

---

# fabiana

The Fabian Women's Network Magazine

---

ISSUE #2

WINTER 2012

## Labour and Feminism

Side by side  
*Ed Miliband*

The welfare state  
we're in

with views from  
Sweden and  
the Fawcett Society

Potential energy  
The economy  
needs more women

Shadow Minister **Chi Onwurah**

### PLUS

**Seema Malhotra**

**Torbjörn Hällö**

**Deborah Mattinson**

**Helen Wells**

**Marc Stears**

**Laura Nelson**



# Fabiana winter 2012

Fabiana is the magazine of the Fabian Women's Network (FWN). The articles represent the views of the writers only and not the collective view of FWN.

**Editor:** Ivana Bartoletti  
**Sub-editor:** Suki Ferguson  
**Designed by:** jamesenglishdesign.com  
**Illustrations:** www.daddoillustrations.com

**FWN Director:** Seema Malhotra  
**Email:** fabianwomen@fabian-society.org.uk  
**Twitter:** @FabianWomen Website: <http://www.fabianwomen.co.uk>

**Fabian Society General Secretary:** Andrew Harrop  
**Fabian Society membership:** Giles Wright 020 7227 4904

**Young Fabians (under 31s):** [www.youngfabians.org.uk](http://www.youngfabians.org.uk)  
**Young Fabian Women:** Claire Leigh, [cleigh@youngfabians.co.uk](mailto:cleigh@youngfabians.co.uk)

**Fabian Women's Network**  
 c/o Fabian Society  
 11 Dartmouth Street  
 London SW1H 9BN  
 Telephone: 020 7227 4900 ■ Fax: 020 7976 7153 ■

## FWN COMMITTEE

Seema Malhotra – *Director*  
 Emma Carr – *Secretary*  
 Johanna Baxter – *Union Liaison*  
 Laura Nelson – *Head of Communications*  
 Christine Megson – *Mentoring Scheme Co ordinator*  
 Sarah Hutchinson – *Researcher and Website*  
 Emma Burnell – *Events Manager*  
 Ivana Bartoletti – *Editor, Fabiana magazine*  
 Jessica Asato – *Events and Social Media*  
 Amina Lone – *Fabian Women's Network North*  
 Carolina Lindhal – *Research and Membership*  
 Alex Kemp – *Research and Events*  
 Nina Champion – *Events*  
 Claire Hickson – *Events*  
 Claire Leigh – *Research and Mentoring Scheme*  
 Christine Quigley – *Young Fabian Women liaison*

## Contents

<b>Editorial</b>	3
<i>Ivana Bartoletti</i>	
<b>Politics must catch up with the power of women</b>	4
<i>Seema Malhotra MP</i>	
<b>Side by Side</b>	5
<i>Ed Miliband MP</i>	
<b>Stick to your guns, Fabiana</b>	6
<i>Deborah Mattinson</i>	
<b>'Gender justice, society and the state' roundtable</b>	7
<i>Laura Nelson and Suki Ferguson</i>	
<b>Feminism and 'the State'</b>	8-9
<i>Monica Threlfall</i>	
<b>Lessons from Sweden</b>	9-10
<i>Interview with Torbjörn Hållö</i>	
<b>Hamleys sees the light</b>	10
<i>Eleanor Shember Critchley</i>	
<b>Politics starts in our daily life</b>	11
<i>Marc Stears</i>	
<b>Change the culture of the welfare state</b>	12
<i>Reema Patel</i>	
<b>Why we must rehabilitate the State in Europe</b>	13
<i>Ernst Stetter</i>	
<b>What's next for the welfare state?</b>	14
<i>Interview with Hilary Cottam</i>	
<b>Gender impact assessment: not so taxing after all</b>	15
<i>Felicity Slater</i>	
<b>Time to release the UK's potential energy</b>	16-17
<i>Interview with Shadow Minister Chi Onwurah MP</i>	
<b>The power gap</b>	18
<i>Preethi Sundaram</i>	
<b>Why women and profits rise together</b>	19
<i>Helen Wells</i>	
<b>Ditch Wonderwoman</b>	20
<i>Interview with Liz Nelson OBE</i>	
<b>Making new citizens</b>	21
<i>Umut Urel</i>	
<b>Where is the voice of real outrage?</b>	22-23
<i>Sara Hamilton</i>	

# Welcome to the second issue of Fabiana!

Ivana Bartoletti,  
Editor



I am delighted that our launch issue met with such great success at the Labour Party Conference in September, and elsewhere!

Progress is under threat as women bear the brunt of the Tory-led Government's reckless choices. We are now seeing women being pushed out of the workforce, their income being driven down, while cuts to legal aid undermine their access to justice and make them more vulnerable to violence.

A clear sign of just how out of touch the Tories are with most men and women's lives was Labour's by-election win at Feltham and Heston on the 15th of December, with an 8.6% swing from the Conservatives. **How satisfying and inspiring for Fabiana readers that the woman who comfortably held the Labour seat was Seema Malhotra, Director of the Fabian Women's Network!**

I am very pleased **Ed Miliband** is using Fabiana to deliver his vital message on why women are so central, why Labour wants to walk side by side with feminism, and how the party's proud history of fighting for women is driving its ambitions for this country and its women now.

I am utterly convinced a new agenda for progressives needs to have women at its very heart, which is why this issue **explores a theme very dear to women, the role of the State** - and how to create a platform for equality through a new vision of the State.

The **Fabian Women's Network**, together with **IPPR** and **Cambridge Institute of Gender Studies**, organised a seminar on Gender Justice, Society and the State, which you can catch up on here. Plus a variety of points of view are advanced on the State, including that of economist **Torbjörn Hållö**, of the Swedish Trade Union, LO.

There is little doubt that an efficient and functioning State is essential for women: from childcare to support when out of work, from healthcare to legal assistance to escape violence and abuse, a strong State has proved to be the way forward not only to women's emancipation but to economic growth as well. **Institute of Fiscal Studies** says that between 1968 and 2009, over a quarter of all growth in household wealth came from women working, compared with 8% from men: this means that **women in the UK have been the main driver of the rise in living standards over the last 40 years.**

This is why cuts to welfare are a threat not only to women, but to the whole economy.

If Labour constructs a new vision of the state with women at its heart, it will be a better designed State, able to develop services rooted in a new partnership between the centre and the communities, and able to unlock all the untapped economic potential of the UK.

In this issue, **Deborah Mattinson** explains why we need Fabiana, and why we need women driving a strong,

progressive agenda. We also look at women in the company boardroom: Shadow Minister for Innovation **Chi Onwurah** explains what the UK has to gain by boosting women's presence at all levels, especially in science and innovation; and **Helen Walls** makes a strong business case for equal participation of women in boardrooms.

The new year will be a struggle for so many. Contrary to what the Government claims, we are not all in this together. Remuneration at the top soars whilst cuts and stagnation afflict the middle and lower paid jobs. There is a real outcry for fairness out there which needs to be listened to.

Fabiana is at the forefront of the debate on how we build a new progressive, reformist and winning alliance in this country, knowing it can only be achieved with a powerful women's presence and the clarity of a feminist lens. So I really hope that all of you readers, women and men, will put some of your personal energy into Fabiana, add your voice and pass Fabiana on to new readers. □

## Fabian Women's Network

"Women Changing Politics" T-shirts and Mugs



**For sale while stocks last!**

T-shirts £9.50 each and mugs only £5 each

To order, email [fabianwomen@fabian-society.org.uk](mailto:fabianwomen@fabian-society.org.uk)  
or just visit our stall at the Fabian Conference on January 14th

# Politics must catch up with the power of women | Says new MP Seema Malhotra

Seema Malhotra,  
Director of FWN and MP  
for Feltham and Heston



By Seema Malhotra

On December 16<sup>th</sup> I received an email from the FWN website team saying, "List of Fabian women MPs duly updated." The reality of what had just happened finally sank in – the whirlwind of the previous three weeks was over – and a new role for me was about to begin. It is a real honour to have been elected as the new Member of Parliament for Feltham and Heston, the area where I grew up and have spent so much of my life. My heartfelt thanks go to so many Fabian men and women who came to help in the by-election and in the process, contributed to an increase in the number of women and ethnic minorities in Parliament.

I was 'introduced' in the House of Commons (as is the practice after a by-election) by Fiona Mactaggart MP and Steve Pound MP on December 19<sup>th</sup> and swore in, in the presence of fellow parliamentarians. The next day I sat on the green benches for Nick Clegg's Deputy Prime Minister's questions. I was left excited by the possibilities of Parliament and humbled by its history and grandeur. I was also struck by its complexity, and the challenges of achieving real change in our political and social life.

In the few weeks of the by-election, another story was unfolding. The ICM poll for the Sunday Telegraph published the week before Christmas suggested that during December, the Tories had clawed back some of the lead Labour had established amongst women voters over the last 18 months. One poll is of course not a trend – but it was a reminder of how quickly opinion can change, how women's votes remain a battleground and how important it is that all political parties stay focused on getting communications and policies right for women.

The ICM poll suggested a small lead for the Conservatives among women voters certain to vote (43% vs 39% for Labour), but also showed that women are more likely than men (25% vs 19%) to say they don't know how they are going to

vote, or to refuse to say. For me, there is a fundamental need to reform our politics so it is, and feels, more closely connected to voters. This was reinforced by my time on the doorstep during November and December. It is not that women don't care, but that there is often not an obvious connection in their minds between what they care about and a cross on the ballot paper.

**"Women's votes will more likely follow when there is a genuine relationship; when parties become distant, voters may well change allegiance. This is an issue as much for men as for women in the party to be concerned about."**

This does speak to a deep challenge for our politics that is a good point of reflection as we enter the new year. Politics, like other forms of public service, needs to transform itself into being a process about a relationship, not just a transaction. Women's votes will more likely follow when there is a genuine rela-

tionship; when parties become distant, voters may well change allegiance. This is an issue as much for men as for women in the party to be concerned about.

On the doorstep, when women were undecided and we talked about local issues – youth unemployment, drugs, women's safety on the streets, to name a few – what made a difference was not just about the handling of a specific issue, but also about my identity: a woman from their area who was the only woman on the ballot paper on a list of nine candidates. It was clear to me that if I was to win, I would have to think about my style of politics in order to keep the women in the constituency involved in my work as their representative; to have a plan for ongoing engagement, not just for the election.

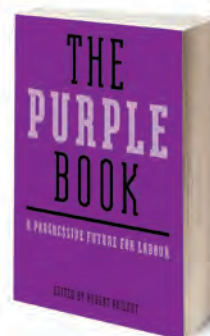
Over the next few months, I'll be working on that. I will be taking the opportunity to experiment a little, applying the principles of running a women's network out in the constituency and setting up some structures to hear more clearly the voices of women in our political discourse. That means women in business, women in public services, women in the community – because whether we choose to see it or not, women are leaders and opinion formers at almost every level.

In order to engage, it is the culture of our institutions and processes that need to change. □

**LEAVING THE BIG STATE BEHIND**

ORDERTODAY AT:  
[www.progressionline.org.uk/purplebook](http://www.progressionline.org.uk/purplebook)

Ed Milliband / Peter Mandelson / Andrew Adonis / Frank Field / Alan Milburn / Jacqui Smith / Douglas Alexander / Liam Byrne / Caroline Flint / Tessa Jowell / Ivan Lewis / Stephen Twigg / Liz Kendall / Rachel Reeves / John Woodcock / Jenny Chapman / Tristram Hunt / Patrick Diamond / Paul Richards / Cllr Paul Brant / Cllr Steve Reed / Robert Philpot



Progressionline.org.uk  
**£7.50**  
(normally £9.99)

**25% off**



# Side by Side

## Ed Miliband on why Labour fights hardest for women

Ed Miliband, Leader of the Labour Party



By Ed Miliband

Women's votes remain a battleground. While Labour has had the lead here for most of the last 18 months, we know there is still plenty to do to make sure we keep it. Let's be clear: the Labour Party is better placed than it has ever been to fight the Tories on this ground because of the strength of our women politicians and campaigners. Labour has more women MPs than all other political parties put together. We have more women than ever before in the Shadow Cabinet – just short of 50%. Those women will ensure that what we offer for the future are concrete answers to the kind of dilemmas and difficulties that ordinary people face in their lives.

Labour did much in government to improve women's lives – and that didn't happen by accident. It was because of the bold decisions we as a party made to promote women. It helped us change the political debate and what had been seen as marginal issues like childcare and parental leave have become central.

We made big steps towards breaking down barriers, with legislation on paid maternity leave, pensions, childcare benefits, carers' allowances and by equalizing the amount of unpaid leave each parent can take after the birth of their child.

And the fight continues. It is why earlier this year we campaigned against changes in pensions that would hit women unfairly. Labour is now campaigning for a living wage which will predominantly benefit women, who make up most of the workforce paid less than £7 an hour.

Any sensible politician has to have a view on how they would deal with such issues: that is how we as a party, but most particularly Labour women, have changed the way politics is discussed. And we have made change happen.

**And that is why Fabiana is so important.** Because the more space there is for women to be heard and to debate policy and politics, the better for our party, the better for our politics and the better for our country.



Ed Miliband and new MP Seema Malhotra

I know there has been increasing concern recently that the national political debate, despite the progress made by our party, continues to be dominated by male voices. All male panels at think tank seminars and TV programmes where (if you are lucky) one woman is asked on to tell the rest of the men "what women think", are still tragically too common in our political discourse.

The persistence and determination of Labour women, particularly of the Fabian Women's Network, to change this state of affairs is something I admire and know will continue. As party leader I offer my strongest support to those helping make that change happen.

The government's own approach to women is testament to what happens when women are excluded from discussions on the basics. A promise to introduce anonymity for those accused of rape was just the first of many gaffes. The economic assault on women would be jaw-dropping if it wasn't so predictable.

The government has been warned. Research by the Fawcett Society and twenty other leading organisations has warned that cuts to women's jobs, as well as to their benefits and services, are creating the "greatest risk to their financial security in living memory." In the three months to June this year, 111,000 jobs were lost from the public

**"Fabiana is so important because the more space there is for women, the better for our party, our politics and our country."**

sector, where a larger proportion of women are employed. There are now more women out of work than at any time since 1988. Two-thirds of cuts in tax credits and benefits are coming directly from women's pockets. The government is choosing to make women pay a higher price than men for their failed attempts to cut the deficit.

Yet in the Autumn statement, of the £18bn of cuts George Osborne announced, £15bn will fall on women and children. They never learn, because they do not listen.

That is why I am determined to see greater progress in the advancement of women in our movement, in the trade unions, as councillors, in Europe and in parliament.

From the struggle for suffrage, to the Sex Discrimination Act, to the minimum wage and women trade unionists battling for equal pay, the Labour Party has fought side by side with the women's movement. I'm proud of that history, but I want us to be ambitious too. Thank you Fabiana, for being part of that ambitious future. □

# Stick to your guns, Fabiana

Gender equality won't happen if women don't have a voice

OK, I'll be honest. When I mentioned that I was writing a piece for a new magazine called Fabiana, the reaction wasn't always what I might have hoped. It included the odd raised eyebrow, even a few sniggers. Women's activism is so last year – so last decade, even.

Last November I co-signed a letter to the Guardian complaining about another think tank inviting me to a meeting to hear an all male panel discuss whether Twitter had opened up policy-making to the wider public. Ironic, no? I reflected then that there had been a time when 'a woman on every platform' was so instilled in those engaged in public life that it would have been hard to imagine this happening – people would tick that box quite mechanically. Not perfect - but it worked, sort of.

A week later, Guardian journalist Kira Cochrane published a startling analysis of male domination of the media. A laborious count of national press by-lines revealed an 80% male 20% female split across the board. The Today Programme contributor scores were 83.5% male against 16.5% female, while Question Time and Any Questions fared little better at 66%/34% and 63%/37% respectively. Comedy current affairs show, Have I Got News For You (HIGNFY) was the biggest man-ghetto at 92% male, 8% female (as of course, women just aren't funny).

As politicians chase the women's vote, representation of women in politics has also come under scrutiny. Polling shows voters think that having more women MPs had a positive effect on the last Labour government. The media sneered at the iconic 'Blair's babes' photograph, often focusing on the new women MPs' looks: "Who will save the utterly dowdy class of '97 from years of brightly coloured polyester?" shrieked the Times. However, women in focus groups saw them as a symbol of a fresh approach to politics – a politics that they might just want to be part of.

Yet voters and media alike tend to resist the all women shortlists that will ensure more women are selected to run for parliament (61% of the public oppose and 22% support all women shortlists). Labour, knowing that only taking this step will guarantee change, was prepared to defy public opinion - but David Cameron remains timid. 16% of Conservative MPs are women, compared with Labour's 31%. Overall, women are now 22% of the House of Commons, 22% of the House of Lords and 22% of the Cabinet. Progress is painfully slow.

**"At the current rate of progress, gender balance in the boardroom will not be achieved in my career or even my daughter's. It will take another seventy years. There is reluctance to intervene to bring about real change. And if we do not consciously set out to make change, the danger is that leaving it to chance means we prop up the wholly unsatisfactory status quo."**

Achieving more women in corporate life poses a similar dilemma. The Davies report recognized the problem, but stopped short of quotas. BritainThinks' recent polling tells us 51% believe it is important that businesses work to get more senior women – of those in favour, 64% were women, but only 38% were men.

Deborah Mattinson  
Founder of BritainThinks



By Deborah Mattinson

The business case for senior women is powerful. The consultants McKinsey found that workplaces with more women in top jobs did better on leadership, accountability and innovation. They also made more money.

Our BritainThinks survey shows that 60% agree that male-dominated boards ignore the talent of half of the population; 62% agree that women on the board serve their female customers more effectively, and 59% agree that women improve boards by bringing different perspectives and working practices.

Of those polled, 64% agree that rules must change so that either parent can use maternity leave, 60% agree that businesses should advertise top jobs as part time or flexible, and 57% think that companies should publish data about their appointment processes and numbers of senior women.

Yet only 46% agree that FTSE companies should set out a target for women on their boards, only 40% agree that the top 100 companies should commit to a minimum of 25% women by 2015 and just 37% support using quotas. At the current rate of progress, gender balance in the boardroom will not be achieved in my career – or even that of my 21-year old daughter. It will take another seventy years.

Despite widespread recognition of senior women's positive effect there remains reluctance to intervene to bring about real change. Meanwhile, as Kira Cochrane's scary media survey shows, women are all but disappearing from public view. My thinktank invitation to hear blokes talk about Twitter highlights the real issue here – if we do not consciously set out to make change, the danger is that leaving it to chance means we prop up the wholly unsatisfactory status quo.

So Fabiana, that's your brief. Let them snigger - as HIGNFY knows, women lack a sense of humour – but stick to your guns. We need more women in corporate and public life. To make that happen, women need a voice. □

# Gender justice, society and the state

In December last year, IPPR, the Fabian Women's Network and the Cambridge Institute of Gender Studies held a morning of roundtable discussions for academics, campaigners and policy leaders to share their thoughts on feminism in its modern iteration. Speakers included Hilary Wainwright, Anne Phillips, Beatrix Campbell, Jonathan Rutherford, Rahila Gupta and Clare Chambers.

*Laura Nelson, blogger, writer and senior manager in a healthcare charity*



Laura Nelson

The first session of the day posed the question that has preoccupied women greatly over the last year: simply, have we reached the limits of the state in advancing gender justice?

The consensus in the room was that Blue Labour is still not entirely understood, despite being much talked about; and at the same time, the Big Society has been just another big confusion - another vague concept that does not seem to have a clear plan for implementation. What we do know about Blue Labour and Big Society is that they propose a shrunken state and place a great deal of emphasis on the family. But the risk, it was agreed, is this: if we rely too much on the family and its associated traditions and practices, women remain in their inferior role in society.

The state is essential for women. Indeed, nothing else will help to achieve gender equality. This, it transpired, was the main answer to the question of whether equality relies on the state.

The state has the power to redirect resources. "It is hard to see how anything other than government can achieve that," said Anne Phillips, Professor of Political and Gender Theory at LSE, and one of the speakers on the panel. She pointed out that care is an important example - "The government has accepted responsibility for education, but we have hardly moved in the issue of provision of care."

Journalist and author Beatrix Campbell, another speaker, agreed. "Women and feminism need state welfare. That is where we find our voice, find our support and can mitigate inequalities."

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't be criticising the state and suggesting ways it can do its job better. The third speaker, Hilary Wainwright, co-editor of Red Pepper, said that redistribution of state resources is what's needed: "resources have been allocated top down." The state is also necessary for legislation.

And the more women enter parliament and business, the more these discussions can take place. Fiona Mactaggart MP, who took part in the discussion, said: "Having women in parliament makes a huge difference. Suddenly, we are having conversations about topics like child poverty."

*Suki Ferguson, writer and editor who specialises in politics and film. Suki is the sub-editor of Fabiana.*



Suki Ferguson

The second roundtable of the day brought together people from varied schools of thought to talk about neo-liberalism and feminism. Was feminism assisted or damaged by the neo-liberal project? And what now for feminism, if neo-liberalism continues to fall from favour?

Although the speakers invited to discuss this topic couldn't agree on when - if ever - the neo-liberal era might near an end, there was agreement upon how women had been affected by this economic outlook in recent years. One-time Blue Labour proponent Jonathon Rutherford (now agnostic) started off by noting neo-liberalism's paradoxical trapping of "millions of women in the double shift of low paid work and caring obligations" whilst simultaneously freeing women from financial dependency on men, and from the biological imperative of pregnancy. However, control over pregnancy was the only biological equality that neo-liberalism provided for women in Rutherford's view; he maintained that the

basic relation between men and women is inherently "interdependent and asymmetrical" and that a gender-neutral common good should be the goal of politics, even if it is "always incomplete, always contested."

The Cambridge Gender Institute's Clare Chambers offered a more specifically feminist critique of neo-liberalism, but she chimed with Rutherford's central observation - that it has failed as a leveller between the sexes. She summed up the two key issues relating to neo-liberal feminism as "the fetishism of choice and the prison of biology." As she pointed out, "patriarchal ideology in Western liberal society insists that both women and men are inevitably different - so much so that inequality can be premised on biological difference.

"But there is also this idea that any injustice from that inequality can be mitigated by the liberal capitalist focus on individual choice. The result, in this story, is that gender inequality becomes inevitable but unproblematic. So a situation can now be unequal without being unjust, so long as we attribute the inequality to the choices of those involved."

Unfortunately for women, capitalist culture was constructed by men - and so "the ideal worker and the ideal mother will never be compatible within the existing capitalist framework."

Rahila Gupta noted that the neo-liberal mixing of vague politics with pop-culture concepts like 'girl power' weakened feminism's clout for some time. "It was at that point that neo-liberalism represented the archetypal appropriation of the feminist agenda, shorn of all its political context - and that was when the neo-liberal and feminist projects converged."

But, she went on, that was another era, and now feminists are fighting back. "Resistance is important" she concluded. "The only reason we are where we are now is because of it." She pointed out that although women pay a high price for being politicised, it works - and it will work again now, particularly at a time like this, as "we are witnessing an implosion of liberalism" - after all, "people are tired of being trickled down on." □



# Feminism and 'the State'

## A love-hate relationship?

Feminism has long had a love-hate relationship with the state, at least in democratic countries. The liberal feminism of the First Wave believed in the power of parliaments to improve the lot of women and saw law reform, i.e. the call on the reasonableness of men in power, as the way to make steps towards equality. The extraordinarily unreasonable arguments against giving women the vote and the obstacles put up during the suffrage campaigns did not deter them. Eleanor Rathbone first called for Family Allowances in 1919, but it took until 1945 for the act to be passed. Thus the beginnings of the welfare state were associated, along with unemployment compensation, with measures for mothers and their children in poor families – whether natalist in intention or truly helpful. Ever since, child benefit paid directly to every mother by 'the state' whether central or regional, remains widely popular.

But the Second Wave feminists of the 1960s attacked patriarchy as a social system of domination (see Walby) and the gender-class system (see Eisenstein) in which the state was complicit in upholding male power. Male power was to be countered through women raising their own awareness of their oppression; by unpicking the obfuscating intricacies of male domination around sexual liberation, abortion, rape and pornography; and articulating a general condemnation of the capitalist system, which required an 'ultimate revolution' (see Firestone) or a 'long revolution' (see Mitchell). A new sexual politics was to replace it. Such was the distrust of the state that despite calls for equal rights, both Germaine Greer and Betty Friedan envisaged a conceptual and societal 'sex-role revolution' of altered grass-roots counter-hegemonic practices.

By contrast, the 1970s can be seen as the decade in which individual states, chiefly but not exclusively European social democracies, addressed the need to rebalance gender inequality in law and the labour market, as the well-known Sex Equality and Equal Pay laws were ushered in along

with increased welfare provisions such as child allowances. Such government reforms were supported by the liberal- and socialist-feminist wings of the burgeoning women's movements. Yet some saw the welfare state itself ('public patriarchy') as oppressive to women and socially controlling because it maintained the male breadwinner model of family (see Wilson, MacIntosh). And Marxist feminists continued to develop critiques of capitalism as a system, arguing that no thorough and general end to the subordination of women could be achieved within the limits of capitalist exploitation (see Barrett).

**"It is an alarming fact that most of what women want cannot be obtained through money or freedom alone.**

**The reason is that our social and economic system has no solution for society's ubiquitous need for care."**

Nonetheless there followed a long drawn out turn towards the 'really-existing state' - as one could call it. Three facets stand out. First came the turn towards regarding the series of European welfare states in varying stages of development as key for women's welfare. The depth of transformations in Scandinavia under social democratic governments led to a positive evaluation of what public intervention could do for women and children, with Swedish feminists hailing the advent of the 'woman-friendly state' (see Hernes), friendly to women both as clients and as public sector employees.

The second move towards engaging with the really-existing state happened when politically active liberal women from various

Monica Threlfall, Reader in European Politics at London Metropolitan University



By Monica Threlfall

parties decided to capture branches of the state administration in order to implement equality policies. After all, if you can't beat them, join them. Successful persuasion of political elites gave rise to new state institutions – women's policy agencies or ministerial committees – in charge of extensive reform in all areas of the public administration and in civil society institutions as well (see the comparative studies by Amy Mazur and the international RINGS team). Though misleadingly called 'state feminism', they were dependent on the whims of the government of the day. Thus the French agencies kept changing their shape and powers only to disappear completely. Most of their reforms were so poorly implemented, they were dismissed as 'symbolic' (see Mazur). Today under Sarkozy, the French government can hardly be bothered even to address 'the family', and our Conservative-Liberal coalition abolished the Women's National Commission against the wishes of UK women's advocacy organisations.

The third broad turn towards the state, clearly visible from the 1990s onwards, was the worldwide feminist demand for presence in national parliaments, a clear contrast to earlier feminist distrust in male-led state bodies. This has been both reliant on governments initiating and parliaments passing legislation requiring parties to field certain minimum proportions of female and male candidates, and reliant on parties adopting rules on gender-balance for their internal elective bodies and be willing to see them implemented in the context of varying electoral systems (see Dahlerup).

Clearly then, feminism has already spent many decades engaging with state institutions in order to obtain policy reform and new measures to buttress gender equality. Extensive public policy areas - areas that dominate women's quality of life – are wholly or mainly dependant on public services and measures, starting with children's education, equal pay, paid leave, accessible health care, anti-discrimination laws, and legal protection from a wide range of acts of violation of their physical integrity including intimate partner



abuse, forced marriage and rape in marriage. Women's well-being is extraordinarily dependant on public policy and public intervention, well-implemented and sustained over time, and supported by complex statutory public systems – not just education and health but criminal justice, social services, disability support, eldercare, public housing, homelessness protection, child protection, law-enforcement and the penal system, employment tribunals, public media, and the myriad local authority schemes for children-friendly parks and playgrounds. There is already plenty of experience of how regulation serves to defend us from any abuse by private or public contractors for such services – and the point is: only a strong accountable state can regulate effectively for our optimal quality of life.

Thus, making such essential institutions work efficiently and fairly must be an overriding concern for all women. After all, it is not as if women obtain quality of life from basing their identity on making millions in banks, becoming captains of polluting industries, obtaining profits from arms manufacture and trading, conducting wars, leading gangs, smuggling drugs and people, or living off robbery, fraud,

kidnapping or extortion – all of them lucrative private sector activities conducted virtually exclusively by a minority of deviant men.

It is an alarming fact that most of what women want cannot be obtained through money or freedom alone. The reason is that our social and economic system has no solution for society's ubiquitous need for care. Why is childcare still not made easy? Why are nurseries, sheltered homes, care homes, never affordable as a privately purchased commodity unless subsidised in some way? The market has so far found no real solution – its short-term answer, to solve the labour-intensity of care problem by importing cheaper workers who are paid beneath a living wage is of course not a true 'market' solution, and is morally questionable as well as unsustainable in the long run.

As feminists we have to take on board the key intractable issue of the care deficit and summon everybody, including men – all of whom have parents and most of whom have children - to love the efficient and accountable public institutions we already have. And, yes, to love our public realm, while thinking energetically about improving its defects. □

*This article's sources include: Barrett, Michèle (1980) Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist-feminist Analysis, Verso. Dahlerup, Drude (2005) Women, Quotas and Politics, Routledge. Eisenstein, Zillah (1979) ed, Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism, MonthlyReview Press. Firestone, Shulamith (1970/71) The dialectic of Sex: the case for feminist revolution, Jonathon Cape. Friedan, Betty (1963) The Feminine Mystique, (1997) Beyond Gender: The New Politics of Work and Family, Woodrow Wilson Center Press. Greer, Germaine (1970) The Second Sex. Hernes, Helga (1987) Welfare State and Woman Power: Essays in State Feminism, Aschehoug AS. Mazur, Amy & McBride Stetson, Dorothy (1995) eds, Comparative State Feminism, Sage. Mazur, Amy (1995) Gender Bias and the State: Symbolic Reform at Work in Fifth Republic France, University of Pittsburg Press. Mitchell, Juliet (1966) The Longest Revolution, New England Free Press. Randall, Vicky & Waylen, Georgina, eds, Gender, Politics and the State, Routledge. Showstack Sassoon, Anne (1987) ed, Women and the State, Hutchinson Education. Walby, Sylvia, Theorising Patriarchy, Blackwell. Wilson, Elizabeth (1977) Women and the Welfare State, Routledge.*

# Reforming the State

## Lessons from Sweden

**What are the principles that underpin the welfare State in Sweden?**

The Swedish welfare state was designed to deliver both high equality and an efficient economy. A core principle is that most welfare programs are universal, which means welfare is usually not means tested and social programmes such as health care, pensions, child allowance and health insurance cover the whole population. Yet, benefits are often income-related: if you are sick, unemployed or on parental leave you receive compensation according to your former salary. The result has been a system with both strong redistributive effects and a high public support.

**"Public financed childcare is one important example of a welfare reform that has made it possible to achieve high level of female employment."**

**In Britain, people would label Sweden as a nanny-state: what would you respond?**

The Swedish welfare state is big in terms of levels of taxation, but can hardly be described as a nanny-state. The term nanny-state implicates that the state inter-

Torbjörn Hällö, Trade union economist (LO), Sweden



By Torbjörn Hällö

vene excessively in peoples life, hampering people from taking risks. I would rather describe the welfare state as a middle class oriented system that invests in the human capital through high spending on health and education, which increases the personal freedom and opportunities.

**How do you see your welfare state surviving the European economic downturn?**

The Swedish welfare state is fairly efficient. If comparing the economic development in Europe during the last decade one has to conclude that welfare states such as Norway, Finland and Sweden are doing much better than countries with smaller welfare states.

The threat against the Swedish model is not international, it is domestic. The centre-right government is undermining the central principles of the welfare system.

One example is that the Swedish government is not adequately funding the welfare producers (schools, hospitals etc.) thereby forcing people to buy for example health insurance.

#### **What is the balance between centre-led initiatives and localism in delivering welfare services?**

There has been a great deal of discussion and debate in the labour movement between those who favoured more of cooperative solutions and those who favoured stronger central institutions. The Swedish welfare system of today is based on both cooperative solutions (such as the trade union administrated system of unemployment insurance) and central welfare systems.

#### **Who are the recipients of the welfare state in Sweden? Families or individuals? What are the most effective tools you have in place?**

The welfare is to a great extent individualised. There are some systems that is (partly) family based one such important example is the governmental financed parental leave. Many progressives in Sweden are advocating reforming the parental leave making it individualised, half would then be allocated to the mother and the other half would be allocated to the father.

#### **Sweden seems a successful model for feminism across the genders: how do you succeed? And what would be your advice to British policy-makers?**

The rate of female employment in Sweden is quite high. Swedish women participate in the work force to a greater extent than in most other European countries.

The relatively high level of employment is in many aspects the consequence of welfare reforms that took place in the sixties and seventies. Public financed childcare is one important example of a welfare reform that has made it possible to have a relatively high level of female employment.

However, the rate of female employment in Sweden is still about five percentages lower than male employment. If women had the same rate of employment as men do, approximately 150 000 more women would be employed.

My advice would be to step by step introduce welfare reforms that enhance the living standards for women and simultaneously increase the potential employment rate. Making high quality public childcare affordable is probably one of the most important reform. □

# Hamleys sees the light

## Gender epiphany follows feminist intervention

You may have heard the good news, but it bears repeating - Hamleys has ditched its gender signs. The story blew up last December, just in time for Christmas, and was covered by most of the national newspapers, radio and TV, and numerous other news outlets in the UK and beyond.

It's a change with significance. Hamleys is one of the world's largest and most influential toyshops, and the run up to Christmas is their busiest time of year.

At the beginning of December I wrote to the CEO of Hamleys and spoke to their marketing team, outlining my concern that gender segregation restricted children's and parents' choices and influenced the development of skills and aspirations of children, contributing to society's inequality.

In my letter, I requested they categorise toys by type, not by gender, and pointed out that on the girls' floor the toys were related to domestic, caring and beauty activities whilst the boys' floor was geared to action and war, with little scope for creativity.

At the same time as speaking to Hamleys, I contacted the nationalised Icelandic bank, Landsbanki, which controls Hamleys. I was also gathering support on Twitter and elsewhere – journalists, scientists and organisations such as Mumsnet – which I had been building up since I wrote a blog post on the topic in October. Mine was not the first campaign on this issue. In the past few years there have been successful campaigns against toyshops in the UK and overseas, and support has been widespread.

A few days after I sent the letter, Hamleys changed the signs. All mention of gender has been removed and the toys are now categorised by type.

For a few days, journalists called me non-stop and I went on air to debate the issue. People were intrigued, horrified and wanted to discuss it. Are boys and girls not born with different tendencies and skills? How influential is conditioning by toys?

This kind of public debate is crucial. We have gaping inequalities between the genders; for example, only a fifth of UK

MPs and less than 1% of business leaders are female. There are many factors contributing to these disparities, and it's important to try to unpick them.

**"This has opened up a debate, and other campaigns may follow.**

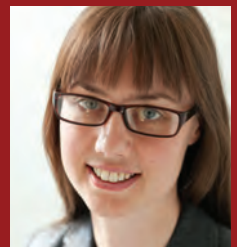
**I couldn't have hoped for more."**

As yet, there is no scientific consensus that boys and girls are born with differences in aspirations and cognitive abilities, such as problem-solving. Conversely, conditioning is much more likely to affect skill development.

Hamleys said it was going to change the signs anyway. It would be a remarkable coincidence if this were true, and strange that the marketing team hadn't told me this when I called them.

It doesn't matter in any case - they did it and it has created a stir. It has opened up a debate, and other campaigns may follow. I couldn't have hoped for more. □

*Dr Laura Nelson, writer, blogger and senior manager in a healthcare charity. She has a doctorate in neuroscience and writes the Delilah blog.*



By Laura Nelson

# Politics starts in our daily life

It's time we placed ourselves back at the centre of the story

At its heart, Fabianism is a demand for change. In common with all branches of democratic socialism, the soul of the Fabian Society is found in campaigns against injustice, systematic cruelty and political exclusion. The Fabian Women's Network exists to bring that same campaigning spirit to bear on the manifold varieties of those evils that impact directly and disproportionately on women.

The most pressing question that confronts the Network must be how such campaigns can most effectively be waged. How can we all help to bring change to Britain, and to other parts of the world? How can we act together to ensure that the life experiences of women are characterized not by injustice, but by fulfilment, not by exclusion but by a full and vibrant sense of participation?

Feminists and others have, of course, grappled with these challenges for generations, often engaging in intense debate and disagreement as they have done so. During the New Labour years, though, a new consensus emerged in the mainstream left. The answer, it was said, lay primarily in state action. The response to the evils that women faced was to be found through legislative decision-making and executive implementation. Campaigning thus became focused first on winning Parliamentary elections and second on constructing formal rules and enforceable procedures. The goal of the women's movement was seen as establishing new patterns of behaviour and outcomes through the rule of law and the exercise of sovereignty.

This consensus was well-intentioned and saw some initial success. In the long run, however, it has proven to be an error. The state has been capable of tackling a number of individual injustices. Legislative action has made some headway in eroding the gender pay gap, in ensuring fair hiring practices at work, in protecting

the welfare of some of the most economically vulnerable in our society. That is all to the good. But it has not been capable of leading a broader transformation in the lives of the vast majority of women in Britain. State action has not effectively tackled endemic sexism in the everyday experience of women in the workplace. It has not made women feel welcome and valued in a host of our democratic institutions. It has not offered women significantly greater opportunities to combine caring responsibilities with vocational loyalty and career development.

This failure has not come about by chance. There are some things that states can do and there are some things they cannot, simply by virtue of them being states. States are agents of standardized provision or of technical protection. They are not agents of attitudinal transformation. As a result, states can rarely bring about the kind of change that shapes our lived interactions with each other. They don't penetrate our everyday experiences. They don't show us how to respect, be loyal and have affection for one another. They don't teach us how to love in ways that truly ensure the equality of each of the partners in a relationship. Yet this, surely, is what we need if we are to be true to our mission.

If we are to begin a new campaign against injustice, systematic cruelty and exclusion, then, we will need to develop a new account of how change occurs. That account will take time to develop. It will emerge, as all great things in the Fabian tradition always have, from a continual argument amongst the movement's supporters, friends and critics. Whatever form it eventually takes, though, I believe it will grow out of three central admissions.

First, it will admit that the state is not the solution to all of the evils that we face, and indeed that it can often

Marc Stears, Professor of Political Theory, University of Oxford and Visiting Fellow, IPPR



By Marc Stears

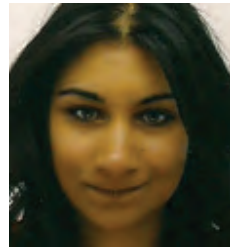
be a source of evil itself. Second, it will admit that long-term change requires serious and sustained struggle in all parts of our society. It will acknowledge, that is, that it is the daily injustices in our workplaces, our neighbourhoods, our churches, our mosques, our schools and our social clubs that demand our attention and all often escape the reach of government. Third, and most importantly, it will admit that we need to do more ourselves. It will accept that a campaigning focus on government has too often led us to turn away from the things that we do right and do wrong in the conduct of our own lives. And that serves no-one.

**"If we are to begin a new campaign against injustice, we must accept that a campaigning focus on government has too often led us to turn away from the things that we do right and do wrong in the conduct of our own lives. And that serves no-one."**

What all of this means is that it is time that we placed ourselves at the centre of the story once again. Every day each one of us shapes the experience of others. We do it in small ways and in big ways. We do it when we interact with those who serve us in shops, those with whom we labour, those for whom we care, and those with whom we choose to struggle and campaign. That's where our primary attention should lie as we fight against the evils that face us. That is where the new campaign against injustice, cruelty and exclusion should begin. □

# Change the culture of the welfare state

Reema Patel, Associate Consultant, ELGH (Excellence in Local Government and Health)



Reema Patel

The Fabians have long held that, where possible, inequality should be mitigated using social democratic means. The welfare state is understood to have an important purpose and role in addressing arbitrary inequality within a democratic framework, and to afford the vulnerable both a safety net and a base upon which a better life can be built.

One of the greatest inequalities that pervades British society is the inequality between men and women, which manifests itself in several ways: in a disparity of wages, in the 'glass ceiling' at senior levels in most fields and behaviourally, in the assumptions women have about their role in society and how that fits into conceptions of the family; after all, women make up a disproportionate number of carers for both older and younger people. But perhaps most crucially, it manifests itself in the political under-representation of women within our democratic society - we still have all-male policy panels in Westminster, for example. These are all inequalities that seem to exist for women because they are women, and must be addressed.

Inequality between men and women also intersects with a range of other inequalities which can disproportionately affect women; because women may be ageing or have older parents, are particularly young and have children, find themselves in certain socio-economic and/or family circumstances, belong to a particular racial group or religion, have a particular sexual orientation or gender identity – or indeed a combination of all of the above.

Securing social democratic outcomes whilst planning a woman-friendly welfare state is not an easy task given the diversity of circumstance. There is no archetypal woman around whom welfare must be designed, just as there is no archetypal person. It is this issue

that makes designing a welfare state to address the inequalities affecting women a genuine challenge.

**"We must rise to this challenge of designing a socially democratic and equal welfare state by making it smarter, not smaller."**

There are some needs common to a wide range of women – for instance, support around domestic abuse -and providing it may seem relatively straightforward. However, the state as is fails to make space for nuances, such as whether a woman is in an abusive relationship with a man or a woman. In some ways, this information is irrelevant to the need to provide support for her. But the reasons for such abuse being prevalent and the accessibility of such support in the two instances can, and do, diverge.

A welfare state such as the one we have now may continue to provide existing domestic violence support, but reforming the provision of it is needed. It would be beneficial to recognise the barriers to accessing that support for different groups (in this instance, for women in same-sex relationships), and to refrain from assuming what sort of support women in such circumstances may need. This example also highlights how the onus is on front-line workers in such services to deepen their own understanding of the problems that may face different women depending on their circumstances, and to be better equipped to facilitate a dialogue about those issues.

In short, the inequality some women encounter thanks to their gender is compounded by their particular social context. Such nuances require us to

think more intelligently about the women themselves who need support; accordingly we must rise to this challenge of designing a socially democratic and equal welfare state by making it smarter, not smaller.

So when we are asked whether the welfare state should be reformed and whether it can do more for women, the answer is that of course it must – and of course it can, if only because our understanding of the inequalities of opportunity that affects society is now far richer than it was in 1945, and because it is a stretch to suggest that the welfare state has always evolved adequately to meet these needs.

When we talk about changing the structure of the welfare state from a 'top-down' organisation to one that is more driven by its recipients, we are not really talking about changing its structure. We are really talking about changing its culture.

Welfare begs the question – welfare for whom? Welfare for women often begs the question – welfare for which woman? An effective welfare state first needs to be resourced effectively to provide such services. This is the first strike against the coalition government; it has deprived British society of that funding, and is taking apart the welfare state as a consequence.

But an effective welfare state also needs to target its resources to avoid wastefulness, which involves changing the culture of how public services are delivered through it, including the social attitudes of those who are responsible for its delivery. This is the second strike against the coalition government – their so-called 'reform' of the welfare state has alienated, rather than engaged with or led public servants, 65% of whom are, incidentally, women. This government is not reforming the welfare state – rather, it is dismantling it. □



# Why we must rehabilitate the state in Europe

*Ernst Stetter, Secretary General, FEPS (Foundation for European Progressive Studies)*



*By Ernst Stetter*

The European Union and its member states are facing one of the most difficult periods in recent history. The current crisis is the crucial test of the solidity of the future of Europe since World War II. Europe seems not to be able to face a sovereign debt crisis in one or more of its member states due to a lack of solid crisis management, showing us that we are living in a deep crisis of the very concept of the State.

In the last few months we have seen big changes in the political landscape across Europe, especially the implementation of so called "technical" governments in Greece and Italy. Let us be cautious. In our cities, young people have taken to the streets, disillusioned with the traditional institutions of representative democracy. While some such movements have resulted in wanton destruction, others provide an alternative analysis of the functioning of democracy. Furthermore, recent years have seen a rise in support for far right political parties which operate within the parliamentary system but maintain a presence on its fringes.

Hence the crisis is more than a sovereign debt crisis in Greece. It is a profound crisis of solidarity and democracy in our nation states. Therefore we have to reconsider our concept of the state.

A key starting point in this context is that Europe and its member states need to understand that federalism is not a threat but an opportunity. Sharing sovereignty and giving responsibilities to a federal system is a means to ensuring long-term sustainability and welfare. European integration is a story of sharing sovereignty and of accepting the need to help the weaker in the interest of all, hence a question of solidarity.

The current crisis raises important questions directly related to our basic set of values. It is time to take this opportunity

to look afresh at with the free-market ideology, which led to huge income inequalities, low levels of investment and a financial burst.

**"Participative traditional democratic structures are being questioned by those who are suffering the most from the crisis, the unemployed youth. This is the crucial point to develop and goes together with the rehabilitation of the state."**

They are social constructions which have always been, by definition, regulated on national and international levels. The need for a common fiscal and economic policy is evident. Restructuring the European economies, reducing sovereign debt, and achieving effective savings in the national budgets is not easy. But it is all about a coordinated and well defined, coherent economic and social policy. And it is all about risk-sharing in our nation states.

Public interest needs regulation of private activities. The goal is to re-align private practices with public interest, and this is precisely the role of a democratic state. Without discrediting a free market economy, it seems urgent to re-assign the need for regulation with respect to economic stability and public interest. Against all views presented for supporting economic liberalisation, a good economy is first and foremost a democratically regulated economy with respect to private economic forces but also towards the public interest. However, it will be necessary to convince citizens

that the pursuit of profit maximisation can be destabilising, if not regulated by democratic institutions. Indeed, restoring space for public intervention in economic affairs necessitates democratic support; here lies one of the keys towards a redefinition of our welfare systems and social policies!

In the past twenty years, social democracy and Labour were not able to fulfil the commitments of equality, social justice and solidarity; these were often considered as a secondary issue. Unfortunately, Social Democratic parties have moved away from their members and have been contradicted by the economic and social crisis which we are witnessing.

Indeed the "Third Way" argues that political power may only be organised under coalitions formed occasionally. These were rather ad hoc and not based on a structured majority usually linked with social classes. The "Third Way" tried to win over the middleclasses, which functioned for a certain time, but clashed. In the end the desired compromise between a more financialised capitalism and the welfare state was not possible. The financial markets rejected the principles of the welfare state and Europe has seen a considerable increase in inequalities strengthening the financial character of the economy. Fortunately we are witnessing a rehabilitation of the concept of the state. The financialised capitalism is ever more questioned. However, the state is still weak. Consequently the participative traditional democratic structures are being questioned by those who are suffering the most from the crisis, the unemployed youth. This is the crucial point to develop and goes together with the rehabilitation of the state. If progressives cannot deliver on the future of our youth, our democracies will be challenged more and more – and we all know what this could mean. □

# What next for the welfare state?

Hilary Cottam, founder of social enterprise, Participle, talks to Fabiana about relational welfare

**The welfare state: where are we now, Hilary? What is working and what is missing?**

It is essentially the same welfare state that we had in the 1950s, and we have had 20 years of trying to reform it around the edges. The reality is that British society has changed but our welfare state is still built around a white male breadwinner while care, a huge role of the state, is pushed off, unpaid, into the women's domestic realm.

There are problems today that Beveridge never considered when he designed it: for instance, I work on ageing. Over 60% of the British population is over the age of 60. Another example is our health economy, all organised around hospitals and infectious disease when 80% of the health burden now is chronic disease and shouldn't be medicalised.

With all these issues coming together, we need a radical settlement around the state, society and business and a very new, dynamic relationship between the state and the citizen. The Labour Party did make things happen - such as SureStart - but we need a fundamentally different welfare model. The Labour Party understood the state and it didn't understand the citizen; now the Big Society talks about the citizen but has got no conceptual model of the state, which is equally problematic.

**You have defined what we need as a more relational welfare: what do you mean?**

We need to move away from a model about a transaction which passes goods and services to people, that does things to people, to one about engaging with people and doing things in relationship with people.

The idea of relational welfare works on three levels for me. One is methodological - to reconceive the welfare state we need a completely different vantage point: approaching it from my background of feminist academia, of psychoanalytic thought rather than the sphere of production or consumption, immediately makes you ask different questions. Secondly, there are huge issues about time and how to balance our lives. The third set

of considerations are about welfare in terms of services and the state, and here we need to see how to solve problems collectively, in dialogue, working together.

**How would that work in practice?**

In all the public service work Participle does, one of the most important things is the way people talk to each other. For instance, when our families in crisis choose the life team, they are looking for people who will talk to them as I am talking to you now - as equals, in an open way. For me, this is relational welfare. It is a kind of cultural, attitudinal change as much as a change in what is actually delivered.

Our work on ageing is another concrete example of relational welfare. The system of adult social care in Britain is one rationed by economic status, how much money you have, and your physical ability. But our work clearly shows that people are in greatest need of social relationships. As the WHO says, loneliness is a bigger killer than smoking. People judge their meal delivery or their cleaner according to whether they've been able to talk to them, not only by the food or cleaning received. Taking all these insights, we've built a universal service called Circle, basically a community membership service. Instead of a public sector service being done to you, you join something, you own it, feel like a member, and the traditional boundaries are very blurred between who is providing the service and who is receiving it. I might be very bad at technology so someone is helping me with that, but I'm helping you because I'm taking you out of the house for a walk, or meeting you out of hospital. This particular example is cheap, and it is saving a lot of money, because it is built on software rather than on buildings, vehicles, all that kind of thing. And it is built on social capital, on us being each other's solution.

We designed this service bottom-up in Southwark, with 250 older people and, importantly, their families. Circle would not have been invented by 250 people getting together alone in a church hall without resources. To design our project, there was

Hilary Cottam, founder of social enterprise, Participle



Hilary Cottam

major state participation and investment, in really rethinking, in a very systemic way, where resources are, what's needed and how we can shift that system.

**"Welfare reform must bring a very new, dynamic relationship between the state and citizen"**

**How would women benefit from a relational approach to welfare?**

The gender issue is the challenge for relational welfare to solve, because care is still predominantly the woman's role, and the old welfare state has not found a way to resolve this. Traditional welfare, and public service reform, is held within very traditional categories of production, consumption, subject, object, and all of those categories have broken down. Power is diffused in a very different way, so I think the lens of relationships enables us to bring them back into the political debate, which is a starting point, without which we can't go anywhere.

Looking closely at relationships also enables us to tackle the outdated presumption of care being in the home and the woman's role, while production and consumption happen outside. The caring roles are still being pushed onto women, from mothering to caring for a relative, and in late capitalism it has become more difficult to think of a way to address those issues.

Funding the welfare state is essential but so is the principle, the intellectual framework that we are talking about. I cannot believe that all my conversations with my girlfriends and the mums at school are still about how we cope with the basics of our daily lives like childcare and balancing everything, even with a supportive partner! I don't see that it is going to be any different for my daughter as things currently stand. The welfare state needs to change, and it is a cultural change that we need, to enable people, women in the first place, to develop their capabilities and unlock their talents. □

# Gender impact assessment: not so taxing after all

Felicity Slater is a Young Fabian and masters student.



By Felicity Slater

Under Labour's Equality Act 2010, the government is legally bound to give 'due consideration' to the implications of its policies for gender equality. In its high-profile legal challenge to the government over the disproportionate impact of cuts on women, the Fawcett Society demonstrated the force and utility of this equalities legislation.

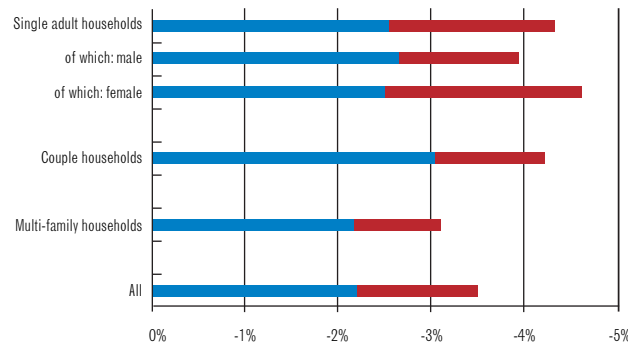
Evidence on the specific question of the impact of tax and benefit reforms by gender was published in June 2011 in a report that Fawcett commissioned from the Institute for Fiscal Studies. It is just one of a number of analyses that has successfully highlighted the government's flagrant disregard to uphold its statutory obligation.

Firstly, the evidence itself clearly demonstrates that a gender impact assessment had not been carried out. Notably, the results produced by the IFS's model reveal how overall single female households will be significantly harder hit in terms of net income loss than their male equivalents over the period 2010-2015.

Although when broken down the statistics illustrate that single male households lose a greater proportion of their net income, as a whole group single women undergo a greater loss owing to the fact that 92% of lone parents are women, and that lone parents as a group are particularly hard hit by tax and benefit changes from 2012-2013 onwards.

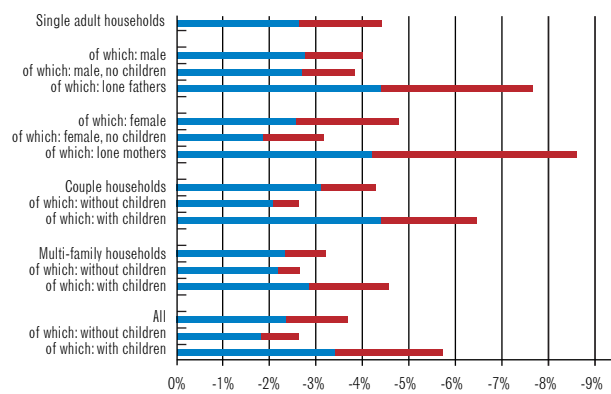
As a corollary of the observed gender impact, the IFS's report most importantly proposes some basic measures with which the government can carry out an assessment in future. These need not even generate additional expense: the statistics necessary for the assessment already feature in the Budget document, while further useful data available to government departments could expand and refine analysis.

The main challenge facing any attempt to carry out a meaningful gender impact assessment of tax and benefit



1

**Figure 1:** Impact of tax and benefit reforms on household incomes for single adult households by sex of adult, with average loss for couple and multi-family households for comparison.



2

**Figure 2:** Impact of tax and benefit reforms on household incomes for single adult households by sex of adult, couple and multi-family households by presence of children

changes is to evaluate how those who live in households with others are affected. Whereas some estimation of gender impact is possible through analysing differences in changes to direct taxes and benefits, the IFS report highlighted that the unknown and highly varied degree of cost-sharing within households means that any such analysis must be more nuanced. A pertinent assessment remains therefore difficult to achieve.

Nonetheless, that the government does not do what it could to uphold its statutory duty reflects a clear set of priorities. Yet gender impact assessments

are not a question of priority: they are a legal obligation based on the belief in gender equality. The Tories have shown themselves to be at best unconcerned by gender equality, at worst seeking actively to reverse the progress made under Labour, to reinforce a more 'traditional' role for women in society.

Fundamentally, that overlooking equalities legislation has such acute consequences highlights the fundamental role that the state can and must play in addressing and ultimately overcoming entrenched gender inequality. □

# Time to release the UK's potential energy

Shadow Minister Chi Onwurah MP on women in science, boardrooms and politics

by Ivana Bartoletti

**With the economic crisis continuing, the UK needs investment – what do you see as the contribution innovation and science can make to growth? What should the government be doing more of?**

This government is not supporting growth: they have cut investment in science research by 15%, including a 40% cut in capital spending. They also abolished Labour's 10 year framework for science investment. It's a shame as innovation and science play a leading part in achieving growth.

Josh Lerner, the Harvard Business School Professor, in his book *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* cites studies in the 1950s that analysed 100 years of economic data. He found that just 15% of growth in output - in any given economy - can be accounted for by increasing input. Which means that 85% of growth in economic output comes from innovation!

**"The UK has the lowest proportion of female engineering professionals in the EU - only 8.7%"**

**We have one of the most celebrated industrial pasts in the world and led scientific invention internationally – but where is the country's ambition in these fields today?**

It is true that this country has a long tradition of innovation and ingenuity, excellence in engineering and science, and of creativity and global engagement. From the steam engine to the world wide web we have consistently punched above our weight in science and innovation.

That is a fantastic inheritance but rather than standing and admiring it, we need to safeguard our world-leading



scientific position for the future. A recent Business, Innovation and Skills report concluded that the UK is a world leader in research, and a world leader in article and citation output (both per researcher and per unit of research spending) but other countries are outpacing the UK in terms of growth in number of researchers and spending on research. The UK's ability to sustain its leadership position is far from inevitable.

Thirteen years of increased investment in science and research has given us a real competitive edge in the global economy. Yet the government's own assessment now admits that we are putting that position at risk if we do not keep up with our rivals.

Our global competitors and the emerging science nations – even those with austerity programmes – are increasing their investment in science and research. So why has this government cut 60% of capital funding and 10% of programme funding for British science?

Following the spending review last year, a report by Imperial College found that cutting investment in research negatively affects GDP by a factor of ten: a cut of £1bn a year in science spending will result in a £10bn drop in GDP, because of the economic contribution, and associated private sector leverage, made by publicly funded science in the UK.



Without a long-term plan, the science community and private sector investors in research cannot be certain of the government's future commitment to science. This lack of commitment to science and research is putting our world-leading position in science at risk. So we cannot afford to be complacent.

**We know women are still under-represented in science and the digital economy. What do you see as the consequences of this?**

Before I answer that I'll give you some data first!

Women make up 45.1% of the UK's workforce, but remain under-represented in science, engineering and technology (SET) occupations in the UK. Women were only 12.3% of all employees in SET occupations in 2010 and the UK has the lowest proportion of female engineering professionals in the EU - only 8.7%. Gender segregation is particularly extreme in SET skilled trades such as electrical work, with women forming roughly 1% of the workforce in these occupations. Only 5.3% of all working women were employed in any SET occupation, compared to 31.3% of all working men. All this isn't just unfair on women; it is bad for our economy and our global competitiveness.

The coalition government has stopped funding the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science and Engineering, the body set up by the previous government that promoted women in these areas. Instead it has handed over the responsibility for promoting women in science to the Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering. These are excellent organisations, but in the first the fellowship is around 93% male, and in the second is at 95%.

In India the proportion of women enrolled on engineering degrees in 2000 was twice what it is in the UK, and that is despite the lower rates of literacy for girls there. And the UK has the lowest proportion of women engineers in the EU – less than one third that of Latvia.

These two countries clearly provide a more effective infrastructure than we do to allow talented women to compete in the field.

The consequences of the government's shortsightedness are dramatic. Progress with social mobility and equality in these industries has now been at best retarded, at worst reversed. Creating barriers to training and employment for half the workforce is bad for the economy, and hinders our ability to lead on a global scale.

**"All this isn't just unfair on women; it is bad for our economy and our global competitiveness."**



**"There are many women out there who could sit on boards."**

**What more needs to be done to increase the representation of women in jobs in science, engineering and technology? Do you think we need to do more to attract young women into science professions?**

Much could be done, as the causes are both cultural and structural. First, I believe we need role models. Great ambassadors are absolutely vital - but they are volunteers, and they can't do the job alone. There also needs to be proper support for science itself in

society. A positive cultural representation of science needs to be embedded in lessons early on in primary school, and then continue from there.

Also, the industry itself can do a lot. I believe there ought to be transparency on how businesses are performing, and it would be great to make the rewards of working in SET more visible. We would also need a minister who is sympathetic! Unfortunately, David Willetts doesn't agree with us that a problem exists.

**Another important area related to your portfolio is the issue of women's leadership in business, particularly women on boards. We have a woeful record on this in Britain. The Davies report recommended that UK listed companies in the FTSE 100 should aim for a minimum of 25% female board member representation by 2015. However, research released last year revealed that only 21 women have been appointed to board positions out of a possible 93. What more do you think our leading companies need to do to develop and promote female talent in the workplace?**

There is such a compelling case on why there should be equal board member representation. But if we want to see this issue tackled, there needs much more proactive head-hunting – after all, there are many women out there who could sit on boards.

The problem of representation encompasses all sectors: I must say, Parliament is the most diverse place where I have worked! In SET, women are still only a small proportion of board members in FTSE 100 companies. In 2009, only 10.8% of board directorships were held by women, albeit a slight increase of 2.4% points in the five years since 2004. In 2009, exclusively male SET FTSE 100 boards still existed in 28.3% of companies. However, the proportion of SET FTSE 100 companies with women directors on boards had increased by 8.7% since 2004.

Of course, if nothing works to increase numbers of women in board-rooms then we may need to consider temporary quotas. Boosting diversity is important for the economy, and quotas are a way to make sure it happens. □

# The Power gap

## Why we are at a watershed moment for women's rights

By Preethy Sundaram, Fawcett Society

In 2011 the number of women out of work reached a 23 year high. In the same year, the number of women in the Cabinet fell to a ten year low. The power gap between women and men in politics is mirrored in the growing gap between those most affected by government decisions and those shaping policy.

We are just seven years away from the centenary of the enfranchisement of (some) women, yet the Equalities and Human Rights Commission estimates that it will take ten times that long – another 14 elections - to achieve equal numbers of men and women in Parliament. Men MPs outnumber women four to one - in the recent Abortion Bill debate, three in four votes were cast by men. Women make up just one in five members of the House of Lords, a third of local councillors, and around one in ten council leaders. When it comes to the government quad - the top four members of the coalition government – there's not a single woman in sight.

The women who have made it to public office are remarkably similar – white, middle class, well-educated and within a narrow age range. BME women are still under-represented at all levels, as are women from lower socio-economic backgrounds and both older and younger women. The diversity of women's voices is not proportionally represented within the political realm.

The link between our current democratic deficit and government's pursuit of gender blind policy needs further exploration. Women are bearing the brunt of current austerity measures and as a result women's power and agency over their own lives and wider world is diminished. Decisions that affect us all, be it how to balance the nation's budget or our preferred system of welfare, are being made without women round the table. Little wonder that women feel

increasingly alienated from politics and lack confidence in the government's economic strategy.

The Fawcett Society's analysis has shown that the government's approach to tackling the deficit means women face a 'triple jeopardy': hit hardest by job cuts in the public sector, worse affected as the services and benefits they use more are cut, and left filling the gaps as support services are withdrawn.

**“Decisions that affect us all, be it how to balance the nation's budget or our preferred system of welfare, are being made without women round the table.”**

At the same time, other government policies are posing a serious challenge to women's power and agency: the Women's National Commission has been abolished, removing a mechanism that allowed women's voices to be heard within government; drastic reforms to legal aid are set to see half of all women who are victims of domestic violence ineligible for support, and an expected roll-back on employment rights through the 'Red Tape Challenge' could well undermine women's foothold in the workplace.

We are at a watershed moment for women's rights. If we do not act now, there is a very real danger that we will see a turning back in time for women's hard-won equality. Increasingly, women will have less power and influence over their own lives and their wider world as both their political and economic capital is reduced. A power

gap is growing in society to match the gap which already exists in politics.

The gender-blind nature of current government economic and social policy serves to highlight the need for more equal representation in decision-making. We need to see more women – all kinds of women - in positions of power and influence, in order that the position of women in society is not further undermined. In times of economic difficulty it becomes more not less important to have a range of voices and experiences inform the direction of government policy - only then can power be more equally distributed between women and men in civil society. □



# Why women and profits rise together

Helen Wells, Director of Opportunity Now, reviews the commercial imperative for having more women in senior management.

Helen Wells, Director  
of Opportunity Now



By Helen Wells

The publication of the Davies report on women on boards in February 2011, coupled with the launch of various new government initiatives on women in business, has put a spotlight on women's equality at work. For some, campaigning on this is important as a matter of justice. For Opportunity Now, the gender equality campaign from Business in the Community, having more women on boards and in senior management roles is also a matter of business advantage.

The drive to get more women into powerful leadership roles cannot be dismissed as a matter of political correctness. It is not just the right thing to do, it is a business imperative. Having more diversity in management and leadership builds better and more dynamic businesses.

Studies in both the United States and Europe have found that companies with the highest representation of women on their top management teams experienced significantly higher returns on equity and total return to shareholders, compared to those with the lowest female representation.

For example, the benefit to a company's bottom line of women in powerful positions was highlighted when management consultancy McKinsey researched the performance of listed European companies. It found that those with the most women in top level posts outperform their sector in terms of return on equity (11.4% vs. an average 10.3%), operating result (EBIT11.1% vs. 5.8%) and stock price growth (64% vs. 47%).

Deadening 'group think' also tends to give way to more good ideas when more women are around the boardroom table. The role of a board is to facilitate debate, encourage informed discussion, anticipate problems and set strategies to deal with a changing and challenging business landscape. Evidence shows that a more diverse board is a better board. Having a great mix of opinions, experi-

ences and perspectives helps boards to escape the herd mentality where no-one challenges decisions. A board with a good mix of both men and women benefits from broader perspectives, new ideas and more vigorous challenging of decisions.

## "Women are less influenced by peers to take high risk bets under pressure."

Wiser and more pragmatic management of risk appears to be another benefit of more balanced boards. The excessive risk taking of some corporate boards helped contribute to the economic crisis. Interesting research has shown that women are not as influenced by peers to take high risk bets when under pressure. The same research showed that men are more likely to take high risk bets when under financial pressure and surrounded by other males of a similar social status.

An increase in the number of women in leadership roles could also improve corporate governance. A study in Canada found that boards with three or more women directors took more responsibility for verifying audit information compared to companies with all-male boards. The same study showed that boards with two or more women consistently surpass all-male boards on accountability practices, review of non-financial performance and assuming responsibilities recommended by the Stock Exchange.

Role models are extremely important to women in terms of developing their own identity at work and career aspirations. Having more women in leadership roles can help other women within the same organisation to progress further and faster up the career ladder, and role models become more important

as women move up an organisation. Opportunity Now's *Sticky Floors and Cement Ceilings* research of 1200 women in non-managerial roles indicated that over a third of them thought that a lack of female senior role models within their organisation had affected their chances of progressing. Meanwhile, 52% of female managers recently cited a lack of visible women in senior positions as a key barrier to their own advancement.

How do we ensure all these benefits are understood and actually attained? Real change has already been made this year. In the government commissioned report from Lord Mervyn Davies, a banker and former Labour government minister, he called for 25% of FTSE 100 board places to be held by women by 2015. To achieve this, one third of all appointments have to be women. In the six months following the Davies report, recruitment of women on boards increased, but not enough – it was close to but not yet at one in three.

The core action that Lord Davies asked companies to take was to set their own aspirational goals, starting from where they are now, and rooted in what is reasonable, realistic and achievable. He made other recommendations around the recruitment process and other areas, but the core proposal was that companies give some thought to where they are now on women with boards, where they want to be in the future, and that they publish those goals and their policy for getting there. There is now a mechanism for those policies to be published, through a change that has been made to the UK Corporate Governance Code. As a driver for change, it is straight forward. Let's hope it succeeds. □

*"Women Matter: gender diversity, a corporate performance driver" McKinsey and Company, 2007. Women's representation on Boards", Joy, Carter, Wagener, Narayanan, Catalyst, 2007.*



# Ditch Wonderwoman

Ivana Bartoletti interviews **Liz Nelson OBE**, founder of the global market research giant TNS.

*Liz Nelson OBE,  
founder of the global  
market research  
giant TNS*



**Your success in business is well known.**

**But what are your politics?**

I was a member of the Labour Party, but resigned six months before the invasion of Iraq. I don't know what I'd do in the next election, but all my sympathy is with the Labour Party.

**Was business your first choice?**

I started off wanting very much to be a clinical psychologist working in the NHS, but one day my tutor said, "You are never going to be a psychologist, you are too impatient, but you have been interviewing schizophrenics for two years, and why don't you interview members of the public? - there is a job going at Mars." So it happened by chance.

**How did your family treat women and girls?**

My being a girl, and having an elder brother, had an enormous impact on me. So did my mother, who had been a very successful teacher of Italian children in the slums of New York. But those days, you gave up work when you had children. She pushed me much too much, made me skip a grade. Driven, she was. Lived through me. She was always frustrated from not working. She never said it, but it was so obvious. She ran women's clubs but it was not enough for her.

**What do women bring to senior positions?**

Women can certainly add substantially to the efficiency of companies, and organisations in the public sector, and enormously add to the richness of any board. The world of finance would definitely be different with more women and it has been proved. If more women ran banks I don't think it would be such a mess, as it is now.

**And you had an inside view as a non-executive director of RBS.**

Incredibly I was the first and only woman non-exec director for eight years. It took me five years before they invited me to a rugby match. But I loved it, and I loved being on the board. It was made easy for us by the chairman, Sir George Younger. I have followed his example ever since, of

allowing non-executive directors to meet separately - as long as they don't gang up on the executive staff.

**Was the private sector harder for women?**

It was more difficult because in this country, it was the civil service which made the hugely important changes in the laws, when female civil servants were given a fairer deal. It was not unusual for women to be connected with the public sector - mind you, not many ran for parliament. But it was easier. Men didn't feel so threatened if women were just going in to do charity work or for the local hospital. They perhaps thought "This is okay, this isn't going to put us out of work."

**And this was bad news for the country, as well as the individuals, wasn't it?**

Very much so. Muriel Nissel, the head statistician in the British government during the 60s and 70s was a woman, who had been in the civil service for 25 or 30 years and applied to the private sector. The interviewers said, "we don't think you have had much experience in time management." She could not believe it. She said, "I am a wife, I have four children and I am a top statistician." And she never entered the private sector. What a loss!

**Did it make any difference to you as a woman that you started life in America?**

Being an American, yeah, but in a funny sort of way. It helped me to avoid the British class system, or to cut through it.

**This economic downturn is hitting women hardest. What do you think politicians and businesses should do to increase women's representation at all levels?**

I think whatever position they hold in whatever sector, women need a good deal of mentoring and confidence building. It is very true of running for parliament. I hope you are all getting it - mentoring is just so necessary. Some of the best mentors I had were men.

**How do you feel about the Davies Report?**

I was very disappointed. I don't believe he was patronising when he said women need mentoring, but it seems to me that above all, we need quotas, and that was chucked out. There is no way we can do it without quotas.

**Are women being realistic?**

I feel strongly that we are not managing the expectations of women under 30. Unfortunately, you cannot do it all. I defy anyone to say you can be a marvellous wife and marvellous mother and be marvellous at business. I think women taking 12 months off to have a baby is absolutely crazy! Small businesses cannot possibly afford it. Well, I certainly couldn't.

**So who is placing these impossible expectations on women?**

These amazing women, like Shirley Conran, who wrote *Superwoman* in the 60s, said you can do it all. I don't think it is true. That does not mean I look down on women who choose to go back to work and not go for the top jobs. But to complain when you have been away for 12 months that you are not on the board.....

**What is your advice to a young woman?**

Women respond extremely well to 'what if?' situations. For the most part, women unfortunately think that analysis is a far better virtue than emotional intelligence or understanding, which is a huge pity, because their strength is just that. Any IQ can bring in analysis, but not everyone can bring emotional intelligence. I am very much influenced by the female coaches who admire the EQ. □

Liz Nelson was a co-founder of Taylor Nelson, a research powerhouse that has since become the second largest market research company in the world. Formerly director at the Chronic Granulomatous Disorder Research Trust, Liz is now the executive chairman of Fly Research Ltd and a trustee of the Family Planning Association and the Tavistock Institute.



# Making new citizens

## Migrant mothers in London

As the ethnic diversity of Britain has increased in recent years, there have been calls for social interventions to create an understanding of 'shared futures', as the Commission for Integration and Cohesion phrased it in 2007. Migrant mothers contribute to this shared future by bringing up part of the future British citizenry: almost a quarter of the 700,000 children born in England and Wales in 2008 had foreign-born mothers - in London this figure rises to 55%.

**"Migrant mothers play an important role enabling their families to find their way around a new country, giving them the necessary routine and security to allow them to succeed in education and work. Yet this important contribution is not recognised."**

According to Home Office reports, in 2006, 28% of those granted citizenship were children. However, we know little about the women who bring up this future generation of new citizens. Migrant mothers have been a focal point of my research for a while, and recently I conducted a study of European migrant mothers in London to explore how they perceive their own and their children's belonging, participation and citizenship.

Our everyday thinking sorts migrants into those who are either committed to life in the UK or those dreaming of a return to their home country. This study challenges these either/or preconceptions. It transpires that most mothers see them-

selves as part of British society, and yet this feeling often went hand in hand with a strong identification with their home countries or a broader, less nationally fixed outlook, such as 'being European', or simply 'being cosmopolitan'. While it was important to mothers that their children should feel part of UK society and speak good English, they often took this for granted. This is evidence of how successful schools, teachers and young people are in building a shared, multi-ethnic understanding of being part of London and the UK. Many mothers wanted their children to learn the language of the home country so that children could keep in touch with family members back home - but they also thought it would help children succeed in professional life. A related issue is the high status of many European languages, whose cultural value tends to be better recognized as a skill than the home languages spoken by non-European migrants. Yet, despite this overall positive attitude to European languages, the mothers report that schools are not supportive of bilingual approaches - in some cases they are even hostile.

Like many British parents, the mothers in this study are very concerned with the quality of secondary education. Regardless of their views of private education, they state that there should be good quality education accessible to all. Perhaps in contrast to British parents, they feel that this is not an impossible dream - instead they refer to their own experience of education in their home countries to point out that it can be done.

What can political activists take from these findings? They provide important lessons in the role of migrant mothers and families more generally. Firstly, this study and previous research with non-European migrant families shows that mothers play an important role in enabling their families to find their way around a new country, giving them the necessary

Umut Urel, RCUK  
Academic Fellow at the  
Open University



By Umut Urel

routine and security to allow them to succeed in education and work. Yet, this important contribution of migrant mothers is not recognized in policy on integration and social cohesion. Integration continues to be measured through participation in the labour market.

Secondly, in bringing up their children migrant mothers engage with the wider community and build bridges with British and other ethnic minority communities - playgroups and schoolyards are important meeting grounds not just for children but also for mothers of different backgrounds. Migrant mothers build social cohesion across ethnic group boundaries, but their contribution tends to be overlooked.

Finally, the European mothers in this study show that a commitment to the language and culture of the home country need not stand in the way of active engagement with life in Britain. They all see their future and that of their children as being part of the UK. Being able to live and work in other European countries and beyond is not seen as turning their backs on the UK, but rather as an active engagement with the world. Their experience as European Union citizens, who had the opportunity to migrate and integrate into the UK labour markets smoothly, shows the importance of migrants' rights in enabling their belonging. Their EU citizenship protects their mobility and their family and social rights. This allows them to build a positive social imagination where cosmopolitan values and engagement with British citizenship co-exist and even reinforce each other. Rather than viewing this particular group of EU migrants as particularly 'easy to integrate' I suggest that politics needs to provide the social, legal and political basis for all migrants to be so comfortable in claiming a sense of belonging in both the UK and their home country, and by extension Europe and the wider world. □

# Where is the voice of real outrage?

The neglect of children in our country is a fundamental problem

On September 12<sup>th</sup> 2011, Polly Toynbee wrote the following lines in the Guardian:

*"This neglect of the young makes the financial deficit pale beside the cost the future social deficit. In unemployment, crime, mental health and social breakdown, the damage done will cascade on, down future generations. I doubt many voters know or would approve the price that children are paying as cuts are camouflaged by empty Cameron words of concern.*

*What's needed is a campaign by children's charities to shame the government and to make these facts known. Quiet despair grips those who see it happening, but where is the voice of real outrage?"*

A month after she asked this pertinent question I joined several paediatricians in registering our own 'real outrage' by opposing the Health and Social Bill in a letter to The Times. Over 300 child health professionals signed the letter, and it is one of many that have been written, by various bodies, to voice the medical profession's strong objection to the Bill.

The neglect of children in our country is a fundamental problem: one in ten children are either neglected, psychologically or physically abused every year. Children suffer neglect at the hands of individuals. But we forget, as a nation, that we neglect children in our failure to be proactive enough in tackling the roots of inequality.

In the UK, health and wellbeing follows a clear socio-economic gradient – and we need to be curious about the complex factors that perpetuate the steepness of that curve. The current government may lack an ideological motive to reduce social inequality, but they do have a clear financial incentive: social inequality has been shown to cost the NHS billions each year. Despite the clear moral and financial imperative to tackle social inequality, the IFS predicts child poverty will rise sharply (after nine years of falling) as a result of

this government's changes in policy. There is a bitter irony that the leaders of our democratic society were educated at the most elitist schools and have gone on to systematically cut education maintenance allowance, increase university tuition fees and abandon plans to extend the number of children eligible for free school meals. Unlike higher education, the NHS still delivers free health care regardless of wealth. Yet we cannot be complacent; as the British Medical Journal reported, we have a higher all-cause childhood mortality compared with other European countries. If the UK health system performed as well as that of Sweden, as many as 1500 children might not die each year. However, the scale of the NHS presents challenges; it is the 4<sup>th</sup> biggest organisation in the world, so coordinating the disparate array of components within the NHS is not easy. In reviewing children's services, Ian Kennedy highlighted the lack of health equality and lack of integration across "a complex array of organisations, units and teams." The complexity of improving children's health services necessitates that we derive lessons from other complex systems. The state, and those who work within the health service, cannot keep applying traditional solutions to increasingly 'wicked' problems, as they are known in social planning circles – i.e. problems too monumental and too varied to remedy conventionally.

It's unacceptable to waste taxpayers' money on ineffective solutions that fail to have any impact on improving patients' lives. Steve Jobs said of Apple when it was in financial crisis, "the cure for Apple is not cost-cutting - the cure for Apple is to innovate its way out of its current predicament." We need to be innovative about reducing the neglect of children that takes place within society, within our health system and within the state as a whole. The current Bill will simply result in increased fragmentation of the

Dr Sara Hamilton,  
Paediatrician and  
Academic Clinical Fellow  
in Integrated Child Health



By Sara Hamilton

services, penalise those children with the most complex, chronic health and social problems who already struggle to navigate a disparate system, and inhibit collaborative efforts between health services and community resources.

**"It is utterly hypocritical for Cameron to pose as the 'ideal parent' whilst cutting state and third sector support for families."**

There are amazing community initiatives that strive to support the most vulnerable members of our society - the victims of trafficking and domestic violence, or those trying to escape the cycle of crime and drug abuse. But acute health services can only pick up the pieces - a baby born to a heroin-addicted mother on a methadone programme will spend months in hospital being weaned off four-hourly morphine and being deprived of the chance to form a secure attachment with a primary carer. Meanwhile, government cuts are crippling the community initiatives that strive to address the factors that contribute to those babies being born to disempowered mothers lacking in hope. Initiatives that empower women and mothers help break the cycle of addiction and prison, and yet they go unfunded. For example, Clean Break offers a free education programme to women ex-offenders and those at risk of offending due to substance misuse and/or poor mental health. But statutory cuts have been made, reducing the charity's ability to cover childcare and travel costs and provided a hot meal, whilst the state subsidises the restaurants our leaders dine in.

Parenting is a challenge, regardless of one's position on the socio-economic

spectrum. However, is utterly hypocritical for Cameron to pose as the 'ideal parent' whilst cutting state and third sector support for families. Families across the socio-economic spectrum benefit from working tax credits, childcare vouchers, school breakfast clubs, holiday play schemes, children's centres and libraries. By threatening all of these providers of parental support, the government sends out a message that it does not value the contribution of parents to society as a whole. I receive more status in society as a doctor, yet I have the potential to contribute more to society as a parent. We do not acknowledge the 'invisible job' parents do. Regularly in my job I see parents (often sole) struggling to meet the needs of a disabled or chronically ill child (and those of their healthy siblings). These unpaid, unacknowledged caregivers lack sufficient respite care, adequate housing or input from overstretched therapists. I no longer ask parents, particularly mothers, 'do you work?' Instead I ask, 'are you also in paid employment?'. The primary caregiver in families is often the mother - but that should not detract from the affording fathers equal importance in contributing to the welfare of the next generation (irrespective of whether or not the parents are in a relationship with one another). The Fatherhood Institute that campaigns for "laws, policies and public services to encourage and enable fathers to invest more of their time and energy in the direct care of their children. We want all health, education, family and children's services to be 'father-inclusive' – that is, to support fathers in their caring roles as seriously as they currently support mothers."

I began this piece by echoing Toynbee's question, "where is the voice of real outrage?" Silence and inaction is not a valid response from either the state nor those of us who pertain to caring about the future generation, or indeed society. I end with the words of Michael Marmot, whose review on inequality presented the moral and financial imperative for the state to invest in our future generations:

*"The health and well-being of today's children depend on us having the courage and imagination to rise to the challenge of doing things differently, to put sustainability and well-being before economic growth and bring about a more equal and fair society."* □

## About the Fabian Society

The Fabian Society has played a central role for more than a century in the development of political ideas and public policy on the left of centre. Analysing the key challenges facing the UK and the rest of the industrialised world in a changing society and global economy, the society's programme aims to explore the political ideas and the policy reforms which will define progressive politics in the new century. The society is unique among think-tanks in being a democratically-constituted membership organisation. It is affiliated to the Labour Party but is editorially and organisationally independent. Associate membership of the Fabian Society is open to all, regardless of political persuasion.

The Society has approx 7000 members of which around 2000 are women.

To join, visit our website [www.fabians.org](http://www.fabians.org), uk or contact membership officer Giles Wright on 020 7227 4904 or [giles.wright@fabian-society.org.uk](mailto:giles.wright@fabian-society.org.uk)

## About the Fabian Women's Network

The Fabian Women's Network was launched in January 2005 and is run by a committee of volunteers. It is part of the voluntary section of the Fabian Society, alongside local Societies and the Young Fabians. The Fabian Women's Network aims to bring people together to:

- ▶ Create a thriving network for social and political change.
- ▶ Connect Fabian networks with Fabian Women Parliamentarians.
- ▶ Provide new ways in which women from all backgrounds and sectors can engage in topical policy debate.

The Network has held a number of high profile receptions and policy discussions and regularly works with voluntary sector organisations on areas including women and pensions, women and work and family related policy. Speakers at events have included Cabinet Ministers, Ministers, representatives from leading charities or agencies, business, academics and media.

### Labour Women's Network

**Supporting Labour women since 1988**  
 @LabourWomensNet  
[www.lwn.org.uk](http://www.lwn.org.uk)

**Labour Women's Network is an organisation of women members of the Labour Party dedicated to supporting Labour women to play a full part in the Party, and to securing the election of more Labour women to public office at every level.**

We train, mentor and advise Labour women seeking selection for all levels of public life, but particularly parliament. We run residential courses for our members, and provide CV surgeries by email.

Interested? Join us today – [www.lwn.org.uk](http://www.lwn.org.uk)



## Movement for Change

The home of community organising within the Labour Movement

[www.movementforchange.org.uk](http://www.movementforchange.org.uk)

@M4COnline  
#M4CWomwn

# **The Economic Alternative: Fabian New Year Conference 2012**

## **Keynote: Ed Balls MP**

Saturday 14th January 2012 - 9am

Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

## **Join the Fabian Women's Network event morning breakout event Women, the crisis and politics**

**Featuring:** Polly Toynbee (*Guardian*), Seema Malhotra

(*MP for Feltham and Heston*), David Coats (*Research Fellow at the Smith Institute*),

Vera Baird (*former Solicitor General, pilot of the Equality Act*)

Chair: Ivana Bartoletti (*Editor of Fabiana*)

**Come and meet members of the FWN  
committee and find out more about the Fabian  
Women's Network - join us at our stall!**

To register for the Fabian New Year Conference visit

**[www.fabians.org.uk](http://www.fabians.org.uk)**