

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Oxford
Unit of Assessment: 30
Title of case study: Lessons for the Labour Party from the 1930s and 1980s
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>After losing the 2010 general election the Labour Party began an important debate about the Party's future direction, focusing in particular on how to advance Labour's traditional redistributive commitments at a time of economic austerity. Ben Jackson's research has informed some of the key discussions on this subject among politicians, advisors, commentators, and think tank researchers. His analysis of the ideological roots of these debates, especially of the distributive politics generated by economic austerity, has provoked and informed debate, and has contributed to the development of Labour's new direction under Ed Miliband.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Between 2007 and 2013, Ben Jackson has pursued two strands of research that have influenced and provided valuable historical context for debates within the Labour Party. The first of these is a comparative investigation of the ideas and rhetoric used by political leaders of the Left in Britain and the United States during the rise of the welfare state in the mid-twentieth century. This work, focusing on the speeches of figures such as Roosevelt and Attlee and on the ideological sources of their public appeals, resulted in a book-length study, <i>Equality and the British Left: A Study in Progressive Political Thought 1900-64</i> (3.1, 3.2). The second is a study of the ideas and rhetoric of free-market Conservatism in the late twentieth-century, with a particular focus on the ideological foundations that underpinned the rise of Thatcherism in Britain. This research has been published in a series of single-authored papers and in <i>Making Thatcher's Britain</i>, a book edited by Jackson (with Robert Saunders) on the history of Thatcherism (3.3 and 3.4). Throughout the period of this research, Jackson has been employed full-time in the Faculty of History at Oxford University as a University Lecturer and Tutorial Fellow in Modern History.</p> <p>The key research findings of this work were as follows. First, Jackson showed that the rhetoric used by political leaders to mobilise support for the welfare state in Britain and the United States during the 1930s and 1940s drew on a discourse of social patriotism. Leaders like Roosevelt and Attlee, Jackson argued, sought to win support for economic redistribution by associating it with the values and traditions of the nation, and characterising the improvement of the condition of the people as itself a cardinal national tradition. The Left's most successful and creative periods of policy-making, according to Jackson's analysis, have been popularised via a language that has framed welfare provision and progressive taxation as serving the broad national interest of low- and middle-income citizens, and by contrasting this national interest with the sectional interests of wealthy elites.</p> <p>Second, in his examination of the ideological foundations of Thatcherism and the remaking of Conservatism in the late 1970s, Jackson has argued that Conservative electoral success in the 1980s employed a resonant economic rhetoric that sought to reverse the emphasis of the progressive rhetoric established in the 1930s and 1940s. Jackson has shown that Thatcherism, by drawing on the economic theory of the neo-liberal right, and in particular on public choice theory, created a popular discourse about sectional interests that focused on the dangers posed by trade unions and other agencies associated with the Left. This form of electoral appeal fitted closely with the statecraft needs of the Conservatives in the 1980s, namely the need to construct a parliamentary majority in the face of regionally concentrated mass unemployment and (at least initially) significant economic austerity. This rhetoric therefore helped the Conservatives to frame the electoral contest from 1979 onwards as centring on which party was best fitted to manage austerity in the face of significant resistance from unions, public sector interests, and the Labour Party.</p>

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3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1 B. Jackson, *Equality and the British Left: A Study in Progressive Political Thought 1900-64* (Manchester University Press, 2007, paperback 2011), 259+xii pp (academic university press). [available upon request]

3.2 B. Jackson, 'The rhetoric of redistribution', in J. Callaghan, N. Fishman, B. Jackson, and M. Mclvor (eds.), *In Search of Social Democracy* (Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 233-51. (Academic university press) [Available upon request. Shortened version published as 'How to talk about redistribution: a historical perspective', *History & Policy*, September 2008, at <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/papers/policy-paper-76.html>].

3.3 B. Jackson, 'An ideology of class: neo-liberalism and the trade unions, c.1930-79', in C. Griffiths, J. Nott and W. Whyte (eds.), *Classes, Cultures and Politics: Essays on British History for Ross McKibbin* (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 263-81 (major university press). [Available upon request]

3.4 B. Jackson and R. Saunders (eds.), *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 353+xiv pp [Includes single-authored chapter by Jackson and substantive introductory chapter co-authored by Jackson and Saunders]. (major university press). [Available upon request]

3.5 B. Jackson, 'Corporatism and its discontents: pluralism, anti-pluralism and Anglo-American industrial relations, c. 1930-80', in M. Bevir (ed.), *Modern Pluralism: Anglo-American Debates Since 1880* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 105-28. (major university press). [Available upon request]

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Through effective communication and collaborative work with politicians, advisors, and commentators, Ben Jackson's research has provoked and informed debate on the future direction of the Labour Party.

In 2011, in collaboration with the Labour MP and Shadow Pensions Minister, Gregg McClymont, Jackson co-authored a pamphlet for the think-tank Policy Network (McClymont wrote his DPhil and then worked as a fixed-term lecturer in the Oxford History Faculty between 2000 and 2009). Overall, the pamphlet and the debate it initiated played an important role in framing the Labour Party's Policy Review as being about finding a response to Conservative austerity that projects a national rather than sectional Labour policy appeal.

The pamphlet, *Cameron's Trap: Lessons for Labour from the 1930s and 1980s* (Policy Network, 2011), argued that Labour's future direction should be informed by the experience of earlier periods of economic austerity when, in spite of mass unemployment and public retrenchment, the Conservative Party was able to prosper at the ballot box. Drawing on Jackson's work on the ideological foundations of Thatcherism, Jackson and McClymont argued that Conservative success depended on being able to present Labour as a sectional party, and on defining the key metric of political competence as which party is most effective at managing austerity. Drawing on Jackson's work on progressive political rhetoric, the pamphlet then suggested how Labour could frame its policy agenda as a patriotic, national one focused around encouraging growth rather than managing austerity. The text was available for free download on the Policy Network website (http://www.policy-network.net/publications_detail.aspx?ID=4113).

Cameron's Trap was widely discussed after its launch on 29 December 2011. An article based on the pamphlet was published by the *Guardian* on the day of its launch ('How Labour can avoid the Tory trap', *Guardian*, 29 December 2011); in addition, the *Guardian* ran two other articles reporting and analysing it (including one on its front page) [i][ii]. The ideas and arguments presented in the pamphlet were then widely debated on a number of important Labour and progressive websites and publications, such as *LabourList*, *Liberal Conspiracy*, *Next Left* (the then blog of the Fabian

Society), *Compass*, *Huffington Post*, *Labour Uncut*, *Fabian Review*, *Progress*, as well as sparking media commentary in major media outlets such as the BBC News website, the *New Statesman*, the *Scotsman*, and others [iii][iv][v][vi][vii][viii]. The pamphlet was officially launched in a seminar at the House of Commons on 16 January 2012, at which McClymont and Jackson both spoke and responded to comments on the pamphlet by Stewart Wood (one of Ed Miliband's advisors), the journalist Jenni Russell, and the political scientist Tim Bale (Tim Bale's comments were subsequently published as an article on the *Guardian* website). The audience at the launch included Labour MPs, advisors, and other figures closely involved in Labour's policy debates. Subsequent articles by McClymont and Jackson on the websites *LabourList* and *History and Policy* further publicised the pamphlet's argument and responded to criticisms. The co-ordinator of Labour's Policy Review, Jon Cruddas, has said: 'Ben Jackson's research was really valuable when we were framing the work of the Labour Party's Policy Review. It set out the historical context for today's policy debates and the traps Labour has to avoid as we develop our new direction.' [1]

After Ed Miliband's speech at the annual party conference in 2012, at which Labour's new designation as 'One Nation Labour' made its debut, Jackson contributed to the debate surrounding the meaning and implications of Miliband's speech. Using his earlier research into the history of progressive rhetoric about economic redistribution, he contributed a post to the Labour blog *Shifting Grounds* that drew out the egalitarian implications and historical precedents of a One Nation Labour appeal ('Miliband reclaims social patriotism', *Shifting Grounds* blog, 4 October 2012, at <http://shiftinggrounds.org/2012/10/miliband-reclaims-social-patritotism/>). This post was widely read, and consequently he was commissioned to write a longer article for *Juncture*, the house journal of the centre-Left think-tank the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), elaborating on the historical parallels and egalitarian implications of Labour's new rhetoric. As Guy Lodge, Associate Director of the IPPR, explains, 'Ben Jackson's research on the history of progressive political rhetoric provided an important historical dimension to the debates around Ed Miliband's "One Nation Labour" agenda. I commissioned Ben Jackson to write a piece drawing on this research for IPPR's journal, *Juncture*, which is widely read by policy-makers.' [2] ('The masses against the classes: One Nation Labour and the revival of social patriotism', *Juncture*, 19 (2012), pp. 160-5, shortened version at <http://www.ippr.org/juncture/171/10060/one-nation-labour-and-the-revival-of-social-patriotism>). By highlighting that Miliband's use of 'One Nation' was not only an attempt to co-opt traditional Conservative ideas, but also a revitalisation of earlier forms of progressive rhetoric grounded on social patriotism, these writings contributed directly to the discussion of social policy within the Parliamentary Labour Party. As attested by the Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, "*Cameron's Trap* was widely read and debated within the Labour Party. It gave a historical perspective on the policy discussions Labour is now engaged in which helped clarify how Labour can respond to a period of austerity and craft a One Nation policy agenda." [3]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Testimonial Evidence

[1] Correspondence with MP, Co-ordinator of the Labour Party's Policy Review

[2] Correspondence with Associate Director of the Institute for Public Policy Research

[3] Corroboration via Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury

Other evidence sources

[i] N. Watt, 'Miliband told: Tory trap could decide election', *Guardian*, 29 December 2011, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/dec/28/ed-miliband-tory-public-spending> [Ran as lead story on front page of paper].

[ii] N. Watt, 'Is David Cameron turning into the Stanley Baldwin of the 21st Century?', *Guardian* blog, 29 December 2011, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/wintour-and-watt/2011/dec/29/edmiliband-davidcameron>.

[iii] S. Shackle, 'How optimism might start to wear thin for Labour', *New Statesman*, 29 December 2011, at <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/12/labour-miliband-support-poll>.

[iv] A. Lent, 'Cameron's Trap has a missing piece which can be filled by Black Labour', *LabourList*, 30 December 2011, at <http://labourlist.org/2011/12/camerons-trap-has-a-missing-piece-which-can-be-filled-by-black-labour/>.

[v] J. Clare, 'An attack on the left?', *Liberal Conspiracy*, 30 December 2011, at <http://liberalconspiracy.org/2011/12/30/an-attack-on-the-left-no-the-labour-right-is-offering-concessions/>.

[vi] H. Reed, 'White Flag' Labour? Fiscal policy for the UK's next progressive government, *Compass*, January 2012, at <http://clients.squareeye.net/uploads/compass/documents/WhiteFlagLabourfinal.pdf>.

[vii] L. Byrne MP, *The New Centre-Ground*, *Progress*, February 2012, at <http://www.progressonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/The-New-Centre-ground.pdf>.
[Describes the Jackson & McClymont pamphlet as a 'powerful recent essay']

[viii] D. Weldon, 'The Tory "feel-good" factor', *Fabian Review*, 25 April 2012, at <http://www.fabians.org.uk/the-tory-feelgood-factor/>.