



## Case Study –

### **The British Labour Experiment in Ethically Just Social Policy as a Driver of Economic Welfare**

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The modern transition between the British Conservative and Labour governments provides an interesting case study in how ethics are especially pertinent to public policy decisions requiring tradeoffs between investments for private short-term profits versus long-term public social justice and the common good. While relativist ethics have always been reflections of worldviews and social values, Tony Blair's Labour Party has found that it is possible to move from political party dogma into an amorphous political ideology rooted in non-sectarian ethics and driven by the practicality of what the electorate really cares about, regardless of political party.

Under the leadership of Tony Blair, the Labour Party set out to establish more equitable access to public goods and services that would establish a strong economic base from the bottom-up. The essence of Labour's economic infrastructure involves four key factors for sustainable growth and economic empowerment. They are: (1) an income safety net with the ability to support oneself and one's family, (2) an educated, less class-oriented society able to compete in the global economy, (3) a healthy population able to contribute to the common good, and (4) a safe and accessible public infrastructure for the movement of people and goods. As it came into office, the Labour Government staked its success on its ability to facilitate the economic well being of the British public by being better managers of these core domestic policies.

#### **The Socialist Contract in a New Context**

These laudable goals are not a substantial diversion from the earlier Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major; however, Tony Blair's 'big tent' populist approach to these subjects is indeed very different in their implementation from the free-market laissez faire approach of the Conservatives. Indeed, Blair's Labour Party came to the public policy questions with a politically flexible and, what Geoffrey Wheatcroft calls a "deliberately vague," platform, driven by Blair's personal convictions, moral principles (if not practices), pragmatism, and perhaps a set of inner virtues approaching Machiavelli's *ends*, regardless of *means* (Wheatcroft 60-64).

Britain is attempting an experiment to see if a modern technologically advanced, wealthy, and information-rich society needs to develop a new worldview that is not constrained by the overwhelming influence of raw capitalist win-lose economic philosophies that developed during the British-led industrial age. Just as scarcity of raw materials, labor, and land drove the economics of the industrial revolution that reaped the benefits of the earlier agricultural age's plenty, one might conclude that the Labour Party came to office in 1997 with the intent to shape Britain, in the same manner envisioned by Bill Clinton and Albert Gore in the United States, into a technologically rich information-based society that would not be constrained by scarce infrastructure access, nor scarcity of basic goods, nor scarcity of basic medical care, nor scarcity of education and information. Labour might be seen to believe that all of these constraints that were appropriate for the construction of free-market libertarian capitalism for an industrial age, so enshrined and reinforced by the Conservatives, have been surpassed such that, if it were not for an over-reliance on monied self-interest at every turn of society, the entire population could be fed, clothed, housed, educated, and provided with a basic level of medical care.

Geoffrey Wheatcroft relays how the academic theologian and philosopher, John Macmurray, influenced Blair to believe that individuals prosper in strong, supportive communities (Wheatcroft 60). As such, New Labour embraced a new form of participatory capitalism. It moved away from previous Labour governments' insistence on owning the means of production, into one that believes in populist capitalism where all members of society could be the best that they could be. As Ian Budge, et. al., observe,

“Since the mid-1990s, the Labour Party, along with other Social Democratic parties in Europe, has largely abandoned high-tax, high-spending policies in favour of fiscal rectitude (i.e., low taxation and restraints on public spending and inflation). [Likewise] the values represented by the City of London throughout the post-war period (lower taxes, balanced budgets and low inflation) became the economic orthodoxy almost everywhere. This development has had the effect of putting strict limits on what governments of all political complexions can do in terms of public expenditure” (Budge 17-19).

Wheatcroft observed that when Tony Blair came to office, he was seen as, “a man who could move Labour away from dogmatic socialism while avoiding the Tories' meanspiritedness” (Wheatcroft 58).

However, Labour also tapped into the British public's sentiment that, after 18 years of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party policies that no longer seemed to work, acquisitive capitalism, as the primary driver of economic development and the criteria for distribution, could become anachronistic in the worldview that may be enabled by modern technology. Blair's somewhat idealistic view was that an economics of cooperative long-term social value and an ethics of just, but not necessarily equal, distribution of benefits and costs was called for. The Party broke with the traditional Labour views and “steered political discussion away from how industry was to be structured and levels of spending and taxation determined,” notes Budge, “towards an emphasis on the quality of public services,” then referred to as ‘The Third Way’ (Budge 75).

### **Economic Safety Net: From Socialist Entitlement to Social Responsibility**

Britain was the first major country to base itself on an industrial and commercial economy. As the population migrated from the countryside into the cities in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, social and political institutions formed to deal with this new situation (Budge 7). One might also note that political institutions also sought to meet the interests of the commercial class and their sustained need for workers. The Industrial Revolution's abject poverty, overcrowding, and risks to the public health as well as to the labor supply, led Britain to establish itself as a liberal democracy, which, by the early 1900s also began to recognize the needs and rights, not just of the landed gentry and the commercial class, but also the industrial workers. As such, David Lloyd George's Conservative coalition government passed the Insurance Act in 1912. Stanley Baldwin's Conservative government introduced a widow's pension scheme in 1925 and modified the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Poor Law under the Local Government Act of 1929 (Childs 8). The Labour Party was formed to address many of the needs of the working class and it adopted a socialist constitution in 1918 that was committed to common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. However, Labour opposed Soviet-type communism. Ethical principles were the basis of their socialism, rather than Marxism (Childs 9).

In an ethical context, *distributive justice* concerns the distribution of social benefits and burdens based on *relevant* respects or *substantive* principles of *fairness* (Munson 37-38). Distributive justice concerns the distribution of social benefits and burdens, and seeks to ensure that people receive that to which they are entitled. Philosophical theories of justice attempt to resolve questions of distributive justice by providing explanations as to why distinctions are made in any unequal distribution of benefits and burdens (Munson 37-38).

One of the most significant arguments put forth by the trade union movement was that workers' wages were not just a commodity price to be set by the market. Competing workers driving the costs down also meant increased human misery in terms of poverty, health, family stability, crime, and problems that would affect the whole society (Budge 48). This was more than lobbying by the unions; it was a powerful ethical argument of the intrinsic worth of the individual that set the foundation for an accepted policy of a social safety net. In addition, according to Budge, “The mass unemployment of the 1930s had demonstrated how inadequate social protection was in the absence of comprehensive state aid” (Budge 625).

The post-war Labour governments of 1945-1951 unified social protection and health care into a body of legislation called the 'Welfare State' (Budge 8-9). The state used public funds to provide a minimum standard of living or 'safety net' of cash benefits, job training, insurance, and health care for its citizens. According to Budge, "The basic aim was to ensure that everyone got support in all the major crises of life: poverty, sickness, old age, and unemployment" (Budge, 9). The Labour government of 1945 also nationalized certain industries, strengthened regional policies, focused on maintaining full employment through active Keynesian macroeconomics, and developed the 'Welfare State,' which stayed in place until the 1980s (Budge 60-61). The Welfare State's services were universal, rather than selective. Family allowances and old-age pensions were a flat rate and public housing was for general need with rents unrelated to income (Budge 624).

By the 1980s the New Right's doctrine of 'Thatcherism' and its belief that the market was more efficient than the state at providing everyone with goods and services, caused it to ignore or refuse to intervene in the closing of factories and mines concentrated in the north. They also sought to reduce the number of government employees from 700,000 to 590,000 (Budge 13). According to Budge, unemployment reached 12 percent in the mid-1980s and it rose again in the mid-1990s. In addition, though Britain signed the European Union's Maastricht Treaty, the Conservative government of John Major opted out of the EU's Social Chapter, which sought to give social rights to workers and ensured a level base for competition<sup>1</sup> (Budge 22). The subsequent dislocations set the stage for Labour to return to power after an 18-year absence, but with a new twist – the 'New Deal.'

Tony Blair's Labour Party came to office in 1997 and accepted both the EU's Monetary Union and Social Chapter, which, as noted by Budge, provided "an unprecedented opportunity for Labour governments to pursue their policies with the consent of both industrial and financial interests...and advance its social policies without creating a crisis of confidence" (Budge 23). Unlike previous Labour governments, Blair supported the idea of increasing the size of the national economy to the benefit of all of the UK's citizens (Budge 77). As such, Labour was no longer opposed to private education, private provision of transport, and owner occupied housing, and it sought to move the social safety net in the manner of Bill Clinton in the U.S. – from welfare to work.

For the most basic economic security, the British government provides an economic floor, innovates in public housing, and provides numerous job training and placement programs. The National Health Service (NHS) is transferring land from 'brownfield' sites to become part of the ≤22 billion *Sustainable Communities Plan*. The surplus NHS land will be used for the development of 15,000 low income homes over 100 sites, a third of which will target workers, such as nurses and teachers (10 Downing Street, *Old NHS Sites*). In addition, Britain pays social security benefits of ≤79.60 a week for a single and ≤127.25 a week for a couple. A *Pension Credit*, an entitlement for people aged 60 or older, guarantees an income of at least ≤105.45 a week for singles and ≤160.95 per week if the pensioner has a partner (10 Downing Street, *Pensioners Gain*).

*New Deal* is an essential part of the government's Welfare-to-Work strategy. Blair's government established it to address the specific problems faced by people looking for work during various stages of their lives. The services include training, basic reading and writing skills, job counseling, assistance in claiming benefits, and help with childcare. Over 100,000 companies signed New Deal employer agreements and the program has helped over 750,000 people over the past four years (10 Downing Street, *What is New Deal?*). One of the employers is the National Health Service. Through a program called *Ambition*, unemployed people get a chance to work in the NHS in areas where the NHS has shortages. *Ambition* has also been applied to the construction, energy, IT, and retail sectors (10 Downing Street, *Healthy Ambition for Unemployed*).

Once a job is obtained, the government is also supportive of development programs and lifelong learning that will improve long-term employment opportunities. The government has several programs meant to address the 7 million adults that have serious basic skills needs in reading, math, and basic information technology. The *Learning and Skills Council*, established in 2001, funds apprenticeships and vocational training with a ≤7.3 billion budget. The *Learndirect* scheme is run by the University for Industry out of 1,855 centers and offers over 800 courses, many of them online. It has enrolled over 500,000 since

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<sup>1</sup> The Social Chapter of the Maastricht agreement established a broad set of regulations on social conditions, working hours, minimum wages, and health and safety standards. The Chapter was not signed by the Conservative government, but has since been accepted by the Labour government (Budge 217).

its October 2000 launch and has addressed the needs of 42 percent of its enrollees who had no previous qualifications. Every public library in the U.K. has a *UK Online Centre*, including 2,000 of the most deprived local authority wards, to provide access to online services, information, and training. *Connexions* is a UK-wide service targeting 13 to 19 year olds with personal advisors and *Jobcentre Plus* will be a new fully integrated work and benefit service that will be launched by 2006 (10 Downing Street, *Training and Development*).

### **Educational Foundation for Economic Health**

During the Victorian era, the exclusive and inaccurately named ‘public school’ developed as a private institution to educate aristocrats and wealthy middle-classes and fused them into a single upper class (Budge 40-41). As such, the elite secondary education of the public school system and the lack of the government taking responsibility for free primary and secondary education before 1944, is one reason why Britain is regarded as an educational laggard in comparison with other countries, such as the U.S. and France (Budge 637). Even with the 1944 reforms, free education was available only up to age 15. The reforms of 1971 raised the age to 16.

The Conservatives passed two Education Acts in 1986 and 1988, which devolved day-to-day operations of schools to governing bodies, that include elected parents, who manage school finances, hire, and fire staff. Britain has a National Curriculum, standardized performance tests, formally assessed teachers, and comparisons between schools (Budge 639). The Blair government’s Department for Education and Skills sets national standards for 7 million pupils, legislates to improve the quality of education, inspects post-19 education, and funds local learning skills councils, City Technology Colleges and universities (10 Downing Street, *Department for Education and Skills*). To tackle Britain’s high dropout rate, students who stay in school after 16 years old can get up to  $\leq 30$  a week and bonuses of  $\leq 100$  if they achieve certain progress milestones. While the program is means-tested and designed for families making  $\leq 30,000$  or less, the government expects the biggest impact will be on boys from the lowest socioeconomic group. It hopes to raise full-time education for 16 to 18 year olds by more than 70,000 (10 Downing Street, *Pupils to Earn*).

According to Childs, “Primary schools are improving dramatically.” Test scores for 11-year olds show a leap of 10 percent in math and a rise in 5 percent in English. However, the 2000 report, *Measuring the Mathematical Problem*, revealed a significant decline in math education. A survey of 120 university science departments found that half of them needed to give remedial math lessons, citing that many undergraduates had math skills equivalent to 14-year olds (Childs 312).

Alternatively, the expensive higher education system was not reformed until the 1990s. Though it was free to all those able to get admitted and grants were available on a means-tested basis, only less than 5 percent of 18-year olds could obtain a university education. In the 1990s, the privatization of public services had put such a financial strain on universities that many of them had to recruit students from outside the EU, as far away as China, Malaysia, Egypt, Turkey, and Mexico, in order to boost their incomes (Childs 313).

Labour announced new tuition fees for all students in 1997, with rebates and maintenance grants for those with low incomes. According to Budge, “Most commentators agree that this [ $\leq 3,000$  university fee], together with a more targeted system of research resources, is more likely to result in a two-tier system: an elite headed by Oxford and Cambridge and a large number of universities whose primary function would be teaching rather than research” (Budge 640).

Since 99 percent of the 3.7 million businesses in the U.K. have less than 50 employees, the government is also active in fostering the transfer of research and development innovation to the small business community. Many of the government’s programs target small businesses with university collaboration, R&D institutes, government-funded R&D, *Enterprise Grants*, and tax breaks. *Partners in Innovation* can provide up to half the costs of R&D projects in the construction sector. The *LINK* scheme funds collaborative R&D between industry and universities. The *Smart Scheme* provides grants to small businesses to help companies make better use of technology. The *TCS Scheme* provides companies with access to university-based subject matter experts. Public/private sector knowledge transfers for business acceleration are supported by the *UK Business Incubation* and the *Innovator’s Club* (10 Downing Street, *Research and Development*).

### **Mobility and Access to Infrastructure**

The 'social democratic consensus' in the post-war era of 1945-1979 accepted state ownership and control of coal, gas, electricity, telephones, rail, and air transport (Budge 69). However, in an effort to get government out of business, the Thatcher Government of the 1980s pursued a policy of privatization of the government-controlled infrastructure, such as electricity, water, gas, public housing, and railways.

The 1997 election manifesto of the Labour Party focused on a few key public policies, the most troubling of which has been the transportation policy. The Labour government's position on the importance of the transportation infrastructure is summarized as, "Our economy has to be underpinned by a transport infrastructure that enables people and goods to move around the country as efficiently as possible" (10 Downing Street, *Transport*). However, in spite of the July 2000 *10-Year Plan for Transport*, the Labour government has been slow to produce a workable integrated transport strategy, as evidenced by the 1997 merger and then the 2001 de-merger of the ministries of transport and environment. The Plan committed over £180 billion over a ten year period. This was to include £22 billion on strategic roads, £33 billion on the railways, and £51 billion on local transport. The plan included £3 billion worth of rail rolling stock and a new Train Protection Warning System. It was to provide for 66 strategic road improvement projects, 116 local road projects, 10 light rail lines, 200 rural bus projects, and improved reliability of the London Underground (10 Downing Street, *Transport*).

However, auto congestion and pollution remain problematic, and Railtrack has been a failure (Budge 597). Of all the transport policies, the privatization of the railroads by the Thatcher government has proven to be the most problematic.<sup>2</sup> Defective rails, antiquated signaling equipment, old coaches, unreliable schedules, and high prices were just a few of the complaints. In fact, the number of passenger complaints of poor service and delays passed the one million mark in 1998 (Childs 327). After a tragic accident at Hatfield in October 2000, due to a broken rail, John Prescott commented, "I have always said that the fragmented, adversarial, blame-culture structure of the railways, which we inherited, encouraged different parts of the industry to pull in different directions, against the interests of passengers." More recently, Labour Transport Secretary Alistar Darling noted that the "Fragmented and dysfunctional nature of the [rail] industry gets in the way of effective decision making and frequently leads to dispute." He noted that there were too many organizations with overlapping responsibilities (10 Downing Street, *Rail report an important contribution*).

### **Nationalized Health as the Foundation for Productivity**

The Welfare State, and especially universal health care, remains very popular with the electorate, so that all political parties have been enthusiastic supporters of the National Health Service (Budge 61). The NHS was formed in 1948 to provide health care on a universal basis (Budge 633). The primary doctor and hospital care were free and available to all British citizens.

Unlike the United States, which seems to have an over reliance on fee-market exchanges as a defacto allocation scheme, British governments have supported socialized medicine in accordance with the well-established sense of justice and fairness espoused by Rawls. In a Rawlsian society, differences in wealth and social position can be tolerated only when they can be shown to benefit everyone and to benefit those who have the fewest advantages, in particular. A just society, according to Rawls, is not one where everyone is equal, but one in which inequalities must be demonstrated to be legitimate. In addition, in a Rawlsian society, everyone must be given a genuine opportunity to acquire membership in a group that enjoys special benefits (Munson 22-23). The implications of Rawls' principles are that: (1) everyone is entitled to health care, (2) inequalities in the health care system can be justified only if those in most need can benefit from them, and (3) to the degree that the previous two conditions are not met, as in the current system, a wholesale reform is called for that would provide health care to those who are unable to pay (Munson 24-25).

Regardless of government, from the 1951 Churchill government to the 1979-1989 Thatcher government, the percentage annual increase in NHS spending has ranged from 1.1 percent to 3.5 percent. While the NHS has undergone a number of reforms, they did not significantly increase the quality and quantity of health care delivered, according to public expectations<sup>3</sup> (Budge 634-635).

<sup>2</sup> In spite of calls for the re-nationalization of the railways, opposition from within the Labour Party and among the public, Blair's government pushed through a partial privatization of the air traffic control system (Childs 328).

<sup>3</sup> Reforms of NHS have included (Budge 633-636):

The Blair Labour government remains committed to maintaining free universal health care for the majority of the population, but NHS seems to still be in a crisis (Budge 637). Blair's reforms in 1997 abolished portions of the internal market, mandated GPs to join primary care trusts, and established targets for improving clinical care. Childs observes that, "The NHS remained beset by problems and controversy just as it had done under Major and earlier administrations. Britain had simply not been investing enough in the NHS to enable it to remain a modern service on par with the rest of Europe" (Childs 308-309). In January 2000, Britain had one doctor for every 625 people, whereas France had one for every 344. Britain spent  $\leq 868$  per capita on healthcare, compared with  $\leq 2,559$  in the U.S.,  $\leq 1,490$  in Germany, and  $\leq 1,245$  in the Netherlands (Childs 309). The Office of National Statistics reported that deaths among the elderly in the winter of 1998-1999 were the highest in ten years. In addition, a conference of specialists rated Britain's cancer treatment program as poor relative to other advanced countries and another study found that over 5,000 patients died each year from infections they contracted while in the hospital (Childs 309).

The NHS plan of 2000 followed a winter of bed shortages and lengthening hospital waiting lists. As a result, the government pledged to double the spending on the NHS in real terms to reach the European average of 8 percent of GDP by 2004. Further increases announced in 2002 accompanied increases in National Insurance contributions (Budge 636-637). In Sir Nigel Crisp's **Chief Executive Report to the NHS: May 2004**, he cites dramatic falls in waiting times:

- 98 percent see a primary care practitioner within 24 hours
- 94 percent of emergency room patients are seen within 4 hours
- Outpatient appointments have fallen from a maximum of 21 weeks a year ago to 17 weeks, and
- Hospital admissions average 10.2 weeks and a maximum of 9 months, down from 12 months a year ago.

These statistics are likely to remain seen as extremely poor to the American observer. Indeed, some UK residents are seeking alternatives to the waiting lists. According to a special report in **The Guardian**, the NHS waiting lists, even for very painful conditions such as hip replacements, is causing a small but growing number of people who can afford private medical care to seek help abroad. Estimates are that up to 50,000 British citizens traveled overseas to seek treatments in South Africa, India, Thailand, and Cuba for conditions such as heart surgery, cataracts, knee and hip replacements, and cosmetic surgery. They have found that the quality of care is good and the costs to be significantly less expensive than in the U.K. Even the government is recognizing the problem with the waiting lists. In a program called London Patient Choice, patients facing extremely long waits for orthopaedic surgery are treated in Belgium at the UK government's expense. Over the past nine months, 320 patients have been sent to Brussels. For comparison, a  $\leq 5,900$  hip replacement in London, if performed in Brussels, would cost  $\leq 8,400$ , but the Belgian waiting period averages 5 weeks and the costs include aftercare (**The Guardian**, *Sun, sea, sand ...and surgery*. May 11, 2004).

Criticisms of the NHS go beyond waiting lists and costs. The most vulnerable elderly patients may be systematically missed by the NHS and social services until they are brought to the hospital emergency room. Studies of nine primary care trusts indicate that while three percent of the over-65 patients in areas studied accounted for 35 percent of hospital admissions for that age group. However, district nurses were seeing only 25 percent of these patients and only 35 percent were on the local social service books. Some had been admitted into the hospital ten times in a year, according to James Meikle, writing for **The Guardian**. Two thirds of hospital patients are over 65 years old and 75 percent of those studied were still living in their homes (Meikle).

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1974 – System of regional advisory committees and community health councils

1982 – Abolished regional authorities and created 192 district health authorities in an initiative called "Patients First"

1991 – Next Steps reforms sought to address the incentives for medical staff to improve their status and conditions rather than those of patients

1993 – Market principles were introduced

1997 – Labour's *New NHS: Modern, Dependable*

2002 – Increase in National Insurance contributions

### Concluding Observations

In a manner not unlike his contemporary George W. Bush, Blair's critics within both Conservative and Labour parties may respect his ethics but dislike his moralizing tone. Peter Riddell notes that his critics say that his ethics-driven approach can come across as sounding hypocritical and sermonizing. "But Blair means exactly what he says about addressing the ills of the world in 'right and wrong' terms, almost regardless of the strategic implications. This has put him, and Britain, in some very risky positions. But Blair believes that his moral outlook not only should, but will, prevail" (Riddell 6-7). Writing with regard to Blair's first term, Howard Glennerster suggested that the Blair government will be viewed as significantly as the 1945 Atlee government, but for very different reasons. He cited: (1) the Blair social policy shift away from an all-inclusive universal welfare system, (2) the solidification of many of the Conservative government's structural reforms, (3) the selective universality of public spending, (4) increases in spending on health and education, and (5) a reversal of the Conservative's policies on poverty, income distribution, and social exclusion (Seldon 383-402).

While the current political disaster of the Iraq War may derail Labour's best intent on the domestic front, it remains a laudable experiment. It certainly will compete with domestic programs for funding from the public coffers. Because of Iraq, Blair has become very unpopular among the British populace. Though his standing on the world stage may have been enhanced, Wheatcroft observes that the public did not vote to reduce the Conservatives to 165 MPs out of 659 to gain a world leader. "The British electorate voted for someone who'd make the bloody schools and hospitals and trains work" (Wheatcroft 68). Cliched though it may be, politics is local after all.

According to Riddell, "Discontent with his handling of Iraq fed into a sharp drop in trust in him generally. A decline of credibility of the Government has affected his ability to persuade voters that public services are improving, as well as fuelling opposition within the Labour Party to controversial policies such as foundation hospitals and tuition fees" (Riddell 298). It would be unfortunate if the wars in Iraq, plus the British military involvement in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, and Afghanistan derail the noble experiment in public policy. As noted by Wheatcroft, "At home his government has a number of real and even profound achievements to its credit. The best of them have been hidden from view and will bear fruit only in years to come: a steady alleviation of child poverty and a marked improvement in teaching for young children (if not much as yet in secondary or university education)" (Wheatcroft 60).

In addition, of all the economic development and infrastructure initiatives summarized in this paper, the Blair government seems to be pursuing them with the ethics of sustainability. The assessment by the Sustainable Development Commission outlined the government's principles as:

- Making sustainable development the organizing principle for economic, social, and environmental concerns
- Revering nature for its intrinsic value, regardless of its economic and aesthetic value to humans
- Providing fair shares for all in an inclusive economy
- Making polluters pay explicit costs for pollution and inefficient use
- Broadening effective, participative systems of governance that tap the interests and energy of all citizens
- Taking a scientific precautionary approach and performing environmental impact assessments on new technologies (10 Downing Street, *Progress Report*).

While Britain has no formal constitution in the U.S. sense of the concept, if Blair is successful, he will have mirrored the best social constructs outlined in the United States Constitution – life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Life can be assured and enhanced by using technology to provide a basic level of food and shelter, a safe environment, and to ensure a minimal level of health and wellness as a basic human right. Liberty for all can be enabled by raising the level of equality when accessing and utilizing the public infrastructure, such as access to information and mobility. The pursuit of happiness might be ensured with a decent education that maximizes the individual's potential contribution to society and their own well-being, and by providing the ability to support oneself and one's family to anyone who is willing to work.

If Blair can provide these enabling factors for domestic tranquility, perhaps the public will forgive his 'presidential' style and his actions on the world stage may be indulged. Clearly, if the British home front is in chaos, neither indulgence nor forgiveness will be forthcoming.

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