



EMPOWERMENT AND THE COMMUNITY

Speech by David Lammy MP, Minister for Culture

~

**Next Decade Fabians Lecture
22 May 2007, Commonwealth Club**

I'm very grateful to the Fabians for asking me to deliver this Next Decade Lecture, particularly because I actually joined the Fabians a few months before I became a member of the Labour Party.

And so in many ways, it's a real honour to be given the opportunity as the youngest member of the government, representing the kind of constituency I do, to talk about globalisation, empowerment and the community.

I think it's an exciting time to be part of the Labour Party again.

Exciting, yes, because we will have a new leader and deputy leader in a few weeks time. For some people in this room that will only be the second Labour Prime Minister of their lifetime.

But exciting also because this period offers a real chance to reconnect with the public once again.

To start to heal divisions between urban and rural, religious and secular, young and old. And to demonstrate once again that we share people's hopes for the future and that we understand their fears.

Because in the long run, political parties don't get renewed just by a change of personnel at the top.

They find renewed purpose and renewed support when they produce a vision that inspires people about the future again.

A global age

And when we step back and take a look at the future one thing is clear: You can't look at Britain's next decade without considering our place in the world.

Ten years ago our focus, as a government, was on class sizes in schools. On waiting times in hospitals. On speeding up the criminal justice system.

I remember speaking to people as I campaigned at the time. Their biggest concerns were about keeping the economy stable. About re-building our public services.

They were domestic issues that people knew a Labour government could – and would – deliver on.

But consider Britain ten years from now and the picture looks very different.

The economics is different.

In those days we were just coming to terms with a single market in Europe. Today the question is how to compete in a *global* marketplace with emerging economic superpowers in the East.

Because the scale and pace of change in that part of the world is staggering.

China already produces seventy per cent of the world's photocopiers. A quarter of the world's washing machines. By 2010 it will have the same number of science and engineering graduates as the United States. India and South Korea are fast becoming global R&D centres.

It's a different world, that poses a different set of questions for Britain.

The social context is different.

The UN tells us that 191 million people now live and work outside their country of birth. About 20 million of those are living in the EU.

Increased mobility between nations mean more people both enter and leave Britain than a decade ago.

5.5 million British people live permanently abroad, whilst people from all over the world see Britain as the place that they want to make a life for themselves.

And that means that communities already look and feel different to those days in 1997.

And the technological change that has taken place over the last decade is breathtaking.

It's easy to forget how much has happened in the last ten years.

The rise of the internet. The emergence of much cheaper travel. Of satellite TV. 24-hour rolling news. All this means that it is not just governments who find themselves in day-to-day contact with others around the world. It is people themselves who create, control and access information from their front rooms .

The government in New Zealand learnt this last year.

It found people fleeing their homes in the middle of the night because of a tsunami warning. But unlike previous warnings this one hadn't come from the government. It came from reports in the media on the other side of the world. Reports that the government wasn't even aware of.

That kind of event simply wasn't imaginable ten years ago – a time when most people had never even sent an email.

All these changes – economic, social, technological – mean that we live in an age where national and international challenges overlap with one another. Where many of the traditional distinctions between domestic and foreign policy are collapsing because what happens on one side of the world can have profound consequences for everyday life in Britain.

Fuel shocks. Terrorist attacks. Stock market fluctuations. Contagious diseases. They *become* our business wherever they take place in the world, whether we like it or not.

They become our business and they require new responses because they don't fit neatly inside national borders.

That's why serious politicians from Al Gore to Angela Merkel recognise the importance of finding ways for nations to work together in the twenty-first century.

They know that you can't seriously expect to manage migration, or tackle climate change or SARS or bird flu or terrorism without working in partnership with others round the world. From intelligence sharing to carbon trading, an open, internationalist approach is the only option for the future.

That's a profound change and a big challenge for the future – for us, for Europe and for others around the world.

Global Britain

But there is another aspect of globalisation that matters to people too. And that is the more visible set of changes that people see all around them.

Because globalisation isn't just about international institutions – it's also about our everyday lives. It is about jobs we do. It is about the communities we live in. About new cultural influences.

Most people don't wake up every morning thinking about the re-structuring of the global economy, or current levels of net migration. But these are the changes that shape our everyday experiences, when we go to work, step outside the front door, or open a newspaper.

And in large part the changes are positive.

Benefits to Britain

Living in an open society with a dynamic economy has brought many of us huge benefits.

New jobs. New markets for British exports. Cheaper consumer goods every time we enter a supermarket. New traditions and customs to explore.

Many of changes these we now take for granted.

And we enjoy these benefits because Britain, in many ways, is made for globalisation:

Our language is spoken by 1.3 billion people across the world – an incredible asset when you stop and think about it. Worth nearly £15 billion to our economy according to some estimates.

Our national history leaves us with more than one special relationship. From India to Australia to New Zealand we have historical ties that are invaluable – diplomatically, economically, socially – in a global age.

And our tradition of open trading relationships – from as far back as the repeal of the Corn Laws in the Nineteenth Century – puts us in a fantastic position to make the best of all those assets.

As France edges towards an end to the protectionism that has held its economy back, Britain is prospering through trading relationships with others all around the world.

Britain was once described – by a famous Frenchman as it happens – as 'a nation of shopkeepers'. This was meant to be an insult. But in truth, our ties with others all over the world have brought us great prosperity and it will continue to do so in the future.

And it's true to say also that it's not just Britain that stands to benefit if we get things right.

Migrants from poor countries working abroad send home \$200bn every year – money that benefits their families and their communities.

Many are returning home themselves to invest newfound money and expertise in enterprises, charities and public in their home countries.

And the trade that we benefit from in this country also has the potential to help nearly three billion people worldwide, who are still living on less than two dollars a day.

People's fears

Yet despite all the advantages and the prosperity that we and others have enjoyed, the changes brought about by globalisation also create a real sense of unease among many people in this country.

Because the *very same* dynamism that makes globalisation such an opportunity for Britain also creates real uncertainty in people's lives.

It's easy for politicians to stand up and quote the rising GDP figures, but people's lives aren't lived out in generalisations.

And I sense that this rapid pace of change – the feeling that forces beyond people's control are changing their lives whether they like it or not – is what creates the unease that we are seeing in Britain today.

Globalisation may create a small world, but it can leave individuals feeling smaller too – and disconnected from one another.

I think it creates three important sets of challenges for our future:

First, an economic challenge: of how to achieve both prosperity and fairness in ever-more competitive global economy. And at a time when people rightly worry about inequality in society.

Second, a social challenge: of how to keep sight of the things that really matter to people in life – spending time with our children, caring for our parents, being active in our communities, enjoying life ourselves.

And third, a civic challenge of how to maintain a sense of community, of belonging and togetherness in an age where communities are changing rapidly – and where the old institutions of community life such as the working men's club or the pit have withered away.

These are not impossible challenges to overcome, but they ask a lot of people.

And what is also striking about these three challenges – economic, social and civic – is they ask serious questions about what kind of government we are going to need in the future.

Because unlike the pledges of a decade ago, they can't simply be delivered by government acting alone. You can't build a happy family, a cohesive community or strong economy in the same way that you can build a school or a hospital.

But we also know something else. That while government can't deliver these things itself, they also won't be achieved at all without government playing its part.

The challenges of the next ten years point to the need to rethink the place of the market and the role

of the state.

The economic challenge

So, first the economic challenge.

Because we know that for all the wealth that globalisation brings us *as a country*, there are still those who lose out in the marketplace.

It is true to say that we've seen over 300,000 new jobs in the City in the last five years. And it is a real success story that London now finds itself edging ahead of New York as a global financial centre.

It's true that cities like Manchester and Leeds and Liverpool are all driving economic growth again. Creating new jobs. Finding their own particular roles in a global economy.

But for all the success we also need to recognise that there are the people who have worked hard all their life – but who now find themselves being asked to acquire *new* skills to do *new* jobs in *new* industries.

To them, globalisation doesn't feel exciting and dynamic. It feels worrying and destabilising. And it feels the same to their friends and their families who worry about what changes to their own jobs might be around the corner.

These are the people that we all have a responsibility to in a fast changing world.

Because at a time when there are more opportunities, but also greater risk and uncertainty, the simple idea that 'we are all in this together' becomes more important than ever.

It's not enough simply to cheerlead for openness rather than protectionism.

Alongside openness, people need reassurance.

They need to hear that if the company you work for is suddenly no longer viable then we won't desert you as whole communities were deserted in the 80s.

You won't be demonised for something you have no control over, or cut adrift just when you need help the most – to support your family, access training or find a new job.

People need that reassurance. And they deserve it too.

And more than this, a collective spirit allows us to fulfill an even greater goal. To spread power, opportunity and hope to *all* people in *all* communities.

More than simply compensating for the uneven outcomes of the market, the state at its best offers a means of helping people take control of their lives again. To regain a sense that they, rather than the huge impersonal forces affecting their lives, are the masters of their own destiny.

It seems to me that often the debate about putting people back in control of their lives is detached from reality. It's reduced to giving people a choice over who delivers their services.

But I'm clear that it has to be much more than that. It has to be a way of understanding what government is there for and why it is so important.

Democracy has its roots in the ideal of self-government – the belief that we should each have the opportunity to shape our own lives. To make our own decisions about our futures as individuals,

families and communities.

And that ideal is something we need to keep sight of as we face up to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Let me give you an example.

Just a few weeks ago in my surgery, I met a working mother, who has been doing her very best to bring up a family. But who is also struggling too to find the money for the rent, the time for her children, and the energy to progress in her own career.

For her, *real control* is much more than having a choice about which school to send her children to. It comes from a government that genuinely understands what real life is like for most people.

...For her, *real control* does more than just keep her family afloat with benefits, it also helps them build up *assets*, whether through savings schemes or new ways to get that foothold on the property ladder.

All the research shows that those who own a home in their twenties have better outcomes later in life. They're wealthier, healthier and less likely to get divorced than those who don't.

But it's not easy. So we need more affordable housing that really is within people's reach. And we need to do all we can to help people make their own investments in their futures.

...*Real control* for that mum and her family is financial support that helps her children stay on at school when they get older, rather than have to go out to work before their time.

Look at all the projections for the future and so many of the secure jobs, the well-paid jobs, the rewarding jobs are going to need people with high skills.

No young person should have to choose their family over their future – they should be able to make that decision to stay on at 16 and 18.

... And *Real control* offers that mum and her children the chance to refresh and update their skills in *adult* life when their job or their employer changes.

A third of the 2020 workforce has already left school. And those who are the least involved in learning in adult life aren't the high-flying graduates who already have all the qualifications.

The people missing out are those with the lowest qualifications.

They deserve support and we need their participation in the next ten years.

So for that mum who came to see me – and for the millions of people across the country like her – real power comes when people's lives are not dictated by the market or the state...but when they are given the opportunity to take control of their own lives again.

That comes from government that is on people's side, that understands their needs and shares their aspirations. Not one that sees the uncertainty created by globalisation as someone else's problem.

That means more support for first time buyers. It means all the encouragement possible encouragement for young people to stay on at school. And it means creating opportunities for adults as well as children to learn.

That mother needs to know that her life can and should be different.

The social challenge

And that applies to the social challenges of globalisation too.

...Because if we want people to be successful as parents so that their children join sixth forms rather than gangs when they get older

...If we want people to be active in their in their communities so that it's not the same old faces turning up at the town hall every week.

...If we want to give people the best chance to to enjoy their own lives

...then that also needs a government that understands what life's really like for most people.

That understands that devolving power isn't enough if people don't have the time to grasp hold of it. That recognises that being a parent is the most difficult job that anyone could be asked to do without the right advice and support.

It probably won't surprise anyone here that the countries that came out best in the recent UNICEF report on young people were Holland, Sweden, Denmark and Finland.

They all have something important in common. They are all countries that understand that we can't rely on the market to deliver well-being on its own. Markets left to their own devices are very good at creating wealth, but not always at providing balance, well-being, support and care.

They don't create flexible working for parents – or not for all parents at least. Just those who are powerful enough to demand it from their employers.

They don't provide support for new families in those vital early years of a child's life.

They don't prevent young people becoming targets for advertising before they reach primary school unless government plays its part. Seven to eleven-year-olds are now worth nearly £20 million a year as consumers – that doesn't make life easier for any parent.

And that's why we should be very wary of politicians who are ideologically wedded to the market, but who also trumpet 'family values'.

Sometimes one has to take priority over the other. Our message has to be that it is possible for us to make that choice.

In the 80s Britain decided it couldn't live without the market. Now, slowly, we are learning how to *live with it*. To humanize it. To shape the market around the type of society we want to live in rather than *visa versa*.

So of course, in a global economy, we want to see the economic success we've enjoyed in the last decade repeated in the next ten years.

We want to see living standards to continue to improve. New jobs to be created.

But we also need to rise to the social challenges.

If we want 'children to be children' then we need to give parents *time to be parents*. Through flexible working arrangements and maternity and paternity leave.

We need wrap-around support for parents who don't have the support networks to that past

generations enjoyed. And early support, that *prevents* parents and young people running into trouble – not just that responds to it.

And we need public spaces that are welcoming for children and families, that encourage play and adventure. Places that young people can enjoy and parents can trust.

Because in the end parents need to become our biggest allies. Our biggest allies in raising aspirations, in preventing anti-social behaviour and in promoting well-being.

We need to be a government that helps people make those adjustments to their everyday lives that reflect their priorities, not the life that has been decided for them.

The civic challenge

And like the economic and social challenges created by globalisation, we need to be clear about how we can meet an important civic challenge. Of living together, of maintaining a sense of community in a changing world.

That collective spirit has always been at the heart of our values on the Left – given expression not just by our policies but by trade unions, co-operatives, and friendly societies.

And reviving that spirit is as important as ever in a global age if we are to take some of the collective decisions that I've been describing.

I like John Stuart Mill's vision of patriotism based on a 'principle of sympathy, not of hostility; of union, not of separation', in which the community regards itself as 'one people' whose 'lot is cast together'.

But that sense of togetherness takes work. It takes work at a time in which we are less and less likely to have grown up alongside those living in our street or in our neighbourhood.

Many communities that have looked the same for decades are changing rapidly.

Between 1991 and 2001, half of Britain's population growth was due to immigration.

According to the 2001 census, people from ethnic minority groups now account for more than a third the population in Birmingham. That compares to just over a fifth of the population in that city a decade earlier.

And in my own constituency in Tottenham we have 193 languages spoken at the last count.

I am a firm believer in the benefits of diversity. My parents were part of the generation who arrived in this country in the 1960s and made such an important contribution.

My son was born just over a year ago in an NHS hospital in Archway across London, staffed by doctors and nurses from all over the world.

And I'm clear that none of the changes that we're seeing mean that it's not possible to maintain a strong sense of togetherness in the twenty-first century, if we find the right response.

It's my belief that like the economic and social challenges that I have been describing, we need a government that is neither tells people how to live their lives, nor which ignores the question of how we live together.

In this country, we have often dealt with issues of integration through landmark pieces of national legislation – and largely in response to crises.

The Race Relations Acts in the 60s, the 70s and under this government.

Through a commitment to citizenship we are now finding ways to express Britain's national and civic culture. By providing by episodes in which people to commit to one another as citizens. When they learn the national language. And when they familiarise themselves with national heritage and customs. When they learn about key moments in British history at school.

But one thing is also clear: that integration comes easiest when people meet and interact with one another in everyday life.

The surveys show again and again that people living in the most diverse areas are also those that feel most positive towards those from other backgrounds.

And I think the reason is for this is simple: when we *do* meet one another, suddenly people from other backgrounds and cultures are not one-dimensional caricatures any more.

They are no longer seen only as a Christian, a Muslim, a black person, an Asian. They are real people with children, with interests, with hopes and fears that are often very similar to our own.

And when we experience this for ourselves we tend to realise what we hold in common, rather than focus on what differentiates us from one another.

That's why I believe that it is fear and unfamiliarity that are the problems – not incompatibility.

And it's why what we really need as a society is the social glue created by an *encounter culture* – in which it becomes normal, commonplace and comfortable to meet people from other backgrounds and cultures.

We need workplaces that are representative. Public spaces that are welcoming. Schools that are integrated, and which interact with one another. Housing policies that bring people together, not reinforce divisions.

We need to rediscover a national service for our young people.

Of course, government can't deliver an integrated community any more than we can deliver a highly skilled workforce. By definition, a civic challenge needs citizens to do their bit.

But a government that helps people solve their own problems – through avoiding the unnecessary damage that gets caused by social segregation – is the kind of government that we need over the next ten years.

The politics of hope

Much more than the Right, the Left depends on a politics of hope. Looking back at our history, these have been the times when the Left has spoken for the nation.

In 1945 Clement Atlee's Labour Party won an election that no-one believed it would win. The name of its manifesto: Let us Face the Future.

A manifesto that changed the terms of debate. That created new institutions and new expectations for years to come by pushing the boundaries of what could be achieved.

Ten years ago, we recaptured that energy. That impatience to make Britain the place it could be rather than the place it was becoming. People saw the promise of a brighter future for Britain.

And ten years on they see the institutions that have become part of the social fabric in this country. The children's centres. The new libraries. The neighbourhoods that have begun to regenerate

themselves.

The progressive politics of the future needs to keep hold of that hope. That hunger for progress. That belief that things can be better.

A global age comes with fear and insecurity – but also with hope and possibility. We need to be the party which embodies and creates that hope.

The state can't deliver productive workplaces, or happy families, or strong communities on its own. People need to play their part.

But they also need to be given a fair chance to do just that if they are to achieve all that they can.

That comes not from wishful thinking. Or from the cheerleading of the Right for globalisation. Or from the idea that rolling forward civil society somehow means rolling back the state.

It comes from a belief that that state can strengthen communities and individuals by working alongside them – helping people shape their own lives regardless of wealth or power that they were born with.

And above all it comes from a government – a Labour government – that doesn't shy away from the big questions of the future.

That challenge now is to offer a politics which is honest, trustworthy and respectful of people's real experience, but which continues to test and challenge the boundaries of what is possible.

That means continuing to make ambitious commitments for a better future – and being prepared to pursue change in how government *itself* works in order to achieve them.

So the task of renewing our purpose is also a very practical one. Creating and recreating a government that is true to the values of service – in meeting people's personal needs and expectations, and but also in serving a community and a future that is bigger than one's individual concerns.

Because in a global age, it remains truer than ever by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone.

Thank you.

END.