"In a world without walls, we need shared standards to make Britain feel like home…"

A MORE UNITED KINGDOM

Liam Byrne

DEMOS

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1   **Introduction**

Fragmentation, free thought and new excitements came now to intrigue and perplex us
   Laurie Lee, *Cider with Rosie*, 1959

The idea of shared standards or 'rules of the road' has always been part of the fabric of political ideas and public life. For Labour they are the quintessence of the kind of cooperation that we believe vital to social progress. And over the last decade we have acquired a new appreciation of the importance of this 'fraternity', reciprocity and mutual respect to a healthy, wealthy – and more equal – society.

But modern life is bringing changes to the way shared social standards are created, reinforced and used day to day. In a more fluid world of international migration, fast-moving economies and changing social attitudes, individuals find new opportunities for career progression and personal expression. But collective life also faces new pressures as communities become more transient, families more dispersed, work less secure and traditional institutions less powerful.

For Labour, this poses some urgent new questions. We have always been comfortable with an extremely relaxed definition of what we think it is we have in common, but this will not do any more. We can live in a country where our values are different, where we have different inspirations and different ambitions, but living in a country without 'shared standards' is impossible. When a society begins to question the things it has in common, it is automatically more predisposed not only to the politics of fear but also to the politics of individualism.

As a counterweight to this, shared standards are the secret to preserving harmony in a more diverse society. When the rules of the road are clear, people relax about where their neighbours

plan to travel. Every fraternal society has its code of conduct. Every happy family has good ground-rules. Shared standards are the glue that keeps diverse societies together; they are something akin to Oliver Wendell Holmes' idea of the law: 'those wise constraints that make people free'.[1] And this is no more or less than the insight that has been at the centre of progressive thinking since at least JS Mill.

Of course, these standards also come in different forms. Sometimes they are codified in law, as with property rights or privacy laws. In other areas, communities share less formalised conventions, which make communal life fairer and more fulfilling, from giving up a seat on a bus to the great British pastime of queuing.

Today, the appetite for shared standards, both civic and legal, is acute. This is the lesson of the immigration debate for Labour's wider agenda: strengthening what we have in common must coexist with a respect for difference. My warning is that unless Labour takes this argument seriously the Tories will seek to take this ground. Already in the work of writers like Danny Kruger and others we see a Tory ambition to seize the language, the agenda and the policies of fraternity from us. Indeed Kruger points to a coming 'passionate disagreement about who owns the ground of fraternity, and whether the state or the individual will lift their banner there'.[2]

Yet the reflex of the right is to draw the wrong lessons from history. In America and continental Europe, neo-conservatives are provoking 'culture wars' to promote a regressive agenda of their own. In Britain, the right seeks to revert to a set of traditional institutions, most obviously the nuclear family, in an attempt to stave off vast technological, social and economic changes. But the real lesson of the past is one of inventiveness, not stasis.

Because we have been here before. And we have once before mastered this challenge. At the end of the nineteenth century we felt in this country the industrialisation that sucked people out of the countryside into new associations in the city. As Laurie Lee put it: 'Fragmentation, free thought and new excitements came now to intrigue and perplex us.'

Our national response was not reactionary; it was inventive. In cities like mine, Birmingham, at the end of the nineteenth century, we built a new civic fabric from scratch. Social and civic entrepreneurs like Chamberlain and Cadbury helped invent a new way of living together, underpinned by new, collective habits and services. Countless social and political entrepreneurs created a new richness in social and political life.

New answers will require the political imagination of all of us. Rather than hark back to the past, we should set sail for a different future, which is above all imaginative, where we seek to keep the standards and norms that have been shaped by our national history and reimagine how to apply them to the challenges of today. In this future we should strike an intelligent balance between what is common and the space to be different – with what Putnam called 'an era of civic inventiveness'[3] – and add this ambition to New Labour's traditional themes of opportunity and security.

This is why the debate about Britishness is so important and so relevant today. Britishness is quite simply one of the most important associations that we have; it is a code, shaped by our history and reinforced by our everyday experience, which defines so much of the way we look at the world. We need therefore to think hard about ways to weave Britishness creatively throughout our work; and we must couple this with a much broader attempt to refresh fraternity in modern Britain, to renew the social contract that links us all.

There are a number of fertile areas to begin this process. The statement, or bill, of British rights and duties is perhaps the most constitutionally prominent opportunity to set out a picture of the contract that binds us together. The Olympics in 2012 will be an extraordinary stage for the UK to have the chance to set out our national story. Renewed investment in our history and the sites, landmarks, monuments and markers of our shared heritage provides not just a way of enticing tourists to Britain, but a focus for local interest and pride. Many in the UK would like to see greater honour accorded to our veterans, and leaders like the Chief Rabbi have argued for greater attention for inter-

generational exposure to the sacrifice of others. In our schools, the citizenship curriculum should be a matter of debate and discussion. Our local councils are already developing practical steps like providing sensible guidance on how we live for migrants.

One of the clear opportunities to respond is in our policies for migration and integration, as laid out in the Home Office's recent green paper.[4]

In this pamphlet, I explore three further ideas to sit alongside an argument for citizenship reform in the immigration system, one unashamedly cultural, one political and one that is both civic and economic:

· a national day to celebrate what we like best about our country
· a stronger defence of the Union
· the Labour Party leading a renewal of civic pride and association as part of a broader, sustained effort to regenerate Britain's poorest places.

A national day to celebrate what we like best about our country

Last year, wherever I went in Britain talking about immigration, I got a sense that Britain was today a country that was comfortable with difference. As one lady said to me in Edgbaston: 'We can learn to live together, if we only put our minds to it.' In this remark you hear captured the strong sense that the time is right for Britain as a country to do more to celebrate the things that we do have in common. A national day would be the perfect way. There is no national blueprint for what people want. In my discussions, people suggested 27 different ways of celebrating a national day (see chapter 6). I suggest we just get started.

A stronger defence of the Union

Britain has emerged from the last two decades of globalisation as one of the world's most successful societies. It would have been

impossible for any one nation of the UK to have achieved so much alone. But there is another reason for the defence of the Union.

First, Britishness as a political idea is much more flexible and inclusive than many sub-national identities. As Vron Ware puts it: 'I think British is easier [than English] – it's clearly a bit more plural as it includes the Celtic fringe: Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. It seems to accommodate the regional difference.'[5]

But second, the Union is a constitutional example of the kind of balance that we all must achieve in the modern world. I am the grandson of Irish immigrants. But I have three generations of family from Birmingham, where I live today. I spent years growing up in Essex and a bit of me will always be proud to be an 'Essex boy'. When I go to Europe I feel European. As a Catholic, part of me is defined by two millennia of history and an allegiance to the Pope. But I am British and proud of it. The celebration of the Union is fundamental to Britishness because it is de facto a construction of multiple identities. An argument for dissolving the Union would be a lamentable admission that in this age of diversity we are unable to master the task of marshalling, combining and celebrating what is in common between our modern plurality of identities.

The Labour Party leading a renewal of civic pride and association

Without doubt, the job of building a more cohesive society would be easier if competition for resources in some of our poorest places was not as sharp. But in my own constituency, Hodge Hill, I have come to see that alongside my work on regeneration through my Hodge Hill 2020 programme, I had to find different cultural, civic, faith-based ways of getting residents out of the streets they live in and into the streets of others. Stronger local roots, I learnt, are the ground floor of regeneration. So I am bringing together local and oral history projects, exploring how inter-faith groups can grow, and backing young entrepreneurs who are using sports and street games to

bring different groups of young people together. This has convinced me that as part of the huge programme of regeneration now proposed by this government, the Labour Party nationally must invent a new style and purpose for Labour parties locally. The Labour Party needs to lead a local renewal of civic pride and a renaissance of what de Tocqueville called 'the art of association'.

Here then are some first thoughts about New Labour's renewal and how Labour can lead a debate and lead change about how we strengthen shared standards in Britain, and how we put alongside new arguments for empowerment, an agenda for refreshing fraternity in modern Britain. It is a debate that is national and local, political and civic, and forms an agenda for Labour in government and for Labour parties in local communities.

In his speech, A Struggle for the Soul of the 21st Century, Bill Clinton[6] describes the world that is being created right now as a 'world without walls'. It is a world with the promise of glittering new rewards; new advances in science, new wealth powered by trade and technology, and new freedoms to move and explore for literally billions of people.

But the risks are great too. Especially the risk that the divisions of the past – between rich and poor, young and old, domestic and 'foreign' – become deeper and more bitter. Successful societies will be those that make the right investments in people and embrace change. But voters will only make that choice if they believe that this new world will offer them a fair chance to succeed and a fair share of the rewards. Above all, people will want this world without walls to still feel like home. And that is why strengthening shared standards – creating a more United Kingdom – is so important to the emotional calculation that voters face today.

2   Why are shared standards so important?

Shared standards and a sense of fraternity have always been part and parcel of Labour's political appeal and philosophical message. Put simply, we believe that the individual has a better chance of realising their full potential living in a strong community that sustains difference but which is pinned together by a shared sense of the things that we have in common. This is the behaviour of mutual regard. It is the habit of reciprocity. It is the 'strength' in 'by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone'. And it is deeply rooted in our political heritage.

Throughout our political history our movement has nurtured those who reached a point – like the Rochdale pioneers or the cooperative corn millers of the 1760s[7] – who reacted to tough economic conditions or local monopolies with a strategy of association and cooperation, rooted in shared standards.

In the last decade, we have acquired a fresh appreciation of why shared standards are so important, just as we have watched forces that put those standards in jeopardy grow stronger. The things that helped us create our habits in the first place are subject now to pressures that are powerful, that are always on, and that are putting traditional forms of solidarity under pressure.

An identity crisis?

When Labour came to power in 1997, a debate emerged rapidly about British identity. With the death of Princess Diana, Britain suddenly saw in its response a very different kind of country from the nation of 30 years ago. We realised that Britain was a place of diversity. As the *Guardian* put it at the time:

It is now taken as fact that once upon a time there was a universal British character – one with a stiff upper lip and a love of fair play, suet pudding, cricket and the Queen and somewhere along the way we carelessly lost it… [But] what has taken place since the war is not so much the fragmentation of one identity as the assertion of all those other identities previously unacknowledged.[8]

But the focus of this discussion was less about an ambition for a more cohesive British society and more about a concern about our image in the world:

The main reason why this [rebranding] needs to be done is that a gulf has opened up between the reality of Britain as a highly creative and diverse society and the perception around the world that Britain remains a backward-looking island immersed in its heritage.[9]

Today, Britain needs to provoke a debate about self-image, not only Britain's position in the world. The rise of a new extremism in Britain is but one more sign that shared standards are under pressure. We now live in a country where the shadow of a new extremism is longer, a shadow that cuts some small groups adrift from society – rejecting the rules that living in Britain requires all to follow.

The Security Service says that it is working to contend 200 groupings and networks of over 1600 individuals. As many as 100,000 Britons believe that the attacks of 7/7 were 'justified'.[10] In 2006 nearly 1 million voted for the BNP. One survey found that 74 per cent of BNP voters said they understood and agreed with what they were voting for, and nearly a quarter had voted BNP before.[11] Hate crimes are on the increase and attitudes to asylum seekers and migrants are becoming more not less negative.

In the 2004/5 British Social Attitudes polling, 45 per cent said there was more racial prejudice now than five years ago – a 16 per cent increase compared with 1996; and 52 per cent said they expected there to be more racial prejudice in five years' time. In the same year, Ipsos MORI found 39 per cent of Brits believed Britain is becoming less racially tolerant.[12] Pressures on communal and civic life are growing.

Britain is not contending with these pressures alone. In America, Robert Putnam found a similar sense of something in decline. As he put it: 'at the century's end, a generation with a trust quotient of nearly 80 per cent was being rapidly replaced by one with a trust quotient of barely half that'[13] as 'we have developed communities of limited liability... place based social capital is being supplanted by function-based social capital'.[14]

If we ask people in Britain, why they think we're losing the 'community spirit', longer hours and television top the league table of answers (Table 1).

Table 1 **Why do you think we're losing the community spirit?**

	%
People work longer hours	40
People spend more time watching TV/on the internet	35
People move home more often	20
More newcomers to Britain	17
People more likely to 'take advantage' these days	13

Source: Ipsos MORI[15]

Putnam's list was longer. He identified up to 11 key causes – from busyness and time pressure, movement of women into the labour force, residential mobility, suburbanisation, TV, changes to marriage and the welfare state, to the 1960s (Vietnam, Watergate and the cultural revolution against authority).

Like America, Britain is a different place from what it was 40 years ago. Gone is the workplace as the principal crucible in which shared identity was forged. The job for life is very much a thing of the past. Only one-third of British employees have been with their employers for ten years.

The way we have families now is not the same as 40 years ago. It is harder to speak of an 'average' home. Three in ten households consist of one person living alone (2.5 times the rate of 1961) and 25 per cent of households now have a couple with no children (compared with 18 per cent in 1961).

Our families also look different. In 1972, 7 per cent of children lived in a lone parent family. Today 21 per cent do.[16] We

are moving around faster than ever before. We predict that by 2015 passenger movements across the UK's borders will have doubled on the level of 2000. Technology and media are constantly changing and Ofcom estimates that 70 per cent of 16–24 year olds use social networking sites and one in five 18–24 year olds have their own weblog or webpage.

Migration, too, is part of today's change. Global migration has doubled since the 1960s and although the UK is placed approximately midway in the selected OECD countries in terms of the percentage of foreign and foreign-born population (4.9 per cent and 9.3 per cent, respectively), some communities in the UK have changed fast. The foreign-born national population of Canning Town, for example, doubled between 1991 and 2001.

Picking apart what matters most is pretty tricky. Surveying America, Putnam concluded it was generational change that accounted for half of the weakening social capital; with electronic entertainment – the 'privatising [of] our leisure time',[17] around a quarter; and pressures of time and money (including two career families) plus suburbanisation and commuting accounting for the balance.

In the UK, I think any such estimate would be as controversial. In a sense my point is simpler. Together these changes are altering the way we interact and who we interact with. The nature of the communities that have traditionally defined us is changing – and changing under pressure. And politicians need to respond.

Why are shared standards important?

Why do I say shared standards are so important? In a liberal society, should not everyone have the freedom to go their own way? I think they matter because we came to see in the 1990s that shared standards – and the social trust or social capital that shared standards author – have an altogether new significance.

Similar notions of 'social capital' appear to have been independently 'invented' on at least six occasions during the twentieth century.[18] But in a series of books, articles and arguments during the 1990s, we were reminded how

absolutely central shared standards are to the 'trust' that powers successful economies, and the 'social capital' that helps successful societies flourish.

Francis Fukuyama laid out in perhaps the clearest way why shared standards matter to the economy.[19] As he put it:

Economic activity… is knit together by a wide variety of norms, rules, moral obligations and other habits… one of the most important lessons we can learn from an examination of economic life is that a nation's well-being, as well as its ability to compete, is conditioned by a single, pervasive cultural characteristic: the level of trust inherent in the society.[20]

This trust, which lies at the heart of the welter of functional, frictionless transactions that make up a market economy, in turn rests on the ability of communities to share norms and rules and 'the ability to subordinate individual interests', which in turns rests on the 'ability to associate'. In this sense economic life, as Adam Smith well understood, cannot be divorced from culture.[21] The purism of neo-classical economics cannot really explain the historical phenomenon that 'the greatest economic efficiency was not necessarily achieved by rational self-interested individuals but rather by *groups of individuals* who, because *of a pre-existing moral community*, are able to work together effectively'[22] (my italics). Crucially, Fukuyama argues that 'social capital, the crucible of trust and critical to the health of an economy, rests on cultural roots'.[23]

This kind of ubiquity of trust becomes extremely important in societies where transactions are becoming ever more complicated and the scale of industrialisation is becoming ever more advanced.

As in the economy, so in society. The last ten years has reminded us of the social value of trust. This argument is well known: the influence of social capital can be detected in pretty much all aspects of public policy. As one study has found:

research undoubtedly correlates high social capital, in the form of social trust and associational networks, with a multiplicity of desirable policy outcomes… [including] lower crime rates, better health, improved longevity,

better educational achievement, greater levels of income equality, improved child welfare and lower rates of child abuse, less corrupt and more efficient government and enhanced economic achievement through increased trust and lower transaction costs. The cumulative effect of this research indicates that the well connected are more likely to be 'housed, healthy, hired and happy'.[24]

As Diego Gambetta puts it: '[S]ocieties which rely heavily on the use of force are likely to be less efficient, more costly, and more unpleasant than those where trust is maintained by other means.'[25] So, shared standards are under pressure, but important – socially and economically. Political attention therefore must follow.

3 The political contest

Not all big changes in society ignite immediate political change, but the pressure on shared standards might. Why? Because in the UK, we now operate in a political market where the number of 'political identifiers' – those voters who naturally associate themselves with one political party or another – is below 50 per cent of the electorate for the first time. A renewal of shared standards, and an association with them, will help persuade people to vote for one party rather than another.

This debate is probably only just getting started, but I think the demand for reform that strengthens and reinforces a shared sense of what we have in common is likely to become more important, not less. And Labour will not have the pitch to itself. Around the world, neo-conservatives are on this war-path already. Their answers are not answers we will like much. And what is more, they are wrong.

Danny Kruger, a former special advisor to David Cameron, has been among those in Britain making the argument for the right to take this ground. He points to the coming 'passionate disagreement about who owns the ground of fraternity, and whether the state or the individual will lift their banner there'.[26]

In any debating contest, the right has deep intellectual traditions on which to draw. What we call community, de Tocqueville called 'association'. Marvelling at the strength of the fledging US republic[27] and the safeguard 'association' provided against the tyranny of the majority, de Tocqueville argued:

In the United States, associations aim to promote public safety, business, industry, morality, and religion. There is nothing the human will despairs of attaining through the free action of the combined will of associations.[28]

Today, the Tories are arguing again that 'liberty needs fraternity'.29 It was an argument they last made a decade ago. Back in the mid-1990s, Roger Scruton and later David Willetts argued that the bonds of association were essentially the product of 'tradition'30 – 'a willing submission to what is socially established' – which becomes a norm and a guide for others, until modified by further social interaction.31

But the Tories' problem has not changed. Their problem is not de Tocqueville, it is Edmund Burke. It was Burke who argued for the needs of something to transmit that tradition down the generations on the basis that 'the ends of such a [revered] partnership [such as the state] cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are to be born'.32 Hence the need for 'traditional institutions' to keep the flame alive.

Here is why we now hear from David Cameron the echoes of the American neo-cons and a new defence of 'traditional institutions' (starting with the nuclear family) to the new applause of some of Mrs Thatcher's best thinkers like Ferdinand Mount.33

And here we see the challenge for Labour. In the Tories' hands, a defence of shared standards becomes a defence of traditional institutions. And this almost immediately becomes an attack on active government.

Thus, in the US today, the neo-conservative right has co-opted de Tocqueville's analysis as the basis of an attack on the modern welfare state. American writers like Glazer, Moynihan, James Q Wilson, Glenn Loury, Charles Murray and others have all taken this tradition and used it to argue that:

Ambitious efforts to seek social justice… often left societies worse off than before they either required massive state intervention that disrupted organic social relations *(for example, forced busing) or else produced unintended consequences (such as the increase in single parent families)*34 (my emphasis).

Thus Danny Kruger argues in 2006, that '[a Tory fraternity] does mean a certain scepticism about the efficacy of

state action… David Cameron emphasises exhortation rather than instruction.'[35]

This 'new gloss on an old philosophy', as Ed Miliband eloquently puts it, is the Achilles' heel of the contemporary right. When the world is moving on apace, a puritanical reliance on 'traditional institutions' with an analysis that dates to the days of Pitt the Younger is frankly difficult in a world when 'traditional institutions' are under pressure from changes that are not 'revolutionary' in the sense of a violent overthrow of an ancient regime, but which are socially and economically driven, and extremely rapid.

If we believe – like Scruton and Willetts – that tradition is like a 'price' set by social interaction in the marketplace, we must at least acknowledge that the speed of social interaction today and the breadth of today's 'social market' is so wide that the price movements are likely to be extremely volatile.

And what are we supposed to do exactly when, as Matthew d'Ancona incisively argues, public trust in 'traditional institutions' is fast evaporating? Or when some 'traditional institutions' – like the nuclear families – do not accommodate the 40 per cent of today's children born outside marriage? Are somehow those parents, or those children, to be excluded from our equation?

A traditional reluctance

So what is Labour's alternative? Labour has always been a bit vague about what shared standards mean – how we express them and translate those standards into a political agenda and a programme of reform.

When Labour talks about shared standards, we typically use the language of 'community' rather than any description of the values or habits or standards that pin that community together. So although the idea of community has always been a feature of our politics it is perhaps among the less well-defined elements. As Bernard Crick suggested, as a feature of the socialist world-view, community is 'the most rhetorical, potent, but least defined of values'.[36]

It has, however, rather a lot of history. If we survey Anthony Crosland's original 12-point check-list of the Labour Party's intellectual antecedents,[37] we can see ideas of community, mutuality and cooperation in at least seven of them.[38]

Rightly sceptical of the purist cooperative ideal epitomised by the idealists of the Robert Owen and William Morris school,[39] Crosland nevertheless argued that if we step back and try to summarise the five key recurring themes in socialist thinking, then surely one of them must be the promotion of clearer 'social organisation and... motives by means'.[40]

To this tradition, New Labour has brought a consistent if loosely defined sense of what shared standards mean, together with a sense of how those standards need translating into a policy agenda for stronger communities.

On the ground floor of New Labour, as it were, Neil Kinnock, in an echo of Roy Hattersley's *Choose Freedom*, explained the intimate connection between shared standards, community and a Labour agenda of empowerment. In *Democratic Socialist Aims and Values* (1988) he put it thus: 'We want a state where the collective contribution of the community is used to advance individual freedom.'[41]

In turn, Kinnock found his echo in the Labour Party's 1997 manifesto: 'We are a broad-based movement for progress and justice... Our values are the same: the equal worth of all, with no one cast aside; fairness and justice within strong communities.'

This kind of thinking was of course something Tony Blair talked about a lot. In 1993 he said: 'The founding principle, the guiding principle of the Labour Party is the belief in community and society. It's the notion that for individuals to advance you require a strong and fair community behind you.'[42]

A modern view of community, therefore, saw the existence of a 'strong and cohesive society [that is] essential to the fulfilment of individual aspiration and progress'.[43]

In office, New Labour has developed two policy responses to this agenda. First is the emphasis on community politics. As Hazel Blears puts it, Labour's notion of community is 'a way of expressing fellowship, or a sense of belonging to one

another in a society' but 'the community' can never really be idealised as some kind of homogenous entity: 'Community must mean more than simply a common bond between individuals... a socialist definition must include a dimension of empowerment and control over people's collective destiny.'[44] Community must be given expression by forms of collective decision-making.

Second, New Labour has consistently presented the notion that membership of a community comes with certain responsibilities. Society is a two-way street. This argument, well known and associated with Amitai Etzioni's *The Spirit of Community*, argues fiercely for the idea that alongside rights sit reciprocal responsibilities. Citizens have to consider their duty and obligations towards establishing and maintaining a good society.[45] Thus Alan Whitehead argues that the state has not one but two jobs: 'on both sides of the community equation: encouraging the individual to take responsibility within his or her community... and making available... the basic wherewithal to make this happen'.[46] Or as Tony Blair put it: 'A modern notion of citizenship gives rights but demands obligations, shows respect but wants it back, grants opportunity but insists on responsibility.'[47]

So, ideas of shared standards, mutual obligation and community are important to Labour traditionally and New Labour more recently. Therefore we now have a political choice about how to take shared standards forward in our national life. The right offers us a return to traditional institutions. The left offers us, potentially, a way to take traditional, mutual standards and apply them to the challenges of the future.

This is not to argue for a second that traditional families and traditional institutions do not require – indeed demand – support. But let us not kid ourselves that such an agenda will be sufficient. It will not. And this is not a challenge that we confront for the first time. We have been here before.

As Robert Putnam argues, in the years after the industrial revolution we confronted huge industrial change, widespread immigration and large-scale social upheaval, and the result was an explosion in civic energy:

For all their difficulties, errors and misdeeds of the progressive era, its leaders and their immediate forebears in the late 19th century correctly diagnosed the problem of social capital or civic engagement deficit. It must have been tempting in 1890 to say 'life was much nicer back in the village. Everybody back to the farm'. They resisted that temptation to reverse the tide, choosing instead the harder but surer path of social innovation.[48]

We too in Britain corralled a similar civic effort at around the same time. In late nineteenth-century Britain, as our cities grew, with bigger and bigger waves of migration from the countryside, we cut a new social and cultural fabric for ourselves that spanned civic and cultural life.

Take Birmingham. As the city grew, a new generation of politicians like Chamberlain extolled a new civic gospel that delivered new services – like gas, water and arts – and created a new city. From 1879 philanthropists like the Cadburys pioneered, in Bournville, new designs for communities. Political movements – like the National Education League, headquartered in the city – were founded to conduct national campaigns for new goods like free education. In 1902 the Birmingham district labour representation council brought together a huge constellation of working class organisations: the Birmingham Trades Council, the Labour Church, the Social Democratic Federation, the National Women's League, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the National Amalgamated Societies of Brass Workers and the Furnishing Trades, the Britannia Metal Workers Association and the Aston Manor Labour Association.

In civic life, too, we invented things: Aston Villa FC was founded in 1874, Birmingham City a year later, and within two decades Warwickshire County Cricket Club entered first-class cricket. In 1889 the Boys' Brigade was started, followed by the Birmingham Association of Boy Scouts in 1909. By 1914 Asa Briggs estimates some 19,000 young people were attached to youth bodies. The Girls' Union was founded in 1919; the Birmingham Federation of Boys' Clubs started in 1928.

We live in a country where we are quite capable of organising our way through change.

Next steps for Labour

If Labour is to continue to argue for an agenda that sets out a stronger sense of personal empowerment through the sustained force of strong communities, we will have to address the need to reinforce the standards that pin our national community in Britain together.

This need – and the prospect of a challenge from the right akin to that we have seen in America and Europe – should provide a new urgency to Labour's thinking about what shared standards we think are important, and how we shape a progressive political agenda around them.

The prize is important; buy-in to shared standards is the *sine qua non* of the kind of cooperation and reciprocity in politics we believe is the foundation stone of social progress.

Citizenship reform is perhaps the key front on which many of the advances can be made. David Blunkett among others has argued consistently that 'we need a shared and common set of values as well as an understood and respected set of rules enforceable by law'[49] and for citizenship reform in a way that underlines the concept 'not as something to be possessed, but as shared membership of a political community… as Aristotle put it, a "mode of life"'.[50]

Some on the left, too, will of course find this a difficult argument – but often for the right reasons. What is absolutely critical for the left is that while we strengthen a framework of common rules, we stand up for the right to be different. Empowerment, after all, means little without this.

So this balance is hard to strike with intelligence. Our first step therefore should be to ask: What do the British public think?

4 What do the British public think?

If you are ever in doubt about whether British people are interested in politics, start a debate about immigration. You can pick your venue – a pub, a public hall, a church, mosque or temple. You will find your audience does not need much warming up.

To understand in detail what British people think about British standards I spent eight weeks on the road around Britain with a group of civil servants from the Home Office, talking to hundreds of people about how they thought we should put Britain's standards at the heart of the immigration system.[51] In an era dogged by a concern with the flagging public interest in politics, the debates I heard throughout the country were a source of inspiration. Here was debate that was animated, and almost never jaundiced or cynical. People thought that it was not only a worthwhile discussion but one that needed to continue. It was a sharp reminder that when politics tackles a subject close to people's hearts, their minds – and their voice and views – soon follow.

In my visits all over Britain, I cannot claim that I discovered any new and dazzling definition of Britishness, which neatly encapsulates shared standards. But you get a sense of what we treasure in this country. In the debate about shared standards, there are perhaps three conclusions we can draw:

· Britain is a nation that is comfortable with difference.
· Nevertheless, we think it's time we did more to celebrate the things we've got in common.
· And, tolerance comes with an insistence that everyone signs up to some basic – but not many – 'rules of the game'.

Not a nation of Alf Garnets

In a speech I made to Demos in December 2007, I said that my conversations all over Britain had convinced me that our country is not a nation of Alf Garnetts. We are a nation that is comfortable with difference. We can get this sense of how much Britain has changed when we look at the way in which we have the debate about immigration policy.

Simply put, if we go back 40 years, the migration debate is scarred by the language of colour. In 1961 Rab Butler talked of the need for new immigration legislation if Britain was to avoid a 'colour problem'. Even the House of Commons, the mother of Parliaments, was not immune. In the 1961 Commonwealth Immigrants Bill debate, the Conservative MP Sir Cranley Osborne (who was also an active lay preacher) openly argued for the controls the bill promised, saying: 'I claim control is inevitable because of the attraction of our country to the coloured people.'[52]

He was attacked by among others, FH Hayman MP, who bluntly challenged him to say whether 'he believe[d] in the brotherhood of all men or merely the brotherhood of white men'.[53]

Today, the debate is reassuringly different, reflecting the fact that from the changes of the last 40 years, Britain has actually emerged not only as a multicultural country, but as a country that is comfortable with diversity. Today we live in a country that embraces multiculturalism, where the Premiership's top scorer last season was from the Ivory Coast and the player of the year was Portuguese, where school children in London speak over 300 languages, and where two-thirds of people believe immigration is a good thing. In fact, Britain is today one of the world's most successfully diverse societies. Trevor Phillips, speaking to the Race Convention in 2006, put it bluntly: 'Britain is by far – and I mean by far – the best place in Europe to live if you are not white.'[54]

We still talk about immigration policy, but we do not have the debate in terms of skin colour. People in Britain prefer living in a diverse society to a place without differences:

· 70 per cent of Brits say they are 'not at all prejudiced', up from 60 per cent in 1987.[55]

- Those saying they would mind if a relative married a black or Asian person has fallen from 33 per cent to 12 per cent over the last five years.
- 64 per cent of 16–34 year olds disagree with the statement 'I'd rather live in an area with people from the same ethnic background.'[56]
- 86 per cent of Brits disagree with the statement 'to be truly British you have to be white'.

But there is a strange split in the way people feel about what the government or the local council is doing, and what they personally should do to help the business of integration. Bluntly, people are up for personally doing a little more – and the government – or the local council – doing a little less.

Hence people said time and again that the UK 'bends over backwards' to 'adapt to newcomers', or 'avoid giving offence' at the expense of British traditions (for example, schools no longer holding nativity plays were mentioned; indeed in every discussion we heard mention of Christmas being downplayed, or carol services and nativity plays being banned because they might cause offence). This was seen as 'political correctness gone mad'.

What I heard was a general acceptance that people from different backgrounds could have different cultural traditions and religious practices; tolerance levels naturally varied; and some felt strongly that headscarves should be discouraged, others were far more comfortable with the idea. But people were concerned that cultural differences – like language, religious dress and the natural propensity to live together – all prevented integration, and that 'integrating' involved not only understanding British laws (eg not drinking and driving) but also learning about everyday behaviours like the great British tradition of queuing.

Yet what was fascinating was the general sense that integration is not a one-way street, and that even if the 'state' was bending over backwards, there was more that British people could, should and would like to be doing as individuals to make Britain and local communities more welcoming. There was a

sense that the idea of being welcoming is not particularly British and that, actually, we should try a little harder to be more outgoing. Some were keen to give up their time to help people integrate.

Others, particularly younger members of the discussions, mentioned how important it was for British people to make more of an effort to understand newcomers' traditions. This was based on a sense that Britain has a long history of newcomers making a contribution to British life and this was one of the country's positive features. Some people mentioned the recent violence on the outskirts of Paris and felt that, compared with France, Britain is a much less divisive society.

But time to celebrate what we share

Everywhere I talked about immigration, I got this sense that Britain is now a country that is comfortable with difference, but throughout the debates I heard a strong sense too that the time is right for Britain as a country to do more to celebrate the things that we do have in common – and those two things do not necessarily have to be in tension with one another.

In a largely secular society, it is perhaps not a surprise that there is only a rather vague sense of what shared British standards look like – until it bumps into something hard-edged that looks like a direct challenge to norms like 'tolerance' and 'freedom of speech' (Sharia Law was sometimes mentioned). But one way into this question is to ask people what they think about a national celebration day for our country – like there is in France, the US and Australia.

On balance, the groups I listened to reflected a poll we took at the Home Office over summer 2007. In places there was a sense of fatality, that it is all too late, that celebrating 'British' was too hard. In others there was a simple and traditionally British suspicion for 'authority'-sponsored celebrations of anything, and a concern for who would pick up the bill. But in the groups I listened to, this was a minority view. In fact, many of the people in our discussions supported the idea of a national day very strongly. When asked why, people simply

answered: 'It's just a good way to celebrate being British.' They remembered holding street parties for the Queen's Jubilee – events that were organised by local people, which was seen as a great strength. People wanted to see, as someone in Bristol put it to me, 'Not a celebration of diversity – but something which provokes diversity.'

In essence, those I spoke to were interested in ways of bringing people together. Food, music, sport and dance were all mentioned as good ways to celebrate both traditional British culture – food, music and local history – and to recognise the diverse cultures from other countries that now make up the UK population, perhaps combined with opportunities for newcomers to affirm their commitment to the UK and to remind the rest of us what it means to be British.

Listening to the discussions, it became clearer how Britain's comfort level with diversity is in part simply a reflection of the persistent strength of Britain's local identities. Time and again, when asked how to celebrate a national idea, people pointed to a celebration of what they liked locally – whether it was something reminiscent of Trafalgar Day (mentioned in Portsmouth) or the St Paul's Carnival (mentioned in Bristol). What people wanted was something with both local and national aspects.

So the tone of balance and measure almost defines the outlook that Britain has on newcomers. We want to be welcoming. We do think that we should spend a bit more time celebrating what we have in common. And perhaps most important of all, we want to see some basic – universal – signing up to the core of things that we believe are important. The expectations are unambiguous: speak the language, obey the law, and make sure you're paying your taxes. It's a very British, tough-minded fairness.

The rules of the game

I've long been interested in this idea of 'rules' at the heart of a civic contract. What I heard people around Britain say was that they wanted to live in a country with a clear sense of reciprocity. People talked about their ambition for the migration policy

reform in a way that did not violate what John Denham called 'the fairness code'.[57] This is simply an idea that connects with a different tradition of freedom, which takes account of some of the legitimate criticisms made by the new right of old-fashioned welfare programmes.

The writers Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, among others developing the work of Robert Axelrod, underline how absolutely central this notion of reciprocity is for retaining support for progressive values. In 1999 Bowles and Gintis made the argument in the context of the reciprocity of the welfare state – but the same logic applies to the migration system:

The welfare state is in trouble not because selfishness is rampant (it is not) but because many egalitarian programmes no longer evoke, and sometimes now offend, deeply held notions of fairness, encompassing both reciprocity and generosity… stopping far short of unconditional altruism towards the less well off.[58]

As Nick Pearce put it more recently:

In focusing almost exclusively on outcomes, reform strategies may miss important insights about how the procedures that govern public services – and in particular their fairness – elicit particular responses from the public.[59]

Here are some starting points.

Learning English

In a debate without too many absolutely fixed points, learning English is absolutely one of them. In every part of the country, in every small group discussion I saw, British people are unambiguous that learning English is the foundation stone on which every other effort to create an integrated society is built.

I asked the Home Office's facilitators to report back the views they had heard. Their comments speak for themselves:

Inability to speak English prevents integration and costs the taxpayer money. English should be learnt before arrival in the UK wherever possible.

Learning English... people were fixated about language skills and building that up... everything follows from that... Some went as far to say that people should not be allowed to get in unless they demonstrated grasp of English via a test.

English always came up as the first step towards successful integration.

People expect newcomers to have a working knowledge of English before they arrive in the UK – no matter whether they come from the EU or outside the EU. They also expect people to improve their English when they come to live here – through English lessons, self-study and just making an effort to talk to neighbours and colleagues.

Language: a strong sense was evident that if people were not given enough incentive and encouragement to learn English, then efforts to integrate them would be fruitless.

But what was striking in the debate I heard was that although people were pretty strident in their insistence on the language question, they were quick, too, to start thinking about solutions, like:

- schools helping newcomers' children to learn, these children then helping their parents
- employers helping their migrant staff with language lessons
- language lessons at local colleges
- less translation so that newcomers have to learn English to access services and find their way around.

Most people in the discussions I listened to felt that it would be easier for people to learn the language and the 'rules of the road' if they had a job or another source of income that enabled them to make friends and become part of a community. But here, too, I quickly heard suggestions for what we could do differently:

- Seek out people willing to act as mentors or buddies to help people adjust to living in the UK – these people would live in

the same community and could help people understand how they need to behave and what services they can access to help them settle in the UK.

· Direct people to community groups that represent their ethnic origin (but be careful not to encourage people to create ghettos).
· Encourage newcomers to live among British people and not to group together (people recognised that British people were guilty of this when going to live in eg Spain or Saudi Arabia).

But above all what was seen as a key to successful integration was the creation of a fair framework in which newcomers came to Britain and 'earned' their rights.

Two key themes stand out: paying tax – or earning one's way – and obeying the law. But several other ideas attracted people: putting new citizens 'on probation' to check they were indeed signing up to the rules; there was some – but not universal – sign-up to the idea of introducing volunteering as a requirement for new citizens; and British people were absolutely clear that there should not be one rule for the rich and another for everyone else.

Generally, though, what people want to see is a much simpler, more straightforward set of rules governing the way newcomers become citizens, with a much clearer set of rights and responsibilities. Achieving citizenship should in no circumstances be something that is easy to achieve, but nor should we ask too much of newcomers or anything that we would not be prepared to deliver ourselves.

So, what would this mean in practice? If the foundation is a grasp of our native language, what else do we want to see newcomers subscribe to, before they are regarded as having earned the status 'citizen'?

Signing up to tolerance

Among the first principles was a sense that newcomers had to sign up to the ideal of tolerance – including tolerance of others' religions – that actually characterised so many of the discussions I listened to. As one contributor in Croydon put it: 'Being British

is about accepting other cultures' and the quid pro quo was that people should be free to have their own cultural identity and that often British citizens needed to understand different cultures and religions better, too. But a basic point that many wanted to emphasise in different parts of the country was summed up well by one participant in Bristol: 'It's important to make clear to newcomers that laws in this country don't come from the church – [it] can be seen as racial prejudice to insist on this, but it's so important.'

The way in which people thought we should ensure this kind of sign-up varied, but ideas included:

· taking an oath
· passing the British citizen test
· signing some sort of contract
· having a sponsor vouch for your outlook, or interviewing neighbours and friends to ensure newcomers are meeting criteria
· having a character reference from an employer or neighbour.

Paying your way

The second clear principle that emerged from our group discussions was the importance of working and paying tax – earning one's way, so to speak – and intimately linked with this was the question of minimum qualifying periods and the kinds of benefits that newcomers should be entitled to before they qualified for citizenship.

In essence, working and paying tax was seen as an essential precursor to acquiring citizenship. This idea of paying in was reasonably flexible and embraced:

· paying taxes for a fixed period of time
· making investments or having a lump sum to bring to the UK
· employing others
· being able to support oneself and one's family through a permanent job.

People had different ideas about the kinds of checks that were desirable, but some kind of credit check to prove people were paying their bills, a check on proof of savings, a check on tax contributions made, plus some kind of endorsement or sponsorship from employers were mentioned time and again.

Three ideas were linked to this discussion:

· introducing a differential tax rate for newcomers – higher national insurance contributions, or an emergency or higher rate of tax
· introducing minimum qualifying periods of paying tax, before becoming eligible for citizenship; as might be expected, the views on the right time periods varied a lot, between six and ten years; some put the emphasis on working long term for say four to six years, paying taxes and national insurance; some wanted to see restrictions on the ability to bring family into the country if the migrant in question was not working
· having limits on access to benefits in the period before citizenship was granted – this view was widely endorsed, particularly when it came to housing, and some mentioned the idea of health insurance.

Obeying the law

The third very clear principle was the need for newcomers to obey the law – and for immediate and often draconian consequences to follow for those who broke it. All over the country, people were very clear about what they wanted to see: 'no criminal record'. Most were also fairly clear that deportation should follow for anyone committing a serious offence, but there were shades of ambiguity and disagreement when it came to 'minor offences' where there was a broader range of opinion and some fairly sophisticated analysis:

Anybody with a criminal record shouldn't be allowed a work permit or citizenship ever.
(Cardiff participant)

You could have a probation period during which citizenship could be revoked if a serious crime was committed [or could be revoked at any stage].
    (Aberdeen participant)

Serious crimes (murder, rape, crimes against children) should exclude people – but not lesser offences like shoplifting. There should be one chance to break [the] law, but for serious crimes [people] should be deported immediately.
    (Croydon participant)

Mixed views on volunteering (volunteering)

Fourth, we tested the idea of asking newcomers to participate in some kind of community work. In the discussions I listened to, many considered this an important idea – as much for the contribution it could make to better integrated communities if it was implemented as for migrants demonstrating commitment to Britain. Thus it was generally thought that migrants should be expected to volunteer as early as possible once they had arrived in the UK, as this was one more way in which they could demonstrate a commitment to Britain – by making every possible effort to integrate into the local communities where they lived.

But there were mixed views about this and, in particular, three issues to think through. First, the idea of 'forcing' newcomers to undertake voluntary work was seen as a bit paradoxical.

Second, although some people felt that it would demonstrate commitment, others were uncomfortable with the idea of there being some kind of 'reward' attached to voluntary work, especially as existing citizens do not get rewarded for voluntary work, and because the work would not be 'voluntary' if done to earn points.

Third, there was a sense that we should not ask newcomers to sign up to things that frankly many British citizens do not get involved in. One participant in Newcastle said: 'Some British people don't contribute, how can we ask newcomers to do so? If

you haven't committed a crime and [have] paid your taxes, then you've done enough.'

Some argued that there were many different ways to contribute towards society beyond officially recognised voluntary work – one woman in Nottingham asked simply how newcomers were going to undertake extra work on the side when they were already working.

No special treatment for the rich

Finally, our discussion groups demonstrated that the British have a profound sense of fairness. I asked people whether they thought that people who earned more – and therefore paid more tax – for example those in highly valued professions such as doctors or high net worth people – should be allowed to become citizens faster.

The answer was an emphatic 'no'. People wanted rich and poor to be treated alike and felt that a two-speed system implied that poorer people were automatically assumed to be less useful to society.

British?

My debates taking place around Britain were intended to help me draw up plans to reform specific parts of the immigration and naturalisation system. I argued in my introduction that 'Britishness' is one of the most important associations we have and that we should foster it and weave it through our work. But is any of what I heard an agenda that is peculiarly British? I think three themes were at least rare in the way they were combined: the emphasis on language; the pretty strong emphasis on tolerance; and a very strong emphasis on obeying the rules (paying taxes and obeying Parliament's laws).

I think this combination comes from the fact that our diversity has always been underwritten by a subscription to a common set of standards – commitment to Britain and its people, loyalty to our legal and political institutions, commitment to fairness and open mindedness, respect for the

standards and norms of British life, and a tradition of tolerance (Table 2).

Table 2   **Which four or five of the following values, if any, would you say are the most important for living in Britain?**

Values	Respondents (%)
Respect for the law	64
Tolerance and politeness towards others	54
Freedom of speech and expression	42
Respect for all faiths	34
Justice and fair play	33

Source: Ipsos MORI[60]

But, what do migrants think?

Now, at this stage of the argument a rather important pause is required. We know what the British public thinks. We know a bit about how the British public might differ in what we treasure most in contrast to some other European countries. But what do migrants think? Is the British public asking for sign-up to something that is not actually going to yield a more harmonious country? The evidence is not extensive, but on balance it would appear that based on what we do know, the things the British public thinks are part of the deal for living here do help migrants feel part of the club.

     We should start by sounding a great note of optimism. Much research confirms that migrants find Britain a welcoming country of 'good neighbours'. A significant number of newcomers cite the tolerant, democratic or multicultural nature of Britain as a factor in their decision to come to here.[61] There are bad experiences, but much research confirms that Brits like welcoming newcomers. According to one study in London:

London and the spaces within the city were not associated with white hostility. Although some respondents recalled incidents whereby white people

were made anxious by their presence by, for example, not wanting to sit next to them on a bus, this was often balanced with an account of a helpful neighbour.[62]

One thing that struck me going round Britain is how much the affinity to local places is part and parcel of British people's attachment to our country. For new migrants there is some evidence that the balance is the other way round: they feel a stronger attachment to Britain than to their local neighbourhood, although Eugenia Markova and Richard Black found that this attachment to local places grows with time: '[There] appears to be a specific "neighbourhood effect", since nearly twice as many said they did feel they belong to Britain [as to the local neighbourhood].'[63]

Over and above the passage of time, three big things seem to make the difference:

· mastering the means of interaction, in other words acquiring a command of English
· acquisition of – and protection by – rights
· engaging in opportunities to mix and interact with the local population.

Let me take each in turn.

The need for a shared language

English emerges from research as the *sine qua non* of happy integration. Studies by Markova and Black[64] into the experience of East European migrants and Hudson et al's work on the lives of Somali women[65] show that migrants who speak better English report higher levels of community participation, and therefore a stronger sense of belonging. Research by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) into migrant experiences in Scotland found it was issues of (lack of) language that made interaction difficult.[66]

Acquiring rights

Second, there is lots of evidence that acquiring rights – including the right to live in peace and safety – is vitally important in fostering a migrant's sense of belonging to Britain. In my own work with newly arrived Somalian groups in Birmingham I have found that group leaders typically ask for help acquiring more effective access to basic rights like education (especially language services), health care (including preventative services like exercise) and protection (such as more effective liaison with the police to tackle racially motivated violence).

In part, this is why some 'universal' public service access for migrants – especially education and public protection – is so important, because both provide a very basic equality, and opportunities and freedoms to mix.

I found around the UK that British people very strongly felt that sending children to school was vitally important for migrants because of the contribution it made to drawing communities together. Interestingly, Markova and Black found that children do help foster a migrant's sense of belonging: 'Those with children living with them were also more likely to say they belonged.'[67] Access to childcare is part of this question because HIE's study found a lack of childcare could exacerbate isolation of newcomers.[68]

Equally, violence and discrimination towards migrants is obviously profoundly alienating. Some research among migrants, for example, discussed migrants' attempts to socialise on a Saturday night as coming with a risk of receiving racist verbal abuse:

Consequently, many individuals tended to avoid going out and [subject] themselves to such experiences. While these experiences were particularly evident amongst the visible minorities, it was not solely confined to them.[69]

The Citizens Advice Bureau has reported migrants' problems with fellow workers including 'harassment and racially prejudiced behaviour' and being excluded from staff social events. And in everyday life, Norfolk County Council found Chinese workers being spat on when getting off work buses at

the end of the day and migrant workers being ignored when trying to get service in local shops.[70]

Around the country, British people stressed to me that 'obeying the law' was a vital part of the British deal. But this is clearly a two-way street. Migrants must be protected and they should have easy access to justice and protective services.

Engaging in opportunities to mix and interact with the local population

Finally, there is evidence that the emphasis that British people put on volunteering and social interaction as well as work is important because of the opportunities for migrants and existing residents to mix in some shared endeavours.

This agenda clearly needs nurture. Research by HIE found that most Central and Eastern Europeans living in Scotland described their local communities as friendly (indeed as places where there were more similarities than differences between people) but that there was little evidence of proactive social interaction outside work, and where there were many new migrants, workers tend to interact either with work colleagues from their own country, with their fellow countrymen and women, or with fellow migrants.[71]

Research by TimeBank underlines why this part of our agenda is so important. Its research on mentoring for new migrants suggests that a sense of belonging is enhanced by a level of integration with the surrounding community outside the workplace.[72] TimeBank found that mentoring quickly helped inspire volunteering. Approximately half the mentees of the Time Together scheme[73] went on to volunteer, either independently or by joining a local action group or charity. TimeBank too suggests that volunteering is something 'typically British'.[74]

Evidence of the benefits of volunteering abounds in other studies. Hudson et al highlight examples in Moss Side, Manchester and Tottenham where volunteering provides opportunities for black Caribbean, Somali and multiple-heritage women to come together to provide community-based parenting

and childcare projects, noting that 'these women, lone parents as well as partnered, were among the residents who valued community more highly and all had a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods and wanted to remain living there'.[75]

Hudson et al concluded that paid and unpaid work lead to 'more diverse social networks across age ranges, gender and ethnic group', exemplified by their story of Ollie, a black Caribbean man in Moss Side who, by interacting with Asian people through his work, began to recognise and address some of his stereotypical perceptions, discovering Asians to be 'just as friendly and open as me'.[76] Other studies highlight examples ranging from the group of Somali, Turkish and Indian families in an area of London who support each other by taking it in turns to do the school run for their children[77] to mixed community sports projects like Bend it Like Birmingham, in my own home town, to 'communities of musicians' formed by young Somali, Caribbean and British people developing music projects and businesses within diverse social networks.[78]

The point here is simple. Volunteering helps nurture a social life that fosters a sense of belonging. But it needs an invention that stretches beyond traditional, institutional forms of association, and indeed beyond an agenda built on Britishness.

What I think emerges from this discussion is a clear sense that there is a huge degree of consensus about the shared standards that are important in pinning modern British life closer together, and about some of the tactics and habits that will help.

The job of politicians as public leaders is to take what the public is saying and to translate ambitions into ideas, and ideas into reform. One of those reforms must be the way we ask newcomers to earn their right to become a citizen. And that is what I turn to next.

5 Britain's standards and reforming the path to citizenship

If we are thinking about policy opportunities to strengthen the standards that we have in common then one obvious stage is immigration reform. Migration is one of the causes of the diversity that characterises modern Britain – and indeed the modern West. Global migration has doubled since the 1960s, and all rich countries have felt the change. In the key OECD countries the foreign-born population has increased by some 14 per cent between 2000 and 2004 alone. Luxembourg tops the league for both foreign population (39 per cent) and foreign-born population (33.1 per cent). Austria, Finland, Ireland and the US all experienced increases of over 20 per cent.[79]

Despite the image the media might sometimes project, the UK in 2004 was only around mid-table in terms of the percentage of both foreign and foreign-born population (4.9 per cent and 9.3 per cent respectively). Nevertheless, it's no surprise that immigration reform is riding high as an issue in political debates across the West (as it was in France last year, and is this year in the US presidential primaries, especially among Republican candidates). And Western countries are modernising their arrangements for integrating new citizens with a much greater accent on the need for newcomers to demonstrate a commitment to their new home more visibly. In our pursuit of citizenship reform for newcomers, Britain is certainly not alone.

What's happening elsewhere?

France made it compulsory for foreigners to sign a welcome and integration contract in July 2006, and is now introducing French tests abroad before issuing residence visas. Spain has recently issued its first 'Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration

2007–2010', including aspirations 'to foster knowledge… [of] the social norms and habits in Spanish society'.[80]

In Berlin in July 2007 Chancellor Merkel started to develop a draft national integration plan covering courses for newcomers and knowledge of German. The reform act now in the Italian parliament will modernise the 1992 Citizenship Act, including the introduction of a language and social integration test. Holland recently introduced civic integration exams as part of their requirements for a residency visa.

Sweden, which rejected language exams five years ago, is now discussing ceremonies for new citizens. The Finns are merging their departments for migration and citizenship from January 2008, and the Czechs are discussing citizenship reform.

Even countries with a long tradition of structured integration are making changes. The Australians introduced citizenship tests like the UK's in September 2007 and from mid-October sign-up to a Values Statement will be mandatory for getting a visa. And in the US the Office of Citizenship created by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 is upgrading its naturalisation tests, too. Applicants will have about a year to prepare for the exams, which will be introduced later in 2008.

Why now?

Of course some will argue that any such programme of reform is simple electioneering and nothing more, but there are three key reasons that suggest that now is the right time to act to change the path to citizenship for newcomers:

· Citizenship reform is the final piece of the puzzle in the wholesale changes to the UK's immigration system this year.
· Longer term, this is the 'unfinished business' of migration reform since the war.
· Reform is vital to winning a progressive argument in favour of carefully controlled migration.

Let me take each in turn.

The final piece of the puzzle

Citizenship reform for newcomers is the logical next step in what is the biggest shake-up of the British border security and immigration system pretty much for 45 years.

In essence change is twofold. On the one hand we are changing the way we judge who can come into the country; from February 2008 the introduction of a points-based system, modelled on the success of the Australian system, has simplified migration rules with a goal of ensuring that only people the UK needs come here to work and study. Alongside this, reviews are under way into the way in which family reunion visas are issued (around 47,000 spouse visas were issued in 2006) and short term visit routes.

Second, we are changing the way we police the system, and have plans to create the world's most advanced border security system, with a single border force to guard our ports and airports, fingerprint checks before visas are issued, systems to count foreign nationals in and out of the country, and watch-list checks for travellers before they land in Britain.

Once the reforms that Labour proposes are in place, our goals for the migration system will be in essence threefold:

· bringing to Britain the skills and talents, assets and ideas we need to stay one of the world's leading nations
· reuniting British citizens with their loved ones
· honouring our long and proud tradition of providing a safe haven to those fleeing torture, persecution of worse.

The logical next step to complete these changes therefore is to reform the way that newcomers not only earn their way here, but earn their stay here.

Finishing the unfinished business

The second, slightly bigger reason that points to now being the time for change is that, quite simply, citizenship reform for newcomers is the 'unfinished business' of UK migration reform since the Second World War.

Since the later 1940s, there have been two main periods of immigration reform in the UK. Both were responses to big

changes in the world community and both centred in essence on control (rather than integration) of the movement of people. Over the last 50 years we simply have not focused hard enough on establishing a logical, progressive system for integrating the newcomers we do permit to stay in Britain into Great British society.

Britain began to wrestle with these questions in a serious way in the years after the Second World War as our position in the world began irrevocably to change. In the years immediately after the war, migration to Britain was limited. Some 130,000 Poles arrived, followed by 14,000 Hungarians after the failed uprising in 1956. But the controversy in the public debate was really sparked by the right, from 1948, of Commonwealth citizens to seek free entry to the UK. Between 1956 and 1960, some 813,000 new entrants were recorded on the government's migration scheme; 130,000 were from the West Indies, 55,000 from South Asia and 24,000 from Africa. Not everyone decided to stay, but by 1962 Britain's black and Asian community was 500,000 strong.

From 1954 working parties of civil servants began to survey the terrain and 13 cabinet discussions ensued in a year. The Home Secretary and the Colonial Secretary divided. Watching briefs were established. Draft bills were prepared and shelved. There were riots in 1958. Monitoring reports were established for the Home Secretary. Ministerial committees were set up. Until in 1961 the decision was taken to legislate.

The debates were difficult:

- Which British subject should be allowed to come, and which should not? What of those in countries Britain still administered?
- How could a British subject be deported from Britain?
- How could we preserve the historic freedom of Irish citizens, whose country left the Commonwealth, to move around?
- How could the growing appetite of a growing economy for labour be satisfied?
- How could international relations with former colonies – relations that undermined the sterling area – be preserved?

But in 1961 the decision was taken: to be a British subject no longer carried the right to come to Britain. The Act, ending what Rab Butler called 'the cherished tradition of the Mother Country',[81] was passed in 1962. It was followed by another in 1968 in the wake of the Uganda crisis and again in 1971. But almost all the legislative provisions centred on the key question of controlling who could – and could not – come.

By the mid-1990s Britain's migration system was heading for big changes once again. As the Cold War ended, civil war exploded. During the 1990s the toll on human life inflicted by conflict inside states outstripped that inflicted by conflict between states. Naturally Britain was affected. By the end of the 1990s, 374,000 people had claimed asylum, 23 per cent from just four countries: former Yugoslavia – which had collapsed into bitter and bloody internal ethnic fighting; Iraq – under the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein; Somalia – a failed state with no central government and no rule of law; and Afghanistan, under another brutal dictatorship, the Taleban.

Asylum applications snowballed, from less than 25,000 in 1992 to over 70,000 seven years later. Britain's systems were simply not designed to cope with pressure on this scale:

- By mid-1998, there was a backlog of over 50,000 asylum applications, over 30,000 immigration appeals and nearly 100,000 citizenship applications.
- Appeals could take over a year to be heard, and another three months for the decision to be communicated.
- Yet in 1997 only 7,000 failed asylum seekers were removed.

Reform of this chaotic system dominated the Labour government's legislative agenda for migration reform, but once again legislation centred on controlling who could come to the country, and strengthening the government's hand in removing those we felt had no right to stay.

Ten acts of parliament, beginning in 1999, were required alongside new border security arrangements stationed abroad and wholesale administrative reform. The change worked to such an extent that removals of principal applications increased by 128

per cent. In 2006, for the first time, we hit the 'tipping point' target – removing more failed asylum seekers than the number of unfounded claims lodged. By the end of 2008, the UK Border Agency will conclude the majority of new asylum cases – either granting or removing applicants – within six months.

As this short survey reveals, immigration legislation since the war has largely been reactive. Today, for the first time in some years, we arguably have some space to look with progressive eyes at global migration and not ask 'what is the right kind of fix?' to the immigration consequences of decolonisation or the immediacy of an asylum crisis. Instead, we have the opportunity to match what is now a functional asylum system and a rational, robust migration system with a system that helps newcomers integrate effectively into Britain if they decide – and indeed earn the right – to stay.

Winning the progressive argument for migration

There is however a third reason for reforming the path to citizenship now and not later. I am often accused of doing too little to make the positive case for migration. I do try. But there isn't much of a market for good news about immigration. That should not stop us trying harder, because the benefits of carefully controlled migration are indisputable.

The Treasury estimates that some £6 billion of national output in 2006 is owed to migration. Economists at the Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) conclude that in the short and long term the impact of migration on GDP and capita growth is positive and that migration adds to productivity growth.[82] The IPPR, in the most thorough assessment of the question to date,[83] concludes that migrants pay in more in tax than they consume in public services. So, we can win an argument about the net benefits of migration. But winning this argument is unlikely to be enough. We have to win, too, an argument that the system functions – and the system is fair.

Today – as has always been the case – public concern about immigration is sharpest about the numbers of people coming in.

This is not anything new. In his introduction to the second reading of the Commonwealth Immigration Bill, Rab Butler said: 'Given a too rapid increase in the number of immigrants there is a real risk that the drive for improved conditions will be defeated by the sheer weight of numbers.'[84] Today, in Home Office polling, two-thirds of respondents feel that laws on immigration should be much tougher and nearly half say their biggest concern is pressure on public services and jobs. This is why our introduction of the points system sits alongside two independent committees to advise on where in the economy migration is needed (and where it is not), and, second, to monitor and assess relevant evidence of where wider impacts of migration are being felt.

In this way, the setting of points in the new points system is able to reflect the balance of Britain's national interest taking into account both benefits and costs. But effective management of the pace of change is unlikely to get us very far or help us win a progressive argument for the benefits of migration if the British public does not feel the system in the UK is fair. The country has to be convinced that the deal we strike with newcomers is not only profitable for the national bank balance, but a fair deal for the country as a whole.

So, Labour has to tread very carefully. Reforming the path to citizenship should not be some kind of backdoor design for controlling numbers. Rather, the argument for reform of the path newcomers take towards citizenship should have two objectives:

- to create a path that is more successful in creating a better integrated society with stronger sign-up to the 'basic rules of the game' – a virtue that should not prove too controversial
- to create a clearer system that is not just 'fair' but which is seen to be fair, a system that is easier to explain and understand than the system today, which grew organically and piecemeal since the 1970s.

Change the path to citizenship for newcomers

The government recently set out proposals to reform the path to citizenship in a green paper. In essence, the changes we propose are threefold:

· provide a simpler, clearer journey
· change the way migrants move from stage to stage
· rethink rights and responsibilities.

Provide a simpler, clearer journey

The points system will radically simplify the way in which foreign nationals are able to come to Britain and make a contribution, but the path to citizenship has not benefited from the same kind of reform. Over the last few decades around 80 different routes to work and study had evolved. Broadly speaking each route had its own protocols by which newcomers could seek settlement and eventually citizenship.

If we are to build a better understanding of the path newcomers take towards citizenship, then reform should incorporate the importance the British public attaches to two ideas.

First, what I heard from the public was a strong sense that between temporary leave and citizenship itself we need a form of 'probationary citizenship'. A period of time which gives us – the country – the opportunity to ask some final questions about whether someone has really made the commitment to joining British life.

This stage simply does not exist in today's immigration system. Newcomers are able to move straight from having 'temporary leave to remain' to being allowed what is effectively permanent residence. This structure creates a problem. It is quite difficult to incorporate a reverse gear in the system. So, if someone, for example, breaks the law it is difficult to finesse an adequate response. If the offence is serious, the individual will face automatic deportation. Following changes proposed by Jacqui Smith, extant offences will bar someone from being granted citizenship. We know that the public draws a distinction in its own mind between serious and lesser offences, but surely

we must find a way in our immigration system of creating a penalty for this kind of inappropriate behaviour?

Probationary citizenship (I accept there are problems with the term 'probationary') gives us this chance – it lets us set up a reverse gear, a 'holding stage' where we can delay or slow down the progress of a newcomer towards citizenship where the individual in question has not demonstrated the responsibilities that come with that commitment.

There is one more idea we should incorporate into any reformed path to citizenship for newcomers. We should encourage people to commit to Britain. To become citizens – rather than (as David Goodhart puts it), 'denizens'[85] – we should create incentives to become a citizen rather than a permanent resident. The creation of a probationary citizen stage gives us this opportunity. If we construct a new journey from the status of having temporary leave to remain, to having probationary citizenship, to having either citizenship or permanent residence, we can create a powerful incentive by simply offering a faster track to citizenship than to permanent residence.

Change the way migrants move from stage to stage

Second, if we want to demonstrate a different kind of deal to the British public and if we want to clarify and make visible the commitment newcomers are making to Britain as they progress towards citizenship, we need to clarify and reform the 'tests' or obligations that newcomers sign up to at each stage of their journey to citizenship.

Here, I learnt something from the conversations I had all over the country. I expected most people to be exclusively concerned with the contribution that newcomers needed to make in return for the rights and privileges of living in Britain that we granted them. I was disabused of that notion. People in Britain are as interested in which obligations along the trail prompted newcomers to move out of a certain comfort zone and integrate with British society. And along with this analysis was a clear recognition that if newcomers stretched out a hand, then British people had an obligation to take it and shake it.

But what is the essence of the 'contract' we want newcomers to sign up to? How do we translate what the British public said into a practical programme of reform?

Several ideas stand out. First is the emphasis on command of the English language. If we are to simplify the path to citizenship by creating a three-stage journey from temporary leave to probationary citizenship to citizenship or permanent residence, then it seems logical to ask for a greater and greater command of English at each stage of the journey. We know that speaking English is good for integration, and good for social mobility. Fluency in English increases a migrant's chances of a job by 22 per cent – and increases a migrant's earnings by 18–20 per cent.

Second, where there are offences committed that fall below the threshold set by Parliament for automatic deportation, we should use the probationary citizenship stage to slow down a newcomer's journey to citizenship and the privileges that come with it.

Third, it is clear from what the public says that (marriage routes and refugees aside) we should be insisting on newcomers making a steady tax contribution – for five years at least – before we consider someone for progression to probationary citizenship.

Fourth, there is strong evidence that promoting 'active citizenship' can encourage integration into British life. We should consider some kind of minimum contribution on this front as a sign of seriousness to commit to Britain.

Rethink rights and responsibilities

The final series of reforms is perhaps the most controversial: to rethink the nature of the benefits – privileges of Britain – that we make available to newcomers at each stage of their journey (Table 3).

The entitlements that newcomers acquire when they come to Britain are obviously controversial, and have evolved piecemeal over the decades according to a logic defined by the benefit or right in question rather than holistically and according

Table 3 **Summary of benefits for migrants in 2008**

Benefits	Before settlement in UK	After settlement in UK	After having citizenship
Health	Access to A&E Access to NHS after 6–12 months (depending on route)	Free access to NHS	No additional entitlements
Education	Free – and compulsory for minors	Additional access to FE and HE on same terms as UK citizens	No additional entitlements
Social security	None	Full package of social security entitlements	No additional entitlements
Housing	No access to social housing (apart from emergency homelessness)	Access on needs basis	Access on needs basis
Dependants	Right to bring immediate family	No additional entitlements	No additional entitlements
Travel outside UK	Limited/ dependent on visa	Visa free travel	UK passport plus EU rights to work and travel

to whether the rights given to newcomers match the obligations we ask in return. So health care rights are given at a different stage from contribution-based benefit rights, which are given at a different stage from other DWP benefits, or local authority administered benefits. This is complicated and not very helpful if we want to tell a clear story about rights matching responsibilities.

A further criticism is that the rights that are eventually acquired at citizenship are marginal compared with the rights that are offered to those with permanent residence. If we are to make citizenship more central we need to ensure that its value is

clear, recognised and part of a wider story about British life. This is why the concept of earned citizenship is so important.

Over the months to come we need to debate when newcomers should acquire the right to different kinds of benefits. This is a complicated issue, but unless we have a discussion about the facts of the 'contract', we will not sustain confidence in it. We need to agree when access to different rights should kick in, and on what terms. There are different ways to answer the question. What we cannot persist with is a stance that puts these questions beyond debate.

6   A more United Kingdom

In my introduction, I said that there were many opportunities in political and civic life for us to make an effort to celebrate and reinforce the things that we have in common. Most of these ideas will be for others – other departments, other politicians, other leaders – to develop. But there are three arguments in particular to which I believe all politicians, of all parties, can contribute. One is unashamedly civic, one is political, and one is both economic and local.

A day to celebrate what we like best about Britain

A national day of celebration is an idea that is unashamedly civic. In debates about creating new spaces and places to reinforce the things we have got in common, a national day has come to the fore. Last year, Ruth Kelly and I published an argument that it was time to think about a 'Britain Day', and we offered the example of the success of Australia Day as a model.[86] As I went around the UK talking to the public about shared standards and how we celebrate them, I could not resist asking too what people thought of a Britain Day.

I was impressed at the strength of support I heard. Not that it was to everyone's taste. Indeed the views I heard approximated the balance reflected in a Home Office poll we took last year, in which broadly two-thirds expressed support with around 25 per cent against, the balance saying 'I don't know'.

Let me start with the case against – the negative views. Among some was a suspicion that this was an idea that was simply an invention of the government: 'its just a talking point for politicians' or, worse, '[it] feels like a government gimmick to reunite a disunited country' to make good for the fact that citizens today 'don't feel British', and that the idea was only

being proposed because 'our culture has been diluted and our country fragmented'. Or simply: 'It's too late to bring this in.'

Others argued:

There are no communities now to celebrate in; we don't know [our] neighbours so [are] unlikely to celebrate with them.

Britain is not Britain any more – lost its values – how can we celebrate when it doesn't really mean anything?

Unsure what 'Britain Day' would mean – we don't know what British is as we're trying too hard to take into account other cultures and religions.

Mixed into this was a different but related idea, that trying to celebrate something in common was simply too difficult:

Not sure about themes – these are already covered by Armistice Day and scouts/guides.

[The] most defining thing about Britishness is multiculturalism, diversity, sharing and understanding other cultures – can't manufacture a sense of togetherness out of this.

Different parts of UK would have different view of what should happen and when – may be divisive or cause animosity.

Others had different concerns. Some did not like the idea that a national day might be something 'forced' – 'you can't force people to celebrate'. Feared one: 'Britain Day would be a way to get people to conform', and another put it bluntly: 'I would drink at the pub – it's my right to do what I want on the day.'

Some worried that the day would alienate people – and that everyone would want a day for themselves or that any such day would have to be 'multicultural day' because there would be too much disagreement about what the day should look and feel like as it was forced to take account of our citizens' many different backgrounds. And there was a flip side to this argument, a suspicion that the celebration would not in fact be a celebration of our country: 'Political correctness would mean

[being] unable/not allowed to celebrate truly British things, [to] fly [the] British flag.'

The final fear was of gratuitous wastefulness. Some did not feel we needed a national day to have a celebration. The cost would end up coming from taxes and having a bank holiday would (negatively) affect employers. The money could be better used in specific communities. The UK already has lots of public holidays and opportunities to do things together (like participating in the Children in Need appeal – but Christmas, bonfire night and Halloween were also mentioned) and people 'would just go on holiday' with another day off. Annual might be too often – once every five years was posed by one as an alternative. And one or two participants fretted that public holidays are commercialised and people would try to make money out of it (although some thought this was a positive).

This was, however, the minority view. The positive argument predominated in the discussions I listened to – but it was difficult to put a finger on why Britain Day was an appealing idea. It was partly because people wanted the space to make a statement about what they loved about the UK. It reflected a comment I heard in a discussion with my own constituency party, which is ethnically very mixed and where we have had a series of arrests in recent, high-profile counter terrorism operations: 'We want the media to see the unity in the community.'

Around the country, people echoed this sense that the UK has always been a pretty diverse place and because of this there has evolved an extra need to raise awareness about our shared history and values of tolerance, as well as simply to celebrate the things of which we are proudest (the military and the NHS are often mentioned).

So, people talked about raising awareness of our national history, and creating ways of bonding between different communities, something many felt we were particularly good at precisely because Britain is a collection of nations linked into one nation that is not actually defined in terms of a single ethnic race or religion:

British Day is a great idea to raise awareness of being British and celebrating having a British passport, no matter what your culture.

[It would be] a way to bond people of different nationalities [and] bring communities together, similar to Notting Hill Carnival [and] the Mela in Hyde Park.

[The] event would help to remind people that being British is about helping each other out, being in the community, inclusiveness.

Celebrating Britain would help people appreciate it and learn more about it and previous generations.

[It would be] an opportunity to celebrate historical events.

A national day would bring together more people, [an] opportunity to mix.

[It would] give people a sense of belonging.

[It would be] an opportunity to celebrate Britain.

[It would be] a way to educate others about Britain.

[It would] help people to understand cultures of different parts of the UK.

Some also felt a national day would have a positive impact on integration. On the one hand it could help newcomers feel welcomed, but more importantly it would help people understand what it means to be British. As one participant put it: 'We need to define this and it is very diverse because it also means allowing people to celebrate their own culture.' A national day would help people learn about and accept cultural and social differences between each other, while also providing some space to talk about the history of Britain – and about the changes in the country.

People had some clear ideas, too, about how we should celebrate. I had this debate initially with my own local Labour Party in Hodge Hill, Birmingham, in 2007. Overall, among my own party members, there was strong support for the idea of a Britain Day. There was a strong sense that the day was so important that it should be a public holiday – but there was no

consensus about when it should be, although there was a strong feeling it should be separate from Remembrance Sunday. This lack of consensus was mirrored in the discussions I had around Britain. The list of suggestions for when a Britain Day might be held included:

· on the Queen's birthday
· on May Day
· on All Saints' Day
· on a day with historic significance, eg Hastings Day, Trafalgar Day, Magna Carta Day, Empire Day
· in the summer – to allow for outdoor celebrations
· on St George's Day (others disagreed) or other saint's day
· by making more of an existing day, eg Pancake Day, Whitsunday or Easter.

Other suggestions were to have a national day held in London, with local events elsewhere, that a bank holiday would encourage people to get involved, to hold the event over a weekend, and to hold it during a day and evening but not as a week-long event. My own preference would be a day in late Spring (the last Monday in May is already a day off everywhere) – or to agree a day at the beginning or the end August (which means either a new day for Scotland, or England, Wales & Northern Ireland depending what was agreed).

My own party members wanted a happy – rather than a mournful or solemn – day, which had space for expression and celebration of the wonderful diversity of British life, woven with opportunities to come together in a celebration of what we have in common. They wanted to see colour and celebrations of costume – what we called 'kilts and saris' with a strong emphasis on celebrating foods – traditional and new. Hodge Hill members were keen on local, neighbourhood celebrations, like street parties, before coming together in broader civic gatherings: the proverbial 'Party in the Park'.

Across the UK, some wanted a carnival to get everyone involved; others felt that carnivals are not British. People put lots of different ideas for locations to me:

- in the local park
- in central London
- at Buckingham Palace
- in Trafalgar Square
- in Hyde Park
- in Portsmouth dockyard
- in schools
- in community centres
- at university
- at the same venue as where there are Christmas lights.

Members were not keen on placing much emphasis on the 'trappings of nationalism', by which they meant too much emphasis on 'saluting flags'. They wanted the media to see 'the unity within the community' but a community that also celebrated the 'colours of the British tapestry'. Around Britain, people had many similar ideas, reflecting perhaps a very healthy lack of order.

Twenty-seven ways to celebrate a national day
Here is a list of 27 ways to celebrate a national day:

1 as a national event, celebrated in local areas
2 with a good cross-section of society on the organising committee; lots of small community events; have a particular theme – different theme each year, set by organising committee
3 by using TV to inform about British history; a speech by the Queen; TV link-ups around country
4 in the form of a remembrance day celebrating the bravery of veterans
5 by encouraging young people to visit or help older people; celebrate voluntary work
6 through school involvement – teach history, choirs singing
7 through daytime activities to involve whole community, and evening for partying
8 by holding street parties and neighbourhood get-together; would work as a street party – exchanging food and culture

9   as a carnival similar to the Notting Hill Carnival; big procession similar to St Paul's Carnival; fireworks

10 through music – British or world music; concerts like Live Aid; British music; play local music; local dress

11 through dance – British dancers; Morris dancing; folk dancing

12 through food – British and other cultures; regional food; different cultures' foods

13 through drinking

14 through art; involve theatre; free film viewings on history of Britain

15 by having a sports theme – all nationalities can take part; football

16 by celebrating different cultural dress

17 by holding community discussions; meetings in town halls

18 by promoting posters of iconic figures, eg fallen heroes, Winston Churchill

19 by holding a ceremony to remember the good things over the past year

20 by appreciating the country; weather; enjoyment

21 cheaply so people get involved

22 by holding free events around the city

23 by incorporating countries that used to be part of the Empire

24 by making it about integration

25 by using publicity to ensure people get involved – like Children in Need

26 by emphasising the theme of British life, immigration, remembrance; cost should be met locally as shows that putting into the local community helps to get something good back

27 in an understated but firm way, without fuss; show good and bad aspects of living in Britain (and how bad aspects are being addressed) – give honest picture.

Members of the public felt that the following people should be involved:

- the whole community
- the Queen and the Royal family
- politicians, the Prime Minister, politicians, MPs

- councillors
- celebrities with the right values (eg David Beckham, Kate Moss)
- veterans
- children
- community leaders and representatives
- young people
- corporate sponsors
- famous people who have been immigrants
- sports people
- celebrities to attract young people.

A defence of the Union

My second argument is political.

It feels a little odd at times that we do not hear more English voices speak out against Scottish independence. We know the Union is hugely important to Scotland. Two and a half million Scots have relatives in England; hundreds of thousands work south of the border; and the 'Union dividend' is worth some £10 billion. But the Union is of fundamental importance to England, too, not just economically but for the vitality of English – as well as British – society.

There is perhaps no better illustration of our economic ties than the UK's huge financial services powerhouse. The UK has rapidly consolidated its global leadership of the industry in the last decade, but £8 billion of the business is based in Scotland, 90 per cent of which is linked to the rest of the UK. However, the Union is more than a cash nexus. It is fundamental to our national identity, of which Englishness is part. When the countries of the Union came together, the state of England and Wales was transformed from a middle-ranking power playing on the stage of Europe to a world-beater.

Last year on St George's Day I went to Southwark, to witness the swearing in of 60 new British citizens amid the civic finery of London's oldest borough (motto 'United We Serve'). These occasions, when ministers are invited to say a few words, are always a good moment to collect some thoughts about why we are so proud to be British.

My message was very simple. We may not have a 'manifest destiny' codified in an American Dream, and we may not be animated hour to hour by a continental joie de vivre, but we have something else in this country. What is its anatomy?

It is partly the sense of adventure that drove Brits to sail around the world faster than anyone else and which the Union can trace back to its earliest Imperial explorers. It is partly our native inventiveness, an inventiveness that has conceived everything from gravity to penicillin to the world wide web. And it is partly our sense of decency mixed with courage that inspired our stand against continental dictators, and which today means we deploy more peacekeepers abroad than any other country bar the US.

I can think of few who would argue that the English could take all the credit on this balance sheet. Ours is fundamentally a spirit born in the alchemy of the Union, and today we owe that spirit an extraordinary debt. Britain has emerged from the last two decades of globalisation as one of the world's most successful societies. A higher share of our GDP is traded than almost any other nation in the OECD. Uniquely we are members of the UN Security Council, the OECD, the G8, the EC, NATO, the Commonwealth and the Council of Europe, and we have a track record of leadership on the international stage on issues ranging from peacekeeping to climate change to ending third world debt. We are one of the world's largest and richest economies.

Could England have achieved this on its own? Could we maintain this on our own in the years to come? Unlikely.

Today, it is commonplace to declare that in modern Britain each of us marshals a multiplicity of identities. I am the grandson of Irish immigrants. But I have three generations of family from Birmingham where I live today. I spent years growing up in Essex and a bit of me will always be proud to be an 'Essex boy'. When I go to continental Europe I feel European. As a Catholic, part of me is defined by two millennia of history and an allegiance to the Pope. But I am British and proud of it.

The celebration of the Union is fundamental to Britishness because it is de facto a construction of multiple identities. If you talk to new British citizens fresh from swearing their oath, it can

be striking how deeply moved even the cynical become.

But what often moves new citizens most is how, before our flag, lots of different people – from all walks of life, from all parts of the world, who have fled wars, or moved for love or work – have all chosen to swear one allegiance to one country, its standards and its sovereign, and feel that the country they live in is now 'a home'. It is that expression of unity and common purpose between people who are so different that is so inspiring.

So surely our task in Britain today is not to plan a separation, but to combine better a Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, atheist, English, Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish Britain into one United Kingdom. What would it say about England if we chose to separate from a country with which we have so much in common?

I recently republished the book on British life on which we test everyone who applies for citizenship – and from 2 April 2007, everyone applying to settle permanently, too. Throughout its pages you see the history, standards, economy and what Churchill called 'the long continuity of our institutions' intimately entwined.

An English argument for dissolving the Union would be a lamentable admission that in this age of diversity we were unable to master the task of marshalling, combining and celebrating what is in common between our modern plurality of identities. It would be an appalling resignation – and frankly a dangerous augury of the future.

The UK would be tragically diminished if Scotland sued for divorce. And within a torn UK, our sense of England – our past and our future – would shrink. And the implication of this must surely be that more English, Welsh and Irish politicians and civic leaders need to find space and time to make the argument for the Union.

The Labour Party leading regeneration and renewal of civic pride in Britain's poorest places

Third, and in contrast to the civic and constitutional arguments presented here, I want to add an argument about economics and

inequality. When I started this line of research I was almost exclusively concerned with what could be characterised as essentially cultural questions. But my own constituency experience tells me that we cannot split off the economics of this question from our wider ambition. This is not my insight. Politicians like Jon Cruddas and leaders like Sukhvinder Kaur-Stubbs[87] have been making this argument for a while, but I want to offer my own analysis.

In chapter 2, I made the point that in a debate about civic inventiveness we have some long traditions on which to draw. As our cities and new urban communities were built, local leaders took the chance to marshal and project a new and unashamedly local pride. Yet, now as we set about rebuilding our communities, with 3 million new homes needed by 2026, with new schools and hospitals being built, with new proposals to devolve power to local neighbourhoods, we surely have a once in a generation opportunity to replay that act again.

But Labour has to shape this programme of reform in a way that tackles once and for all the damaging inequality between rich and poor places in this country. Why? Because as Kaur-Stubbs puts it:

No amount of flag-waving or oaths of allegiance to the Queen will increase social solidarity when too many Britons live in communities blighted by failing schools, crumbling housing, drugs and crime.[88]

Today, inequality is more and more concentrated in certain places. Some wards in England have the same mortality rate as the national average in the 1950s. Life expectancy for men in some parts of Liverpool today is lower than average life expectancy in Libya. Despite rising employment, the spatial distribution of worklessness changed little between 1999 and 2005: 92 per cent of wards in the decile with most claimants of out-of-work benefits in 1999 were still in the highest decile in 2005.[89]

So long as inequalities between areas remain great, the least advantaged people will always end up living in the least advantaged neighbourhoods. And when these least advantaged households become concentrated together, the implications for

them, their communities and for society as a whole are devastating. These are also the places where a large number of Britain's ethnic minorities live together with a good slice of Britain's newcomers. When resources are so scarce competition for them can be sharp and this in turn can damage any attempt to foster harmony.

The forces that have created this inequality are extremely powerful. Spatial concentration of poverty and social exclusion in the UK is not new. But the gaps between the poorest areas and the rest of the country do appear to be widening as polarisation within cities has grown and poverty has become arguably more concentrated.

Why is this? Part of the answer lies in powerful national trends played out across the UK. But this has been aggravated by the unique things that happen to certain neighbourhoods, which become prone to cycles of spiralling decline. Arguably the process started with the decline of manufacturing in the UK, when there was a big loss of low-skilled and skilled manual jobs with the large-scale loss of jobs from major industrial areas. Service industries brought new jobs, but these jobs were often unavailable to former industrial workers, who lacked the requisite skills and qualifications. Deprived neighbourhoods, plagued by low levels of key skills, have simply suffered in the UK's transition to a new economy, which places a higher premium on skills and qualifications.

Second, new jobs have tended to grow in new places; traditional industrial and manufacturing areas have lost jobs, as have most major cities, while new work opportunities were located in the suburbs.[90] Third, employment has become increasingly insecure as the labour market has been deregulated and work has become ever more flexible, with a decrease in stable, full-time jobs, an increase in part-time, flexible jobs, increasingly held by women, and a growing earnings polarisation within service sector jobs.[91]

Together, there factors have led to higher unemployment in many of our cities, but the problem of 'poor places' has been exacerbated by the changing nature of public housing. The growth of home ownership has concentrated social housing in

the least popular areas,[92] and with stock so reduced, pressure on allocation has grown.

Most councils allocate according to need, so there has been a concentration of the most disadvantaged households in the least popular housing. Council housing, designed for a working population, increasingly had to accommodate the unemployed, and the location of this housing often further reinforced unemployment, located as it was in areas that had traditionally required labour, but no longer did so.[93]

Add in a pattern of out-migration from most major cities and the result is a concentration of poverty in poor places, which can set off a process of 'residential sorting' where the desirability of the neighbourhood sets the value of property, and those with the means to do so will opt to live in areas with more favourable housing, employment or other prospects.

Those with the least capacity to exercise choice become concentrated in the least advantaged neighbourhoods. 'Concentration effects' can then set in, which in turn can mean it becomes less profitable for landlords and residents to invest in homes that are visibly neglected, and decline can result.

Only the Labour Party in government offers an analysis of this problem, coupled with the promise of investment to manage these forces and rebuild communities that find themselves on the sharp end of change. But I believe that the Labour Party, locally, has to take a leadership role in shaping this investment in communities in a way that fosters new bonds, new links and new forms of association amid today's diversity.

Is this a fantasy? I don't think so. Let me explain how it could work in Birmingham.

In the 1950s Laurie Lee gave us his extraordinary memoirs about the end, as he put it, of the village in which he grew up, and with it a thousand years of British history:

The last days of my childhood were also the last days of the village. I belonged to that generation which saw, by chance, the end of a thousand years' life. The change came late to our Cotswold valley, didn't really show itself till the late 1920s; I was twelve by then, but during that handful of years I witnessed the whole thing happen.[94]

The 'last days' of the village, as Lee describes it – the end of 'waiting on weather and growth', the arrival of the car, the charabanc and motorbikes, the death of the squire, the silting up of his lake and the dissolution of his estate, registry office marriages, the death of the older generation and the arrival of radio – and the urbanisation of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Britain presaged not in fact an 'end' but an extraordinary rerendering of Britain's social fabric. As the communities of the countryside broke up, new communities were invented in our cities, together with a new civic pride, which created a glue for communities that were new.

In my own city of Birmingham, part of that pride was in simply being bigger. Our nineteenth-century city fathers created a vision of Greater Birmingham, embracing a wider and wider reach of the parishes beyond its own once narrow borders. But inside the city, the real strength that was created was not measured by the stretch of the city's frontiers but by the strength of the city's fabric. The honours and badges of civic virtue came thick and fast.

In three key ways, a new city fabric was stretched to include ordinary people: schools were organised, homes were built, and the exercise of power became something more widely shared. In the 1860s Birmingham politicians helped create the Education Aid Society, which explored the national education question. In 1869 we became the centre of the Education League, a highly organised political effort that struggled for eight years inside and outside Parliament to press for a programme of educational reform. By 1871 our city made bye-laws compelling attendance at school from age 5 to 13. By 1891 all school fees were abolished. Under the 20-year chairmanship of George Dixon, the Birmingham School Board became a model for educational authorities everywhere.

Now Birmingham has the opportunity to set that standard again. Birmingham happens to have the largest urban Building Schools for the Future project in the country, a building programme that will give Birmingham the opportunity to rebuild or refurbish all 76 secondary schools and six secondary special schools over the next decade. This money is a once in a

generation chance to reshape not only our city's education system, but also our entire system for educating the city. Not education as a one-off event that consumes the first quarter of life but something that stays with us for all of life. Once we built communities around the manor house. Then we built communities around the factory. In the twenty-first century we should be building communities around the school. And that should be a badge and a symbol of a twenty-first-century city pride.

Over a century ago, it was Birmingham that helped invent the town-planning movement. Back in 1895 pioneers like the Cadburys in Bournville created model homes, separate gardens, wide roads. Those new communities helped define the new city.

Yet now we have the chance of reinvention. In December 2007 I launched West Midlands' ambitious proposals to build a new home every half an hour for the next two decades – the largest programme of house-building since the 1970s backed by new government money including the £300 million Communities Infrastructure Fund. Nearly half a billion pounds will go towards building at least 2,400 social rented and 1,200 low cost homes each year. Just as pioneers like the Cadburys helped shape a new community in the nineteenth century, so today's pioneers have a chance to try the same again.

In politics, too, we have a new chance of civic renewal. As Birmingham grew, so did new political movements like the National Education League, headquartered in the city, or our own trade union movement and district labour representation council.

Here I have come to see in my own constituency that we need to reinvent the Labour Party somewhat, because contrary to popular perception there is a market for civic action. This is the real conclusion from several studies charting the recent decline in election turnouts. In 'The state of participation in Britain', Paul Whiteley noted: 'the lesson of the audit is not so much that participation has declined, but rather that it has evolved over time and taken on new forms… A sense of civic obligation runs deep amongst the British.'[95]

Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley's analysis revealed that on average people had engaged in at least three political activities

in the last year. Voters were most likely to have given money (62 per cent), voted (50 per cent) or signed a petition (42 per cent); 28 per cent had participated in a boycott, just 5 per cent had attended a political meeting or rally, but 13 per cent had contacted a politician. Furthermore, four out of 10 people are members of at least one type of group: 19 per cent belong to just one group; and 20 per cent belong to two, three or four groups. This means something important, as the authors noted: '18 million adults in Great Britain belong to, 11 million participants participate in, and four million volunteered their time and labour for organisations.'[96] What is more, around 1 million adults (2 per cent of the adult population) are 'super-activists' belonging to five or more groups.

This is the opportunity for local Labour parties and local Labour leaders to redefine the way local communities come together and solve problems in new alliances that renew civic pride and the 'art of association' in modern Britain.

I first came to see this by organising residents' meetings, which I still do once a month. When I started, I remember being very struck at the surprise on people's faces when white and Pakistani-heritage residents appeared to see for the first time that they each had exactly the same set of grievances about the problems outside their front doors. We had simply not brought people together to discuss shared problems before.

Those early residents' meetings quickly led to a campaign called Hodge Hill 2020, an attempt to develop a community-based agenda for the renewal of our community, and with it a vision shared by the complex range of stakeholders required to get anything done in inner city Birmingham.

Our conference in June 2006 sought to develop ideas about the long-term prospects for Hodge Hill – challenges, opportunities and trends – to consider how to make Hodge Hill a destination of choice through renewal of the physical infrastructure and assets; to help inform Local Area Agreements; and, crucially, to get sign-up, commitment to action and energy behind the vision.

The list that emerged was unsurprisingly long and included:

- obtaining investment by local people in their own community
- encouraging civic pride and mutual respect
- making each individual accountable for the area
- improving education standards and attainment rates
- recognising the lack of vibrant successful retail and local centres
- working against health inequalities
- improving housing standards and allocations
- improving employment opportunities
- supporting young people in reaching their potential.

But what came top of the conference's list were concerns about community cohesion. Centre-stage was a sense that we had to empower and support local communities in tackling our problems within the community, rather than relying completely on outside organisations – and that we would need to work civically and culturally – not just politically – to get people out of the streets they lived in and into the streets of others.

That conference has now led us to a programme of work that arguably is not political. It has three strands:

- heritage – a group drawing up bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop an oral history written by the white and Pakistani community, plus developing a history trail and blue plaque scheme
- arts – planning for an annual arts festival led by the constituency's young people
- faith – planning to establish an inter-faith group based on experiments that have worked well elsewhere in the city.

In time, we hope to factor in sports – again with a big emphasis on young people.

Political parties with their ability to 'educate, agitate, organise' are uniquely placed to support parties and political leaders in leading this kind of work locally. It is not an original idea. It was there at the start of New Labour. Indeed it was Gordon Brown who wrote in 1992 that Labour would become a real channel for people to bring about change themselves:

People are used to 'doing it for themselves'. In the past, people interested in change have joined the Labour Party largely to elect agents of change. Today they want to be agents of change themselves. Tenants' associations, residents' groups, school governors, community groups. These are where Labour Party members will be in the 90s, bringing Labour values to life.[97]

7   Conclusion

The purpose of this pamphlet is quite straightforward. The Labour Party believes that individuals and families stand a better chance of achieving their full potential in strong communities. We do not believe that people flourish when left exclusively to what Mario Cuomo calls the 'tender mercies of the marketplace'. We believe there is such a thing as society.

But globalisation is putting pressure on the shared standards that pin society together. Although we strongly believe in pluralism and will stand up for the right to be different, now is surely the time to recognise that the twenty-first century will require an agenda for strengthening the things we have in common.

This is not anyone's department. It is everyone's business. Right across government and our civic and cultural life in this country, we will need action. In the Home Office we can contribute to the development of this agenda with, among other responses, reform of the path to citizenship for newcomers. But as I have tried to show, there are other ideas, too, which should be explored and advanced.

The debate about shared standards is vital to the future of New Labour because it addresses one of the foundations on which we believe individual empowerment is to be built in the future. Over the course of many decades of Labour's thinking, we came to argue that the freedom of individuals to achieve what they can in the modern world is rooted in strong communities that nurture and tolerate difference and individuality, but combine to put at the disposal of the individual assets – and investment – that the individual is simply unable to command on their own.

The creation, development and continued investment in these kinds of assets requires above all a commitment to a shared

– not an autarkic – future, but that in turn requires a sense of reciprocity to remain alive, in the face of new, powerful pressures that separate us from each other.

The ways of life that fostered habits of solidarity that were part of everyday life some decades ago are no longer there as a prop for us. We need to reinvent them. Today we live in a sophisticated society where the potential to develop our own character in the way we, each of us, determine has perhaps never been as free-ranging. But that freedom is best sustained by cooperating in a way that allows us to create and share common things. That in turn requires some shared standards, and if they are under pressure, new ones are needed. Government reform can play a part in that evolution.

Notes

1 Jared Diamond in his extraordinary *Guns, Germs and Steel: The fates of human societies* (New York: Norton, 1999) puts it thus: any complex society requires enforcement of rules, if necessary by complex central organisations to (a) solve 'the problem of conflict between unrelated strangers' that grows astronomically as societies become denser; (b) manage communal decision making in similar conditions; (c) redistribute goods as needed in any exchange economy; and (d) manage trade with others.

2 Kruger, 'The right dialectic'.

3 Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

4 Home Office, *The Path to Citizenship*.

5 Ware, *Who Cares About Britishness*.

6 Dimbleby Lecture, 2001

7 The first recorded cooperative store belonged to the Weavers Society in Fenwick, Ayrshire, in 1769.

8 'What a daft idea to brand Britain'.

9 Leonard, *Britain TM*.

10 Director General of the Security Service, 'The international terrorist threat to the UK', speech to the Mile End Group of Queen Mary, University of London, 9 Nov 2006.

11 Trevor Phillips in his opening speech to the Race Convention, 27

Nov 2006 (citing ICM poll commissioned by the Commission for Racial Equality).

12 Ipsos MORI interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,004 GB adults aged 16+ by telephone on 8 and 9 Aug 2005.

13 Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

14 Ibid.

15 Ipsos MORI, 'Can we have trust and diversity?', 19 Jan 2004, available at www.ipsos-mori.com/content/polls-03/can-we-have-trust-and-diversity.ashx (accessed 21 Aug 2008).

16 Census 2001; see www.statistics.gov.uk.

17 Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

18 Ibid.

19 Fukuyama, *Trust*. Fukuyama himself would underline that his argument was not exactly new, but was set on a pretty clear track in Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in 1905. But Fukuyama gave the argument new force against the backdrop of the transition of former Soviet states to capitalism.

20 Fukuyama, *Trust*.

21 Which is why Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* cannot really be read aside from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

22 Fukuyama, *Trust*.

23 Ibid.

24 ONS, *Social Capital*.

25 Gambetta, 'Can we trust trust?'.

26 Kruger, 'The right dialectic'.

27 'In no country', de Tocqueville marvelled, 'has greater advantage been derived from association… than in America' (de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*).

28 Ibid.

29 Kruger, 'The right dialectic'.

30 Tradition, they argued, was just like a 'price' – a highly complicated piece of information, which settled the mutual interests and ambitions of the traders involved, a 'pool' of information created when the organisers put what they know about their own positions together.

31 The argument then went on that there could *de facto* be no conflict between 'tradition' and 'markets' because they were both operating on a single model of social interaction.

32 Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

33 Mount, 'Rebuilding Conservatism'.

34 Fukuyama, *After the Neocons*.

35 Kruger, 'The right dialectic'.

36 Crick, *Socialism*.

37 Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*.

38 Clearer thinkers will perhaps have a different count from me, but I would argue the notions of shared *values* (as opposed to shared ownership) appear in Owenism, Christian Socialism, William Morris and anti-commercialism, Fabianism, welfare state

traditions and syndicalism/guild socialism.

39 In *The Future of Socialism* Crosland argued, 'We cannot assert definitively what would be the effect either on personal contentment or attitudes to work, or the quality of our society, of a wholesale effort to suppress the motive of personal gain or to elevate collective at the expense of individual relationships; nor can we even begin to see a feasible institutional framework within which these changes could be brought about.'

40 Ibid.

41 Hattersley, *Choose Freedom*; Kinnock, *Democratic Socialist Aims and Values*.

42 Blair, 'The revisionist tendency'.

43 Blair, *New Britain*.

44 Blears, *Communities in Control*.

45 Etzioni, *The Spirit of Community*.

46 Whitehead, 'Civic renewal'.

47 Blair, *New Britain*.

48 Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

49 Blunkett, *Politics and Progress*.

50 Blunkett, *Civic Renewal*.

51 Discussion groups were organised in Aberdeen, Bristol, Cardiff, Croydon, Leeds, Newcastle, Nottingham and Portsmouth by the Central Office for Information, on behalf of the Border and Immigration Agency

52 Hansard, 1961, column 720.

53 Hansard, 1961, column 719.

54 Phillips, opening speech to the Race Convention.

55 *British Social Attitudes*, quoted by Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute.

56 Ipsos MORI.

57 Denham, 'The fairness code'.

58 Bowles and Gintis 'Is equality passé?'.

59 Pearce, 'Fair rules'.

60 Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, *End of Year Review 2007*.

61 Markova and Black, *East European Immigration and Community Cohesion*.

62 Herbert et al, 'Multicultural living?'.

63 Markova and Black, *East European Immigration and Community Cohesion*.

64 Ibid.

65 Hudson et al, *Social Cohesion in Diverse Communities*.

66 HIE, *Migrant Workers in the Highlands and Islands*.

67 Markova and Black, *East European Immigration and Community Cohesion*.

68 HIE, *Migrant Workers in the Highlands and Islands*.

69 Ibid.

70 Citizens Advice Bureau, *Home From Home?*

71 HIE, *Migrant Workers in the Highlands and Islands*.

72 TimeBank, *Mentoring for New Migrants*.

73 See www.timetogether.org.uk (accessed 20 Aug 2008).

74 Time Bank, *Mentoring for New Migrants*.

75 Hudson et al, *Social Cohesion in Diverse Communities*.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Increases have been lower (less than 10 per cent) for Australia, Canada, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

80 Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, *Plan Estratégico de Ciudadanía e Integración 2007–2010*.

81 Rab Butler discussing the Commonwealth Immigration Bill 1961, Hansard, 1961, column 687.

82 It is worth noting that over the last decade, the UK has pulled off a very rare triple: employment growth, wage growth and productivity growth.

83 Sriskandarajah, Reed and Cooley, *Paying Their Way*.

84 Hansard, 1961, column 695.

85 Goodhart, D, 'Earned citizenship', expert paper to the Prime Minister on community cohesion. One of six independent papers delivered in preparation for a speech by Tony Blair on community, part of a series of lectures called 'Our Nation's Future', available at www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page10554.asp (accessed 14 Aug 2008).

86 Kelly and Byrne, *A Common Place*.

87 See most recently Kaur-Stubbs, 'Poverty and solidarity'.

88 Ibid.

89 Page, *Respect and Renewal*.

90 Green and Owen, *Where Are the Jobless?*

91 DCLG, *Enabling Cities in the Knowledge Economy*.

92 Richardson and Mumford, 'Community, neighbourhood and social infrastructure'.

93 Ibid.

94 Lee, *Cider With Rosie*.

95 Whiteley, 'The state of participation in Britain'.

96 Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley, 'Civic attitudes and engagement in modern Britain'.

97 Brown, *Making Mass Membership Work*.

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This project was supported by:

The idea of shared social standards has always been part of the fabric of political ideas and public life. But modern life is bringing changes to the way shared social standards are created, reinforced and used day to day. Collective life faces new pressures as communities become more transient, families more dispersed, work less secure and traditional institutions less powerful.

In *A More United Kingdom*, Liam Byrne argues that shared standards are the secret to preserving harmony in a more diverse society. Strengthening what we have in common, he suggests, must coexist with a respect for difference. And while the right seeks to revert to a set of traditional institutions the real lesson of the past is one of inventiveness, not stasis.

Alongside radical reform of the immigration system, Byrne offers three ideas for strengthening shared standards and a sense of fraternity in Britain – a national day to celebrate what we like best about our country; a stronger defence of the Union; the Labour Party leading a renewal of civic pride and association as part of a broader, sustained effort to regenerate Britain's poorest places.

Liam Byrne is the Member of Parliament for Hodge Hill.