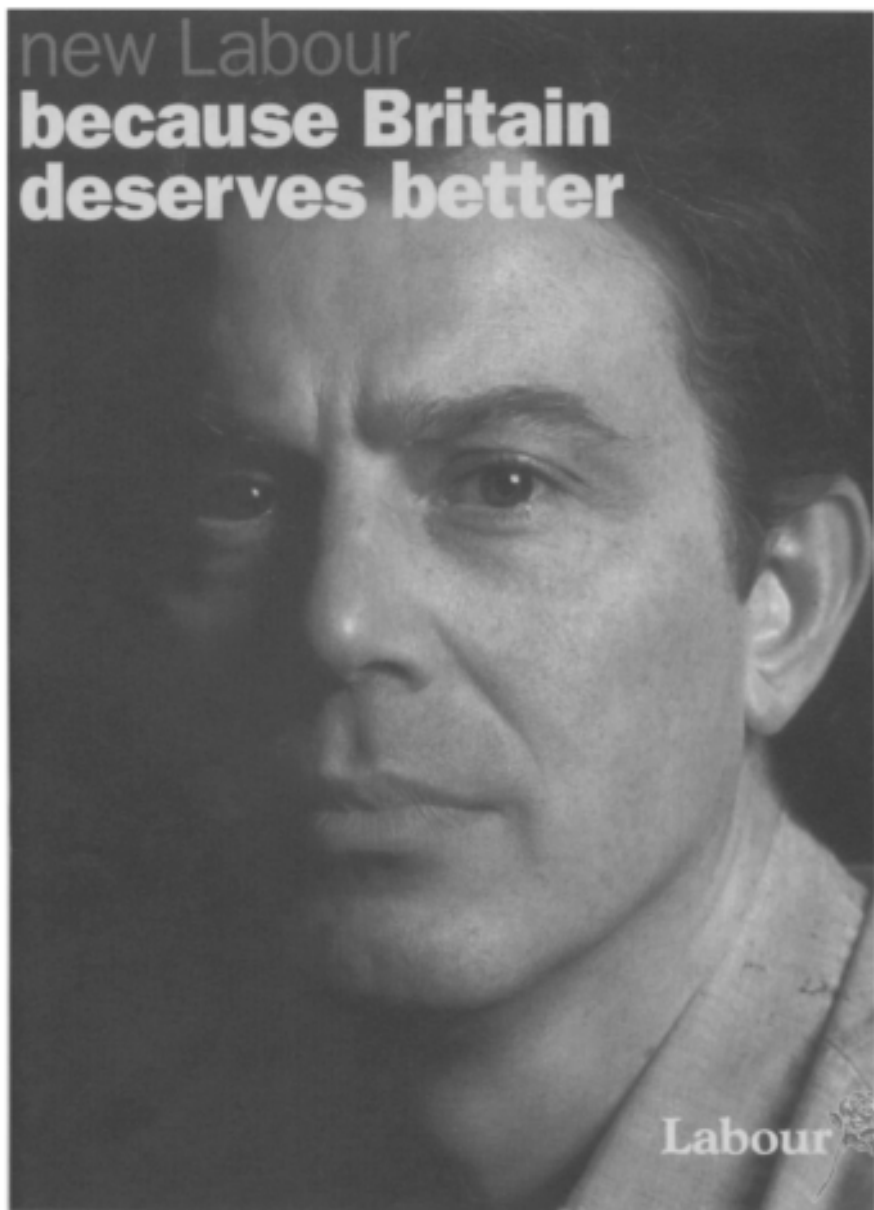


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new Labour
**because Britain
deserves better**



Labour

LABOUR PARTY GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 1997

New Labour: because Britain deserves better

Date of Election	1 May
Party Leader	Tony Blair
Candidates	639
MPs	419
Votes	13,516,632
% of Vote	43.2%

Message from Tony Blair

I believe in Britain. It is a great country with a great history. The British people are a great people. But I believe Britain can and must be better: better schools, better hospitals, better ways of tackling crime, of building a modern welfare state, of equipping ourselves for a new world economy.

I want a Britain that is one nation, with shared values and purpose, where merit comes before privilege, run for the many not the few, strong and sure of itself at home and abroad.

I want a Britain that does not shuffle into the new millennium afraid of the future, but strides into it with confidence.

I want to renew our country's faith in the ability of its government and politics to deliver this new Britain.

I want to do it by making a limited set of important promises and achieving them. This is the purpose of the bond of trust I set out at the end of this introduction, in which ten specific commitments are put before you. Hold us to them. They are our covenant with you.

I want to renew faith in politics by being honest about the last 18 years. Some things the Conservatives got right. We will not change them. It is where they got things wrong that we will make change. We have no intention or desire to replace one set of dogmas by another.

I want to renew faith in politics through a government that will govern in the interest of the many, the broad majority of people who work hard, play by the rules, pay their dues and feel let down by a political system that gives the breaks to the few, to an elite at the top increasingly out of touch with the rest of us.

And I want, above all, to govern in a way that brings our country together, that unites our nation in facing the tough and dangerous challenges of the new economy and changed society in which we must live. I want a Britain which we all feel part of, in whose future we all have a stake, in which what I want for my own children I want for yours.

A new politics

The reason for having created new Labour is to meet the challenges of a different world. The millennium symbolises a new era opening up for Britain. I am confident about our future prosperity, even optimistic, if we have the courage to change and use it to build a better Britain.

To accomplish this means more than just a change of government. Our aim is no less than to set British political life on a new course for the future.

People are cynical about politics and distrustful of political promises. That is hardly surprising. There have been few more gross breaches of faith than when the Conservatives under Mr Major promised, before the election of 1992, that they would not raise taxes, but would cut them every year; and then went on to raise them by the largest amount in peacetime history starting in the first Budget after the election. The Exchange Rate Mechanism as the cornerstone of economic policy, Europe, health, crime, schools, sleaze—the broken promises are strewn across the country's memory.

The Conservatives' broken promises taint all politics. That is why we have made it our guiding rule not to promise what we cannot deliver; and to deliver what we promise. What follows is not the politics of a 100 days that dazzles for a time, then fizzles out. It is not the politics of a revolution, but of a fresh start, the patient rebuilding and renewing of this country—renewal that can take root and build over time.

That is one way in which politics in Britain will gain a new lease of life. But there is another. We aim to put behind us the bitter political struggles of left and right that have torn our country apart for too many decades. Many of these conflicts have no relevance whatsoever to the modern world—public versus private, bosses versus workers, middle class versus working class. It is time for this country to move on and move forward. We are proud of our history, proud of what we have achieved—but we must learn from our history, not be chained to it.

New Labour

The purpose of new Labour is to give Britain a different political choice: the choice between a failed Conservative government, exhausted and divided in everything other than its desire to cling on to power, and a new and revitalised Labour Party that has been resolute in transforming itself into a party of the future.

We have rewritten our constitution, the new Clause IV, to put a commitment to enterprise alongside the commitment to justice. We have changed the way we make policy, and put our relations with the trade unions on a modern footing where they accept they can get fairness but no favours from a Labour government. Our MPs are all now selected by ordinary party members, not small committees or pressure groups. The membership itself has doubled, to over 400,000, with half the members having joined since the last election.

We submitted our draft manifesto, new Labour new life for Britain, to a ballot of all our members, 95 per cent of whom gave it their express endorsement.

We are a national party, supported today by people from all walks of life, from the successful businessman or woman to the pensioner on a council estate. Young

people have flooded in to join us in what is the fastest growing youth section of any political party in the western world.

The vision

We are a broad-based movement for progress and justice. New Labour is the political arm of none other than the British people as a whole. Our values are the same: the equal worth of all, with no one cast aside; fairness and justice within strong communities.

But we have liberated these values from outdated dogma or doctrine, and we have applied these values to the modern world.

I want a country in which people get on, do well, make a success of their lives. I have no time for the politics of envy. We need more successful entrepreneurs, not fewer of them. But these life-chances should be for all the people. And I want a society in which ambition and compassion are seen as partners not opposites—where we value public service as well as material wealth.

New Labour believes in a society where we do not simply pursue our own individual aims but where we hold many aims in common and work together to achieve them. How we build the industry and employment opportunities of the future; how we tackle the division and inequality in our society; how we care for and enhance our environment and quality of life; how we develop modern education and health services; how we create communities that are safe, where mutual respect and tolerance are the order of the day. These are things we must achieve together as a country.

The vision is one of national renewal, a country with drive, purpose and energy. A Britain equipped to prosper in a global economy of technological change; with a modern welfare state; its politics more accountable; and confident of its place in the world.

Programme: a new centre and centre-left politics

In each area of policy a new and distinctive approach has been mapped out, one that differs both from the solutions of the old left and those of the Conservative right. This is why new Labour is new. We believe in the strength of our values, but we recognise also that the policies of 1997 cannot be those of 1947 or 1967. More detailed policy has been produced by us than by any opposition in history. Our direction and destination are clear.

The old left would have sought state control of industry. The Conservative right is content to leave all to the market. We reject both approaches. Government and industry must work together to achieve key objectives aimed at enhancing the dynamism of the market, not undermining it.

In industrial relations, we make it clear that there will be no return to flying pickets, secondary action, strikes with no ballots or the trade union law of the 1970s. There will instead be basic minimum rights for the individual at the workplace, where our aim is partnership not conflict between employers and employees.

In economic management, we accept the global economy as a reality and reject the isolationism and 'go-it-alone' policies of the extremes of right or left.

In education, we reject both the idea of a return to the 11-plus and the monolithic comprehensive schools that take no account of children's differing abilities. Instead we favour all-in schooling which identifies the distinct abilities of individual pupils and organises them in classes to maximise their progress in individual subjects. In this way we modernise the comprehensive principle, learning from the experience of its 30 years of application.

In health policy, we will safeguard the basic principles of the NHS, which we founded, but will not return to the top-down management of the 1970s. So we will keep the planning and provision of healthcare separate, but put planning on a longer-term, decentralised and more co-operative basis. The key is to root out unnecessary administrative cost, and to spend money on the right things—frontline care.

On crime, we believe in personal responsibility and in punishing crime, but also tackling its underlying causes—so, tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime, different from the Labour approach of the past and the Tory policy of today.

Over-centralisation of government and lack of accountability was a problem in governments of both left and right. Labour is committed to the democratic renewal of our country through decentralisation and the elimination of excessive government secrecy.

In addition, we will face up to the new issues that confront us. We will be the party of welfare reform. In consultation and partnership with the people, we will design a modern welfare state based on rights and duties going together, fit for the modern world.

We will stand up for Britain's interests in Europe after the shambles of the last six years, but, more than that, we will lead a campaign for reform in Europe. Europe isn't working in the way this country and Europe need. But to lead means to be involved, to be constructive, to be capable of getting our own way.

We will put concern for the environment at the heart of policy-making, so that it is not an add-on extra, but informs the whole of government, from housing and energy policy through to global warming and international agreements.

We will search out at every turn new ways and new ideas to tackle the new issues: how to encourage more flexible working hours and practices to suit employees and employers alike; how to harness the huge potential of the new information technology; how to simplify the processes of the government machine; how to put public and private sector together in partnership to give us the infrastructure and transport system we need.

We will be a radical government. But the definition of radicalism will not be that of doctrine, whether of left or right, but of achievement. New Labour is a party of ideas and ideals but not of outdated ideology. What counts is what works. The objectives are radical. The means will be modern.

So the party is transformed. The vision is clear. And from that vision stems a modern programme of change and renewal for Britain.

We understand that after 18 years of one-party rule, people want change, believe that it is necessary for the country and for democracy, but require faith to make the change.

We therefore set out in the manifesto that follows ten commitments, commitments that form our bond of trust with the people. They are specific. They are real. Judge us on them. Have trust in us and we will repay that trust.

Our mission in politics is to rebuild this bond of trust between government and the people. That is the only way democracy can flourish. I pledge to Britain a government which shares their hopes, which understands their fears, and which will work as partners with and for all our people, not just the privileged few. This is our contract with the people.

Over the five years of a Labour government:

- 1 Education will be our number one priority, and we will increase the share of national income spent on education as we decrease it on the bills of economic and social failure.
- 2 There will be no increase in the basic or top rates of income tax.
- 3 We will provide stable economic growth with low inflation, and promote dynamic and competitive business and industry at home and abroad.
- 4 We will get 250,000 young unemployed off benefit and into work.
- 5 We will rebuild the NHS, reducing spending on administration and increasing spending on patient care.
- 6 We will be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, and halve the time it takes persistent juvenile offenders to come to court.
- 7 We will help build strong families and strong communities, and lay the foundations of a modern welfare state in pensions and community care.
- 8 We will safeguard our environment, and develop an integrated transport policy to fight congestion and pollution.
- 9 We will clean up politics, decentralise political power throughout the United Kingdom and put the funding of political parties on a proper and accountable basis.
- 10 We will give Britain the leadership in Europe which Britain and Europe need.

We have modernised the Labour Party and we will modernise Britain. This means knowing where we want to go; being clear-headed about the country's future; telling the truth; making tough choices; insisting that all parts of the public sector live within their means; taking on vested interests that hold people back; standing up to unreasonable demands from any quarter; and being prepared to give a moral lead where government has responsibilities it should not avoid.

Britain does deserve better. And new Labour will be better for Britain.

Tony Blair

We will make education our number one priority

- Cut class sizes to 30 or under for 5, 6 and 7 year olds;
- Nursery places for all four year olds;
- Attack low standards in schools;
- Access to computer technology;
- Lifelong learning through a new University for Industry;
- More spending on education as the cost of unemployment falls.

Education has been the Tories' biggest failure. It is Labour's number one priority.

It is not just good for the individual. It is an economic necessity for the nation. We

will compete successfully on the basis of quality or not at all. And quality comes from developing the potential of all our people. It is the people who are our greatest natural asset. We will ensure they can fulfil their potential.

Nearly half of 11 year-olds in England and Wales fail to reach expected standards in English and maths. Britain has a smaller share of 17 and 18 year olds in full-time education than any major industrial nation. Nearly two-thirds of the British workforce lack vocational qualifications. There are excellent schools in Britain's state education system. But far too many children are denied the opportunity to succeed. Our task is to raise the standards of every school.

We will put behind us the old arguments that have bedevilled education in this country. We reject the Tories' obsession with school structures: all parents should be offered real choice through good quality schools, each with its own strengths and individual ethos. There should be no return to the 11-plus. It divides children into successes and failures at far too early an age.

We must modernise comprehensive schools. Children are not all of the same ability, nor do they learn at the same speed. That means 'setting' children in classes to maximise progress, for the benefit of high-fliers and slower learners alike. The focus must be on levelling up, not levelling down.

With Labour, the Department for Education and Employment will become a leading office of state. It will give a strong and consistent lead to help raise standards in every school. Standards, more than structures, are the key to success. Labour will never put dogma before children's education. Our approach will be to intervene where there are problems, not where schools are succeeding.

Labour will never force the abolition of good schools whether in the private or state sector. Any changes in the admissions policies of grammar schools will be decided by local parents. Church schools will retain their distinctive religious ethos.

We wish to build bridges wherever we can across education divides. The educational apartheid created by the public/private divide diminishes the whole education system.

Zero tolerance of underperformance

Every school has the capacity to succeed. All Local Education Authorities (LEAs) must demonstrate that every school is improving. For those failing schools unable to improve, ministers will order a 'fresh start' —close the school and start afresh on the same site. Where good schools and bad schools coexist side by side we will authorise LEAs to allow one school to take over the other to set the underperforming school on a new path.

Quality nursery education guaranteed for all four year olds

Nursery vouchers have been proven not to work. They are costly and do not generate more quality nursery places. We will use the money saved by scrapping nursery vouchers to guarantee places for four year olds. We will invite selected local authorities to pilot early excellence centres combining education and care for the under-fives. We will set targets for universal provision for three year olds whose parents want it.

New focus on standards in primary schools

Primary schools are the key to mastering the basics and developing in every child an eagerness to learn. Every school needs baseline assessment of pupils when they enter the school, and a year-on-year target for improvement. We will reduce class sizes for five, six and seven year olds to 30 or under, by phasing out the assisted places scheme, the cost of which is set to rise to £180 million per year.

We must recognise the three 'r's for what they are—building blocks of all learning that must be taught better. We will achieve this by improving the skills of the teaching force; ensuring a stronger focus on literacy in the curriculum; and piloting literacy summer schools to meet our new target that within a decade every child leaves primary school with a reading age of at least 11 (barely half do today).

Our numeracy taskforce will develop equally ambitious targets. We will encourage the use of the most effective teaching methods, including phonics for reading and whole class interactive teaching for maths.

Attacking educational disadvantage

No matter where a school is, Labour will not tolerate under-achievement. Public/ private partnerships will improve the condition of school buildings.

There will be education action zones to attack low standards by recruiting the best teachers and head teachers to under-achieving schools; by supporting voluntary mentoring schemes to provide one-to-one support for disadvantaged pupils; and by creating new opportunities for children, after the age of 14, to enhance their studies by acquiring knowledge and experience within industry and commerce.

To attack under-achievement in urban areas, we have developed a new scheme with the Premier League. In partnerships between central government, local government and football clubs, study support centres will be set up at Premier League grounds for the benefit of local children. The scheme will be launched on a pilot basis during the 1997/8 season.

We support the greatest possible integration into mainstream education of pupils with special educational needs, while recognising that specialist facilities are essential to meet particular needs.

Realising the potential of new technology

Labour is the pioneer of new thinking. We have agreed with British Telecom and the cable companies that they will wire up schools, libraries, colleges and hospitals to the information superhighway free of charge. We have also secured agreement to make access charges as low as possible.

For the Internet we plan a National Grid for Learning, franchised as a public/private partnership, which will bring to teachers up-to-date materials to enhance their skills, and to children high-quality educational materials. We will use lottery money to improve the skills of existing teachers in information technology.

In opposition, Labour set up the independent Stevenson Commission to promote access for children to new technology. Its recent report is a challenging programme for the future. We are urgently examining how to implement its plans, in particular the

development of educational software through a grading system which will provide schools with guarantees of product quality; and the provision for every child of an individual e-mail address. An independent standing committee will continue to advise us on the implementation of our plans in government.

The role of parents

We will increase the powers and responsibilities of parents. There will be more parent governors and, for the first time, parent representatives on LEAs.

A major objective is to promote a culture of responsibility for learning within the family, through contracts between all schools and parents, defining the responsibilities of each. National guidelines will establish minimum periods for homework for primary and secondary school pupils.

Teachers will be entitled to positive support from parents to promote good attendance and sound discipline. Schools suffer from unruly and disruptive pupils. Exclusion or suspension may sometimes be necessary. We will, however, pilot new pupil referral units so that schools are protected but these pupils are not lost to education or the country.

New job description for LEAs

The judge and jury of LEA performance will be their contribution to raising standards. LEAs are closer to schools than central government, and have the authority of being locally elected. But they will be required to devolve power, and more of their budgets, to heads and governors. LEA performance will be inspected by Ofsted and the Audit Commission. Where authorities are deemed to be failing, the secretary of state may suspend the relevant powers of the LEA and send in an improvement team.

Grant maintained schools

Schools that are now grant maintained will prosper with Labour's proposals, as will every school. Tory claims that Labour will close these schools are false. The system of funding will not discriminate unfairly either between schools or between pupils. LEAs will be represented on governing bodies, but will not control them. We support guidelines for open and fair admissions, along the lines of those introduced in 1993; but we will also provide a right of appeal to an independent panel in disputed cases.

Teachers: pressure and support

Schools are critically dependent on the quality of all staff. The majority of teachers are skilful and dedicated, but some fall short. We will improve teacher training, and ensure that all teachers have an induction year when they first qualify, to ensure their suitability for teaching.

There will be a general teaching council to speak for and raise standards in the profession. We will create a new grade of teachers to recognise the best. There will, however, be speedy, but fair, procedures to remove teachers who cannot do the job.

The strength of a school is critically dependent on the quality of its head. We will establish mandatory qualifications for the post. A head teacher will be appointed to a position only when fully trained to accept the responsibility.

Higher education

The improvement and expansion needed cannot be funded out of general taxation. Our proposals for funding have been made to the Dearing Committee, in line with successful policies abroad.

The costs of student maintenance should be repaid by graduates on an income-related basis, from the career success to which higher education has contributed. The current system is badly administered and payback periods are too short. We will provide efficient administration, with fairness ensured by longer payback periods where required.

Lifelong learning

We must learn throughout life, to retain employment through new and improved skills. We will promote adult learning both at work and in the critical sector of further education.

In schools and colleges, we support broader A-levels and upgraded vocational qualifications, underpinned by rigorous standards and key skills.

Employers have the primary responsibility for training their workforces in job-related skills. But individuals should be given the power to invest in training. We will invest public money for training in Individual Learning Accounts which individuals—for example women returning to the labour force—can then use to gain the skills they want. We will kickstart the programme for up to a million people, using £150 million of TEC money which could be better used and which would provide a contribution of £150, alongside individuals making small investments of their own. Employers will be encouraged to make voluntary contributions to these funds. We will also promote the extension of the Investors in People initiative into many more small firms.

Our new University for Industry, collaborating with the Open University, will bring new opportunities to adults seeking to develop their potential. This will bring government, industry and education together to create a new resource whose remit will be to use new technology to enhance skills and education. The University for Industry will be a public/private partnership, commissioning software and developing the links to extend lifelong learning.

Government spending on education

The Conservatives have cut government spending on education as a share of national income by the equivalent of more than £3 billion as spending on the bills of economic and social failure has risen. We are committed to reversing this trend of spending. Over the course of a five-year Parliament, as we cut the costs of economic and social failure we will raise the proportion of national income spent on education.

We will promote personal prosperity for all

- Economic stability to promote investment;
- Tough inflation target, mortgage rates as low as possible;
- Stick for two years within existing spending limits;
- Five-year pledge: no increase in income tax rates;
- Long-term objective of 10 pence starting rate of income tax;
- Early Budget to get people off welfare and into work.

The Conservatives have in 18 years created the two longest, deepest recessions this century. We have experienced the slowest average growth rate of any similar period since the second world war. There has been a fundamental failure to tackle the underlying causes of inflation, of low growth and of unemployment. These are:

- too much economic instability, with wild swings from boom to bust;
- too little investment in education and skills, and in the application of new technologies;
- too few opportunities to find jobs, start new businesses or become self-employed;
- too narrow an industrial base;
- and too little sense of common purpose in the workplace or across the nation.

Britain can do better. We must build on the British qualities of inventiveness, creativity and adaptability. New Labour's objective is to improve living standards for the many, not just the few. Business can and must succeed in raising productivity. This requires a combination of a skilled and educated workforce with investment in the latest technological innovations, as the route to higher wages and employment.

An explicit objective of a Labour government will be to raise the trend rate of growth by strengthening our wealth-creating base. We will nurture investment in industry, skills, infrastructure and new technologies. And we will attack long-term unemployment, especially among young people. Our goal will be educational and employment opportunities for all.

Economic stability is the essential platform for sustained growth. In a global economy the route to growth is stability not inflation. The priority must be stable, low-inflation conditions for long-term growth. The root causes of inflation and low growth are the same—an economic and industrial base that remains weak. Government cannot solve all economic problems or end the economic cycle. But by spending wisely and taxing fairly, government can help tackle the problems. Our goals are low inflation, rising living standards and high and stable levels of employment.

Spending and tax: new Labour's approach

The myth that the solution to every problem is increased spending has been comprehensively dispelled under the Conservatives. Spending has risen. But more spending has brought neither greater fairness nor less poverty. Quite the reverse—our society is more divided than it has been for generations. The level of public spending is no longer the best measure of the effectiveness of government action in the public interest. It is what money is actually spent on that counts more than how much money is spent. The national debt has doubled under John Major. The public finances remain

weak. A new Labour government will give immediate high priority to seeing how public money can be better used.

New Labour will be wise spenders, not big spenders. We will work in partnership with the private sector to achieve our goals. We will ask about public spending the first question that a manager in any company would ask—can existing resources be used more effectively to meet our priorities? And because efficiency and value for money are central, ministers will be required to save before they spend. Save to invest is our approach, not tax and spend.

Taxation is not neutral in the way it raises revenue. How and what governments tax sends clear signals about the economic activities they believe should be encouraged or discouraged, and the values they wish to entrench in society. Just as, for example, work should be encouraged through the tax system, environmental pollution should be discouraged.

New Labour will establish a new trust on tax with the British people. The promises we make we will keep. The principles that will underpin our tax policy are clear:

- to encourage employment opportunities and work incentives for all;
- to promote savings and investment;
- and to be fair and be seen to be fair.

New Labour is not about high taxes on ordinary families. It is about social justice and a fair deal. New Labour therefore makes the following economic pledges.

Fair taxes

There will be no return to the penal tax rates that existed under both Labour and Conservative governments in the 1970s. To encourage work and reward effort, we are pledged not to raise the basic or top rates of income tax throughout the next Parliament. Our long-term objective is a lower starting rate of income tax of 10 pence in the pound. Reducing the high marginal rates at the bottom end of the earning scale—often 70 or 80 per cent—is not only fair but desirable to encourage employment.

This goal will benefit the many, not the few. It is in sharp contrast to the Tory goal of abolishing capital gains and inheritance tax, at least half the benefit of which will go to the richest 5,000 families in the country.

We will cut VAT on fuel to 5 per cent, the lowest level allowed. We renew our pledge not to extend VAT to food, children's clothes, books and newspapers and public transport fares.

We will also examine the interaction of the tax and benefits systems so that they can be streamlined and modernised, so as to fulfil our objectives of promoting work incentives, reducing poverty and welfare dependency, and strengthening community and family life.

No risks with inflation

We will match the current target for low and stable inflation of 2.5 per cent or less. We will reform the Bank of England to ensure that decision-making on monetary policy is more effective, open, accountable and free from short-term political manipulation.

Strict rules for government borrowing

We will enforce the ‘golden rule’ of public spending—over the economic cycle, we will only borrow to invest and not to fund current expenditure.

We will ensure that—over the economic cycle—public debt as a proportion of national income is at a stable and prudent level.

Stick to planned public spending allocations for the first two years of office

Our decisions have not been taken lightly. They are a recognition of Conservative mismanagement of the public finances. For the next two years Labour will work within the departmental ceilings for spending already announced. We will resist unreasonable demands on the public purse, including any unreasonable public sector pay demands.

Switch spending from economic failure to investment

We will conduct a central spending review and departmental reviews to assess how to use resources better, while rooting out waste and inefficiency in public spending.

Labour priorities in public spending are different from Tory priorities.

Tax reform to promote saving and investment

We will introduce a new individual savings account and extend the principle of TESSAs and PEPs to promote long-term saving. We will review the corporate and capital gains tax regimes to see how the tax system can promote greater long-term investment.

Labour’s welfare-to-work Budget

We will introduce a Budget within two months after the election to begin the task of equipping the British economy and reforming the welfare state to get young people and the long-term unemployed back to work. This welfare-to-work programme will be funded by a windfall levy on the excess profits of the privatised utilities, introduced in this Budget after we have consulted the regulators.

We will help create successful and profitable businesses

- Backing business: skills, infrastructure, new markets.
- Gains for consumers with tough competition law.
- New measures to help small businesses.
- National minimum wage to tackle low pay.
- Boost local economic growth with Regional Development Agencies.
- A strong and effective voice in Europe.

New Labour offers business a new deal for the future. We will leave intact the main changes of the 1980s in industrial relations and enterprise. We see healthy profits as an essential motor of a dynamic market economy, and believe they depend on

quality products, innovative entrepreneurs and skilled employees. We will build a new partnership with business to improve the competitiveness of British industry for the twenty-first century, leading to faster growth.

Many of the fundamentals of the British economy are still weak. Low pay and low skills go together: insecurity is the consequence of economic instability; the absence of quality jobs is a product of the weakness of our industrial base; we suffer from both high unemployment and skills shortages. There is no future for Britain as a low wage economy: we cannot compete on wages with countries paying a tenth or a hundredth of British wages.

We need to win on higher quality, skill, innovation and reliability. With Labour, British and inward investors will find this country an attractive and profitable place to do business.

New Labour believes in a flexible labour market that serves employers and employees alike. But flexibility alone is not enough. We need ‘flexibility plus’:

- plus higher skills and higher standards in our schools and colleges;
- plus policies to ensure economic stability;
- plus partnership with business to raise investment in infrastructure, science and research and to back small firms;
- plus new leadership from Britain to reform Europe, in place of the current policy of drift and disengagement from our largest market;
- plus guaranteeing Britain’s membership of the single market—indeed opening up further markets inside and outside the EU—helping make Britain an attractive place to do business;
- plus minimum standards of fair treatment, including a national minimum wage;
- plus an imaginative welfare-to-work programme to put the long-term unemployed back to work and to cut social security costs.

A reformed and tougher competition law

Competitiveness abroad must begin with competition at home. Effective competition can bring value and quality to consumers. As an early priority we will reform Britain’s competition law. We will adopt a tough ‘prohibitive’ approach to deter anti-competitive practices and abuses of market power.

In the utility industries we will promote competition wherever possible. Where competition is not an effective discipline, for example in the water industry which has a poor environmental record and has in most cases been a tax-free zone, we will pursue tough, efficient regulation in the interests of customers, and, in the case of water, in the interests of the environment as well. We recognise the need for open and predictable regulation which is fair both to consumers and to shareholders and at the same time provides incentives for managers to innovate and improve efficiency.

Reinvigorate the Private Finance Initiative

Britain’s infrastructure is dangerously run down: parts of our road and rail network are seriously neglected, and all too often our urban environment has been allowed to deteriorate.

Labour pioneered the idea of public/private partnerships. It is Labour local authorities which have done most to create these partnerships at local level.

A Labour government will overcome the problems that have plagued the PFI at a national level. We will set priorities between projects, saving time and expense; we will seek a realistic allocation of risk between the partners to a project; and we will ensure that best practice is spread throughout government. We will aim to simplify and speed up the planning process for major infrastructure projects of vital national interest.

We will ensure that self-financing commercial organisations within the public sector—the Post Office is a prime example—are given greater commercial freedom to make the most of new opportunities.

Backing small business

The number of small employers has declined by half a million since 1990. Support for small businesses will have a major role in our plans for economic growth. We will cut unnecessary red tape; provide for statutory interest on late payment of debts; improve support for high-tech start-ups; improve the quality and relevance of advice and training through a reformed Business Links network and the University for Industry; and assist firms to enter overseas markets more effectively.

Local economic growth

Prosperity needs to be built from the bottom up. We will establish one-stop regional development agencies to co-ordinate regional economic development, help small business and encourage inward investment. Many regions are already taking informal steps to this end and they will be supported.

Strengthen our capability in science, technology and design

The UK must be positively committed to the global pursuit of new knowledge, with a strong science base in our universities and centres of excellence leading the world. The Dearing Committee represents a significant opportunity to promote high-quality standards in science teaching and research throughout UK higher education. We support a collaborative approach between researchers and business, spreading the use of new technology and good design, and exploiting our own inventions to boost business in the UK.

Promoting new green technologies and businesses

There is huge potential to develop Britain's environmental technology industries to create jobs, win exports and protect the environment.

Effective environmental management is an increasingly important component of modern business practice. We support a major push to promote energy conservation—particularly by the promotion of home energy efficiency schemes, linked to our environment taskforce for the under-25s. We are committed to an energy policy designed to promote cleaner, more efficient energy use and production, including a new

and strong drive to develop renewable energy sources such as solar and wind energy, and combined heat and power. We see no economic case for the building of any new nuclear power stations.

Key elements of the 1980s trade union reforms to stay

There must be minimum standards for the individual at work, including a minimum wage, within a flexible labour market. We need a sensible balance in industrial relations law—rights and duties go together.

The key elements of the trade union legislation of the 1980s will stay—on ballots, picketing and industrial action. People should be free to join or not to join a union. Where they do decide to join, and where a majority of the relevant workforce vote in a ballot for the union to represent them, the union should be recognised. This promotes stable and orderly industrial relations. There will be full consultation on the most effective means of implementing this proposal.

Partnership at work

The best companies recognise their employees as partners in the enterprise. Employees whose conditions are good are more committed to their companies and are more productive. Many unions and employers are embracing partnership in place of conflict. Government should welcome this.

We are keen to encourage a variety of forms of partnership and enterprise, spreading ownership and encouraging more employees to become owners through Employee Share Ownership Plans and co-operatives. We support too the Social Chapter of the EU, but will deploy our influence in Europe to ensure that it develops so as to promote employability and competitiveness, not inflexibility.

A sensibly set national minimum wage

There should be a statutory level beneath which pay should not fall—with the minimum wage decided not on the basis of a rigid formula but according to the economic circumstances of the time and with the advice of an independent low pay commission, whose membership will include representatives of employers, including small business, and employees.

Every modern industrial country has a minimum wage, including the US and Japan. Britain used to have minimum wages through the Wages Councils. Introduced sensibly, the minimum wage will remove the worst excesses of low pay (and be of particular benefit to women), while cutting some of the massive £4 billion benefits bill by which the taxpayer subsidises companies that pay very low wages.

We will get the unemployed from welfare to work

- Stop the growth of an ‘underclass’ in Britain.
- 250,000 young unemployed off benefit and into work.
- Tax cuts for employers who create new jobs for the long-term unemployed.
- Effective help for lone parents.

There are over one million fewer jobs in Britain than in 1990. One in five families has no one working. One million single mothers are trapped on benefits. There is a wider gap between rich and poor than for generations.

We are determined not to continue down the road of a permanent have-not class, unemployed and disaffected from society. Our long-term objective is high and stable levels of employment. This is the true meaning of a stakeholder economy—where everyone has a stake in society and owes responsibilities to it.

The best way to tackle poverty is to help people into jobs—real jobs. The unemployed have a responsibility to take up the opportunity of training places or work, but these must be real opportunities. The government's workfare proposals— with a success rate of one in ten—fail this test.

Labour's welfare-to-work programme will attack unemployment and break the spiral of escalating spending on social security. A one-off windfall levy on the excess profits of the privatised utilities will fund our ambitious programme.

Every young person unemployed for more than six months in a job or training

We will give 250,000 under-25s opportunities for work, education and training. Four options will be on offer, each involving day-release education or training leading to a qualification:

- private-sector job: employers will be offered a 60 pound-a-week rebate for six months;
- work with a non-profit voluntary sector employer, paying a weekly wage, equivalent to benefit plus a fixed sum for six months;
- full-time study for young people without qualifications on an approved course;
- a job with the environment taskforce, linked to Labour's citizens' service programme.

Rights and responsibilities must go hand in hand, without a fifth option of life on full benefit.

Every 16 and 17 year old on the road to a proper qualification by the year 2000

Nearly a third of young people do not achieve an NVQ level two qualification by age 19. All young people will be offered part-time or full-time education after the age of 16. Any under-18 year old in a job will have the right to study on an approved course for qualifications at college. We will replace the failed Youth Training scheme with our new Target 2000 programme, offering young people high-quality education and training.

Action on long-term unemployment

New partnerships between government and business, fully involving local authorities and the voluntary sector, will attack long-term joblessness. We will encourage employers to take on those who have suffered unemployment for more than two years

with a £75-a-week tax rebate paid for six months, financed by the windfall levy. Our programme for the phased release of past receipts from council house sales will provide new jobs in the construction industry.

Lone parents into work

Today the main connection between unemployed lone parents and the state is their benefits. Most lone parents want to work, but are given no help to find it. New Labour has a positive policy. Once the youngest child is in the second term of full-time school, lone parents will be offered advice by a proactive Employment Service to develop a package of job search, training and after-school care to help them off benefit.

Customised, personalised services

We favour initiatives with new combinations of available benefits to suit individual circumstances. In new and innovative ‘Employment Zones’, personal job accounts will combine money currently available for benefits and training, to offer the unemployed new options—leading to work and independence. We will co-ordinate benefits, employment and career services, and utilise new technology to improve their quality and efficiency.

Fraud

Just as we owe it to the taxpayer to crack down on tax avoidance, so we must crack down on dishonesty in the benefit system. We will start with a clampdown on Housing Benefit fraud, estimated to cost £2 billion a year, and will maintain action against benefit fraud of all kinds.

We will save the NHS

- 100,000 people off waiting lists.
- End the Tory internal market.
- End waiting for cancer surgery.
- Tough quality targets for hospitals.
- Independent food standards agency.
- New public health drive.
- Raise spending in real terms every year—and spend the money on patients not bureaucracy.

Labour created the NHS 50 years ago. It is under threat from the Conservatives. We want to save and modernise the NHS. But if the Conservatives are elected again there may well not be an NHS in five years’ time—neither national nor comprehensive. Labour commits itself anew to the historic principle: that if you are ill or injured there will be a national health service there to help; and access to it will be based on need and need alone—not on your ability to pay, or on who your GP happens to be or on where you live.

In 1990 the Conservatives imposed on the NHS a complex internal market of hospitals competing to win contracts from health authorities and fundholding GPs. The result is an NHS strangled by costly red tape, with every individual transaction the subject of a separate invoice. After six years, bureaucracy swallows an extra £1.5 billion per year; there are 20,000 more managers and 50,000 fewer nurses on the wards; and more than one million people are on waiting lists. The government has consistently failed to meet even its own health targets.

There can be no return to top-down management, but Labour will end the Conservatives' internal market in healthcare. The planning and provision of care are necessary and distinct functions, and will remain so. But under the Tories, the administrative costs of purchasing care have undermined provision and the market system has dis-torted clinical priorities. Labour will cut costs by removing the bureaucratic processes of the internal market.

The savings achieved will go on direct care for patients. As a start, the first £100 million saved will treat an extra 100,000 patients. We will end waiting for cancer surgery, thereby helping thousands of women waiting for breast cancer treatment.

Primary care will play a lead role

In recent years, GPs have gained power on behalf of their patients in a changed relationship with consultants, and we support this. But the development of GP fundholding has also brought disadvantages. Decision-making has been fragmented. Administrative costs have grown. And a two-tier service has resulted.

Labour will retain the lead role for primary care but remove the disadvantages that have come from the present system. GPs and nurses will take the lead in combining together locally to plan local health services more efficiently for all the patients in their area. This will enable all GPs in an area to bring their combined strength to bear upon individual hospitals to secure higher standards of patient provision. In making this change, we will build on the existing collaborative schemes which already serve 14 million people.

The current system of year-on-year contracts is costly and unstable. We will introduce three- to five-year agreements between the local primary care teams and hospitals. Hospitals will then be better able to plan work at full capacity and co-operate to enhance patient services.

Higher-quality services for patients

Hospitals will retain their autonomy over day-to-day administrative functions, but, as part of the NHS, they will be required to meet high-quality standards in the provision of care. Management will be held to account for performance levels. Boards will become more representative of the local communities they serve.

A new patients' charter will concentrate on the quality and success of treatment. The Tories' so-called 'Efficiency Index' counts the number of patient 'episodes', not the quality or success of treatment. With Labour, the measure will be quality of outcome, itself an incentive for effectiveness. As part of our concern to ensure quality, we will work towards the elimination of mixed-sex wards.

Health authorities will become the guardians of high standards. They will monitor services, spread best practice and ensure rising standards of care.

The Tory attempt to use private money to build hospitals has failed to deliver. Labour will overcome the problems that have plagued the Private Finance Initiative, end the delays, sort out the confusion and develop new forms of public/private partnership that work better and protect the interests of the NHS. Labour is opposed to the privatisation of clinical services which is being actively promoted by the Conservatives.

Labour will promote new developments in telemedicine—bringing expert advice from regional centres of excellence to neighbourhood level using new technology.

Good health

A new minister for public health will attack the root causes of ill health, and so improve lives and save the NHS money. Labour will set new goals for improving the overall health of the nation which recognise the impact that poverty, poor housing, unemployment and a polluted environment have on health.

Smoking is the greatest single cause of preventable illness and premature death in the UK. We will therefore ban tobacco advertising.

Labour will establish an independent food standards agency. The £3.5 billion BSE crisis and the E. coli outbreak which resulted in serious loss of life, have made unanswerable the case for the independent agency we have proposed.

NHS spending

The Conservatives have wasted spending on the NHS. We will do better. We will raise spending on the NHS in real terms every year and put the money towards patient care. And a greater proportion of every pound spent will go on patient care not bureaucracy.

An NHS for the future

The NHS requires continuity as well as change, or the system cannot cope. There must be pilots to ensure that change works. And there must be flexibility, not rigid prescription, if innovation is to flourish.

Our fundamental purpose is simple but hugely important: to restore the NHS as a public service working co-operatively for patients, not a commercial business driven by competition.

We will be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime

- Fast-track punishment for persistent young offenders.
- Reform Crown Prosecution Service to convict more criminals.
- Police on the beat not pushing paper.
- Crackdown on petty crimes and neighbourhood disorder.
- Fresh parliamentary vote to ban all handguns.

Under the Conservatives, crime has doubled and many more criminals get away with their crimes: the number of people convicted has fallen by a third, with only one crime in 50 leading to a conviction. This is the worst record of any government since the Second World War—and for England and Wales the worst record of any major industrialised country. Last year alone violent crime rose 11 per cent.

We propose a new approach to law and order: tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. We insist on individual responsibility for crime, and will attack the causes of crime by our measures to relieve social deprivation.

The police have our strong support. They are in the front line of the fight against crime and disorder. The Conservatives have broken their 1992 general election pledge to provide an extra 1,000 police officers. We will relieve the police of unnecessary bureaucratic burdens to get more officers back on the beat.

Youth crime

Youth crime and disorder have risen sharply, but very few young offenders end up in court, and when they do half are let off with another warning. Young offenders account for seven million crimes a year.

Far too often young criminals offend again and again while waiting months for a court hearing. We will halve the time it takes to get persistent young offenders from arrest to sentencing; replace widespread repeat cautions with a single final warning; bring together Youth Offender Teams in every area; and streamline the system of youth courts to make it far more effective. New parental responsibility orders will make parents face up to their responsibility for their children's misbehaviour.

Conviction and sentencing

The job of the Crown Prosecution Service is to prosecute criminals effectively. There is strong evidence that the CPS is over-centralised, bureaucratic and inefficient, with cases too often dropped, delayed, or downgraded to lesser offences.

Labour will decentralise the CPS, with local crown prosecutors co-operating more effectively with local police forces. We will implement an effective sentencing system for all the main offences to ensure greater consistency and stricter punishment for serious repeat offenders. The courts will have to spell out what each sentence really means in practice. The Court of Appeal will have a duty to lay down sentencing guidelines for all the main offences. The attorney general's power to appeal unduly lenient sentences will be extended.

The prison service now faces serious financial problems. We will audit the resources available, take proper ministerial responsibility for the service, and seek to ensure that prison regimes are constructive and require inmates to face up to their offending behaviour.

Disorder

The Conservatives have forgotten the 'order' part of 'law and order'. We will tackle the unacceptable level of anti-social behaviour and crime on our streets. Our 'zero tolerance' approach will ensure that petty criminality among young offenders is seriously addressed.

Community safety orders will deal with threatening and disruptive criminal neighbours. Labour has taken the lead in proposing action to tackle the problems of stalking and domestic violence. Child protection orders will deal with young children suffering neglect by parents because they are left out on their own far too late at night.

Britain is a multiracial and multicultural society. All its members must have the protection of the law. We will create a new offence of racial harassment and a new crime of racially motivated violence to protect ethnic minorities from intimidation.

Drugs

The vicious circle of drugs and crime wrecks lives and threatens communities. Labour will appoint an anti-drugs supremo to co-ordinate our battle against drugs across all government departments. The 'drug czar' will be a symbol of our commitment to tackle the modern menace of drugs in our communities.

We will pilot the use of compulsory drug testing and treatment orders for offenders to ensure that the link between drug addiction and crime is broken. This will be paid for by bringing remand delays down to the national targets.

We will attack the drug problem in prisons. In addition to random drug testing of all prisoners we will aim for a voluntary testing unit in every prison for prisoners ready to prove they are drug-free.

Victims

Victims of crime are too often neglected by the criminal justice system. We will ensure that victims are kept fully informed of the progress of their case, and why charges may have been downgraded or dropped.

Greater protection will be provided for victims in rape and serious sexual offence trials and for those subject to intimidation, including witnesses.

Prevention

We will place a new responsibility on local authorities to develop statutory partnerships to help prevent crime. Local councils will then be required to set targets for the reduction of crime and disorder in their area.

Gun control

In the wake of Dunblane and Hungerford, it is clear that only the strictest firearms laws can provide maximum safety. The Conservatives failed to offer the protection required. Labour led the call for an outright ban on all handguns in general civilian use. There will be legislation to allow individual MPs a free vote for a complete ban on handguns.

Labour is the party of law and order in Britain today.

We will strengthen family life

- Help parents balance work and family.
- Security in housing and help for homeowners.

- Tackle homelessness using receipts from council house sales.
- Dignity and security in retirement.
- Protect the basic state pension and promote secure second pensions.

We will uphold family life as the most secure means of bringing up our children. Families are the core of our society. They should teach right from wrong. They should be the first defence against anti-social behaviour. The breakdown of family life damages the fabric of our society.

Labour does not see families and the state as rival providers for the needs of our citizens. Families should provide the day-to-day support for children to be brought up in a stable and loving environment. But families cannot flourish unless government plays its distinctive role: in education; where necessary, in caring for the young; in making adequate provision for illness and old age; in supporting good parenting; and in protecting families from lawlessness and abuse of power. Society, through government, must assist families to achieve collectively what no family can achieve alone.

Yet families in Britain today are under strain as never before. The security once offered by the health service has been undermined. Streets are not safe. Housing insecurity grows. One in five non-pensioner families has no one working; and British men work the longest hours in Europe.

The clock should not be turned back. As many women who want to work should be able to do so. More equal relationships between men and women have transformed our lives. Equally, our attitudes to race, sex and sexuality have changed fundamentally. Our task is to combine change and social stability.

Work and family

Families without work are without independence. This is why we give so much emphasis to our welfare-to-work policies.

Labour's national childcare strategy will plan provision to match the requirements of the modern labour market and help parents, especially women, to balance family and working life.

There must be a sound balance between support for family life and the protection of business from undue burdens—a balance which some of the most successful businesses already strike. The current government has shown itself wholly insensitive to the need to help develop family-friendly working practices. While recognising the need for flexibility in implementation and for certain exemptions, we support the right of employees not to be forced to work more than 48 hours a week; to an annual holiday entitlement; and to limited unpaid parental leave. These measures will provide a valuable underpinning to family life.

The rights of part-time workers have been clarified by recent court judgements which we welcome.

We will keep under continuous review all aspects of the tax and benefits systems to ensure that they are supportive of families and children. We are committed to retain universal Child Benefit where it is universal today—from birth to age 16—and to uprate it at least in line with prices. We are reviewing educational finance and maintenance for those older than 16 to ensure higher staying-on rates at school and college, and that resources are used to support those in most need. This review will continue in government on the guidelines we have already laid down.

Security in housing

Most families want to own their own homes. We will also support efficiently run social and private rented sectors offering quality and choice.

The Conservatives' failure on housing has been twofold. The two-thirds of families who own their homes have suffered a massive increase in insecurity over the last decade, with record mortgage arrears, record negative equity and record repossessions. And the Conservatives' lack of a housing strategy has led to the virtual abandonment of social housing, the growth of homelessness, and a failure to address fully leaseholder reform. All these are the Tory legacy.

Labour's housing strategy will address the needs of homeowners and tenants alike. We will reject the boom and bust policies which caused the collapse of the housing market.

We will work with mortgage providers to encourage greater provision of more flexible mortgages to protect families in a world of increased job insecurity.

Mortgage buyers also require stronger consumer protection, for example by extension of the Financial Services Act, against the sale of disadvantageous mortgage packages.

The problems of gazumping have reappeared. Those who break their bargains should be liable to pay the costs inflicted on others, in particular legal and survey costs. We are consulting on the best way of tackling the problems of gazumping in the interests of responsible home buyers and sellers.

The rented housing sector

We support a three-way partnership between the public, private and housing association sectors to promote good social housing. With Labour, capital receipts from the sale of council houses, received but not spent by local councils, will be reinvested in building new houses and rehabilitating old ones. This will be phased to match the capacity of the building industry and to meet the requirements of prudent economic management.

We also support effective schemes to deploy private finance to improve the public housing stock and to introduce greater diversity and choice. Such schemes should only go ahead with the support of the tenants concerned: we oppose the government's threat to hand over council housing to private landlords without the consent of tenants and with no guarantees on rents or security of tenure.

We value a revived private rented sector. We will provide protection where most needed: for tenants in houses in multiple occupation.

There will be a proper system of licensing by local authorities which will benefit tenants and responsible landlords alike.

We will introduce 'commonhold', a new form of tenure enabling people living in flats to own their homes individually and to own the whole property collectively. We will simplify the current rules restricting the purchase of freeholds by leaseholders.

Homelessness

Homelessness has more than doubled under the Conservatives. Today more than 40,000 families in England are in expensive temporary accommodation. The government, in the face of Labour opposition, has removed the duty on local

authorities to find permanent housing for homeless families. We will impose a new duty on local authorities to protect those who are homeless through no fault of their own and are in priority need.

There is no more powerful symbol of Tory neglect in our society today than young people without homes living rough on the streets. Young people emerging from care without any family support are particularly vulnerable. We will attack the problem in two principal ways: the phased release of capital receipts from council house sales will increase the stock of housing for rent; and our welfare-to-work programme will lead the young unemployed into work and financial independence.

Older citizens

We value the positive contribution that older people make to our society, through their families, voluntary activities and work. Their skills and experience should be utilised within their communities. That is why, for example, we support the proposal to involve older people as volunteers to help children learn in pre-school and after-school clubs. In work, they should not be discriminated against because of their age.

The provision of adequate pensions in old age is a major challenge for the future. For today's pensioners Conservative policies have created real poverty, growing inequality and widespread insecurity.

The Conservatives would abolish the state-financed basic retirement pension and replace it with a privatised scheme, with a vague promise of a means-tested state guarantee if pensions fall beneath a minimum level. Their proposals mean there will be no savings on welfare spending for half a century; and taxes will have to rise to make provision for new privately funded pensions. Their plans require an additional £312 billion between now and 2040 through increased taxes or borrowing, against the hope of savings later, with no certainty of security in retirement at the end.

We believe that all pensioners should share fairly in the increasing prosperity of the nation. Instead of privatisation, we propose a partnership between public and private provision, and a balance between income sourced from tax and invested savings. The basic state pension will be retained as the foundation of pension provision. It will be increased at least in line with prices. We will examine means of delivering more automatic help to the poorest pensioners—one million of whom do not even receive the Income Support which is their present entitlement.

We will encourage saving for retirement, with proper protection for savings. We will reform the Financial Services Act so that the scandal of pension mis-selling—600,000 pensions mis-sold and only 7,000 people compensated to date—will not happen again.

Too many people in work, particularly those on low and modest incomes and with changing patterns of employment, cannot join good-value second pension schemes. Labour will create a new framework—stakeholder pensions—to meet this need. We will encourage new partnerships between financial service companies, employers and employees to develop these pension schemes. They will be approved to receive people's savings only if they meet high standards of value for money, flexibility and security.

Labour will promote choice in pension provision. We will support and strengthen the framework for occupational pensions. Personal pensions, appropriately regulated, will remain a good option for many. Labour will retain SERPS as an option for those who wish to remain within it. We will also seek to develop the administrative structure of SERPS so as to create a 'citizenship pension' for those who assume responsibility as carers, as a result lose out on the pension entitlements they would otherwise acquire, and currently end up on means-tested benefits.

We overcame government opposition to pension splitting between women and men on divorce. We will implement this in government.

We aim to provide real security for families through a modern system of community care. As people grow older, their need for care increases. The Conservative approach is to promote private insurance and privatisation of care homes. But private insurance will be inaccessible to most people. And their policy for residential homes is dogmatic and will not work. We believe that local authorities should be free to develop a mix of public and private care.

We recognise the immense amount of care provision undertaken by family members, neighbours and friends. It was a Labour MP who piloted the 1995 Carers Act through Parliament. We will establish a Royal Commission to work out a fair system for funding long-term care for the elderly. We will introduce a 'long-term care charter' defining the standard of services which people are entitled to expect from health, housing and social services. We are committed to an independent inspection and regulation service for residential homes, and domiciliary care.

Everyone is entitled to dignity in retirement. Under the Tories, the earnings link for state pensions has been ended, VAT on fuel has been imposed, SERPS has been undermined and community care is in tatters. We will set up a review of the central areas of insecurity for elderly people: all aspects of the basic pension and its value, second pensions including SERPS, and community care. The review will ensure that the views of pensioners are heard. Our watchword in developing policy for pensions and long-term care will be to build consensus among all interested parties.

We will help you get more out of life

- Every government department a 'green' department.
- Efficient and clean transport for all.
- New arts and science talent fund for young people.
- Reform the lottery.
- Improve life in rural areas.
- Back World Cup bid.

The millennium is the time to reaffirm our responsibility to protect and enhance our environment so that the country we hand on to our children and our grandchildren is a better place in which to live. It also provides a natural opportunity to celebrate and improve the contribution made by the arts, culture and sport to our nation. We need a new and dynamic approach to the 'creative economy'. The Department of National Heritage will develop a strategic vision that matches the real power and energy of British arts, media and cultural industries.

Protecting the environment

Our generation, and generations yet to come, are dependent on the integrity of the environment. No one can escape unhealthy water, polluted air or adverse climate change. And just as these problems affect us all, so we must act together to tackle them. No responsible government can afford to take risks with the future: the cost is too high. So it is our duty to act now.

The foundation of Labour's environmental approach is that protection of the environment cannot be the sole responsibility of any one department of state. All departments must promote policies to sustain the environment. And Parliament should have an environmental audit committee to ensure high standards across government.

Throughout this manifesto, there are policies designed to combine environmental sustainability with economic and social progress. They extend from commitments at local level to give communities enhanced control over their environments, to initiatives at international level to ensure that all countries are contributing to the protection of the environment.

A sustainable environment requires above all an effective and integrated transport policy at national, regional and local level that will provide genuine choice to meet people's transport needs. That is what we will establish and develop.

Railways

The process of rail privatisation is now largely complete. It has made fortunes for a few, but has been a poor deal for the taxpayer. It has fragmented the network and now threatens services. Our task will be to improve the situation as we find it, not as we wish it to be. Our overriding goal must be to win more passengers and freight on to rail. The system must be run in the public interest with higher levels of investment and effective enforcement of train operators' service commitments. There must be convenient connections, through-ticketing and accurate travel information for the benefit of all passengers.

To achieve these aims, we will establish more effective and accountable regulation by the rail regulator; we will ensure that the public subsidy serves the public interest; and we will establish a new rail authority, combining functions currently carried out by the rail franchiser and the Department of Transport, to provide a clear, coherent and strategic programme for the development of the railways so that passenger expectations are met.

The Conservative plan for the wholesale privatisation of London Underground is not the answer. It would be a poor deal for the taxpayer and passenger alike. Yet again, public assets would be sold off at an under-valued rate. Much-needed investment would be delayed. The core public responsibilities of the Underground would be threatened.

Labour plans a new public/private partnership to improve the Underground, safeguard its commitment to the public interest and guarantee value for money to taxpayers and passengers.

Road transport

A balanced transport system must cater for all the familiar modes of transport: cars—whether owned, leased or shared; taxis; buses; bicycles and motorcycles. All needs

must be addressed in transport planning to ensure the best mix of all types of transport, offer quality public transport wherever possible and help to protect the environment.

The key to efficient bus services is proper regulation at local level, with partnerships between local councils and bus operators an essential component. There must be improved provision and enforcement of bus lanes. Better parking facilities for cars must be linked to convenient bus services to town centres.

Road safety is a high priority. Cycling and walking must be made safer, especially around schools.

We remain unpersuaded by the case for heavier, 44-tonne lorries mooted by the Conservatives. Our concern is that they would prove dangerous and damaging to the environment.

Our plans to reduce pollution include working with the automotive industry to develop 'smart', efficient and clean cars for the future, with substantially reduced emission levels. The review of vehicle excise duty to promote low-emission vehicles will be continued.

We will conduct an overall strategic review of the roads programme against the criteria of accessibility, safety, economy and environmental impact, using public/private partnerships to improve road maintenance and exploiting new technology to improve journey information.

Shipping and aviation

The Tory years have seen the near-extinction of Britain's merchant fleet. Labour will work with all concerned in shipping and ports to help develop their economic potential to the full.

The guiding objectives of our aviation strategy will be fair competition, safety and environmental standards. We want all British carriers to be able to compete fairly in the interests of consumers.

Life in our countryside

Labour recognises the special needs of people who live and work in rural areas. The Conservatives do not. Public services and transport services in rural areas must not be allowed to deteriorate. The Conservatives have tried to privatise the Post Office. We opposed that, in favour of a public Post Office providing a comprehensive service. Conservative plans would mean higher charges for letters and put rural post offices under threat.

We favour a moratorium on large-scale sales of Forestry Commission land. We recognise that the countryside is a great natural asset, a part of our heritage which calls for careful stewardship. This must be balanced, however, with the needs of people who live and work in rural areas.

The total failure of the Conservatives to manage the BSE crisis effectively and to secure any raising of the ban on British beef has wreaked havoc on the beef and dairy industries. The cost to the taxpayer so far is £3.5 billion. Labour aims to reform the Common Agricultural Policy to save money, to support the rural economy and enhance the environment.

Our initiatives to link all schools to the information superhighway will ensure that children in rural areas have access to the best educational resources.

Our policies include greater freedom for people to explore our open countryside. We will not, however, permit any abuse of a right to greater access.

We will ensure greater protection for wildlife. We have advocated new measures to promote animal welfare, including a free vote in Parliament on whether hunting with hounds should be banned by legislation.

Angling is Britain's most popular sport. Labour's anglers' charter affirms our long-standing commitment to angling and to the objective of protecting the aquatic environment.

Arts and culture

The arts, culture and sport are central to the task of recreating the sense of community, identity and civic pride that should define our country. Yet we consistently undervalue the role of the arts and culture in helping to create a civic society—from amateur theatre to our art galleries.

Art, sport and leisure are vital to our quality of life and the renewal of our economy. They are significant earners for Britain. They employ hundreds of thousands of people. They bring millions of tourists to Britain every year, who will also be helped by Labour's plans for new quality assurance in hotel accommodation.

We propose to set up a National Endowment for Science and the Arts to sponsor young talent. NESTA will be a national trust—for talent rather than buildings—for the twenty-first century. NESTA will be partly funded by the lottery; and artists who have gained high rewards from their excellence in the arts and wish to support young talent will be encouraged to donate copyright and royalties to NESTA.

Sport

A Labour government will take the lead in extending opportunities for participation in sports; and in identifying sporting excellence and supporting it.

School sports must be the foundation. We will bring the government's policy of forcing schools to sell off playing fields to an end. We will provide full backing to the bid to host the 2006 football World Cup in England. A Labour government will also work to bring the Olympics and other major international sporting events to Britain.

A people's lottery

The lottery has been a financial success. But there has been no overall strategy for the allocation of monies; and no co-ordination among the five distributor bodies about the projects deserving to benefit from lottery funding. For example, the multi-million-pound expenditure on the Churchill papers caused national outrage. A Labour government will review the distribution of lottery proceeds to ensure that there is the widest possible access to the benefits of lottery revenues throughout the UK.

Labour has already proposed a new millennium commission to commence after the closure of the Millennium Exhibition, to provide direct support for a range of education, environment and public health projects, including those directed at children's play, a project currently excluded from lottery benefit.

Because the lottery is a monopoly intended to serve the public interest, it must be administered efficiently and economically. When the current contract runs out, Labour will seek an efficient not-for-profit operator to ensure that the maximum sums go to good causes.

Media and broadcasting

Labour aims for a thriving, diverse media industry, combining commercial success and public service. We will ensure that the BBC continues to be a flagship for British creativity and public service broadcasting, but we believe that the combination of public and private sectors in competition is a key spur to innovation and high standards. The regulatory framework for media and broadcasting should reflect the realities of a far more open and competitive economy, and enormous technological advance, for example with digital television. Labour will balance sensible rules, fair regulation and national and international competition, so maintaining quality and diversity for the benefit of viewers.

Citizens' service for a new millennium

An independent and creative voluntary sector, committed to voluntary activity as an expression of citizenship, is central to our vision of a stakeholder society. We are committed to developing plans for a national citizens' service programme, to tap the enthusiasm and commitment of the many young people who want to make voluntary contributions in service of their communities. The millennium should harness the imagination of all those people who have so much to offer for the benefit of the community. We do not believe programmes should be imposed from the top down, but on the contrary wish to encourage a broad range of voluntary initiatives devised and developed by people within their own communities.

We will clean up politics

- End the hereditary principle in the House of Lords.
- Reform of party funding to end sleaze.
- Devolved power in Scotland and Wales.
- Elected mayors for London and other cities.
- More independent but accountable local government.
- Freedom of information and guaranteed human rights.

The Conservatives seem opposed to the very idea of democracy. They support hereditary peers, unaccountable quangos and secretive government. They have debased democracy through their MPs who have taken cash for asking questions in the House of Commons. They are opposed to the development of decentralised government. The party which once opposed universal suffrage and votes for women now says our constitution is so perfect that it cannot be improved.

Our system of government is centralised, inefficient and bureaucratic. Our citizens cannot assert their basic rights in our own courts. The Conservatives are afflicted by sleaze and prosper from secret funds from foreign supporters. There is unquestionably a national crisis of confidence in our political system, to which Labour will respond in a measured and sensible way.

A modern House of Lords

The House of Lords must be reformed. As an initial, self-contained reform, not dependent on further reform in the future, the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords will be ended by statute. This will be the first stage in a process of reform to make the House of Lords more democratic and representative. The legislative powers of the House of Lords will remain unaltered.

The system of appointment of life peers to the House of Lords will be reviewed. Our objective will be to ensure that over time party appointees as life peers more accurately reflect the proportion of votes cast at the previous general election. We are committed to maintaining an independent cross-bench presence of life peers. No one political party should seek a majority in the House of Lords.

A committee of both Houses of Parliament will be appointed to undertake a wide-ranging review of possible further change and then to bring forward proposals for reform.

We have no plans to replace the monarchy.

An effective House of Commons

We believe the House of Commons is in need of modernisation and we will ask the House to establish a special Select Committee to review its procedures. Prime Minister's Questions will be made more effective. Ministerial accountability will be reviewed so as to remove recent abuses. The process for scrutinising European legislation will be overhauled.

The Nolan recommendations will be fully implemented and extended to all public bodies. We will oblige parties to declare the source of all donations above a minimum figure: Labour does this voluntarily and all parties should do so. Foreign funding will be banned. We will ask the Nolan Committee to consider how the funding of political parties should be regulated and reformed.

We are committed to a referendum on the voting system for the House of Commons. An independent commission on voting systems will be appointed early to recommend a proportional alternative to the first-past-the-post system.

At this election, Labour is proud to be making major strides to rectify the under-representation of women in public life.

Open government

Unnecessary secrecy in government leads to arrogance in government and defective policy decisions. The Scott Report on arms to Iraq revealed Conservative abuses of power. We are pledged to a Freedom of Information Act, leading to more open government, and an independent National Statistical Service.

Devolution: strengthening the Union

The United Kingdom is a partnership enriched by distinct national identities and traditions. Scotland has its own systems of education, law and local government. Wales has its language and cultural traditions. We will meet the demand for decentralisation of power to Scotland and Wales, once established in referendums.

Subsidiarity is as sound a principle in Britain as it is in Europe. Our proposal is for devolution not federation. A sovereign Westminster Parliament will devolve power to Scotland and Wales. The Union will be strengthened and the threat of separatism removed.

As soon as possible after the election, we will enact legislation to allow the people of Scotland and Wales to vote in separate referendums on our proposals, which will be set out in white papers. These referendums will take place not later than the autumn of 1997. A simple majority of those voting in each referendum will be the majority required. Popular endorsement will strengthen the legitimacy of our proposals and speed their passage through Parliament.

For Scotland we propose the creation of a parliament with law-making powers, firmly based on the agreement reached in the Scottish Constitutional Convention, including defined and limited financial powers to vary revenue and elected by an additional member system. In the Scottish referendum we will seek separate endorsement of the proposal to create a parliament, and of the proposal to give it defined and limited financial powers to vary revenue. The Scottish parliament will extend democratic control over the responsibilities currently exercised administratively by the Scottish Office. The responsibilities of the UK Parliament will remain unchanged over UK policy, for example economic, defence and foreign policy.

The Welsh assembly will provide democratic control of the existing Welsh Office functions. It will have secondary legislative powers and will be specifically empowered to reform and democratise the quango state. It will be elected by an additional member system.

Following majorities in the referendums, we will introduce in the first year of the Parliament legislation on the substantive devolution proposals outlined in our white papers.

Good local government

Local decision-making should be less constrained by central government, and also more accountable to local people. We will place on councils a new duty to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area. They should work in partnership with local people, local business and local voluntary organisations. They will have the powers necessary to develop these partnerships. To ensure greater accountability, a proportion of councillors in each locality will be elected annually. We will encourage democratic innovations in local government, including pilots of the idea of elected mayors with executive powers in cities.

Although crude and universal council tax capping should go, we will retain reserve powers to control excessive council tax rises.

Local business concerns are critical to good local government. There are sound democratic reasons why, in principle, the business rate should be set locally, not

nationally. But we will make no change to the present system for determining the business rate without full consultation with business.

The funnelling of government grant to Conservative-controlled Westminster speaks volumes about the unfairness of the current grant system. Labour is committed to a fair distribution of government grant.

The basic framework, not every detail, of local service provision must be for central government. Councils should not be forced to put their services out to tender, but will be required to obtain best value. We reject the dogmatic view that services must be privatised to be of high quality, but equally we see no reason why a service should be delivered directly if other more efficient means are available. Cost counts but so does quality.

Every council will be required to publish a local performance plan with targets for service improvement, and be expected to achieve them. The Audit Commission will be given additional powers to monitor performance and promote efficiency. On its advice, government will where necessary send in a management team with full powers to remedy failure.

Labour councils have been at the forefront of environmental initiatives under Local Agenda 21, the international framework for local action arising from the 1992 Earth Summit. A Labour government will encourage all local authorities to adopt plans to protect and enhance their local environment.

Local government is at the sharp end of the fight against deprivation. Ten years after the Conservatives promised to improve the inner cities, poverty and social division afflict towns and outer estates alike. A Labour government will join with local government in a concerted attack against the multiple causes of social and economic decline—unemployment, bad housing, crime, poor health and a degraded environment.

London

London is the only Western capital without an elected city government. Following a referendum to confirm popular demand, there will be a new deal for London, with a strategic authority and a mayor, each directly elected. Both will speak up for the needs of the city and plan its future. They will not duplicate the work of the boroughs, but take responsibility for London-wide issues—economic regeneration, planning, policing, transport and environmental protection. London-wide responsibility for its own government is urgently required. We will make it happen.

The regions of England

The Conservatives have created a tier of regional government in England through quangos and government regional offices. Meanwhile local authorities have come together to create a more co-ordinated regional voice. Labour will build on these developments through the establishment of regional chambers to co-ordinate transport, planning, economic development, bids for European funding and land use planning.

Demand for directly elected regional government so varies across England that it would be wrong to impose a uniform system. In time we will introduce legislation to allow the people, region by region, to decide in a referendum whether they want

directly elected regional government. Only where clear popular consent is established will arrangements be made for elected regional assemblies. This would require a predominantly unitary system of local government, as presently exists in Scotland and Wales, and confirmation by independent auditors that no additional public expenditure overall would be involved. Our plans will not mean adding a new tier of government to the existing English system.

Real rights for citizens

Citizens should have statutory rights to enforce their human rights in the UK courts. We will by statute incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law to bring these rights home and allow our people access to them in their national courts. The incorporation of the European Convention will establish a floor, not a ceiling, for human rights. Parliament will remain free to enhance these rights, for example by a Freedom of Information Act.

We will seek to end unjustifiable discrimination wherever it exists. For example, we support comprehensive, enforceable civil rights for disabled people against discrimination in society or at work, developed in partnership with all interested parties.

Labour will undertake a wide-ranging review both of the reform of the civil justice system and Legal Aid. We will achieve value for money for the taxpayer and the consumer. A community legal service will develop local, regional and national plans for the development of Legal Aid according to the needs and priorities of regions and areas. The key to success will be to promote a partnership between the voluntary sector, the legal profession and the Legal Aid Board.

Every country must have firm control over immigration and Britain is no exception. All applications, however, should be dealt with speedily and fairly. There are, rightly, criteria for those who want to enter this country to join husband or wife. We will ensure that these are properly enforced. We will, however, reform the system in current use to remove the arbitrary and unfair results that can follow from the existing 'primary purpose' rule. There will be a streamlined system of appeals for visitors denied a visa.

The system for dealing with asylum seekers is expensive and slow—there are many undecided cases dating back beyond 1993. We will ensure swift and fair decisions on whether someone can stay or go, control unscrupulous immigration advisors and crack down on the fraudulent use of birth certificates.

Northern Ireland

Labour's approach to the peace process has been bipartisan. We have supported the recent agreements between the two governments—the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Downing Street Declaration and the Framework Document. The government has tabled proposals which include a new devolved legislative body, as well as cross-border co-operation and continued dialogue between the two governments.

There will be as great a priority attached to seeing that process through with Labour as under the Conservatives, in co-operation with the Irish government and the Northern Ireland parties. We will expect the same bipartisan approach from a Conservative opposition.

We will take effective measures to combat the terrorist threat. There is now general acceptance that the future of Northern Ireland must be determined by the consent of the people as set out in the Downing Street Declaration. Labour recognises that the option of a united Ireland does not command the consent of the Unionist tradition, nor does the existing status of Northern Ireland command the consent of the Nationalist tradition. We are therefore committed to reconciliation between the two traditions and to a new political settlement which can command the support of both. Labour will help build trust and confidence among both Nationalist and Unionist traditions in Northern Ireland by acting to guarantee human rights, strengthen confidence in policing, combat discrimination at work and reduce tensions over parades. Labour will also foster economic progress and competitiveness in Northern Ireland, so as to reduce unemployment.

We will give Britain leadership in Europe

- Referendum on single currency.
- Lead reform of the EU.
- Retain Trident: strong defence through NATO.
- A reformed United Nations.
- Helping to tackle global poverty.

Britain, though an island nation with limited natural resources, has for centuries been a leader of nations. But under the Conservatives Britain's influence has waned. With a new Labour government, Britain will be strong in defence; resolute in standing up for its own interests; an advocate of human rights and democracy the world over; a reliable and powerful ally in the international institutions of which we are a member; and will be a leader in Europe.

Our vision of Europe is of an alliance of independent nations choosing to co-operate to achieve the goals they cannot achieve alone. We oppose a European federal superstate.

There are only three options for Britain in Europe. The first is to come out. The second is to stay in, but on the sidelines. The third is to stay in, but in a leading role. An increasing number of Conservatives, overtly or covertly, favour the first. But withdrawal would be disastrous for Britain. It would put millions of jobs at risk. It would dry up inward investment. It would destroy our clout in international trade negotiations. It would relegate Britain from the premier division of nations.

The second is exactly where we are today under the Conservatives. The BSE fiasco symbolises their failures in Europe.

The third is the path a new Labour government will take. A fresh start in Europe, with the credibility to achieve reform. We have set out a detailed agenda for reform, leading from the front during the UK presidency in the first half of 1998:

- Rapid completion of the single market: a top priority for the British presidency. We will open up markets to competition; pursue tough action against unfair state aids; and ensure proper enforcement of single market rules. This will strengthen Europe's competitiveness and open up new opportunities for British firms.
- High priority for enlargement of the European Union to include the countries of central

and eastern Europe and Cyprus, and the institutional reforms necessary to make an enlarged Europe work more efficiently.

- Urgent reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. It is costly, vulnerable to fraud and not geared to environmental protection. Enlargement and the World Trade talks in 1999 will make reform even more essential. We will seek a thorough overhaul of the Common Fisheries Policy to conserve our fish stocks in the long-term interests of the UK fishing industry.
- Greater openness and democracy in EU institutions with open voting in the Council of Ministers and more effective scrutiny of the Commission by the European Parliament. We have long supported a proportional voting system for election to the European Parliament.
- Retention of the national veto over key matters of national interest, such as taxation, defence and security, immigration, decisions over the budget and treaty changes, while considering the extension of Qualified Majority Voting in limited areas where that is in Britain's interests.
- Britain to sign the Social Chapter. An 'empty chair' at the negotiating table is disastrous for Britain. The Social Chapter is a framework under which legislative measures can be agreed. Only two measures have been agreed—consultation for employees of large Europe-wide companies and entitlement to unpaid parental leave. Successful companies already work closely with their workforces. The Social Chapter cannot be used to force the harmonisation of social security or tax legislation and it does not cost jobs. We will use our participation to promote employability and flexibility, not high social costs.

The single currency

Any decision about Britain joining the single currency must be determined by a hard-headed assessment of Britain's economic interests. Only Labour can be trusted to do this: the Tories are riven by faction. But there are formidable obstacles in the way of Britain being in the first wave of membership, if EMU takes place on 1 January 1999. What is essential for the success of EMU is genuine convergence among the economies that take part, without any fudging of the rules. However, to exclude British membership of EMU forever would be to destroy any influence we have over a process which will affect us whether we are in or out. We must therefore play a full part in the debate to influence it in Britain's interests.

In any event, there are three pre-conditions which would have to be satisfied before Britain could join during the next Parliament: first, the Cabinet would have to agree; then Parliament; and finally the people would have to say 'Yes' in a referendum.

Strong defence through NATO

The post-Cold War world faces a range of new security challenges—proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the growth of ethnic nationalism and extremism, international terrorism, and crime and drug trafficking. A new Labour government will build a strong defence against these threats. Our security will continue to be based on NATO.

Our armed forces are among the most effective in the world. The country takes pride in their professionalism and courage. We will ensure that they remain strong to defend Britain. But the security of Britain is best served in a secure world, so we should be willing to contribute to wider international peace and security both through the alliances to which we belong, in particular NATO and the Western European Union, and through other international organisations such as the UN and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Labour will conduct a strategic defence and security review to reassess our essential security interests and defence needs. It will consider how the roles, missions and capabilities of our armed forces should be adjusted to meet the new strategic realities. The review we propose will be foreign policy led, first assessing our likely overseas commitments and interests and then establishing how our forces should be deployed to meet them.

Arms control

A new Labour government will retain Trident. We will press for multilateral negotiations towards mutual, balanced and verifiable reductions in nuclear weapons. When satisfied with verified progress towards our goal of the global elimination of nuclear weapons, we will ensure that British nuclear weapons are included in multilateral negotiations.

Labour will work for the effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and for a strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention. Labour will ban the import, export, transfer and manufacture of all forms of anti-personnel landmines. We will introduce an immediate moratorium on their use. Labour will not permit the sale of arms to regimes that might use them for internal repression or international aggression. We will increase the transparency and accountability of decisions on export licences for arms. And we will support an EU code of conduct governing arms sales.

We support a strong UK defence industry, which is a strategic part of our industrial base as well as our defence effort. We believe that part of its expertise can be extended to civilian use through a defence diversification agency.

Leadership in the international community

A new Labour government will use Britain's permanent seat on the Security Council to press for substantial reform of the United Nations, including an early resolution of its funding crisis, and a more effective role in peacekeeping, conflict prevention, the protection of human rights and safeguarding the global environment.

The Commonwealth provides Britain with a unique network of contacts linked by history, language and legal systems. Labour is committed to giving renewed priority to the Commonwealth in our foreign relations. We will seize the opportunity to increase trade and economic co-operation and will also build alliances with our Commonwealth partners to promote reform at the UN and common action on the global environment. Britain has a real opportunity to provide leadership to the Commonwealth when we host the heads of government meeting in Britain at the end of 1997.

Promoting economic and social development

Labour will also attach much higher priority to combating global poverty and under-development. According to the World Bank, there are 1.3 billion people in the world who live in absolute poverty, subsisting on less than US\$1 a day, while 35,000 children die each day from readily preventable diseases.

Labour believes that we have a clear moral responsibility to help combat global poverty. In government we will strengthen and restructure the British aid programme and bring development issues back into the mainstream of government decision-making. A Cabinet minister will lead a new department of international development.

We will shift aid resources towards programmes that help the poorest people in the poorest countries. We reaffirm the UK's commitment to the 0.7 per cent UN aid target and in government Labour will start to reverse the decline in UK aid spending.

We will work for greater consistency between the aid, trade, agriculture and economic reform policies of the EU. We will use our leadership position in the EU to maintain and enhance the position of the poorest countries during the renegotiation of the Lomé Convention.

We will support further measures to reduce the debt burden borne by the world's poorest countries and to ensure that developing countries are given a fair deal in international trade.

It is our aim to rejoin UNESCO. We will consider how this can be done most effectively and will ensure that the cost is met from savings elsewhere.

Human rights

Labour wants Britain to be respected in the world for the integrity with which it conducts its foreign relations. We will make the protection and promotion of human rights a central part of our foreign policy. We will work for the creation of a permanent international criminal court to investigate genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

A new environmental internationalism

Labour believes that the threats to the global climate should push environmental concerns higher up the international agenda. A Labour government will strengthen co-operation in the European Union on environmental issues, including climate change and ozone depletion. We will lead the fight against global warming, through our target of a 20 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2010.

Labour believes the international environment should be safeguarded in negotiations over international trade. We will also work for the successful negotiation of a new protocol on climate change to be completed in Japan in 1997.

Leadership, not isolation

There is a sharp division between those who believe the way to cope with global change is for nations to retreat into isolationism and protectionism, and those who

believe in internationalism and engagement. Labour has traditionally been the party of internationalism. Britain cannot be strong at home if it is weak abroad. The tragedy of the Conservative years has been the squandering of Britain's assets and the loss of Britain's influence.

A new Labour government will use those assets to the full to restore Britain's pride and influence as a leading force for good in the world. With effective leadership and clear vision, Britain could once again be at the centre of international decision-making instead of at its margins.

This manifesto contains the detail of our plans. We have promised only what we know we can deliver. Britain deserves better and the following five election pledges will be the first steps towards a better Britain.

- Cut class sizes to 30 or under for 5, 6 and 7 year olds by using money from the assisted places scheme.
- Fast-track punishment for persistent young offenders by halving the time from arrest to sentencing.
- Cut NHS waiting lists by treating an extra 100,000 patients as a first step by releasing £100 million saved from NHS red tape.
- Get 250,000 under-25 year olds off benefit and into work by using money from a windfall levy on the privatised utilities.
- No rise in income tax rates, cut VAT on heating to 5 per cent and inflation and interest rates as low as possible.