

'We will always strive to be on your side'

Gordon Brown

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If anyone is in any doubt the difference almost ten years of Labour government has made, let them come here to Manchester.

And let us congratulate business, commerce and local government.

From the tragedy of the bombing of the city centre Manchester's renewal has created thousands of new jobs, new businesses and new confidence.

And I am proud, this is not just an achievement of Manchester this is an achievement of Labour Manchester.

And let me begin by addressing one point directly.

I've worked with Tony Blair for almost ten years as Chancellor - the longest relationship of any Prime Minister and Chancellor in British history.

And it has been a privilege for me to work with and for the most successful ever Labour leader and Labour Prime Minister.

Building new Labour and winning three elections, he recognised what we must never forget that we must always be in tune with the aspirations, at all times on the side of the British people.

And in the time we've been MP's - working together for more than 23

years – I believe that we have real achievements together.

But it's hardly surprising that as in any relationship there have been times when we've differed.

And where over these years differences have distracted from what matters I regret that, as I know Tony does too.

I will never forget – the only reason any of us are here is that we are in politics as servants of the people.

And Tony: from the first time we shared that office together in 1983 to today.

You taught our party – you saw it right, you saw it clearly and you saw it through – that we can't just be for one section of society we've got to be for all of society.

We can't just be pro Labour we've got to be pro business too.

And we cannot leave public services as they were, we must build them around the personal aspirations of the individual.

And let me say that the renewal of New Labour must and will be built upon these essential truths: a flexible economy, reformed and personalised public services, public and private sectors not at odds but working together so that we can truly deliver opportunity and security not just for some but for all.

And Tony you taught us something else - and once again you saw it right, you saw it clearly and you saw it through; that the world did change after September 11th. That no one can be neutral in the fight

against terrorism and that we – Britain – have new international responsibilities to discharge.

And let us be clear: the renewal of New Labour will be founded on that essential truth – the need for global cooperation in the fight against terrorism, never anti-Americanism, recognising that the values of decent people everywhere are for liberty, democracy and justice not just for ourselves but for everyone, not least for the poorest countries and peoples of the world.

And let me say that commitment to international action on justice means today to prevent genocide, the world must through the U.N, urgently act in Darfur.

And we must support Tony Blair and Margaret Beckett – and their proposals for a political and economic plan to underpin a lasting middle east peace.

And as Hilary Benn has said we must now make the promise of Gleneagles come alive in the right to schooling for all the world's children, and meet the Millennium Development Goals.

So whether it is building social justice at home, the advances in peace in Northern Ireland, resolution in the face of terrorism and leadership on Africa, let us today applaud the immense national and international contribution, as Leader and Prime Minister, of Tony Blair.

Remember also in 1997 we inherited a Britain of economic instability, unemployment and chronic underinvestment in public services.

Now from being one of the most unstable economies, Britain is today

seen around the world as the most stable economy in the industrialised world.

With 2.4 million new jobs – instead of the highest unemployment in Europe – we are closer to full employment than ever before.

And our economic strength has allowed us to do what no government has ever achieved so quickly: to double investment in health, in education, policing, and transport.

Our prudence yes, she'll always be around, was and is for a purpose.

And don't let Conservatives tell you it hasn't made a difference – higher school results, lower waiting times, more police on the beat and the longest sustained fall in child poverty and pensioner poverty since records began.

So as a Party and a Government we have climbed a huge mountain.

But we must now climb many more and even more challenging mountains ahead.

The next ten years will be even more demanding.

And because the challenges are quite different, the programme for governing will be different.

And as the tasks of government change the way we govern must change, not just new policies but a new politics too. A new politics founded on responsibilities as well as rights.

And our starting point must be the concerns, the struggles and the

hopes and ambitions of families in every part of our country.

I think of the young couple I talked to who work all the hours of the day and yet cannot afford their first home.

The grandmother who's come out of hospital desperate to stay in her home who doesn't have the support to make it possible.

The mothers I met in Broadwater Farm, trying not just to build a children's centre but to rebuild a whole community.

The young people I met on the streets who said they would not be there if they had somewhere to meet.

The employee who wants to branch out and start up her own business but doesn't feel she has enough support to make it happen.

All of them know how they want to live their lives – but want a government on their side to enable them to make the changes they need.

And as we listen to and seek to answer their concerns we the Labour Party do so from and must apply an enduring set of values that put the needs and concerns of the British people first.

And where did I learn these values?

My father was a minister of the church.

His motivation was not theological zeal but compassion.

He told me 'you can leave your mark on the world for good or ill'.

And my mother taught my brothers and me that whatever talents we had, however small, we should use them.

I don't romanticise my upbringing.

But my parents were more than an influence, they were – and still are – my inspiration. The reason I am in politics.

And all I believe and all I try to do comes from the values I learned from them.

They believed in duty, responsibility, and respect for others.

They believed in honesty and hard work, and that the things that matter had to be worked for.

Most of all my parents taught me that each of us should live by a moral compass.

It was a simple faith with a fundamental optimism.

That each and every one of us has a talent.

Each of us a duty to use that talent.

And each of us should have the chance to develop that talent.

And my parents thought we should use whatever talent we had to help people least able to help themselves.

And as I grew up surrounded by books, sports, music and encouragement, I saw at school and beyond how some flourished and others, denied these opportunities, fell behind.

They had talent, they had ability. But they did not have the chance to

fulfil their promise. They needed someone to champion them. They needed the support of people on their side.

And is not our history the story of yes, progress through the fulfilled talents, even genius, of some but, yes, also of the wasted potential of millions for too many, their talents lost and forever unfulfilled?

That's why I joined the Labour party - out of faith – faith in people, that they should have the opportunity to realise their potential.

And I believed then and I believe now that at all times the Labour party must stand for more than a programme: we must have a soul.

And I believe that these are the values – our belief in opportunity and responsibility – that we must put to work today, and let me say I believe that these values are even more relevant to the future of our country as we face profound change:

The momentous challenges of terrorism and security,
Global economic competition,
The threat to our planet from climate change.

And we must also recognise – and celebrate – other new social forces at work – that people rightly now have higher aspirations for themselves and their families than ever before. And precisely because of the changes around us, people yearn for a Britain of stronger, safer and more cohesive communities too.

And all these challenges have one central defining feature in common – a lesson we have learnt in government.

None can be met by government alone.

In nine years I've learned that these new challenges can be met only by government and people working together, met only by an active citizenship only by involving and engaging the British people and forging a shared British national purpose that can unify us all.

Take terrorism.

Let me promise: as a government, as John Reid and Des Browne have said, we will take any necessary steps and find all necessary resources to ensure whether in Iraq, Afghanistan or anywhere else there is no safe haven for terrorists and no hiding place for terrorist finance.

But we also know that we must isolate these murderous extremists and we will do so best when we, the British people, mobilise the essential decency and moderation of all our communities and win the battle of ideas for hearts and minds.

And in this modern world, in the same way that defeating terrorism requires us all to play our part, success in the global economy will depend upon us engaging the creative talents of all.

Strip away the rhetoric about globalisation and it comes down to one essential truth:

You can buy raw materials from anywhere,
You can borrow capital from anywhere,
You can engage with technology half way across the world,
But you cannot buy from elsewhere what in the global economy you need most; the skills and the creativity of all our people – and that means that in education we must aim to be number one.

And as a country of 60 million people competing with countries more than ten times our size, we cannot afford to waste the talents of anyone, so at the heart of our next reforms in education – aspiration and excellence: whether through one to one learning, more help for parents, tackling failing schools, every child challenged and brought on, and no one held back.

And no longer schooling just from age 5 to 16, but nursery education from age 3, to - part time or full time - everyone in education till 18.

But to make all this happen we cannot tolerate second best investment in our schools. And, step by step, we will raise investment in state school pupils now £5,500 per pupil to today's level for private school pupils – £8,000 a year.

And I make this challenge to all parties – if you believe, like us, in equal opportunities in education, support my priority for the future: invest in education first.

I want a Britain not just of excellence in education but a Britain of full employment and an end to the dole as we know it.

So let us also remove one by one Britain's biggest educational and employment handicaps:

As Alan Johnson proposes, give vocational qualifications parity of esteem with academic qualifications.

As Alistair Darling said today, build a stronger enterprise culture and fight for modern manufacturing to have a level playing field.

And as John Hutton has said, give new incentives for British companies to train up British workers.

And instead of the old social security, benefits to do nothing, a new security: the enduring benefit of a new skill that will give you a new and better job.

And because I believe the greatest expansion in new jobs can come from the environment, David Miliband, John Prescott and I will publish proposals this autumn showing how environmental care and job creation advance together: from energy saving, innovation and green technologies. At least 100,000 new jobs for British people.

And let me say candidly of the environment:

Yes it is about personal and collective responsibility to change our behaviour, and I know too that governments across the world have been too slow to recognise the threat of climate change.

And I don't want our children to say to us: 'You knew what needed to be done, you had the political power but you lacked the political will'.

So when the Treasury publishes in a few days time the most comprehensive study of economics and climate change, I will call for global co-operation among governments, government providing the right incentives and investment a new environmental transformation fund, business taking its responsibility and by our will to act, new incentives to change behaviour can truly make a difference.

And I make this promise: tackling climate change must not be the excuse for rich countries to impose a new environmental colonialism: sheltering an unsustainable prosperity at the expense of the

development of the poor.

So Britain is calling on the World Bank and our international partners to create, for alternative energy for poorer countries, a \$20 billion global fund, meeting our obligations that to safeguard our common planet, the financial resources of the richest countries should be put at the service of the poor.

And here at home, the task is also to build stronger communities and as nine years of government have taught us we can only build strong communities by championing the active involvement and engagement of local people themselves.

We know unemployment is lower

Interest rates are lower

Poverty is lower

And mortgage repossessions much much fewer.

And yet people feel insecure,

Anxious, even worried. Concerned about the future.

Working parents worried about the limited time they can spend with their children and the unsettling influences their children are open to;

Manufacturing workers concerned about firms, jobs and people migrating in and out of countries across the world;

Families insecure because they see their communities changing very fast around them; and their concerns echo a question many ask – how can we protect and enhance the best in the British way of life.

For it's true that globalisation could mean a free for all, a turning inwards, a new protectionism, even a break up of community life.

So these times challenge us to ask -- what kind of society do we together want to become?

I believe the answer is that we the British people must be far more explicit about the common ground on which we stand, the shared values which bring us together, the habits of citizenship around which we can and must unite. Expect all who are in our country to play by our rules.

And while we do not today have a written constitution it comes back to being sure about and secure in the values that matter: freedom, democracy and fairness.

The shared values we were brought up with and must not lose: fair play, respect, a decent chance in life.

And let us reaffirm the truth, that as individual citizens of Britain we must act upon the responsibilities we owe to each other as well as our rights.

Here is the deal for the next decade we must offer: no matter your class, colour or creed, the equal opportunity to use your talents.

In return we expect and demand responsibility: an acceptance there are common standards of citizenship and common rules.

And this is the British way: to say to all who live in our country there are common standards and rules to be upheld.

Opportunity, yes, so let me say it must always be a mark of British citizenship that we root out discrimination, prejudice and racism from whatever source it comes.

And so that those already in the workforce do not find their standards undercut, we will not only raise the minimum wage next month but enforce the minimum wage and as we legislate an offence of corporate manslaughter, stage by stage eliminate second class citizenship in the workplace.

And let me say something which I know is controversial but I know needs to be said: If we are to uphold these values that matter most we need not only respect for all traditions but also a common language.

And in addition to rules for managed migration and the decision we will apply to Romania and Bulgaria, it is right that people who come to and are in this country to stay learn English; Have some sense of what it means to be British, of our history and our culture; And through citizenship tests and citizenship ceremonies take British citizenship seriously.

And don't let us fall for the idea that this is a view held by one part of the community and not another.

Let us expose and banish once and for all a doctrine of race based exclusivity that is the wholly unacceptable message of the BNP.

Let me tell you about a mother I met recently in Luton devout in her Muslim faith and, as she told me, determined to play her full part in contributing to a community founded on the British values we all share.

And she's right: if for too long we overvalued what makes us different, it is time to also value what we believe in common a shared

national purpose for our country.

Why is it that I care so much about this idea of Britishness?

When I'm in Scotland some people say it's just to defeat today's Scottish nationalists, but I've spent all my political life defending the unity of great Britain against narrow nationalism.

When I'm in England some people say I talk about Britishness because I'm now embarrassed about being Scottish. Let me say I am proud to be Scottish and British.

No, the reason I make speeches about my pride in Britain and Britishness is that valuing our shared purpose as a country will be as critical to our success and cohesion in this new century as it was in the last when we together defeated fascism and build the NHS and together in the century before when we led the industrial revolution.

And this same commitment to a Britain of responsibilities as well as rights demands strict measures to combat vandalism, violence and all forms of anti social behaviour.

And just as in the economy where there was instability in 1997 there is now stability, so now in our communities where there is insecurity we seek security and where there is fear, freedom from fear.

And let me say: as we support the police, the armed forces and security services with the resources they need, we will not hesitate as on Identity Cards and if the evidence shows it necessary, moving beyond 28 days detention to ask for the necessary powers.

And we are right to be tough with the small minority of young people

whose anti social behaviour undermines our community.

But we should also do more to encourage and recognise the vast majority of young people who abide by the values of our community.

So let us in every area of the country champion youth councils and youth budgets, young people deciding for themselves the shape of youth facilities in their communities.

Let us do more to support what gives young people opportunity and idealism: a youth community national service offering thousands of chances to expand horizons.

And as Tessa Jowell has urged us, let us encourage thousands of young people to be volunteers for the London Olympics of 2012.

But our commitment to a responsible society also means
The right of teenagers to education maintenance allowances but the responsibility to show good school results;
The right of mothers to higher maternity benefits but the responsibility to ensure infants have their health checks;
And the right of citizens to use the NHS but the responsibility – a simple one like turning up for appointments – not to abuse the system.

And to the responsible young couple I met a few days ago who tell me they work all hours, play by the rules and still cannot afford their first home, I say we hear your concerns, it is because we are on your side that we will now expand shared equity for affordable homes, plan for another one million more owner occupiers, and because many people want to rent we are also doubling public investment in social housing.

But we must also remember what for successive governments have been, as Hilary Armstrong has said, the greatest failures of social policy:

Children in care

Treatment of offenders

Services to disabled children

Personal care for the frail and old.

For what we need to recognise anew is the importance of the one to one, face to face, not impersonal but personal care, the support from families, neighbourhoods and voluntary organisations that are often the difference between success and failure and the support that demonstrates both the limits of markets and the limits of state action.

So in future I want more support for parents to be better parents, I want more recognition for home helps and carers whose dedication I believe should be the first call for our honours system, and I want a new compact that elevates the third sector as partner, not as the Tories see it - a cut price alternative to government - but government fulfilling its responsibilities to fund services and fully valuing the contribution the voluntary sector can make.

And I believe that there is nothing we cannot achieve together if we enable what Beveridge called that driving power of social conscience to work. No longer a Britain of "no such thing as society" or "me too"-ism. No longer a Britain of them and us, but a Britain of we the people working together.

And I tell you: just as in the last century governments had to take power from vested interests in the interests of communities, in the

new century people and communities should now take power from the state and that means for the new challenges ahead a reinvention of the way we govern: the active citizen, the empowered community, open enabling government.

When I made the Bank of England independent, and to build trust in economic decision-making, I gave executive power away and I want a radical shift of power from the centre.

And while there must be scope for emergency action, it is in my view right that in future, Parliament, not the executive, makes the final decisions on matters as important as peace and war. And, as Jack Straw and Peter Hain have said, it must also means looking at the power of patronage including over appointments.

The purpose of independence for the Bank of England, the FSA and the Competition Commission was to devolve power and separate the making of public policy from the independent administration of daily business.

And I believe we must now examine how elsewhere we can separate the decisions that in a democracy, elected politicians must make from the business of day to day administration.

And look at the difference that a Labour-led Council has made here to this city of Manchester.

It is right that local councils, not Whitehall, should have more power over the things that matter to their community and from economic regeneration to public transport, the empowerment and strengthening of local councils and local communities is what we must now do.

And I will also champion community ownership of local assets and so that people who want change can secure that change community petitions to trigger action. And in that spirit of devolution I want to work with the lottery so that for even the smallest community, local budgets for local community facilities can be voted on by local people.

New Labour renewed not just holding the centre ground, but modernising it in a progressive way too.

New Labour strengthening and entrenching our position in the mainstream as the party of reform.

And so we must continue in the NHS as in all public services to make all reforms necessary and modernise all institutions in need of change to meet the rising aspirations of the British people.

Let us remind the country that the NHS is our greatest achievement and I am proud that free at the point of use we can aspire to it being for all people the best and fairest insurance policy in the world.

But when some people say as they do, why all that modernisation? Why all these New Labour reforms? Why continue to change?

I tell the country:

This is not reform for reforms sake but reform to deliver the best service possible, and Britain cannot lead the world by standing still.

But, Conference, I know people what to know about more than programmes and policies.

And its right that people should know where I come from and for what I stand.

As a quite private person what drew me into public life was not a search for fame, or headlines but a determination to make a difference.

If I thought the future of politics was just about celebrity and not about something more substantial, I wouldn't be in politics.

If being in public life becomes about image above all else then I don't believe politics would be serving the public.

It will not be a surprise to you to learn I'm more interested in the future of the Arctic circle than the future of the Arctic Monkeys.

Some see politics simply as spectacle.

I see politics as service because it is through service that you can make a difference and you can help people change their lives.

I know where I come from, what I believe and what I can contribute.

And I am confident that my experience and my values gives me the strength to take the tough decisions.

I would relish the opportunity to take on David Cameron and the Conservative Party.

And in that endeavour I would be determined to draw on all the talents of our party and country.

And why?

Because I know that in Britain today there are great causes left, noble purposes worth fighting for, a progressive future still to be built, and this is the task that falls to our Party and our Government.

A few months ago a primary schoolteacher told me that despite the improvements in education, in all her 34 years of teaching just a small handful of her pupils – just one every few years – had ever gone on to university.

Don't try and tell me so few of these pupils ever had the ability.

Don't tell me we couldn't have done better for them.

And it falls to us now to address this poverty of opportunity and aspiration.

I also met a former company managing director. A woman who had watched two young people die in tragic circumstances. Her response was to change her life, to give up her job and devote her time to bringing out the best in other young people.

And today as a result of her efforts and others, hundreds and soon thousands of young people are volunteering in community service, and I've met many of them: they want to change not just their communities but to change the world.

So there is a vision of the good society.

A Britain where we can do better than we are.

Where we do feel and share the burdens of others.

Where we do believe in something bigger than ourselves.

Where we can be inspired by the driving power of social conscience.

And where by working together we grow more prosperous and secure.

This is the Britain I believe in.

A Britain where by the strong helping the weak, our whole society becomes stronger and where by all contributing, each and every one of us is enriched.

Let this message go out from our party to the people of Britain.

We will listen and we will learn.

We will never lose sight of your aspirations.

We will always strive to be on your side.

We will at all times seek to earn your trust.

For your concerns are our concerns.

Your values are our values.

And working together the good society can and will be built.