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Centre Write

Autumn 2017

Conservatism refresh

The Rt Hon Justine Greening MP | Jacob Rees-Mogg MP | The Rt Hon Ken Clarke MP | Sir Craig Oliver

Photo: Save the Children/Jonathan Hyams

SAVE THE CHILDREN
ANNUAL RECEPTION

Co-hosted by ConservativeHome

Tuesday 3 October
9.30pm – 11pm
Charter 4
Manchester Central

Speakers include:

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State for International Development

The Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP

Paul Goodman
Editor, ConservativeHome

Kevin Watkins
Chief Executive, Save the Children

Refreshments will be provided, wheelchair accessible

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governmentrelations@savethechildren.org.uk

Save the Children

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Bright Blue is an independent think tank and pressure group for liberal conservatism.

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Editor's letter

Laura Round is the Editor of Centre Write and Communications Manager at Bright Blue

The centre-right is in trouble: capitalism is under attack from the socialist left, young voters have deserted the Conservative Party and many liberal conservatives are feeling politically neglected.

First Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Damian Green MP, recently echoed these concerns at Bright Blue's annual conference, saying the Conservative Party is going to have to "change hard" if it wants to win a majority at the next general election.

Targeting working-class Labour and UKIP voters by trading off socially liberal voters was a gamble that lost the Conservative Party its majority. Economic and social liberalism appeals to the younger generations, yet this liberal conservatism has been rejected by the Prime Minister over the past year. These are points reiterated by our Chair, **Matthew d'Ancona** (p.27), who argues liberal conservatism is needed now, more than ever.

This edition of *Centre Write* explores the challenges facing conservatism today, drawing from many different voices on the right.

> **"The Conservative Party is going to have to 'change hard' if it wants to win a majority at the next general election."**

Julian Glover (p.8) hopes that the conservatism which encompasses a generous, liberal worldview will resurface at this year's Conservative Party conference, arguing the Conservative Party needs a basic explanation of motives and ideas. In our letter exchange (p.10), **Sam Bowman** from the Adam Smith Institute and **David Skelton** from Renewal go head to head to debate what the role of the state should be in conservative thinking.

In our new dialogue (p.20), **Lord Finkelstein, the Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP, Sir Craig Oliver** and **Jacob Rees-Mogg MP** discuss what went wrong in the last election and how to sell capitalism. With Jeremy Corbyn's popularity increasing in the polls, our Associate Fellow **Kate Maltby** (p.18) urges conservatives to do a better job of explaining to millennials why socialism isn't all it's cracked up to be.

Former MP **Douglas Carswell** (p.19) explores whether there is still an electoral threat for the Conservative Party from the populist right after the EU Referendum. And, just in case you've forgotten, negotiating Brexit is the biggest challenge facing the Government today: London's MEP **Syed Kamall** (p.12) recognises that wounds from the Referendum are still healing but urges 'Leave' and 'Remain' conservatives to unite.

> **"It's time for the centre-right to come together to fight the real threat of socialism in modern Britain."**

There is no inherent reason young people should be more attracted to left-wing thinking, let alone a hard-left, socialist candidate. Yet, worryingly, the under 45s overwhelmingly believe the Labour Party have the answers when it comes to issues such as housing, tax, unemployment and the economy. I asked a number of conservative politicians and thinkers, including **the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP** and **Lord Heseltine**, what they believe are the biggest challenges facing conservatism (p.14).

These debates aren't taking place in Britain alone. **Ted Bromund** (p.25) from the US think tank the Heritage Foundation explains that the challenges facing conservatism in the US are structural and that a winner-takes-all style politics is on the ascendency. Our Associate Fellow, **Rupert Myers** (p.24), takes a look at France and explores what conservatives can learn from President Macron's success.

In the *Centre Write* interview, Education Secretary the Rt Hon Justine Greening MP argues that the Conservative Party needs to adapt to keep up with social change in Britain. She believes "the younger generations want to hear from us, and they deserve a better choice" than a socialist Labour party. Finally, I profile the father of the House, **the Rt Hon Ken Clarke MP** (p.34), exploring his views on leadership, conservatism and, of course, Brexit.

It's time for the centre-right to come together to fight the real threat of socialism in modern Britain.

Director's note

Ryan Shorthouse is the Director of Bright Blue

It wasn't just students who voted, in growing numbers, for a radical left-wing alternative in this year's general election. For everyone under the age of 47, more people voted Labour than Conservative. Age rather than social class is now a stronger predictor for the way people vote.

Are younger people struggling so much – so poor and powerless in modern Britain – that they are suddenly convinced socialism is the solution? Young people today do face unique challenges: compared to their parents, it takes them longer to buy a house and to pay for their higher education. A small and unfortunate minority are afflicted by evils such as mental health problems, permanent poverty and homelessness. Conservatives have been warned: no wonder young people don't like the capitalism you defend and represent, if they haven't got any chance of owning capital.

Honestly, come off it: for most young people, this country is a privileged place to live in, both historically and internationally. The UK has record levels of employment, including youth employment. Educational attainment and entrepreneurial activity amongst the young continues to rise. Travel and technology have enabled amazing opportunities that were unavailable for most younger people decades ago. They are living in a much more tolerant and safer society than in the past.

Marxism, luckily, has had little impact on Britain. But it continues to have considerable influence on how prominent people describe how society works. Specifically, the propagation of identity politics, where society is perceived not to be a collection of individuals with differing agency, morals, experiences and relationships, but simply of conflicting social groups wrestling for power.

Marxists started this, of course, with the idea that the bourgeoisie had the proletariat in chains. But the list of victims has expanded enormously over time. Blind to their adoption of leftist thinking, even many on the right now believe Britain is like *The Hunger Games*, with only a 'liberal metropolitan elite' benefitting and everyone else suffering. In vogue now, especially among left-wing politicians and organisations, is the absurd notion that all young people are sufferers. It is the persistently poor, not the persistently impatient, who we should focus our sympathy and resources on.

> **"Conservatism needs to embrace and champion both social liberalism and social justice."**

Even if the world is not a disaster for most young people, the case for capitalism not crumbling in front of their eyes, the Conservative Party has moved further away from the priorities and values of younger generations this year. Perhaps the majority of younger folk are actually quite conservative: more fearful of losing the liberal Britain they enjoy, rather than yearning for a new socialist utopia. Perhaps a bigger influence on their vote this time wasn't Corbyn's barmy spending and nationalising plans, but May's illiberal agenda encompassing a 'hard Brexit', tough controls on immigration, downgrading of human rights and scepticism of 'citizens of the world'.

Numerous attitudinal studies of young people in recent years reveal common trends: a generation that is more likely to believe in the importance of personal freedom and responsibility, with support for gay rights and and scepticism with state welfare standing out. In other words, most young people would probably be comfortable describing themselves as economically and socially liberal.

So, to win over the hearts and minds of young people, conservatism need not abandon fiscal discipline or responsible capitalism. Rather, conservatism needs to embrace and champion both social liberalism and social justice. The Prime Minister, therefore, should do two things. First, prioritise the development of meaningful policies to tackle the 'burning injustices' she cares deeply about. Second, abandon the closed – rather than open – communitarianism she has been articulating in recent years, which wrongly blames immigration and human rights for undermining the security of ordinary Britons.

Conservatives should not just offer young people this new vision, but practical policies too. It is no good believing, as the authors of the last Tory election manifesto did, that policies that take away from older people – for example, abandoning the Triple Lock on state pensions – will appeal to younger folk. They need a positive offer.

A good start would be two distinctively Tory policies to better help young people with the cost of living and housing, which they do have genuine concerns about. First, raise the salary threshold for repaying student loans, currently frozen at £21,000 until 2021. Raising this threshold each year at least in line with average earnings would give young graduates a Tory tax cut. Second, stamp duty should be substantially reduced, if not cut entirely, for almost all first-time property buyers. This would reduce some of the significant amount of cash young people need to save to get on to the property ladder.

Letters to the editor

Send your letters to laura@brightblue.org.uk

I am heartened to see that the urgent need to engage and enthuse a new generation of voters with core conservative ideas is so widely shared ('The conservative state: small, strong and strategic', Summer 2017).

However, we must not underestimate this challenge. When Margaret Thatcher presented her ideas in the 1970s she had the advantage of context. She was able to successfully articulate a positive alternative vision, against the backdrop of a daily reality where left-wing ideas had very clearly failed.

Today, as we present our conservative ideas to this new generation of voters, we lack such recent context of what a hard-left alternative really looks like. It will therefore be up to us to provide a retrospective history lesson, to help explain why many of the left-wing ideas being presented as new and exciting, are actually old ideas re-packaged, and bad ones at that. But, herein I fear, lies a danger. In providing such a history lesson there is a real risk that we ourselves come across as sounding negative, condescending, and backwards-looking or even, dare I say it, nasty.

This is not to say that we should not highlight the lessons of history in our critique of socialism, indeed we must. But, as we do so we should also demonstrate, even more loudly, the very great merits of our own ideas so that people are enthused by our positive vision, rather than just convinced by our critique of the alternative.

Thomas Fieldhouse *member of Bright Blue*

The Conservative Government has rightly embraced the mass rollout of electric vehicles (EVs), which will reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, and help transform our power sector to a cleaner, more flexible grid ('Driving off into the future', Spring 2017). However, there are policy challenges to overcome if all new vehicles are to be zero-emission by 2040.

Smart charging – the ability to feed power back into the grid at peak times – will be essential in managing the impact of an additional 40 million EVs on the grid. However, while the technology is ready, we are yet to find a model that makes sure every player, including the drivers themselves, benefit.

The nature of charging itself will surely shift. Around half of British homes have no off-street parking, and with an increasingly urban population this looks unlikely to change. The current model of relying on slow overnight charges may not be realistic without a guaranteed spot outside your front door.

Conservatives recognise that economic growth and environmental preservation go hand in hand, and the manufacture of EVs in the UK can form an important part of the modern clean economy – but there's work to do before we can make the electric dream a reality.

Sam Richards *member of Bright Blue*

The Rt Hon Lord Francis Maude is absolutely right to call on conservatives to re-engage with and champion the benefits of capitalism ('Capitalism is core to conservatism', Summer 2017). With a radical socialism sweeping through a younger generation of new Labour voters, now more than ever we must fight to champion the opportunities of free enterprise and business.

Through our rhetoric we must offer a vision of a united Party built on pragmatism, common sense and economic ability. Beyond this, though, we must reach out to those voters the Prime Minister spoke to on the steps of Downing Street on her first day in office – those who feel left behind and dispossessed by a global economic system that all too often appears alien, unaccountable and tilted in favour of the rich and privileged.

A truly global Britain should seek to reap the benefits of globalisation but it should also not be afraid to be bold in making the economy work for ordinary voters – calling out corporate excess and tax avoidance, closing loopholes and overhauling regulatory framework. It is through this boldness that voters will understand capitalism's vital role as a key component of both wealth creation and social progress. To stray from these values is to betray not only our Party's legacy but also the economic futures of the next generation.

James Baker *member of Bright Blue and board member of the Tory Reform Group*

Contents for conservatism

Beyond Brexit, what should conservatives fight for? **Julian Glover** opines

Julian Glover
was previously chief speechwriter to Prime Minister David Cameron

Thinking about conservatism in Britain, without thinking about Brexit, is becoming ever harder. The spring has been poisoned. This leaves those of us sympathetic to a gently-sceptical, generously-patriotic, largely-tolerant political force in favour of liberty with a problem.

Our state of permanent national anxiety does not have to be the new normal. But large parts of the Conservative Party have gone mad, seeming to prefer a diet of nationalist revolution, pretending that the impossible is possible, and doing so in opposition to the instincts which have so often led Conservatives: respect for Parliament and the legal process; support for the principle of the market and the concerns of business; and doubt about the politics of agitation.

We complain, as we should, that there is nothing conservative about the manic pursuit of an imagined claim to enforce the will of the people. But saying this over and over again, while therapeutic, will get the rest of us nowhere. As grim as the glazed-eyed Brexiteers may be, at least they are doing what they believe.

What, though, are we hearing from those who disagree? Able younger Conservatives with generous views and talent – the sort of people who actually wanted the Big Society and were disappointed with Cameron when he grew bored with it – seem silent, with the exception, in Scotland, of Ruth Davidson, and in London, of George Osborne, whose bitterness goes beyond the personal and who reminds us of a time when liberal Tories stood up for themselves.

These people did not join the Conservative Party to defend the narrow values of a declining sect. But they fear becoming part of one now. Maybe some of them are preparing their assault, developing ideas, finding allies, refinding a robust case for liberal conservatism. Bright Blue do good work on this, but does it resonate, these days, within the wider Party? If it is happening among English conservatives beyond the offices of think tanks, I see little sign of it.

> **"Thinking about conservatism in Britain, without thinking about Brexit, is becoming ever harder."**

What is being done to bring in support and interest from beyond the confines of the old, the angry and the frightened who backed the Conservatives in 2017? Where is the intelligence, the decency, the realism, the internationalism which, at its best, trimmed the Party's excesses? The appeal to the young, the tolerant and the positive?

What kind of rogue Tory antibodies are driving them from the bloodstream?

Perhaps this will continue. Perhaps the Conservative Party is now driven by some inner urge to be, and be considered, a party of reaction. Such a strand of thinking always existed within the Party. It has a right to, in a democracy of many shades but few routes to power. But seldom has it come this close to capturing the citadel.

What a surrender that would be to both political extremes for this to happen now. What a misrepresentation of the gentle conservatism that can also encompass a generous, liberal worldview. There are, as the chancellor-turned-editor says, millions of people out there hoping for something better and in Parliament a majority of Conservative MPs surely still want to offer it.

So how do they do this? The usual wallpaper of conference speeches will be pasted up this week in Manchester and perhaps somewhere there will be kind thoughts. But for the most part tactical positioning is the limit of debate: cutting student fees here and promising a wheeze to build new homes there, in the hope it will make some voters happy.

Those old tricks have had their day. What is needed is a basic explanation of motives and ideas. Call this a vision if you like, but when offering a vision, you need an explanation of where it comes from and how you think you can make it real.

So optimists in the Party should tell their story. They should describe how many of the best things in society – from good music to good housing, good jobs and good food – are the result of a freedom to make choices, spend and earn, protected by government but not directed by it.

They should tackle head on the canard that all the ills in the world can be solved by government. This means retreating from the lazy habit – which David Cameron indulged more than anyone – of sending out ministers to make claims which start 'today I can announce', setting targets, as

>> if these could ever be real or the job of government was just to boss people around.

But it also means something more: offering a positive view of a free society which accepts that trust in market economics was damaged badly both by the 2008 crash and the lack of consequences for those who caused it and who have benefited since.

People tell pollsters they want the railways nationalised, for instance, not because they think socialism works but because they think competition and the profit motive are not being made to work for them. They think the world has become less fair. This leaves Labour looking like the only party with alternative ideas.

Well-run, well-regulated and well-defended independent organisations working for individual gain are the best route to a better, happier country.

This does not mean profit should always be the goal: the Big Society was an awkward phrase but at its core there was a truth. Good public services and a free economy are not contradictions, but you can't have everything everyone wants free forever on credit, and the only way you can say this without appearing callous is to show other ways in which things can be done.

Nor should this just be a cover for cuts as it sometimes seemed in the past. Doing some things outside government is simply the best way. The National Trust saved the British coastline from development, for instance, not local government planning officers. The Canals and Rivers Trust – one of the coalition's less controversial creations – does a better job than the old state system.

So do the best private bus companies, or shops: almost any example, in any sector, can provide it. Parents like private charitable schools because they work.

Yet no one now trusts the market to do the right thing, or tries to explain why and when it works, or sets out the case for managing it properly or punishing those who exploit it.

Theresa May made a powerful claim in her conference speech last year for the good that government can do. But where, next, is the conservative case for the good that government can't do?

Yes, government can and should beat up cheating businesses such as mobile phone companies who hide their monthly charges behind a mass of add-ons and impossible-to-navigate websites. But the conservative voice in politics should also be encouraging not repelling investment in businesses, such as utilities, from pension funds who take a return to pay back the workers who have funded them.

Liberals should be rushing, as they are not, to encourage open competition by breaking up monopolies of power. They should welcome, for instance, the European Union's stance on Google, just as they ought to remind us that Margaret Thatcher's support for the single market was right, and dependent on the proper, transnational enforcement of fair rules to facilitate trade. Where do we hear conservative support for that principle?

They should also defend the idea that a free society requires relatively loose limits on the movement of people. They could speak out, for instance, on the obvious benefits of welcoming students who want to come to Britain to study – and perhaps settle, with their skills – but in return make immigration checks real.

Why, after years in which the Home Office has apparently been trying to crack down on migration, do we still have a border-control regime in which no border official checks passports when people leave the country?

At home there is scope to be bolder about what is known, feebly, as public sector reform, but which has become stuck. Unexpected progress was made up to 2016 with devolution, which did start to challenge some centres of power and produced Andy Street as Mayor of the West Midlands, but where next? Who is thinking about this?

"Well-run, well-regulated and well-defended independent organisations working for individual gain are the best route to a better, happier country."

Even the obvious need to coordinate London's suburban rail system under Transport for London has been rebuffed by those who want to keep the levers of power in Whitehall. And what is being done to free up the centre, which now has more departments with longer names than ever operating in even more ossified ways?

This is not a call to let the market rip, but to pull the state back in order to strengthen it in places, and direct its capabilities where it can actually do things no one else can. The environment is one example on which the party seems to have been silent for years but clean air and conservatism should not be contradictions – and nor should ecological diversity be associated as a cause with the left.

The current rush to build houses would meet less resistance if more respect was given to the sorts of places that are being built and how they look and will evolve. As it is, objectors are often right to fear that fields will give way to soulless red brick.

In such things there needs to be a revolution not only in action but in thinking. What is missing is an optimistic decency, a confidence in confronting those who want to narrow the world down.

Liberty can be threatened from the right as much as by the left. Conservatives seem, at the moment, to be basing their claim to power on the horror that Labour would be even more damaging to Britain. Under Corbyn this may be true, but what has the party come to if the first defence of Conservatism is the horror of the alternative?

Time for more state?

David Skelton and **Sam Bowman** debate

David Skelton is the founder of Renewal

Sam Bowman is executive director of the Adam Smith Institute

Dear Sam,

I'm a great fan of the work of you and your colleagues at the Adam Smith Institute (ASI). You're one of the most exciting think tanks around and have helped deliver some necessarily provocative work on issues, like reforming our outmoded drug laws. I'd hope you would agree that today's political priorities aren't about whether the state is a good or a bad thing, but how the state can nimbly be used for the good of citizens.

The results of both the referendum and the election had the same root cause – too many people felt that they were shut out from economic growth. There is a real demand for economic reform and this involves a mature and balanced role for the state.

In too many cases, the market alone is failing to deliver a secure economic future. Housing is the starkest example. The proportion of 25-34 year olds who are owner-occupiers has fallen from 54% to 34% in just a decade. The market alone hasn't even come close to solving the problem and there's little evidence that a bonfire of planning controls would be a panacea. Instead, there's a role for the state in pushing forward a scheme that will lead to a new generation of low-rent homes, with a fast track to home ownership.

> **"The results of both the referendum and the election had the same root cause - too many people felt that they were shut out from economic growth."**

It's hard to see how those deindustrialised areas that voted most emphatically for Brexit will be economically transformed if the state merely stepped out of the way. The state has a role to play in developing an intelligent industrial strategy that will help those areas that have been hit by economic dislocation to economically renew, as well as ensuring that poorer areas have the skills and infrastructure to succeed. This is clearly something that the market alone cannot do.

Regards, David

Dear David,

Long before most others, you understood the need for the Conservatives to get out of their comfort zone and focus on the wellbeing and dignity of ordinary workers. You have been proved right.

I agree with your diagnosis of the problem, and am troubled by the decoupling of economic growth and wage growth in developed countries. Markets do not solve all problems, and can work badly when the incentives and rules we create for them are wrong.

In the case of housing, that's exactly what we've done with green belts and urban planning rules, which make it very difficult to build in the places people want to live. Land-banking and other dysfunctions can only happen because supply is constrained – houses are an investment good as well as being somewhere to live. How much of that is down to planning? Quite a lot: getting planning permission can raise the value of an acre from £2,500 to £2 million.

Social housing can make housing cheaper, but has serious problems in other respects and is not most people's first choice. Tokyo shows that the private sector, given better rules, can do it: it absorbed three million people, had more housing starts in 2014 than the whole of England and has some of the highest building standards in the world, but has not seen any rise in house prices for decades. Planning laws are very permissive there with only light rules about land-use and height. Fixing this problem would also improve wages by making it easier for people to move to where the jobs that are right for them are – Nobellist Ed Prescott estimates that freer planning laws in the United States could make workers 12% richer. In my opinion, the gains may be even larger in the UK.

We agree about the need to create more meaningful jobs for people. Our corporation tax system penalises investment in machinery and property, a problem made worse by George Osborne's cuts to capital allowances to pay for his headline corporation tax rate cut. Fixing this, so the system does not tax businesses that invest in their workers, will not win many votes – but the high-quality jobs it creates just might.

Regards, Sam

Hi Sam,

Thanks for the kind words. I think we both agree that there's no future for an orthodox and safety-first conservatism that doesn't adapt to a changing environment. A new political offer needs to be bold and ambitious, and you and the ASI are playing an important role in creating part of that.

On housebuilding, I agree with you that some planning restrictions are holding back housebuilding and we agree that housing is expensive because land is expensive. But I can't see a pure market solution solving the problem.

Land is inherently scarce and fixed – you can't create more land like you can create new shoes if the price of shoes goes up. This is what [Karl] Polanyi meant when he called land a 'fictitious commodity' and what Mark Twain meant with his quip, "buy land, they're not making it any more." This, combined with endless demand because of easy credit, means market supply can never perfectly keep up with demand, no matter how much you liberalise planning.

Even before we had a planning system in England, we had similar problems with land banking and speculation driving housing costs beyond the reach of ordinary people. The 1947 Planning Act isn't perfect, but it's not realistic to assume that all of our problems somehow go back to it.

A more pragmatic and workable solution would be for the Government to work to provide a good supply of homes for those who are permanently shut out of the housing market, along with a fast track to home ownership, so that the dream of a property-owning democracy can be revived. The alternative to this is rapidly escalating Housing Benefit bills or rent controls - both of which I'm sure you'll agree are sub-optimal. I'd rather the state helped provide the homes we badly need rather than spending billions on a state subsidy to landlords through Housing Benefit. There's also a strong case to end the advantageous credit and tax position of buy-to-let landlords.

Your ideas about reinvigorating the economy are really interesting. And, as you say, the decoupling of wage growth and economic growth is a major challenge. I'd love to see more firms give their workers capital in their companies as the divergence between labour and capital has been stark in recent years. And I think it's also important that firms do what they can to pay the voluntary Living Wage. I think we'd both agree that an economy that creates high-skilled, secure jobs and an education system that gives people the skills to thrive is the way to ensure wage growth over the longer term.

Regards, David

Dear David,

Yes, land is in fixed supply – but it is not simply land that we're short of right now, it is 'developable' land. Only 2.27% of England is built on, but we have not been able to expand more because of planning rules. Freeing up just 4% of London's Green Belt around existing railway stations would give us room for one million new homes.

There are three related problems with building more social housing. The first is that, historically, social housing has often been of poor quality and been neglected by government after being built. Governments of both stripes have found it easy to ignore people who live in social housing.

"For my part, the great challenge is to persuade other free marketeers that redistribution, done right, is nothing to be afraid of."

The second is that almost nobody actually wants to live in social housing. The Joseph Rountree Foundation found that only 8% of Brits wanted to live in socially rented housing, as opposed to 84% who would like to own. We should listen to them.

The third is that, politically, raising the tens of billions of pounds in tax necessary to build enough houses seems impossible. People are willing to pay for a mortgage because they will own something at the end of it – getting them to accept a higher tax bill to pay for the government to build and own new houses seems impossible even if it was desirable.

I would suggest, instead, a system where local government is allowed to capture some or all of the uplift in land value that takes place when planning permission is granted through auctions or some other mechanism. I am sympathetic to the idea of workers being given a stake in their firms – it would be a lot better than putting workers on boards, which can do great damage to a company's internal governance, as the Financial Times showed with Volkswagen.

For my part, the great challenge is to persuade other free marketeers that redistribution, done right, is nothing to be afraid of. I want a generous, broad-based redistribution policy that's on in-work and family benefits, combined with regulatory reform focused on growth – a 'Hayekian welfare state', you might call it, that tries to use free markets to grow the size of the pie, and use the state to redistribute it to those who've missed out afterwards. There is a role for the state, but we must be aware of its limitations too.

Regards, Sam

Brexit together

Syed Kamall MEP
is Co-Chair of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group

Syed Kamall MEP explores how best to unite 'Leave' and 'Remain' Conservatives

As we gather as a Party for this conference, wounds from last year's European Union referendum are still healing. Lines were drawn. Reputations staked, on either side. Now that the people have spoken and the negotiation clock is ticking, as a Party we have one job. To put aside differences and then stand together, fighting for Britain's best interests.

While a minority of those who voted Remain need more time to come to terms with the result, it is heartening that most of my Remain friends respect the democratic will of the British people to leave the EU.

Similarly, while a minority of those who voted Leave want to get out now – without any deal – most of my Leave friends understand the need for patient negotiations to achieve a new, better and more honest relationship between the UK and the EU.

> **"It won't always be comfortable or easy, but at this moment, we have a duty to unite."**

Fortunately, there is a common understanding that the challenge of our political lives is before us: securing Brexit, embracing the opportunities of life outside the EU and delivering the prosperity and security for our country in a time of tremendous change.

It won't always be comfortable or easy, but at this moment, we have a duty to unite. The country has voted for Brexit, and it has voted for a government led by Theresa May to lead us through these historic negotiations.

We all have our differences in how exactly we define conservatism, reflecting the old cliché about our Party being a broad church. But whatever else, when the chips are down, to be Conservative is to stand firm and hold the line. As Conservatives, we must be strong enough to put aside personal rivalries for the common good.

In this, the Prime Minister is an object lesson. Mrs May was no Brexiteer, but she accepted the referendum result and stepped forward to serve her country. And when the margin of our election victory proved disappointing, she did not run from her post but kept steady at the helm.

Because the Prime Minister appreciates that the real prize here is not votes or seats. It is our country's future. When the smoke and clamour of Brexit fades, and we all have had time to recover from the fray, how will things stand in the streets of our towns and cities, and in the villages and fields of our countryside, and out at sea on our fishing boats and merchant ships?

So let's come together and agree that we want to see a prosperous, thriving, outward-looking post-Brexit UK trading and cooperating with a prospering EU, and open to the best talent from across the globe, not just the EU.

Let's agree on being ambitious. Ambitious in seeking new trade deals overseas. Ambitious close to home on the issues that matter: securing economic growth that benefits everyone; delivering sustainable, world-class healthcare; helping new generations into home ownership.

And let's agree that we must be modest, too. As conservatives we must remember that it is proper for government to be limited. That the secret of Britain's success has always been to trust its citizens.

> **"Take a moment this conference season to stand back from the messy business of politics."**

As a London MEP, one of the most rewarding parts of my job has been the opportunity to support grassroots charities. Groups that are out there making a difference in the lives of those who need it the most. They're not waiting for the state to do the job. They're stepping up because they see something that needs to be done.

Britain's civil society should be a source of tremendous pride to our country. And as conservatives we should do all we can to encourage it.

Whatever we do, the world will be watching. And not just the world. History, once again, has its eye on our island.

Take a moment this conference season to stand back from the messy business of politics. Ask yourself, when the books of these years are written, what will they say we achieved? What names will be picked out, and what for? Will they say we let faction come between us? Or will they write that after decades of letting the issue of Europe divide and weaken us, when our country called, we stood together?

It's up to us. Let's do the right thing.

Ready, willing and able?

Can the UK labour force meet demand after Brexit?

By Kevin Green

Chief Executive, Recruitment & Employment Confederation

In the sectors most reliant on EU workers, recruiting to meet demand is already a huge challenge. The number of EU nationals applying for roles in the UK is already falling as fewer decide to make the move here and more decide to leave.

Our latest report, which is part of a series to inform the immigration debate, looks at the agriculture, food manufacturing, warehousing and hospitality industries, asking employers, recruiters and British and EU workers about the effect the Brexit vote has already had and the impact changes to immigration rules might have going forward.

There is anxiety from all sides as employers consider scaling down or relocating, workers from the EU feel unable to plan their future here and British workers recognise that their workplaces would struggle without their EU colleagues.

That's why we are asking the government to:

- not set a blanket salary threshold for EU migrants wishing to work in the UK after Brexit
- ensure there are provisions for temporary workers including a seasonal workers scheme
- not overestimate the potential for either British workers or automation to fill the labour gap caused by a fall in net migration
- minimise the uncertainty that is already deterring EU nationals from working in the UK as well as ensuring EU workers feel welcome here.

Read the REC's new report at www.rec.uk.com/brexit

The challenges facing conservatism

"One of the reasons I got involved in politics was to achieve the eradication of poverty. I had friends who had outside lavatories. We have made huge advances. That eradication of poverty can only be delivered through compassionate capitalism. So our biggest challenge is to see off socialism and Jeremy Corbyn by making the case for caring and compassionate capitalism."

The Rt Hon Anna Soubry MP
Member of Parliament for Broxtowe

The Labour Party have always tried to present the Conservatives as being cold and heartless and that is something that we have to rebut very, very strongly at every stage that it is suggested. Whenever we are in receipt of silly and nasty campaigning, we have to call it out.

Victoria Atkins MP
Member of Parliament for Louth and Horncastle

Across the West people are being made to feel that our lives have never been so bad. Although we face challenges, we have never been so been so healthy and educated. Most of us are lucky enough to have seen more and will see more and have much broader experiences than our parents and grandparents. The challenge in our society is to unleash all that store of experience, knowledge and really put it to work. Without being too American about it: 'not to ask what your country can do for you; to ask what you can do for your country'.

Rory Stewart OBE MP
Minister of State for Africa

The Conservatives need to find a way to reach out to both the voters in Harlow and Kensington. Part of our problem is we've often focused on one group over the other; sometimes we've been the metropolitan party, sometimes the workers' party. The best years were in 2014-15 when we managed to get a fusion of both sides. We need to pick a raft of policies that metropolitan professionals like, and also Harlow man or Mansfield woman like also.

The Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
Chair of the Education Select Committee

The speed of technological change is more pervasive and faster moving than other great historic changes which the Party has survived. The younger generation are embracing these changes and practices in their everyday lives, in ways and on a scale that increasingly separates them from elder generations. At the heart of this dilemma is the proposal to sever our relationship with our European partners. This is a negation of British self-interest. It flies in the face of all our historic experience and defies the advice of every Conservative Prime Minister since Winston Churchill.

The Rt Hon Lord Heseltine
Former Deputy Prime Minister

"Young people today feel increasingly locked out of the housing market - with home ownership a distant dream. It's not just an economic challenge, but the biggest barrier to social progress in Britain today. That's why I'm absolutely determined to fix our broken housing market - so that young people under 40 can feel more secure when renting, or make their home ownership dreams a reality."

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government

The challenge facing conservatism today is threefold. Firstly, how to make Brexit a moment of electrifying domestic national renewal which inspires even those who didn't vote for it. Secondly, to signal that we understand the fatigue in our public services with public sector austerity, and set out a more inspiring next phase of balancing the public finances based on incentives and rewards for our best public sector leaders who deliver productivity and support economic growth. And thirdly, we need to reconnect with the under 40s and millennials who are growing ever more disillusioned with capitalism and conservatism. Unless we think seriously about bold reforms in these three areas I fear there is a real risk of a Corbyn victory at the next election, whenever it is.

George Freeman MP
Chair of the Conservative Policy Forum

Conservatism means preserving what's good from the past. The challenge is providing evolutionary conservatism that keeps up with fast-paced technological changes, whilst preserving the best principles from the past. It's about learning new technologies and embracing an internationalist outlook in order to make the most of the opportunities.

Luke Graham MP
Member of Parliament for Ochil and South Perthshire

If you have a generation who have not had a chance to acquire capital, whether it's in homes or in savings, then why do we assume they think capitalism is a good idea? So for me the biggest challenge is more about the fundamental conversation about capitalism and socialism in the UK at the moment.

Claire Perry MP
Minister of State for Climate Change and Industry

I worry that the distraction of Brexit is preventing us from realising that there are few countries in the world that can step forward as a force for good, that have the soft power that we have. We're in danger of encouraging a younger generation to forget the important role Britain plays in the UN Security Council, the Commonwealth and NATO. And that Britain is one of the few that can step forward to challenge the inappropriate, illegal and dictatorial behaviour around the world.

The Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence People and Veterans

"We need to be more confident in showing our commitment to decarbonise and tackle climate change. Millennials don't think there is a debate left to be had on this. They simply want to see bold action for a cleaner, greener future."

James Heappey MP *Member of Parliament for Wells*

Her secret...

What can conservatives today learn from the late Lady Thatcher? **The Rt Hon Lord Willetts** tells us

The Rt Hon Lord Willetts is the Executive Chair of the Resolution Foundation and was previously Minister for Universities and Science

Margaret Thatcher appears high up most lists of great Prime Ministers. She transformed Britain and many of us believe it was for the better. She raised the growth rate of a mature Western economy which is exceptionally hard to do. More than that, she gave us back our national pride. The Falklands War together with her partnership with President Ronald Reagan and the collapse of the Soviet Union meant that the West and our values were advancing not retreating. For me the most moving moment at her funeral was when the great West doors of St Paul's were opened for her coffin to be carried out and I heard shouting. I worked for her in the mid Eighties and was used to protests and jeering wherever she went, but these were cheers: I felt it was a kind of vindication.

"There was the blend of clear strategic direction and then pragmatism."

How did she achieve it? There are of course her personal qualities. I was a foot soldier, serving in the Number 10 Policy Unit and she was one of the most effective people I have ever worked with. She worked hard and purposefully. She had the capacity both to look close up at the tactics around a problem and at the same time never to lose sight to the strategic direction in which she wanted to take the country. She drew on an awkward squad of free-thinking unconventional advisers who provided essential stimulus and challenge. But she would also accept, albeit reluctantly and after intense dispute, realistic advice on what could or could not be done.

She had a guiding set of beliefs. I said to her once how we needed 'laissez-faire' and she looked at me sternly and said: "No. Ordered liberty". I think she objected not just because it was French but also because she had a deeper objection. She understood that of course freedom and free markets were essential but so were the ties of community and effective national government which made it possible for us to enjoy these freedoms.

She never really recovered after she left office. Without the framework of disciplined professional advice around her, and with her deep unhappiness about what had happened, she set out views increasingly different from what she had said and done in office. Maybe that later Margaret Thatcher was the authentic one but I am not so sure. As a guide to what conservatives do and why I prefer Margaret Thatcher in government, I believe it contains some important lessons for conservatives today.

First, there was the blend of clear strategic direction and then, yes, pragmatism. Sometimes it was reluctant and she conveniently blamed ministerial colleagues but they were often the alibi for her own shrewd assessment of what was feasible or not. I remember a conversation with her about privatising the BBC. Her clinching objection was along the lines of: "it would be very tiresome if every programme was interrupted by advertisements." In the Policy Unit we worked up ambitious plans about, for example, means-testing child benefit and, whilst she encouraged that kind of work and she could see the case for change, she rejected it because she did not want families with children to lose out relative to other groups.

"Margaret Thatcher put our country on a different path which gave us rising prosperity and national pride for the next thirty years."

She was fundamentally a believer in expanding opportunities. That is why one of the features of privatisation she was most keen on was the spread of personal share ownership. We forget now how controversial council house sales were within the Conservative Party – people who were not socially the usual type of owner-occupier were going to get a house without saving for years with a building society to get a mortgage. Tory critics thought this was undermining prudence and rewards to saving. She closed more grammar schools than any other Education Secretary and launched ambitious plans for university expansion because she wanted more people to stay on at school and get to university. For the same reason she fought a strong battle

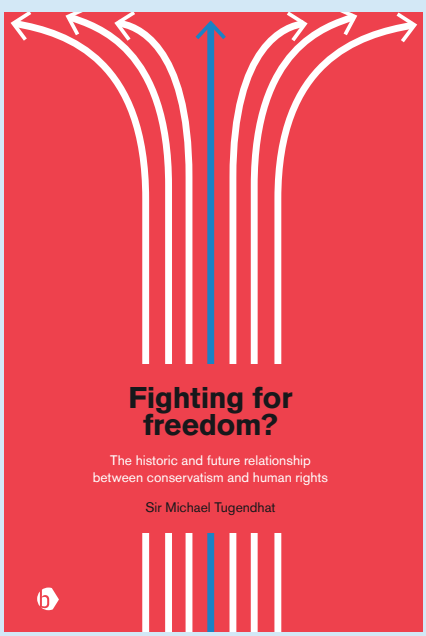
>> to save the infant Open University when she was Education Secretary. She loved the way the dynamism of free markets extended everything from foreign travel to property ownership to more people and she wanted public policy to do the same too.

"She was fundamentally a believer in expanding opportunities."

And then there is finally that most fraught issue for our Party and our country – the EU. I was working for her during the development of the single market. It was a project shaped by a British free-market agenda. The French were right to see it as an Anglo-Saxon attempt to use the EU to open up markets. She was crucial in driving it forward. She was even willing to make the unprecedented move of shifting from unanimity to majority voting to make it work. She felt betrayed when Jacques Delors used majority voting to push through social policy regulations which she never thought should be part of a single market – competition between different social models was a good thing and there was no need for uniformity. That turned her against the project but none of that alters the fact that she strongly believed in the original project. Indeed it was crucial to her economic policy: opening up British markets to more competition from Europe forced us to raise our game.

Britain hit its post-war low point with the humiliations of the IMF bail-out of 1976 and the Winter of Discontent of 1979. Margaret Thatcher turned it round and put our country on a different path which gave us rising prosperity and national pride for the next thirty years.

Latest report



Fighting for Freedom?

Sir Michael Tugendhat

Conservative writers and politicians have been influential in the development of human rights in the UK for centuries. Sir Winston Churchill made the enthronement of human rights a war aim, which was achieved by the founding of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). It was a Conservative MP in 1968 who was the first to campaign for incorporating the ECHR into UK statute law, which would eventually be realised with the introduction of the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998.

However, Conservatives today are sceptical of the HRA. The current Government has promised to review the UK's future human rights legal framework after Brexit. This report outlines and assesses different options for reform, concluding that Conservatives should be supporters of the HRA and ECHR.

Beware Corbyn

Kate Maltby is a columnist, arts critic and Associate Fellow of Bright Blue

Kate Maltby suggests how best to counter modern socialism

When I was 16 and ineffectually precocious, I interviewed Ann Widdecombe for my school newspaper. I asked her what had drawn her to conservative politics and she was characteristically clear: "I wanted to fight socialism, passionately. Your generation doesn't realise it now, but socialism was a real and present danger when I was young."

Even as a teenager, I understood immediately what she meant. I had grown up on stories of Eastern European relatives trapped behind the Iron Curtain: homes, jobs, rights of conscience dispensed only by corrupt bureaucratic fiat. But for most of my millennial peers, the admonition from a helmet-haired Tory to vanquish socialism was met with full-on derision. The Cold War was yesterday's struggle; "socialism" was something vague and nostalgic about the Labour Party which Tony Blair didn't like (and therefore teenagers did). It was romantic, abstract and utterly removed from anyone's political concerns in 2002.

Fifteen years on, the Tories are still doing a bad job of explaining to millennials why socialism isn't all it's cracked up to be. But the stakes are higher. As Widdecombe pointed out the direct state control wasn't "a clear and present danger" to the British economy at the turn of the millennium. It is now. To call Jeremy Corbyn a socialist isn't a reactionary smear: it's a direct quotation of the self-described principles of the leader of the Labour Party. And he's doing well, especially amongst young people.

Dangerously well. In an August survey by YouGov, 56% of voters under 24 stated that Corbyn would make a better Prime Minister than Theresa May (compared to 17% for May, with 26% 'don't knows'). In overall voting intention, Labour lead the Conservatives by a 1% gap, and in every age group except for the over 65s.

But the Conservatives won't be able to rely on even that over 65 age group in the future. In the past, each generation has become more likely to vote Conservative as they get older. CCHQ polling shows that for the next generation of pensioners, that is no longer the case. Old age no longer functions as a mystic car-wash that descends on voters in their sixties and dissolves to reveal a production line of new Conservative voters.

Why aren't we turning Tory as we age? One answer is that British voters are having to wait longer in their lives to accumulate significant personal capital – because it's all but impossible to get onto the housing ladder. Socialism is less threatening when it's not your wealth being redistributed. Or, as I've written before, you can't be a capitalist if you don't have any capital.

Another part of the answer is that a generation of Britons is reaching late adulthood without a concrete memory of what socialism really looked like in Eastern Europe. The suppression of the resistance in the Prague Spring is now 49 years ago, the massacre of Hungarian anti-Soviet protestors a full 61 years back.

It's not like Tory candidates didn't mention the S-word during this year's disastrous snap election campaign. On the contrary, I sat through hustings after hustings of Tory candidates railing against Jeremy Corbyn's friendships with various unpleasant groups in the 1980s, 'committees' and 'syndicates' with slogans drawn from Eastern European philosophers of whom British voters haven't heard and about whom they don't care. Mention that Jeremy Corbyn has defended the economic policies of Pavil Postyshev, and they won't remember mass starvation in Soviet Russia – they'll ask why there are food banks in Britain here and now. Political party broadcasts about the failures of Soviet central planning have the uncomfortable feel of too many History Channel documentaries about the Holocaust: absolutely necessary, morally right and yet through the alchemy of overfamiliarity and distance rendered toothless. The more often we are told "Never Again", the more tempted we become to forget.

To combat a full-throttle, retro-rinse Cold War socialist in 2017, it's not enough for the Tories to replay slogans that won the Cold War in the 1980s. Jeremy Corbyn has been attacked left, right and centre as a personality, but the penny-by-penny impact of his policies on our contemporary economy has evaded scrutiny. It doesn't help that his policies shift on the sands – direct economic promises from the Labour Party remain a moving target. But the Tories will need to rise to that challenge. Nor is it enough to warn that socialism leads to economic disaster. In a time of continued economic distress, conservatives will have to prove all over again that capitalism offers something better.

End of the insurgency?

Douglas Carswell contemplates if the Conservatives are still vulnerable to populism

Douglas Carswell
was the Conservative and then UKIP MP for Clacton from 2005 to 2017

It's over. Forty years of Eurosceptic insurgency came to an end the night Vote Leave won the referendum.

In the early hours of June 24th 2016, UKIP lost its purpose. For most UKIP voters, it was a case of job done. Having got 3.8 million votes at the 2015 General Election, support for the insurgent party duly plummeted.

That night, too, the great Euro rebellion within the Conservative Party came to an end.

For four decades, the Europe question had gnawed away at the Tory Party. What started has a hairline crack in the 1970s, because a fissure in the 1990s – and then a running sore. Yet since June 2016, the division and rancour has largely dissipated.

To be sure, there are lots of lively differences of opinion amongst Conservatives as to the kind of post-EU relationship we might have with our neighbours. Should we pay for Single Market access or not? How closely aligned to the Customs Union ought we to be?

These are all open to debate, but few on the centre-right of British politics seriously advocate remaining with the EU.

The handful of continuity Remain Tory MPs left in the Commons might manage to make some mischief. But they have no hinterland. They might find a hearing on the Today programme, yet they lack deep reservoirs of support across the country. They sound animated less by a fervent desire to change the course of their country, than by a vague sense that they disapprove of those on the other side of the argument.

The EU insurgency is over because the insurgents have won. Were the upper echelons of the Conservative Party to try to engineer some sort of associate EU membership – remaining in the Single Market and under the jurisdiction of the European courts – then things might be different.

> **"The Conservative Party has been at its greatest not when it sides with out-of-touch elites, but when it offers the insurgent alternative."**

But unless the Conservative Government somehow manages to fall flat on its face within the next eighteen months (possible, but unlikely), and therefore fails to deliver on Brexit, Europe no longer has the power to divide the centre right in this country.

So is that it? With the end of the great Euro revolt, has the danger of populism passed?

Not if the Conservative Party makes the mistake of regarding populism as a problem.

What elite opinion formers call 'populism' often turns out to be the great democratic corrective that rescues us from the delusions of elite opinion formers. Far from being an unwelcome complication in the political process, it is essential intrusion into it.

The Conservatives should never forget that it was a small cadre of elite public policy makers in the 1950s that built tower blocks, championing what they told us would be 'streets in the sky'. Establishment opinion advocated the nationalisation of industry in the 1960s, a prices and incomes policy in the 1970s, membership of the ERM in the 1980s and the Euro in the 1990s. It was establishment grandees who tanked the banks in the noughties.

The Conservative Party has been at its greatest not when it sides with out-of-touch elites, but when it offers the insurgent alternative. Yet today's Conservative Party is vulnerable to a Corbyn-shaped insurgency precisely because it shows so little sign of offering any real alternatives.

Conservatives lay a lazy claim to be in favour of free-market capitalism. Yet capitalism cannot exist without capitalists – and consecutive governments over the past twenty-five years have pursued policies that make it increasingly difficult for young people to acquire capital.

If you favour free markets, are you happy to have central banker bureaucrats to fix the price of credit? Few in the Party appear to even understand the question.

Our economy is not free-market capitalism, but cartel capitalism. Swathes of economic activity are regulated in the interests of vested interests. The only solution the Conservatives have so far offered to address this kind of corporatism is more corporatism; the idiotic idea of putting workers representatives on boards.

A mood of revolt against politics-as-usual festers and grows. Unless the Conservative Party starts to do some fresh thinking – and fast – it will be highly vulnerable.

Dialogue

Laura Round sits down with **Lord Finkelstein, Jacob Rees-Mogg MP, the Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP** and **Sir Craig Oliver** to reflect on this year's election, leadership and the future of capitalism

Laura Round: What does the recent election tell us about the state of the Conservative Party?

Lord Finkelstein: Well, there's no question that the Conservative Party is in real trouble, which should bother every moderate, centre-right Conservative. We're obviously in power and with the ability to do things, but the serious long-term problem is that the Conservative Party has shifted its demographic. It's won the support of less well-off or less-well educated older people - and of course, every voter is a good voter and worthy of respect - but it's also the case that the long-term future of this country clearly belongs to younger, more urban, prosperous, better-educated people. That's not to say that everyone in the country will belong to these categories, but it's the trend. And it ought to be the trend, because it's what we want for Britain. For the Conservative Party to fall so far behind with that type of voter should concern everybody who is an economic and social liberal.

Sir Craig Oliver: Cameron's main message was we can appeal to traditional shire Conservatives and to the more liberal-minded. Under him, the Party spent ten years reminding people of the importance of sound money and socially liberal values. The fact that the trajectory of the Conservative Party went up in 2010 and 2015 tells you something. When the Conservatives stopped talking about sound money and socially liberal values, it went backwards.

Laura Round: So do you think the Conservative Party has moved away from the centre-ground?

Lord Finkelstein: I genuinely don't believe that. I think that the mainstream of the Conservative Party remains a perfectly comfortable place. However, I do definitely think that we have to assert our belief in the Conservative Party we've been fighting for over the past ten to fifteen years with greater robustness than was necessary before. Perhaps we were complacent, thinking we were winning the argument.

Sir Craig Oliver: From a communications perspective, it's important who controls the narrative and how it's reported. Before Cameron left office, the defining word was 'deficit'. Afterwards, that was dropped. Corbyn successfully inserted the word 'austerity' into every message. The debate's now around austerity rather than sound money, which is problematic for Conservatives. To be fair to May, there's consistency in what she's saying about people who are just managing, wanting Conservatives to be seen to champion the concerns of normal people. However, the problem is the gap between what's been said and putting your money where your mouth is with significant policies.

Laura Round: Over the summer many people called for a new centrist party. Nicky, you mentioned you're opposed to this. Why?

Nicky Morgan MP: Firstly, our political system doesn't make the birth and success of new parties easy. Secondly, the superficial attractions of having a new party because of Brexit completely miss the point. It would have people with very different political views and it would swiftly collapse under the weight of its own contradictions. More fundamentally, as a longstanding Conservative, I think the Party is at its best when we are a broad church and encompassing a variety of different views. What would it say about the Conservative Party if liberal conservatives decided their only option is to go elsewhere? I worry that would send a message to many people, including party members and councillors, that the Party is not interested in their views anymore. A lot of people who were Conservative supporters in 2010 and in 2015 now feel politically homeless. I think one of the inexcusable

>> things over the last twelve months was that there were those in government who were seeking to deliberately make them feel politically homeless: the "citizens of the world, citizens of nowhere" language, which I hope we've seen the back of.

Laura Round: Which policies of May's Government have been most successful in appealing to centrists?

Nicky Morgan MP: I think the industrial strategy is very important and hasn't had the attention it deserves. Mental health is an issue that has rightly been discussed more in Westminster. I also welcome what the Prime Minister has been saying about the "just about managing". There are undoubtedly people who feel they are working very hard and doing the right thing, but feel life or the government hasn't given them a break. The Conservative Party should be on their side.

Laura Round: Jacob, capitalism has been under fire recently, which is problematic for the right. In your opinion, what's the best way to defend and reform capitalism to ensure all people feel and know the positives it brings?

Jacob Rees-Mogg MP: I think capitalism does not require you to be on the side of big monopolistic businesses that abuse their position. Free markets are about ensuring that consumers are able to get the best service at the best price, which competition helps get. It is perfectly reasonable for government to rebalance the scales – to ensure that consumers don't lose out. I think 2019 is going to be a good opportunity to reinvigorate and reinforce the free market with the benefits that bring real improvements in people's standard of living. Capitalism helps the poorest in society the most, because it reduces the cost of the staples of their daily life, which take up a higher percentage of their income than they do for the better-off.

Lord Finkelstein: It will be hard to win the next election if the economy doesn't provide more personal income for voters. So the question is how we can organise Brexit in such a way that it does not disrupt business and the economy grows. Secondly, how to ensure capitalism makes everybody feel better off, and what sort of policies are necessary to do that? Housing policy is crucial for that.

"The party hierarchy should not be frightened of new thinking."

Laura Round: The hard-left under Jeremy Corbyn are on the march, attacking capitalism. In the last election the Conservatives barely spoke about the economy. What do you think the lessons are from that?

Jacob Rees-Mogg MP: Well, and I think, in a way, you've answered the question in your question, when you said we didn't talk about it in the last general election. If we're completely silent on the advantages of our belief in how to make people's lives better, we can't expect people will gather it out of the ether. We need to make our own arguments clearly, we need to put them forward, we need to argue for what we believe in. Then I think these arguments will prove to be attractive.

Sir Craig Oliver: There's something in Corbyn about authenticity and sincerity and being at ease with the rough and tumble of dealing with normal people. The reality is the Conservatives have often shied away from exposing their leaders to those situations. I think people are much more forgiving of a politician who's sincerely engaging in difficult circumstances.

Laura Round: What do you think makes a good leader, Craig?

Sir Craig Oliver: You need to know exactly what you're about and have a clear sense of direction. You need to be able to communicate your story effectively, but not over emphasise that side of it, not get carried away and turning yourself into a 24-hour news station rather than governing. It's a combination of those

"We united the opposition against us, moved away from modernising language, and were more polarising."

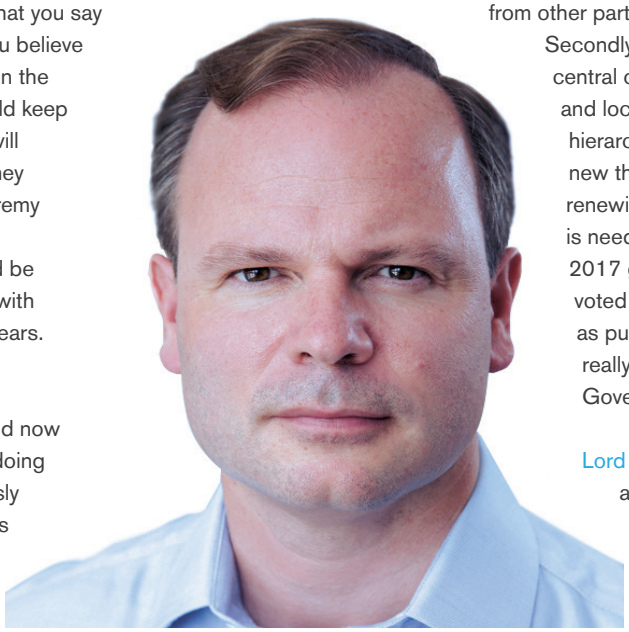
>> things. Increasingly, the demand in the modern environment is authenticity in demonstrating you are true to yourself and that's vital.

Laura Round: Jacob, there has been a lot of chit chat about you as a future leader. What do you make of all that?

Jacob Rees-Mogg MP: I think these things are fundamentally unforecastable and that I'm supporting, unequivocally, Theresa May. If you look back at other Conservative leaders, other Prime Ministers, often everybody thinks that they won't last beyond a certain date, and then they do. I think, if I go back to my old trade as an investment manager, I would be buying Theresa May shares rather than selling them. I think they're just recovering from the low point of the cycle, and that they're at a better price now than they were in June.

Laura Round: You've done a remarkable job at managing to cut through to the public as a likeable figure, while staying true to your identity. What's your secret?

Jacob Rees-Mogg MP: Well, I'd be very careful about this, because there aren't magic bullets. What I would say is that it's important to recognise that what you say may connect or may not, but if you believe that your principles are right and in the interests of the country, you should keep on making them, because there will come a point in the cycle when they are right. This is a lesson from Jeremy Corbyn, isn't it? I happen to think that his political philosophy would be catastrophic, but he has kept on with his political philosophy for thirty years. Through a period when it was completely ridiculed and had no traction in the country at large, and now it does. I think that when we are doing conservative things, it's enormously successful, but that it's not always popular. Therefore, we should continue to make the argument.



Laura Round: It was reported that Cameron recently received an amazing reception at the 1922 Committee of Conservative MPs. What does that tell you?

Sir Craig Oliver: I'm reminded of the line in the Joni Mitchell song: "Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got till it's gone". There's an element of that, in terms of Cameron, because he was an outstanding communicator. The idea that suddenly there's success waiting to happen, where somebody emerges, and they're a messianic figure that'll lead the Party to election victory, is for the birds. I believe the reason telling people you'll fight the 2022 election was wrong was because asserting - rather than showing - you're right is the problem. I don't mean that critically of May, I'm just saying the best advice is demonstrating success. Not by telling them what's what.

Laura Round: And how can the Conservative Party secure victory at the next election?

Nicky Morgan: I believe there are four things – leaving aside personalities. Firstly, the Parliamentary Party must remember that winning a majority means actually winning over voters from other parties, and I don't mean UKIP voters. Secondly, we've got to allow Conservative central office to rebuild the party infrastructure and local campaigning. Thirdly, the party hierarchy should not be frightened of new thinking. We've got to be seen to be renewing. Lastly, I think a non-Brexit unit is needed in Whitehall. We saw in the 2017 general election that most people voted on issues other than Brexit, such as public services. These things would really demonstrate this is a Conservative Government on the move.

Lord Finkelstein: There are a number of big arguments we need to fight. But, firstly, we need to answer "what is the correct conservative coalition?" Is the correct conservative coalition the one we moved towards at

>> the last general election, where we sacrificed seats in big cities and won them in less well-off areas? Or is that a constituency that can't sustain the sort of politics we believe in and will not produce Conservative governments in the long-run? Secondly, I am of the view that despite doing well at acquiring votes at the last general election, we also managed to unite the opposition against us. One of the things David Cameron did was to make people not dislike Conservatives. It is important politically that we don't stop doing this. We united the opposition against us, moved away from modernising language, and were more polarising. A really good example of that was the decision to offer a vote on fox hunting. It unites all non-Conservative – or non-rural – Britain into a feeling that they want to stop the Conservatives from getting in power.

Laura Round: So, conservatives have to be careful about language?

Lord Finkelstein: It's not just a question of using the right words. It's an entire outlook. I believe conservatives should conduct politics with civility and with a concern for the views of other people, including an understanding of what motivates our opponents. I remember once during the initial debate on modernisation, Simon Heffer said "David Cameron just wants to be nice to homosexuals". I replied saying: "God, it's worse than that Simon. He wants to be nice to everyone." And that's good politics.

Sir Craig Oliver: Too often in British politics there is a tribal sense of absolutism that is not just off-putting to people who want to be members of another party, but off-putting to normal voters. They find the stridency, tribalism and aggressiveness to your opponents off putting. Anybody who's ever sat in a focus group or spent time talking to people who aren't members of political parties, but obviously vote, can see that.

Laura Round: The Conservative Party has lost a lot of support from younger voters. Reaching out to these voters is one of the biggest challenges facing the Party. How can we make conservatism appeal to them?

"I think our fault in the last election was not that we didn't have gimmicks for young voters, but we just ignored them completely".

Jacob Rees-Mogg MP: I think we should be careful about segmenting the electorate. We shouldn't devise gimmicks to appeal to young people. Instead we should be explaining the arguments for conservatism, free markets, to the young, to the middle aged, to the elderly, that convince them that our base is right and the policies that will flow from that will therefore benefit them over the course of their life. I think that segmentation of the electorate is slightly condescending. I think our fault in the last election was not that we didn't have gimmicks for young voters, but we just ignored them completely.

Sir Craig Oliver: It seems to me, for the Party to be successful given the demographic of its members, they need to understand what it would've been like for them fifty years ago facing the circumstances young people now face.

Nicky Morgan MP: In the last election, the younger you were the more likely you were not to vote Conservative. That is very bad news for our franchise. People used to believe that people started voting for Labour and then switched to the Conservatives once they became taxpayers and home owners. I'm not sure this still holds true and we don't want people to get into the habit of voting Labour, thinking Conservatives have nothing to offer them. I have a theory that a lot of the attraction of Corbyn isn't about specific policies, but about the values people think he represents. People mistakenly think Conservatives lack empathy. Sometimes, we stop at setting out the hard facts of a policy. We don't explain what's driving us to want to put that policy in place.

Magician Macron?

Rupert Myers is political correspondent at GQ Magazine and Associate Fellow at Bright Blue

What can the Conservatives learn from President Macron's success in France? **Rupert Myers** explores.

The scale of Emmanuel Macron's political achievement cannot be ignored, even if it is overshadowed by his current unpopularity. Rows over the high-handed approach to creating a 'First Lady' role for his wife, the price of his suits, or the exorbitant sums blown on makeup for France's youngest leader since Napoleon have all dominated the news as protests meet his attempts to reform France's economy. Current stumbles cannot deprive Macron of our respect. In three years the boy wonder went from being an unknown government adviser to President. Macron excites international attention and is causing fury in France. Both his errors and his triumphs contain important lessons for conservatives.

There's never been a better time in human history to begin a political movement. The insurgent success of Trump, Brexit, and Momentum show this to some extent, but it's Macron who provides the clearest example because his rise relied so little on existing political machinery, and so heavily on the creation of a grassroots movement built using a business-like approach.

An army of online guerrilla support was mobilised by a campaign that allowed individual operators to open local branches. When an idea is compelling, when a leader is engaging, the public can and will respond with political activism. A good platform and the right policies can quickly mobilise support that can crush existing political machinery, and the digital dimension to modern politics is reducing the influence and power of legacy structures. Real choice drives turnout. It's the strength of the message, not the history of the brand that drives activism. An army is out there to be found if the banner is appealing.

The danger for the Conservative Party is that the fluidity of modern politics shows us that no political party has the right to govern, or even a right to exist. Less tribal, less loyal, people are not siloed into political alignments and their votes cannot be taken for granted. Macron got a little lucky – every successful politician must – but his win should remind us that the value of a traditional political brand can wane, and that in the right conditions trust can be established in a new political movement very quickly.

For Conservatives, Macron's fall from favour now is instructive, because he seems to be ignoring some of the lessons demonstrated by the political fragility he exposed. Once lauded, he is now derided for a string of errors. He has misjudged the optics of certain moves, and brought back memories of Nicolas Sarkozy with his high-handedness. What can be built can be destroyed, and political success is a living, fragile thing that can be harmed by hubris or complacency.

Macron's greatest strength was arguably his honest analysis of the structural problems France faces. To the protesters who now oppose his work reforms he has only stark, honest disagreement, calling them "slackers." Macron has a monumental advantage over legacy parties: his positions do not have to be determined by concerns about party management, nor is he beholden to internal factions. The dynamism and attraction of his reformist agenda didn't need to be watered down in a bid to satisfy concerns over party management, because he attracted new candidates to his cause. If there are lessons here for the Conservatives, perhaps they

>> are that a more open recruitment of candidates and an outward-facing party allow great opportunity to reap electoral dividends. Furthermore, clear-sighted and direct engagement with a country's economic challenges, unburdened by the worst excesses of tribalist or ideological concerns can be enormously compelling. People want to vote for what works, and they will reward honesty about unfairness and attempts to tackle vested interests.

Macron's victory shows the value of a party structure that allows for engagement by non-members and encourages digital activism. The Conservatives should adopt an honest, empirical analysis of the nation's problems that prizes outcomes above ideological hangups. A political movement that puts the concerns of ordinary citizens above fear of internal party management or vested interests will reap dividends. Successful politicians must always respect the fragility of the status quo, and abandon hubris. Outward focus, not inward obsession. Open politics, and a dynamic, pragmatic response to the economic and political landscape are all vital to political success. Macron shows how it can be done, and also how easy it is to stumble at any point.

Conservatism across the Atlantic

Ted Bromund argues American politics is becoming more British

Ted Bromund is Senior Research Fellow in Anglo-American Relations at the Heritage Foundation

In the era of Trump, it would be easy to conclude that the greatest challenge facing conservatism in the United States is its tendency to fratricide. That is a challenge not unknown in Britain. But in the US, the more serious challenges come from shifts in the underlying political and ideological structure of the nation. These challenges, too, have their parallels in the United Kingdom.

That said, conservatives in Britain have something that their American brethren lack: a political party. If conservatism is to achieve successes in Britain, it must do so through the Conservative Party. By the same token, the Party plays an outsized role in defining what being a conservative means in Britain.

Of course there are controversies about this – the Brexit saga springs to mind – but for all their changes, political parties in Britain have a fixity that the American ones lack. Over their long lives, the Democratic and Republican Parties have been both for and against everything.

It's certainly true that today, the Republican Party is the more conservative of the parties, as the word conservative is commonly understood. This fact is reflected in the rude health of the Republicans at the state level, where the GOP is as dominant today as it was in the 1920s.

But it's worth bearing in mind that my conservative employer, the Heritage Foundation, was founded in 1973 – not to support Republican President Richard M. Nixon, but to oppose his policies of détente abroad and big government at home. The Republican Party is not the Conservative Party.

Fratricide – or disagreement about policies – is not an aberration on the American right. It is the normal condition of affairs. And though it has its inconveniences, disagreement may be more healthy over the long run than the left's assumption that the world must end in a state-fed, multiculturalist prison.

The real challenges facing

>> conservatism in the US are structural. First, there is the near-disappearance of the sensible left – or liberals, as we used to call them. Britain experienced this in the 1920s when the Liberal Party collapsed. The US is seeing it now.

Today, the dominant force on the left in the US is European-style leftism, which combines a worship of welfare with an inability to say when the state is big enough, an obsession with race and gender, and a dislike of standards that result in unequal outcomes.

This is a toxic mix. It owes nothing to genuine liberalism, and everything to the rise of the New Left. True, this left also exists in Britain, but in a parliamentary system, the answer on the political level is simple: win a majority, and the left can do little but complain from the sidelines.

In the US, the answer is not simple. The fading of liberalism (and the destruction of the conservative Democrats, known as the Blue Dogs) means that American politics have become more parliamentary in style. But winner-take-all politics sort ill with the separation of powers, which implies, as Reagan knew, that getting 70% of what you want is good enough (for now).

The second challenge to conservatism is that the US system is built on the assumption that, in a republic, Congress is naturally the first branch of government. There is a reason the US Capitol, not the White House, is on the highest ground in Washington, DC. We have no kings, and want none.

Or at least we didn't. Today, while Congress often complains, it shows no actual desire to take power back from the White House, where decades of ill-considered legislation have delegated it. Indeed, Congress, like the left, finds this administrative state convenient: the left uses it to impose dictates without the trouble of legislation, while Congress uses it to avoid the trouble of actual responsibility.

This situation finds a parallel in Britain, where Remainers purport to be appalled by the idea of 'Henry VIII' powers, while being untroubled by the European Communities Act of 1972, which sidelined Parliament to a far greater extent than Henry VIII powers ever could. In the US, the administrative state violates the separation of powers. But in the US, conservatism exists as an independent movement, standing outside both parties, that can take umbrage when the GOP establishment defends that state.

And that is where we are today. The Tea Party sought to remake the Republican Party, but the GOP establishment resisted it with success. So Trump came along, ran against that establishment, and won. But the problem today is not the clash between Trump and the establishment. Such clashes are healthy.

The problem is that, if Congress does not resume its proper place in the system, the US will remain dominated by executive power – an easy instrument for leftism to take up. Even in such an America, conservatism will remain a vital ideological force in the US, and powerful at the state level.

> **"In short, American politics is becoming more British, with well-sorted and opposed political parties and a powerful executive."**

But without sensible liberals to win over or work with, conservatives will find it harder to win sustainable national victories against the administrative left, and popular discontent with the establishment in both parties will continue to grow, fueling more winner-take-all politics.

In short, American politics is becoming more British, with well-sorted and opposed political parties and a powerful executive. The problem is that ours is not a parliamentary system – and if Congress remains derelict in its duties, the new American system is not likely to be conservative.

An update from our Chair

Matthew d'Ancona is the Chair of Bright Blue

A sage veteran of the Blair years suggested to me recently that Brexit had become the black hole of British politics. "Its gravitational field pulls in everything," he said. "There's no room for anything else."

This strikes me as a useful warning – and challenge – to the Conservative Party as it gathers in Manchester. Of course, the conference will be dominated by Britain's departure from the EU and the squabbles over the terms of the divorce settlement and alimony.

Expect the loudest cheers for those who declare that we not should pay Brussels a red cent - or a "brass farthing" as Jacob Rees-Mogg puts it. Brace yourself, too, for some stringent attacks upon Tory 'Remoaners', 'saboteurs' and all those who express anything other than rampant delight at our escape from the tyranny of Brussels.

> **"Is liberal Toryism needed in 2017? Now more than ever."**

This conference will also be a curious mixture of choreographed unity carnival, nervous electoral audit and barely-concealed beauty contest. For good or ill, Theresa May decided to hang on to power after her disappointing electoral performance, and the Party chose quickly to back her. So – by definition – this gathering must dramatise that decision in noisy expressions of loyalty.

At the same time, there will be much soul-searching – public and private – about what went wrong in the campaign, and how the Party lost its majority in a contest with a supposedly unelectable Labour leader. As a corollary, the prospective successors to May will be setting out their respective stalls, mindful that the Party could conceivably be plunged into a leadership contest at any moment.

All of which enhances my pride and pleasure that Bright Blue will be such a prominent force at this conference, hosting more than thirty events to stimulate discussion, debate and civilised argument. Is liberal Toryism needed in 2017? Now more than ever.

I say this for two principal reasons. First, the centre-right has long grasped that modern conservatism cannot define itself by nationalism disguised as patriotism, obscure rows over sovereignty and demands for ever-stricter immigration controls. This is the old-fashioned politics of the club rather than the country. It is no basis for electoral or governing success.

For twenty-first century Britain to thrive in a world of interdependence, multiple identities, and supranational challenges, isolationism is the worst possible course. Brexit makes it more rather than less important that we acknowledge the complexity of modern global engagement. 'Taking back control' is only meaningful if you use that control wisely. We know that Britain is leaving the EU. The question is: what sort of society do we aspire to build from April 1, 2019?

Second, liberal Tories understand that a true party of government embraces public service reform in a spirit of problem-solving enthusiasm and social compassion. Though Brexit will loom over Manchester like a menacing Zeppelin, the Government must not lose sight of its duty to enhance opportunity, improve the NHS, provide a better education for every child, address the social care crisis, build more houses, transform the nation's infrastructure, devise a welfare strategy that enshrines decency and hope, keep climate change at the forefront of Whitehall's preoccupations, devolve power wherever possible and prepare for the next wave of automation and the digital revolution. A few things to chew over, then.

> **"We do not have the time to be idle. There is much work to do. Which is why Bright Blue will be omnipresent at conference, and we hope to see you at our many events."**

Since the referendum result and Donald Trump's election, I have detected a bewilderment among some liberal Tories that, in certain cases, resembles bereavement. They fret that the centre-ground has been deserted by the voters, perhaps for good, and that the future belongs to politicians ready to embrace the shrill ideologies of far left and right.

True, social media has encouraged clustering, tribalism and polarisation. Identity politics, the anxieties of the 'left-behind' and the rise of the alt-right and Corbynite Left have certainly changed the political landscape. But the centre-right has not been rendered obsolete.

Quite the opposite: it faces the urgent task of constructing new proposals and new strategies, adapting its core principles to an evolving context. The far right builds walls. The centre-right understands that prosperity, freedom and opportunity depend upon bridges.

We do not have the time to be idle. There is much work to do. Which is why Bright Blue will be omnipresent at conference, and we hope to see you at our many events. Be of good cheer: the best is yet to come.

The Centre Write interview:
The Rt Hon Justine Greening MP

Laura Round discusses social mobility, socialism and social liberalism with the Secretary of State for Education

Now the Government has dropped the policy on grammar schools, what are the major policies this Government will pursue to build 'the great meritocracy'?

Our reforms have lifted education standards for many children across our country and nine out of ten of our schools are now rated outstanding by OFSTED, which is fantastic. However, some children haven't been able to benefit from those improved standards. Through our 'opportunity areas', we are working on ways to make sure we lift education standards in the parts of the country that have been left behind.
We also need to recognise that for some communities raising education standards is more complex than simply working in schools. For example, in our 'opportunity areas' we are building a coalition of people who want things to be different in their local area. It's knitting together parents, schools and businesses who are working towards the same goal: stronger education standards and stronger social mobility. I'm really excited about all of that work.

Do you think Corbyn's pledge to scrap tuition fees was a vote winner? How should the Conservative Government respond to it?

I think the way in which Jeremy Corbyn shamelessly said to graduates that he would write off their debt was one of the most outrageous broken promises of any election that I can remember. Furthermore, we know - looking at Scotland - that scrapping tuition fees would mean fewer kids are able to go to university and that the ones missing out would disproportionately be children from lower income backgrounds. To me this seems the antithesis of everything that we should be aiming for in our country.
I was the first person in my family to get the chance to go to university and it transformed my life. I think, to see a party proposing a policy that would basically be a massive cash boost to some of the best-off students with the best prospects ahead of them, was the wrong approach. We now have better funded universities, more young people going into them for the first time from disadvantaged families, and I think that's a good situation.

Do you think the Government's reforms to technical education will help to broaden its appeal among younger voters who don't attend university?

I think it's really important that, whatever your talents are, you can stay in the education system, develop those talents and then kickstart your career afterwards. I feel that we have an education system where arguably only half of our young people who go to university feel that they have the chance to do that for themselves. So, yes, I do think it helps. Our apprenticeships strategy is also really popular. For me, it all comes down to opportunity. When I was growing up in Rotherham, I was thinking ahead to what I was trying to achieve in my own life and getting opportunities was at the core of that. So, we should be the party that is for people who are looking ahead and who want opportunity. That's what

Adrian Lourie, for London Evening Standard

>> we're going to give them. This is especially relevant with technical education. It's for those young people who feel that when they hit 16 they don't have as many choices.

Do you think forcing large companies to publish their gender pay gaps from 2018 is a conservative approach?

I think it's striking how much the introduction of transparency into gender pay gap reporting has worked. A lot of companies are looking at what their gender pay gap reporting will be if they don't change, and as a result they are changing before they do their first lot of reporting. So, yes, I think it's really driving change. Also, it's giving companies who are doing well the chance to shine. I've always been keen to work with businesses on what I call "The Race to the Top" on standards, whether it's working with us on social mobility or gender equality.

The Government recently signaled it was going to relax the public sector pay cap, including for teachers. Is it right for the Government to ease off deficit reduction in this way, and is it necessary electorally?

The Treasury were clear that they want to be less prescriptive and I think there's a lot of sense in that. We actually have a very sensible process of looking at public sector pay in our country, which is an evidence-based approach. And many independent people feed into the process. The strength of the existing process is that it's looked at in the round by people who are entirely independent. I also have to then give evidence to a select committee. The Government made some recent announcements around transgender rights, including the right to self-identification.

Why is championing LGBT rights the right thing for the Conservatives to do, and what is the political mileage in it?

Primarily, it's the right thing to do. I think the Conservative Party needs to be a modern party which reflects modern Britain and fights for equality in all forms. Defending LGBT rights is important and it really matters. I think we've made great strides over the years, but there's a long way to go. If you look at how young people identify themselves and how many would say they're straight or gay, there's actually a huge group of people in the middle who don't think they are one or the other. So, I think it's about reflecting a country that has moved on. At the same time, we need to tackle the homophobic bullying that goes on in schools and elsewhere.

Do you think the Conservatives need to re-establish their reputation for social liberalism?

I think Britain is changing a lot and I think it's continuing to change quite significantly. We have to be seen as a Party that is taking people's priorities and making them ours. Politics doesn't work when it's the opposite way around: when it feels like a political party is the one telling people why they should agree what the party thinks is good for Britain. I think for young people, who felt that's not happened, we need to make sure that we reflect their priorities and bring them into our own policy agenda. And this isn't just about politics, it's not healthy to have a country where different generations think very differently.

For each new generation growing up, it feels less likely you can make your way in the world like your parents were able to. Sixty-four percent of young people say they're getting better education than their parents, yet when they finish their education they feel like it isn't leading to a better future than their parents might have had. This is a major issue for our country and we need to make sure we tackle this. Fundamentally, it's about values. It's about the fact we are not going to have a country that thrives if we have a whole generation that feels locked out of being able to progress.

Damian Green recently said, at a speech to Bright Blue, that the Party needs to "change hard" if it's to win a majority at the next election, especially if it's to do well in urban constituencies like yours. Do you recognise this need for change?

First of all, we should reflect on the fact that we are now the only moderate major, mainstream party in Britain. Yes, we need to make sure we continue to adapt to keep up with the change in Britain. But, we are up against the hard-left, socialist Labour Party that would take us in a profoundly dangerous direction and will destroy opportunity for young people. As a Party, we need to move up and move on. The younger generations want to hear from us, and they deserve not just a better choice, but another choice compared to Labour. I think that a lot of them didn't feel they had that choice in the last election.

As the Minister for Women and Equalities, do you think the next Prime Minister should be female?

I am really proud that we are the only major party that's even had a female leader and that we've now had two Prime Ministers. For a start, I genuinely want to see more diversity. I would like to see more of our wonderful MPs, who have shown they're in touch with their communities and won seats, as Ministers and in the Cabinet. For me, diversity is really important, for women, but also in general. The great thing about the Conservative Party is that there is room for everyone, but I think we need to see that on more levels.

A big splash of green

Sam Hall is a Senior Research Fellow at Bright Blue

Sam Hall argues the environment must be higher on the Conservative Party's agenda

The lack of prominence given to the environment among conservative policymakers is a mistake. It is a missed opportunity, not only to champion a policy agenda that is directly aligned with the conservative tradition and to address widely held concerns, particularly of younger generations, but also to apply important conservative principles to some of our biggest policy challenges.

Concern for the environment has deep roots in conservative thought. Conservative philosophers from Edmund Burke to Roger Scruton powerfully articulate the duty of each generation to those that come after to hand on a preserved natural inheritance. Conservatives also have an intrinsic appreciation and love of beauty, of which nature, with its inspiring landscapes and diverse wildlife, is our greatest source.

Conservative leaders have a strong record of applying these principles when in government. Consider the Conservative Governments that passed the first Clean Air Act or created the first Department for the Environment. Then recall the legacy of Margaret Thatcher: the Wildlife and Countryside Act, which introduced new legal protections for nature; the Montreal Protocol, an international agreement on phasing out chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which she spearheaded together with President Reagan; and the first major speech to the UN General Assembly about the risks of climate change.

Protecting our environment enjoys broad and deep support among the electorate. This issue was partly why David Cameron's modernisation project was so successful. As Zac Goldsmith MP, one of the most prominent green Tories, told us, "he made it acceptable to flirt with the Conservative Party – and green was a way in."

For today's conservatives that are seeking to broaden their appeal a better offer on the environment is vital, as polling carried out by YouGov for Bright Blue ahead of conference shows. We find that among under 40s, climate change comes second only to health in the list of issues voters wanted to hear senior politicians discuss more. Among 18- to 24-year-olds, it comes top. We also find that 83% of under 40s would be proud to vote for a party that generated more electricity from renewables – the same number who'd feel proud voting for a party that banned all trading of ivory.

Conservatives have a vital role in environmental policymaking with their belief in the importance of markets. One example is the recent creation of marine reserves around some of the UK's overseas territories. The UK has now protected over four million square kilometres of marine environment from overfishing and other extractive practices – a larger area than India. This is an incredible achievement, forced through by Cameron against civil service advice, and one which conservatives should celebrate more.

Their long-term success, however, depends on developing sustainable incomes for local communities. Zac Goldsmith talks about Somalia, where a recent collapse in fish stocks coincided with the rise of piracy, as former fishermen, still in need of a livelihood, applied their sea-faring skills elsewhere: "If you destroy an environment, you plunge people into poverty. None of us benefits from that." So our development budget should complement these marine protections, by tackling the root cause of the environmental degradation.

> **"Concern for the environment has deep roots in conservative thought."**

Another example is the future of agricultural subsidies after Brexit. While scrapping payments, currently worth over £3 billion a year, would be socially and economically devastating for rural communities, taxpayers should expect more in return for their money. There is a huge range of public goods that we could get from the countryside that the market does not provide, from natural flood defences and carbon sequestration, to biodiversity and beautiful landscapes. A forthcoming Bright Blue report will be proposing a new market mechanism for commissioning these environmental services from landowners.

It is wrong to see concern for the environment as exclusively a left-wing issue. Parties should compete to champion different approaches to solving environmental issues, but not dispute the desired outcome of a better environment. It's not just that conservatism stands to benefit electorally from being more active in environmental debates, but that the environment could be greatly enhanced by more consistent application of conservative ideas to these pressing policy issues.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aren't working
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Attracting BME voters

James Dobson is a Senior Researcher at Bright Blue

Conservatives must draw votes from all corners of society, argues **James Dobson**

A new report from the think tank British Future found that Theresa May would have won a comfortable majority in the 2017 election had the Conservative Party closed the 'ethnic minority voting gap' whereby the Tories performed half as well with black, minority and ethnic voters (BME) as with white voters.

This voting gap poses an enormous problem for the Conservatives. Ethnic minorities are projected to constitute a fifth of the UK's population by 2051. Gaining their support will soon be vital to the Conservatives' electoral prospects.

Fortunately, there are many in the Conservative Party who recognise this. Sam Gyimah MP – the Prisons and Probation Minister – recently told me that the Conservatives "must become the party of mass appeal, that confidently and fully embraces modern Britain".

But, while the Government's rhetoric has often been encouraging, real policies to persuade BME voters have sometimes been lacking. To redress this, Tories must present a positive vision of how they can break down the barriers which prevent BME people from fulfilling their full potential.

This starts with the education system. Some migrant groups achieve significantly worse results in our schools than others. These 'gaps' emerge early in life. High–quality formal childcare at a young age significantly enhances a child's educational development, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Unfortunately, Britain has some of the highest childcare costs in the developed world. As a result, BME children – whose parents are disproportionately disadvantaged – are less likely to participate in formal childcare. The Conservatives should open up childcare by offering all new parents an income–contingent loan to finance childcare when their child is under five.

Further up the education ladder, BME people have not always experienced the benefits of the apprenticeship revolution. Since 2010, there have been almost three million new apprenticeships but BME apprentices are significantly underrepresented in these figures.

Part of the cause of this is the low apprenticeship minimum wage which can discourage individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds from pursuing an apprenticeship. The Conservatives should offer maintenance loans – which are already available to higher education students – to apprentices to supplement their wage during an apprenticeship.

After education, the Conservatives must show BME voters that they are prepared to help them break the 'BME glass ceiling'. Job applicants with typically white British names are more likely to be shortlisted for jobs than those with names associated with BME backgrounds.

The answer to this pernicious problem is name–blind recruitment – where the name of a job applicant is hidden from the recruiter at the beginning of the application process. David Cameron instigated this in the civil service, but it must now be extended to the senior civil service and government agencies.

These changes are, perhaps, modest but they are also crucial. Theresa May was right to rail against the 'burning injustices' which prevent BME individuals from succeeding. These changes would demonstrate to BME voters that Conservatives are on their side, that Tories want them to succeed and to achieve their full potential.

But more wide comprehensive changes to the way the Tories are perceived is also necessary. Immigration policy has become one of the key policy areas where BME voters believe their values misalign with the Conservatives. In the election, Theresa May was perceived to be more sceptical of immigration than any of her recent predecessors.

Yet, BME voters are frequently found to be positive about the impact of immigration. Shortly after the election a poll found that BME voters were substantially more likely than white voters to believe that immigration into Britain was a positive thing. To appeal to BME voters, the Conservative Party must abandon the disastrous net migration target and work towards a more liberal, modern immigration policy.

Winning more BME votes is electorally necessary for the Conservative Party, but it is also just the right thing to do. To be truly 'One Nation', the Conservatives must draw votes from all corners of society. This requires innovative policies that show the Conservatives are on their side, but it also requires the Tories to embrace modern Britain.

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Profile:
The Rt Hon Ken Clarke MP

Laura Round speaks to Ken Clarke MP about the general election, party leaders and Brexit.

Kenneth Clarke – the longest-serving member of the House of Commons – has seen it all, from representing Britain abroad as Chancellor of the Exchequer to being chased down the road during an election by a pitchfork-wielding constituent.

Reflecting on his time in Parliament, he concludes the Conservative Party has completely transformed. "When I joined the Party in the 1960s, it was still frightfully dominated by aristocrats and grandees. I was one of the first generation of meritocrats who started engaging with it."

However, Mr Clarke believes the fundamental principles underlying conservatism remain unchanged. "I've always believed in the same basic things; free market economics combined with a social conscience, equality of opportunity and an ethical approach to government. Those have been my views for about the last sixty years and they have been the views of the Conservative Party for the last sixty years." Perhaps the exception to this coalition is on the issue of Europe.

A lifelong Europhile, Mr Clarke has vowed to continue to resist Brexit, but acknowledges that the Conservative Party has always been split on the question. He recalls seeing John Major's Government destroyed by "ridiculous civil wars" over the Maastricht Treaty in the 1990s. "But leaving Europe on one side, the basic values of the Party have always been there and were reinstated by Cameron, and I think will be by Theresa May - if she can get control of the Party."

"Leaving Europe on one side, the basic values of the Party have always been there and were reinstated by Cameron, and I think will be by Theresa May – if she can get control of the Party." "

It is Margaret Thatcher, who appointed him both Health and Education Secretary, who he regards as the best Prime Minister he has served under. "She gave us the courage of our convictions to actually challenge the worst of the post-war consensus. She did drive us in a way that we really did change things." The current Prime Minister, he feels, with her focus on the 'just about managing' has put forward some "very appealing" ideas.

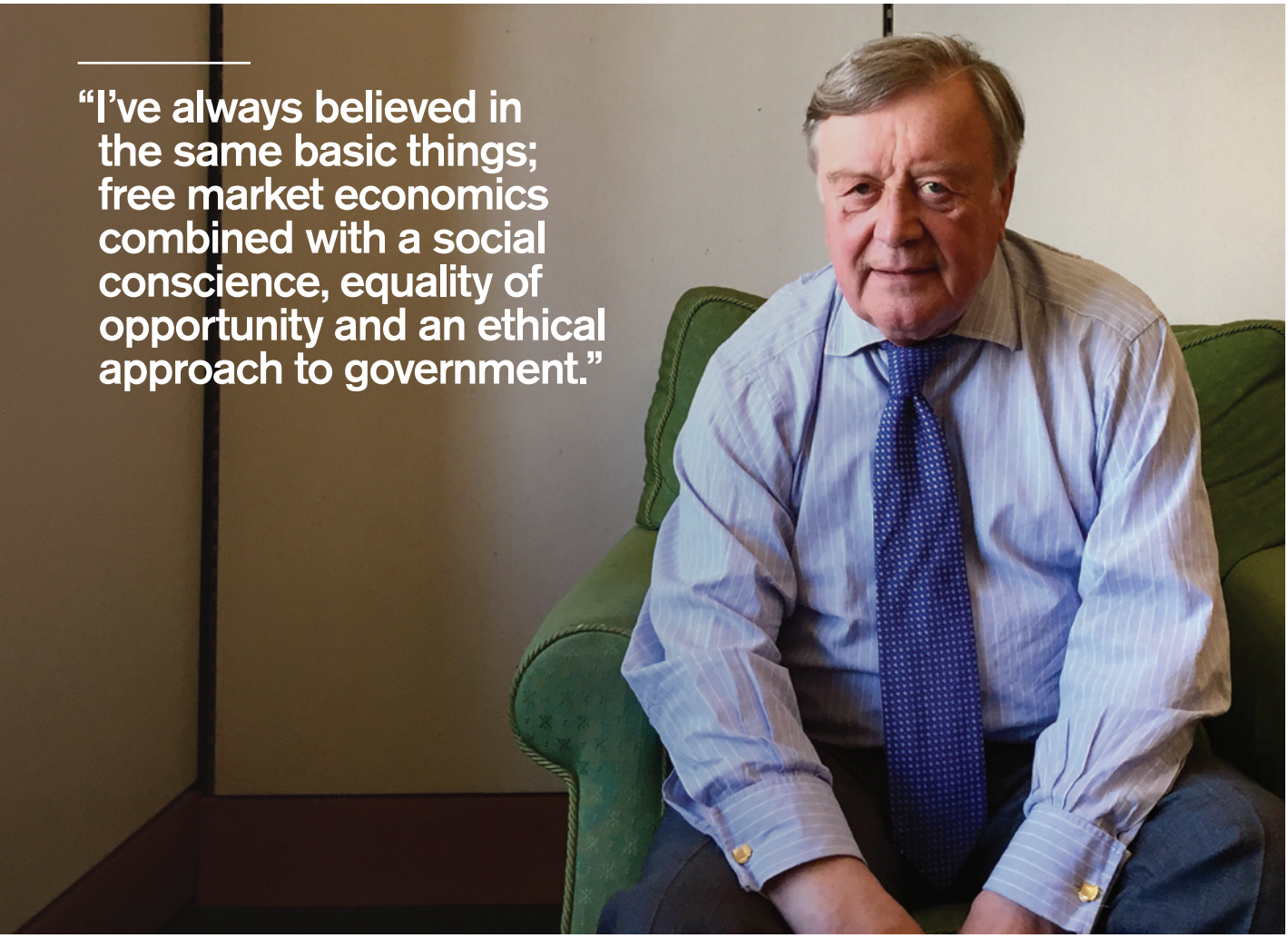
On the last election, he concedes: "we got it wrong." But on the upside, he says the result has brought other voices into the open in a bid to steer the Party back on course. "All kinds of unlikely people are being much more noisy and successful in guiding the Party now."

Nevertheless, he remains concerned about the damage wrought by the EU referendum. "We are in a frightful mess, because we haven't quite come to terms yet with the outcome of the Referendum, which took everybody on both sides of the aisle by complete surprise." One of his main concerns is the transitional arrangements after 2019. "The idea that we're going to have any idea of what our final trading relationships are going to be by the end of 2019 is quite ridiculous, so the Government is going to have to explain how it's going to keep things in one piece for our business investment and our exports during the transitional period."

However, he has resigned himself to the fact that Britain will be leaving the EU. "That Article 50 majority was far too big, but we must at least try to minimise the damage and make a sensible relationship with the rest of the world."

Although over half of the Conservative MPs backed Remain in the EU Referendum, Mr Clarke was the only one to vote against the triggering of Article 50. Despite this show of defiance, he understands why a number of his younger colleagues in the Party chose to fall into line.

"It's alright for a maverick veteran like myself. I pompously tell myself I'm voting for the best interests of my children and grandchildren. Of course, I'm not at the beginning of my career or having to try to catch the selector's eye." However, he does believe it's an MP's duty to vote for what they believe to be in



>> the national interest. “I hope more create the political space to vote for what they really believe in,” he adds.

Mr Clarke recognises the challenges politicians face today are quite different from those of the past, especially with pressures from the modern media and a 24-hour news agenda. “Social media has produced a nasty, vicious quote check and a rather silly low-level debate, which in my opinion is damaging things as well.” He thinks it’s vital for politicians to prevent that from influencing them. “If you’re going to be in government, you’re going to be accountable for the results and frankly, nobody will remember what the Daily Express was saying about it three years ago.”

In the past year, the Commons has lost some of its members to newspapers. Fellow former Chancellor George Osborne left the Commons to take up the editorship of the London Evening Standard. Should he have stuck around? “He’s a loss,” he says. “I’m a fan of George. I don’t agree with him always, I thought he and David Cameron fought an absolutely dreadful Referendum campaign, not as bad as the Leave, but almost as bad.” However, he takes his performance in the round. “He was a very good Chancellor and he’s a very good guy”, he says, and dismisses media attacks on his decision to take on multiple private sector roles after he left the Treasury.

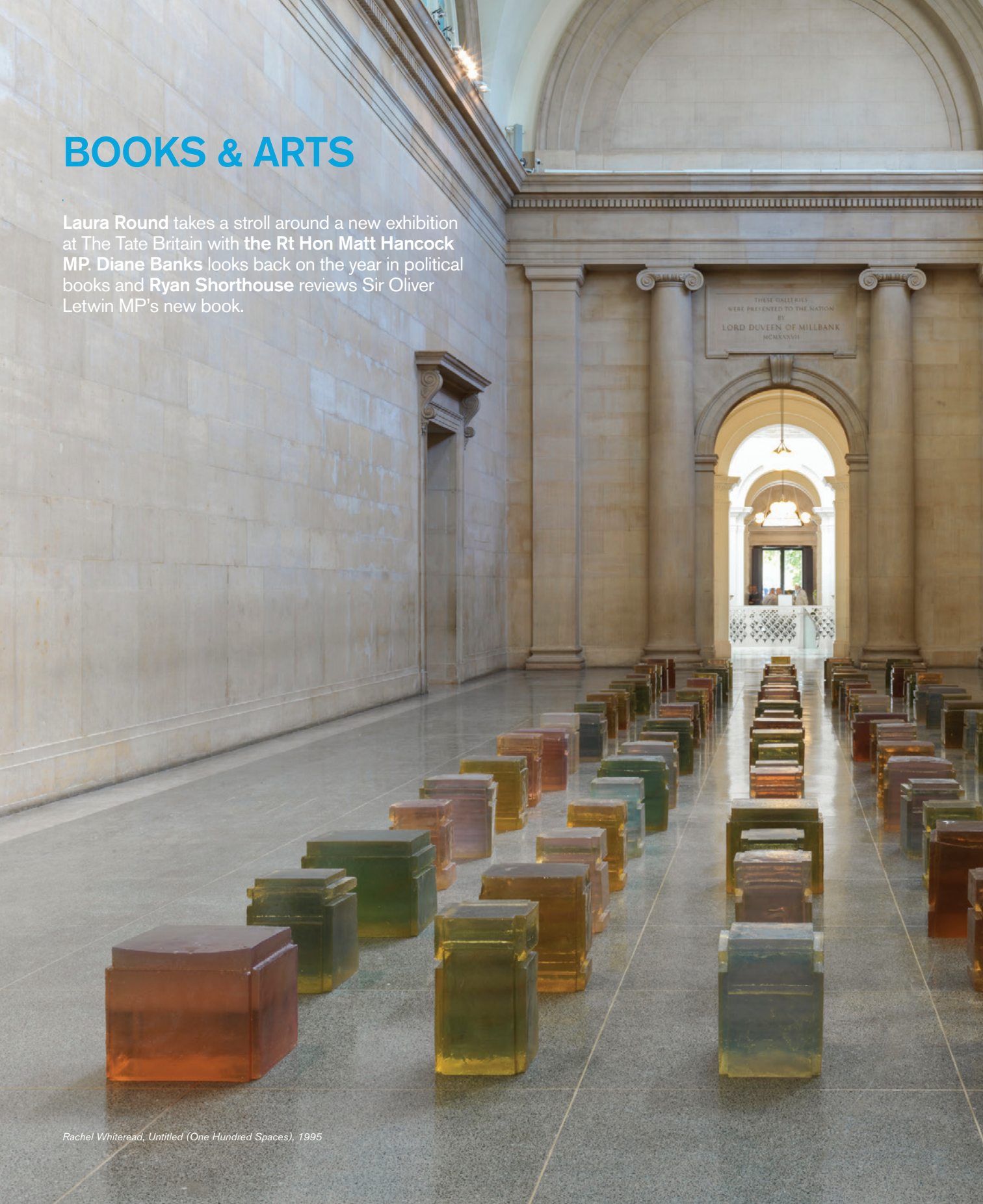
“If you’ve got a Chancellor of the Exchequer who can’t earn anything when he’s no longer in office, you’ve got the wrong bloke in the job in the first place so he should have ignored all of that silly rubbish.”

And what would his advice be for new MPs looking to emulate his long career in public service?

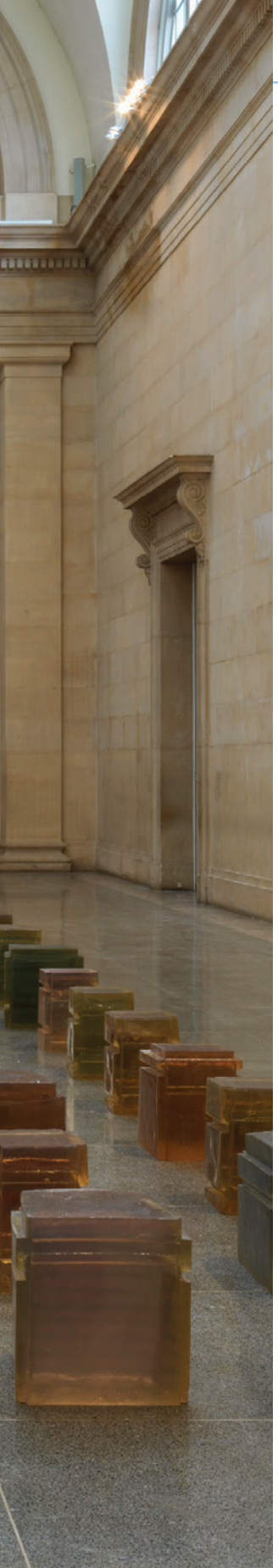
“Don’t do stupid things for the sake of getting publicity. It is important to get publicity but not at all costs. Try to get publicity by putting forward some interesting idea in an original way and not just by larking about and saying stupid things.”

BOOKS & ARTS

Laura Round takes a stroll around a new exhibition at The Tate Britain with **the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP**. **Diane Banks** looks back on the year in political books and **Ryan Shorthouse** reviews Sir Oliver Letwin MP's new book.



Rachel Whiteread, Untitled (One Hundred Spaces), 1995



Exhibition: Rachel Whiteread

Laura Round and **the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP** explore Tate Britain

Laura Round
is the Editor of Centre Write and Communications Manager at Bright Blue

Traditionally, the arts are considered to be the political territory of the Left. Since 2010, the Conservative Ministers responsible for the creative industries, Ed Vaizey MP and now Matt Hancock MP, have made it their mission to change this. "Danny Finkelstein would call it reciprocity. I call it love bombing", says Matt. "If you love something and care about it, then other people who also care about it will respect that."

Engaging with the arts is a ministerial brief heavy on soirees. Matt has kindly invited me along to the opening night of Rachel Whiteread's exhibition at Tate Britain. He is knowledgeable about the artist's work and the trajectory of her career since she won the Turner Prize in 1993, as the first female winner.

Her sculpture *House*, which won Whiteread the prize, was a temporary public sculpture completed in East London in October the same year. It was demolished eleven weeks later. Whiteread casted the inside of a three-story house that was already scheduled for demolition. It was too heavy to move, and it was exhibited at the location of the original house. It became a popular attraction.

Upon entering Tate Britain one-hundred colourful resin casts of the undersides of chairs welcome you. It's an impressive sight. The main exhibition – absent of colour – has a different feel. It is in one enormous, open space, incorporating large scale work and smaller objects. Whiteread's sculptures are predominantly made from plaster and rubbers, creating a rather surreal ambiance. She manages to fossilise everyday objects in a simplistic manner that still capture your imagination.

While walking around the exhibition Matt and I get talking about his love of the arts. "I've always had an interest, but I also felt like I didn't have the chance to explore it, until I was made the Minister of Culture." His job is incredibly varied, ranging from visits to the glass museum in Sunderland to meeting the parents of Skepta, the grime artist, at the Mercury music awards, with whom he "clicked". It turns out he is a surprising fan of London's underground music scene. "I love the music, I love the way that they've done it."

This enthusiasm for the future of the creative industries is shared by senior figures in Number 10, including the Prime Minister herself. "She's very engaged in the fashion industry. I get really good engagement with Number 10 on these subjects," he says.

The Conservatives have done a lot for the creative industries whilst in office, including introducing theatre and film tax credits and making the sector a priority in the Government's industrial strategy. Matt is especially determined to spread the arts to other parts of the country. He adds that "using cultural and creative institutions to help social and economic regeneration in areas is really exciting."

Matt believes more people in the arts vote Conservative than one would suspect. He adds that "the fact there are lots of people who are on the Left in arts is a reason to engage more, not less." He concludes: "There's a great big hole in the centre-ground of British politics", where common ground, such as the need to preserve and grow the arts industry, could be turned into electoral advantage for the Conservatives.

Rachel Whiteread runs until 21st January 2018 at Tate Britain, London.

2017:
The year in political books

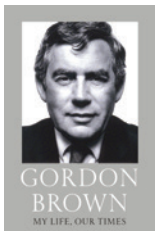
Diane Banks is a literary agent and a non-executive director of Bright Blue

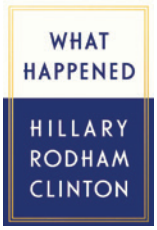
The year kicked off with the storm around the Breitbart News editor banned from Twitter Milo Yiannopoulos's deal with Simon & Schuster in the US, with S&S UK's office declining to publish. The deal had spurred a debate about free speech after Simon & Schuster were widely condemned for the signing, with the Chicago Review of Books announcing that it would not review any of the company's books this year and many of its authors threatening to leave. The book, *Dangerous,* was to be published on S&S's 'conservative' imprint Threshold – a feature of US publishing houses which has no parallel in the UK. Anyway, in the event, Yiannopoulos managed to disgrace himself to such an extent during a podcast interview in which he appeared to condone sexual relations with young boys that the contract was cancelled. He went on to self publish in June, though the 65,000 pre-orders which he was claiming must have been in the US as Nielsen Bookscan UK figures show a measly 1,900 copies sold at the time of writing.

In February, Hutchinson published Jess Phillips's *Everywoman: One Woman's Truth About Speaking the Truth*. Unlike the US, the UK has traditionally denounced politicians who publish before they've reached the pinnacle of their career, but here Phillips uses politics to publicise wider, cross-party issues to great effect, showing that there is scope for other types of political memoir than the end of career retrospective. A similar example this year was Sayeeda Warsi's *The Enemy Within: A Tale of Muslim Britain* (Allen Lane, March). Harriet Harman's *A Woman's Work* (Allen Lane, February) also straddles this emerging sub-genre and next February we can look forward to Jo Swinson's *Equal Power: A handbook for men and women* (Atlantic). This development in political publishing is to be welcomed.

July saw Oneworld's publication of Justin Trudeau's *Common Ground*, which somehow doesn't seem to have made waves as it should have done – just a few hundred hardbacks sold in the UK to date and not a lot of noise at all. Yanis Varoufakis's *Adults In The Room: My Battle With Europe's Deep Establishment* (Bodley Head, May) on the other hand struck a chord, shifting over 25,000 copies in hardback in just a few months. In March Bloomsbury published bestselling Dutch historian Rutger Bregman's *Utopia for Realists: And How We Can Get There* and in May, at the other end of the political spectrum, Douglas Murray's *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam* which was considered risqué in liberal publishing circles. Whilst the former sold a respectable 10,500 hardbacks to date, Murray went on to storm the Sunday Times bestseller list, now up to 25,000 hardbacks at the time of writing.

Publishers have always reserved their biggest titles for autumn and this year is no disappointment. The two big ones for 2017 are Hillary Clinton's *What Happened* (Simon & Schuster, 12th September) and Gordon Brown's *My Life, Our Times* (Bodley Head, 9th November). I will be





reading both of these. The latter, only announced in March this year and with proceeds going to the Jennifer Brown Research Laboratory, Theirworld and the Brown's charitable and public service work, promises to be excellent.

Finally, as you read this, Nick Clegg's *How to Stop Brexit* (Bodley Head, 5th October) will be about to hit the shelves (though of course if Conservative Party Conference had been anywhere near the publishing industry's radar, they would have published a week earlier). The blurb makes the extraordinary claim that "there is nothing remotely inevitable about Brexit". Perhaps he's trying to out-Blair Blair. Anyway, if you want more fiction from the Lib Dems, Vince Cable's debut novel *Open Arms* – "an explosive thriller which circles from Whitehall to the slums of Mumbai" - has just been published by Corvus. If forced to choose between these two I'd go with the latter.

Hearts and minds
By Sir Oliver Letwin MP

Ryan Shorthouse is the director of Bright Blue

Oliver Letwin has had an incredibly privileged life: he has been at the heart of conservative thinking and politics since childhood.

As a young boy, he would converse with intellectual giants such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, who were invited around for dinner by his parents. In his twenties, Sir Keith Joseph offered Oliver a job – again, whilst at dinner at the Letwins – as an adviser at the Department for Education. So began his long political career, which would see him as a key confidant to Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s to eventually becoming "David Cameron's odd-job man" – actually one of the most important and powerful Ministers, alongside Cameron and Osborne, in the Governments from 2010 to 2016.

This book is Letwin's memoirs, each chapter providing detailed and often surprising accounts of key periods in recent Conservative Party history, right from the top of the tree.

We learn that Margaret Thatcher called Oliver in 1997 to urge him to back William Hague instead of Ken Clarke in the Conservative leadership contest. That he was the only one in Iain Duncan Smith's Shadow Cabinet to support university tuition fees. That Letwin, as Shadow Chancellor, proposed the introduction of the Office for Budget Responsibility and raising the Inheritance Tax threshold, both of which Osborne later then introduced. And that he, as well as other members of the Conservative negotiating team for the Coalition in 2010, were deeply surprised that the Liberal Democrats did not push for the automatic introduction of the Alternative Vote (AV) electoral system for the next election, rather than just a referendum on it. Amusingly, he divulges that he endured his most sleepless nights in fear that Andrea Leadsom would be Cameron's successor.

> **"His passion for politics and achieving social justice for the less fortunate seeps through the pages."**

In the Cabinet Office, we learn he was "Minister for Crises", leading and ultimately resolving - alongside relevant colleagues – the UK's response to Ebola, flooding and the 2012 fuel crisis. His proximity to, and possession of, power is underlined too by his membership of the National Security Council, visiting and interacting with the upper echelons of the Chinese and Indian governments.

But Oliver wears power lightly: he is genuinely grateful for the experiences he has had, including getting to know and love rural England as MP for West Dorset. Some recollections of his work as a government Minister can, admittedly, be quite dull - even Fabianistic, when talking about reforming government machinery – but they are nonetheless littered with playfulness, wit and funny anecdotes. He reveals the logic and clarity of his impressive thinking to a plethora of government problems, setting an example of what politicians ought to be: problem-solvers and compromise-seekers, not publicity-seeking showmen.

Reflecting his humility and kindness, the book confesses to his and the Conservative Party's past errors: Thatcher Governments neglecting vulnerable individuals who do not have the capacity to partake in a booming free market, for example. Sometimes, though, there is a sense of him trying to set the record straight on infamous blunders, where he could not defend himself at the time: the big spending cuts pledge in the 2001 election and his 2009 parliamentary expenses claims. There's too much mockery of Gordon Brown, a safe but predictable source of jokes for too many politicians. His reasoning for supporting the Iraq War and his faith in Universal Credit are untypically irrational.

His passion for politics and achieving social justice for the less fortunate seeps through the pages. Pleasingly, he advises the Conservative Party to pursue a combination of social liberalism and social justice, believing – as a fellow liberal conservative – that "social market liberal policies" are both morally and politically right. Whether its advice on our future relationship with the EU or how to respond to the populist trend, Conservatives would do well to read and keep on listening to Oliver Letwin, an impressive man with a big heart and a big mind.

Hearts and Minds, Sir Oliver Letwin, Biteback Publishing, 356 pages, £20.00 Available from 2 October, 2017.

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**Source: National Audit Office 'Hinkley Point C' report & Hendry Review of tidal lagoons*

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