New Labour: 'The Road Less Travelled'?

Stephen Meredith[1]

Department of Politics, University of Sheffield

Abstract

This article offers a contribution to the debate in recent issues of this journal concerning the relative 'newness' or otherwise of New Labour. It briefly assesses the significant arguments of the respective academic protagonists and asks if, in responding to a changing social and economic climate, New Labour, the highly focused use of language and rhetoric aside, is, in a significant sense, different to the measured, pragmatic and reformist revisions of the past. It emphasises significant associations and continuities in Labour's recent evolution and the largely rhetorical and politically (and electorally) expedient nature of the party's current designation. It offers an interpretation of New Labour, based around two related observations of the party's historically broad and complex political culture and diverse perceptions and preferences of Labour's traditionally centre-right 'governing elite', that suggests that the post-1994 'New' Labour Party possesses significant precedents within elements of Labour's diverse, centre-right 'dominant coalition'.

Introduction

This article is intended as a contribution to the debate in recent volumes of this journal concerning the relative continuities or disjunctions between 'old' and 'New' Labour. Broadly, it suggests that New Labour's response and adaptation to the influences and processes that have supposedly aided and abetted its creation and informed its current ideological and political character and trajectory is not, in itself, particularly unique. Nor does it represent 'year zero' as New Labour apologists would have us believe. Much of the subsequent focus on a simple break and dichotomy between 'old' and 'New' Labour, it is argued, is the product of focused political rhetoric, ably assisted by an amenable mass media (and academy) always in search of novelty (see Bale, 1999b, pp. 3-4, 1999c, pp. 193, 197). More specifically, it contends that the perspective of a complex political culture and historically diverse centre-right leadership coalition emphasises significant links and continuities with Labour's past and signals the largely synthetic and politically expedient nature of Labour's current appellation. One consequence of the failure to acknowledge the complexity of old Labour's centre-right coalition, for instance, has been an inability to perceive important parallels and continuities between so-called old and New Labour. A brief discussion of different, often conflicting perspectives of a core organising principle – the idea and practice of equality – within Labour's broad and diverse political culture hopes to emphasise the historical context and precedents of significant aspects of *New* Labour thinking and practice.

The Debate So Far

David Rubinstein (2000) introduced the debate by bucking the trend of recent accounts (particularly that of Driver & Martell, 1998) that emphasise the clearly defined differences and discontinuity with Labour's past. Drawing upon Labour's historical development, he (2000, pp. 161, 166) argues that 'the Blair-led Labour Party is the direct successor of the Labour Party of the past', and concludes that 'the objectives of the Blair government are not dissimilar from those of the Attlee and Wilson administrations'. Any significant change is largely a consequence of 'a rational response to the profound economic and social changes that have taken place since the 1970s'.

Driver and Martell themselves (2001), together with Phil Larkin (2001), provide a (concerted) response to Rubinstein's advocacy of clear signs of continuity between 'old' and New Labour. While acknowledging important continuities in Labour's political history, Driver and Martell (2001, pp. 47, 49-50) claim that Rubinstein's argument in fact presents evidence in support of their own thesis that change, emanating from wider social factors, 'has been marked in many policy areas.' Moreover, they restate their original thesis (see Driver & Martell, 1998) that New Labour, in its contemporary 'post-Thatcherite' form, represents a break 'both with post-war social democracy and with Thatcherism.' Larkin (2001, pp. 51, 53-4) also acknowledges important similarities between 'old' and New Labour governments and questions Driver and Martell's simple and easy old/new dichotomy. However, he is also careful to insist that Rubinstein's emphasis on continuity and limited acknowledgement of a changed societal context and

its consequences for political parties, their policies and strategy, underestimates how far contextual changes impact upon the aims and strategy of a 'left-of-centre' government, and 'does not fully allow for the fact that even where a number of similar policies and attitudes can be identified the changed context substantially weakens social democratic intent. As such his claim that '[i]n essentials the party's policies have not changed' is…misleading.'

This article hopes to expand upon and make clearer the continuities between 'old' and New Labour and the respective approach and strategies adopted to engage with periodically shifting times and context. Although a new emphasis on language, in conjunction with a new relationship between politics, government and the mass media (see Fairclough, 2000; also see Shaw, 1996b, pp. 206, 212, 217-18), has been used to good effect by New Labour to symbolise its expression of a 'new politics' and a 'reinvention of government' (which in itself entails a greater salience for language as, in part, a new form of control), the process of response and adaptation is in itself neither unique nor absolute; that the concepts, phenomena and impact of a 'changed context' or 'new times' are not in themselves new and that the approach of adopting new themes or paradigms to meet 'new times' is also by no means new. As well as contributing to the idea of New Labour as somehow different to the pre-Thatcher incarnation of itself - indeed, as 'post-Thatcherite', in Driver and Martell's (2001, p. 49; also see 1998) characterisation - the concept and emergence of 'new times' illustrates, paradoxically, striking similarities in Labour's evolution when seen in historical perspective.

New Labour's 'Newness' in Historical Perspective

The Left-wing Critique of Labours Old and New

According to the traditional left-wing critique of Labour and 'Labourism', the party in government (or at least its parliamentary leadership) has always preferred and pursued a gradual, pragmatic, reformist and adaptive route. From this left-wing, 'Milibandian' perspective, Coates (1996, pp. 63, 67, 68-9, 70-1) has argued that a 'New' Labour government will no doubt encounter similar constraints to past Labour governments and that its response will broadly resemble its past behaviour in such circumstances: 'then [it was] with multinational companies, then with international financial agencies. Those were the old constraints on Labour radicalism; and were Labour to be radical again they would all rapidly reappear' (Coates, 1996, pp. 68-9, 71). Moreover, given Labour's historical 'coalition of two main groupings, two projects, two political universes' of 'social reformists' (keen to manipulate private capital for progressive social ends) and 'bourgeois radicals' (keen to modernise the local industrial base), 'in a very real sense *there has always been Old Labour and New Labour*…What is new in New Labour is that the forces of Old Labour are so weak. It is the *dominance and self-confidence* of the modernizers, not their novelty, which distinguishes the Blair party from its predecessors' (Coates, 1996, p. 68).

From 'New' Labour to New Labour

From a different historical angle, parallels and continuities in Labour history and politics have been emphasised, by two key exponents of Labour politics who have transcended the simple old-new Labour divide, from the perspective that the Labour Party has always been 'new'. Firstly, Neil Kinnock (2000, p. 28) attempts to break down the reductionist distinction between 'old' and 'New' Labour. He suggests that 'at its best times, Labour always has been "new", or at least searching for dynamic change'. There have been significant developments within New Labour's party. The name 'New Labour' itself possesses 'evident symbolism and general appeal', and others include Tony Blair's style of leadership, further modernisation of policies and party structure and the adoption of new technological and psephological techniques. However, at its most responsive and progressive, he argues, Labour has always been 'new' and receptive to change and, moreover, 'the idea of a homogeneous old Labour is something of a myth, and, like most myths, a product of ignorance.'[2]

Labour's essential capacity for renewal and change is seen in a variety of periods and experiences in the evolution of the party. There has been nothing more new, Kinnock suggests, than the party of Keir Hardie 'that broke with Lib-Labbery a century ago' and, in 1920, 'newness' was expressed in terms of a party that had hastened from its founding to government in little more than twenty four years. More (or even most) famously, patent 'newness' was 'the most glorious feature of…Attlee's government of welfare state creation, full employment, reconstruction and decolonisation'. Even the difficult years of opposition and internal factional strife of the 1950s witnessed some degree of response and adaptation to the problems presented to Labour by the emergence of what has come

to be known as the 'affluent society' (see Black, 2002) and the related phenomenon of the changing sociological basis of Labour support, so much so that the socio-political research of Abrams and Rose (1960) received significant attention from revisionist thinkers and strategists within the Labour Party. In this respect, the ideas of Tony Crosland, with their reappraisal and reaffirmation of Labour's key notion of equality and emphasis upon the values of personal freedom, were presented, on the dust jacket of the first edition of his classic work, The Future of Socialism (1956), as 'An answer to the demands for 'new thinking on the Left''. Can New Labour claim to possess an evolutionary revision of similar quality and vision to Crosland's work? Again, in the 1960s, in the wake of thirteen years of Conservative government, 'new' Labour was expressed in terms of a number of significant developments in the spheres of industrial reorganisation, technological initiatives, education (particularly the introduction of the Open University) and significant developments in liberal social legislation.

Running right through the historical record, then, is the theme of response and adaptation to periodically evolving and changing circumstances. According to Kinnock (2000, p. 28), Labour's ideas and methods 'have always been in a state of progressive flux, of permanent evolution. If [it is] the party of newness today, it is in part because [it] always have been'. David Marquand (2000, p. 2), a respected observer of Labour's developmental history, concurs with Kinnock. The very idea of being new, he argues, 'has always been part of the mental furniture of the Labour movement.' The Labour Party, from its very beginnings, has developed and adapted as society and politics has evolved and, it is no accident, he suggests, that Labour's 1945 Manifesto was called '*Let*

us face the future': there is 'nothing new in the idea of being new. Given the strategy of Ramsay MacDonald as leader of the party in the 1920s, for example, 'to build up a broad-based progressive coalition extending beyond the frontiers of the Labour Party' and of Wilson's 'white hot heat of technology' strategy to mobilise the 'new class of technicians and scientists to produce the second great Labour victory…of 1966', it is New Labour's *success* rather than its pursuit of creating an 'election-winning social coalition' that is new. The same can be said of New Labour's nascent idea of the 'Third Way'. Marquand (2000, p. 2) suggests that the 1945 Labour government thought that it was pursuing a 'third way' and, from the horse's mouth, so to speak, Marquand and his revisionist colleagues of the late 1950s, influenced by Crosland, thought that they 'were offering a Third Way between old style, boring, fundamentalist socialism and old style, boring, class bound Toryism.' As Marquand suggests, '[t]he idea of the Third Way has been part of the psyche of the Labour movement in this country for a very long time.'

New Labour and Labour's Complex Political Culture

Two important points often forgotten in recent political and academic presentations of the simple old-New Labour dichotomy, suggest a different understanding and interpretation of the relationship between the Blairite Labour Party and its supposedly homogeneous, obsolete predecessor. Firstly, Labour's has always been a complex political culture of systematic and recurrent intra-party struggle and competition between different traditions, strands, tendencies and groups over assorted understandings, interpretations and applications of party principles and policy. Secondly, one consequence of the failure to

acknowledge the ideological and programmatic complexity of old Labour's centre-right 'dominant coalition' and 'governing elite' has been an inability to perceive important parallels and continuities between so-called old and New Labour.

Labour's Complex Political Culture

Labour's complex political culture has always been (and is) a combination of mutually dependent, continuously competing 'ways of life' each in search of dominance or even hegemony (Bale, 1999a: 77-8 and see 1997b, 1999b). Warde (1982: 1 and see 9-24), for example, has described the Labour Party as an 'organization sheltering a mixture' of cultures and traditions (or 'segments' and 'strategies' in his terms) 'whose divergent interests and aspirations frequently brought them into conflict' and were often incompatible. He refers to 'the systematic basis of intra-party cleavage' and tells us that '[i]nternal conflict is neither unusual or eradicable.'

If we conceive of the Labour Party as a complex political culture containing a number of 'ways of life' that continuously interact and compete for dominance or hegemony (Bale, 1999a: 77-8), we are less likely to explain New Labour as an unambiguous dichotomy and departure between homogeneous 'old' and 'New' Labours: this view can be seen as an invention of the modernisers in their haste to patent 'year zero' as a new, dynamic and electable party (see Shaw, 1996a: 52, 1996b: 206, 212, 217-18). It further helps to avoid both the amnesia and caricature current in New Labour political and some academic circles (see Bale, 1999c; Powell, 2000) and to historicise New Labour (see Fielding,

2002). Rather than signifying a complete break or departure with its past, (the ascendancy of) New Labour represents the contemporary manifestation of the (possibly temporary) dominance and attempted hegemony of just one of Labour's 'ways of life' (hierarchy) or 'segments' and 'strategies'. The other 'ways of life' continue in more or less attenuated form. We are, then, likely to be more sensitive to the patterns weaved into Labour's complex political culture and the parallels and continuities inherent in Labour history and politics. As Bale (1999b: 250-1) suggests:

> 'no one way of life is capable of fully capturing a reality which is only completely described by all ways of life in combination. As we have seen in the past, the decisions made by the adherents of the temporarily dominant strain will at some point result in structures, practices, rhetoric and acts which prove incapable of coping with novel and unforeseen circumstances. At that point both the party and the public are likely to begin listening to the 'I-told-you-so's' of those ways of life that currently seem to make so little sense. Not for no reason are the most successful parties often the broadest churches.'

The Idea and Practice of Equality

Labour's core organising idea and principle of equality (see Ellison, 1994: ix-xiii; Kellner, 1999: 20) presents a useful snapshot of the tendency to generalise and periodise adherence to core traditions, principles and ideas within Labour's historic coalition and to obscure useful comparisons of New Labour with a simplified version of 'old' Labour.

As the much heralded debate between representatives of so-called New and 'old' Labour (Brown, 1997; Hattersley, 1997) concerning respective interpretations and applications of

equality suggest, some old Labour centre-right politicians, most famously Crosland and Hattersley himself, championed the principle of some degree of redistributive equality of *outcome*. However, if we acknowledge the complexity of 'old' Labour's centre-right coalition and the recurrent, systematic intra-party competition over policy and principle in Labour's complex political culture, what Warde (1982: 21; also see Bale, 1999b: 4-5; Ellison, 1994: ix-x; Larkin, 2000) calls 'the struggle for segmental dominance', we can recognise that different strands, traditions and groups even within Labour's centre-right 'dominant coalition' and 'governing elite' employed different readings and analyses of equality as the means by which to develop and sustain particular policy preferences. According to this perspective of Labour's long history and culture of inter- and intra-factional strife concerning its core organising principles – in which one group might enjoy temporary dominance but would not eclipse its competitors – New Labour's allegedly 'retreating vision' of or 'apostasy' on the Croslandite, egalitarian idea and purpose of equality is not a new or even recent development.

One consequence, then, of the failure of much of the literature to reconcile the complexity of the centre-right of old Labour has been an inability to perceive important parallels and continuities between elements of this coalition and New Labour. During the crisis years of traditional Keynesian social democracy and the discrediting of many of its core pillars and principles during the 1970s, differences and divisions concerning the idea and practice of equality within Labour's centre-right coalition are revealed, for instance, in the lack of Croslandite egalitarian spirit and the evidence of nascent thinking around more tempered interpretations and applications of equality in organisations allegedly set

up within the party in the 1970s to champion the cause of traditional 'Keynesian socialism'.

The Manifesto Group, founded in 1976 initially to resist the advance of the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES) and as a counterweight to the Tribune Group within the PLP, contained within its (seventy plus) membership a diverse range of broadly centre-right Labour MPs including Jenkinsites such as Bill Rodgers, David Owen and Ian Wrigglesworth and others such as Roy Hattersley and Harold Lever. Its initial policy document, What We Must Do: A Democratic Socialist Approach to Britain's Crisis (1977), restates its faith in *limited* planning and the mixed economy but repudiates increased public expenditure and simple redistribution of wealth. Instead, it emphasises wealth creation: '[p]rogressive taxation and increased public expenditure have been pursued with too little regard for overall cost and too optimistic a view of the likely benefits'. Bryan Magee, one of the principal authors of the proposals, described how wealth creation must be given a priority which it had never previously achieved in socialist thinking and the pamphlet as an attempt to update and stimulate support for the principles of moderate democratic socialism (LP/MANIF/18).

Perhaps in themes that pre-date New Labour by fifteen years or so, the Manifesto Group pamphlet advocates that the 'principal object of economic and industrial policy is to produce an atmosphere in which innovation thrives, risks are worth taking, profitability is satisfactory, and efficiency is a habit'. It rejects both Conservative monetarist policies and the idea of a *laissez-faire* society and the idea of a significantly planned economy and

society and the alleged ‘destruction of individual initiative and choice, and therefore of freedom, which that brings’. It further attacks the ‘inept use’ of weapons on which democratic socialists have traditionally placed too much reliance: ‘Keynesian demand management policies have been operated with insufficient care for the damage they might cause if pursued beyond their limitations’. Focusing on the problems of wealth creation rather than wealth distribution, the proposals represent new ground in socialist thinking and revise the priorities of Crosland’s earlier work which had presented economic growth as a given. In attacking the ‘over-simplifications’ of the ‘neo-Marxist’ demand economy and the Conservatives’ vicious free market, it claims to offer a middle course towards economic recovery and social and democratic prosperity (LP/MANIF/18; Telegraph, 9 March 1977; The Guardian, 9 March 1977). Although relatively basic in relation to some of the complex issues and problems of the time, we can identify here the seeds of nascent themes and thinking on the Labour right in the form of social democratic responses to the emergent problems of the 1970s that have been taken up and developed more recently by ‘New’ Labour (also see Fielding, 2002).

The recent debates (see Brown, 1997; Hattersley, 1997; Kellner, 1997 and various contributions to Leonard, 1999) around New Labour’s relative espousal of traditional egalitarian principles have demonstrated that there remain significant differences of understanding and interpretation of the central organising principle of equality within Labour’s broad centre-right coalition that reflect the divisions of the earlier generation of so-called ‘Keynesian socialists’. The Jenkinsite members of the Manifesto Group were very wary of ‘doing a Crosland’ while, at the same time, struggling to find coherent

solutions and strategies for complex issues and difficulties themselves. Bill Rodgers, for instance, was prominent in his opposition to high public expenditure which, he suggested, should be 'dependent on achieving economic growth and rising personal living standards *first*'. Rodgers argued that individuals desired more control of their own lives and that this demanded greater attention to individual liberty, including lower personal taxation and a clearer role for individuals in greater industrial democracy. Reprising an earlier (perhaps recurrent) theme resonant of the anxiety on the left during the late 1950s and early 1960s concerning the likely impact of the so-called 'affluent society' on the political culture and future electoral success of the Labour Party (see Black, 2002), the core of the argument was that Labour should recognise the fact that most individuals now placed personal consumption above the pursuit of equality and, regardless of the merits of the approach, it certainly 'lacked any sense of Crosland's commitment to equality as the central feature of Labour's vision of the future' (Ellison, 1994: 199-200).

Conclusion

The underlying rationale here has been to argue that analysts of New Labour, seemingly seduced by the appeal of novelty and the portrayal of 'newness', should not hurry to distance their subject from its past and the significant continuities that lie therein. One consequence of the failure to acknowledge the complexity of the centre-right of old Labour has been an inability to perceive important parallels between old and New Labour. For example, attempts (see, for example, Driver & Martell, 1998: 79-82) to contrast significant qualitative differences between the respective Croslandite (as

singularly representative of ‘old’ Labour) and New Labour conceptions of equality to reflect significant divergence and departure in important areas of thinking and policy between the pre-and post-1994 Labour Party neglect the fact that a significant school of thought within ‘old’ Labour’s centre-right ‘dominant coalition’ were already moving away from (if they had ever fully accepted them) Crosland’s unqualified egalitarian, redistributive principles and approach as the pillars of Keynesian social democracy crumbled during the 1970s. So, a simple distinction between New and a single, homogeneous ‘old’ Labour posits a false frame of reference and analysis: if we acknowledge and delineate the complex ideological and programmatic character and diverse perceptions and preferences of ‘old’ Labour’s centre-right ‘dominant coalition’ and ‘governing elite’, important aspects of New Labour thinking and policy can be seen to possess overt historical context and precedents.

New Labour, then, represents not so much a cohesively and coherently *new* party with significantly new principles, ideas and policies as the expression of the present dominance and attempted hegemony of a particular segment and strategy of Labour’s broad and complex (traditionally dominant centre-right) coalition. As Larkin (2000: 182-3) notes, once we have established the need for a more profound examination of Labour’s past as a means of locating New Labour’s place in it and go beyond the simplistic conception of a straightforward, unambiguous and homogeneous ‘old’ Labour to acknowledge the diverse traditions and ‘segments’ therein, ‘certain similarities…emerge’.

Number of Words

Text 3670 words

Notes on Contributor

Stephen Meredith is a lecturer in the Department of Politics at the University of Sheffield and is completing research on the political culture of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

References

Abrams M. & Rose R. (1960) Must Labour Lose? (Harmondsworth: Penguin)

Bale T. (1997) 'Towards a 'Cultural Theory' of Parliamentary Party Groups', Journal of Legislative Studies 3 (4) 25-43

Bale T. (1999a) 'Broad Churches, Big Theory and One Small Example: Cultural Theory and intra-party politics', in Thompson M., Grendstad G. & Selle P. (eds.) Cultural Theory as Political Science (London: Routledge) 77-89

Bale T. (1999b) Sacred Cows and Common Sense: The Symbolic Statecraft and Political Culture of the British Labour Party (Aldershot: Ashgate)

Bale T. (1999c) 'The logic of no alternative? Political scientists, historians, and the politics of Labour's past', British Journal of Politics and International Relations 1 (2) 192-204

Black L. (2002) The Political Culture of the Left in 'Affluent' Britain, 1951-1964: Old Labour, New Britain? (Basingstoke: Palgrave)

Brown G. (1997) 'Why Labour is still loyal to the poor', The Guardian, 2 August, 19

Coates D. (1996) 'Labour Governments: Old Constraints and New Parameters', New Left Review 219, September-October, pp. 62-77

Crosland C.A.R. (1956) The Future of Socialism (London: Jonathan Cape)

Crouch C. (1997) 'The Terms of the Neo-Liberal Consensus', Political Quarterly 68 (4) pp. 352-60

Driver S. & Martell L. (1998) New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism (Cambridge: Polity Press)

Driver S. & Martell L. (2001) 'From Old Labour to New Labour: A Comment on Rubinstein', Politics 21 (1) pp. 47-50

Ellison N. (1994) Egalitarian Thought and Labour Politics (London: Routledge)

Fairclough N. (2000) New Labour, New Language? (London: Routledge)

Fielding S. (2002) The Labour Party: Continuity and Change in the Making of 'New' Labour (Basingstoke: Palgrave)

Harrison R. (1991) 'Labour Party history: Approaches and interpretations', Labour History Review 56 (1) pp. 8-12

Hattersley R. (1997) 'Why I'm no longer loyal to Labour', The Guardian, 26 July, 21

Kellner P. (1997) 'More equal than others', New Statesman, 17 October, 20-3

Kenny M. & Smith M. J. (2001) 'Interpreting New Labour: Constraints, Dilemmas and Political Agency' in Ludlam S. & Smith M. J. (eds.) New Labour in Government (Basingstoke: Macmillan) pp. 234-55

Kinnock N. (2000) 'New? We've always been new', New Statesman, 28 February, p. 28

Labour Party Manifesto Group Papers (LP/MANIF), Labour History Archive, Manchester

Larkin P. (2000) 'New Labour and old revisionism', Renewal 8 (1) 42-9

Larkin P. (2001) 'New Labour in Perspective: A Comment on Rubinstein', Politics 21 (1) pp. 51-55

Leonard D. (ed.) (1999) Crosland and New Labour (Basingstoke: Macmillan)

Marquand D. (1999) The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair, Revised Second Edition (London: Orion/Phoenix)

Marquand D. (2000) 'History today', Fabian Review 112 (1) pp. 2-3

Miliband R. (1972 [1961]) Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour, Second Edition (London: Merlin Press)

Powell M. (2000) 'Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue: the Jackdaw Politics of the Third Way', paper presented to The Third Way and Beyond Conference, University of Sussex, 2 November 2000, http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/CST/for/3rdway/sosnsbsb.rtf [accessed 9/11/00]

Rubinstein D. (2000) 'A New Look at New Labour', Politics 20 (3) pp. 161-67

Shaw E. (1996a) 'From Old Labour to New Labour', Renewal 4 (3) 51-9

Shaw E. (1996b) The Labour Party since 1945 (Oxford: Blackwell)

Warde A. (1982) Consensus and beyond: The development of Labour Party strategy since the second world war (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

[1] I would like to thank Steve Ludlam and two anonymous referees for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.

[2] Colin Crouch (1997: 352-5; also see Powell, 2000) concurs that 'old' Labour represents a broad and diverse spectrum of traditions and ideas. In terms of 'politics that had a practical importance', Crouch identifies four 'Old Labours', each a product and somehow representative of particular epochs: old Labour one was the limited but optimistic politics of the governments of the interwar years; old Labours two and three which dominated the postwar period up to 'the oil and other inflationary crises of the 1970s' were characterised respectively by the *democratic socialist* strategy of nationalisation and state planning and control, and by the *social democratic* acceptance of a competitive market economy allied to a Keynesian, interventionist and welfarist strategy that sought 'to channel rather than suppress [these competitive] market forces'; old Labour four represented 'the socialism of defensive decline' of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Each of these manifestations is new in the sense that they are responding and adapting to particular circumstances and challenges or, at least, the 'spirit of the age'. So, it could (and has been) argued, that New Labour is new in the sense that it is representative of a period of considerable socio-economic upheaval. On the other hand, New Labour is far from new in the sense that it represents a similar continuous pattern of development in terms of episodic or periodic response and adaptation to changing circumstances. Certainly, as Powell (2000) argues, the old left (and the new right) has suffered from some re-writing of history and caricature in order to create *new* political space for New Labour and the Third Way.