relying on China's influence and having to work through the multilateral processes they previously argued are irrelevant. Intellectually, Francis Fukuyama has declared the neocon project dead.

The moment is right for the left to construct a 'neoprogressive' agenda from the ashes of the current global disorder. A new positive internationalism would set out priorities for international action and cooperation, benchmarks for interventions in failed states and consider means to be crucial to achieving the right outcomes.

What sort of foreign policy should progressives seek? At one level, this is an easy question to answer. We know where we want to get to in the end. Unlike the neocons, we think multilateralism matters. Without the legitimacy it can deliver, Iraq has been mission impossible. So our long-term aims in global politics are easy to define. We should all be working for the International Criminal Court, a strong United Nations and other regional organisations committed to the principles of human rights and democracy – and to ensure there is international cooperation on the biggest issues we face, from climate change to managing international migration. But the difficulty – and our own divisions – come about because we don't live in that world.

Iraq developed and discredited the concept of 'humanitarian intervention', but there has never been an easy response to the question of whether or how to intervene in failed

states. The left has always struggled to present a coherent response to the tensions between human rights and state sovereignty that have come to the fore since the end of the Cold War stalemate. The 1990s were littered with examples of Western-led military interventions which ranged from misguided to shambolic and tended to be defined, in large part, by who intervenes.

In Somalia, the paradoxical 'peace-enforcement' mission failed when 18 US soldiers were killed. The new Clinton administration soon realised that this loss was not worth the hundreds of thousands of Somali lives that could have been saved if the mission completed. Withdrawal from Somalia was rapid and six months later the Western powers shamefully allowed the genocide in Rwanda to continue unchallenged to its grotesque completion.

Towards the end of the decade, the NATO-led Kosovo War, which led to the toppling of Milosevic, was widely trumpeted as a triumph of foreign intervention. Yet is it enough to judge success by the outcome and not the means? The Balkan crisis highlighted the inadequacies of the UN and of European military power. The intervention was in reality almost entirely US-led, and therefore designed to avoid repeating the mistakes of Somalia. It was not politically feasible for American troops to die, so a campaign of bombing the region from a high altitude marked the new phenomenon of 'virtual war', with no risk to the attacker, but did little to address the complication of ethnic warfare. With neighbour pitched against neighbour, ground troops would have been much more effective, but neither the political will to intervene on behalf of the Americans, nor the military capacity on behalf of the Europeans, existed.

9/11 provided a political will for US-led interventions that had not previously existed, and the neo-cons seized their moment. Forays into Afghanistan and Iraq followed, on the pretext of the War on Terror. Waging war on an abstract notion is a difficult enterprise, particularly as the political and military build up to each war concentrated on the fact of the intervention, not the capacity for nation-building that necessarily followed regime change.

The post-9/11 world allows little scope for interventions that cannot be justified under the banner of the War on Terror. We are now faced with an escalating crisis in Sudan to which the international community's limited response has already broken the post-Rwanda promise of 'never again' and makes a mockery of the UN's 2005 commitment to an international 'responsibility to protect'. The US is preoccupied, Europeans incapable, the UN hamstrung: meanwhile Darfur is in ruins.

So what is the progressive response to the immediate challenges of global security? We must start by asserting our belief in democracy and human rights as innate values that must guide our foreign policy. When activities within sovereign borders threaten these principles, action must be taken. The problem is that international law and the institutions that enshrine it have not overcome the dilemma between respect for state sovereignty and respect for human rights, on occasions when the two conflict. The UN is an imperfect institution because it does not distinguish between democratic and non-democratic states and is only the sum of its diverging parts. The Security Council gives disproportionate power to the victors of the Second World War and is often deadlocked and incapable of responding to crises.

Reform of the UN must be a long term aim. The neoprogram commitment to democracy must in practice lead to an explicit recognition of the difference between legitimate and illegitimate states. Engagement within the UN should seek the emergence of a 'democracy club' and begin to challenge the authority of states who do not speak for their people. An aim could be to formalise voting rights in the General Assembly only for democracies.

In the meantime, the neoprogram agenda must prioritise multilateral collaboration as the best way to effect change within a state's borders. Diplomatic pressure is crucial, but the model of the EU demonstrates the 'club membership' offer that multilateral institutions can use to effect change internally, as has been demonstrated in Eastern Europe and may prove to be the case in Turkey. The EU has a role in promoting the model elsewhere and supporting the emergence of strong regional institutions in the developing world. In Africa, this is the only role the former colonial powers can legitimately have in response to crises. So the only credible course of action to the internal chaos within Zimbabwe is to support and strengthen the African Union. This could be done with a preference for successful democracies like Botswana, which would provide incentives for other African states to reform.

Soft means must be exhausted before the use of force is considered. Regional institutions are the best vehicle for intervention, because neighbouring states have a greater stake in a stable lasting settlement and are therefore more likely to use force that matches the needs on the ground. The beleaguered African Union Mission in Sudan (Amis) has made little impact and is about to withdraw because it is poorly equipped, lacking a credible mandate and facing a financial crisis. There is a role here for the Western powers in convincing the AU to press for resumed negotiations, and to support the emergence in the long term of a suitable rapid reaction force that can protect civilians.

So the neoprogram agenda should prioritise multilateralism, seek to strengthen regional institutions, and underpin the promotion of these means with a democratic preference. Yet the emphasis on democracy should not equate to a simplistic view of all democratic states as innately peace-loving. Some countries like the US and Israel may be termed 'militant democracies' and the UN has so far proved an ineffective institution to stop them pursuing their interests unilaterally. A significant coalition of democracies must be in agreement before another Western-led intervention is pursued. The neoprogram agenda must seek to strengthen other multilateral institutions for this purpose and here military alliances like NATO are key to determining a course of action and assigning legitimacy. This is what happened in Kosovo, a widely supported intervention, when the prospect of intervention within the UN was opposed by Russia. On this benchmark, the intervention in Afghanistan would have proceeded, but not Iraq – arguably the former, which did have widespread popular support, could have been more successful if resources hadn't been stretched by the latter.

There has never been a more urgent need for progressives to unite around common goals in foreign policy and international interventions. Within the UK, a new prime minister is the perfect opportunity to revise the internationalism of the left, while the Conservatives remain unable to articulate a credible opposition to a foreign policy they essentially supported all along. The neoprogram agenda must move forwards into this political space. In 2008 the much awaited prospect of a world after Bush will be a reality. We must have an agenda for action by then.

Jessica Studdert is Events Director and Researcher at the Fabian Society. She can be contacted at jstuddert@fabian-society.org.uk.

Vive la socialisme

Alex Barker writes the first of a series of columns following the progress of the French presidential elections

It is a cliché that the French are a people not afraid to take time off work to militate for their interests and political beliefs. Next year will see them offered the chance to express themselves without having to down tools, burn cars or shut down lecture halls. The Republic is preparing for the election that will see the Right's power tested more thoroughly than it has been since 1995. Jacques Chirac's 12-year tenure of the most powerful executive position in a Western democracy, spared the ultimate test in the controversial election of 2002, is at last coming to an end, and all parties seem determined to send a breath of fresh air into the Elysée.

New direction is what the country needs, if we are to trust recent history. Starved of an adequate outlet for the communication for their problems, different sections of French society have vented their malaise in their own ways. The "Non" vote against the European Constitution, the troubles in the banlieues, and the student strikes; the most alarming events in France over the last two years read like frustrated cries against the status quo. The establishment, the most obvious target of these movements, now has the opportunity to show that it has the capacity to offer its citizens what they want. The politicians have taken on board the desire for change, scrambling to interpret these various protests in the hope of tapping into a current of popular sentiment that will sweep them to office.

The gaullist UMP's likely candidate, Nicolas Sarkozy, and freshly selected Parti Socialiste (PS) candidate Ségolène Royal, are the most serious contenders in a race that in the past has often been seen by minor political groups as a means to reach a national audience with their message. The first lesson the Left has learnt from its catastrophic result in the 2002 election is that eclecticism comes at a high price. With eight candidates splitting the left-wing vote last time, far right Jean-Marie Le Pen managed to sneak ahead of favourite Lionel Jospin by 16.9% to 16.2%, obliging the electorate to vote overwhelmingly for Chirac for lack of a mainstream alternative. This time, even the disparate groups of the far-left are attempting to settle their differences and find a common candidate. Jean-Pierre Chevènement, a ex-PS member whose candidature captured over 5% of the vote in 2002, has promised to stand down if Le Pen looks likely to repeat his performance.

Sarkozy's rhetoric and policies as Ministre de l'Intérieur have earned him a reputation for heavy-handedness. He has pledged to oppose Turkey's membership of the EU. It was his contemptuous branding of banlieu youths as "racaille" (scum) which sparked the Autumn riots. It appears these attempts to poach Le Pen's voters have only legitimised the latter's discourse, however, as recent surveys indicate the 78 year-old's support at an all-time high near 20%.

Following the riots, strikes, and "Non" vote, Sarkozy and Royal are aiming to portray themselves as outsiders. Sarkozy did not go the elite political school, the Ecole Nationale de l'Administration (ENA). He is currently, however, a senior minister. Royal regularly denounces machismo in politics, and would of course be the first female President of France. Her long-term partner and the father of her children, however, is the Secrétaire Générale of the PS, and they met while studying ... at the ENA.

There is a clear desire for change in France, but it is not clear what form this change should take. Last year's student protests, after all, successfully defeated a law passed by the current government which aimed to free up the youth labour market. The rivals are turning to look overseas for inspiration. "Ségo", as the media know her, admitted to the FT last spring that she admires Tony Blair; an admission which cost her the disapproval of the PS old-guard. "Sarko" is said to have gone as far as to seek advice on the elections from our Prime Minister. With the successful candidate set to come to power just as Blair leaves office in Britain, will his legacy continue to be felt across the Channel as the lessons of the Third Way are applied to France?



L'Etat C'est Moi

Former Young Fabian Chair, Kevin Bonavia, sums up the French presidential system

French democracy, certainly as articulated by the constitution of the Fifth Republic, can be fairly expressed as an elected monarchy.

British democracy, in contrast, has often been summed up as an elected dictatorship, by which the individual who can command a Commons majority, effectively sets the legislative agenda, exercises executive authority and, not least, has awesome powers of patronage.

With the French version, I would emphasise the "monarchical" – representative assemblies play a supporting role to the figure of the president. That certainly was Charles de Gaulle's view of the new constitution which he demanded upon being invited to rescue France in its political crisis of 1958. De Gaulle wanted to restore the so-called 'grandeur' of France, embodied in its strong leaders. These strong leaders had actually been absolutists such as the Sun King, Louis XIV and the Emperor Napoleon.

Whilst the French president could not get away with some of their arbitrary measures, de Gaulle and all his successors have often lived in a manner that would make even our old dear Majesty blush, residing in their several presidential chateaux, served by vast personal retinues and fortified by priceless wine stocks.

At least Her Maj sticks to the ceremonial. Monsieur (or perhaps soon-to-be Madame) le President's constitutional powers have a touch of the old absolutism too. Apart from actively heading the armed forces and running foreign policy (even when parliament is controlled by an opposing party), the president has the right to dissolve parliament and call national referenda. But these last two powers can have nasty consequences: de Gaulle had to resign after losing a referendum in 1968 and Chirac did both in his presidency ending up with a Socialist parliament in 1997 and a rejection of the European Constitution in 2005.

The president can justify his activist role in the constitution from the mandate sent from the largest direct electorate in Europe. It should not be surprising if next year's presidential election is essentially a personality contest. Sego and Sargo are well advised to continue developing their cults of

personality. This is vital if both are to reach the run-off between the two highest placed candidates: the Socialists' lacklustre Lionel Jospin failed this hurdle when the populist demagogue of the National Front's Jean-Marie Le Pen overtook him in 2002.

But a personality-driven campaign cannot afford to be too detached from the supporting party, as parliamentary elections follow shortly after the presidential ones.

All 521 seats in the National Assembly are up for grabs, currently controlled by a coalition led by the right-wing Union for the Presidential Majority (a name demonstrative of the system). Should Royale triumph in May, she might well anticipate a strong bounce for the Socialists, but a trait common to French government, apart from its taste for monarchism, is its susceptibility to the upset of a revolution...



Segolene Royal has a suitable name to live up to Louis XIV, who was a model ruler for the current presidency.

l'etat c'est moi

Tertiary education policy: a few degrees off course?

Gavin Lingiah tells us why he thinks it's time to increase university tuition fees

By the time this issue of *Anticipations* is published, "freshers" will be under the new "top-up fees" regime. The Higher Education Act 2004 is a step in the right direction. The Higher Education Policy Institute predicts that total fee income for the university sector will be around £3 billion per year. This is in addition to the £7 billion from the state. Yet the resultant injection of funds into universities is not transformative.

The Association of University Teachers (AUT) estimates it would cost £10 billion to remedy the backlog of capital repairs let alone make substantive improvements, whilst the OECD notes that state spending per student in the UK is half that spent in the USA. The picture is worse than it first appears given the large amount of private spending on higher education in the USA. Additionally, the decline in the average funding per student from over £7500 in 1989-1990 to a little over £4500 in 2000-2001 (Bekhradnia 2004), illustrates how vulnerable universities are to government spending decisions. This reduction in per student spending has inevitably led to lower relative salaries for staff (a relative reduction of 37 % since 1981), reduced staff-student ratios (from 1:9 in the mid 1970s to an estimated 1:23 in 2010), over-crowding, lack of support services and an overall decline in the learning experience.

I applaud the moves this government have made to stabilise and begin to reverse this fall in funding per student. However, there is no prospect of a return to the value seen many years ago. It is in the interests of our country to have many educated to the highest global standards. Yet taxpayers are unwilling to provide sufficient funds. UK expenditure HE stands at 1% of GDP whereas the USA spends 2.7% of GDP (OECD 2005). As progressives, we know that education is the only viable route out of poverty.

What should progressives be arguing for? The taxpayer will not pay taxes. Instead graduates should pay more and give universities back their autonomy. I propose that the ceiling on undergraduate fees be lifted to over £50,000 per year. Even the moderately wealthy can not afford £50,000 a year for 3-5 years. Because the benefits to individuals and society at large accrued by tertiary education demand state

intervention, the state should provide loans linked to the rate of inflation to cover these higher tuition fees. Such loans would allow universities to receive funds up front whilst not inflicting financial damage on students. Further, universities would no longer require funds for teaching from HEFC or their equivalents in the devolved administrations. This could free up money to encourage non-traditional students into HE through summer schools, to develop innovative teaching tools or to help commercialise research. Universities will also no longer be tempted to become overly reliant on overseas student fee income.

I have not chosen £50,000 arbitrarily. Medical courses are the most expensive and UCL is estimated to have spent £50103 per medical student in 2002-2003 (HEPI 2005). Few courses justify such fees. Might this discourage people from low socio-economic groups from studying a subject that would likely charge such high fees? It should not because students will not need to find that money upfront. Additionally, medical graduates tend to be high earners; thus potential medical students should be content to know that they will not be plagued by large un-repayable debts. In contrast, a subject like theology would probably not charge such high fees. Theology is less expensive to teach and its graduates tend to earn less. Of critical importance is that what ever you wish to study, the funds will be available from the state. The state could further entrench this level playing field by providing a non-means tested loan. I would suggest around £10,000 a year (NUS survey 2004-2005). This means that what ever, wherever you study, and regardless of your socio-economic background, you will have the means to provide for yourself. We will be treating students as adults. The absence of state means testing will reduce tortuous form filling too.

What could students expect from universities free from over-regulation and with greater financial independence? As universities compete for students, you can expect three types of benefit: better financial aid, infrastructure and support. The access regulator would insist on the institutional provision on bursaries for those from lower

socio-economic groups and scholarships for those demonstrating high achievement on entry and during their course of study. This entitlement would be on top of the £10,000 loan entitlement.

We may also see improved student accommodation, upgraded lecture and seminar rooms, improved scientific facilities to name but a few improvements. In terms of support we could expect a return to better staff-student ratios and better pay for staff. We might also see more support staff in order to allow teachers to teach. Furthermore, it is likely that there would be an improvement in the level of pastoral care. For instance, nearly half of students suffer a debilitating mental episode at least once a year (ACHA 2006) but with better support, we might see a reduction in the drop out rate and an improvement in the well-being of students.

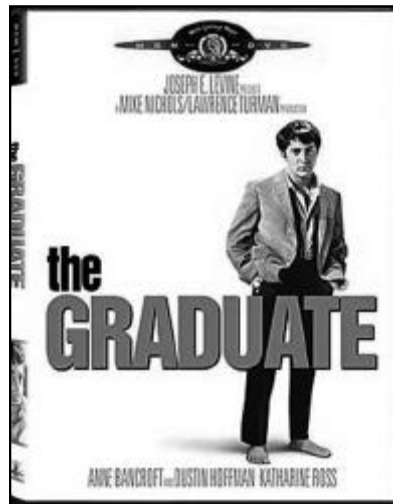
We might enter a "Golden Age" of tertiary education in this country. But expect objections from students, parents, the media and political parties - including sections within Labour. It is fair not to wish to load young people with such a large amount of debt. However we need to remember that very few people would graduate with the maximum level of debt, financial aid would be available and importantly, tertiary education is an investment in oneself. It is worth pointing out that as a society we are increasingly becoming comfortable with borrowing. Taking out unsecured personal loan for things like cars and holidays, or even general expenditure is now the norm. No one ever graduates and thinks 'I am going to have to repay thousands of pounds in tax'.

The policy of the Scottish Executive to replace up-front tuition fees with a graduate

endowment shows that the line between tax and fee is less than clear-cut in the public mind. Of course, if universities in England were given more flexibility in what they charge, this would inevitably put pressure on the Scottish Executive to change direction. They would simply not be able to match the increased funding of institutions south of the border. As such, I hope they too move towards the position outlined above.

Moving to increase the fee cap is politically difficult. But if we truly value education and want to improve our universities, the student experience and provide support for talented people from disadvantaged backgrounds this is the way to do it.

The Labour government has already enacted many controversial policies. Labour has also improved lives on several levels, transformed the country along progressive lines and given long-ignored communities the chance to reach their potential. Education is at the core of Labour values; isn't time we let our universities and students reach their potential?



But how could he pay his tuition fees without the help of a certain Mrs Robinson?

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Book Review

100 years of Labour, Graham Bash and Andrew Fisher
(London 2006)

Conor McGinn reviews *100 Years of Labour* as seen from Bash and Fisher's hard left perspective

I consider John McDonnell MP to be a personal friend, a man of integrity and an articulate advocate of his sincerely held beliefs. None of that, however, stops me from believing that the political direction he, the authors of this book, and the dubiously-titled Labour Representation Committee (LRC) want to take the Labour Party in would be nothing short of disastrous for the very people they claim to fight for, namely the British working class.

The book itself is a well written and relatively easy read. In some respects it is like a GCSE guide to the Labour Party from a hard left perspective, with aesthetically pleasing text boxes appearing every few pages in which the biographies of prominent Labour figures or factions are outlined.

This of course is to illustrate to the reader how wonderful Tony Benn/Militant/the Miners' Strike was, and how evil Ernie Bevin/Neil Kinnock/Peter Mandelson was, lest we were in any doubt about the socialist purity and moral superiority of Labour's hard left.

Despite its title, the publication fails as a new historical account of much merit and it is not an exaggeration to say that academics and scholars will learn nothing new about Labour's past from it.



The arguments and the "if-only-we'd-beaten-Healey" rose-tinted views of Labour's hard left are well rehearsed. This is perhaps epitomised in the fleeting references to the Miners' Strike as being 'the final and greatest defeat of the working class'? Really? Whilst in no way diminishing the courage and cause

of the striking miners in 1985, and in no way justifying the actions of that horrible woman, Thatcher, can we really say that the collapse of a strike undertaken by a small percentage of working people was the '...greatest defeat of the working class'? I think not.

But perhaps I am being too harsh on what is at least an addition to the library of Labour history, but it is very difficult to look objectively at an especially romanticised and revisionist history of Labour's hard left which itself is partisan far beyond the hard right John Golding's *Hammer of the Left* was.

The most interesting - and that's still not very - part of this book is the final chapter, in which the authors deliberate on what the future direction of the Labour Party should be.

The rant about the treachery of Blair and New Labour is to be expected. The accusation, however, that Clem Atlee's pioneering government, and indeed all Labour governments, reverted to Tory economic and social policies and therefore betrayed the working class is nothing short of ridiculous.

The final astonishing flourish says that a return to 'old Labour' is not enough, that the party must adopt the policies, values and tactics of that time that brought us closest to the working class: the glory days of the Bennites. I know, I nearly vomited as well. Yes, the authors want us to return to those wonderful days when we had our worst election results in history and alienated more people from our party than even the most right-wing of Tories could have hoped for. As old Wedgie himself would say: "You just couldn't make it up."

Book Reviews

If you would like to review a book, or if you know of a book that would make an interesting Anticipations book review, please email Emma Carr at ecarr@youngfabians.org.uk or Angela Green at agreen@youngfabians.org.uk.

Book Club

The Trial, Franz Kafka (1925)

Reviewed by the Young Fabian Book Club and written up by Paul Miller



August's Young Fabian Book Club discussed Franz Kafka's *The Trial*. When reading it I was reminded of the original advertising campaign for Staropramen lager when it first became available in this country in about 1995. Like Kafka, 'Star' is from Prague, and the general gist of the campaign was that if he had drunk Star a bit more, Kafka's literary work might have been a bit less depressing.

It's quite easy to get depressed at the view of politics put across in *The Trial*, which verges on the nihilistic, reinforced by the mordant language, characterisation and description in the work. The central thread of the book is the tale of Joseph K, a middle-ranking employee of a bank who is arrested without explanation by two anonymous government officials. The charges are never explained, a

proper hearing is promised and never takes place, and K's professional and personal life gradually unravels before his morbid end. It seems to be better to not participate at all and to hide, or to physically resist arrest, rather than to participate in processes that are inherently rigged, irrational and corrupt. In a key passage, the painter Titorelli suggests that Joseph should just get on with his job and not let the case bother him.

The Trial suggests a huge scepticism about post-Enlightenment theory about the nature of the state, in particular that it should be just, protect rights, and arise through consent or a social contract. State officials just come along and arrest people without explaining why, and the legal process merely serves the interests of the professionals who operate it rather than justice or the public interest.

When considering the identity of the author - Kafka was Jewish - and the setting - 1920s Eastern Europe - *The Trial* takes on a frightening poignancy, even though this point has been noted by many studies of the novel. I was particularly struck by the unfolding of the process from arrest to execution. This is incremental, mannered and bureaucratised - as was often the case with the Final Solution.

There is more to *The Trial* than the dark corners of interwar Europe - particularly in the sexual politics of the novel. Joseph K's exploitative and self-centred approach to personal relationships almost seem to form the basis of his guilt and indictment. Both the value of loving, mutual relationships on the personal level, and the importance of access to a fair and transparent system of justice, are shown by their respective absences throughout.

Young Fabian Book Club

The next book to be read by the Young Fabian book club will be *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells.

The club will be meeting on Thursday 18th January 2007 at The Old Star in Westminster. If you are interested in attending or would like to submit your comments for discussion by the group, please contact Angela Green at agreen@youngfabians.org.uk.

Events Diary

Embassies:

Immigration and Integration - Why and How?

14 September, Royal Netherlands Embassy, 38 Hyde Park Gate, London SW7 5DP

Speakers: John Denham MP (Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee); Roisin Donachie (Head of European and International Relations, Commission for Racial Equality); Alan Travis (Home Affairs Editor, The Guardian); Dr Wendy Asbeek-Brusse (Dutch Academic Council for Government Policy).

Lessons for the UK from Spanish devolution

10 October, Spanish Embassy, 39 Chesham Place, SW1X 8SB

Speakers: Spanish Ambassador; Jordi Pedret (MP from the Catalan Socialist Party); Guy Lodge, IPPR Democracy Research Fellow and former Young Fabian Chair; Ramiro Gil Serrate (LSE Researcher into regional and public economics).

Debate on the flat tax

25 October, Estonian Embassy, 16 Hyde Park Gate, SW7 5DG

Speakers: Andy Love MP (Labour MP for Edmonton and member of the Treasury Select Committee) and Greg Hands MP (Conservative MP for Hammersmith & Fulham).

Socials:

Young Fabians in the North

31 August, Pitcher and Piano, Coney Street, York

Details: Exec members Conor McGinn, and Matt Blakely attended. This was the precursor to the regional section of the Young Fabians website, which is currently being developed and will provide a network for regional members.

Pub Quiz

31 August, Upstairs at the Marquis of Granby - 41 Romney Street, London SW1P

Details: Put Young Fabians' intellect to the test to win special prizes (and glory) with quiz-mistress Ellie Levenson.

City of London Fabians

19 October, City University Club, 50 Cornhill near Bank Tube Station

Details: The City of London Fabians held their inaugural meeting.

Young Fabian Annual Dinner

3 November, City Spice, 138 Brick Lane

Speaker: Tristram Hunt (historian, broadcaster and columnist).

Labour Party Conference:

'The world after Bush' – Fabian Society/Young Fabians fringe

24 September, Conference Hall, Manchester Town Hall

Speakers: Peter Mandelson (EU Commissioner for Trade); Mary Kaldor (LSE); Rashmee Roshan Lall (Times of India); Mark Leonard (CER), Jef McAllister (Time Magazine).

Young Fabians Annual Reception at Labour Party Conference

27 September, One Central Street Manchester.

Speakers: Rt Hon Jack Straw (Leader of the House of Commons), Graham Goddard (Dep. General Secretary, Amicus), Meg Munn MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary, DCLG) and Martin Salter MP.

Seminars:

Young Fabian debate: 'Multi-culturalism's Dilemma: Does religion fit?'

19 October, Committee Room 7, House of Commons

Speakers: Lord Bhikhu Parekh (chair of the Runnymede Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain 1998-2000), John Battle MP (Prime Minister's Faith Envoy), Harriet

Crabtree (Inter Faith Network UK) and Shaista Gohir (Muslim Voice UK)

Details: 'Multiculturalism's Dilemma' examined how religion fits into multicultural Britain, and explored from a grassroots perspective the feasibility and implications of a 'shared citizenship'.

"I've got the foreman's job at last": Can Labour reconnect with working class communities?

28 November, Committee Room 8, House of Commons

Speakers: Liam Byrne MP, Mary Creagh MP, Jon Cruddas MP, and Jim Devine MP

A "whole Middle East" strategy: how can the UK build a new partnership with Iran?

5 December, Grand Committee Room, Westminster Hall

Speakers: Dr Phyllis Starkey MP, Chair of the British-Iranian All-Party Parliamentary Group
Simon Tisdall, Assistant Editor & Foreign Affairs Columnist, The Guardian.

Details: Following the Prime Minister's recent call for a "new partnership" with Iran, this Parliamentary seminar considered the current condition of the UK's relationship with Iran and the prospects for a new dialogue. Given the conditions laid out by the Prime Minister, how likely are improvements - and how big a threat does Iran continue to pose to regional security?

Young Fabian Trip to Sweden

Mark Rusling, who organised the trip to campaign in the Swedish general elections, tells us how it went.

On 13th September, a group of 10 Young Fabians jetted off to the supposed social democratic paradise of Stockholm.

The five-day trip was in order to campaign for the Social Democrats in the final few days before the Swedish local, regional and national elections. In terms of votes gained, the trip was not a success - our sister party slipped to their worst result since 1914. However, in terms of opportunities to forge links with, and to learn from, our fellow European social democrats, the visit was undoubtedly positive.

We lived and campaigned with members of the young Social Democrats from the Stockholm region and from Denmark. Campaigning involved handing out roses at train stations and shopping centres, putting up posters and door knocking. One group, finding that their Swedish was not quite up to this task, managed to accost a bilingual ten-year old Swedish-Palestinian youth who went from door to door with them translating their Social Democratic entreaties!

Another slightly bizarre addition to the otherwise standard campaigning routine involved handing out leaflets at Stockholm

railway station while half the cabinet sang songs from the 'Jungle Book' behind us!

There were many similarities between British and Swedish elections. We even found ourselves in the familiar position of cheering as the first, favourable, results came in from the north. However, by far the most ominous was watching up close as a seemingly successful centre-left government was beaten by a policy-light opposition reinvigorated under a new young leader. We watched as Prime Minister Göran Persson conceded defeat just a few metres from where we were standing and were reminded that we do not want to find ourselves in a similar position in three years' time.

The Social Democrats will be back soon - after all, the centre-right coalition won by only 2% and has already lost two ministers to scandals. Now is the time for Labour to learn the lessons of the Swedish campaign, particularly about the need for incumbent governments to set out their vision of the future, rather than simply relying on past achievements. Having experienced this election at first hand, the Young Fabians are well-placed to deliver these lessons to the Party.

Goodbye from her...

Prema Gurunathan, outgoing Young Fabian Chair, say so long, farewell, Auf Wiedersehen, goodbye

After four years on the Young Fabian executive, I am now in 'retirement'. It has been a journey for me: challenging, stimulating and fun. I've tackled my fear of public speaking in the last year, speaking to 150 people in a debate against the Tories, as well as 150 Upper Six students. I've gone from correcting bad grammar, setting off the fire alarm and creating bad puns as editor of *Anticipations* to being cheeky to Secretaries of State, singing songs from the *Sound of Music* to get everyone to be quiet, and creating yet more bad puns during speeches.

For those of you who have thought about getting involved with the YFs, I can only say that it is a worthwhile experience, and urge you to do so.

The busy schedule has continued since the last issue in early August - our trip to the Edinburgh Festival, a regional event in York, a discussion at the Dutch Embassy on immigration, another on devolution at the Spanish Embassy, and a more than timely on multiculturalism. At party conference we had a very successful reception, kindly sponsored by Amicus; as well as a joint event with the Fabian Society on 'The World After Bush'.

Our reception at party conference attracted over 80 people on a cold and soggy Wednesday evening. Fortunately the venue was cosy, the food decent, there was lots of drink - at one point, YF Treasurer Tom Flynn came over to be, expressing grave concern we might not even use all the money behind the bar. Our speakers for the evening - MPs Meg Munn, Martin Salter, Jack Straw and Graham Goddard from Amicus were good value, full of thoughtful remarks and amusing anecdotes about their early years as political activists.

Speaking of the Leader of the House, the autumn to date has been dominated by headlines after he remarked that he found it difficult to communicate with Muslim constituents who wore the 'veil' (or more accurately the niqab and burqa) during his surgeries.

Two of our events - on immigration and multiculturalism have clearly struck a chord, taking place to packed audiences. I grew up in Singapore, like the UK, a multicultural society, but with a different approach to multiculturalism. Singapore prefers an inorganic, to-down approach to ensuring that

multiculturalism works, primarily because as a recently founded state (gaining independence in 1965), there was, and is an enduring urgency to ensure that any potential hurdles to nation-building were tackled. To this end, state-funded housing has to meet racial quotas - there are no ethnic ghettos in Singapore, or at least not to the same extent there were 50 years ago. Faith schools follow the state curriculum, and their intake is not limited to people of the same faith.

Indeed, my main memory of attending a Catholic convent was a place with friends from all faiths- Hindus, Muslims, Christians and non-believers. Chinese New Year was celebrated with a mass where a Catholic priest blessed the 'good luck' oranges we had brought. For this reason I find the acidic views of faith schools somewhat hard to swallow, for my experience - albeit in a very different environment - was so very different.

The emphasis is on shared goals- the national pledge which all Singaporean children are taught to recite from an early age says as much that 'regardless of race, language or religion', we are there to achieve the goal of 'happiness, prosperity and progress for our nation'. Doubtless there are problems with an inorganic approach - fewer people for instance now live in public housing, so how much longer will racial quotas work? In addition, does blind recital of the pledge amount to anything in practice?

The Singapore model is not perfect (and I'm a broken record on its faults), and the UK is different in countless respects, but as the 'outside insider' I think there is something the UK could learn. The debate the Fabian Society has started on Britishness is key - it's doubtlessly difficult to define who you are, but it's high time you made a start, and stopped having a long-running case of colonial and liberal guilt. I for one wouldn't be here if I didn't like it, so there must be something innately attractive about British values.

But for now, I'd like to thank my executive members over the years for all their support. Several are now personal friends who I am sure are looking forward to my piano recitals now that I've had to find an obsession to occupy the big gaping hole in the heart of my life. New chair Conor McGinn will no doubt keep up the good work - and may not even need the luck of the Irish to do so!

...and hello from him

The new Young Fabian Chair, Conor McGinn, says hello with his first Chair's column.

Let me begin by thanking last year's executive and, especially, last year's chair. Prema Gurunathan has done a wonderful job over the past year in leading the Young Fabian executive and enabling them to produce a huge number of excellent events, trips, debates and receptions. Her work was never ceasing and her size four shoes will be very hard to fill – even with my size nine feet.

Next I'd like to thank the membership for voting – having a democratically elected executive is an essential aspect of the Fabian Society and the Young Fabians. It is important, therefore, that every member has the opportunity to have a say in who is part of their executive.

The coming year is set to be a very interesting one in Labour Party politics. Tony Blair has already said that he will be standing down as leader in 2007 so we are set for if not a leadership contest then certainly a change of leader. Perhaps the more interesting contest will be for the role of Deputy Leader. Many have indicated that they will be standing for this position and the debate is well underway on who is best suited for it.

The Labour Party faces an important year which will hopefully bring together the various quarters and results in a more unified, stronger Labour Party; one which is fit for another ten years in Government and one which will ensure that leader of the opposition remains forever the pinnacle of David Cameron's political career.

As Young Fabians it is important that we are involved in the debates that are to come, helping to shape the future of the Labour Party as the Fabian Society helped to shape its past. As Chair I hope to lead the Young Fabians in an active year of intellectual debate and political campaigning.

However, the Labour Party has always been about helping those that are most in need. With this in mind I am setting up the idea of a Chair's Charity that the executive as a whole will aim to raise funds for over the coming year. For the first year's charity I have chosen The South West Miners' Convalescence Home. This charity is based in Bournemouth and provides convalescence places for ex-miners suffering from lung disease caused by coal dust. The miners have been important to the Labour party and to the

country as a whole. They did a very hard job and deserve better than they've had. I hope you will all join me in raising funds for this charity and helping some of Labour true grass-roots.

I hope that this initiative will be the first of many, with Young Fabians across the country getting more involved with their communities and giving something back locally as well being as involved in the wider political movement.

I am also hoping to not only see the Young Fabian membership grow but also to see more of our members take a much more active role. As ever, there is a limit to how much the executive can do, this is never more true than in the various regions, where it can be very difficult to get a regular events programme running. If you have ideas for running events in your area, please get in touch with the national executive so that we can help you to put your plans into action.

Once again, thank you for voting. I am looking forward to working with the new executive in what looks set to be a very busy year. And I hope to meet as many Young Fabians as possible in our upcoming events so please do come along and get involved.

To contact Conor, email him at cmcginn@youngfabians.org.uk.



Young Fabian Trip to Edinburgh 2006



**The Young Fabian
Edinburgh Trip
group pose for a
photo at the
Edinburgh book
festival in the
middle of
Charlotte's Square.**



**Final night away -
the group's last
meal in one of
Edinburgh's
restaurants**



**Hear no evil, see no
evil and speak no
evil - Exec members
Rebecca Rennison,
David Floyd and
Emma Carr are
fooling nobody.**