



A co-operative agenda for a fourth term



the co-operative party

 **Labour**
and Co-operative

A co-operative agenda for a fourth term



Now more than ever is a time when the ideas and values of the Co-operative Party can flourish. As we prepare for the next election, I am keen that we draw on the enduring values that the Co-operative movement represents - and for which Labour's sister party, the Co-operative Party, has stood for since its foundation in 1917.

Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, Leader of the Labour Party

Our economy and our society have undergone profound and unprecedented change in recent times. The major institutions of our financial system have been found wanting, at a great cost to us all. There is a feeling across the public and the private sector that large organisations that affect our lives are not being run in our interests.

This manifesto seeks to directly address this. Across the economy, the public sector and society we are looking to build institutions that demonstrably serve our collective needs as people rather than, as has happened too often, our lives and circumstances being altered by bodies over which we have too little control.

This manifesto and the radical ideas in it offers us a unique and historic opportunity to fulfil the promise of the co-operative movement – to put the values of co-operation and mutuality at the heart of public policy; to ensure the election of sufficient numbers of co-operators to Parliament to put those values into practice; and to see off the threat of a Conservative Party that pretends to be the friends of co-operation but would betray it as easily and as readily as it has on every single occasion it has seized power.

We cannot let that happen. If the credit crunch has taught us anything it is that the way to a prosperous and progressive future lay in involving people in the institutions that run their lives and in ensuring that the values of those institutions reflect an approach that puts people before profit and never loses sight of the principles on which the co-operative movement was founded.

Please support this manifesto and our team of candidates who promote it at this general election.

Gareth Thomas MP
Chair of the Co-operative Party



The mutual moment



This is the moment for mutualism: a new relationship between the institutions of government and the people they serve, trusting people to exercise greater control over the services they use.

Tessa Jowell MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office

As we seek to rebuild the economy there has never been a time in which the co-operative and mutual ideal has been more important. We need to pioneer a new way of doing business that will underpin the long term stability of this country's economy and ensure that all, not just the few, will be able to share in its rewards.

Perhaps the most important thing the financial crisis has taught us is that in the modern world, no country is able to solve all of its problems on its own. As we face the greatest challenge to the world economy in modern times, the looming catastrophe of climate change and the continued emergency of global poverty; co-operation between nations has never been more important.

We also need to find new ways to rebuild faith in our political system and democratic legitimacy. This requires us to find new way to increase participation and devolve power within our society. Local communities must be given the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives through partnerships with government.

From foundation trust hospitals to co-operative trust schools, we are already seeing the benefits that new mutual organisations are bringing to public services. These can provide the efficiency gains of the private sector whilst providing real democratic accountability, giving users, employees and other stakeholders a real say in how their organisations are run. If we are serious about creating a new politics, then giving ordinary people real power over the services that they rely on is the best way to do it.

This manifesto is also about fostering a new 21st century collectivism. Whether it's a question of people saving their football club, their local post office or even the planet, co-operative and mutual organisations can provide a means through which people can collectively meet their aspirations and help change behaviour for the better.

For over ninety years, the Co-operative Party has stood for giving economic and political power to everyone in our society. Co-operative values and principles are truly an idea whose time has come back. The time for action is now.

There has never been a time in which the co-operative ideal has been more important as we seek to rebuild the economy. The banks have failed, confidence is low, and the recovery is still underway. We can be rightly proud of the action our Labour Government has taken to prevent us suffering from the worst of the global recession but need more to ensure a return to a stable economy.

For 150 years, the co-operative movement has been on the side of ordinary families. The original co-operative and mutual societies were formed as to help ordinary people to get good quality food at a fair price, purchase their own homes and insure themselves against unemployment. They were designed to provide mutual self-help for their members, rather than create wealth for investors. This is still their core purpose today.

We need to pioneer a new way of doing business: an approach that will underpin the long term stability of this country's economy, and ensure that all people, not just the few, will be able to share in its rewards. As the failings of the market have led us into recession, we are starting to see a renaissance of mutual organisations, who are continuing to extend market share and deliver profits, putting people rather than shareholders at the centre of their operations.

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The Co-operative Party will campaign for:

- **Remutualising the failed banks** – Mutual ownership is the best solution for ensuring a stable long-term future for these companies and ensuring that the risk taken by taxpayers will deliver for consumers in the long term.
- **Access to finance** – Credit unions lead the way in providing services to many citizens who are often excluded from mainstream banking. We will continue to assist them to ensure that they are strong and sustainable.
- **A new settlement between banks and society** – Given the unprecedented support our financial institutions have received in the last year, it is vital they recognise the obligation of their responsibility to society. We will campaign for the introduction of a Financial Inclusion Act, which will ensure that banks have to serve every part of the community equally.
- **Support for co-operative and mutual enterprise** – We will assist co-operative and social enterprise business structures, and the creation of new mutual and employee-owned businesses.
- **An economy in all of our interests** – By reconnecting our firms with their stakeholders and society, we'll work to transform the way business is done.

Changing the way we do **business**



The credit crunch has shown that there has never been a more important time for the values the Co-operative Party stands for - a strong mutual sector that puts people before profit.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP, Exchequer Secretary

A new international settlement



The international leadership that Britain has shown over the last decade would not have happened without the efforts of people of conscience and concern who drive the co-operative movement.

Douglas Alexander MP, International Development Secretary

Perhaps the most important thing the financial crisis has taught us is that no country is able to solve all of its problems on its own. As we face the greatest challenge to the world economy in modern times, the looming catastrophe of climate change and the continued emergency of global poverty, co-operation between nations has never been more important.

The G20 agreements reached constitute a global plan for recovery on an unprecedented scale. Commitments have been made to strengthening our global financial institutions, promoting global trade and mitigating the impact on the world's poorest countries.

We should not simply try to get back to the way things were before. Global co-operation is essential to creating a new world economy - designed to provide for all our long term interests, rather than short term gains for a few.

The Co-operative Party will campaign for:

- **An International Transaction (Robin Hood) Tax** – To help ensure our future economic stability, and ensure that banks pay the full cost of their bailout, we will campaign for the global introduction of taxes on capital transfers in the international stock, credit derivative and currency markets.
- **Protecting the future of our planet** – We will continue to campaign for a comprehensive climate deal at the Mexico Summit, that will radically cut global emissions and provide the support needed by poor countries that are already struggling to cope with a changing climate
- **Tackling Global Poverty** – Co-operatives put people at the centre of development, giving communities the power to bring themselves out of poverty. We will campaign for the creation of a co-operative agency for international development, which will build capacity for co-operatives across the globe.
- **Fair Trade** – through assisting fair trade producers to own an increasing proportion of their supply chain, we can allow primary producers to capture more profits and allow some of the world's poorest farmers to collectively own sophisticated international businesses.
- **Trade Justice** – we will work with governments to replace free trade with just and equitable trade. We will seek to ensure that fair trade rules and development concerns are central to a global trade deal.

Creating sustainable communities



Co-ops are showing what can be done: from local farmer's markets to community wind farms. We should have faith in the ability of people to come together to address the problems in our society.

Ed Miliband MP, Climate Change Secretary

Government cannot build sustainable communities alone.

Doing so requires trusting people to make decisions over the services that they use, as well as the control of public services.

From tackling climate change to building new affordable homes, co-operative and mutual organisations can deliver new and radical changes to the society in which we live. The role of the co-operative sector is crucial as we seek to move to a more sustainable society.

The Co-operative Party will campaign for:

- **Transferring power to communities** through community-based and new mutual organisations running local services, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, engaging young people and regenerating run-down neighbourhoods.
- **Tackling climate change and bringing down the cost of energy.** Our 'Collective Power' model allows people to come together to save money and help tackle climate change through purchasing their power collectively.
- **Delivering high-quality affordable housing** through our 'New Foundations' model - a new form of intermediate home ownership that can ensure families have access to a decent home they can afford.
- **Establish a 'community right to try'** to end the decline in rural services. With pubs and shops closing at a faster rate than ever before, a 'right to try' would give them the option of a community social enterprise and time to consider taking over a service.
- **Tackling crime and disorder** through local crime-fighting partnerships. Introducing a broad-based and open membership to these bodies can drive further reduction of the level of crime within our communities.
- **Promoting better public transport** and sustainable travel with our 'People's Rail' campaign. This would give the British public real power over Network Rail. We believe the Government should also create a new mutual provider of train services as a public sector comparator to the other train operating companies.
- **Reforming the important institutions in culture and sport** to ensure they put the needs and interests of their fans and enthusiasts first. We believe that by giving ordinary people a say over the way that organisations like the BBC are run is the best way to ensure this occurs.

Public ownership does not have to mean top-down management from Whitehall or town halls. Communities must be given the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives in partnership with government.

We believe that co-operative models offer the best model for the reform of public service delivery. These provide the efficiency gains of the private sector whilst providing real democratic accountability, giving users, employees and other stakeholders a real say in how organisations are run.

This way the quality of service is not dependent on producer interests or the whims of market forces, but on frontline expertise and the needs of the people they serve. Public assets are locked into community ownership, providing further protection against privatisation and asset stripping.

Government can continue to improve public services through involving staff, users and local communities in the delivery of those services.

The Co-operative Party will campaign for:

- **Make healthcare mutual** – Through the greater involvement of staff, users and local communities, it has already been demonstrated that we can not only strengthen citizenship, but also build services based on the frontline experience of staff as well as the needs of the people that they serve. We will continue to campaign for all hospitals to become NHS Foundation Trusts, and for the extension of community foundation trusts and community owned social enterprises in primary care.
- **Transform social care** – By coming together collectively, direct payments and individual budget recipients can improve the quantity and quality of services and ensure a decent working environment for carers. We will work to ensure that there is a direct payments mutual in every local community.
- **Bring co-operative values into education** – Co-operative trust schools provide everyone with a stake in a school's success – parents, teachers and staff, local community organisations and even pupils – the opportunity to be involved in running it.
- **Sure Start Mutuels** – By giving communities ownership over Sure Start Children's Centres, we can do more to help centres deliver to all those in need of their services, particularly 'hard to reach' groups.
- **The BBC** – With huge sums of money spent annually on services, the public deserves to have more of a say in the package of programs and services that are delivered. For the BBC to become truly accountable, all TV license holders should be given a real say over how the BBC Trust is run.

Developing people-based public services



More schools are working together with parents and communities actively involved, putting power in the hands of those directly engaged with local schools and who know best what is needed in their area.

Ed Balls MP, Secretary of State for Children, Schools & Families

Winning with Labour in 2010



This election is the most important in the Co-operative Party's history. We have a historically high number of candidates and we need them all elected so we can finish the job Labour has started in bringing about crucial changes for our movement.

Michael Stephenson, Co-operative Party General Secretary



This election is a choice between a Labour Government, working with its sister party the Co-operative Party, that continues to deliver on the real reforms it has provided to the co-operative movement for decades or a Conservative Party that claims to support the mutual sector but has neither the plans or the values to make it happen.

Labour's track record is built on real achievement – a complete review of legislation which has put co-operatives and mutuals on a level playing field with other types of business, 126 NHS Foundation Trusts with more than 1.5 million members, more than 30 co-operative trust schools with 200 planned by the end of 2010, and the establishment of Supporters' Direct, giving more than 120,000 supporters at more than 160 clubs an opportunity to have a say in how their club is run.

In government the Tories have been a disaster for the co-operative movement. They abolished the Co-operative Development Agency and legislated to de-mutualise our building societies, contributing directly to the worst economic crisis for more than 60 years.

Labour delivers for co-operatives because it shares the values of the Co-operative Party. That difference has never been more important than it is in this election campaign.

How you can help deliver a Labour and Co-operative win in 2010

We need your help to get our great team of Co-operative Party candidates into Parliament, part of a historic fourth term of a Labour government.

Here's how you can help:

- Head for your local key seat. Help is needed with leafleting, knocking on doors and talking to voters.
- Telephone voters in any of our seats by using the Virtual Phone Bank, available via <http://members.labour.org.uk>. Unite members can use a similar system on the union's website.
- Donate - please send your cheques to the Co-operative Party, 77 Weston Street, London SE1 3SD

Best wishes too to our hundreds of candidates for local councils around the country, working to deliver co-operative policies at local level.

To join the Co-operative Party,
visit www.party.coop or
phone 020 7367 4150.

