

Wales
forward
not back

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Preface **Tony Blair**

New Labour's 2005 manifesto applies the unchanging values of our party to the new priorities of the British people. It is a plan to improve the lives of hard-working families and prepare our country for success in a fast-changing world. Our case rests on one idea more than any other – that it is the duty of government to provide opportunity and security for all in a changing world. Every chapter relates back to that goal: breaking down the barriers that stop people fulfilling their talent, extending opportunity to every corner of the United Kingdom, building communities strong and safe for those who play by the rules. On the firm foundations we have laid since 1997, our programme will embed a new progressive consensus in our country.

This preface is my personal message.

Eight years ago, I offered new leadership – fresh, idealistic, energetic, but untested. You voted for change and gave me the chance to serve. In our first term we banished the demons of ten per cent interest rates, mass unemployment, wages of £1.50 an hour, and years of underinvestment in our schools and hospitals. We put Labour values into action. And we banished Labour demons too: we showed we could run the economy well, cut crime, and stand up for Britain abroad. We proved our competence.

Four years ago, I said we needed to continue the modernisation of our economy, coupled with investment and reform to achieve change in public services. At the end of this second term we have delivered an unprecedented period of stability and growth, we have increased investment and we have embarked on a radical programme of reform to put the people themselves in the driving seat of our public services. We have made difficult decisions. In the process we have proved our resilience. Now we go to the people not only having delivered on our promises, but also setting new and more ambitious goals for our public services and our country.

But Britain can be better still.

I know the change is possible. Not just because I have studied the statistics, but because I have seen it with my own eyes, across the length and breadth of the United Kingdom.

I have spoken to NHS staff who tell me how their new hospital and the new funding is letting them improve care for their patients.

I have heard teachers tell me how they no longer have to work in crumbling classrooms without books and computers – and pupils show me, with pride, round their sparkling new school.

I have met youngsters whose lives have been transformed by the New Deal – once written off, they are now full of confidence and ambition.

I've been to communities where the Sure Start programme is helping overcome disadvantage and seen for myself the remarkable revival of our great cities.

I have met aid workers in Africa who tell me how this country is improving the lives of the poorest on our planet.

These are not the fantasy of politicians. They are the stories of real life in our country and abroad. Not for everyone. Not everywhere. But for enough people and in enough places for us to know it is not a fluke. Personal prosperity and the good society; the fruit of partnership between the British people and a government on their side.

Now we have to decide whether to go forward or back.

Britain is on the right track. We will not change direction. Neither will we rest on our laurels. Our third-term opportunity is to build on the progress we have made. That progress, first as a party then in government, began with the insight that the only way to advance decent progressive values was to develop a new policy agenda. Our understanding of the world and the great changes underway in our society led us to reject the false choices of the past. This is the foundation stone of new Labour.

I believe that in our third term we can embed a new progressive consensus. One that reflects the mission of our movement, and the hopes and values of our people. And as much as the pursuit of this consensus represents an unprecedented opportunity for progressive politics, so it will be bitterly opposed by those who seek to take us back to the divisions of the past.

In our third term we will forge an even stronger bond between the goals of economic progress and social justice. No going back to fiscal irresponsibility. No going back to a Conservative government that says mass unemployment is a price worth paying. Going forward instead to an opportunity economy, spreading prosperity through high employment and welfare reform, spreading opportunity through widening access to university and training, spreading ownership through the Child Trust Fund and expanding homeownership.

In our third term, working in partnership in Westminster and Cardiff, we will make public services safe for a generation. No going back to one-size-fits-all monolithic services. No going back to the Tory years of cuts and privatisation. Going forward instead to services free to all, personal to each: breaking once and for all the drop-out culture in education and the waiting-list culture in health, by raising investment and driving innovation through diversity of provision and power in the hands of the patient, the parent and the citizen.

In our third term we will cement a new social contract with rights matched by responsibilities. No going back to ‘no such thing as society’. Going forward instead to power and resources in the hands of the law-abiding majority. A government committed both to abolishing child poverty and to putting the values of individual responsibility and duty at the very heart of policy.

In our third term we will show that our national interest can only be pursued by engaging with the world’s great challenges. No going back to a Britain marginalised and weak. Going forward to a stronger country in a safer, fairer world. Leading on Africa, leading on the environment, at the heart of Europe, working together to tackle terror and spread peace and justice.

We do not duck the tough choices – from independence for the Bank

of England to the tax rise we made for the NHS, to the war in Iraq. We made decisions because we believed them right not because they were destined to be popular.

But we refuse to accept false choices. The British people never wanted to choose between wealth creation and social justice. They never wanted to choose between national security and overseas aid. They never wanted to choose between equal rights and protection from crime. These are the false choices that landed us with economic decline and social division.

The British people have the capacity to make this a great country. Our ideals are undimmed: extend opportunity to all, demand responsibility from all, secure justice for all. Our policies are refreshed: never has a governing party proposed a more wide-ranging programme of change for the country. Our vision is clear: a country more equal in its opportunities, more secure in its communities, more confident in its future. It is our social contract: we help you, you help yourself; you benefit and the country benefits.

So now, I fight my last election as Leader of my party and Prime Minister of our country. My call is a passionate one: let's together make irreversible the positive changes that are happening in our country. Let's make the values of social justice and a fair deal for all the governing ideal of our country not just for some time but for all time. People freed from barriers of class, building a better future for themselves and for the country. Self-interest and national interest together.

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Preface

Peter Hain and Rhodri Morgan

The choice the people of Wales are facing at this General Election is crystal clear. On the one side stands a Labour Government that has delivered economic stability, low unemployment, low inflation, and rising living standards. On the other, a Tory party committed to massive spending cuts and the same disastrous economic policies that gave us high interest rates, high inflation, the two worst recessions since the Second World War, and unemployment three times higher than it is today.

After eight years of a Labour Government, Wales is striding forward with 125,000 more people in employment; unemployment halved since 1997 with the Welsh unemployment rate now below the UK average and the second fastest rate of earnings growth in Britain.

There are now more teachers, nurses, doctors and police officers delivering frontline services in Wales. Crime has fallen, educational achievement has risen and more people are being treated by the NHS.

So we can be proud of what the people of Wales have achieved, with a Labour Government working in partnership with a Labour administration in Wales. We recognise that major challenges lie ahead.

This manifesto describes how we intend to tackle those challenges, including expanding prosperity in the economy and business, getting our economy into gear for intensified global competition, helping those who are economically inactive back into appropriate work, providing

affordable childcare and under-five provision, giving older people greater security and independence, and tackling anti-social behaviour.

But to do all this we need a continuing strong partnership between a Labour Government at Westminster and a Labour administration in Cardiff. The return of the Tories, with their plans for £35 billion worth of cuts, would bring back high unemployment, which would be damaging to our economy and our society. Their proposed public expenditure cuts would devastate Labour's programme of sustained investment in education, health, transport and housing.

Labour has changed Wales for the better through a strong partnership between Wales and Westminster. We are moving Wales forward toward our goal of high-quality public services and a world-class economy. But there is still much more to do. That is why we are seeking the opportunity to continue building for social justice and economic prosperity.

Britain is working. Wales is working. We must not let the Tories wreck it again.

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New Labour's record:

The contract delivered

Our country is changing for the better, because we fulfilled the promises of our 1997 and 2001 manifestos. Here is what has changed.

■ Prosperity for all

Britain now has a stable, growing economy with the lowest inflation since the 1960s.

Around 125,000 more people are in work in Wales compared to 1997, and the UK has the lowest unemployment for 30 years. Tax credits and the minimum wage are ensuring that work pays for everyone.

Because of this, we are saving £5 billion a year on the costs of unemployment – that's £84 for every citizen in Britain – money that is being invested in frontline services such as schools and hospitals.

There are over one million more homeowners, saving on average nearly £4,000 a year, thanks to the lowest mortgage rates for 40 years.

Since 1997, average incomes have increased by 19 per cent and the income of a typical family has increased by 17 per cent, with living standards rising in double digits for every part of the income spectrum.

There are 300,000 more businesses across the UK providing jobs and increased prosperity.

There are two million fewer children and nearly two million fewer pensioners living in absolute poverty.

■ World-class public services

Investment in public services is up – with spending on education and health in Wales doubled. There are over 1,600 more teachers, 5,200 more nurses and over 850 more police officers. Public servants – from nurses to police officers – are better rewarded for their work.

Infant and junior classes now have a limit of 30 pupils in Wales and 51 per cent of our pupils achieved at least five grades A* to C at GCSE

last year, compared to just 44 per cent in 1997.

Since the introduction of free entry, visits to our national museums and galleries have risen by 75 per cent.

Reductions in cancer, strokes and coronary disease have been achieved in Wales.

■ **A modern welfare state**

Thanks to our New Deal, long-term youth unemployment has been virtually eradicated, with over half a million young people helped into work.

By October 2005, families with children will be on average £1,400 a year better off as a result of our tax and benefit measures compared to 1997.

Thanks to our reforms pensioner households are on average £1,500 a year better off, rising to £2,000 a year for the poorest third.

Maternity leave has increased to 26 weeks and maternity pay has almost doubled.

There are 1.2 million more older people in employment. The employment rate for people aged between 50 and pension age has increased by over five percentage points to 70 per cent.

■ **Strong and safe communities**

Across England and Wales, crime has fallen by 30 per cent overall, with almost five million fewer crimes a year than in 1997.

There are record numbers of police, nearly 13,000 more, assisted by 4,600 new Community Support Officers.

New Labour's record: The contract delivered

New powers to tackle anti-social behaviour have been introduced, with nearly 4,000 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders issued so far and nearly 66,000 fixed penalty notices.

We have halved the time from arrest to sentencing for persistent young offenders.

More than 80 per cent of initial decisions on asylum claims are now processed in two months.

■ Britain strong in the world

Britain's interests are at the heart of an enlarged European Union, with economic reform putting jobs first.

Our international aid budget for the world's poorest countries has more than doubled.

We have successfully pressed for the restarting of world trade talks which will focus on the needs of developing countries

Our strong, effective and responsive armed forces are ensuring the defence of Britain's interests.

We introduced greenhouse-gas trading to cut pollution – the first country to do so – reducing emissions by 9.8 million tonnes in the first two years.

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Chapter 1

Economy: Rising prosperity in an opportunity society

**Forward to increased prosperity,
not back to boom and bust**

**1979-1997: Interest rates average over ten
per cent**

**1997-2005: Britain, the fourth largest economy
in the world, with the longest ever
period of continuous growth**

**2010: Full employment in every region
and nation**

Labour's economic record is unprecedented – the highest employment ever, longest period of uninterrupted growth in modern history, lowest sustained interest and inflation rates for a generation. Our economic policies will build on the platform of stability and growth in three ways: entrenching a low-debt/high-employment economy which generates investment in public services; supporting enterprise and wealth creation by making Britain the best place to do business; and helping every part of Britain and every person in Britain to contribute to and gain from the strength of our economy. And as we work globally to tackle climate change we recognise the challenge and the opportunity of achieving sustainable development at home.

■ **The new Labour case**

Our economic record has finally laid to rest the view that Labour could not be trusted with the economy. We are winning the argument that economic dynamism and social justice must go hand in hand. In the future, the countries that do best will be those with a shared purpose about the long-term changes and investments they need to make – and have the determination to equip their people for that future. So, we approach new challenges with a progressive strategy for growth. In our third term we will build new ladders of social mobility and advancement on the firm foundations of stability, investment and growth.

■ **Low debt and high employment**

In the last eight years we have pioneered a British way to economic stability. Our economy has grown in every quarter with this Government. Interest rates have averaged 5.3 per cent since 1997, saving mortgage payers on average nearly £4,000 per year compared to the Tory years.

The Welsh economy is striding forward with business start-ups up 20 per cent from the previous year; a higher business survival rate than Britain as a whole; and earnings rising faster than the UK average.

Only with Labour, which constructed this framework, will this continue. We will maintain our inflation target at two per cent. We will continue to meet our fiscal rules: over the economic cycle, we will borrow only to invest, and keep net debt at a stable and prudent level.

■ **Public spending and taxation**

The longest period of uninterrupted economic growth in modern times has enabled the Government to deliver the longest period of sustained investment in public services for a generation. Social security bills for unemployment have been halved since 1997, saving £5 billion a year, and we are also saving £4 billion a year on debt interest payments. In Wales over the eight-year period from 1999, real-terms investment in education will rise by an average of 6.4 per cent and in health by 8.4 per cent per year.

‘Our economy has grown in every quarter under this Government.’

Every pound we invest goes further because of our drive for efficiency and reform. Labour will complete the implementation of Sir Peter Gershon’s recommendations to improve public-service efficiency and root out waste, liberating over £21 billion for investment in frontline services.

Labour believes tax policy should continue to be governed by the health of the public finances, the requirement for public investment

and the needs of families, business and the environment.

We will not raise the basic or top rates of income tax in the next Parliament. We renew our pledge not to extend VAT to food, children's clothes, books, newspapers and public transport fares. We will continue to make targeted tax cuts for families and to support work. As a result of personal tax and benefit measures introduced since 1997, by October 2005 families with children will be on average £1,400 a year better off in real terms. Living standards in Britain have been rising, on average, by 2.5 per cent per year since 1997 – a total increase of nearly 20 per cent.

We want a tax regime that supports British business. That is why we have cut corporation tax to its lowest ever level, introduced the best regime of capital gains tax in any industrialised country, and introduced a new Research and Development tax credit.

■ Full employment

Our goal is employment opportunity for all – the modern definition of full employment. Britain has more people in work than ever before with the highest employment rate in the G7. Our long-term aim is to raise the employment rate to 80 per cent. And, as we move more people from welfare to work, the savings on unemployment benefits will go towards investing more in public services.

We will make work pay. With Labour's tax credits, a family with two children pays no net tax until their earnings reach £21,000.

We will implement the recommendations of the Low Pay Commission to raise the minimum wage to £5.05 from October 2005 and £5.35 from October 2006, benefiting 80,000 low-paid workers in Wales.

The New Deals and the creation of JobCentre Plus have made a major

*‘We are winning
the argument that
economic dynamism
and social justice must
go hand in hand.’*

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contribution to cutting unemployment, with over 70,000 helped into work in Wales. The active welfare state created since 1997 is working.

The Tories trebled the number on incapacity benefits. We will help people who can work into rehabilitation and eventually into employment, recognising the practical assistance to disabled people of the Access to Work scheme. We will build on the successful Pathways to Work programme and reform Incapacity Benefit, with the main elements of the new benefit regime in place from 2008. The majority of claimants with more manageable conditions will be required to engage in both work-focused interviews and in activity to help them prepare for a return to work. Those with the most severe conditions will also be encouraged to engage in activity and should receive more money than now. We will continue to welcome new independent and voluntary sector partners to provide job-seeking services.

■ Supporting enterprise

Government does not create wealth but it must support the wealth creators. That is why our priorities are the national infrastructure of skills, science, regulation and planning, and transport. The economy of the future will be based on knowledge, innovation and creativity. That applies both to manufacturing and services.

In a fast-changing global economy, government cannot postpone or prevent change. The modern role for government – the case for a modern employment and skills policy – is to equip people to succeed, to be on their side, helping them become more skilled, adaptable and flexible for the job ahead, rather than the old Tory way of walking away, leaving people unaided to face change.

Successful manufacturing industries are vital to our future prosperity. The Labour Government backs manufacturing: from launch investment for the Airbus A380 Super Jumbo to the successful

Manufacturing Advisory Service, helping 13,000 of our smaller manufacturing businesses in its first year. In a third term we will continue to do so.

Public procurement is a big opportunity for business in Britain and the source of many jobs. We will promote a public procurement strategy that safeguards UK jobs and skills, under EU rules, to ensure that British industry can compete fairly with the rest of Europe.

Britain has some of the strongest capital markets in the world. And we are determined they – and our financial services industry – should prosper. We will ensure that companies have the right framework of corporate governance and relationships with the institutions that invest our pension funds and savings in them.

■ Skills at work

Our goal is clear: every youngster moving from school, college or university to work with the skills they need to make a contribution to the economy, and every adult – not just those at the top – with the chance to develop their skills throughout their working life. Our vision for Wales is clearly set out in the new Skills and Employment Action Plan 2005:

- * *Every adult given the chance to learn, with free access to literacy and numeracy training.*
- * *Build upon the success of the Learning Workers Project in Llanelli and look to offer free training up to level 3 to all employees.*
- * *A partnership between government and employers to fund workplace training in priority sectors across Wales.*
- * *A genuinely employer-driven training system – in every sector there will be a Sector Skills Council determining the training strategy.*
- * *A strong partnership with trade unions to boost workplace training, including a new TUC Academy and continued support for Union Learning Representatives.*

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* *Further development of the innovative, award-winning CareerWales On-Line, which brings together support on skills, jobs and careers – helping people of all ages to get on at work.*

■ Supporting science

The alliance of scientific research and business creativity is key to our continued prosperity.

Looking ahead, we are committed to a ten-year strategy on science and innovation that will continue to invest in our science and industrial base at least in line with trend GDP. Our ambition now is to raise the UK's total private and public sector investment in research and development, as a proportion of national income, from its current 1.9 per cent to 2.5 per cent by 2014.

'In our third term we will build new ladders of social mobility and advancement on the firm foundations of stability, investment and growth.'

Our pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries are world leaders. We have created one of the world's best environments for stem-cell research. We have now passed legislation to protect our researchers from the activities of animal rights extremists.

Across a range of environmental issues – from soil erosion to the depletion of marine resources, from water scarcity to air pollution – it is clear now not just that economic activity is their cause but that these

problems will themselves threaten future economic activity and growth. We will continue to work with the environmental goods and services sector – which is already worth £25 billion to the economy to promote new green technologies and industries in the UK and internationally, and use the purchasing power of government to support environmental improvement.

■ **Competition, planning and regulation**

Competition is a driving force for innovation. Our competition regime has been toughened with independent competition bodies and stronger penalties.

To the benefit of business and household consumers we are liberalising the postal services market, while protecting the universal service at a uniform tariff.

As we said in our policy document, *Britain is Working*, we have given the Royal Mail greater commercial freedom and have no plans to privatise it. Our ambition is to see a publicly owned Royal Mail fully restored to good health, providing customers with an excellent service and its employees with rewarding employment. We will review the impact on the Royal Mail of market liberalisation, which is being progressively introduced under the Postal Services Act 2000 and which allows alternative carriers to the Royal Mail to offer postal services.

We have reformed our energy markets to make them open and competitive. And we are a leading force in the campaign to make Europe's energy markets the same. Our wider energy policy has created a framework that places the challenge of climate change – as well as the need to achieve security of supply – at the heart of our energy policy. We have a major programme to promote renewable energy, as part of a strategy of having a mix of energy sources from nuclear power to clean coal to micro-generators.

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We will only regulate where necessary and will set exacting targets for reducing the costs of administering regulations. We will rationalise business inspections. The merger of the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise will cut the administrative costs of tax compliance for small businesses.

We will take further action in Europe to ensure that EU regulations are proportionate and better designed. We strongly support the creation of an EU single market in services to match the single market in goods – and want an effective directive to provide real benefits to consumers and new opportunities to British business. We will protect our employment standards. In developing the directive we will want to avoid any undermining of our regulatory framework.

We will continue to work to protect the rights of consumers, bringing forward proposals to strengthen and streamline consumer advocacy, working in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government. We look forward to action from the banking industry to remove delays in processing cheques and other payments and, if necessary, will legislate to ensure this early in the next Parliament.

There are many bank accounts that are lying dormant and unclaimed, often because people have forgotten about them or because the owner has died. We will work with the financial services industry to establish a common definition and a comprehensive record of unclaimed assets. We will then expect banks, over the course of the Parliament, to either reunite those assets with their owners or to channel them back into the community.

An effective planning regime protects the environment while promoting economic growth – and does so quickly and responsively. We will ensure that our planning system continues to protect the sustainability of local environments – and we will continue to develop a regime

which is simpler, faster and more responsive to local and business needs, including the need to create jobs and regenerate our cities.

■ **Fostering entrepreneurship**

There are 300,000 more businesses across the UK now than in 1997. We are improving access to capital for small and growing businesses – especially enterprises in deprived areas. We offer tailored advice, support and capital to start-ups and small businesses through the WDA ‘Business Eye’, the Assembly Investment Grant and Finance Wales. In Wales, we are fostering the entrepreneurs of tomorrow by offering enterprise education through the Entrepreneurship Action Plan.

■ **Modern transport infrastructure**

An efficient transport system is vital to the country’s future, to our economy and to our quality of life. We welcome the freedom that additional travel provides and support the continuing development of a competitive and efficient freight sector. Investment, better management of road and rail, and planning ahead are vital to deal with the pressures on the system in a way that respects our environmental objectives.

We will invest £8 billion over 15 years as part of the all-Wales integrated transport strategy.

The Eddington Review will work with the Government to advise on how UK transport investment should be targeted – in particular, where transport is vital to underpin economic growth.

We are now taking charge of setting the strategy for rail to further raise the standard of service and reliability. We will examine options for increasing capacity, including a new generation of high-speed trains on intercity routes. In Wales, we are reopening passenger rail services on the Ebbw Valley and Vale of Glamorgan routes for the first time

*‘Objective 1 status for
West Wales and the
Valleys ... has played a
vital part in regenerating
local communities, creating
and safeguarding over
90,000 jobs.’*

since the Beeching cuts of 40 years ago. In addition, we are investing in increased capacity on the Valley Lines and have increased the number of direct north-south trains within Wales.

On our roads, major investment is expanding capacity on the key strategic trunk roads A465, A40 and A55. We must also manage road space better. We will take forward the M4 Relief Road using tolled road capacity. We will look at the introduction of Traffic Management Officers to keep traffic flowing. At the UK level, because of the long-term nature of transport planning, we will seek political consensus in tackling congestion, including examining the potential of moving away from the current system of motoring taxation towards a national system of road-pricing.

*‘We are therefore committed to a further
devolution of powers over transport to Wales.’*

We will continue to work in partnership with local authorities and providers to support the growth in bus provision to provide an alternative to the car. Pensioners and disabled people are now able to travel for free by bus throughout Wales, and we are looking at ways to extend this scheme.

It is important to ensure that public transport provision and road policy are aligned and we are set on achieving a fully integrated transport system for Wales. We are therefore committed to a further devolution of powers over transport to Wales. We will support innovation in school transport provision to increase choice for parents and reduce unnecessary journeys by private car.

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We will continue to provide funding to make cycling and walking more attractive, and are committed to reduce child deaths and serious injuries on the road by 50 per cent. We will continue the drive to reduce dangerous driving, especially drink driving and uninsured driving. And we will work with industry to make travel on public transport safer and more secure.

Government will continue to support technological innovation to reduce carbon emissions such as the hydrogen fuel-cell buses in London. We will explore the scope for further use of economic instruments as well as other measures to promote lower vehicle emissions.

We will continue to support air travel by implementing the balanced policies set out in our aviation white paper. We are committed to using the UK's 2005 presidency of the European Union to promote the inclusion of aviation in the EU's emissions trading scheme.

For shipping, our introduction of the tonnage tax has led to a trebling in size of the fleet since 1997. We want more ships to fly the British flag, to boost jobs and training, and to increase shipping and port capacity.

■ Opportunity for all

We are determined to spread the benefits of enterprise to every community in the country. We have given Welsh local authorities a direct incentive to promote local business creation, allowing them to keep up to £60 million over three years of increased rate revenues to spend on their own priorities. We will build on this by ensuring that local councils play an active part in promoting local economic development in partnership with businesses and the new economic powerhouse created by the merger of the WDA, Wales Tourist Board and ELWa with the Welsh Assembly Government.

In 1997, many parts of Wales were suffering from deeply entrenched and multiple disadvantage. To tackle this we established the ten-year Communities First programme to bring together investment in over 100 of our most deprived communities. It puts local people in the driving seat, using new investment to design local solutions to local problems.

Objective 1 status for West Wales and the Valleys, secured by the UK Labour Government and implemented by the Welsh Assembly Government, has played a vital part in regenerating local communities, creating and safeguarding over 90,000 jobs. In discussions on the future of EU regional policy, we will work together in London and Cardiff and with our European partners to secure the best deal for Wales and for the UK.

■ **Fairness at work**

Since 1997, the Labour Government has introduced new rights for people at work and new opportunities for trade unions to represent their members. We see modern, growing trade unions as an important part of our society and economy. They provide protection and advice for employees, and we welcome the positive role they have played in developing a modern model of social partnership with business representatives. The Labour Party has agreed a set of policies for the workplace (the Warwick Agreement) and we will deliver them in full. They will be good for employees and for the economy.

We have introduced, for the first time, an entitlement for every employee to four weeks' paid holiday, and we propose to extend this by making it additional to bank holiday entitlement.

■ **Promoting equality at work**

A strong economy draws on the talents of all. We have extended legislation to protect people from discrimination at work to cover not only

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gender, disability, race and ethnicity but also religion and sexual orientation and – from 2006 – age. Labour has transformed legal rights for disabled people. The next step is to improve the life chances of disabled people by joining up Direct Payments.

We will take further action to narrow the pay and promotion gap between men and women. The Women and Work Commission will report to the Prime Minister later this year.

*‘We are improving access to capital
for small and growing businesses –
especially enterprises in deprived areas.’*

We will implement the National Employment Panel’s report on measures to promote employment and small business growth for ethnic and faith minorities. We will take forward the Strategy for Race Equality to ensure that we combat discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnicity across a range of services. The Equalities Review reporting to the Prime Minister in 2006 will make practical recommendations on the priorities for tackling disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity for all groups.

■ Thriving rural areas

In Wales extra investment has gone into assisting over 150 post offices in our most deprived and isolated communities to help them continue to provide an essential service to people in those areas. We are looking to extend the free bus travel scheme for pensioners and disabled people to community transport, in order to benefit those living in more rural locations.

We will publish new planning guidance to strengthen local authorities' ability to develop local affordable housing policies that reflect the local market and needs, and facilitate an increase in the provision of affordable housing.

Because of our success in achieving extensive reforms in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), 2005 will be the first year for decades when farmers will be free to produce for the market and not simply for subsidy. We will continue to push for further reform of the CAP in the next Parliament, starting with the sugar regime.

We will continue to promote the competitiveness of the whole food sector, and assure the safety and quality of its products. We have issued guidance so that schools, hospitals and government offices consider local sourcing of fresh produce where possible. We will continue to improve the environmental performance of agriculture, rewarding farmers in Wales for environmental protection and enhancement work on their land through our agri-environment schemes. We will also promote biomass, bio-fuels and non-food crops. We will work to tackle diffuse water pollution through addressing impacts across water catchments without the costs falling on water customers.

Under difficult circumstances, Labour is working with the fishing industry to create a sustainable long-term future for the fishing communities of the United Kingdom. We have reformed the Common Fisheries Policy and will continue to protect the marine environment and ensure fish stocks and their exploitation are set at sustainable levels.

We will introduce the Animal Welfare Bill as soon as possible in the new Parliament.

The choice for 2010

The Conservatives are the party of high interest rates, high inflation, mass unemployment and house repossessions. Their tax-and-spend promises do not add up; and they would cut £35 billion from public investment. With new Labour, Britain can seize the opportunities of globalisation, creating jobs and prosperity for people up and down the country. We can only do so if we build a clear sense of shared national economic purpose, not just around economic stability but also investment in infrastructure, skills, science and enterprise. The choice is to go forward to economic stability, rising prosperity and wider opportunities with new Labour. Or go back to the bad old days of Tory cuts, insecurity and instability.

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Chapter 2

Education: More children making the grade

Forward to better opportunities for all, not back to selection for success or failure

- 1997: £1 billion backlog of repairs on school buildings**
- 2005: No infant or junior class size over 30 and over 1,600 more teachers**
- 2010: More course choices for 14- to 19-year-olds and a guaranteed place in college, sixth-form or an apprenticeship**

In Wales, we want a flying start for all children, beginning with our very youngest children. We are introducing a new world-class Foundation Phase curriculum for three- to seven-year-olds, making free breakfasts available to all primary school children, ending overcrowding in junior classes and developing integrated Children's Centres. We are reforming the testing system, assisting lagging schools to catch up with those performing best, ending the outdated notion of learning finishing at 16, offering wider curriculum choices for 14- to 19-year-olds and guaranteeing a place in college, sixth-form or an apprenticeship.

■ **The new Labour case**

We believe that devolving power to Wales is the right way to deliver the best education service suited to Welsh needs. Every child can and should be able to fulfil their potential. Our progressive strategy is to raise standards and participation for all, getting the best out of every child. All the evidence shows that the three-to-seven age group is where we can make the greatest difference in helping children develop self-confidence about their ability to learn and achieve. We are getting rid of the financial barriers to young people staying on in full-time education beyond 16. We will provide further encouragement by extending curriculum choice on the basis of parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications, and by instilling a positive attitude towards a lifetime of learning.

■ **World-class learning environments**

There is no greater responsibility than teaching the next generation. Head teachers, teachers and support staff deserve support and respect. There are now 1,600 more teachers and over 3,200 more teaching assistants than in 1997; graduate teacher applications are up; average salaries are up by more than 30 per cent. We will now go further: increasing professional development for teachers to raise

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Education: More children making the grade

standards and levels of pupil achievement; further widening routes into teaching by specific measures to address the shortage of teachers in certain subjects; helping more teachers and pupils get the benefit of the range of support staff now working by enabling teachers to spend even more time teaching in the classroom.

Since 1997 school funding has risen by a third. We will continue to raise the share of national income devoted to education and we will work with our partners in local government to reform the way the money is spent, allocating funding on a three-year timescale. Our long-term programme of investment to reverse the Tory legacy of crumbling school buildings means that we are on track to ensure that all schools will be fit for purpose by 2010. By this time each local authority will receive an additional lump sum of £9 million to enable a single major school building or rebuilding project to be undertaken, should they wish to, as well as investing in modernisation and major repairs to bring all the school estate up to modern standards. This funding will also be available to modernise school kitchens to assist schools in producing better, healthier school meals.

New technology is central to giving our young people world-class facilities, and investment has already ensured that every school in Wales is now connected to the internet and has access to at least one interactive white board.

We want to see our primary and secondary schools becoming more community focused, offering courses and provision to all outside of the school day. We are currently offering £3 million to schools to support such schemes, including £1 million specifically for small and rural schools. New legislation allows for governing bodies to cooperate or to federate with one another. This is one example of the encouragement that we will give to small schools in Wales to make the most effective use of their resources and to overcome the problem of surplus places.

A strong, effective governing body is essential to the success of every school; school governors play a crucial role in raising educational standards and engaging with the community in the school and beyond. Alongside the governing bodies, pupil-led school councils are beginning to play a key role in encouraging and empowering pupils to have a say in the way their schools are run.

■ **Raising standards and extending opportunities**

Since 1997 standards in Wales have risen and class sizes have fallen. Standards have risen because of the hard work of pupils and teachers and as a back-up to this improvement, we are developing a rigorous new assessment regime, designed to provide genuine value added to schools, to parents and to teachers. That is why in the current year we abolished statutory testing for seven-year-olds and why we are proposing further reforms for 11- and 14-year-olds.

We want to see every pupil mastering the basics, ensuring that no pupil leaves primary school without basic literacy and numeracy skills. To achieve this, ten-year-olds will undertake tests that will focus on literacy and numeracy together with problem-solving to help teachers identify individual strengths and weaknesses. This focus will help improve the transition from primary to secondary schools and ensure that pupils continue to make progress, or make up lost ground, in their early years at secondary school.

Our best comprehensive schools have high-quality leadership provided by strong head teachers and governors; firm rules consistently applied to promote good discipline; teachers given maximum encouragement to teach a curriculum that engages all pupils; and high-class facilities that really inspire students to make the effort and never to think of themselves as failures.

Wales has a positive tradition of diversity within our comprehensive

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system with Welsh and English medium schools and faith schools. In many parts of Wales there will be a single secondary school serving the whole community and it is our aim to ensure that school provides the best opportunities, the highest standards and the richest education it can for all pupils, whatever their background.

■ **Good discipline**

Every pupil has the right to learn without disruption; no teacher should be subject to abuse or disrespect. We have given head teachers the powers needed to maintain discipline and the highest standards of conduct. Violent behaviour, including the use of knives will not be tolerated. Early intervention to tackle truancy and bullying is being extended throughout Wales to address issues at source before they develop into problems later on. Targeting those pupils vulnerable to poor attendance for example, will go further to remove the problem of truancy in the long term. We will encourage more dedicated provision for disruptive and excluded pupils, including by charities and voluntary groups with expertise in this area.

Parents have a duty to get their children to attend school. We have introduced parenting orders and fines, and will continue to advocate truancy sweeps.

■ **Special educational needs**

Children with special needs will continue to be given dedicated help by trained staff in mainstream or special schools. Our all-Wales approach, with regional centres of excellence, is designed to ensure high standards and good access to services for all children.

■ **Learning doesn't stop at 16**

The historic problems of our education system at 14-plus have been an academic track that has been too narrow and a vocational offer too weak, and no parity between those two educational pathways.

Education: More children making the grade

This has led to high rates of drop-out and low average standards of basic skills. Reform of 14-19 education and the continuing development of our unique Welsh Baccalaureate alongside GCSEs and A-levels are our priority. A new generation of high-quality, vocational qualifications will also form part of our overhauled qualification system. We will create a positive attitude to lifelong learning and ensure that by 2010 no pupil leaves school without a qualification.

In order to assist our quest to raise the status and quality of vocational education, Labour in Wales will look to second a high-profile person from industry or commerce to work with the Welsh Assembly Government to champion the development of vocational courses and qualifications. Designed by employers on the basis of industry needs, vocational qualifications will be established in key areas of the economy, leading to apprenticeships, to further and higher education and to jobs with training. We will continue to expand apprenticeships at 16 so that all young people get the opportunities they need, leading to jobs with training.

Financial disadvantage will not be allowed to stand in the way of young people staying in full-time education beyond the age of 16. We have rolled out Education Maintenance Allowances, providing lower-income students with up to £30 a week staying-on allowance.

We believe that every 16- to 19-year-old should have dedicated supervision and support. This is why we are developing the role of the Learning Coach and other support mechanisms for young people in our 14-19 policies.

Further education is vital to vocational lifelong learning. We want FE colleges to become centres for vocational excellence and encourage them to work closely with local comprehensive schools and other training and education providers. We want every pupil to achieve their

potential, including the brightest, so we will develop extended projects at A-level, harder A-level questions to challenge the most able, and give universities the individual module marks – as well as overall grades – of A-level students.

■ **World-class higher education, open to all**

Universities are vital to Britain's future prosperity. We need a bigger, better higher education system. We are investing £1 billion more in the science base and increasing public spending on higher education. But graduates and employers must also play their part. Following the completion of the Rees Review we will finalise our plans to increase funding for higher education in Wales. This will include honouring our commitment to a supplementary income stream for our universities in 2006-07. Already we have introduced the Assembly Learning Grants, benefiting over 20,000 students every year in higher and further education post-18 and making a significant contribution, on a means-tested basis, to reducing student hardship and widening participation. We want a system that is fair to students and which funds a world-class Welsh university sector – developing a higher education system that will play its full part in building a Wales that is internationally competitive in the global knowledge economy. That is why we will also continue to provide additional funding for the higher education sector to find ways of restructuring and increasing collaboration.

The choice for 2010

Under their last government the Conservatives spent more on unemployment and debt interest than on education. Their priority now is to take at least £60 million from state schools in Wales to subsidise private education for the privileged few. In addition they would allow a free-for-all in school admissions – including an extension of selection for five- and 11-year-olds – cap the number of pupils who can succeed at GCSE and A-level, and reduce places in higher education. The choice for 2010 is

Education: More children making the grade

forward with Labour: pupils with quality and opportunity through the system from three to 18; teachers with the confidence that their professional qualities will be recognised, supported and rewarded; parents with the confident knowledge that there will be intervention to improve schools that are lagging behind; and employers with a system that gets the basics right and provides the skills that our industries are going to need in the modern economy. Or back with the Tories to an education system designed to look after the few, which labels the many as failures before their lives have begun.

**Wales
forward
not back**

Chapter 3

Crime and security:

Safe communities, secure borders

Forward to neighbourhood policing, not back to rising crime

1979-1997: Recorded crime had almost doubled

**2005: Almost 13,000 more police officers,
850 extra in Wales**

**2010: A neighbourhood policing team in
every community**

Today there is less chance of being a victim of crime than for more than 20 years – but our security is threatened by major organised crime; volume crimes such as burglary and car theft, often linked to drug abuse; fear of violent crime; and anti-social behaviour. Each needs a very different approach. We are giving the police and local councils the power to tackle anti-social behaviour; we will develop neighbourhood policing for every community and crack down on drug dealing and hard drug use to reduce volume crime; we are modernising our asylum and immigration system; and we will take the necessary measures to protect our country from international terrorism.

■ **The new Labour case**

The modern world offers freedoms and opportunities unheralded a generation ago. But with new freedoms come new fears and threats to our security. Our progressive case is that to counter these threats we need strong communities built on mutual respect and the rule of law. We prize the liberty of the individual; but that means protecting the law-abiding majority from the minority who abuse the system. We believe in being tough on crime and its causes, so we will expand drugs testing and treatment, and tackle the conditions – from lack of youth provision to irresponsible drinking – that foster crime and anti-social behaviour. In a third term we will make the contract of rights and responsibilities an enduring foundation of community life.

■ **A neighbourhood policing team for every community**

Overall crime as measured by the authoritative British Crime Survey is down 30 per cent – the equivalent of almost five million fewer crimes a year. Record numbers of police – over 850 more in Wales than in 1997 – working with nearly 300 Community Support Officers (CSOs), local councils, and the Crown Prosecution Service deserve the credit. But local people want a more visible police presence and a

role in setting local police priorities. So our pledge is a neighbourhood policing team for every community. We will carry on funding the police service to enable it to continue to employ the historically high numbers of police officers.

Hard-working police officers should be supported by professional and trained support staff. So a new £340 million a year fund will take CSO numbers up to 24,000 – to work alongside the equivalent of an additional 12,000 police officers across England and Wales, freed up for frontline duties. And we will work with representatives of police officers and other police staff to develop a modern career framework for the whole police team.

Not all problems need a 999 response, so a single phone number staffed by police, local councils and other local services will be available across the country to deal with anti-social behaviour and other non-emergency problems.

■ Empowering communities against anti-social behaviour

People want communities where the decent law-abiding majority are in charge. The experience of almost 4,000 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, nearly 66,000 Penalty Notices for Disorder, and the closure of over 150 crack houses shows that communities can fight back against crime. We are ready to go further.

We will look at ways in which local authorities' neighbourhood wardens could use Penalty Notices for Disorder for noise, graffiti and throwing fireworks. Victims of anti-social behaviour will be able to give evidence anonymously. Local people will be able to take on 'neighbours from hell' by triggering action by councils and the police.

We have reformed housing and planning legislation to ensure that councils plan for the needs of genuine Gypsies and travellers. But with

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rights must go responsibilities so we have provided tough new powers to tackle the problem of unauthorised sites.

Excessive alcohol consumption fuels anti-social behaviour and violence. The new Licensing Act will make it easier for the police and councils to deal with pubs and clubs that cause problems. Local councils and police will be able to designate Alcohol Disorder Zones to help pay for extra policing around city centre pubs and clubs, with new powers to immediately shut down premises selling alcohol to under-age drinkers, and bans from town and city centres for persistent offenders. Police will be able to exclude jobs from town centres for 24 hours when they issue a Penalty Notice for Disorder.

We will continue to overhaul our youth justice system and improve Young Offender Institutions. We will make more use of intensive community programmes, including electronic tagging and tracking to deal with the most persistent young offenders, and will increase the number of parents of young offenders getting help with their children's behaviour. We will increase, by at least a half, programmes targeted at young people most at risk of offending and will expand drug treatment services for young people.

■ Cutting crime through cutting drug dependency

Communities know that crime reduction depends on drug reduction. There are now 54 per cent more drug users in treatment and new powers for the police to close crack houses and get drug dealers off our streets. We will introduce compulsory drug testing at arrest for all property and drugs offenders, beginning in high-crime areas, with compulsory treatment assessment for those who test positive. Offenders under probation supervision will be randomly drug-tested to mirror what already happens to offenders in custody.

From 2006, the Serious Organised Crime Agency will bring together

over 4,000 specialist staff to tackle terrorism, drug dealers, people traffickers, and other national and international organised criminals. And in consultation with local police authorities and chief constables we will restructure police resources in order to develop strong leadership, streamline all police support services, and focus upon national and regional organised crime.

■ Reducing the use of guns and knives

Dangerous weapons fuel violence. We have banned all handguns, introduced five-year minimum sentences for those caught with an unlawful firearm and raised the age limit for owning an air gun. Now we will go further. We will introduce a Violent Crime Reduction Bill to restrict the sale of replica guns, raise the age limit for buying knives to 18 and tighten the law on air guns. Head teachers will have legal rights to search pupils for knives or guns. At-risk pubs and clubs will be required to search for them and we will introduce tougher sentences for carrying replica guns, for those involved in serious knife crimes and for those convicted of assaulting workers serving the public.

■ Punishing criminals, reducing offending

As court sentences have got tougher we have built over 16,000 more prison places than there were in 1997. The most high-risk violent offenders will now be detained in custody indefinitely and our 2003 Criminal Justice Act confirmed that life sentences must mean life for the most heinous murders. Where significant new evidence comes to light we have abolished the 'double jeopardy' rule so that serious criminals who have been unjustly acquitted can be tried again. And we will introduce much tougher penalties for those who cause death by careless driving or who kill while driving without a licence or while disqualified.

We will tackle reoffending. By 2007 every offender will be supervised after release; we will increase the use of electronic tagging; and we will

test the use of compulsory lie detector tests to monitor convicted sex offenders. Our new National Offender Management Service will ensure that every offender is individually case-managed from beginning to end of their sentence, both in and out of custody – with increased effort targeted on drugs treatment, education and basic skills training to reduce reoffending. Voluntary organisations and the private sector will be offered greater opportunities to deliver offender services, and we will give local people a greater say in shaping community punishment.

■ **Making sure crime does not pay**

Those who commit crimes should not profit from them. Already we have introduced laws that enable the courts to confiscate the assets and property of drug dealers and other major criminals. We will enable the police and prosecuting authorities to keep at least half of all the criminal assets they seize to fund local crime-fighting priorities. And we will develop new proposals to ensure that criminals are not able to profit from publishing books about their crimes. In addition, we will support magistrates effectively in fighting crime and improve the enforcement of court decisions – including the payment of fines.

Where a defendant fails to turn up for court without good excuse, the presumption should be that the trial and sentencing should go ahead anyway.

We will overhaul laws on fraud and the way that fraud trials are conducted to update them for the 21st century and make them quicker and more effective.

■ **Backing the victim**

The legal system must dispense justice to the victim as well as the accused. We have invested to create a modern, self-confident prosecution service. With new powers and new technology to bring more

‘We believe in being tough on crime and its causes, so we will expand drugs testing and treatment, and tackle the conditions ... that foster crime and anti-social behaviour.’

offenders to justice more speedily and effectively. We will improve the way the courts work for victims, witnesses and jurors by:

- * *Building a nationwide network of witness and victim support units that provide practical help.*
- * *Expanding specialist courts to deal with domestic violence and specialist advocates to support the victims of such crime and of other serious crimes like murder and rape.*

We will extend the use of restorative justice schemes and Community Justice Centres to address the needs of victims, resolve disputes and help offenders to make recompense to victims for their crimes.

Legal aid will be reformed to better help the vulnerable. We will ensure independent regulation of the legal profession, and greater competition in the legal services market to ensure people get value for money. We will tackle the compensation culture – resisting invalid claims, but upholding people’s rights.

Following consultation on the draft Bill we have published, we will legislate for a new offence of corporate manslaughter.

■ **Migration: The facts**

Over seven million people entered the UK from outside the EU in 2003: of whom 180,000 came here to work and over 300,000 to study, with the rest coming here as business visitors and tourists. People from overseas spent almost £12 billion in the UK, and overseas students alone are worth £5 billion a year to our economy. At a time when we have over 600,000 vacancies in the UK job market, skilled migrants are contributing ten to 15 per cent of our economy’s overall growth.

Since 1997, the time taken to process an initial asylum application has been reduced from 20 months to two months in over 80 per cent of

cases. The number of asylum applications has been cut by two-thirds since 2002. The backlog of claims has been cut from over 50,000 at the end of 1996 to just over 10,000. There are 550 UK Immigration Officers posted in France and Belgium to check passports of people boarding boats and trains, and Airline Liaison Officers and overseas entry clearance staff are helping to stop 1,000 people a day improperly entering the UK.

■ **Building a strong and diverse country**

For centuries Britain has been a home for people from the rest of Europe and further afield. Immigration has been good for Britain. We want to keep it that way.

Our philosophy is simple: if you are ready to work hard and there is work for you to do, then you are welcome here. We need controls that work and a crackdown on abuse to ensure that we have a robust and fair immigration system fit for the 21st century that is in the interests of Britain.

■ **A points system for immigration**

We need skilled workers. So we will establish a points system for those seeking to migrate here. More skills mean more points and more chance of being allowed to come here.

We will ensure that only skilled workers are allowed to settle long term in the UK, with English language tests or Welsh language tests, where appropriate, for everyone who wants to stay permanently and an end to chain migration.

Where there has been evidence of abuse from particular countries, the immigration service will be able to ask for financial bonds to guarantee that migrants return home. We will continue to improve the quality and speed of immigration and asylum decisions. Appeal rights for

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– the equivalent of
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non-family immigration cases will be removed and we will introduce civil penalties on employers of up to £2,000 for each illegal immigrant they employ.

■ Strong and secure borders

While the Tories would halve investment in our immigration services, we would invest in the latest technology to keep our borders strong and secure.

By 2008 those needing a visa to enter the UK will be fingerprinted. We will issue ID cards to all visitors planning to stay for more than three months. Over the next five years, we will implement a new electronic borders system that will track visitors entering or leaving the UK.

Across the world there is a drive to increase the security of identity documents and we cannot be left behind. From next year we are introducing biometric 'ePassports'. It makes sense to provide citizens with an equally secure identity card to protect them at home from identity theft and clamp down on illegal working and fraudulent use of public services. We will introduce ID cards, including biometric data like fingerprints, backed up by a national register and rolling out initially on a voluntary basis as people renew their passports. In Wales, the power to decide on access to devolved public services rests with the Assembly Government.

■ Fair rules

We can and should honour our obligations to victims of persecution without allowing abuse of the asylum system. We will:

- * *Fast-track all unfounded asylum seekers with electronic tagging where necessary and more use of detention as we expand the number of detention places available.*
- * *Remove more failed applicants. We have more than doubled the number of*

failed asylum seekers we remove from the UK compared to 1996. By fingerprinting every visa applicant and prosecuting those who deliberately destroy their documents we will speed up the time taken to redocument and remove people, and will take action against those countries that refuse to cooperate. By the end of 2005 our aim is for removals of failed asylum seekers to exceed new unfounded claims.

■ **Tough action to combat international terrorism**

We know that there are people already in the country and who seek to enter the United Kingdom who want to attack our way of life. Our liberties are prized but so is our security.

Police and other law enforcement agencies now have the powers they need to ban terrorist organisations, to clamp down on their fundraising and to hold suspects for extended questioning while charges are brought. Over 700 arrests have been made since 2001. Wherever possible, suspects should be prosecuted through the courts in the normal way. So we will introduce new laws to help catch and convict those involved in helping to plan terrorist activity or who glorify or condone acts of terror. But we also need to disrupt and prevent terrorist activity. New control orders will enable police and security agencies to keep track of those they suspect of planning terrorist outrages including bans on who they can contact or meet, electronic tagging and curfew orders and, for those who present the highest risk, a requirement to stay permanently at home.

We will continue to improve coordination between enforcement agencies and cooperation with other countries so that every effort is made to defeat the terrorists.

The choice for 2010

Labour's goals for 2010 are clear. Overall crime down, the number of offenders brought to justice up, with a neighbourhood

Crime and security: Safe communities, secure borders

policing team in every community to crack down on crime and disorder, and a modern criminal justice system fit for the 21st century. And to reduce threats from overseas: secure borders backed up by ID cards and a crackdown on abuse of our immigration system. The Conservative threat is equally clear. Savage cuts to our border controls, ‘fantasy island’ asylum policies, and a return to the days of broken promises on police numbers and crime investment.

Wales
forward
not back

Chapter 4

Our NHS: Free to all, personal to each

Forward to an NHS fair to us all, not back to two-tier healthcare

- 1997: 70 hospitals closed in Wales under the Tories. Prescription charges up eightfold
- 2005: Ten new hospitals opened or on the way. Prescription charges reduced to £4
- 2009: Prescription charges abolished by 2007. By 2009, no one waiting more than 26 weeks from GP referral to treatment, including investigation

Wales is the birthplace of the NHS, one of our country's proudest achievements. Equal access for all according to need not ability to pay – those key principles command overwhelming support in Wales. When Labour took office in 1997 expenditure on health in Wales was just £1.85 billion. This year it is £4.3 billion. By 2007-08 it will be £5.5 billion. In their last year, the Tories spent £640 per person in Wales. By 2007-08 it will be more than £1,800.

The NHS is being restored to good health: more doctors, more nurses, better facilities and a huge increase in students being educated to become our future doctors, nurses and other health professionals. Waiting times are down and the survival rates for the biggest killer diseases are improving. Now we must create not just an 'illness service' but a true National Health Service, promoting and creating good health and preventing ill-health at source.

■ **The new Labour case**

The best way to serve the people of Wales is through a devolved health service with priorities set by Labour in Wales. Healthcare is too precious to be left to chance, too central to life chances to be left to your wealth. It is our mission to make our system the envy of the world. This means defeating those who would dismantle the NHS but it also means fundamentally improving the patient experience to meet new challenges: an ageing population, higher expectations, major advances in science and medical technology, changes in the composition and needs of the population. We will provide an NHS free to all and with the patient centre stage. We will deliver it through high national standards backed by sustained investment, through increasing the capacity to deliver healthcare, through devolving power in the NHS, and most of all through citizen-centred services, which put cooperation between patient and health professional at the heart of all we do.

*‘Wales is the birthplace
of the NHS, one of our
country’s proudest
achievements.’*

■ **Staff: our most important resource**

With Labour the number of staff in the NHS in Wales has risen by 19 per cent. There are over 350 hospital doctors and over 5,200 more qualified nurses in Wales than in 1997. By 2010 we will have an additional 700 consultants, 6,000 nurses and 2,000 other health professionals working in the NHS in Wales, over and above the numbers employed in 2001.

And we have also ensured that staff can take on more and different tasks. We have widened the responsibilities of nurses and pharmacists, paramedics and porters, creating more convenient health services for patients. More pharmacists and nurses can now prescribe medicines and help treat patients with chronic conditions.

The future of our health service in Wales depends upon training new staff. That is why Labour has expanded medical education in Wales so quickly, with places up from 190 to 360 by 2009. The new Clinical School in Swansea is being joined by Schools in North Wales and in Gwent. At the same time since 1999 the intake to nurse training has increased by 39 per cent, to 1,278 in 2007.

■ **Improving health**

Labour in Wales has set new health gain targets for Wales. By 2012 we will reduce the rate of deaths from cancer and from strokes by 20 per cent, and make a more rapid improvement among most deprived groups; we aim to reduce hip fractures for people aged 75 and over by ten per cent.

Through the Health Inequalities Fund, the unique Welsh Health Survey and the Townsend funding reforms, we are making sure that we spend most where need is greatest. Through Health Challenge Wales we will engage the whole nation in a new effort to tackle the causes of ill-health and to reduce the risk of illness in the future. We will

provide an extra £37 million over the next three years, extending Health Challenge Wales and developing new approaches to stopping illness before it starts.

■ **Shorter waiting times for Wales**

The number of people waiting unacceptably long has fallen dramatically over the past 12 months. Labour's Second Offer Guarantee scheme has been massively successful, effectively using capacity in the NHS in Wales and spare capacity elsewhere to give long-wait patients the choice to be treated more quickly. By the end of March 2005, we estimate that 10,000 extra patients in Wales will have been treated and treated more speedily under the scheme.

*'We will provide an NHS free to all
and with the patient centre stage.'*

Now we will do more. Already, from April 2005, no in-patient in Wales will be kept waiting more than 12 months from referral. Our new targets will result in a total combined wait (including outpatient, diagnostics and in-patient treatment) of no more than six months by 2009. With Labour there will be no hidden waits for treatment in the NHS. And, unlike the Tories' schemes, this is not just for those with money but will be there for everyone in Wales, free of charge.

Shorter waiting times can only be achieved with modern facilities. We will spend an extra £30 million specifically on projects to bring down waiting times in all parts of Wales, including new orthopaedics treatment centres at St Woolos, Newport and Llandough.

Nine out of ten patients use the health service through primary care. That is why, in Wales, we are providing access to a member of the primary care team within 24 hours. We are well on track to making this happen in all parts of Wales by April 2006.

We have increased the number of dental school places by 17 per cent. We are actively reviewing the scope and resourcing of NHS dentistry in Wales.

We have tightened the rules on NHS operations so that ‘health tourists’ now have to pay for treatment.

■ Tackling disease

We will deal with the challenge of MRSA. Infections acquired in hospital are certainly not new. The time to destroy MRSA was in the early 1990s – when only five per cent of the bacteria were resistant to antibiotics. At that time the Tory government did not even keep records about the incidence of MRSA and were forcing hospitals to contract out cleaning services. We were the first government to publish statistics on the problem.

MRSA rates in Wales are the lowest in the United Kingdom. But there is still more we need to do. We need better hygiene in our hospitals, to suppress the spread of MRSA and other hospital-acquired infections. Action has already been taken, including hand-hygiene, decontamination of equipment, single-use instruments, isolation facilities and sterile services for use in operating theatres.

We are changing the way wards and hospitals are managed, to give new priority to infection control. All Welsh NHS Trusts must appoint a senior staff member to be formally responsible and accountable for infection control practice, develop comprehensive action plans setting out how they will tackle these infections and ensure progress is monitored closely at a directorate level.

Now, in consultation with patient groups, we will determine what information patients and families need to make proper sense of infection rates in hospitals.

With medical technology improving, the NHS in Wales continues to make inroads into curable and preventable medical conditions. Yet, around 80 per cent of GP consultations relate to chronic disease and, in Wales, respiratory illness alone accounts for nearly one in every three visits that patients make to their GP.

We have required all Local Health Boards in Wales to introduce by 2006 specific measures to tackle asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, stroke, diabetes and arthritis. Over the same period, the health service in Wales will be expected to achieve a ten per cent reduction in avoidable hospital admission for people with chronic diseases.

An integral part of dealing with chronic disease is to involve the patient as much as possible in managing their own condition. Our Expert Patient programme does just that. It has been exceptionally successful and is being rolled out across the whole of Wales.

Following the recommendation of the Health Select Committee we will require registration of all clinical trials and publication of their findings for all trials of medicinal products with a marketing authorisation in the UK.

■ Creating new services

To create the most modern, up-to-date health service for Wales we have to invest now for the future. With Labour, new services are available in all parts of Wales – including new digital hearing aids and the award-winning Wales Eye Care Initiative. Our investment in the new £50 million Institute of Life Sciences at Swansea and the Wales

*‘Now we must create
not just an “illness service”
but a true National
Health Service, promoting
and creating good health
and preventing ill-health
at source.’*

Cancer Institute in Cardiff has put the NHS in Wales in the forefront of medical research and development.

Now Labour will increase capital spending in the Welsh NHS from £120 million in 2005-06 to £309 million in 2007-08 with extra investment in the most up-to-date and powerful diagnostic equipment, new facilities in mental health and an extra £140 million on building new hospitals and changing our services for the future.

And by strengthening accountability and cutting bureaucracy we shall ensure that the new investment is not squandered. The abolition of health authorities and the rationalisation of health quangos have allowed resources to be focused on frontline staff. We are ensuring that the NHS in Wales achieves at least one per cent efficiency gain each and every year.

*‘Our new targets will result in
a total combined wait of no more
than six months by 2009.’*

Providing a modern, non-stigmatising mental health service is a priority for Labour in Wales. We shall provide safeguards for the few people with long-term mental health problems who need compulsory treatment coupled with appropriate protection for the public. We shall also strengthen the system for protecting the public from offenders who have served their sentence but may also pose a threat because they have a serious psychopathic disorder.

■ **Improving social services**

Since 1999 spending on social services in Wales has gone up by almost £383 million, a real-terms increase of 43 per cent.

Labour's actions mean that health and social services now work more closely together. We have introduced shared budgets and Local Health Boards on the same boundaries as local councils. The success can be seen in the way in which people are helped to leave hospital more quickly.

Real progress has been made on delayed transfers of care although more remains to be done. Last year saw a 33 per cent reduction over 12 months, with a further 15 per cent reduction to come by March 2006.

Labour has introduced free nursing care for all nursing home residents and six weeks' free home care for vulnerable people leaving hospital. From September 2005 we will begin to implement our pledge to scrap homecare charges for the disabled.

Improving services for carers remains an important part of Labour's policy in Wales. We will continue to fund and extend respite care, assess carers' needs and reform NHS practices to make life easier for carers. We will allocate additional funding for these purposes.

■ **Healthy choices**

Health Challenge Wales aims to change the public culture so that the healthy choice will be the normal choice. Such choices must be available to all and encouraged through learning and experience. Our children need extra encouragement to make the right choices so we have established a unique Healthy Schools Scheme with fruit tuck shops, water coolers and healthy vending machines. This scheme will be extended to all schools so that all have policies in place to promote healthy food options as well as reducing the promotion and

availability of snacks and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar.

We have introduced a healthy, free school breakfast scheme for primary school children to help improve attendance, behaviour and concentration. Launched in some of our most disadvantaged communities, this scheme will be available to all schools that choose to take part. Schools in Wales also lead the way in promoting healthy and sustainable options at lunchtimes. We have set nutritional standards for school lunches and issued guidance to schools on healthy diets and making healthy meals the attractive option for pupils; and we will be working across the UK to tighten up these rules on the potentially damaging 'bad diet' content of school meals.

Alongside this focus on healthy eating, we are doubling the funding for physical activity and specifically extending schemes that increase participation in schools.

We will put in place a simple system of labelling to make it easier for busy shoppers to see at a glance how individual foods contribute to a healthy balanced diet. We will help parents by restricting further the advertising and promotion to children of those foods and drinks that are high in fat, salt and sugar.

Labour is committed to introducing other measures to enable people to lead healthier lives. This includes support for people to give up smoking through the first ever NHS smoking cessation service and continued support for a ban on smoking in public places. The Department of Health public health white paper published in late 2004 sets out proposals to ban smoking in the workplace. The next Labour Government at Westminster is committed to providing legislative opportunities to allow Wales to take forward proposals to improve people's health by banning smoking in enclosed public places, subject to consultation.

The choice for 2010

Today's Conservatives want to do what not even Margaret Thatcher would countenance – introducing charges for hospital operations so that those who can afford to pay thousands of pounds can push ahead of those who cannot. As well as ending the founding principle of the health service, this would take up to £60 million out of the system in Wales to subsidise those who can afford to pay. For the rest of us, the Tories would abandon waiting-list targets which would inevitably mean longer waits. The choice is forward with Labour to a true National Health Service, with patients in the driving seat, preventing ill-health, promoting good health and treating illness free for all. Or back with the Tories to longer waits, and to a health system where treatment depends not on your condition but on your bank balance.

**Wales
forward
not back**

Chapter 5

Older people: Secure today, prepared for the future

**Forward to new opportunities
in old age, not back to poverty
and insecurity**

- 1997: 2.8 million pensioners in poverty,
the poorest living on £69 per week**
- 2005: Minimum income for pensioners of
£109 per week**
- 2010: A long-term settlement for pensions**

Our priority since 1997 has been to tackle pensioner poverty. Nearly two million pensioners have been lifted out of absolute poverty as a result of Labour's measures, which are now getting on average an extra £2,000 to the poorest third. Our priorities now are to build a national consensus for tomorrow's pensioners, combining public and private pension schemes to build security in retirement, and to extend the quality of life of older people.

■ **The new Labour case**

By 2020 there will be more people over the age of 80 than under the age of five. For a progressive government there can be no compromise of our duty to today's pensioners. But while we fulfil that duty we must also see old age as a time of independence and opportunity. On pensions, our aim is a system that provides security and decency for all, which encourages and rewards saving, and is financially sustainable. And because, more than anything, people need certainty to plan for the future we will seek a national consensus – cross-party, cross-generation – for long-term reform.

■ **Tackling pensioner poverty: The success of the Pension Credit**

In 1997, 2.8 million pensioners were living in poverty – with the poorest expected to live on just £69 per week. Labour's Pension Credit now means that no pensioner need live on less than £109 per week. It rewards saving and helps over three million pensioners, with women in particular benefiting. We will increase Pension Credit in line with earnings up to and including 2007-08.

All pensioners have benefited from improved universal benefits like the state pension, the Winter Fuel Payment (now worth £300 per year for the over-80s), help with council tax, and free TV licences for the over-75s. This year, all households expected to pay council tax

that include anyone over 65 will receive £200 towards the cost of council tax.

Pensioners are among those most affected by fuel poverty. Millions have benefited from our fuel poverty programme. Our goal is to eradicate fuel poverty by 2010 in Wales.

We are determined to support the needs of older people. Labour will establish a Commissioner for Older People – the first in the UK. The draft parliamentary Bill already launched for consultation shows practical ways in which the Commissioner will raise the profile of older people in Wales, promoting their independence and speaking up on their behalf. Wales has a higher concentration of older people than the rest of the UK and Labour is determined to increase the influence which they have over policy-making in Wales.

The Commissioner will build on the key measures we have already introduced, including free bus passes and free swimming for over-60s at local authority leisure centres, to help active older people stay healthy.

For older people with care needs we have introduced national standards to regulate the quality of domiciliary and residential care, and new funding to provide adaptations which allow people to stay independent in their own homes.

All of this is overseen in Wales by Labour's ground-breaking Strategy for Older People, supported by £10 million over four years and overseen by a new National Partnership Forum for Older People to ensure their voice is heard at the highest levels.

■ **Pensions for the generation of tomorrow**

The generation retiring in the future will be different in many ways

‘On pensions, our aim is a system that provides security and decency for all, which encourages and rewards saving, and is financially sustainable.’

from their predecessors. Their jobs will have been different; the expectations of women will be transformed; their retirements will be longer and healthier. We have begun to lay the foundations for the pensions system of tomorrow, for example, by: introducing the State Second Pension to ensure carers, low earners and disabled people have a chance to build up a decent pension for the first time; encouraging automatic enrolment into company pension schemes; creating the Pension Protection Fund; enabling pensioners for the first time to work part time and draw down their occupational pension; as well as offering an increased state pension or lump sum for those deferring their pension. We will work to increase the proportion of pension fund trustees nominated by scheme members, along with access to proper training. We will keep this issue under review, with consultation in the expectation of further progress to 50 per cent member-nominated trustees.

We need to forge a national consensus about how we move from a pension system designed for today's pension problems to one that is right for tomorrow's. We appointed the Pensions Commission to look into the future of pensions and its second report is due in autumn 2005. We are clear about the goals of a reformed system. It must tackle poverty, provide everyone with the opportunity to build an adequate retirement income, and be affordable, fair and simple to understand. In particular, it must address the disadvantages faced by women.

■ **New rights, new choices**

Many older people want to carry on working in their 50s and 60s. The welfare state should be there to help them. Older people with their skills and experience are potentially an enormous resource. That is why we set up the New Deal for the Over-50s with over 150,000 people helped back to work.

We also need to put the force of the law on the side of older people who wish to continue working. Companies will no longer be able to

Older people: Secure today, prepared for the future

force people to retire before the age of 65 except where specifically justified. All employees over the age of 65 will have the right to request of their employer that they be allowed to carry on working. After five years we will review whether there should be any fixed retirement ages.

We will give older people greater choice over their care – giving them more control over the resources that the state spends on their behalf.

■ Support across the generations

The challenge of balancing work and family applies to parents but also to people looking after an elderly or sick relative – now one in five adults. Since the introduction of the right to request from their employer flexible working arrangements, a million parents have changed their working hours. We are consulting on how to extend a similar right for carers of elderly or sick relatives.

The choice for 2010

The Tories are the party of pensioner poverty. When they left office in 1997, one in four pensioners was living in poverty and the poorest pensioners were expected to get by on just £69 a week. They would phase out the Pension Credit and abolish the State Second Pension, hurting most those most in need. When the one thing we all need is certainty, the Tories have admitted they have absolutely no plans for how to fund their pensions policy beyond four years. The choice is whether we go forward with new Labour with today's pensioners provided for and poverty falling, a national consensus on fair and sustainable long-term reform, and the policies to give older people enhanced rights and choices. Or back with the Tories to rising levels of pensioner poverty and unending insecurity for tomorrow's pensioners.

Wales
forward
not back

Chapter 6

Families: Choice and support at work and at home

**Forward to family prosperity,
not back to family poverty**

- 1997: Childcare places for only one in eight children under eight**
- 2005: Universal, free, part-time nursery education for all three- and four-year-olds**
- 2010: Universal, affordable childcare for three- to 14-year-olds**

It is impossible to fulfil the potential of our country – never mind promoting social mobility and equality of life chances – unless every child gets the best possible start in life. Government does not bring up children, but it must support parents in their key role. We will help parents balance work and family, expand paid leave, deliver the biggest ever expansion in childcare and end child poverty in a generation.

■ **The new Labour case**

Strong families are the bedrock of a strong society. Children cannot be the forgotten constituency of politics; parents put their children first and they deserve support from government. Yet fear of seeming to ‘nanny’ has in the past meant British law and culture have not supported parents and children. Government cannot shirk its responsibilities. Our starting point is that for children to come first parents need to be given choices; a tax and benefit system to raise family incomes and tackle child poverty; legal changes to promote a healthy balance between work and family; and services built around the needs of children. Our third-term commitment – not a nanny state but a family-friendly government.

■ **Tackling child poverty**

We will end child poverty, starting by halving it – both in terms of relative low-income and in terms of material deprivation – by 2010-11.

Work is the best anti-poverty strategy. Tailored help, especially for lone parents, is key but we are also committed to making work pay – with a guaranteed income of at least £258 per week for those with children and in full-time work.

The benefits system needs to support all children, and those in greatest need the most. That is the rationale for universal child benefit and targeted tax credits and why we have committed to increasing the

*‘Children cannot be
the forgotten constituency
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from government.’*

Child Tax Credit at least in line with earnings up to and including 2007-08. By October 2005, families with children will be on average £1,400 per year better off, and those in the poorest fifth of the population on average £3,200 a year better off compared to 1997. Labour's Child Trust Fund creates a nest egg for newborns that they can access at age 18. It is the world's first example of a government ensuring that all children grow up with a financial stake. We are determined to see it grow and are consulting on making payments at age seven and at secondary school age, in addition to those made at birth.

The Labour Assembly Government's strategy for combating child poverty will help ensure that no child or young person in Wales is disadvantaged or prevented from achieving their full potential.

Children in greatest need require help from social services. Under Labour, the Assembly has formally adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We will ensure that each local authority in Wales has a lead director and a lead member with responsibility for children and young people. We will continue to work closely with the Children's Commissioner for Wales – the first in the UK – to keep the views and interests of children at the heart of government.

■ Universal childcare

Since devolution in 1999, over 24,000 new childcare places have been created in Wales. All four-year-olds in Wales have a school place. Half-time nursery education, in either English or Welsh, is available for any three-year-old whose parents choose it. As more childcare becomes available, so parents can get help to find work or training. Increasing childcare brings a way out of poverty and new life chances for parents and children alike.

Over the next three years we will concentrate on practical ideas to provide high-quality childcare at a reasonable cost to children and families

in Wales. We will increase the number of Welsh medium childcare places, help all newly registered childminders with a start-up grant and raise the status of childcare as a profession.

Our new curriculum for three- to seven-year-olds will integrate learning from nursery to primary school by focusing on child development and learning through play, building on the success found in other countries with this approach.

We will increase integrated centre provision across Wales over the next three years, particularly in areas of high child poverty. Seven centres are already in operation and 24 proposed centres have been approved. Community schools will also be used increasingly out of school hours and in vacations. They will be a base for delivering, not just education and training, but a range of other services including wrap-around childcare.

We will help families with incomes of up to £59,000 a year with their childcare costs through a more generous Working Tax Credit, including help for those using a nanny or au pair. Parents using childcare supported by their employer will be able to get a tax break worth up to £50 a week each.

■ **Creating time**

Over 350,000 mothers and 80,000 fathers each year are using new rights to paid maternity and paternity leave. Parents consistently say their top priority is more choice of whether to stay at home with their baby in the first year of its life. We will therefore increase paid maternity leave to nine months from 2007 – worth an extra £1,400 – with the goal of achieving a year's paid leave by the end of the Parliament while simplifying the system for employers. We want to give fathers more opportunities to spend time with their children, and are consulting on how best to do this including the option of sharing paid leave. We have already introduced the

right to request flexible working to parents of children under six and nearly a million parents have benefited. We need to balance the needs of parents and carers, with those of employers, especially small businesses. We are consulting on extending the right to request flexible working to carers of sick and disabled adults as a priority, and also on whether we should extend the right to parents of older children.

■ Supporting family life

Common sense, as well as research, says that children need to be able to depend on the love and support of both parents. The financial support we are giving families, along with new rights to flexible working and access to childcare, are all designed to support family life. Government can and should support those public and voluntary agencies that support families and parents.

‘Over 350,000 mothers and 80,000 fathers each year are using new rights to paid maternity and paternity leave.’

For those parents who do separate or divorce, both have a responsibility for a meaningful relationship with their children where that is safe. We are introducing reforms to minimise conflict and encourage conciliation by greater and early use of mediation. We stand by the principle that absent parents should make a fair contribution to the cost of the upkeep of their children, and we are committed to tackling the backlog of Child Support Agency claims as efficiently and fairly as possible. We also need to ensure court orders on access are enforced according to the best interests of the child, which ideally gives both parents an important role. Devolution of responsibility for

the divorce court welfare service – CAFCASS – to Wales means that we are better able to ensure that services on the ground fit with our broader agendas for social justice for children.

■ **Increasing homeownership**

A decent home is crucial to family well-being. Homeownership has increased by over one million with Labour and by the end of our third term we aim for it to have risen by another million to two million. Rising house prices in many areas of the country have made it difficult for people on lower incomes to get a foot on the housing ladder. So we have raised the stamp duty threshold from £60,000 to £120,000 for residential properties, exempting an extra 300,000 homebuyers from stamp duty every year.

We will take further action to assist and offer choices to people seeking their first home. We want to widen the opportunity to own or part-own, especially for more young people and those tenants who rent in the private or public sector.

Our Homebuy scheme helps people who are unable to meet their housing needs in the market to purchase a suitable property. Labour has acted to make the scheme more generous and more flexible. We will keep the scheme under review.

■ **Social housing**

While local authority housing stock has diminished due to the Right to Buy scheme, councils in Wales have improved the management of their housing to reduce vacancy levels. These have fallen to the lowest level for the past five years.

Labour is using devolved powers in Wales to reform the Right to Buy scheme in order to protect the public housing stock in specific areas of housing need.

Families: Choice and support at work and at home

Labour has already extended the housing rights of vulnerable homeless groups in Wales. Now we will legislate to restrict the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless families, and provide financial support for local authorities in doing so. We will increase the Social Housing Grant programme in Wales by 62 per cent – from £76 million to £96 million – over the next three years.

The choice for 2010

The Tories are all talk and no action on family policy. They opposed our increases in maternity and paternity pay and the introduction of flexible working rights. Even the measures they have proposed wouldn't come in until 2009, by which time the Tories are committed to making deep cuts in spending. The choice is forward with new Labour to a universal, affordable, good-quality childcare, a million more homeowners, more choice for all parents and an end to child poverty. Or back to the risky economic policies of a Tory government that would let families sink or swim whatever the pressures they face.

Wales
forward
not back

Chapter 7

International policy: A stronger country in a secure, sustainable and just world

Forward to international leadership, not back to isolation and powerlessness

- 1997: Marginalised in Europe, aid in decline and Bosnia in ruins**
- 2005: Aid doubled, elections in Iraq and Afghanistan, Kosovo and Bosnia peaceful**
- 2010: A strong Britain in a reforming Europe, 300 million out of poverty, global action on climate change**

Globalisation means that events elsewhere have a direct impact at home. So we will pursue British interests by working with our allies to make the world a safer, fairer place. This means reforming Europe. It means fighting terrorism and stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction. It means modernising our armed forces. And it means using our leading role in the G8, EU, Commonwealth and UN to promote global action on climate change and poverty.

■ **The new Labour case**

Domestic interests and international action are entwined more than ever before. Action on drugs, terrorism, people trafficking, AIDS, climate change, poverty, migration and trade all require us to work with other countries and through international organisations. The best defence of our security at home is the spread of liberty and justice overseas. In a third term we will secure Britain's place in the EU and at the heart of international decision-making. We will always uphold the rule of international law.

■ **Making Europe work better for Britain**

We are proud of Britain's EU membership and of the strong position Britain has achieved within Europe. British membership of the EU brings jobs, trade and prosperity; it boosts environmental standards, social protection and international clout. Since 1997 we have gone from marginal players, often ignored, to leaders in the European Union. Working hard with Labour MEPs, we are determined to remain leaders. Outside the EU, or on its margins, we would unquestionably be weaker and more vulnerable.

The EU now has 25 members and will continue to expand. The new Constitutional Treaty ensures the new Europe can work effectively, and that Britain keeps control of key national interests like foreign policy, taxation, social security and defence. The Treaty sets out what the

EU can do and what it cannot. It strengthens the voice of national parliaments and governments in EU affairs. It is a good treaty for Britain and for the new Europe. We will put it to the British people in a referendum and campaign whole-heartedly for a 'Yes' vote to keep Britain a leading nation in Europe.

We will also work to reform Europe. During Britain's EU presidency this year, we will work to promote economic reform, bear down on regulation; make progress in the Doha development trade round; bring closer EU membership for Turkey, the Balkans and Eastern Europe; and improving the focus and quality of EU aid so it better helps the poorest countries.

We will continue to lead European defence cooperation. We will build stronger EU defence capabilities, in harmony with NATO – the cornerstone of our defence policy – without compromising our national ability to act independently. We will ensure the new EU battle groups are equipped and organised to act quickly to save lives in humanitarian crises.

On the euro, we maintain our common-sense policy. The determining factor underpinning any government decision is the national economic interest and whether the case for joining is clear and unambiguous. The five economic tests must be met before any decision to join can be made. If the Government were to recommend joining, it would be put to a vote in Parliament and a referendum of the British people.

■ **Protecting British interests and British citizens abroad**

We will continue to provide effective support to British businesses and trade unions abroad, and we will continue to improve our ability to respond quickly to international crises and disasters which affect our citizens. The Foreign Office already provides a wide range of services for British people in difficulty overseas, and we will consult widely

before drawing up a comprehensive statement spelling out the rights and responsibilities of British travellers abroad. This will include the help people can expect from their government in times of need.

■ **Helping make you more secure**

We have worked closely with the US and other nations to combat the threat of terrorism in Afghanistan, and Iraq. The threat of the proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons – and their use by rogue states or terrorist groups – is a pressing issue for the world today. We have worked with the US to ensure that Libya has given up its WMD, and we will continue with France and Germany to ensure that Iran does not develop nuclear weapons. In North Korea we will support the multilateral approach of the Six Parties talks. We will continue to strongly support the peace process between India and Pakistan, and back moves to resolve the long-running dispute over Kashmir. And we will work to put an end to the international network of trade in weapons of mass destruction. Labour has already introduced a strict regime to control the export of conventional weapons, and we led moves for EU-wide measures. We will work actively to secure an international treaty on the arms trade.

■ **Promoting human rights, peace and democracy**

We need to be tough on terrorism and its causes. The threat of terrorism and the danger to British citizens are proven, not just by September 11th, but by repeated attacks in Europe and around the world. So we cannot sit back and hope that we will be unaffected. It is right that we do everything in our power to disrupt terrorist networks, and to challenge the conditions that help terrorism to breed.

The UN Charter proclaims the universal principles of human rights and democracy. In an uncertain world they are not only right in principle, they are important guarantees of our national security and prosperity too.

There have been major strides forward in recent years: in Indonesia, Afghanistan and many parts of Africa and Latin America, democracy is being extended.

We mourn the loss of life of innocent civilians and coalition forces in the war in Iraq and the subsequent terrorism. But the butchery of Saddam is over, and across Iraq eight million people risked their lives to vote earlier this year. Many people disagreed with the action we took in Iraq. We respect and understand their views. But we should all now unite to support the fledgling democracy in Iraq. British troops should remain in Iraq under a United Nations mandate as long as the democratically elected government there wants them. They will continue to train Iraqi security forces to take responsibility for their own future.

We welcome the wider process of democratic reform across the Middle East, and we will work with our allies to encourage and promote economic and political change.

We strongly support the peace process between Israel and Palestine. Resolution of the conflict is crucial to peace in the region and the wider world. The conference held in London in March 2005 has started the process of helping a democratic government in Palestine build security and prosperity. We will work tirelessly to bring about a peace settlement in which a viable and independent state of Palestine lives alongside a safe and secure Israel.

■ **Supporting our armed forces**

Britain's armed forces are among the best in the world. They are able to play a key role in advancing our interests and values. We want to keep it that way.

We are immensely proud of the bravery, skill and dedication our armed forces have demonstrated in Afghanistan, Iraq, Sierra Leone, the

‘Domestic interests and international action are entwined more than ever before. Action on drugs, terrorism, people trafficking, AIDS, climate change, poverty, migration and trade all require us to work with other countries and through international organisations.’

Balkans and elsewhere across the world. They are a force for good. We will never commit forces to battle unless it is essential; but when they are committed they will have the investment, strategy, training and preparation they need. That is one reason we have given the armed forces the biggest sustained increase in funding since the end of the Cold War. But we also know that modern demands on our armed forces are changing. That is why reform and modernisation are essential. A reduction in the number of infantry battalions, made possible because of the improved security situation in Northern Ireland, has allowed extra resources for the vital support services such as signals, engineers, intelligence and logistics units – the parts of the Army most under pressure. This is essential to allow our infantry soldiers to be fully supported when they go into action on our behalf. We will continue with the investment and reform that make our fighting forces the most flexible and effective in the world.

We are also committed to retaining the independent nuclear deterrent and we will continue to work, both bilaterally and through the UN, to urge states not yet party to non-proliferation treaties, notably the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to join.

■ **Veterans**

Labour has always recognised the sacrifice and bravery of our servicemen and women. That is why we were the first government to appoint a Minister for Veterans Affairs. This has enabled us to put veterans' affairs at the heart of decision-making at the Ministry of Defence. Labour has also put more money than ever before into veterans' issues, including £27 million of Lottery funding over the last two years. We will continue to give priority to veterans' affairs as we mark 60 years since the end of the Second World War.

■ **Reforming the United Nations**

The UN is crucial to our efforts to build a more secure and more

prosperous world. We support the reform of the Security Council so it becomes more representative and has a stronger focus on conflict prevention. We support the recommendations of the Secretary General's High-Level Panel for a Peace-building Commission to assist countries emerging from conflict and to develop mechanisms to enhance conflict prevention. We will press for more radical reform of the UN humanitarian system, so it is better equipped to save lives. We will also press for reform of the World Bank and IMF to improve transparency, give more say to developing countries and, with the EU, better focus their efforts on the poorest countries, particularly in Africa.

■ Climate change and Africa

Britain has the chair of the G8 this year. We will use the summit for two particular purposes.

First, climate change is one of the most pressing challenges that the world faces. We will continue to lead internationally on climate change, and to strive for wider acceptance of the science and the steps needed to combat the problem. We will look beyond Kyoto and promote an international dialogue to reach agreement on the long-term goals and action needed to stabilise the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. We will also work for effective international action to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The UK has already met its obligations under the Kyoto protocol. We remain committed to achieving a 20 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions on 1990 levels by 2010, and our review of progress this summer will show us how to get back on track. A 60 per cent reduction by 2050 remains necessary and achievable.

We will continue to promote and develop renewable energy sources, to seek high standards of energy efficiency in the public and private sectors, and to support emissions trading in Europe and beyond.

Secondly, we will focus on Africa and the global fight against poverty. We have more than doubled aid since 1997. We have cancelled the debts of the poorest countries and are now pushing others to follow our lead and offer 100 per cent debt relief for the poorest. We are proud to have established a Department for International Development, with a clear mission to reduce poverty. Now, for the first time ever the UK has a clear timetable – 2013 – for achieving the UN target of 0.7 per cent of national income devoted to development. Globally we are pressing for a doubling of aid backed by getting international agreement to an International Finance Facility as supported by the Commission for Africa.

But aid will not be successful without conflict prevention, good governance and zero tolerance of corruption. We will work for faster repatriation of stolen assets from UK financial institutions, ratification of the UN Convention on corruption, and more open and accountable reporting of revenues from oil and mining – that so often fuel local conflicts. Our commitment is to the people of the developing world; our contract is with their governments for reform. But if poor countries are committed to good governance and poverty reduction we then believe they should be in control of their own policies. We will end the practice of making aid conditional on sensitive economic policy choices, such as trade liberalisation and privatisation.

With this leadership and extra money we can now work to ensure all children go to school, and millions of people in Asia and Africa suffering from AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria have access to treatment. In particular, we will press for an international agreement on universal access to AIDS treatment by 2010 and for all people in poor countries to have access to free basic healthcare and education. Our long-term aim is to help lift a billion people out of poverty

■ Fair trade

We also know that without fairer trade rules and private investment, poor countries will not generate the growth needed to lift themselves out of poverty. We will press for the conclusion of an ambitious trade deal that will completely open markets to exports from poorer countries; for further reform of rich countries' agricultural subsidies, including the EU's Common Agricultural Policy and a 2010 timetable to end agricultural export subsidies. We do not believe poor countries should be forced to liberalise. We will allow them to sequence their trade reforms, so they can build their capacity to compete globally.

The choice for 2010

In 1997 the Tories had left Britain isolated in Europe, overseas aid had declined and we lacked any coherent vision of our place in the world. With new Labour a strong Britain will force international terrorism into retreat, and help spread democracy and freedom around the world. We will be leaders in a reformed Europe and, with others, make significant progress towards raising a billion people out of extreme poverty. We will fight for a new global agreement on climate change, an arms trade treaty, and a trade deal that makes trade work for the many, not just the few. Our armed forces will continue to be the best in the world. The alternative is to go back to the Tories with their record of cuts in aid and defence, and their policies of tearing up the Social Chapter, and marginalising Britain in Europe and the world.

Wales
forward
not back

Chapter 8

Quality of life: Excellence for all

Forward to Olympic gold, not back to cuts in sports and culture

1992-1997: **Arts spending cut by 13 per cent in real terms**

2005: **Free entry to national museums**

2012: **An Olympic legacy for Britain**

Arts, culture and sport are thriving in Wales and Britain – enriching individual lives and transforming communities, towns and cities. They are important in their own right – as nourishment for our imagination or a source of plain enjoyment – and our local environment should be a source of pride. But they are also a source of jobs, regeneration and education. We will work to improve the quality of life of every community in Britain.

■ **The new Labour case**

We believe in the inherent value of arts, culture and sport. Our towns and cities are being energised by sports and culture, and as they are regenerated the quality of life for all is transformed. As we build on this change, our progressive challenge is to broaden participation as widely as possible, making the links between sport and health, and culture and well-being. We must combine the broadest base of participation with the ability for the most talented to progress to the very top. Our third term will embed the expectation that every child and every adult have the maximum chance to develop their creative or sporting talents.

■ **Creative Wales**

Art and culture are valuable for their own sake; they are also crucial to our national prosperity. Britain's cultural industries, from computer games to the fine arts, are gaining global recognition and generating real wealth. This is one of the fastest-growing and fastest-changing areas of the economy. And the transformation of our great cities is, in large part, a story of culture-led regeneration.

The new Creative Industries Strategy for Wales will be implemented, with much greater opportunities for wealth-creating companies in Wales. And to help young talent get the right start we will work to establish Creative Apprenticeships. Through the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) we are funding the

Creative Pioneer Academy which will develop the entrepreneurial skills of recent graduates with outstanding talents and original business ideas – and for some there will be the offer of up to £35,000 to start their own business.

■ **Arts, culture and museums**

Since 1997 we have increased funding for the arts by 87 per cent in Wales. Welsh National Opera now has a new home in the Wales Millennium Centre. Thanks to our policy of free admissions the number of people visiting formerly charging national museums and galleries has risen by 75 per cent over three years. Many are first-time visitors, with the biggest increases among children.

Our national museums have increased the numbers of visitors from less advantaged communities and the opening of the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea will no doubt continue this success. Extra funding has been allocated to support maintenance in our national museums across Wales, to allow local communities to promote performances in their areas, and for the touring theatre programme that targets communities where opportunities to see the best performances on offer in Wales have previously been rare.

We will legislate, as soon as time allows, to implement the findings of the Heritage Protection Review, which allows the public a greater say in listing decisions.

■ **Sport for all**

Getting involved in sport is fun in its own right, and it brings greater health, fitness and well-being. Sport plays a crucial role in our communities – by far the largest number of volunteers in our country are involved in running sports clubs.

The amount of funding channelled to sport and physical activity in Wales will more than double over the next three years. This record investment will be used to encourage greater participation across Wales and in all communities.

Children who enjoy sport and physical activity while at school are far more likely to take regular exercise when they grow up. We need to see at least 90 per cent of boys and girls of secondary school age taking part in sport and physical activity for at least 60 minutes, five times a week. To help us achieve this, we are extending the highly popular Dragon Sport scheme in secondary schools.

More than 73,000 children from around 1,000 primary schools have benefited from Dragon Sport's work and by 2007-08, we want to establish these programmes in no less than half of secondary schools in Wales.

We want to encourage participation in sport among all ages, and that is why we will continue to fund the free swimming scheme for children and older people.

We want to encourage more adults and children to join sports clubs. Coaches are vital to the development of sport at all levels and we will continue to invest in order to strengthen the network of community-based coaches.

We will be investing at least £1 million a year in priority sports with the aim both of boosting mass participation at grassroots level and of increasing international success among our elite athletes and sportsmen and women.

Having passed the necessary legislation, we remain committed to completing the sale of the Tote to a Racing Trust.

*‘Our towns and cities
are being energised by
sports and culture, and as
they are regenerated the
quality of life for
all is transformed.’*

■ The Olympics

Britain's medal hauls at the Sydney Olympics in 2000 and in Athens in 2004 were the best for over 80 years, and we maintained our position as one of the leading nations in the Paralympics. Now we are supporting the bid to bring the Olympics to London in 2012. Our plans will leave a lasting sporting, economic and cultural legacy for the whole of Britain. As we approach the Olympics we will continue to invest in elite athletes through Elite Cymru and will work hard to ensure that Welsh athletes and the Welsh economy benefit directly from a successful bid.

■ Libraries in the information age

Our libraries represent the legacy of progressive action and are a key part of our preparedness for the future. More money has been invested to implement new information technology to produce a modernising system for managing the National Library's collections and digital materials. We will continue to invest in improving services and inspiring learning in libraries, archives and local museums through the innovative CyMAL grant scheme.

■ The Welsh language

We will continue to ensure that the Welsh language is a source of pride and strength to all people in Wales. Recent record increases in spending will be focused on promoting the language to all people in Wales and encouraging the learning of Welsh among those who have not had the opportunity previously. We will create more opportunities for people to learn Welsh in response to the rising demand.

■ Public service broadcasting and the BBC

We support a strong, independent and world-class BBC with clearly defined public purposes at the heart of a healthy public broadcasting system. We will replace the BBC Governors with a BBC Trust to ensure that the BBC's governance and regulation is

accountable to the licence-fee payers to whom it belongs. The licence fee will be guaranteed for the whole of the ten-year Royal Charter that will take effect on 1 January 2007. Channel 4 will continue to be a publicly owned broadcaster providing distinctive competition to the BBC. ITV and Five will also be retained in our public service broadcasting system.

We will also work towards a secure future for broadcasting in Welsh through S4C and the BBC in this period of rapid technological change.

■ **Digital switchover**

The success of satellite and cable television in driving take-up of digital shows how changes in technology bring real benefits – in terms of greater choice, and increasingly, in access to services. Our aim is to make those benefits available to all. We will achieve digital switchover between 2008 and 2012 ensuring universal access to high-quality, free-to-view and subscription digital TV. This will happen region by region, and we will make sure that the interests of elderly people and other vulnerable groups are protected.

■ **Digital challenge**

We will deliver our cross-government strategy for closing the digital divide and using ICT to further transform public services:

** A Digital Challenge for a local authority to be a national and international pathfinder in universal digital service provision.*

** A new National Internet Safety Unit to make Britain the safest place in the world to access the internet.*

■ **Copyright in a digital age**

We will modernise copyright and other forms of protection of intellectual property rights so that they are appropriate for the digital age. We will use our presidency of the EU to look at how to ensure content

creators can protect their innovations in a digital age. Piracy is a growing threat and we will work with industry to protect against it.

■ Film

The strength of Britain's film industry is a source of pride, and employment. We will continue to make the UK the right place to invest in film production. We will legislate to provide new tax reliefs that will ensure support is delivered directly and efficiently to those who produce films.

We will work with the UK Film Council to achieve a higher priority for funding film festivals around the country, in particular for the Edinburgh Film Festival, the oldest in Britain.

*'We want to encourage participation
in sport among all ages.'*

■ The Lottery

Every single part of British life has been touched by the £15 billion generated for good causes by the Lottery. Labour has made the Lottery more inclusive and more in tune with people's priorities. We have created the Big Lottery Fund and given it an explicit mandate to involve people not just in setting strategy but also in awarding grants. Our Lottery Bill will give a duty and a power to every Lottery distributor to involve the public more radically in decision-making at every level.

By the end of 2005 we will put in place a new, national consultation on the way that the National Lottery good causes proceeds are spent after the new Lottery Licence is awarded in 2009.

■ **The local environment**

The quality of our local environment is vital to our well-being and our natural environment is a key part of our national heritage.

The environment starts at the front door, and we have made action to improve the cleanliness of public spaces and communities a priority. The 2005 Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act will give local authorities and regulators the powers they have asked for to tackle litter, graffiti, abandoned cars, fly-tipping, noise pollution and other environmental concerns. We will continue to increase kerbside collection of recyclable materials across Wales, reaching 40 per cent of municipal waste recycled or composted by 2010. In Wales we will consult on the principle of whether polluters will have the opportunity to invest in environmental remediation or new local environmental projects rather than just pay fines. Rather than 'polluter pays', this new system would mean the 'polluter improves'.

Welsh beaches, rivers and drinking water are now of the highest ever quality. All beaches in Wales comply with European standards and a record 35 beaches achieved the prestigious blue flag beach status in 2004. And we have added 90 new special sites of conservation this year.

All new or refurbished public buildings paid for by the Welsh Assembly Government will be built to high design quality and high environmental standards on issues such as energy efficiency and water use.

Through a Marine Act, we will introduce a new framework for the seas, based on marine spatial planning, that balances conservation, energy and resource needs. To obtain best value from different uses of our valuable marine resources, we must maintain and protect the ecosystems on which they depend.

The choice for 2010

The Tories have always neglected the arts, seeing them as an easy target for cuts. They do not understand the role that culture can play in the lives of individuals, in the futures of our towns and cities, and in the prosperity of our country. The choice is forward with new Labour to more sport in schools, arts for all children and young people, and record investment in arts, sport and the Welsh language. Or back to Tory cuts that put that investment at risk.

**Wales
forward
not back**

Chapter 9

Democracy: Power devolved, citizens empowered

**Forward to reform and
decentralisation, not back
to opportunism and neglect**

1979-1997: Power centralised to Whitehall

**1997-2005: Power devolved to Scotland,
Wales, London**

**2010: Stronger local government with
local communities able to make the
key decisions about their own areas**

In our first two terms we enshrined a new constitutional settlement between the nations of the United Kingdom. In our next term we will complete the reform of the House of Lords so that it is a modern and effective revising Chamber. We will create a stronger Assembly in Wales with enhanced legislative powers. And we will devolve more power to local authorities and local communities giving people real power over the issues that matter most to them.

■ **The new Labour case**

Widening access to power is as important as widening access to wealth and opportunity. National standards are important to ensure fairness but the best way to tackle exclusion is to give choice and power to those left behind. Our political institutions – including our own party – must engage a population overloaded with information, diverse in its values and lifestyles, and sceptical of power. However people are passionate about politics – when they see it affects them. So our challenge is to bridge the chasm between government and governed. Our third term will build upon our unprecedented programme of constitutional reform; embedding a culture of devolved government at the centre and self-government in our communities.

■ **Building from the community up**

People want a sense of control over their own community. We will provide communities with new powers over the problems that confront them when they step outside their front door – issues like litter, graffiti and anti-social behaviour.

Over 85 per cent of the communities of Wales have town or community councils, and all have the right to create such councils. We will offer further means by which communities may choose to take control over what matters most to them. We will work with local authorities to allow them to provide funds for communities to spend on local priorities

and new opportunities for communities to assume greater responsibility or even ownership of community assets like village halls, community centres, libraries or recreational facilities.

■ **A vibrant civil society**

We believe that enterprises in the mutual and cooperative sector have an important role to play in the provision of local services, from health to education, from leisure to care for the vulnerable. As democratic, not-for-profit organisations, they can help to involve local people in shaping the services they want, unleash creativity and innovation, create jobs and provide new services – especially in communities where traditional services have failed local people in the past.

We have introduced a new legal form – the Community Interest Company (CIC) – and want to support new enterprises. As a major stimulus to this sector, central government and local authorities will work with these ‘social enterprises’ wherever possible. Where services can be provided by mutuals, cooperatives or CICs to the required standards of quality and value for money, they should be positively encouraged to develop and be included in procurement policies. We will discuss with local authorities the best way to achieve this.

In a range of services, the voluntary and community sector has shown itself to be innovative, efficient and effective. Its potential for service delivery should be considered on equal terms. We will continue to improve the context in which the gifting of time and resources to the voluntary sector takes place. We will reintroduce the widely supported reforms in the Charities Bill.

We understand that often the spark for local innovation and change comes from one or two dedicated, visionary individuals. These people, sometimes dubbed ‘social entrepreneurs’, deserve our full support. We will develop a framework of incentives and rewards, to recognise the

special people in every community whose voluntary efforts transform the lives of others.

■ **A better alternative for young people**

We know that parents and young people think that there should be more things to do and places to go for teenagers. We recognise that all young people should have access to a wider set of activities after the school day, such as sport and the arts. We are determined that better provision will be allied to a stronger voice for the young themselves in designing and managing local provision. Building on extra investment announced in the Budget, we will expand and incentivise volunteering among young people.

■ **Councils: more freedom, less bureaucracy**

Strong communities ultimately require strong local government. We will give councils further freedoms to deliver better local services, subject to minimum national standards. We will reduce unnecessary bureaucracy by cutting both the cost and number of inspections, and we will simplify the many funding streams available to local areas. We will also give councils greater stability by providing three-year funding. We will radically reduce the amount of paper and plans that local authorities have to produce – encouraging local authorities to plan broadly and with vision for the future needs of their communities. We will continue to deliver efficiency savings and improvements to local services through joint procurement, joint working, streamlining administrative structures while promoting decision-making at the level that will make a difference.

■ **Council tax under control**

Labour recognises the concerns that have been raised about the level of council tax. This year, we have delivered the lowest council tax increase in over a decade through a combination of extra investment and a veto on excessive increases.

We will continue to invest in local services with year-on-year increases in grant to local councils, and we will retain our reserve capping powers – ensuring that council taxpayers are protected from excessive rises in council tax.

We remain concerned that many council taxpayers are not claiming reductions in their council tax bills to which they are already entitled. We will therefore introduce measures to make it easier for pensioners and people on low incomes to claim Council Tax Benefit.

In the longer term, we are committed to reforming council tax and will consider carefully the conclusions of the Lyons Review into local government finance.

■ **The nations and regions of the UK**

In our first term, we devolved power to Scotland and Wales and restored city-wide government to London. Britain is stronger as a result. In the next Parliament, we will decentralise power further.

Labour is the party of devolution in Wales. We campaigned for and secured a ‘Yes’ vote in the 1997 referendum and since 1999 have led an Assembly Government committed to achieving full employment and record investment in our schools and hospitals.

But the experience of the last six years shows the need for further reform. In a third term we will legislate for a stronger Assembly with enhanced legislative powers. We will improve the accountability of Ministers by ending the confusing corporate status of the Assembly, thereby ensuring that the people of Wales know who is responsible for the decisions taken in their names.

Alongside these changes we will prevent candidates from standing on both the list and in a constituency in order to make all candidates gen-

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uinely accountable to the electorate and to end Assembly Members being elected via the backdoor even when they have already been rejected by voters.

■ Northern Ireland

The Belfast Agreement on Good Friday 1998 was a remarkable achievement. Life in Northern Ireland is immeasurably better as a result. A huge programme of reform in policing, justice and rights, together with the lowest ever unemployment has helped address the inequalities of the past and has created a new confidence.

It is unacceptable that seven years after the agreement there are still paramilitary groups involved in criminality and punishment attacks. This has to end. The period of transition is over. Unionist politicians have made it clear that they are prepared to share power with nationalists and republicans if violence is ended once and for all. It is time for all groups in Northern Ireland to make it clear they will only use democratic and peaceful means to advance their aims.

We will work tirelessly with the parties in Northern Ireland and with the Irish government to re-establish the devolved institutions. But this can only happen on an inclusive basis if the IRA ends paramilitarism and criminality for good and decommissions its weapons. Bringing this about so that normal politics can take over in the Province will be our principal aim.

Loyalist paramilitary violence and criminality is equally intolerable. We will ensure that it is dealt with severely while providing the assistance necessary to Loyalist communities to ensure that prosperity is spread throughout Northern Ireland.

■ Parliamentary reform

Labour has already taken steps to make the House of Commons more

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representative, through all-women shortlists. Labour will also continue to support reforms that improve parliamentary accountability and scrutiny led by the successful Modernisation Committee.

In our first term, we ended the absurdity of a House of Lords dominated by hereditary peers. Labour believes that a reformed Upper Chamber must be effective, legitimate and more representative without challenging the primacy of the House of Commons.

Following a review conducted by a committee of both Houses, we will seek agreement on codifying the key conventions of the Lords, and developing alternative forms of scrutiny that complement rather than replicate those of the Commons; the review should also explore how the Upper Chamber might offer a better route for public engagement in scrutiny and policy-making. We will legislate to place reasonable limits on the time bills spend in the Second Chamber – no longer than 60 sitting days for most bills.

As part of the process of modernisation, we will remove the remaining hereditary peers and allow a free vote on the composition of the House.

Labour remains committed to reviewing the experience of the new electoral systems – introduced for the devolved administrations, the European Parliament and the London Assembly. A referendum remains the right way to agree any change for Westminster.

Having been the first government to take action to clean up the funding of political parties, we will continue to work with the independent Electoral Commission to explore how best to support the vital democratic role of political parties while recognising that campaigning activity must always be funded by parties from their own resources.

Since 1997 there has been a flowering of innovative forms of public engagement, for example, the Citizens Council used by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence to advise on ethical dilemmas. With the growing importance of new public policy issues and dilemmas – particularly those arising from scientific advances – we will continue to explore new and innovative forms of public engagement raising their profile and status in policy-making.

■ **A voice for all**

A fully democratic society depends on giving everyone a voice and stake. Only Labour governments have ever introduced race relations legislation, and laws passed in 2000 are ensuring that all public bodies promote diversity and tackle discrimination against black and Asian Britons. We will continue to promote civil rights for disabled people, ensuring full implementation of the new positive duty on the public sector to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. We will also introduce a similar duty to promote equality of opportunity between women and men, and we will further extend protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief. We are committed to improving the rights and opportunities of gays and lesbians, that's why we brought in legislation on civil partnerships, reducing the age of consent, repealed Section 28 and reformed the sexual offences legislation so that it was no longer discriminatory.

It remains our firm and clear intention to give people of all faiths the same protection against incitement to hatred on the basis of their religion. We will legislate to outlaw it and will continue the dialogue we have started with faith groups from all backgrounds about how best to balance protection, tolerance and free speech.

We are proud to have brought in the Human Rights Act, enabling British citizens to take action in British courts rather than having to wait years to seek redress in Strasbourg. But rights must be balanced

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by responsibilities so we will continue to bear down on abusive or frivolous claims.

In the next Parliament, we will establish a Commission on Equality and Human Rights to promote equality for all and tackle discrimination. And introduce a Single Equality Act to modernise and simplify equality legislation.

The choice for 2010

The Tories have only one policy on democratic reform – opportunism. Arch centralisers when in office, they now claim to be localists. Having refused for decades to accept any reform of the archaic House of Lords, some of them now claim to support a fully elected House. The choice is forward with new Labour to modern institutions and more power than ever devolved to communities and successful local authorities. Or back with the Tories to a government indifferent to the health of our democracy and negligent of our institutions.

*‘Our vision is clear:
a country more equal in its
opportunities, more secure
in its communities, more
confident in its future.’*

Tony Blair

Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party