

10 February 2011
Compass Annual Lecture



Professor David Marquand

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– what way forward for
progressive politics?’**

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DIRECTION FOR
THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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On Thursday 10th February 2011 Compass held its second annual lecture. Professor David Marquand addressed the question of a 'Realignment of the Mind'. He did so in front of a sell out audience who snapped up the 200 tickets within a few days. The Rt. Hon Ed Miliband MP, leader of the Labour Party, Caroline Lucas MP, leader of the Green Party, Evan Harris, ex Liberal Democrat MP and Vice Chair of the Liberal Democrat Federal Policy Committee and Professor Francesca Klug, Director of the Human Rights Future Project at the LSE responded and all took questions from the floor. The event was chaired by Neal Lawson from Compass.

This is the transcript of the evening. It has only been lightly edited for presentation and should be read as intended – a lecture and direct oral responses. It was a thrilling intellectual night.

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‘A REALIGNMENT OF THE MIND – WHAT WAY FORWARD FOR PROGRESSIVE POLITICS?’

Introduction – Neal Lawson

This is our second annual Compass lecture. We are delighted you're here; we are delighted to have this panel. I'll introduce the panel slightly more fully when they're going to respond to David. We've got Ed Miliband, Caroline Lucas, Evan Harris and Francesca Klug. It's hard trying to find people who you want to listen to for half an hour. But there's the thing about the hollowing out of British politics and the hollowing out of the public intellectual. And when you look around and see the public intellectual that you want to listen to, they tend to be of a slightly older generation. And the thing that I love about David is that at the age of 76 is that he's still incredibly vital. He's still challenging us and himself, and thinking and developing and moving his politics in incredibly, I think, interesting and challenging ways. He's had an illustrious political and academic life as a Labour MP, as an advisor in Europe and as a senior academic. He's published absolutely fantastic books. Most of you will have looked at or seen *Progressive Dilemma*; you'll have looked at the book *Decline of the Public* or more recently *Britain Since 1918*; fantastic, fantastic output. The book that stands out to me, from David, more than any is this one, *The Unprincipled Society*, published in 1988. To me it's the prime analysis of the decline of the post-war settlement. It's about why we got it wrong. And like any good book it says exactly what it is about on the cover; it's about that notion that our society, if we want to improve it, if we want to progress, has to be underpinned by a moral basis, because if it's just about what works or socialism being what Labour governments do, then as soon as there is a crisis, an intellectual, a social, an economic crisis,

it falls apart. As it did in the 1970s and 80s for us. And you have to underpin what you're doing, underpin your actions by a moral argument, a moral case. It sounds simple, but I think it's incredibly true and incredibly important as we rebuild the left. This book stands out to me from David's work, and the other thing that stands out to me and I don't know if you'll remember this, is a debate that he did with Anthony Giddens, do you remember him? [laughter] about the nature of the Third Way and social democracy. Anthony Giddens kept talking about a social democratic society, when we arrive at a social democratic society. And David took him to task and said 'You don't understand, you don't arrive at a social democratic society, there is no perfect society, the point is to be on the journey, to try, to improve, to strive to make better, it is the process, the means, there is no end', and I just found that incredibly enlightening; it clarified what I thought about our kind of politics and our kind of journey, and what we're trying to do. So I'm absolutely delighted that we're all here, the panel is here, to listen to someone who is worth listening to, for no more than 30 minutes [laughter]: David Marquand.

Thank you.

Lecture – David Marquand

Neal, bless you, that was a wonderful, wonderful introduction; I am so flattered, so moved by what you had to say. At the end of your remarks I thought maybe I should not speak at all, I should leave you to explain my ideas, because you're doing it better than I did! I was particularly touched that you mentioned *The Unprincipled Society*, because that's actually my favourite of the books I've written in the last 30 years, God help me. Anyway, can I also say that I am enormously flattered that you've invited me to give this lecture, enormously flattered, I can't tell you how proud I am. And how proud I am that you've managed to get such an amazingly distinguished panel as well. I hope I will live up to your billing!

Perhaps I should begin by saying something about this rather peculiar title. Why a realignment and why a realignment of the mind? Well, what I'm trying to get at is this. I'm not going to talk about the party battle in Parliament or elsewhere,

and I'm not going to talk about political parties as such. This isn't because I don't think they matter, of course they matter enormously. But I think we need to dig deeper than they can. I think we need an unconstrained national conversation across party boundaries, about the economic, political and moral predicament that we face as a people. And I think too that all, all the major traditions of our political culture, conservative, liberal and socialist or social democratic, should take part. None of them has a monopoly on the truth, but all of them have, I think, valuable insights, and I'll come to what I think some of these insights are, later on.

Now I think the conversation needs to start with the economic crisis of 2008–9: the second most shattering in the long history of capitalism. Only the Great Depression of the 1930s was more so. It might have been expected to trigger departures from the pre-crisis neo-liberal orthodoxies. After all that's what happened in some places in the 30s. Roosevelt and Hitler both departed, very radically, from the orthodoxy that had prevailed before the Great Depression (I mentioned Hitler because it's worth knowing, worth remembering that not all departures are necessarily nice). But nothing of the sort seems to have happened this time. No substantial political leader that I know of has echoed Roosevelt's marvellous call to the American people to drive the moneychangers from the temple. None that I can see. Everywhere the question seems to be: how do we get back to business as usual? Of course, with some improvements and modifications. Keynesians want to get back by way of stimuli, as laid down by the master. Neo-liberals want to do so by spending cuts and balanced budgets. The differences between them are real, and they are important.

But the two groups disagree about the route, not about the destination. Both want to get to the same place. They want to get back to the imaginary sunlit uplands of ever-rising living standards and a tartered-up version of the untamed capitalism which has roared across the world in the last 30 years. But the crisis demonstrated that the assumptions underlying this untamed capitalism are simply wrong. We have now learnt, again, that markets don't always know better than governments, that private greed does not produce public benefits, that the lords of creation in the hedge funds and investment banks are not wealth

creators, they are wealth destroyers, that a rising tide does not invariably float all boats. Wealth has not trickled down from the ultra-rich to the rest of society. The self-regulating market of neo-liberal economic theory has been shown to be a phantom whose pursuit has produced outrageous inequalities and, in the end, a catastrophic fall in employment and output. The turbo-capitalism, as an American political economist has called it rather nicely, has not been driven by rational economic actors. The rational economic actor is another phantom. It's been driven by stampeding herds of electronic gamblers.

Now I think no single school of thought can offer an adequate explanation of the crisis or an alternative to the neo-liberal world view which has now collapsed. But I think too, and I'm a bit shy of saying this in a way, because this is what I used to think nearly 60 years ago, and I've somehow come back to it: I think that Marx has more to say about this extraordinary world we live in than Keynes or Hayek or any of their followers. Of course, Marx was wrong about a lot of things. The proletariat has not become the gravedigger of the bourgeoisie and it's not going to. But he was right, I think, about the essential dynamic of capitalism. The restless, voracious, all-consuming search for profit that replaces traditional social ties with a cash nexus and breaks down what Marx and Engels called the Chinese Walls dividing nations and traditions and ways of life from each other. We call it globalisation now, as though it was an incredibly new idea. Actually, Marx thought of it 160 years ago. Now I want to look at the implications of all this for three aspects of our life as a nation. First of all I want to look at what I call the public realm. The public realm of equity, professional duty, citizenship and civic virtue, if I can use that ancient term. As opposed to the market domain of buying and selling on the one hand and the private domain of love, family and friendship on the other.

One of the greatest achievements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was to carve out a distinct public domain from the private and market domains. Examples include the creation of a career civil service recruited on merit, the so-called gas and water socialism that transformed living conditions in London and other great cities in this country, Lloyd George's national insurance

act and Bevan's creation of the National Health Service. These are all examples of the growth of the public domain. But, there was a flaw. There was a flaw because the guardians and architects of the public domain forgot about the inherent voracity of capitalism that Marx had diagnosed. They assumed that their achievements were safe. That the institutions and norms of the public domain were and would remain inviolate. They failed to see that the market domain is inherently expansionist. And that if it is given half a chance it will invade parts of the public domain.

As untamed capitalism roared ahead, that is precisely what happened. Gingerly at first, but then with mounting confidence, first the Thatcher government, and then its successors, the New Labour governments, pushed back the frontiers of the public domain in order to expand the market domain. Of course they didn't put it in those terms, but that's what they were doing in my view. An enormous range of public assets were sold off to private purchasers and, more importantly, privatisation went hand in hand with marketisation: a long drawn out process of institutional and ideological colonisation of the public domain, uncannily reminiscent of the Party State of the Soviet Union's colonisation of the civil society.

Wherever possible public bodies, public institutions were forced into a market mould. The political world increasingly took it for granted that the private corporate sector provided the sole model for the efficient management of resources. And as the parliamentary expenses scandal showed, one result was an ominous slide back to the old corruption that radicals in the 19th century had condemned, and whose condemnation of it helped to spur the growth of the public domain in the first place.

Now, the coalition has followed where the Thatcher and New Labour regimes led. Let me describe what to me is a classic (possibly because I have been an academic, I'm sorry I can't help it, for an awfully long time) example that I find particularly shocking: the review of university finance by Lord Browne, former head of BP of all things, and the sequel to the report. Now the student protests over the threefold fee increases, I sympathise greatly with the students and I admire them, but in a way, they have missed the real point. The debaters in the debate that

accompanied the protests focused almost entirely on the impact of the proposed fee increases on individual students and potential students from different backgrounds.

The larger questions, about the universities' contribution to the common good and the health of Britain's public realm, were hardly asked. But the fee increase is the logical consequence of the review's recommendation that state funding for undergraduate teaching in the arts and social sciences should be eliminated. Eliminated. And of the assumptions that underlay that recommendation. For Browne and his colleagues on the review team, higher education – at least higher education of the arts and social sciences, they weren't quite sure about technology and medicine and certain sorts of languages but that's a detail – higher education, in the arts and social sciences at least, is a private good. It gives graduates a higher standard of living than they would have had otherwise. Since it is a private good, a commodity, it ought to be traded in the marketplace like other commodities. So subsidies and controls of the student numbers that distort the market for higher education should be eliminated. The market for higher education should be freed up. In the way the markets for electricity and gas, telecommunications and financial services and blablabla, you know them all, have been freed up. Then free choice, by economically rational students and competition between universities for their custom, would (one of the most horrible phrases in this debate) drive up standards. "Drive up standards."

The kindest word for this is barbarism. The university should be and in the past has been a place where young people have learnt to think critically, to see themselves and the world in new ways, to grow. In helping students to develop in this way, universities have served public purposes. Defined by a conception of the public good that embraces the whole of society and not just people who happen to have been to university. It's the same as what's happening to public libraries; there is a big analogy, I think, between those two. They have belonged by definition to the public realm. First Browne and his colleagues on the review team, and then the coalition, have sought quite deliberately to change all this, to remove universities from the public domain and transfer them to the private domain. The univer-

sity is to become a kind of supermarket, satisfying individual wants. The very words “public good” have disappeared from the higher education policymaker’s lexicon.

Now, if the Browne review were an isolated example that would be bad enough, but it’s not, it’s part of a syndrome that goes back to the early 1980s. Michael Gove’s education policies and Andrew Lansley’s Health White Paper are examples of that syndrome. As of now, we don’t know what the full consequences will be. Most of us probably think they won’t be very nice, I certainly think they won’t be very nice, but we don’t know for sure. What matters is the social vision they encapsulate; at its heart, at the heart of that vision is the totemic term “choice”. Free choice by atomistic individuals, satisfying individual wants through market competition.

As the Lansley White paper puts it: “People want choice”, and do you know, Alan Milburn when he was defending his health policies used exactly the same words: “People want choice”, because we now live in a consumer age.

My next theme, a bit different but related as I hope you’ll see, is about the distribution of resources and life chances in our society. Britain, of course, has never been an egalitarian society. But in World War II, thanks to what is sometimes called war socialism, it was more egalitarian than ever before or since. Rationing, price controls, school subsidies, huge controls in direct taxation and, not least, full employment were responsible for this. The Labour Party was explicitly egalitarian; the Conservatives were not. But there wasn’t much change in income distribution in the post-war period. Now here I come to a horrible concept which, dare I confess it, I’m not sure I understand fully. It’s called the Gini Coefficient. Now I’m not a mathematician. Thank goodness my wife is. In fact she actually got a maths scholarship to go to university many years ago, so I can turn to her for advice. However, you don’t need to understand this to use it, as often the case with academic concepts. As I understand it, income equality or inequality is measured by this mysterious Gini Coefficient. Basically the higher the Coefficient the more unequal the society, the lower the Coefficient the more equal. If you had a Coefficient of 0 it would mean that the income was divided absolutely equally across the society; if you had a Coefficient

of 1 it would mean all the income went into one person’s pocket.

Now, I don’t have the figures for the Gini Coefficient before 1961 when the Coefficient was 0.26. It fell very slightly in the 1970s and by 1980 it was 0.25. But of course in the 1980s inequality rose markedly. By 1990 the Gini Coefficient was well over 0.3. Under Major it stabilised. Under New Labour it rose again, not as far or as fast as under Thatcher, but still significantly. By 2007–8 it was 0.36, much lower than the United States, but higher, much higher than all EU member states except Greece, Lithuania, Latvia, Portugal and Romania. And of EU member states, the UK was then 8th in the numbers living in poverty. Only Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Slovakia, Greece, Spain and Estonia had more. So the summary position is this; the UK has become more unequal in income distribution since the mid-80s and it’s more unequal now than it was when New Labour came to power. The trend towards greater inequality has continued irrespective of the party in power.

Secondly, the UK is an outlier in Europe, both on poverty and on income distribution. Only a fringe of countries on the periphery of the continent have more poverty. We have more poverty and more inequality than any country in what you might call heartland continental Europe. Now I want to make one point very clear. I’m not saying that this happened because evil New Labour ministers knowingly betrayed their egalitarian convictions. I don’t think that’s true at all. It happened, in my view, because they were dazzled by the fetish of economic growth and assumed that this turbo-capitalism was the only sure path towards it.

My last heading, the third of my three introductory headings – this is still my introduction, I must tell you [laughter] – is democracy. It’s often assumed that capitalism and democracy are natural bedfellows. That explains why the west approached the ex-Communist world after the fall of the Soviet Union in the way that it did. It was assumed that if capitalist market economies were installed in these countries, democracy would follow. But of course it’s not the case that capitalism always produces democracy or always goes hand in hand with democracy. You’ve just got to look at a shortlist of the capitalist countries. It’s not true of China, it wasn’t true of

Pinochet's Chile, it wasn't true of apartheid South Africa, and it's not true of Russia now. The fact is, I suggest, that capitalism and democracy are in tension with each other. The basic promise of democracy is equal citizenship: power accountable to all those affected by it. No one has the right to rule over others without their consent. But the basic reality of capitalism is patently one of unequal rewards, of power not being accountable. Exit there is, but voice there is not. And there is a built-in tendency for the inequalities generated by capitalism to spill over from the economy into the polity. Unequal resources for political competition undermine the promise for equal citizenship; and it's worth noting in passing that on some assumptions, notably those of Fredrich von Hayek and early opponents of democracy in this country like Lord Salisbury, the equality which political democracy brings to the political realm actually undermines the capitalist market economy because of the pressure for resource redistribution which results.

Now, this creates a dilemma, a very serious dilemma for capitalist societies. Because in the modern world at least, regimes have to look democratic in order to be legitimate. Maybe China is the one big exception but I'm not sure how long that will last, how long China will remain an exception. But that's by the way. So there's a dilemma. How can we reconcile the outward appearance of democracy with the inward reality of untamed capitalism? A very tough dilemma.

In the contemporary United Kingdom, the answer, I think, is what the Cambridge historian Stefan Collini has nicely described as market populism. Citizens become customers. Voting becomes shopping, politicians become salesmen of illusion, promising ever greater individual benefits that no one can deliver. Disembodied charismatic leaders float above a population of atomistic individuals and derive their legitimacy from their claim to have a direct line to the popular will. Thatcher and Blair were the prime examples and the fates of John Major and Gordon Brown, both honourable men, shows what happens to leaders who can't hack it in this rather unpleasant new world. Cameron's none too subtle recent appeal to Islamophobia makes it pretty clear he's learnt that lesson and he doesn't want to be a second Major or a second Brown.

So, I hope I've made your flesh creep; actually [laughter], the total picture is bleak. A partially crippled public domain, one of the least egalitarian societies in Europe, a debased version of democracy that makes a mockery of the ideal that democrats have espoused from the days of ancient Athens to modern Cairo. The virtual disappearance of the language of the public good. But I don't think gloom is unrelieved. I think that in contemporary Britain you can detect growth points of a better society and I shall turn to them in a moment.

But I want to utter a word of warning first. What I call turbo-capitalism or untamed capitalism has been legitimised by a passionately held moral vision. You might say immoral, but the people who hold it think it is a moral vision. According to this the unhindered, rationally calculated pursuit of individual self-interest in free competitive markets is not just economically efficient, but also morally right. Only if individuals are free to pursue their rationally chosen interests as they wish will they be moral beings. Collectivist interference would turn them, in Mrs Thatcher's frightening phrase, into "moral cripples". Now this vision was enormously powerful and enormously seductive. It bathed flagrant disparities of reward in the odour of sanctity. It told the ultra-rich that they were morally entitled to their riches and the aspirant middle and working classes that if they obeyed its precepts they too would be rich or at least richer. And, above all, it ran with the grain of a culture increasingly in awe of the holy trinity of choice, freedom and the individual in virtually every sphere of life from the most intimate to the most public.

It's time, I think, to dispel the cloud of unthinking reverence that has surrounded that holy trinity. Not all choices are equal. Freedom as a source of human flourishing is one thing, freedom to ignore the common good is quite another. The individual yes, but not as a bloodless abstraction detached from society and history. We can't go back, and I don't want to go back, to the highly structured, hierarchal and, in many ways, oppressive society that I grew up in, but I do think we should challenge the debased moral vision that permeates the culture of the 21st century.

The question is how. Now this is not a manifesto, I have no magic bullets to distribute.

But I offer two thoughts. First, I think that there are resources in our informal institutions and social movements on which we can build. London citizens are one striking example. The nationwide protests against the library closures are another. Compass itself, you'll be glad to hear, is a third. The burgeoning environmental movement is a fourth. These show, I think, that although the language of the common good barely figures in political discourse any longer, the notion itself is still alive.

And the second point I want to make is this: I think the same is true of our three main political traditions. Edmund Burke, often called the father of conservatism, thought society was what he called a partnership between the living, the dead and the unborn – implying an ethic of stewardship, rather closer, I think, to the Green Party today than to the big parties. And that challenges what I'm calling turbo-capitalism at its heart. John Stewart Mill, the prophet of social liberalism, is rightly seen as the champion of individual freedom, but the freedom that he prized was not freedom to accumulate or exploit. It was freedom to develop and grow through arduous practice in civil associations

and local bodies and in doing so to contribute to what he called the "worth" of society. The ethical socialists over 100 years ago espoused a vision of fellowship or fraternity rooted in the lived experience of the Labour movement and quite different from the statism and economism of the New Labour regime. In different ways I think that all of these point the way to what I would call a democratic republican politics of civic engagement, mutual learning and public reasoning.

In a marvellous book that has influenced me hugely – Not For Profit by the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum – she argues against instrumentalism in higher education. In doing so, she spotlights what I see as the moral foundations of such a politics. Democracy for her is not just head counting. It must be informed by "critical thinking", "daring imagination" and "empathetic understanding". It depends, she says, on "rich human relationships", on the ability to "see other people as human beings and not simply as objects". So here is another trinity, human rather than holy: imagination, empathy and critical thinking. The task for us is to make that trinity sing.

RESPONSES – ED MILIBAND

Introduction – Neal Lawson

He said it was going to be 32 minutes, and it was exactly 32 minutes. It's pretty good that I'm not a respondent to that because all I could say, if I was, is that I agree. So thankfully, we've got some people who are going to say a bit more than "We agree". The first person who's going to say something is Ed Miliband, who's now the leader of the Labour Party. Ed had a finely tuned win in the leadership election, but he received a huge majority of Compass members when they were balloted about who we should back. Ed says he wants to move beyond New Labour, and all the time he is doing that he will continue to have the support of Compass.

Response – Ed Miliband

Thank you, Neal. Let me start by just saying to David that as someone who's been reading about politics for about 25 years or so I've always been a huge admirer of yours and you're a great asset to our movement and I think again tonight you showed why that is the case. Nobody could accuse you of false optimism tonight, but I think it was an incredibly clear analysis and argument, even if I didn't agree with every single word of it.

Let me just make three points in response, I think the first thing to say is I fundamentally agree with the central argument that you are making in relation to the market. Which is that we are at a 30 year moment in relation to markets and it's a 30 year moment that maybe you'd date back to the 1970s and the crisis of the Labour government in the 1970s, which led to Mrs Thatcher, which then gave way to New Labour, and then the financial crisis of 2008. As a point of humility, I would say that I don't think anyone in politics has got to grips with the scale and the implications of what that crisis means and the way that crisis means we should think. One thing I want to say very clearly is: I do not think that we should be aspiring to go back to

business as usual, and in my third point I will say something about why I think that and what that means, but I don't think we can aspire simply to business as usual for many of the reasons that you so cogently set out.

So that's my first point. The second point I want to make is somewhat to take issue with you, not with that central argument, but I think with, if I may say so, a slightly undue pessimism. Now I don't consider myself as the biggest defender of the Labour Party of the last Labour government at all, but I think where I would take issue with you – and this is not because I want to defend the past but because I think it's important for the future and in a way should give us more cause for optimism – is, just to take one example, the NHS. In 1997 people were saying that a tax funded health service was simply not something that could be sustained in the modern world. That you know, look at it, it's a crisis service, it's always a crisis service, and every winter it's a crisis service. People die on health service waiting lists, and there is just no way that this can be sustained for the future, and there were all kinds of learned people saying, you know, you've got to pay for it directly, charges and all of that. Now the world has changed and I think what Andrew Lansley wants to do to the health service is terrible and we need to stand up to fight it as hard as we can, but there is a reason why David Cameron was saying between 2005 and 2010 "Look, I'm as big of a defender of the health service as the Labour government": things changed.

And now you as reasonable people can absolutely disagree about PFI and other things that happened in relation to our health service reforms, not all of which I personally agreed with. But my son, my second son was recently born in a new hospital in UCH, and nobody was talking about a crisis service, and the reason I mention that was not to say that everything was great and everything was fantastic, but to say that there is a reason for hope and actually we won a big argument in 2003 about the need to raise taxes for the health service and we were the only social democratic government in the last 20 years to do that. And you know the Conservatives go around saying "Look, you invested all this money when you were in government"; now I don't believe that was the cause of the financial crisis, it goes without saying, but it is true that we significantly

increased spending on the public realm. Now you don't like some of the things we did to the public realm, and I don't like them either, some of them. I think it is right to say that you need to have accountability in the public realm and it's right to say that some of the targets were right, but I also think we went too far and were strangled by a sort of audit and marketised culture. But I just want to make that second point very clear, because otherwise we are all going to go away from here thinking, well, we had 13 years of a Labour government and did we really achieve anything or did we go backwards? So I just wanted to say that.

Thirdly then, what is to be done? Which in a way is the most difficult question and I am glad I am running out of time! No, I'm joking; I'll say three things.

First of all, you've got to limit the market, you've got to reform the state and you've got to build a movement. And let me just say something about each of those. You've got to limit the market because what we learnt over 13 years is that simply having a redistributive welfare state is not enough to run up the down escalator of a vast inequality-producing global economy. You're absolutely right about that. And the interesting thing about the last Labour government is that inequality did go up, but not because it wasn't a redistributive government, it was a very redistributive government actually – I think by some reckoning the most since 1945 – but because inequality was growing so significantly at the bottom and at the top, the welfare state couldn't keep up. That's why you've got to have a vision for your politics which goes beyond, if I can put it this way, a Tony Crosland vision, which says you can essentially grow the economy and then have a redistributive state and everything will be OK. In a way we haven't moved on enough from him; that's why I'm pro living wage, that's why I'm pro action on high pay. Because actually what you learn is you can't just rely on the welfare state, you're putting too much pressure on the welfare state to create the kind of economy and society that you want. That's the first point.

Secondly, as David Marquand taught us, never forget reform of the state. Because if we believe that a centralised (I'm not saying you were making this argument) a centralised state in its current form is either going to convince people

or deliver, I think you're wrong. And I'm for a much more devolved, a much more localised, a much more transparent state, I think it is actually an area where we have not done enough work as a movement, so in a way the choice is between a privatised state, and a marketised state, and a state that is over-laden with targets and audit. And actually I think that we collectively have a big task to develop that alternative vision that has been talked about for a long time and think about what does that different kind of state, that more responsive state, look like.

Third thing, build a movement. I suppose this is one of the main things I learnt from our time in government: that pulling the levers can achieve something, but unless you have not just a Labour Party but a wider movement that supports your cause you will never succeed in progressive politics in Britain. The Conservatives have their newspapers and have their institutions, but we need much more of a movement than we have. That's why we have to open up our party, that's why we have to be willing to work with other parties and that's why we've got to in a way abandon some of the other old Labour, if I can use that phrase, habits of tribalism. Which is the argument of a progressive dilemma, because unless you recognise that you need a much broader development in your country then I don't think you're going to succeed. Let me just end on this point, which in a way does talk about libraries, which I think is more interesting. I think that what we are seeing this week in relation to the Big Society is the intellectual collapse of David Cameron's central idea. And I think you see it, it's that tipping point moment when the idea which he has spent five years nurturing has collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions. People are saying, "Oh well, it's all very well saying 'Go and visit in the local library', but if the library is shut it's going to be very hard to do that. You know, it's all very well saying 'Help people out with debt advice' but if the CAB is closed I'm not going to be able to do that either, and it's all very well saying 'Volunteer to help young kids' but if the Sure Start centres aren't there, I'm not going to be able to do that." I think that provides a big opportunity for us, not to say (Neal and I were discussing this earlier) that we're the party of the centralised state, but actually that we are

the party that believes in local communities and local communities making change themselves. And if we understand that, if we are going to be reformers of the state and build that movement

as well as being reformers and limiters of the market, then I think we can build the vision we need.

Thank you.

RESPONSES – CAROLINE LUCAS

Introduction – Neal Lawson

That is the reason why the vast majority of Compass members backed Ed Miliband to be the leader of the Labour Party, and they were right to do it. Thank you, Ed.

Caroline Lucas, who I agree with on practically everything, she just happens to be in a different party to me, but the important thing is that she believes in everything that I do and wants what I do, and that's the most important thing to me, and I'm delighted you're here, Caroline.

Response – Caroline Lucas

Thank you very much, and thank you for the opportunity to respond to this evening's debate. I thoroughly enjoyed your lecture, and I agreed with 99% of it; it was an impressive and incredibly honest analysis of the problems we face as a society. And for those of us who do care about the public realm it was also a daunting summary of what we have lost as well, I think. The private sector has largely divested itself of moral and social obligations to employees, to local communities or to wider society. And as you say, the pursuit of profit has itself taken on a moral dimension, so that business leaders or pension fund managers can not only betray their human responsibilities but actually see such betrayal as a duty, and even feel good about it. And the spread of that attitude to the public sector has had, I think, appalling consequences. Public services have, as you say, become commodities, citizens are treated as consumers and of course if you are defined as a consumer, if you don't have any spending power then you are a non-citizen as well. And yes, David, perhaps you're right, when you say that popular movements can help with the realignment that could start to win back our public realm. And certainly, as you and Ed have said, the public response to attempts to cut our libraries or to sell off our forests show how little support there is for the

direction that the government is trying to take this country in.

But the point that I would make is that popular movements on their own cannot do the job; they are a vital part of the solution but on their own they cannot do the job. There has to be action on a political level, both from leadership and to put that popular will into effect. So take public services; when you have all three political parties in the UK committed to the private delivery of public services, that denies a voice to those millions who believe in the ethos of public service, in the ability of the public services to do better than the private sector when they are given the chance to do so. David rightly points out the deadening effect of modern political marketing which means politics essentially offers three flavours of vanilla to a pretty bemused electorate. Politics, even political parties are at risk of becoming irrelevant, or worse, simply mechanisms for the advancement of a political elite. And that's why I think that part of the realignment that we seek must be a reinvigoration of politics, including comprehensive electoral reform, so that the will of the people has a genuine purchase on the decisions made by government. And I would disagree that there is no alternative to the neo-liberal world view. It's true that the public realm has been under attack for 30 years, first under a Conservative administration, then under New Labour, now under the new coalition, but those governments were not or are not fully representative of their members or their supporters or indeed of their philosophical traditions; as David has said, Marx and Burke both help explain our current predicament and the way we could respond. And similarly, while agreeing that no one school of thought can have all the answers, I would argue that the Green philosophy is uniquely relevant for our times. I would argue that it is, after all, a response to the very problems that weigh heavily on us particularly in the west, and I'm thinking of overconsumption, diminishing resources, alienation, rising inequality and I have to say I'm a bit surprised that the Green philosophy didn't feature more in your lecture, as I know it has done in other things that you have written. For a century or more progressive politics has sought to increase our national output with the thought that with a bigger overall cake to share out, even though the haves will be

expecting to receive a smaller percentage share of it, the amount they receive in actual terms continues to rise. And so as the economy grows, so the elites have been persuaded to give up just a little bit of their power, they've accepted just a little bit more taxation and redistribution, they've allowed political power to be spread out a little bit more thinly. But that approach has two consequences. First, it gives the illusion of great equality whilst actually it allows the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of the few as it was after 13 years of New Labour; we ended up with a country more unequal than when it came to power. And second, that prosperity itself is often built on rotten foundations. So I would argue that the uncomfortable truth is that the growth that has paid for our welfare state is built on the exploitation of our natural resources and the exploitation of people here and people around the world. So this approach cannot continue; we already exceed the capacity of our planet. Here in Britain we already consume three times more resources than the world can sustain. And when that whole approach is based on taking extra shares that come at the expense of the developing world and of future generations, I'd argue that often the pursuit of greater national wealth as a means to greater equality carries within it the seeds of its own failure. For throughout the years progressive politics, whether it's Labour or socialist or social democratic or liberal, I think has failed to grasp what it really means to under-

stand the essence of equality. We are all equal. And equality doesn't stop at the borders of the UK, nor does it stop with the present generation. I think true equality means seeing every human being on the planet as having an equal call on us, and those whose world we are destroying, those whose precious resources we are using up, whose species we are making extinct, whose seeds we are poisoning, whose beauty and tranquillity we are sacrificing, those in other words who are yet to be born, we owe them just as much as we owe those around us today.

And so in seeking to bring about the realignment of progressive politics I would lay down this challenge; if we believe in equity, and if we believe we have an equal responsibility to every citizen in the world and in future generations, then our realignment must be based on rejection of the traditional model of economic growth. And so I would say to David that there is a political party out there, albeit a small one, that does not want us to get back to business as usual, but sees that the economics of business as usual is precisely what has led us not only to economic destruction but also to environmental collapse.

And so, I'm not suggesting that we return to the Dark Ages but I do think that we need to explore how we live within our means and in doing so actually make for a better society than the one we have at the moment, a more equal society, a more just society and a more sustainable one.

RESPONSES – EVAN HARRIS

Introduction – Neal Lawson

Thank you so much, Caroline. The next speaker is Evan Harris. I always like Evan being on our platforms because he always reminds us that he's a social democrat who happens to be in the Liberal Democrat party and he always reminds us that his party is actually a democratic party (that's his speech probably, his contribution!) Evan was the MP for Oxford and Abingdon, he lost by 176 votes, to a Tory, what a shame that is, but he's still incredibly active in the party; he's the vice chair of the Federal Policy Commission and he's the leading light in the Social Liberal Forum and I'm really glad that you're here, Evan.

Response – Evan Harris

Thank you. And can I say Neal it's very good that you have an Oxford graduate here who didn't study PPE!

I studied medicine and, unlike with the Gini coefficient, I think you have to understand that to do it!

I'm a big fan of David, as he knows, and I can say that now without any suspicion of flattery as he's no longer a constituent. Merely by virtue of me departing rather than him. His book 'Decline of the Public' is a really useful document for aid in the arguments, debates or even "rows" within the Liberal Democrats that I had in the past with David Laws and now with others. And Neal's right, I always declare myself to be a social democrat. In fact the liberal democrats are now declaring themselves to be social democrats. Our national executive, in the strategy motion at our forthcoming conference, set out that we aspire to be twin believers - of liberalism and of social democracy. It was not too much of a fight to get that reference included, because it's very hard to identify nowadays within the liberal democrats the tribal bit of the old liberal party. I think that what you heard today was a plea for a social democratic society. And that's

what I hope realignment can do, renew the broad support for that plea. David said that we shouldn't be defining socialism merely as what Labour governments do, and I think that advice equally applies to all parties. In my own case we shouldn't allow liberalism or liberal democracy to be defined by what the party leader says it is.

Coming to the second point that Neal said I would make, party democracy is essential because we all need to have public debates which define our policies and our ideals, which cannot be denied and can not easily be "fixed" by the leader. So the Lib Dems will be deciding our way forward democratically and openly; and for example we will be stating what we think on health in March, and that what we say should be the way forward will be not necessarily be comfortable for our leader. I urge all parties that seek to realign to give power to their members, to members of this audience, members of the wider labour movement, of the wider social democratic and liberal movement. Perhaps this hasn't yet happened to Ed, or to Caroline (two party leaders here – gosh!) but the point is that party leaders gravitate towards the need to satisfy or appeal to funders, the need to appeal to the media in their message. It's understandable but there therefore needs to be those checks and balances in democratic policy-making.

I was struck by what David said - and this is a problem – in that we have to understand why there was a collapse caused by rampant capitalism but there wasn't a reaction away from centre right parties towards the left in Europe. Why there wasn't the political benefit that there could and should have been. It is probably more complex than just looking at the elections, but it's surprising that we're still having to work so hard to argue against the inexorable assumption that a free market always delivers and minimal regulation is good thing. The argument for taming the banking sector applies to other areas as well.

This is a social democratic society and I was pleased to hear this resonate throughout David's speech. It seems to me the role of government is to put equity in. I see three sorts of societal rules. One is the rule of law, and I hear from Caroline on Prisoner voting that that was just voted against in the House of Commons by 200 versus 20 something. Respect for our treaty obli-

gation on Human Rights was lost 200 to 20, what happened there?

The cause of the default, as David explained, is untamed markets. So my three rules for a social democratic society are the Rule of law, the Rule of equity and the Rule of freedom. Laissez fair may produce freedom that is not good enough to guarantee equity because it has to be proactively safeguarded by political parties in government. I would also add to these three rules, three further needs - the need for localism, democratic accountability and futurism (which is about the development of aid and environmentalism).

The one area where I would disagree with David is his remarks about capitalism and democracy being inconsistent, because I think having the freedom to consume and invest is a pre-requisite, though not sufficient in itself, for there to be democracy. It's very hard for there to be democracy that doesn't provide those freedoms. But that doesn't mean that it need be an untrammelled free market but there must be freedom to spend.

Now it was nice to be reminded of the record of the Labour Party, because I think it is unreasonable to blame all our current fiscal problems on the spending of the last government and I get frustrated and angry when I hear my party do that in government. I guess that's part of the need to defend oneself. But the biggest failure of Labour was the failure to tackle inequality despite what Ed quite rightly said was a relatively progressive approach if you look at in isolation what was done in terms of tax and benefits. And that failure in equality led to a failure in health equality as well.

What we have to guard against in a social democratic society is the combination of privatisation and marketisation. Each one, on its own, can be controlled. But joining them together in the public services leaves no space for equity. I can tell you, if you ask an individual patient who is in pain, who is the most important "consumer" in the whole health service, they will probably say it's them. Well if it's a man it will definitely

be them. They often wouldn't think about the needs of others and you see the same in parents choosing schools for their children. They often don't think when they have a choice, whether it's for a grammar school or a faith school for religion, about what effect that choice has on other people, whose choices may be limited. So fairness and equity is important to add in choice-based public services.

So my final point really, is the universities example, because David asked us to consider that. What Lord Browne did in his review is call for a free market. While I disagree with the Government's policies on tuition fees, where they differ from Browne is specifically where they try to take the market out. And you heard the announcement today about the efforts they are making to try and put equity and fairness in, in terms of access.

You cannot have a decent market even in I think private goods unless you have fairness in access to it. So even if you don't think it's purely for public good (or that there may be some merit in saying that a university education unlike schooling is optional and maybe something that we can promote as a private good), it's still got to be fair and accessible.

So my plea for the future is twofold. Firstly an end to the tribalism. I echo what others have said. And that does not mean people saying "join our party", but instead saying "make your own party have as much ideology and policy overlap". Secondly more critical thinking, because it's easier to deal with others - and realign with them - when you've got rationality at work as well as ideological and policy convergence. So let's have some critical thinking, let's have agreement on what are sensible measures of inequality, which we still don't have. That's the sort of cross party work that needs to be done. And my new undertaking which is a Campaign for evidence-based policy is really hoping to work across parties to try and agree rational metrics against which we can all measure the policy commitments that will help build a social democracy society again.

RESPONSES – FRANCESCA KLUG

Introduction – Neal Lawson

David's saying we all agree, but that's not such a bad thing. I think Francesca Klug will agree with lots of this as well. Francesca is director of the Human Rights Futures Project at the LSE. More importantly than that, she's one of the few leading academics that understands the left and the state and she knows that the state is a good thing when it provides Sure Start and it's a bad thing when it's a policeman spraying CS gas in the face of an UK Uncut protestor.

Response – Francesca Klug

Thank you.

This is a bit like speed dating, not that I have ever tried speed dating! Now you started with an academic and I'm afraid you're going to end with an academic, but don't go to sleep yet. What I take as the most powerful idea from your marvellous lecture, David, is a kind of counter-materialism. Despite your praise for Marx's prescience about our current predicament, the counter-materialism is in the sense that we need to rescue the social vision of the public good from the stampeding herds let loose by voracious, untamed capitalism (as you brilliantly put it). But also counter-materialism in this sense: in the sense that there needs to be a "realignment of the mind" before there can be a true realignment of politics. In other words, to reverse the famous Marxist maxim, the point is not simply to change the world but imagine a better world first. How right you are, David, to say that there are so many giants to turn to, to help us. I would add to your list Tom Paine, who actually understood that the rights of man, properly expressed, is not an excuse for rampant individualism but actually a root to an ethical society; Weber, with his warnings against the dead weight of bureaucracy; and Orwell. Now, I don't know about you but I don't know what I would have done over the last 10–13 years without Orwell and it's not over

yet, is it, it's still happening. We were told last week curfews have been abolished and replaced by overnight residence requirements. I fear their ghosts would turn white if these giants came back today and saw how little their endeavours have helped us make progress. Which is of course what progressives are meant to want to do, make progress. As Neal Lawson said in a recent blog this week, "What's the point of politics if it doesn't put right the big things that are wrong with our world?"

And that brings me neatly to the Big Society versus the Good Society debate. I don't listen every week but I happened to catch Prime Minister's questions on Wednesday, and David Cameron was explaining what the Big Society is, and he said it involved three elements as I heard it: devolving power, localising public services and encouraging volunteering and philanthropy. Now, I think, and I suspect most of you do, that this is absolutely fine as a means of enhancing participation and innovation. And there's no question in my mind that David Cameron struck a chord when he said before the election that there is such a thing as society, it's just not the same as the state. Well, let's face it, by the time New Labour left office they had managed the feat of uniting small state libertarians with social liberals with democratic socialists-it's not easy-in a cacophony of groans about micromanagement, central diktats and, at New Labour's worst, authoritarian high-handedness. Anyway, what hit me when listening to David Cameron on Wednesday was not only the Orwellian nature of what he was saying as we watch big cuts shrink the network of community-based networks already flourishing, but that the Big Society is fundamentally about means not ends. It doesn't tell us much about our destination, does it? It doesn't tell us what is the vision of the public good that it adds up to.

The Good Society, on the other hand- Neal, you'll be pleased to hear- in my view is primarily about ends. It's about the kind of world we want to imagine. Now many of us in this room, and I'm being very presumptuous here, may agree that a Good Society would be one where the dreams and optimism of youth are not crushed by middle-aged managerialism; where price competitiveness and productivity do not snuff out the ethos of public service, of mutual concern. Where

caring and loving are valued as much as success and achievement, indeed they are indicators of success and achievement. Where pluralism and diversity -and even downright eccentricity - are respected as we build common bonds and share common values and where standing for the many, not the few, does not become a byword for populism, in which focus groups trump universal human rights. Can't think what I'm alluding to there! Now to achieve this Good Society many of us who identify as progressives believe it must be more equal than it is now, and that state action must be aimed at unleashing people's passion for innovation and enterprise, and not deaden the human spirit with the weight of beauracracy and central control. If democracy, as David was suggesting, is the key tool to reach this vision of a Good Society, or at least a better society as you put it(perhaps a bit more realistically), then it has to be a democracy, as you said, that's more than head-counting or a vote every five years. I think we all agree on that! But whilst we debate what local and participatory processes are necessary to achieve this, a new form of largely youth-driven networking and engaged democracy is opening up before our very eyes. One that appears immune to hermetically sealed ideologies and doesn't need formal structure to bring it to life. It's facilitated by ever expanding new tech-

nology, but it's not explained entirely by it. It's not focused on parties, leaders or elections, but on building a sustainable future. It's apparently now got a name, I've read. Horizontalism! I have to say this has an altogether different connotation from when I was young [laughter] but nevertheless young people here, in Europe, in the Middle East, in fact all over the world are now doing it for themselves. It would be a shame to miss this phenomenon, maybe this is the basis of your new movement, (Ed - we're all horizontalists now) - but we mustn't get carried away. Those of us who are old enough must also remember the tyranny of structurelessness; that insight from 1970s feminism. We understand that effective democracies, even do-it-yourself democracies, also need political leadership. So to conclude: what do we progressives need from our political leaders? We want them to reclaim what David called the moral foundations of politics. We want our leaders to win elections, yes, to keep the economy on track, yes (we don't ask for much), but above all we are crying out for ethical leadership, ethical in substance, ethical in style, ethical in tone. And we don't just want our leaders to conjure up a better world; we want them to inspire us to be our better selves. Ethical leadership combined with a new horizontal democracy? Now that would be a realignment to blow the mind!

QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Introduction – Neal Lawson

You get real quality when you come to a Compass gig. We've got to finish at eight, we'll take a few questions and then we'll take quick responses back in this order, and then we'll give David the privilege of coming up with the final comment. So:

Response – Audience

1. I was very interested what you were saying, Caroline, about the fact that three main parties are all committed to privatisation and marketisation, and I really wondered, Evan, if you would say something about that and also David, in terms of if we're actually going to see a change in our society, I feel that there is not enough talked about the whole idea of cooperation in terms of delivering and providing services and I wondered if that is somewhere where the alignment of the parties could actually take place.
2. There's an incubus on our unequal society, it's the monarchy in the aristocratic privilege. Now as far as the Big Society goes, David Cameron said we are all going to celebrate a royal wedding, please will you at the front, please could you say we're not all celebrating, we think its celebrating privilege. People in Egypt are getting rid of Mubarak this evening, when can we elect our head of state?
3. Early on in your speech you alluded to the fact that no one political tradition has a monopoly on wisdom or truth; I agree. As you may or may not know, Compass at the moment is balancing its members on opening up its membership to give full and equal rights to individuals ineligible to be members of the Labour Party. What are your views on this and can this be the starting point of a new progressive alliance?
4. Can I ask Ed Miliband is he really going to go away and seriously consider a realignment of the mind and open up a serious conversation with the people of this country about building a Good Society, and is he going to explain to people the massive, massive power of the very wealthy and the hold they have on our political system, which if he got in to power he would have to fight against, it is so endemic, the power of these people; is he really going to try and change the minds of the people in this country to show them what really goes on?
5. Sorry, I just wanted to raise the spectre of the Third Way, because I just rather wonder whether or not we're still feeling around for this Third Way and maybe we'll have to accept that in order to get to this better society we'll have to adjust our own attitude to materialism individually, not just the super-rich and royalty and such like. And so might it actually be part of making the case to the British public now that we let go of our obsession with being a very competitive international economy, we let go of our own consumption targets, and if that is implicit in any move towards a better society is that an argument we can win with the British public?

ANSWERS

Introduction – Neal Lawson

Good stuff; OK, five fantastic questions. So let's run back this way: Francesca, thank you.

Response –Francesca Klug

Yep, extremely quick, back to front, personal consumption – I gave it away, I was a 70s feminist, and we used to talk about the personal ispolitical. What inspires me about the kind of movement that I was describing, for all that I think it is dangerous without good leadership, is that I think it is about people questioning their *own* behaviour, their *own* attitudes, what *they* want to do to make a better world; without that there is no hope.

Realignment of the mind, well, we've just got to make sure he does do that; it's down to all of us. It's a continuation of the same point. It's not down to one leader, one person, it's down to all of us to influence this, if I may say so.

New progressive alliance, absolutely, I voted for that.

And finally the royal wedding, I can't resist a party myself, I can't be sour-faced about anybody's wedding; however we could take a lesson from Egypt, we could all go down to Parliament Square in all our finery, wedding dresses and everything and make our point!

Response –Evan Harris

On the Compass question: I would find it strange, given what Compass stands for, if it decided it was not going to be an open place where there would be equal rights for those subscribed to the views of people not in the Labour Party. I think just at the moment, it's really hard to argue that the Labour Party is or should be the sole resting place for people with progressive views on a whole range of issues, whether it be the environment or economic issues or civil liberties. There are two things that we haven't dealt with around that question, and the first is

where capitalism does conflict with democracy and that is the foul, polluting influence of big money in politics. And it's a prerequisite that we have to get rid of big money out of politics and that's part of the political reform that we need to see; and parties that get into power with funding have an automatic resistance to getting rid of that funding, and parties that attract more funding in opposition because they were more popular relatively than when they were in government also find it difficult, but that's essential. But, the second point: if we have electoral reform even the modest form that's on offer, and I hope Ed will share a platform with anyone who shares a commitment in that respect – then I think we really have to, there's a real challenge to align manifestos. I want the Liberal Democrats at the next election to be saying, if the economy and deficit is tackled, we want to reinvest in public services, reinvest in poor areas, and not argue that a smaller state is good; and that will be our test and if we do that it will put us in a position to work with other parties that share that view after the election, and we can do that ourselves because, as I maintain, we are a social democratic party.

And finally, I think there are enough challenges about unfairness without concentrating on the royal family. I have my views but I would urge us to concentrate on the real unfairnesses that exist out there.

Response –Caroline Lucas

Ok, I've got to try and read my writing, which is a challenge.

First question was less aimed at me, but it was about the privatisation of public services and I certainly agree with that; I think we need far more different kinds of ownership models around different co-ops and mutuals and all of that, and that ought to be taking a far greater role in our political agenda, I think.

On the monarchy, the Green Party is a republican party and we don't think it's right that the monarch has a constitutional role, but I have some sympathy with Evan's point as well in that there are a lot of other big wealthy people out there that we ought to be focusing on and one of the things, as well as the state funding for

political parties that's been talked about, would be about breaking up the power of the media, these massive monopolies of the media that have so much hold over us.

Opening up Compass, yes again, I agree, I very much hope Compass can be the sort of microcosm of the political society it would like to see, so I would very much hope that the vote goes in that direction.

The last thing I want to talk about is that, well, I have to say I'm a little bit disappointed that the one thing we haven't talked about more is the environmental crisis. I have this real sense that we are sleepwalking towards a disaster and in an audience like this, not to have talked about it more, I find it really, really strange. I mean, I just feel like we're all in this other world, and actually the planet is burning, and maybe I've just spent too long talking to climate scientists but actually there is this very, very real crisis out there. A friend of mine was telling this story, a true story, about this little girl in Indonesia when the tsunami was coming and she'd just been taught about what a tsunami looked like, she knew how to recognise the movement of the sea when a tsunami was coming, and she was aged eight, and she was running up and down the beach and she was trying to persuade her parents and everyone else on the beach that a tsunami was coming and they just thought "silly", reading their papers and so on, but I feel like that little girl running up and down the beach.

And in terms of answering the last question, yes, of course parts of it are about changing our own behaviour, absolutely, but it is much more than that. It's about government putting in policy frameworks that enable all of us to move our habits fast enough, because the issue about the environmental agenda is massively urgent and that kind of changes the dynamics around it in a sense. It really is about what we do in the next 5-10 years that will make the difference, I believe; about whether or not we have a fighting chance of preventing the worst of climate change or whether we don't, and that seems to me to be a bit of an organising principle that I wish we'd spent a bit more time talking about. It is deeply related to the social justice agenda to which I am very committed, because if we're not going to get prosperity by more and more economic growth, then we're going to get prosperity through more a

more radical redistribution. There is a wonderful match between those two sets of ideas, and that's where I think the realignment should be, because tackling the climate crisis, the environmental crisis, the social justice crisis, it's not that we don't know what to do, it's about that political will. And the real question is whether we're going to go down as a species that spent all its time monitoring its own extinction or whether we're going to hurry up, take some steps and try to avoid it.

Response –Ed Miliband

Well, what a nice bunch of questions. On Compass, now I think that the way that the people who are running Compass have positioned it, and I think this is actually a really important function, is as a place where people on the centre-left come together, not just Labour people. And therefore I'm completely relaxed about the idea that Compass would open up to members of other political parties because I think that given the scale of the political challenge that we face (you know I want people to vote for Labour; don't get me wrong), but I understand the importance of respecting other political traditions and I've talked in the past about the liberal tradition, now I personally think that the current leadership of the Liberal Democrat party is totally betraying that tradition. And I think those traditions are important, and yes, the green tradition as well.

Just on AV because Evan raised AV – Evan, I will share a platform on AV with anyone I think can win votes for AV on the referendum. But I do say that I think this is going to be a hard referendum to win, and I think it will be harder if certain people are at the front of this campaign and I think that is obvious.

The second point I want to make is on the challenge around consumption, and is in a way related to what Caroline said, and this is where she and I have slightly different thoughts and I have slightly different thoughts from the questioner. The challenge is to have low carbon economic growth, not to be for a policy of no growth. I honestly tell you we won't persuade people to come with us on the environmental agenda if our idea is to say there will be no growth on the

economy. Because it is so much easier to say that you can raise people's living standards at a time when your economy is growing/not growing. And actually to echo something Caroline said in another context, we have the tools for low carbon economic growth, we have many, many tools; it just requires political will to put them into effect, and I am with Caroline about the urgency of this, as you all gather from what I did in government and the centrality of this.

On the monarchy: look, if you want to celebrate the royal wedding you can; if you don't then you

don't have to; that is the benefit of living in a free society.

I will be going to the royal wedding actually, so I will be celebrating it.

The last thing I will just say if I can, I just want to mention somebody who's our chair this evening and that's Neal Lawson. Because I think Compass is doing an absolutely fantastic job both at holding people like me to account, but also as a place where incredibly important issues for the future are discussed. So Neal, more power to your elbow and all the people you have with you.

FINAL COMMENT

David Marquand

Thank you, sorry, well I'm really quite discom-bobulated, this has been such a wonderful evening for me; I feel that, in a way, I have recharged my failing batteries and rediscovered my idealism. Thanks to this wonderful audience and the marvellous commentators on what I said. I'm really, sort of, almost drunk with pleasure and more than just personal pleasure but the feeling that we are actually together, we are actually moving in some morally right and perhaps also practical direction. I want to make just one or two comments on what people have said.

I'm sorry, Caroline, I should have said more about the environmental crisis; there are bits and pieces in my notes, but I missed them out because I couldn't find them when I was looking for them – it's not a very respectable reason but anyway! No of course, you're right, of course, and actually I don't think that there is a contradiction between what you said and what Ed said about growth. I spent nearly the whole of my lecture attacking the fetish of economic growth at all costs, and the belief that economic growth can only come from this particular dangerous, sick form of capitalism. But I also think, I find it very, very hard indeed to conceive of a society or economy where there was no growth at all, merely because people change,

new things are developed. So I don't think there is a conflict between those two points of view. But the thing that I really wanted to say, yes, one small point first, I absolutely think that Compass should open up. The more open it is, the better, obviously – it is a tremendous thing you've done, Neal, a tremendous thing, and the time has certainly come to incorporate a wider cross section of people in it.

And I think that relates to the main thing I wanted to say, which was that I was really pleased, thrilled, by what Ed said, the last of his points I think it was: a movement. I think this is right. I think that perhaps we ought to take be able to take a leaf out of Obama's book – when he was a candidate, I mean he's been a bit of a disappointment since, but still, he did manage to create a popular movement and become the figurehead and the symbol and also the architect of this movement, and all these young people – what Francesca was talking about, these horizontal people with their Twitters and all that stuff I don't understand, that is necessary to it. But the main thing that really heartened me this evening was Ed saying that he wants to lead – I think that was what he was saying, I hope he was, he should anyway – a movement, a movement and not just a party, and I think maybe this gathering tonight could be seen as perhaps the first step towards a movement.

So thank you very much for all being so nice to me, much nicer than I deserve, and I'm drunk with pleasure.

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