



Ken Clarke Interview

**Ken Clarke on Crime,
Europe and the Party.**

Editorial
Fighting Crime, the real war against terror

Dr Roger Mortimore of MORI
On Conservative Electoral Chances

Alan Duncan
On tackling World Poverty

Photo by Clive Hills

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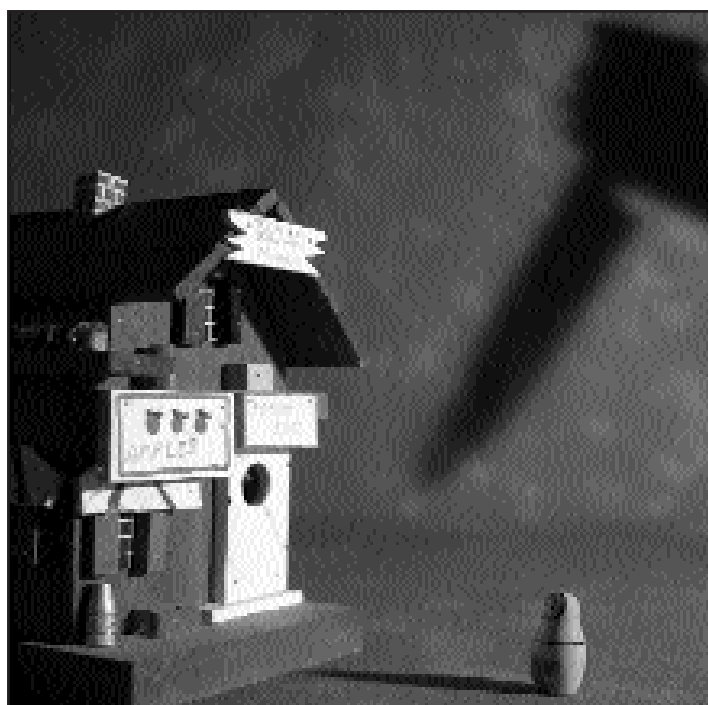
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Editorial: The Real War Against Terror

Crime or the fear of crime threatens us all. **Craig Rimmer** argues that tackling crime should be top of the agenda.



There is much nobility in Britain having joined America and her Allies in going to Afghanistan and Iraq to fight the war against terror. Two states that harboured and sponsored terrorist networks have been overhauled and other states that have a record of sponsoring terrorism have felt the keen need to be more co-operative.

There is, however, a much more visible form of terror that threatens the core of our civilisation, the threat of violent crime in all its manifestations. For me, talking about crime is not simply about pursuing a core-votes strategy. In this edition, Chris Philp neatly argues against such a strategy and I would concur that exciting our core-voters should not be the main reason for the Party to focus in on crime as an issue. If anything, it should be about broadening our appeal and making Britain a safer place to live.

This month, a fireman was shot with an air rifle whilst tackling a blaze in South London. Last year, David Morley, survivor of the Admiral Duncan pub bombing, was beaten to death by a gang of youths, targeted specifically as a gay man. Only 3 months ago, City financier John Monckton was stabbed to death in his own home by intruders, leaving his wife and 9 year old daughter to contact the emergency services. In 2004, a father in Manchester was walking home with a friend from the pub, had pieces of wood

and bricks thrown at him and was killed by one of those bricks hitting his head. In Leeds, Boxing Day 2003, PC Ian Broadhurst was shot at point blank range in the head as he lay on the floor pleading for his life.

These manifestations of crime prove how random it can be when choosing some of its victims. It is not to say that there isn't a pattern. The Bow Group's Go Zones book looked at violent crime in the Safe Streets section. It was shown that you were twice as likely to be a victim of common crime (violence against the person, theft and robbery) in inner cities as elsewhere. In parts of Manchester, 10% of the population were victims of common crime in 2001-02 alone. If we are looking to reach out to urban Britain, then we should be aiming to make our towns and our cities safer with tougher policies on crime and more policing. This is where we can make an impact and become more relevant.

The statistics show that violent crime is on the rise across the board. According to Home Office statistics, total recorded crime dropped by 6% in 2004 but offences against the person with injury rose by 12%, and more serious violence against the person rose by 3%. Sexual offences rose by an astronomical 22% in the same timeframe. Gun crime has doubled since 1997. David Blunket claims to have inherited chaos from Jack Straw when he took over the Home Office. I don't know if Charles Clarke feels the same way, but Labour is clearly guilty of failing us all when it comes to being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.

We need more police officers and they need to be more visible. Needless to say, they feature highly in our policy commitments. We also need a greater degree of local control over our policing. Conservative policies advocating directly elected local Police Commissioners would be a huge step forward in that direction and will help to target the needs of

policing to match the needs of the communities. They will also mean more people becoming engaged in politics and keeping their streets safe. Sentencing needs to be honest and 3 strikes should mean you are out. These are good confidence building measures in terms of the judicial process which will help in bringing witnesses forward and give victims of crime the resolve to see prosecutions through to the end.

In purely political terms, the Conservative Party needs to show how it will protect the most vulnerable in Society with tough policies on crime. They must illustrate how they will make an impact and make Britain safer.

In broader terms, if we talk about "the vision thing" that many politicians aspire to, we should be aiming to curb a crime culture where the British Crime Survey is pleased to announce that there is only a 25% chance of being a victim of crime in the UK. We need to strengthen the anti-social behaviour orders and dispersal orders and put them in the hands of the elected Police Commissioners to decide where and when they can be used. We also need to move beyond that to a stage where criminality at a younger age becomes less likely, by tackling truancy from schools and petty crime. We also need to not just become better at physically preventing crime, detecting crime, and sentencing criminals; we also need to build a more socially cohesive Britain where the desire to commit crime is lessened. Ken Clarke in his interview with Crossbow rightly identified that these causes of crime needed to be tackled by building in values into the educational system. Utopian as it sounds, I think this is within the realms of possibility and I feel that the Conservative Party are best placed to deliver that in a socially liberal way.

Let's make terror a thing of the past; let's cut out the cancer of crime in this country.

CRAIG RIMMER IS THE EDITOR OF CROSSBOW AND FORMER TREASURER OF THE BOW GROUP.

Keep the Appeal of our Campaign Broad

Bow Group Chairman **Chris Philp** asks whether a core strategy can work for the Conservative Party in 2005.



In the coming election campaign, the Conservative party has a simple choice. Firstly, we can re-run the "core votes" strategy of the past, which is designed to get more of our natural supporters out to the polls. This way we beat Labour on turnout. Alternatively, we can campaign on a broader platform of issues that appeals to a wider section of the electorate, but risks a lower turnout amongst our supporters.

The Core Vote approach holds some tempting attractions. It is likely that the turnout at this election will be very low – some suggest figures as low as 55%. In this scenario, it is argued that the party that is able to get out the greater proportion of its own votes (rather than attracting new ones) will win. By focussing on issues that excite Conservative voters – Immigration, Crime and Europe – a higher proportion of Conservative voters will turn out, and so we will improve our standing. Polls also suggest that these issues are important to the whole electorate – a recent YouGov poll put Immigration as the

number one issue with voters, cited by 49% of voters as one of the top three issues, followed by Law & Order on 43%. Further more, support for Labour has collapsed – they are as much as 10% down in the polls compared to this time in the last Parliament. If only we can get our vote out, we might even win. So the argument goes.

However, this analysis, while superficially attractive, is both naïve and wrong. William Hague tried this approach, perhaps in desperation, in 2001 and led the party to its second catastrophic defeat.

Firstly, let's examine the issues that matter to voters. It is true that immigration and crime often come top of the list.

But that is because Conservative voters overwhelmingly care about these issues (64% of Conservative voters cite this in their top three issues, compared to half that number amongst Lib Dem voters, according to YouGov). This biases the whole sample. If you look at Labour, Lib Dem and floating/non voters the top issue is the same – the health service. Provided that the Conservative Party makes it clear that it has a sensible line on asylum (which it has done) we will secure the support of our own voters, who know that we will deal properly with the issue – it is likely that our hard core 32% will vote Conservative pretty much whatever we say in any case.

The voters we need to attract are disaffected Labour, Lib Dem and floating, non-voters. This part of the electorate is less concerned about traditional Tory issues. Further, by over-emphasising issues like immigration, we re-enforce the negative impression that non-Conservative voters have of us – even though the substance of our policy is broadly reasonable. YouGov asked voters to place themselves and politicians on a left/right scale. They placed themselves, on average, right in the middle of this spectrum. This is also where they placed Tony Blair. The Conservative party were placed far, far to the right. By talking too much about

immigration, we reinforce this stereotype, and put most voters off.

Secondly, let's consider the turnout issue. Even if we did slightly increase turnout amongst our supporters in 2001 by talking about "core voters" issues (and I have not seen evidence that we did), the overall result of that election still speaks for itself. The effect of turning off potential defecting Labour, Liberal, floating and non-voters appears to have more than offset the turnout effect, if indeed the turnout effect happened at all. Labour's support has collapsed since 2001. But we have not picked it up. Most of the 10%-12% Labour has lost in the last four years has gone to Liberal Democrats. We need to emphasise policies that will appeal to these defecting Labour voters – policies on areas such as health and education, where we do have a lot to say. If we fail to attract these disaffected Labour and other voters, we will get 31%-34% of the vote – again – and lose.

I support our immigration policy. I support our policies on crime. I support Michael Howard. I believe that the Conservative Party is best for Britain. I will campaign for a Conservative Government no matter what our campaign emphasis turns out to be. But if we are to break through 31%-34%, then we need to emphasise a range of policies – especially health and education – that appeal to a wider section of the electorate. So I hope that in the coming weeks, we talk about wider issues than just immigration, crime and Europe. I hope we can articulate positive, aspirational, forward-looking reasons for voting Conservative. If we fail to do this, the party faces a re-run of 2001.

CHRIS PHILP, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOW GROUP AND ENTREPRENEUR

For the group's latest research, see www.bowgroup.org

SWINGS AND ROUNDABOUTS

Dr Roger Mortimore unravels current polling evidence and finds the Party has still a long way to travel.

Four months to the likely election date, and as yet the opinion polls show no signs of Conservative recovery. MORI's January 2005 poll puts the Tories on a 32% share of the vote, six points behind Labour and doing worse than in January 2004; the most recent published polls from all the other polling companies, using a variety of different methods and assumptions, all agree that the Tory share is between 31% and 33% - at best standstill since 2001.

The Conservative chairman, Liam Fox, argued recently that "the pollsters have it hopelessly wrong" and that the Conservatives are heading for victory. His arguments about the relationship between seats and votes may have some validity; but polls measure the present, they do not predict, and the reasons he gives for believing that the polls are already overstating Labour's lead nationally do not hold water.

As Dr Fox points out, quoting MORI figures, Conservatives say they are much more likely to vote in a general election than supporters of other parties: 72% of Conservatives are "absolutely certain" to vote, compared to 64% of Liberal Democrats and just 55% of those who say they would vote Labour. But this advantage is already accounted for in MORI's "headline" poll figure, which includes only the voting intentions of those certain to vote - if we reported the voting intentions of everybody who named a party, regardless of their likelihood of voting (as we used to do in the past), Labour's lead would be not six points but fifteen. This differential determination to vote is much greater than we have found at past elections. Far from offering a reason to believe that differential turnout is causing the polls to overstate the Labour lead, the danger is that as the election approaches more reluctant Labour supporters will firm up their intentions, the turnout

gap will close and the gap in votes widen.

True, the Conservatives have performed better recently in local government by-elections than their national poll rating would apparently imply; but differential turnout is a much more potent force at local level. Furthermore, with Michael Howard's satisfaction rating standing at 22%, some voters may be finding it easier to vote for a Conservative councillor than they would to vote for a Conservative government.

On the other hand, everything is not necessarily as gloomy as it looks for the Tories. Conventional wisdom accepts that the electoral system is massively biased in Labour's favour, and assuming uniform national swing this is true: Labour can trail in votes while still keeping an overall majority of seats, and Michael Howard would need the biggest swing achieved by any party since World War II merely to reach Downing Street with even a wafer-thin majority.

But uniform swing is unlikely to take place; all that really matters is the swing in the marginal seats. Indeed, in both 1997 and 2001 Labour far outperformed its national result in the marginals, winning more seats than uniform swing would have predicted for a given vote share and so setting up the apparently biased starting position that holds today. Can the Tories do the same in 2005, unwinding some of Labour's advantage?

Labour benefited from two advantages in marginal seats in 1997 and 2001 - low Tory morale contrasting with effective Labour organisation ensured that the latter campaigned far more effectively on the ground, a difference which bites most in the marginals, where both parties' efforts are most concentrated; and most Lib Dems preferred Labour

to the Conservatives, allowing a squeeze and switch of tactical votes.

Neither may still be the case in 2005. Labour morale will surely be lower than in the past, not only because of discontent with the government's record and a widening split between "new" and "old" Labour, but through the direct personal impact of council defeats on local party leaders, whose council seats and committee chairmanships have been imperilled or lost by Mr Blair's unpopularity. Liberal Democrats, especially those opposed to the war in Iraq, may be less inclined to vote tactically for Labour and even if they refuse to support Conservatives instead, the loss of their votes by Labour will bring Tory gains. (Nor should this consequence deter them, as a hung Parliament would give more influence to the Lib Dems than a third Labour majority.) And while voters defecting to UKIP or Veritas are a threat to the Tories, Greens and the various socialist options on the left may damage Labour just as much.

But turnout remains the key. Even a 72% turnout of Tories would be historically low. Any party that could drag back to the polls the supporters who voted in 1997 and stayed at home in 2001 need hardly worry about more trivial factors; but so far the polls show no signs that the Conservatives can manage that.

DR ROGER MORTIMORE, SENIOR POLITICAL ANALYST, MORI SOCIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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International Development: A Conservative Agenda

World Poverty is tackled by **Alan Duncan MP** as he sets out to show that International Development is very much Conservative territory.

International Development has never been higher on the political agenda. And for the first time, the Conservative Party is in a position to dominate the debate. We have the clearest understanding of the nature and causes of world poverty. We champion the most effective solution to the problem: economic growth and wealth creation. And we have the best policies: more and better aid, freer and fairer trade, and faster and deeper debt relief. We must now be relentless in contesting Labour's spurious claim to have a monopoly on compassion, and show that policies rooted in our values of personal liberty and economic freedom work as well for the poorest people in the world as for those in our affluent society.



The facts about global poverty are truly shocking. 1,000,000,000 people live on less than a dollar a day. Millions of children die each year from easily preventable diseases. HIV/AIDS kills someone every 15 seconds. It is no wonder that as people have become increasingly aware of this situation, international development has become an increasingly important domestic political issue. As our PPCs will find out in the forthcoming election campaign, there is a sizable, well-organized and active section of the public who take a close interest in this issue. Young people care about it, as do the middle-aged, middle-class Church-goers who

constitute the grassroots of development NGOs, and who are often potential or existing Conservative voters.

Of course, international development policy is not in itself an election-swinging issue. But it is an important 'signal' issue that offers us the chance to demonstrate that Conservatives can combine a deep compassion for the dispossessed and impoverished with clear thinking about the policies that will help them.

Labour have clearly recognized the importance of this issue - witness Blair's establishment of the Africa Commission, and Brown's recent visit to Africa. I do not question the sincerity of the PM's and Chancellor's concern for poor people. But it is also clear that they have recognized the political pay-offs of such concern, seeing it as a potent way to mobilise and reinvigorate their jaded and disaffected core supporters. Their aim is to give the entirely misleading impression that Labour is the only party that cares about the plight of the poor. They have been quite shameless in this: even after our recent spending announcement, they continued to make the malicious and misleading allegation that Conservatives would cut the aid budget.

We must not let such posturing go uncontested. Rather, we should go on the attack. Despite publishing a White Paper in December 2000 entitled 'Making Globalisation Work for the Poor', Labour have failed to reform world trade rules in favour of the poor. For every dollar that Western countries give to poor countries, those countries lose two dollars through barriers to their exports to the developed world. Western tariffs and farm subsidies reduce developing countries' export earnings by an estimated \$39 billion a year. As Michael Howard has clearly stated, protection for developed countries at the expense of the developing world is immoral and hypocritical, and must come to an end.

Our policy on aid is stronger than Labour's. We will match the Government's aid spending up to 2007-8, and work towards achieving the UN's target of 0.7% of Gross National Income as aid by 2013. And because a Conservative government would take less taxpayers' money than Labour overall in public spending, international development would actually account for a greater proportion of a Conservative government's spending plans than of a Labour government's.

As Conservatives we know that good intentions and generous spending alone achieve nothing, that compassion only becomes meaningful when it is welded to sound analysis and effective policy. So we will spend our aid money better. We will spend less through Europe, and more through NGOs. And we will use our aid to encourage good governance and sound economic policy. We will address the important issue of population, and recognize the important role that socially responsible investment from private companies can play in reducing poverty.

We cannot afford to let Labour succeed in claiming 'ownership' of this issue. We have a record to be proud of - for example, we pioneered debt relief long before it became a high-profile political issue. We have better policies. And above all, we have a clearer and more coherent philosophy of international development. We know that rich countries have created the wealth that they enjoy, and poor countries could do likewise. Our vision of international development is profoundly optimistic. It is a vision of worldwide prosperity, achievable in a generation, driven by economic freedom and freer, fairer trade. It is a vision that we should be proud to trumpet.

ALAN DUNCAN MP IS THE SHADOW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND REPRESENTS RUTLAND & MELTON.

Justice - Based Partnerships

Andrew Lilico challenges the nature of family law in England and Wales, re-examining the inequity of divorce settlements.

English family law has become almost completely emptied of justice. In this article I wish to argue that people should have the choice of entering into “marriage” contracts in which justice is paramount, as well as the welfare-based contracts currently available under family law.

Consider the following cautionary tale: A man gets married and has two children. Seven years into the marriage, let’s say his children are 6 and 3. Both he and his wife work, and have taken advantage of flexible working conditions so that they can each spend some time every week looking after the children - their care for the children is shared equally. Their parents gave them some money for a deposit and they bought a house, hoping to live happily ever after.

However, suppose his wife then decides she prefers another man. What will happen is this: even though they both look after the children and would both be competent to care for them, and even though the mother has committed adultery, if it went to court the children would be given to the mother.

Furthermore, the woman and children will live in the family house, and even though the man is a co-owner he will have to leave. In practice if the wife’s new man wishes to live there with her the husband will not be able to prevent it. The man will have to send money to his wife (in theory to support the children, but in practice family bills are not allocated, but shared).

In due course, since it is the woman who has initiated the separation she will probably sue for divorce on the grounds of “unreasonable behaviour”, and because the courts will certainly grant such a petition (there is no interest in the rights and wrongs of divorce), the man’s lawyers will advise him not to contest her application. Thus, after losing everything he values, he will face the final indignity of

having to sign an official piece of paper saying that it was all his fault.

You may think that things could get no worse for this man, but sadly you might well be mistaken. In such scenarios, the woman may wish to have nothing more to do with her ex-husband, and his visits to see the children might seem like an irritating reminder of a life now behind her. Thus after a while she may refuse him further contact with his children. Perhaps he will go to the courts (those same courts that took away his property and his children, made him pay for it, and made him state officially that it was all his fault). The courts will issue a contact order, but if the woman ignores it (as happened, for example, with 50 per cent of the 55,030 contact orders made in 2001) the courts will not take effectives further action to enforce their orders. Some 40 per cent of divorced fathers lose all contact with their children within two years.¹

Now, of course, it is very often not women who commit adultery. But when it is the man, he will have a significant advantage. Suppose that the scenario was a little different. Consider a man and woman who had lived in a more “traditional” relationship in which the woman stayed home and looked after the children while the man went out to work, and suppose that they had been married rather longer, so that the children were 9 and 12. Then the man decides he prefers another woman and abandons his wife. She becomes very miserable, and spends a period on the verge of depression. After a little while the man, now well set up with his new woman, submits to the courts that his wife is not competent to look after the children, and that they would be better off in the more stable and affluent environment that he and his new partner can offer. This man is not bound to win, but he has a much better chance than the man above — in family law the system of “justice” works to punish the victim.

When most people hear this they find it astonishing - even incredible. Surely the courts don’t work like that? But they do. The Children Act 1989 includes the principle that, when the court considers a question of the child’s upbringing the child’s welfare is the court’s paramount consideration. Issues of who was at fault in the divorce (i.e. issues of what is right and wrong in the situation) are irrelevant. The court must have regard to a “welfare checklist”, including:

- a) The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned (considered in light of his age and understanding);
- b) His physical, emotional and/or educational needs;
- c) The likely effect on him of any change in his circumstances;
- d) His age, sex, background and any characteristics of his, which the court considers relevant;
- e) Any harm which he has suffered or is at risk of suffering;
- f) How capable each of his parents and any other person in relation to whom the court considers the question to be relevant, is of meeting his needs;
- g) The range of powers available to the court under the Children Act 1989 in the proceedings in question.

Typically the courts will always award very young children to the mother (e.g. the three-year-old in our first example) and will not break up siblings (e.g. once a young child goes to the mother, even if an older child might, on his own, be considered best off with his father, because he should not be separated from a sibling he will go to the mother). There is also a common perception (though it is not clear whether it is correct) that judges have “old-fashioned” views and will tend to grant older children to a mother even if

a father would objectively be an equally competent carer.

Once the children have been allocated to the mother, the house will follow (though item (c) on the checklist). And because the father must continue to provide for his children financially, he will have to send money.

On the issue of contact, the Court of Appeal has interpreted the Children Act as creating a 'very strong' presumption in favour of maintaining contact between a natural parent and child. There is considered to be a "fundamental emotional need of every child to have an enduring relationship with both his parents". The courts have threatened parents with removal of children from their care for non-compliance with contact orders, and jailed resident parents who consistently refuse to provide contact to their former spouse. However, this is rare as typically it is not considered to be in the best interests of a child for its carer to be imprisoned.

Groups such as "Fathers 4 Justice" argue that "Parliament intended that the child's best interest was best served by children maintaining a loving, meaningful relationship with both parents." Thus they argue that there should be a change of practice within the same welfare-based principles of judgement. However, a more fundamental question is surely whether the principle that the child's welfare is paramount is correct.

It is obvious why this principle is employed. It is obviously well-intentioned. But it isn't a principle of right and wrong, and when justice is not the primary concern injustice inevitably results. Furthermore, it is not a principle that we apply in other situations. By any objective criteria - expected lifetime wealth, ability to form successful relationships, likelihood of falling into crime, whatever - children adopted as infants by loving, rich, stable parents are better off than children of unemployed single teenage

mothers. Yet we do not say that, on the principle that the child's welfare is paramount, we are going to confiscate the babies of competent teenage single parents and give them to be adopted by wealthy childless couples. And when countries have done such things (e.g. the notorious forcible removing of Australian Aboriginal children which continued until the 1970s) we consider it a scandal. Why? Well, because it would be wrong. It would be unjust. Provided that a parent is competent to care for a child (so that the child's welfare is above a critical threshold), the question of justice dominates that of welfare.

Why isn't this principle employed in family law? Why, if there is a divorce and both parents would be competent to look after the children, aren't questions of justice paramount - who was the guilty party and who was innocent? Why isn't there a presumption that (subject to competence) children and property should be allocated to an innocent party?

One answer is that in modern society it has become fashionable to believe that human relationships are, by and large, a matter for individuals and the state should not interfere. The state needs to take a role when the welfare of children might be adversely affected by a dispute between their parents, but the rights and wrongs of such disputes are widely thought not really to be the state's business. But is this really right? Why does the state regulate human relationships with marriage contracts if it is not going to take a view on whether these contracts have been broken? People make promises to each other before the eyes the state. Aren't they entitled to expect that the state will protect them if the promises made to them are broken? And if not, what, really, is the content of a marriage?

Here is a proposal: those of us who want the state merely to take a welfare role should be able to choose a form of marriage contract that does not involve

promises and in which the state's only role will be to try to maintain equity of welfare between the partners and to maximize the welfare of children in the event of a break-up (as happens now). Those of us who would prefer justice-based marriage contracts should be able to make promises and expect the state to enforce them. If our relationships break up the state would take a view on who was in the wrong, and allocate property and children on the basis of justice (so, for example, children would be granted to competent innocent parties).

Perhaps the welfare-based contracts would most naturally be called "civil partnerships" and the justice-based contracts "marriages". Or perhaps only a small minority of people (e.g. those of strong religious convictions) might want the justice-based partnerships so that it would be better to keep the name "marriage" where it is, and call the new justice-based partnerships "covenant partnerships". The name is not important. But the concept that justice-based partnerships should be available would appear to resonate with two important Conservative themes - choice and the family - and would give us something new to say on divorce, one of the great issues of our age and the source of so much grievous misery.

ANDREW LILICO IS AN ECONOMIST AND A SHADOW MPC MEMBER.

Do you have a burning issue that you want to write about?

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The Ken Clarke Interview

3 Bow Groupers, Ken Clarke, Craig Rimmer and Chris Philp, get together to discuss Europe, Crime, the Party and Blair.

My first Bow Group meeting back in 1993 was a terrace reception where Ken Clarke came to speak to the Group. He had recently moved from the Home Office to become Chancellor of the Exchequer. I managed to grab him and ask him some question about France's potential exit from the ERM and he quickly ascertained that I had just read a bit of Anatole Kaletsky in the Times. From that moment, your editor, then only 17 years old, started to admire the very skilled politician in Kenneth Clarke.



Chris Philp and I interviewed Mr Clarke just before Christmas and started by asking him what he would have done with the last 4 years if he had been elected Leader.

KC - I believe in free market economics and I'm a social liberal. There is a slight tendency when you're defeated in an election to think that the electorate have made a mistake and its the electorate who have got to change their mind next time. Whereas I think they get most elections right and its the party that has to change. It needs to change along the lines of social liberalism to get itself more in line with what society's like now. Which shouldn't be too difficult for a slightly old fashioned 1960's liberal like me.

I would have tried to make what I have just described into something more concrete by getting down to working on solid policies like a competent workman - like government would. I would have tried to avoid just reacting to events, chasing headlines, populism.

Had I won the leadership of the party it would have been exceedingly difficult because of one word I haven't mention yet which our Eurosceptics are completely consumed with, the Euro.

I would have spent the first 12 months trying to fight people off, people trying to topple me again to save the country from the Franco-German plot.

CR - You would have had a similar view to Tony Blair in some respects, wouldn't you?

KC - My views on Europe have always seemed to be identical with Tony Blair. I hope I might have been a little more competent in forwarding them, because Europe is one of the things where Blair has made the biggest mess of all. He has not moved forward his European Agenda one jot since he has come to office.

I believe in the principle of the single currency and that a single market operates best if you can make it operate with a single means of exchange. With it you would remove one more barrier to the movement of goods and services across borders and therefore Britain was likely to join. In terms of convergence, I would have hesitated to join at anytime during the last 10 years. I believe it is in Britain's interests to join eventually, and we're suffering some damage from our inability to join it over the past few years, but I wouldn't join it now. Our monetary policy is quite correctly, quite different from that of the European Central Bank. One of the problems with the European debate particularly inside the Conservative Party, is that for a time we seemed to become crazily obsessed with our currency. It acquired a symbolic significance utterly beyond its importance. Without entering into the arguments for the Euro, people seem to believe their banknotes are a symbol of their national identity.

Whenever we do join the single currency it will not make a massive difference and never would have done. If we had been able to join the single currency in the last 7 years, the only change that I can think of would have been I think we would still have been able to have attracted a reasonable level of foreign inward investment.

CR - The Euro is part of the whole European Project. Where do you see the European project in 50 years time?

KC - Well 50 years time is difficult. It is going to be a powerful union of political states. It will maintain the leading political influence of the European nations in world politics. It will also provide the soundest base you can have in the globalised economy. The problem for Europe is its declining proportion of the World's population and with the rapid emergence of great nations in the other parts of the world, we are in danger of becoming a steadily diminishing influence in the world and if we insist on tackling great problems as 25 squabbling nations states then we will descend into insignificance. If we tackle these on a supranational level those problems that can not be handle adequately at the nation

state level, we will continue to be a very worthwhile .

CR - And isn't European Constitution integral to that?

KC - It is always integral to have a set of rules. Giscard in one of his grander moments used the word constitution, but I think some golf clubs have constitutions. A completely stupid debate of semantics has broken out. What you have is a constitutional treaty, which determines the rules by which the institutions of the European Union will work. The idea because Giscard had this follie de grandeur and insisted on putting the word constitution on the front of it and happens to consider himself Thomas Jefferson doesn't alter the essential nature. This is a set of rules. It is a treaty that sets out the rules by which the binding obligations will be enforced.

CR - Will you be happy to campaign in the Referendum?

KC - Yes, I would regard it as a disaster, if Britain doesn't ratify the consitution especially if most of the other countries have done so.

CP - Would you share a platform with Tony Blair and Charles Kennedy?

KC - Absolutely, but would they share one with me?

CP - They'd bite your hand off.

KC - I believe the constitution takes forward the idea of Europe that I believe in. It establishes the notion of the union of nation states firmly than ever. It clarifies better than before, where the lines are drawn between European competencies and the competencies of the nation state.



It would be absolutely crazy if the British

were to reject a European treaty which will probably bring about the kind of union that the British, the Scandinavians and the East Europeans would prefer.



All treaties are reversible, in fact the new treaty contains provisions which enable you to leave if you want. Because it was conceivable that you might have a government elected somewhere who wanted to leave it. It was possible to get out of it before but we had no idea precisely what the process would be. It would have been chaotic. So if you want to leave, vote for the treaty. If you reject the treaty you complicate the situation.

CP - Wouldn't a better analogy be the Constitution of the United States, when some states wanted secede in 1861?

KC - This Superstate rubbish is complete nonsense. How on earth can you have a Superstate that is spending less than 1% of the combined GDP of the countries concerned. The latest constitution doesn't have the slightest resemblance to the constitution of the United States.

CR - Is the war still going to be an issue on the doorstep come the next general election?

KC - It is. I think the election should be about the War. It will be, particularly if more dramatic events occur, though personally I hope we don't have dramatic events because they tend to be rather nasty and unpleasant, but goodness knows what will happen.

But it's been the principal political effort of

both the Conservatives and Labour for the last 12 months to change the subject from Iraq. But until and unless the Iraqi situation is fairly resolved, there is very little way in which you get Iraq to just go away. There is no use talking about whether you can shoot a burglar or not in the hope that you are going to keep people's attention on that for very long rather than having to talk about the Iraq war. Post elections, who knows what's going to happen. It could stop Blair having an election in May, because of the crumbling nature of his support and the vulnerability and unpopularity of his government. All it takes is one dramatic event to go wrong and he would be in big trouble and couldn't possibly call an early election against some appalling tragedy or dramatic background in Iraq. Iraq is 90% of the reason Blair has lost his hold on public opinion.

CP - So maybe as a party, we might have done better to follow your lead and take a slightly more critical line on the war?

KC - As a backbencher, when matters of War and Peace come up, you just let your conscience speak and vote with your own opinion. We had a 3 line whip but nobody ever mentioned it to me and anyway you can't go back to your own constituency and say I voted in favour of the War because there was a 3 line whip.

I haven't got a clue why Iain Duncan-Smith so rapidly committed himself to it and the line that he took that Blair was being whimsical about it. And I think that some of them just have a love affair with the right wing of the American Republican Party. I think Michael [Howard] would debate with me, was genuinely in favour of the War, thinks it was the right decision and so on. Iain, I don't know. And I don't know whether the Shadow Cabinet ever discussed it. I had no idea how events would turn out, my decision could have been politically catastrophic. Blair, I'm sure thought it was going to be his Falklands and if it had been I would have lumbered myself with another unpopular maverick opinion.

As things have turned out, it means the Conservative Party is unfortunately irrelevant to one of the main political issues. I don't think it's unfair and I will defend my colleagues again, I think it's perfectly possible to say I was in favour of the War and I remain in favour of the War but I find the handling of the politics in the country and the occupation since the War have been catastrophic.

We're being led towards another false dawn, with the expectation that if we hold an election in Iraq in January, suddenly things will start to get better. Just as we were told that if we capture Saddam Hussein things would suddenly get better. If we could appoint Allawi in charge of the interim government, things would suddenly get better. I do not yet have that inner confidence that things will get better. We just don't have a sensible policy. I do think the politics of Iraq have got to involve a much broader spread of Iraqis than the attempt to get elected into a constitution writing government people who are largely pro-Western, a lot of people who were in exile, people who are acceptable to American opinion in particular and in favour of the invasion. It's far too narrow a base to operate. We really have got to engage with anti-Western, anti-invasion, difficult people who have a key role to play in the future of the country.



CR - What do you think about Michael Portillo's recent comments in an article in the Sunday Times that there is a need for a Liberal Party out there? Especially in respect of our support for ID Cards and shooting burglars when they enter your house.

KC - I am a former Home Secretary and I'm in favour of Identity Cards. The shoot a burglar bill, I feel, is populist nonsense. I understand the present law which works quite well which is why we don't have people sent to prison for defending their house against burglars by any reasonable means and I don't understand the changes proposed. Grossly disproportionate means? Does that mean disproportionate means are alright? So I agree with Portillo on that. If you are a right of centre party, you should be reasonably libertarian. So the fact that Michael and I disagree with the particular of Identity Cards, I think that's slightly old fashioned Churchillian wartime stuff. I think with modern technology in the modern state, an identity card is a good substitute for having

to use your driving license all the time and its extremely useful when dealing with identity fraud and dealing with people working illegally. I can't see the slightest use in them against terrorists. Any half sensible terrorist is going to have a perfectly valid identity card. That is just window dressing by Blair and Blunkett. I tend to agree with most of the other things Michael says. Society is even more socially liberal than when I was younger and as long as you don't go to barmy extremes, we ought to reflect that. The general altering of attitudes in a more liberal direction has improved the quality of life for most people and to align ourselves with reactionary forces on these issues is a serious mistake.

CR - Talking about crime for a moment has Blair done enough to attack the causes of crime?



KC - What he has not lived up to is building values into an educational system and some proper understanding of values is difficult to form in a liberal society. So we have not seen much to tackle the causes of yobishness, hooliganism, anti-social behaviour which express itself in graffiti but actually is a reflection of extremely anti-social behaviour and self-centred attitudes on behalf of the ruthless ill-educated young. This is where he has done worst.

In terms of actual detection, in my brief time as Home Secretary, I was about to embark on an attempt to reform the police and prison service. Which I regard as the last great unreformed public services still left in this country. The majority of crime is caused by a hard core of the population but the actual levels of crime have fallen. If you can combine the fall in crime with the improvement in the appalling level of detection and conviction, you would be getting somewhere.

CR - Are the general public right to have

confidence in Labour's handling of the economy

KC - The British are astonishingly complacent about their economy. Gordon has firstly maintained growth and low inflation and so you can't describe him as failed chancellor or anything like that. The government has succeeded in producing and a quite complacent view amongst the general public that we somehow have one of the finest most successful economies in the World and it's all quite securely based. We're not the fastest growing economy in Europe, we don't have the lowest levels of unemployment in Europe. We are totally outperformed by the Irish. The Irish have overtaken us on GDP per head now. It's all built on dangerous foundations. It's certainly dependent on levels of government expenditure and debt and consumer debt. And this has got to be rebalanced. Our record on important things such as business investment and productivity has been extremely poor. It's picking up a bit this year, but after years of decline, negative years for business investment, it's all exceedingly fragile. I think whoever succeeds Gordon Brown will have quite a serious fiscal problem first of all of getting the growth of public spending under control.

CR - Will they be able to cut taxes and control public spending?

KC - I don't think anyone should promise to cut taxes immediately when they take office. Its not feasible, there is no great public demand for it. Its not credible if you claim it, unless you are going in for a slightly irresponsible George W Bush type economics. And I think the Americans have been irresponsible. I'm fiscal conservative, my aim is a balanced budget over the cycle.

CP - Like Gordon Brown?

KC - No he's got the Golden Rule. "Capital Borrowing doesn't matter or the

consequences of this are better met when I'm out of office". I do think that the proportion of GDP being taken by the state is a bit too high. It needs to be reduced. I do think we should go towards a more balanced budget every cycle and I do think the current level of growth of public expenditure is unsustainable. I don't think you can tackle that just by tackling waste and inefficiency, although I agree with both Gordon Brown and Oliver that there is a lot of it about. There is a lot of it about because of the rate the government has poured extra spending into institutions incapable of absorbing it efficiently.

Your main aim may be to rescue them from further increases in taxation which are inevitable if the Labour Party are returned, and also to put on a more secure footing our steadily improving prosperity to go back to a slogan I first used before Gordon Brown used it "No return to Boom and Bust".

CP - What is your top level assessment of Tony Blair and what he has achieved?

KC - I think history will regard him as a huge disappointment. He came to office in circumstances which gave him more potential political power than any Prime Minister seen before. He had a huge majority, a demoralised opposition and a fantastic level of public confidence and good will verging on adulation which meant he could have done practically anything he liked. The problem was that he had no idea what he wanted to do apart from win a second election. And now we are in either the last year or if he wins the last 2 or 3 years of Blair, I guess he will be described as one of the greatest disappointments of British history. He could have done a lot of good. I'm not such a partisan politician that I don't think that the occasional dose of Social Democracy can achieve something. The simple political slogan that we used to attack him when he arrived of "all style and no substance" has turned out to be true.





The Bow Group is pleased to invite members and their guests to its Annual Dinner, with

Rt Hon the Lord Heseltine

Date: Thursday 10 March 2005

Venue: Lord's Cricket Ground, St. Johns Wood, London NW8 8QN

Ticket price: £75

TICKET APPLICATION FORM:

Applicant name:

Address:

.....

.....

Telephone number:

Names of guests:

I would like to apply for _____ tickets and enclose a cheque for £_____.

Please send this application form with your cheque to the Bow Group, 1A Heath Hurst Road, London NW3 2RA.

Membership form

Full name	<input type="text"/>		
Address	<input type="text"/>		
	<input type="text"/>	Post code	<input type="text"/>
Tel (work)	<input type="text"/>	Tel (home)	<input type="text"/>
Mobile	<input type="text"/>	Email	<input type="text"/>
Introduced (if applicable)		<input type="text"/>	

Full rate
£40 per annum
(members may pay in excess of this amount at their discretion)

Concessionary rate
£20 per annum
(for those under 25)

Please tick the appropriate box, and inform the Bow Group Office if your circumstances change.

I declare that I hold Conservative views and understand that if I cease to support the Conservative viewpoint, I shall be expected to resign my membership of the Bow Group.

Signature	<input type="text"/>	Date	<input type="text"/>
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STANDING ORDER MANDATE

Bank name	<input type="text"/>	Sort Code	<input type="text"/>
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Bank Address	<input type="text"/>
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Account name	<input type="text"/>
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Account number	<input type="text"/>
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Until you received further notice in writing I/we [delete as appropriate] hereby authorise payments to be made as follows to the credit of **The Bow Group, Barclays Bank PLC, 147 Holborn, London EC1N 2NU** (Account no. 80173444, Sort Code 204141). Please treat this as replacing any existing standing order to this account.

Please debit my account immediately with the sum of **£**

[Insert **£40** if your application fall in the first quarter of the year, **£30** if in Q2, **£20** if in Q3, and **£10** if in Q4, or half of these amounts if you qualify for the concessionary rate] and on each 1st January thereafter with the sum of **£40/£20** [delete as appropriate]

Signature	<input type="text"/>	Date	<input type="text"/>
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Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of the Bow Group which will take place on Tuesday 7 June 2005 at 7.30 pm at the Carlton Club, St James's Street, London SW1.

NOTICE OF ELECTION

In accordance with the Group's Constitution, this notice invites nominations for the elected positions listed below:

Chairman
Research Secretary
Political Officer
Commercial Secretary
Treasurer
Membership Secretary
Social Secretary
Elected Members of Council (5 vacancies)

A valid nomination required the signature of the candidate as proof of willingness to serve, proposed and seconded by any two members. Nominations should be delivered to the Group's office at 1A Heath Hurst Road, London NW3 2RU no later than 6pm on Monday 9 May 2005, and members may use the tear off slip overleaf. Nominations may be accompanied by biographical notes of up to 150 words, which should be enclosed with the nomination form. Any fully paid-up member who has joined the Group before Wednesday 4 February 2005 will be entitled to be a candidate and/or to vote.

MOTIONS FOR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Any member may bring a motion before the AGM. Motions must be received by the Returning Officer at the Group's office by Monday 9 May 2005.

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

Copies of the Annual Report and Accounts will be available from the Group's Office from 17 May 2005. They will also be available at www.bowgroup.org and at the AGM.

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

The following resolutions will be put at the meeting:

1. Annual Report and Accounts

To approve the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2005.

Proposed: Chris Philp, Chairman; Seconded, Sam Gyimah, Treasurer

2. Re-appointment of Auditor

To re-appoint Mr Alex Finn as auditor of the Bow Group to hold office until the conclusion of the next following Annual General meeting of the Group.

Proposed: Chris Philp, Chairman; Seconded, Sam Gyimah, Treasurer

James Staunton, Secretary
27 January 2005

Nomination form

Please return this form to:

The Returning Officer, The Bow Group, 1a Heath Hurst Road, London NW3 2RU

You are reminded that the close of nominations is 6pm on Monday 9th May 2005 and that your nomination may include a biography of up to 150 words.

I, wish to be proposed for the position of

Chairman / Research Secretary / Political Officer / Commercial Secretary / Treasurer/ Secretary / Membership Secretary / Social Secretary / Council Member (delete or circle as applicable).

Signed Date

Proposed Print name

Seconded Print name

Proposal of motion

Members are entitled to propose motions to be discussed at the Annual General Meeting. If you wish to do so, please complete the details below and return to James Staunton, Secretary by 9th May 2005 at the latest

Proposed Motion

Date

Proposed Print name

Seconded Print name

Regeneration

As Ken Livingstone and John Prescott set out to build the ghettos of the future with their misguided housing policies, **John Moss**, a developer who has worked in urban regeneration for the last 20 years, sets out an alternative vision of how the state can do less, but deliver a better solution to our housing crisis.

Regeneration can be defined by looking at what it seeks to achieve. Regeneration is what you no longer need to do when you have finished regenerating. And one consistent factor in areas which do not need regenerating in the first place, is the existence of a functioning market economy.

By contrast, in my experience, the single key factor that is constant in all those areas where major regeneration was or is still required, is the interference by the state in the normal functioning of the market.

One area where there has been massive and consistent interference has been in housing. First the Rent Acts destroyed the private rented sector, which in 1900 provided 90% of homes and saw "homelessness" at levels far lower than we see today. Then, the subsequent lack of supply led to demands that, "the Government should do something about it", which both Labour and Conservatives duly did, building mass housing projects in state ownership and in the process creating the very problem areas which we are now told need massive amounts of taxpayer's money for regeneration.

That this regeneration is required is not in doubt, but how best to achieve this? How can Conservatives offer an alternative to the failures of the past, which Labour seem destined to repeat?

Looking specifically at the existing housing areas which are the targets of much of the Government's current spending proposals, I suggest that two things need to be done.

First, existing state owned housing should be re-structured to mirror the ownership structures that work so well in most private housing, and, having done that, Right to Buy should not only be encouraged, it should be made compulsory!

Across the country, local authorities are going through the process of "stock transfer", shifting thousands of dwellings from council ownership to housing associations. But nothing fundamental is changing in the way the estates will be

owned or managed, so why should they improve?

Similarly, new housing is being forced to accommodate increasing levels of socially rented housing, with many developers just giving up and leaving it to housing associations who are then providing 100% social housing. Long term, this will simply create the ghettos of the future.

The structure which could be put in place to replace stock transfers is, quite simply, a normal market based on the traditional freehold, leasehold and shorthold structures that have existed for centuries and seem to work quite adequately where there aren't housing problems. This structure would be equally applicable to social housing built in the past 20 years as it would be to new affordable homes being built now. Take as an example a local authority estate, close to where I live. It has a defined boundary, streets, landscaped areas, garages and parking courts. It has a range of buildings, from an eighteen storey tower to smaller, three storey blocks as well as a number of individual houses. I'm certain many such estates exist across the UK.

The first step would be to set up a trust to own a long-leasehold interest of the whole estate with each block within it being held on a subsidiary lease and each individual home then held on a further sub-lease. This put all "owners" of individual leases on the same basis, whether they are private individuals, or the local authority or a housing association.

The main estate lease and the sub-leases of blocks can be held by companies set up with each flat or house having one share and one vote. So initially, they would be local authority or housing association controlled, but over time they would become private, owned by the individuals who buy the properties they live in through the second part of the scheme.

This structure is the norm in private developments and it creates a sense of ownership amongst the residents. If the funds available for maintenance are raised from them and controlled by

them, I am sure that the residents will make a far better job of managing their estate than some remote bureaucrat in the town hall. After all, they have a real stake in getting it right.

However, the second aspect of the proposal goes further and seeks to positively kick-start the transformation of estates from public ownership to private ownership.

Initially, the local authority would take the leases of individual flats and houses, with the occupants becoming their tenants on standard shorthold terms. Assuming all tenants were occupying at a below-market rent, they should then be given – yes, given – an equity stake in their home equivalent to the discount to market rent they currently receive and then pay market rent on the remainder.

They would pay no more, the landlord would receive no less, but the occupier would now have a stake in their own home and an incentive to see the property and the area improve and to increase their ownership stake in their own home.

Over a relatively short period, the "estate" could become almost wholly privately owned, managed and maintained by its residents, as more people buy bigger stakes or whole properties outright. The proceeds from these sales would go back to the local authority or housing association who can recycle the money into new, affordable homes elsewhere. In short, a normally functioning market would have been created and "regeneration" wouldn't be needed anymore.

With billions in grants being channelled through local authorities to housing associations to take over existing estates, there are funds available to meet the initial capital cost of repairs. In the hands of the residents, this will be better spent and the end result will be what they want, not what the politicians want. A home of their own.

JOHN MOSS IS THE CONSERVATIVE PPC FOR HACKNEY SOUTH AND SHOREDITCH

The Turbulence of Tomlinson and the Virtues of Monopoly

The Tomlinson Report is expected to form the basis of the next White Paper on education, which will set the agenda in the classroom for the next decade. **Mark Nicholson** weighs up the pros and cons of the report's recommendations and argues for a move to a single examination board.



The Tomlinson Report

The Tomlinson report, commissioned by the government and written by former Chief Inspector of Schools, Mike Tomlinson, sets out a radical vision of education and examination structures for the 14-18 age group and is expected to be highly influential in the drafting of the government White Paper on Education, expected in January. The key recommendations of the report are:

- GCSE's, AS and A-levels should be replaced with a single, over-arching diploma
- The diploma would consist of a number of modules, some of which would be compulsory and some of which would be optional. Performance in each of the modules would go towards an overall 'score in the diploma
- There should be greater emphasis on technical and vocational education
- The emphasis of performance measurement should be shifted from exams to teacher-based assessment

The report recommends a number of positive suggestions. It is widely accepted that the introduction of AS levels as a separate exam at 17 has led to an over-emphasis of preparing students for exams as opposed to teaching. Consequently, abolishing this set of statutory exams is a step forward. Equally, enhancing the status of, and encouraging participation in, Technical and Vocational education should also be welcomed. Relative lack of local

technical skills has long been a handicap for the UK economy and, along with the low capacity of Britain's local and national transport networks, has done most to prevent the UK economy from realising the microeconomic advantages which for the last twenty years it has enjoyed vis-a-vis our European competitors.

However alongside these laudable recommendations, the Tomlinson Report risks throwing the baby out with the bathwater by proposing the replacement of all traditional exams at 16 and 18 with assessment of performance in each learning module over the duration of the course. Students will be able to retake modules when they are not satisfied with their original performance, and there will be greater emphasis on coursework and teacher assessment than on traditional exams. The combination of these factors could lead to a less rigorous and more subjective system of assessment, which will do little to restore confidence in academic standards.

Furthermore, probably the most concerning aspects of the Tomlinson Report is that it envisages its recommendations being brought in gradually over a period of ten years. This is a recipe for a decade of continuous confusion for pupils, teachers, parents, universities and employers. Whatever the merits of past changes to the exam system, they were at least invariably brought in 'once and for all' and so avoided such a lengthy period of transition.

The Need for a Single Exam Board

The recommendations of the Tomlinson report do little to address the greatest problem of the present education system, the widespread perception that standards are falling and that 'grade inflation' is devaluing students' achievements. One way of ending grade inflation would be to return to the system employed in the early 1980s which fixed the proportion of students who received each grade. However such a system would not show whether standards were improving over time, a point of key importance to teachers and policymakers alike.

I believe that an important factor in driving grade inflation is the existence of five independent exam boards and that confidence in academic standards would

be enhanced and effective parental school choice facilitated, by having a single body setting exams across England and Wales.

Currently, schools are free to pick and choose which board's exams they teach towards for each subject. It is natural under such circumstances for schools, under pressure to deliver good results, to opt for the exam which is thought to facilitate higher grades. Similarly, exam boards in a competitive market could be expected to react to this market pressure and lower grade boundaries. In this way, competition leads to grade inflation and a 'lowest common denominator' of academic standards. Having a single exam board would remove these pressures and would also give a clearer picture to employers and universities of the subject areas covered by each student by the end of their studies.

The Counter-Argument

In his paper A-Levels: Choosing the Best, Bow Group Author Martin McElwee takes the opposite view; that exam boards should be allowed to differentiate their offerings further so that it would become known which were the more rigorous boards, and that schools would be keen to offer the exams of these boards as a hallmark of their quality. The paper offers a number of valid points in support of its argument, principally:

- Having a single exam board in Scotland has not avoided accusations of grade inflation and lower standards
- Although universities offer ostensibly similar degrees, it is widely known that some degree courses are more rigorous than others and that students positively select the more challenging courses
- That having a single exam board runs against the widening of choice in the education system, for schools, parents and students alike.

I acknowledge that a having a single exam board would not remove all of the pressures which contribute towards grade inflation, and that one exam board would be as subject as the many to political pressure for ostensibly rising standards. However the competition between boards certainly exacerbates these pressures, and, as in so many areas, a market is a much more effective driver of change (in this case for the worse) than political interference.

Similarly, I think that the university analogy is not entirely apt for secondary schools. It would take time for the differences in rigour between different exam boards to become apparent, and much longer to habituate parents into believing that all grades are no longer equal. By contrast, the relative strength of universities has been apparent almost since their respective foundations.

Whereas the free parental choice of schools on which the 'Choosing the Best' model is based is undoubtedly a good thing, that choice also needs to be informed. I fear that widening the differences between exam board's offerings would serve only to confuse

parents, especially as it is likely, as now, that schools will teach to exams of different boards in different subjects and that the board which offers the most rigorous exams will differ from subject to subject.

A further drawback with more widely differentiated exam board offerings is that it would be harder to compare the performance of different schools, either on an absolute or a 'value added' basis, especially as the relative rigour of different boards exams could change over time. This would be relevant to boards of governors when assessing the performance of heads and of staff and, more pertinently, to parents when choosing a school for their

children. There are so many elements to take into account in making this choice, both academic and non-academic, that some constant lodestone is required to guide the way, in exam results most of all. Choice in education is invariably a force for good, and we need more of it, however to make this choice efficient and informed, other variables need to be neutralised as far as is practicable.

MARK NICHOLSON IS THE CONSERVATIVE PPC FOR EALING SOUTHALL, AND A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO CROSSBOW AND BOW GROUP RESEARCH

Book Review: French Women Don't Get Fat

Rachel Carson reviews this book with its unusual approach to keep your weight in check.

I AM always slightly bemused when someone comes up to me and remarks – how do you stay so slim?

To me the answer is pretty straightforward – no I don't diet, yes I enjoy my food and I exercise because I enjoy it.

The advice Mireille Giuliano gives in 'French Women Don't Get Fat' is to me common sense but also extremely refreshing.

It is a delightful read which makes one feel better about being alive and determined to live life to the full.

It is about the art of living.

Through a mix of reminiscence, anecdote and practical dietary advice Giuliano

guides the reader to eat well, eat right and above all enjoy food.

Giuliano speaks from experience having gained weight during her time as a student in the United States.

Much of what is said is straightforward yet still overlooked by many people; eat smaller portions, spend time on the presentation of your meals, use local produce in season, walk more, drink plenty of water, sleep well and most importantly enjoy the occasional glass of champagne!

What's more, interspersed throughout the book are mouth watering recipes to wet ones appetite from cold beetroot and yogurt summer soup, to halibut en papillote, and chocolate-espresso faux soufflés.

And hurray, Giuliano's regime doesn't include a daily gym workout either; her remarks as to them being 'a vestige of

Puritanism; instruments of public self flagellation to make up for the private sins of couch sitting and overeating' brought a smile to my face.

That 'French Women Don't Get Fat', may be something of a generalisation but if we all followed the suggestions in this book, I am sure the problems of obesity would be greatly reduced.

Bon sante et bon appetite!

About the author;

Mireille Guiliano is French, brought up in Alsace-Lorraine and Provence and educated at the Sorbonne. She is President and CEO of Clicquot Inc, and a director of Veuve Clicquot in Reims. She is married to an American and lives in New York and Paris.

Thoughts on a Conservative energy policy

Climate change and our environment have become ever more salient as the policy debate focuses on heading off potential disaster. **Michael Liebreich** opens up the debate further as he puts forward policies that Tim Yeo may wish to take up.

There is a strong argument that the electorate will never believe Conservatives can make good custodians of the planet, and that the party should avoid debate on renewable energy. But climate change and energy security are set to be part of the agenda at the next election, whether we like it or not. Tony Blair has said climate change will be one of his priorities during Britain's presidency of the G8 next year. The Government has promised that the country will derive 10% of its energy from renewable sources by 2010, 20% by 2020 and 60% by 2050. It is already well on track to miss the first of these targets.

Michael Howard has called for "new leadership in the way we manage our environment". Tim Yeo, Shadow Environment and Transport Secretary, has demanded the Government rethink its wind power plans and promised that the Conservatives will soon unveil "a more balanced, long term approach". But what should a Conservative energy policy look like? The Party needs to demonstrate that it understands the issues of climate change and energy security, and is offering serious policy alternatives.

Selected policy suggestions

Energy Policy is hard work. It affects multiple stakeholders in sometimes hard-to-predict ways; it is subject as no other area of policy to buffeting by the winds of international events. The following policy suggestions are intended to spur debate on how best to demonstrate that the Conservative Party understands the issues surrounding climate change, is able to put them in technological and economic context, and would implement a positive, coherent set of actions if elected.

- Build a stable investment environment
The scale of investment required to increase the proportion of the UK's energy generated from renewable sources is vast. Investment on this scale will not take place without a stable fiscal and legislative environment. The Conservative Party should:

Make a clear statement of long-term commitment to renewable energy. The Government will miss its 10% goal for renewable energy in 2010, but it would be a mistake to celebrate. Instead we should support the goal of 20% renewable energy by 2020 and 60% (or at least 50%) by 2050;

Declare support for the European Union Greenhouse Gas Emission Trading Scheme (ETS). We want it to work, and we want it to work in London. Announce a clear intention when elected to support and extend it, and to negotiate its inter-operability with other emissions trading schemes springing up around the world in New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Canada and various US states.

Demand that the EU state a long-term "monetary policy" on emissions. An annual reduction of 1.1% will produce a 20% reduction in 20 years, and a 60% reduction in 50 years. If that's what we want to achieve, let's say so, and then set up an independent emissions "central bank" to police the targets. Under the current system, it is up to national administrations to propose and administer their own National Allocation Plans, much as they administer their own budgets under the discredited Euro Growth and Stability Pact.

The Renewable Obligation Certificate (ROC) scheme, which is coming up for review in 2005/2006 should be substantially redesigned as a tool to encourage diversity of renewable energy sources - something it has so far manifestly failed to achieve. There is no point in retaining two overlapping, illiquid cap-and-trade arrangements at national and EU level. What is needed is a long-term, stable, framework with adjustable differential support levels, which would encourage UK power suppliers to invest in all of the country's various renewable energy technologies as they move to maturity.

Introduce a Carbon Disclosure requirement, first for large and then for mid-sized companies, based on the proven methodology of the Carbon Disclosure Project. If investors are given sufficient information to assess companies' exposure to future greenhouse gas liabilities, they will direct funds towards those that are working to mitigate emissions.

- Encourage improved energy efficiency throughout the economy. A relentless drive for energy efficiency must lie at the heart of emission reduction efforts. The Conservative

Party should propose a full range of measures to encourage capital investment by individuals, companies and the public sector:

Offering a reduced Stamp Duty for energy efficient homes is an excellent proposal. More will need to be done, though, to encourage the majority of householders not thinking of moving house to bring forward improvements. A VAT rebate on energy-saving DIY products and services would be an interesting supplementary measure if allowed under EU law;

Increase the differentials in Vehicle Excise Duty to penalise less efficient vehicles;

Extend the Enhanced Capital Allowance scheme to encourage business take-up of energy-efficient plant and equipment, and Combined Heat and Power systems.

Help investors and consumers to demand change by trialling a voluntary labelling scheme for companies wishing to promote low emissions products and services in energy-intensive sectors, such as cars, housing and holidays;

Require carbon disclosure by Government departments and local authorities, and introduce carbon intensity as a factor in public procurement. The public sector spends 40% of GDP, with substantial market clout to demand innovation. Fund the Audit Commission or similar organisation to benchmark energy management practices across local authorities.

- Foster innovation
Britain should be a world leader in emerging energy technologies. We have the strongest materials science and biochemistry base outside North America, and some of the world's best renewable energy resources. Yet we are behind the USA, Japan, Germany, Canada and even Denmark in energy technology research and development. The best way for governments to promote innovation is to ensure generally high levels of education and infrastructure, and low levels of tax and bureaucracy. These

should anyway form part of any Conservative manifesto. In addition, however, we should Create a National Renewable Energy Agency:

Responsibility for renewable energy deployment currently lies with the Sustainable Energy Policy Network, a patchwork of Government departments, Devolved Administrations and regulators that all currently award research, investment and capital grants. Responsibility, and budgets, should be centralised in one Agency.

The Renewable Energy Agency's management should be held accountable for achieving the country's renewable energy targets - unlike the current situation where targets are missed but no one is to blame;

Increase spending on research into climate change and renewable energy technologies to £100m per annum;

Improve access for smaller companies and startups to EU research grants. Most currently require a combination of matching funds, pan-European partnerships and tolerance of bureaucracy which is not found in entrepreneurial organisations;

Identify and remove legislative barriers to the implementation of new energy technologies, such as those that impede the sale of distributed energy to the National Grid, or that place unnecessary restrictions on the transport and use of hydrogen.

- Act internationally

We can and must have influence beyond our shores. We should:

Push for a "Son of Kyoto" to extend emissions targets to rapidly developing countries and to bring America back into the process;

Work towards an international agreement on including air transport in global, EU and national greenhouse gas emissions targets;

Set up a scholarship programme for engineers from developing countries to study renewable energy in the UK;

Encourage export of low-emissions technologies to developing countries via Kyoto's JI and CDM mechanism and by means of a focused, well funded trade development / export credit programme.

- Protect individuals

Moving to a widespread use of renewable energy sources will have general benefits for the population of the country and of the world. However, it will also have negative effects on specific local populations. In the rush to meet what are often artificial, political targets, we must not ignore the risks to affected communities. We should:

Retain or restore the normal planning process for renewable energy projects;

Provide funding for research into the health, social and economic impacts of renewable energy technologies;

Develop policy mechanisms to ensure that increases in energy costs which result from increased renewable energy usage do not fall disproportionately on economically disadvantaged groups, especially pensioners.

- And finally, bite the bullet on nuclear power. The country, and the Conservative Party, needs to make up its mind which it considers the greater evil - greenhouse gases or nuclear power. We should:

Invest to maximise the output and prolong the life of our existing nuclear power plants;

Indicate support in principle for maintaining the nuclear share of UK electricity generation at 20%, subject to the achievement by the industry of independently audited technical and economic criteria;

Commit to reaching a go/no go decision on building new nuclear power stations by the end of 2006, following public consultations on risks and costs.

MICHAEL LIEBREICH IS THE CEO AND FOUNDER OF NEW ENERGY FINANCE LTD.



The Bow Group Annual Dinner

with

Rt Hon the Lord Heseltine

at Lord's Cricket Ground

10 March 2005

See Blue Page A for further details

The Atom or the Seed?

Stuart Baldock looks for sustainable sources of energy for the future.



The current energy debate is concentrated on how Britain will power the national grid in the next 20-30 years. While important decisions need to be made about the national grid, the weakest link in the country's energy plan is providing power for transport.

The level of car ownership in Britain is still increasing: the Government's public transport schemes are failing to compete with the convenience of a private car. The number of cars on Britain's roads has increased by 4 million in the last five years alone. Worldwide car ownership is set to increase over the next 30 years. Emerging economies with large populations such as India and China also need more hydrocarbons to fuel their economies.

Demand for oil has started to outstrip supply to the point where it has become necessary for politicians actively to put in place policy that will ensure the UK's energy security over the next 100 years. The current government's commitment to renewable energy sources, while commendable, has done little to solve the long-term problem: how will we power transport infrastructure? In the recent economic climate, with oil prices reaching over \$50 a barrel, it is becoming ever more expensive to run a car. The current situation offers an alarming insight into the future.

Current thinking is that hydrogen-powered cars are the way forward. While the only waste product of hydrogen cars is water, it is open to debate as to how green they actually are, since electricity is required to split hydrogen from water. With the Government currently only committed to 10% of the country's energy being generated from renewable sources, the power needed would be most likely to come from either a hydrocarbon or nuclear

power station. Hardly a green source of power!

Technological innovation is also still required for hydrogen powered cars. While the fuel cells are already available, the infrastructure that would be needed for the production of hydrogen on a large scale is not yet a reality.

One option is increased use of "bio" diesel which is produced from agricultural oil products. In France all diesel sold already contains 5% biodiesel. The infrastructure to sell biodiesel to power the country's cars is within our reach, as existing pumps and petrol stations could easily be modified. Furthermore, conventional diesel engines can use biodiesel with little or no modification, and farmers possess the necessary skills to produce biodiesel on a large scale. What is needed now is the policy framework to develop the industry on a larger and more profitable scale.

Examples of successful biodiesel use can be found in the USA, where B100 diesel is sold, made up of 100% biodiesel. A different grade B20 is also sold which constitutes 20 "biological" diesel. Even the B20 grade of fuel offers considerable environmental benefits in that it cuts down hydrocarbon use. It also greatly increases the efficiency of the conventional diesel and reduces the damaging effects on the environment.

Carbon monoxide emissions for biodiesel blends are 47% lower than for petrol diesel. Sulphur emissions are also completely eliminated when B100 is used in cars. Sulphur emissions are a major contributory factor in acid rain. Carcinogenic compounds called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons are also reduced by 75-85%.

While the current Conservative policy of taxing high-emission cars provides the "stick" to develop cleaner, burning, non-hydrocarbon fuels, the "carrot" is not evident when it comes to developing biodiesels as a feasible alternative.

The following incentives are necessary:

- A commitment to remove the fuel duty that Gordon Brown introduced on biodiesel in the 2002 budget, taxing it at the same level as conventional diesel.
- Tax breaks for petrol stations that stock biodiesel.

- The fuel tax that consumers pay on conventional diesel should also be eliminated for biodiesel blends that are made up of over 20% biodiesel.

Companies as well as consumers will need to be convinced that it is an economically viable alternative to conventional diesel.

While ensuring that demand will increase for biodiesel, the Government must also ensure that supply is maintained. The EU's target of 5.75% of all road transport fuel coming from renewable sources by 2010 is certainly achievable, if not even a little under optimistic.

- Grants need to be made available to companies to set up biodiesel processing plants.
- The EU farm subsidy that Britain controls can be put to better use by ensuring that British farms help towards energy security.
- Grants should also be made available to firms to contribute towards the cost of producing even cleaner burning biodiesels.

In conclusion while biodiesel production can take place within Britain and the EU, the possibility of generating international trade cannot be overlooked. Domestic farmers will in the first instance be able to meet demand; the possibility of purchasing biodiesel from overseas may in the long-term become a necessity.

Commitments are also needed from the EU:

- A commitment not to place large tariffs on the import of biodiesel from foreign markets.
- A limit on the duration for which EU farmers receive subsidies for the production of biodiesel.

Many of the countries that would be in a position to sell biodiesel come from the developing world, and free international trade must not be manipulated by unfair subsidies.

Biodiesel therefore not only represents an option for a green transport policy! It also represents an opportunity to improve the lives of farmers, not only in Europe, but also in the developing world.

Immigration crisis can be resolved... only by the Conservatives

The hot potato of immigration is taken on by **Sergei Cristo** building on his own personal experiences and knowledge.

There is an effective way to reform the British immigration system. Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats all seem to agree that the political asylum system should be tightened and work permit schemes made more comprehensive. However, in the current political climate any left wing party will find any meaningful reform a balancing act far too difficult for them to master.

The reform should aim, on one hand, to exclude economic migrants from the political asylum route, by introducing stricter application criteria and procedures, and, on the other, to expand the work permit system in order to satisfy the current demand for foreign workers in the UK.

For Labour, this particular combination is a puzzle without a solution. Even the most hard-nosed blue-tinted Blairites will find it hard to drive through proposals for setting a formal limit for asylum seekers entering the country. The Labour Party, in Parliament and in the country, is against it. Equally, the Labour Government is frightened of being seen by the electorate as opening doors to even more immigrants, even to those who are prepared to work, so expanding the work permit system is out of the question too.

Most now agree that Britain needs tougher immigration controls - polls show that around 80% of the public (including ethnic minorities) think so. In response, the Labour government has tried several half measures, even massaging the immigration figures, but the long term solution is only in a radical reform of the system as a whole.

Lately, the political asylum route has been used, to an alarming degree, by people seeking work, rather than a safe haven from political prosecution. However, this is mainly due to the lacking sophistication of the work permit system, totally unable to acknowledge and adequately cope with the demand for foreign labour in this country.

Take, for example, seasonal workers in agriculture. They come to Britain every year to earn some money for their families living in Eastern Europe, Russia and China. The quotas under existing schemes for these workers are laughably small and have such strict criteria that they go nowhere near satisfying the existing demand. This must be changed.

Foreign workers employed through the official Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) which, according to government spin doctors "enable farmers and growers to meet their shortfall in recruiting seasonal workers", in reality represent only a minority of all foreign workers employed. Bizarrely, only foreign students in full education are allowed to apply. Understandably, farmers prefer to hire more mature, experienced and cheaper workforce and so they turn to unscrupulous gangmasters who supply illegal workers to them. According to the research conducted by the Transport and General Workers' Union, around 20% - 30% of the workforce in British agriculture, during the busiest months, are illegal foreign workers. A force of this size will be very difficult, if not impossible, to replace with British workers.

There are many problems associated with illegal foreign workers, most of which actually have more to do with the gangmasters who employ them. Being outside the law, illegal workers do not have any other option but to accept whatever ugly working and living conditions they are subjected to by their gangmasters. Moreover, because workers are paid in cash, some gangmasters became involved in laundering money for drug traffickers and other criminals.

Police officers from the Special Branch told me that collecting evidence needed for conviction is extremely difficult. As many as 1,000 gangmasters are thought to employ up to 75,000 workers, yet since 1998, there have been only a handful of convictions of gangmasters and other employers using illegal workers. Clearly, the only truly effective solution would be to legalise seasonal foreign workers who don't fit the current criteria so that they don't have to deal with gangmasters.

Seasonal labour from Eastern Europe, Russia and China is a recent phenomenon caused by the disintegration of Communist Block countries. It is therefore hardly surprising that our immigration system, which remained almost unchanged since the end of the Cold War, is unable to cope with it. Economic migrants get in through the political asylum route as the easiest way of gaining an official work permit in the UK.

However, compared with a work permit, a political asylum application costs every British taxpayer dearly. There is still an odd

rule which allows asylum seekers to apply for a work permit only 6 months after the date of their asylum application. In the meantime, they are automatically provided with unemployment, housing and any other benefits that any UK taxpayer may be entitled to. Obviously, being in good health, many of the applicants don't wait for a work permit and earn some extra money illegally on the side, in cash, tax-free, so the British taxpayer loses out twice.

This loss in tax revenue does not represent the price we pay for immigration, but the price of an outdated system which the Government failed to scrap. It is also a rapidly rising cost. When the Labour Party came to power in 1997, 32,505 people claimed asylum in the UK. By 2002, this figure has risen to 85,865 - an increase of 164%.

To exclude economic migrants from the political asylum application process is not difficult technically. For example, applications can be assessed at the point of submission, rather than at the end of a backlog, by personnel qualified in foreign affairs. Application desks can be divided by world regions and interpreters might be there for applicants who don't speak English. Officers should have good knowledge of their applicants' region and enough authority to reject applications straight away if they don't fit strict criteria.

The Conservatives are the only party that won't have any problem implementing such proposals. Traditionally, it has always been tough on immigration. The British people know Conservatives well enough to believe that any immigration reforms it sees through will not open immigration floodgates even further. It is, unlike Labour, fully committed to putting a formal annual limit on the number political asylum applications. It is also the only party that is capable of solving the problem of labour shortages by allowing foreign workers into the country without getting the situation out of control.

SERGEI CRISTO IS A FORMER BBC JOURNALIST WHO POSED AS AN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT WORKER ON FARMS WHILST SECRETLY FILMING FOR PANORAMA INVESTIGATION "GANGMASTERS" BROADCASTED IN JUNE 2000. HE IMMIGRATED TO BRITAIN FROM RUSSIA IN 1993.

Beating Labour on electoral reform

Nicholas Hillman challenges the arguments in the last edition of *Crossbow* against lowering the voting age and calls for Conservatives to outflank Labour on electoral issues.

Bad politics

The Labour Party is set to rejuvenate its commitment to constitutional reform by giving the vote to people aged 16 and 17. The right-wing press and some elements of the Conservative Party are, predictably, up in arms - in the last edition of *Crossbow*, for example, an article claimed that 16 and 17 year olds are not 'mature enough' to vote.



Even if such opposition is not a surprise, it should still be robustly challenged by all progressive Conservatives who are serious about returning to power. Opposing the first reduction in the voting age since 1969 is bad politics that goes against the Conservative tradition of responding in practical ways to social change. And it will do nothing to strengthen Conservative support where the party is weakest - among young people.

The real problem with Labour's proposal to extend the franchise is that it does not go far enough. Instead of redefining the concept of citizenship, it simply extends it downwards by two years. Far from opposing the change, the Conservative Party should readily accept it, but also argue that it is insufficiently bold.

It is not totally clear why there needs to be a minimum voting age at all. Three arguments are often used to justify it. First, politicians could 'bribe' children to

vote for them by offering some enticement. Secondly, children cannot be trusted and would either waste their vote or vote the same way as their parents. Thirdly, children wouldn't bother to vote anyway, so the change would be pointless.

But every one of these potential problems is equally true of adults, who tend to vote in favour of more goods for themselves (either through lower taxes or better services), or to vote as their forebears did or, increasingly, not to vote at all.

Empowering potential voters

Of course, abandoning the minimum voting age altogether is so way off the mainstream political radar that even the Liberal Democrats would not adopt it. But there are other, equally imaginative, ways in which the Conservative Party could steal Labour's clothes in this area.

One way to empower the millions of potential voters who feel disfranchised and who have no current interest in joining any political party would be to give them a say in the choice of the Conservative Party Leader. In order to stop other parties hijacking the process, this would probably need to be restricted to people who register in advance and who are not members of any other political party. But, even with such restrictions, primary-style contests would be a much more impressive way to re-connect politicians and voters than either ITV's new reality show 'Vote for Me' or Labour's Big Conversation. And, unlike the proposal to restrict the choice of leader to Tory MPs (as in the past), it would help to ensure that the top echelons of the party are representative of the wider community.

It is worth recalling that there is nothing sacred about the current leadership election rules. Each of the five Tory Party Leaders who has won the post via a contested election has been chosen under a different system. And, because Michael Howard is the only party leader since the 1960s to have been chosen by acclamation, it should be easier to change the rules now than at any point since then.

Another useful reform in the same vein

would be to change the candidate selection process so that a greater proportion of Conservative Parliamentary Candidates are reflective of the individual local communities that they seek to represent. Again, this means moving from the current closed shop selection procedure to a truly open process in which local people who are not party members can play an important part. This has already occurred in a few constituencies, but it should become a well-publicised norm, rather than an exception that is feared by much of the mass party membership.

In addition to the Conservative Party's existing commitment to democratic elections for the second chamber, these sorts of policies would offer a truly radical and attractive addition to the modest reduction in the minimum voting age that is currently on the table. They could also help to rejuvenate the party by making it more representative and by offering a new gateway to full party membership.

Authentic Conservatism

Whatever it might look like on first appearance, such policies are authentically Conservative. They are, for example, in tune with Disraeli's willingness to snatch the reform agenda from under the noses of the Whigs in 1867, as well as the success of Churchill and 'RAB' Butler in appealing to women voters in the aftermath of the 1945 defeat.

Both of these precedents eventually helped to lead the Conservative Party from the political wilderness to unparalleled and relatively untrammelled electoral success. It would surely be better to follow them, than to copy the die-hards who opposed the Great Reform Act of 1832 and who led the Tories into the political wilderness, where the party remained for more than a generation.

Kneejerk opposition to progressive measures of a sensible nature holds Conservatives back; it does not bring us any closer to being a genuine alternative Government.

NICHOLAS HILLMAN WORKS IN THE CITY AND IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO *CROSSBOW*.

Time to be bold, Letwin

Looking beyond the moral case for lower taxation, **Francis Ingham** argues the practical need for pledging tax cuts.



At the party conference, Oliver Letwin made another reasoned, intellectually robust, statesmanlike speech. It was an excellent Chancellor's speech, full of gravity and intellectual certainty. Unfortunately, he isn't the Chancellor, and our current economic policy makes it unlikely he ever will be. His subsequent consultation paper setting out possible ways of reducing tax was erudite and thoughtful. But it again missed the point – voters do not want to read our consultation papers, they want to hear what we believe and how we will make their lives better.

The problem is a lack of conviction from frontbench Tories. Our instincts are to cut tax, and to make the moral and economic arguments for lower taxation.

But we Tories have lost the self-confidence to stand by our principles. The last general election was the final straw. We advocated very modest, targeted tax cuts, and received nothing but pain for our trouble. Voters didn't see a broader vision behind our proposals. They looked at our broken promises during the 1992-97 Parliament, and they simply did not believe we would be true to our word. And in truth, who can blame them? Our proposed tax cuts were little more than opportunistic pandering to special interest groups – the pledge on petrol duty being the most blatant.

Voters did, however, believe Labour when they said that we would slash spending on public services. So we ended with the worst of all possible outcomes – voters somehow didn't believe our promise that we would cut taxes; but they did believe Labour's warning that we would attack public services.

We now appear destined to make exactly the same mistake. Too late in the electoral cycle, we will come forward with modest, targeted tax cuts. They won't inspire former Tories, but they will be inflated by Labour into a secret agenda of public expenditure cuts. Just as happened in 2001, we will have the worst of both worlds.

Back in 2001, we argued that tax had risen a little, and that services had not improved to the same extent. We promised we would make a small package of tax cuts and that services would not suffer. Our argument now seems to be that taxes have risen a great deal; that services have not improved at anything like the same rate; and that we might cut taxes. To blast Labour for their 66 tax rises without saying that we will reverse the great majority of them is simply incredible – in the literal sense of the word. We will not have a credible economic policy until we set out precisely which taxes we will cut (and by how much) and which we will abolish (and by when).

Many commentators believe that Brown's spending splurge has posed strategic difficulties for the Tories, forcing us to come to terms with a new, and deeply un-Tory, public consensus around taxation and spending levels. But instead, I see the potential electoral advantages in this situation. Just think of the room for manoeuvre a bold, confident Shadow Chancellor would have. Labour's tax increases amount to 16 and half pence on the standard rate of Income Tax. To me, that suggests we could promise massive tax cuts, while keeping some of Labour's increased expenditure in key areas of public concern.

This would certainly make tax one of the election's defining issues. It would give Labour ammunition with which to attack us. But it would also give us a clear message, would be evidence of our new confidence, and would give those many voters who feel they're getting a raw deal out of Labour's tax rises, a reason to turn out and vote for us. The argument that we should play safe is simply nonsensical. Playing safe has led us to where we are today – with 166 seats and with the opinion polls showing us at best on level-pegging with a massively unpopular Government. The Tories need to articulate a clear and distinctive message if we are once again to fight Labour on equal terms.

Look at the facts:

Tax is one of the few major issues where we lead Labour. Among the 33% of MORI respondents mentioning tax as one of their key areas of concern, we have a 13 point lead over Labour. At the last election, Labour led us by 3 points.

Polls show that the percentage of those mentioning tax as a major issue has held constant over the last few years at around a third of voters (currently 33%).

In a recent MORI poll of Londoners – a region where we must do much better if we are to have any chance of getting back into Government- 69% of respondents said that taxes were getting worse under Labour, with only 13% saying that they were getting better.

So allow me to put forward a rather different tax and spend policy to that espoused by Dr Letwin.

Bite the bullet on spending. We know that much of Labour's increased spending has been wasted. We say so all the time. And the polls show that voters agree with us. So it's time we started arguing what we know to be true- that spending on this level will lead to lower economic growth, will make us lose our competitive advantage, and will crowd out the private sector.

Use the resulting savings to cut tax. Pledge to cut the standard rate of Income Tax by at least 2p. To raise at least one and a half million people out of Higher Rate Income Tax by significantly increasing the threshold. To abolish Inheritance Tax completely. To reduce employers' National Insurance contributions back to their 1997 level.

Of course, the Shadow Chancellor might not go down this route. He might stick to his cautious strategy – saying tax is too high but making no definite commitments on how to reduce it. But there will be two results - we will continue to have an indistinct message, leading to another defeat at the polls. And the ratchet of Socialism - eversed by Thatcher with her bold agenda of tax cuts- will be cranked another notch. For good. Because if the Tories aren't brave enough to promise tax cuts now, then when on earth will we be?

FRANCIS INGHAM IS A COUNCILLOR ON THE LONDON BOROUGH OF ENFIELD, AND FORMER SECRETARY OF THE BOW GROUP.

An Englishman in South Carolina

The race for the Senate and the Whitehouse are diarised here, in the heat of battle, by **Tom Greeves**.

7 September 2004

I'm sitting at my new desk at the DeMint for Senate campaign offices.

I've already had a lot of fun. I have moved into an apartment with Geoff, Wes and Steve, who have been very welcoming. We've been out on the town and they introduced me to bourbon and ginger, which is what Southern Gentlemen drink.

Everyone is exceptionally friendly, including the candidate, to whom I was introduced at a Labor Day parade. Jim and our opponent Inez Tenenbaum went along the route waving to and meeting people. Rather splendidly, I ended up on television holding a sign saying "Abolish the IRS".

It is very conservative here. Social issues play big, and shops have a sign outside saying "No concealed weapons". There's lots of "yes sir" and "yes m'am", and a tangible degree of inbuilt civility and decency. It's not at all phony, and no, I haven't had any sense of racism at all, and yes, there are black Republicans.

The Southern drawl is highly engaging, and my accent has as anticipated caused quite a stir. The women are very good looking too. All in all a positive start.

15 September 2004

I am now saying "y'all" with a decreasing level of irony, and - to my eternal shame - willingly referring to "soccer". Brace yourselves for a few Southernisms when I get back.

Life continues well. I have been writing letters and policy notes, and doing lots of odd jobs like stuffing envelopes and putting up signs. Laura Bush comes on Friday, so I imagine the Secret Service will give me an assault rifle and ask me to look after her.

Geoff took me to a football match at Clemson. The whole town, and I really do mean EVERYONE, was out in force and wearing orange. Game Day is a really big deal, and it is genuinely heartwarming to see such community spirit.

The candidate has a superb ad man, and has been focussing heavily on a plan to scrap the federal income tax. We've got some heat about this, but it's being well handled. I'm impressed by the calibre of the staff. Our opponent is running scared, and concentrating on negative campaigning.

I need to do some research on 1812, as I'm getting blamed for it.

24 September 2004

I didn't get to guard the First Lady, but I

did get to meet her. I was introduced by Jim, and had the opportunity to wish her well in the forthcoming election. It was a real treat to meet the President's wife about two weeks after arriving in America. Supper at the White House can only be months away.

Bush is looking good for the Presidency, and my man is still favourite to win the Senate election, but our race has tightened. The Democrats' lies about our tax plans are hitting home, and we're



getting lots of worried calls from voters. But I hope and believe we will prevail.

I didn't see John Edwards speak when he came into town, but his motorcade held us up for fifteen minutes. He was born in South Carolina, but even his Southern charm is unlikely to help Kerry here - Bush will win SC handsomely.

5 October 2004

Good news - I have been promoted. Wes and Geoff want me to move to the holy of holies at the top of the building. I have been doing lots of op ed writing, and am perfectly happy to do the manual work too, but this is a good development.

On Sunday Jim debated Inez at the College of Charleston, and she did a lot better than I had expected. Charleston is FABULOUS. It's the one place that everyone in SC said I must visit, and it didn't disappoint. The sea air is bracing, the architecture is gorgeous, and the whole place is spirited and exciting.

The race is hotting up big time now. Inez has a huge staff - many of whom do not sound Southern and have therefore probably been bussed in from other states. The press is often hard on Jim, and we've been hurt by their lies about his tax plans.

I have had one lack of success myself. Anthony Quattrone, who works for the State Republican Party, asked me to call some voters. This did not go well. Hardly anyone could understand a word I was saying. Someone suggested I fake a Southern accent, but the thought of stumbling on sounding like a cross between Forrest Gump and John Gielgud was just too excruciating.

19 October 2004

A van has been "wrapped" with a huge picture of a grinning Jim, and the DeMint logo. It is a mobile advert, and a jolly good idea. Steve drives it, and we occasionally receive verbal abuse. My heart always ascends into my throat, as Steve is nothing if not robust in his views, and I have visions of him screaming back something wildly inappropriate. However, he has managed to control himself thus far.

We are being browbeaten as a result of a curveball question about gay teachers, and the race is going down to the wire.

The debates are fun. They take place in a TV studio, and we go to a bar to eat, drink and watch. Before the candidates arrive, both sides congregate with banners, donning campaign t-shirts. The focus is on making as much noise as possible. Sandy, a retired hostage negotiator, blew into her police whistle for an hour-and-a-half, which caused all of Inez's lot to scarper, and Sandy to nearly pass out.

There have been moments of levity. At one debate local journalists posed questions. One of them, Jennifer Holland, was rigid with fear at being on TV. In attempting to ask Jim about hate crime legislation, specifically relating to attacks on gays, she appeared to ask if he supported legislation for a tax on gays. Cue much hilarity.

1 November 2004

Well, this part of the adventure is about to come to an end. In just over a day's time, Americans will have gone to the polls, and the DeMint for Senate team will congregate in a local hotel to watch the results flood in, and God willing drink ourselves stupid in celebration of a win for our man, for President Bush, and for Grand Old Party candidates throughout the nation.

The last week has been hectic but great fun. We undertook a six day tour of the state, meeting and greeting lots of voters, waving signs, handing out stickers, and putting out yard signs. And I had my fifteen minutes of fame.

At a breakfast rally in Myrtle Beach one of our supporters was waxing lyrical about me coming over from England to help. This prompted Dan Hoover of the Greenville News to amble over and stick a tape recorder under my nose. This in turn attracted the interest of a local TV news network, who briefly interviewed me too. Any inflation of the Greeves Ego was offset by being called "John Greeves" in the paper the next day.

I finally had the great privilege to meet Governor Mark Sanford today. He is a

very affable fellow, and said that America should copy some of our reforms. I presume he had council house sales and privatization in mind, rather than the rape of democracy effected by Tony Blair.

I am nervous and excited about tomorrow. It does look good for Bush and Jim, but neither is a done deal, and I will of course be hugely relieved if it all works out. I also give y'all fair warning that I will be incorrigible if we win. I think everyone would accept that I will have earned the right - after two months of unpaid work and several years of electoral failure - to crow a bit.

17 November 2004

A fortnight ago I rose from my air mattress with a feeling I had not experienced before - victory. It really does beat losing MASSIVELY, and I dread to think how everyone would have felt if Jim had suffered an unexpected loss. But he won by 11 percent, and I was very proud indeed when he named me in his thank you speech.

Americans rejected or ignored the bigotry and arrogance of the liberal media, the Democrat Party, the loathsome United Nations and Michael Moore. The good burghers of Ohio even had the temerity to discard the advice of Guardian readers that they should vote for John Kerry.

After a few days of partying, I went up to DC with the estimable Geoff Emblar. I took in Captiol Hill, various monuments and memorials, and gazed at the White House. DC was a great place to visit, but it further convinced me that I have no desire to work there - although I would reconsider if a President ever came calling!

TOM GREEVES WORKED IN THE CONSERVATIVE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT FOR FOUR YEARS, AND THEN SPENT A YEAR AS PETER AINSWORTH'S PARLIAMENTARY ADVISER. HE HAS JUST RETURNED FROM SOUTH CAROLINA, USA, HAVING VOLUNTEERED ON THE SUCCESSFUL SENATE RACE OF JIM DEMINT. THE FOLLOWING IS AN EDITED VERSION OF HIS EMAILS FROM THE CAMPAIGN.

THE BOW GROUP

EVENTS DIARY

Rt Hon John Major

23rd February, 7.00pm. Central London Venue to be announced (by email) nearer the time for security reasons. Former Prime Minister John Major will deliver the Bow Group's inaugural Annual Lecture.

Boris Johnson MP - Speaker Meeting

1st March, 8.00pm. House of Commons Committee Room 6. The irrepressible Boris will speak and take questions.

Annual Dinner with Michael Heseltine

10 March, 7.00pm. Lords Cricket Ground. The Bow Group's famous annual dinner will take place at Lord's Cricket Ground on Thursday 10th March. One of the Party's most distinguished and colourful figures, Lord Heseltine will speak after the dinner. Send a cheque for £75 per head (made payable to The Bow Group) ASAP to: Bow Group, 1A Heath Hurst Road, London NW3 2RU. Black Tie.

Nicholas Soames MP vs. Clare Short MP

Debate on Britain's Place in the World **22nd March**, 7.30pm. House of Commons, Committee Room 6. Shadow Defence Secretary Nicholas Soames takes on former Cabinet Minister Clare Short in what promises to be a combative evening.