

TO WHAT EXTENT IS BLUE  
LABOUR A COHERENT  
CAMPAIGNING GROUP?

Arthur Aitchison

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## Appendix

Below is the question I raised with each Interviewee conducted over a one-year period whilst writing this thesis.

- Why are religious traditions important to Blue Labour?
- How did Blue Labour become part of your life?
- Why do Blue Labour criticise New Labour?
- How did Blue Labour come to existence? (Question for Glasman)
- How does the academic work you have written compliment your output within Blue Labour?
- Blue Labour seems to have slowed down its outputs, particularly within conferences and events, will this change? Can Blue Labour make a ‘come back’?
- Why does Blue Labour adopt the term ‘radical tradition’? what does that mean to you?
- What are your views on the current ‘culture war’ climate? Does Blue Labour have a stance on this?
- Is Blue Labour the answer to the Labour Party’s current disconnect with the ‘Northern heartland’?
- How does your role as MP aide or hinder your role within Blue Labour? (question for Cruddas)
- What are your views on Globalisation?
- Does Blue Labour have a unified economic stance?

## Abstract

This thesis will analyse the coherence of Blue Labour as a campaigning group, focusing on what I deem to be the five most important subjects for discussion. What this thesis found was that although Blue Labour is, in several aspects, not coherent in their campaigning, they are in fact a vital part of maintaining the Labour Party's connection to those northern 'red wall' communities which the Party holds so dear. My analyse of Blue Labour is assessed through the theoretical framework of Michael Freeden as well as through an Interpretivist approach argument that ideology is not static and can adapt and change over time.

## Introduction

This thesis will be assessing the coherence of campaigning group Blue Labour, a faction of the Labour Party within the United Kingdom. Blue Labour was founded in 2009 by Labour Peer and academic Maurice Glasman as a reaction to the shift in ideology within the Labour Party, from what we could argue as the 'old left' to a new modern interpretation of the Labour Party called New Labour. In the thirteen years since their inception, Blue Labour has been surrounded in controversy by both those within the Labour Party and outside it. During the 2015 General Election Maurice Glasman was appointed as an advisor to the then leader of the Labour Party Ed Miliband which subsequently put more eyes on to the Blue Labour campaign group which led to a series of negative articles and essays about both Glasman and those associated with Blue Labour. I have been a member of the Labour Party now for nearly ten years and my interest in both Labour history and the electability of the Labour Party. Last year, for my undergraduate dissertation, I focused on the decline of the Labour Party's electability from 2010-2019 and now, in 2022, focusing on the Labour Party's traditional campaigning group seemed an appropriate challenge for me. Yet, in the wider academic discussion, outside of the key Blue Labour writers I have identified, to my knowledge, there has not been a long from academic thesis discussing important aspect of Blue Labour's philosophy. My thesis tackles, in my opinion, the five most important subject when analysing Blue Labour; Its thinkers, their economic stance, their religious beliefs and/or values, their position on New Labour and finally their cultural values. Writing about these five key subjects has been the successful way to analyse the coherence of Blue Labour and their position within the Labour Party dynamic. My view is that Blue Labour lack coherence throughout these five subjects and the connected beliefs between Glasman, Rutherford, Stears and Cruddas is mixed. But the importance of Blue Labour in relation to the dynamic of the

Labour Party as a whole is vital and something I have threaded through this entire thesis. The justification for each of the chapters comes down to who I have deemed, with the support of my supervisors, what is important to the Blue Labour conversation as well as what I knew each interviewee is interested in through my initial proposal research.

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## Methodology and Theoretical Framework

For this thesis I have taken a qualitative approach relying on both primary and secondary literature as well as conducting my own set of in-depth interviews on several of the key writers which are closely associated with Blue Labour. The thesis will also be taking a strong thematic analysis approach I understood that before going into this project that Blue Labour had a limited amount of literature about them and what was written about them was overwhelming negative, I wanted to give both sides of the argument a chance to express their beliefs as well as discussing my own analysis of each opinion. The Interviews I have conducted include Maurice Glasman, Jonathan Rutherford, Adrian Pabst and Jon Cruddas.

The instruments I used to conduct these interviews was mostly the video communications app Zoom as well as also contacting John Milbank via email and Tobias Phillips via facetime however, due to a technical issue, this interview was unusable. Each participant received roughly the same questions focusing on each one of my chapters (the economy, religious traditions, New Labour etc). outside of my own original research I primarily used the literature that was made available to me, specifically the two key books on Blue Labour. The first book being *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of*

*Paradox* and the second being *Blue Labour; Forging New Politics*. Both these books contained multiple essays from both the key writers of Blue Labour and several associates of them including Tom Watson and Stuart White. Throughout my interviews I aired with side of caution. On a personal level, I disagreed with almost all of which each one of the interviewees discussed, especially when it came to personal subjects such as gay marriage and abortions. However, I was concerned about coming across as aggressive and/or arrogant which I feared would lead to their withdrawal from my research project. I wanted to appear warm and in agreement with their beliefs and thankfully none of my participants withdrew their interviews. The behaviour of each one of my participants was friendly and eager to answer any questions I had, several of them even requested a copy of my thesis once it was completed, which gave a feeling of reassurance and comfortability that I would not run in to any problems. However, the language used by one of my interviewees (Maurice Glasman) was unprofessional at times and he did have the tendency to swear, some of these quotes will be used throughout the thesis.

For my theoretical framework, I have chosen the work of Michael Freedon, who's belief that ideologies are not static as one could originally interpret but in fact different depending on one's perception of it. Writing in his article *Ideology and Political Theory*, Freedens argues that "ideologies are imaginative maps drawing together facts that themselves may be disputed. They are collectively produced and collectively consumed, though the latter happens in unpredictable ways, and that collective nature makes them public property" (Freedon, 2006, p. 20). Freedens point sums up my hypothesis of how one perceives Blue Labour or indeed its supporters. Assessing Blue Labour's coherence through a single ideological channel will not accurately portray what I believe best summarises the coherence of and indeed who Blue Labour are. the several elements that I believe best explain the coherence of Blue Labour. My aim with using this theoretical framework is provide a multi layered response to my thesis question through each of my chapters.

### Interpretivist approach

Finally, another way to assess this thesis is through an interpretivist context. Placed as a criticism of positivism, Interpretivism is defined by John Dudovisky as an approach that "involves researchers to interpret elements of the study, thus interpretivism integrates human interest into a study" (Dudovisky, n/a). It is important to highlight and discuss Dudovisky view of the importance of the researcher through this methodological outlook and the clear advantages and disadvantages of this, Blue Labour, through my own observations and values is an important aspect of the Labour Party's history and helps diversify the Party. However, one can make the claim that Blue Labour is outdated in their outlook and certainly within their cultural values that have a direct offense towards myself

when it comes to the rights of LGBT+ community which plays in accordance to the interpretivist paradigm philosophy of focusing “on the whole experience rather than considering certain parts of it” (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020) as well as also assessing “questions and problems identification development of the research would be mainly influenced by the researcher in terms of interest” (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020) now for me as the researcher, I wanted to understand, at its core, why Blue Labour as its place in British Politics but also what makes them either a successful or non-successful campaigning group. The Labour Party, particularly, in the past ten years has transformed as a political party that the younger (18-24) voter demographic relate to yet Blue Labour does not fit into their mould and it is clear to see that Blue Labours view on social issues could play a leading factor in this. As the researcher, this is what interests me the most about Blue Labour and how I arrived at this topic for my thesis.

My judgment for using this methodological approach over, for example, positivism, is due to its openness to criticism, which is important for how researchers interpret this piece of work.

This interpretivist methodology does of course have its disadvantages, the main one being the clear researcher bias that could be assessed through this view. As a member of the LGBT+ community it is of course challenging to not feel a personal effect from speaking with these people who hold, what could be classed a prejudice view however, as I have stated previously, that I was aware of the potential of my interviewee’s withdrawal, so I tried to remain neutral and to make them as comfortable as possible throughout the process.

The interpretivist interpretation can be highlighted in one key area of interest; this being Blue Labour being viewed as social interactionism which is defined as, at its core, “It takes symbols into consideration as social objects providing shared meaning” (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Blue Labour, throughout its history has been closely linked with symbolism and how the overt Blue Labour ‘message’ is to bring the Labour Party back to its halcyon days. This is partly why an interpretivist methodological outlook is an important factor within the Blue Labour conversation.

Blue Labours can be interpreted through a hermeneutics methodology as well. Defined as the “study of interpretation. Hermeneutics plays a role in a number of disciplines whose subject matter demands interpretative approaches, characteristically, because the disciplinary subject matter concerns the meaning of human intentions.” (George, 2020) with Blue Labour, I will be interpreting it through not only how I as the researcher understands Blue Labour. As a theme throughout this thesis, I have interpreted Blue Labour as doctrine that although I don’t personally believe in their mission and what they stand for as their vision of the Labour Party and what the Party stands for is in my view outdated. However, the Labour Party is made up of nearly half a million members with millions more who vote for them, of course not all will share my personal views and values and if Blue Labour can speak to them than that for me is reason enough for them to exist.

Finally, I can conclude that my justification for both these methodological approaches is down to its loose interpersonal connection with the literature which in part links to the Blue Labour philosophy. In the Blue Labour ideology is woven with personal interpretation and how one deems suitable for them and to assess this through a positivism approach which is based on “strong prediction” (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020) Interpretivism through “understanding weak positions” and how I have as interpreted this is trying to strengthen an already weak perception of what Blue Labour is. Throughout my work, I found that it is easy to simply deem Blue Labour as nothing more than a racist, bigoted and out of touch minority faction of the Labour Party when in actual fact, they are far more than that. Blue Labour do not seek to offend, nor do they desire to be ‘disliked’ they wish for the Labour Party to be more in touch with a certain voter base which they believe to have been left behind. Throughout this thesis I have justified their role within the Labour Party and how we, as researchers, can better understand them.

## Literature Review

My thesis is broadly analysing the conversations, debates, and the history of 'Blue Labour', but specifically analysing the coherence of the campaign group. Blue Labour can be seen as a socially conservative think tank which focuses on the traditions and communities of those who feel 'left behind' following the birth of New Labour. This literature review will discuss both who Blue Labour are and why it became significant in the discussing around who the Labour Party represents.

However, it is important to note that throughout my research of the relevant literature there are key gaps in the empirical study. As Blue Labour began to fade slightly from its peak of interest between 2011-2015 it did create limitations, however what my goal with this literature review is to present not only how scholars have come to understand 'what' Blue Labour but also how I as the researcher can better understand their existence and more importantly the coherence of them.

I have also broken down this review into broad sub-chapters to help better understand a complete journey from beginning to end of what I deem to be vital in understanding the broader image of my research. The first being, who Blue Labour are? Their identity can be challenging to pinpoint to an exact theme or ideological standpoint as each of the key characters within have different values and Blue Labour as a whole regularly fails to present a clear unified position. This first part of the review will clarify subjects revolving around origin and religious values of certain characters as well as also interpreting the secondary literature surrounding this.

I then believe that the next appropriate step will be to focus in on this view, why did Blue Labour come into existence? This can be interpreted in a multiple of ways however I have channelled this through one common theme throughout the Blue Labour story and that is a strong disapproval of Tony Blair and the New Labour project which dominated British Politics for over a decade.

### What is Blue Labour

At first, Blue Labour is a socially conservative economically radical campaigning group within the Labour Party. Which ostensibly came into the public eye following the failed 2010 General Election where the Labour Party saw one of its worst electoral defeats in 70 years. However, as well as this, Jonathan Rutherford argues that Blue Labour is a driving force for common good and relies on its philosophical roots which centres around "moral sentiments and the relationship of human beings to one another and to society" (Rutherford & Glasman, What is Blue Labour, 2020). When asking 'what' Blue Labour it is important to note its inherited religious identity which is threaded throughout its policies. Founder Maurice Glasman writes that Blue Labour supported Germany's uses of Catholic Social Thought which created a "radical form of decentralisation that enabled responsibility and power to be exerted at a local level" (Glasman, The Good Society, Catholic Social Thought and the



Politics of the Common Good, 2015) an shift to local level politics and a focus on community focused politics is at the core of what Glasman set out with Blue Labour, which provides an interesting discussion surrounding religion in politics. These values are expanded in Hickson's article regarding 'localism' which is defined as a "radical critique of the central state", Hickson describes as being part of the 'communitarian turn' of Localism arguing that localism is not simply a left-right wing ideal but more a focus on faction of each party such as 'Red Toryism' or indeed 'Blue Labour' (Hickson, 2012).

Jeremy Nuttall article Culture and Character in the book *The Struggle for Labour's Soul* argues that Blue Labour provides several key points for the Labour Party to experience both "intellectually , and in terms of routes to electoral revival" (Nuttall, 2018) the concept of what Blue Labour stands for is in Glasman's Article *Labour as Radical Tradition* in which Glasman discusses that in order to understand where Blue Labour stems from it's important to see that "Labour is robustly national and international, conservative and reforming, Christian and secular [...] radical or traditional" (Glasman, Labour as a Radical Tradition , 2010) the electoral revival needed by Labour is one of the key points of why Blue Labour is seeing a reassurance in support post 2019 General Election. Glasman writes what it means to be a traditionalist within the Labour movement is one which synonymous with conservatism as well as also being associated with the idea that "modernist eventually reached the limits of their rational, in terms of their unique embrace of both market and the state" (Glasman, Labour as a Radical Tradition , 2010). I agree with what Glasman states here and the evidence to support this, is the work New Labour did their attempt to modernise the Labour Party. New Labour's rationale was, in short, to embrace a Third Way which combined neoliberal market economies of the New Right as well as also committing to a rejection of collectivism through the working class as the 'old' Labour Party would have in favour of creating a diverse of supporters which span the entire political spectrum.

This is expanded in the essay *Red Tory and Blue Labour: More Theology Needed* by Malcolm Brown, who writes that at its core Blue Labour and Red Toryism is driving religion back into mainstream politics and promoting the church from being a "marginal relic" to being validated (Brown, Red Tory & Blue Labour: More Theology Needed , 2012). However, from a theological perspective, what separates Blue Labour from their Red Tory cousins is Glasman's belief in Christian heritage and a desire to replicate the Free Church's and Catholicism of a century ago seeing as that was the defining factor of collectivism (Brown, Red Tory & Blue Labour: More Theology Needed , 2012) whereas the Red Tories are more inclined to support a type of Anglicanism which is an "implicit appeal to embedded religion inseparable from stable community structures." (Brown, Red Tory & Blue Labour: More Theology Needed , 2012) however, what Brown and Hickson both agree on is the driving philosophy of Blue Labour is 'Collectivism'. In the article *Individualism and Collectivism* by from

1997 he argues that the post war era saw an increase in ‘ethical socialism’ which led an increase collectivist policy, writing that “integrated individualism with socialist collectivism. It paved the way for the rise of social welfare states in Western Europe” (Kagitcibasi, 1997) however, the type of collectivism I believe Blue Labour lies within is the ideas of Janzx (1991) who defines collectivism as an emphasis on community and a strong belief in the moral aspect of collectivism and finally a love for community (Kagitcibasi, 1997), this definition clearly sets out for me the religious theology that threads itself throughout Blue Labour. similar to this is another theoretical approach by Paul Hildreth regarding ‘localism’ and particularly *community asset localism* which is defined as a community which devolves all responsibility for an asset or service to the community either directly or via local authority to run the asset or service provide accountability and/or ownership within the community (Hildreth, 2011). this concept of collectivism is supported by Steve Reed and Paul Brent who write in the Purple Book that Labour must “argue for the socialisation of public services-putting them under the control of reinvigorated communities whose energy, insight and creativity will deliver better outcomes” (Reed & Brant, 2011). This view is expanded on by Luke Bretherton who describes Blue Labour’s love for community but disapproval of state interference in religious events such as marriage, as Bretherton wrote “We give legal personality and priority to corporations in the market sphere, but refuse that same recognition and priority to both religious and political forms of corporate life” Bretherton arguments relates to how both the current Labour and Conservative Party view ceremonies such as Same Sex Marriage (an Act which was made legal under the Cameron Government in 2014).

Blue Labour’s views on religion is the clear backbone of their thinking and values, Glasman has made it clear that his concept of the ‘common good’ relies heavily on Christian values, and the consensus shared between Blue Labour and Philpots Purple Book is a need for devolved power to local governments and a restoration of power to local communities and “building on the principles of the ‘cooperative councils’ model” (Philpot, 2011), going on to the conclude that communities deserve the rights to community ownership. This progressive idea of what working in a community should be defies the traditionalist aspects of Blue Labour flagship value. What Glasman puts forward in the introduction of *Blue Labour; Forcing a New Politics* is that in a historical context, communities thrive within a religion society, making note that although it could be potentially uncomfortable (an example used Glasman uses in Protestant and Catholics), once together a community can bring back “exiled traditions” (Glasman, *The Good Society, Catholic Social Thought and the Politics of the Common Good*, 2015) this coalition described by Glamsan is the answer to the sense if inequality within local communities however Glasman fails to grasp in this chapter is that the current issues facing rural communities and one cosmopolitan areas goes beyond a lack thereof of ‘common good’ but a lack of investment and economic support. Philpots ‘cooperative council’ council model appears to deliver a sense decentralised power and power to communities will equate to a prosperous community,

Glasman ideas on the common good is filled with paradoxes and will deliver more disconnect than connection.

Outside of its religious context, Blue Labour is a beacon of patriotism. Frank Field MP writes that Blue Labour is for people who are proud of the United Kingdom as well proving a “near-blind loyalty in taking its side against whatever is thrown against it” a true sense of brutishness or, more appropriately, Englishness is one of the central focuses of Blue Labour. In Richard Jobson's article *Blue Labour and nostalgia: The Politics of Tradition* he describes the fact nostalgia plays a key role in Blue Labour and Glasman's thinking, writing that “a perceived need to return to the values of the early twentieth-century” (Jobson, 2014) an example of this would be what Jon Cruddas discussed at the Aneurin Bevan lecture in 2010 and in the words of Jobson “Cruddas noted that traditional working-class communities, cultures and identities were in decline but he proclaimed that ‘there is hope for Labour precisely because we have a powerful tradition; a collective memory built in previous periods of dispossession’” (Jobson, 2014) this continuous thread of community and working class support seem to be the continuous conscience around Blue Labour.

One of Blue Labour's most prominent writers Adrian Pabst describes Blue Labour as a “fusion of social with economic liberalisation under the joint aegis of the central bureaucratic state” (Pabst & Geary, *Blue Labour; Forcing a New Politics*, 2015), which although provides a quick snippet of Blue Labour's doctrine, Pabst doesn't adequately discuss the more nuanced elements of Blue Labour including their relationship with the working class and how New Labour essentially dismantled what the Labour Party originally stood for. As well as this Blue Labour's main concern is upholding the countries traditions and protect local communities in the Midlands and North which differ from the cosmopolitan cities and suburbs of the South. However, Blue Labour economics are challenged by Jon Bloomfield in his article *Progressive Politics in a Changing World: Challenging the Fallacies of Blue Labour* who argues that Blue Labour economic plan is incredibly damaging due to its disregard for globalisation. Bloomfield continues this point by stating that the ‘industrial Britain’ Blue Labour want to return back to is extinct, stating that “old industrial Britain, their factories have been transformed into retail parks, business units and housing estates. And a no-deal Brexit will do the same to Ford, Honda and Vauxhall in Bridgend, Swindon and Ellesmere Port” (Bloomfield, *Progressive Politics in a Changing World: Challenging the Fallacies of Blue Labour*, 2020) Bloomfield central point focuses on Blue Labour lack of thought surrounding the economy in a post Brexit Britain. The romanticisation of a ‘Strong, Independent Britain’ is met with economic complications that would threaten Britain on the global scale. Bloomfield makes the key point that in trade Europe, trade works by a succession of “integrated supply chains operating across borders” (Bloomfield, *Progressive Politics in a Changing World: Challenging the Fallacies of Blue Labour*, 2020) the idea that Britain can prosper without this shows a lack of understanding about global trade

and its importance within the Blue Labour literature. However, Helen Goodman agrees with Blue Labour economic stance on company law and an increase in tax breaks for the wealthy in society however, unlike Blue Labour, Goodman believes that Glasman's capitalist reform is unachievable writing that "We have to channel it and regulate and keep up with it. You can't get off the roundabout, redesign it and step back on again. You've got to redesign it while it's moving round." (Goodman, *Tradition and Change: Four People A Response to the Politics of Paradox*, 2011) To completely reshape capitalism from the ground up is impractical and incredibly unlikely in the current global market, which Glasman fails to understand yet Goodman believes that although flawed, Blue Labour have strong economic idea and values that could be tweaked in order to fit in today's society.

However, Helen Goodman's article *Tradition and Change: Four People a Response to the Politics of Paradox* argues that Glasman and Blue Labour have dated policies which don't reflect Britain in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Goodman argues that we cannot be a closed off economy when it comes to trade (an example she uses is regarding fishing) writing that we shouldn't just talk with our Cornish and Scottish fishermen but also those who fish in Islandic and Norwegian fishers as well. Goodman continues by saying that even before we were given Free Trade via the EU that Britain had a long historically timeline of trade which dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. Glasman's view of England in the words of Goodman their outlook "isn't just culturally unattractive, but historically false" (Goodman, *Tradition and Change: Four People A Response to the Politics of Paradox*, 2011). Goodman also continues to criticize Blue Labour for the lack of discussion within their essays about modern manufacturing writing that it requires "strong science base, a highly skilled workforce and partnerships between universities and the public and private sectors." Continuing with the fact this wasn't by Blue Labour being "quite extraordinary" (Goodman, *Tradition and Change: Four People A Response to the Politics of Paradox*, 2011). Goodman provides an interesting debate since Blue Labour, at its core, is about helping left behind communities and rebuilding towns which have been heavily affected by neo-liberal policies starting from the seventies.

Another criticism of Blue Labour is its lack of originality, in Matt Bolton et al article *Corbynism and Blue Labour: post-liberalism and national populism in the British Labour Party* writing that Blue Labour presents no other alternative to Corbynism and that they are both flawed ideologies when it comes to capitalism (Bolton & Fredrick, 2020). Bolton and Fredrick also discuss the comparisons between Corbynism and Blue Labour when it came to their vision of nations states, writing that they both celebrate "its traditional and accelerationist forms" (Bolton & Fredrick, 2020) as well as also stating that one of their biggest similarities comes down to Brexit, which Bolton et al write that both "sense opportunity in Brexit to reinstate the sovereignty of the nation state against global capital." As well as pointing out that Blue Labour see sovereignty as a *thing* and it can be used to help create an

opportunity for a renewal against the global capital market (Bolton & Fredrick, 2020). What Blue Labour also shows is a level of inconsistency about what they want their identity is. On the one hand, Bolton et al suggest that “There are those that recognise the complexity of Englishness or Britishness in a group of islands divided along lines of class and the urban–rural divide and who make clear voiced appeals to the maintenance of liberal rule of law at a time of its dissolution” (Bolton & Fredrick, 2020). It appears that Bolton and Fredrick appear to suggest a lack of substance to the identity of what Blue Labour is.

Another aspect to consider in the literature surrounding Blue Labour is to better understand their American counterparts the Blue Dog Democrats which have several similar themes and values which can aide in better understanding the broader conversations surrounding moderate political ideologies. According to the work of David Boaz, the blue dog democrats were “fiscally conservative Democrats from Southern and Western and rural districts” of the United States of America. Although it would be incorrect to assess Blue Dog Democrats strong fiscal conservatism as similar to the conservatism felt by Blue Labour, what this does do is a set the benchmark for understand factions within major western left wing political parties. One of the strongest similarities is both Blue Labour and Blue Dog Democrats rejection of ‘Third Way’ politics, as Stephen Medvic writes in their article *Old Democrats in New Clothing?* That “The New Deal (i.e. liberal) philosophy of Traditional Democrats has become irrelevant, the defenders argue, and only the New Democrats have realistic progressive solutions to today’s problems” (Medvic, 2005) as well as also stating that “the New Democrats themselves insist that they propound a fresh intellectual vision for the party” (Medvic, 2005) Medvic paints a view point that has strong correlation with relationship felt between Blue Labour and New Labour. The Viewpoint that the ‘traditional’ left wing outlook is a thing of the past and the Third Way borderline brags about being the new ‘intellectual vision’ of left wing politics can come across as arrogant and out of touch with a large majority of the Party membership. An example of this would understanding how the significant Third way leaders in both former President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Tony Blair education before they went into politics. President Clinton attended Yale University and Blair Oxford, an elite education with an acceptance rate of below 10% for Yale and below 20% for Oxford would gift them several advantages in life and both universities were classed as schools for the elite which poses a question over their legitimacy of understanding the issues facing their working-class voter base. This in essence leads onto my next part of the review which is understanding ‘why’ Blue Labour came to existence and the direct consequence of this new Third Way leadership. As argued by Shaun Bowler et al in their article *Party Cohesion, Party Discipline and Parliaments* that “a model of leadership in which the peace is kept, possibly simply an agreement to keep to the status quo” (Bowler , Farrell, & Katz, 1999) shows an ease in governing and silences a desire for fractional division within political parties,

### Why did Blue Labour come into existence?

As stated previously, Blue Labour was founded in 2009 and rose in prominence following the 2015 General Election where Labour Leader Ed Miliband appointed Glasman as one of his advisors. Miliband believed that having Glasman advise him on creating a 'One-Nation Labour Party' would help him secure voters in the North. However, looking back on History, Jon Lawrence argues that Blue Labour can be traced back to failures within New Labour, writing that "failure to articulate a coherent and powerful alternative social vision to that fostered by Thatcherite policy and rhetoric after 1979" (Lawrence, *Blue Labour, One Nation Labour and the Lesson of History*, 2013) Tony Blair has stated in interviews in the past that he is an admirer of Prime Minister Thatcher, a Prime Minister which deeply upset and angered the mining communities and working class heartlands in which Labour rely on electorally. In a historical sense, the origins of conservatism within the Labour Party can be seen with the ingrained conservative values within working class in Britain. Martin Pugh articles *The Rise of the Labour Party and The Political Culture of Conservatism 1890-1945* where Pugh's establishes that The Labour Party came out of the collapse of the Liberal Party and a socialist outlook on how the United Kingdom should be governed. Writing that "Neither the socialist nor the liberal traditions really enabled the party to fulfil its mission as the party of the working class"(Pugh, 2002) as well as also writing that "An explanation for the rise of Labour must therefore take account of the party's adaptation to the Conservative tradition" (Pugh, 2002) if Pugh argument is right and Labour's surge in popularity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is assisted by an adaption of conservative values then a need for a 'Blue' labour is vital to keep the Party from becoming a political home for the cosmopolitan middleclass and rejecting the conservative working class that made it one of the two largest parties in the United Kingdom. In history, Conservatism within the working class has been significant, as Psychologists Stacey and Green argue in their 1972 article *Working Class Conservatism: A review and Empirical Study* that the typical working class conservative voter consist of those generally are: church goers, non-union members or those brought up in a smaller family ( E.G one or two siblings), as well as this Stacey and Green discuss the idea that an increase in working conditions created a sense of an 'affluent' working class community which began to hold sympathetic views towards middle-class thus created bridge between both socio-economic classes for the first time (Stacey & Green, 1971). Stacey and Green go on to discuss the relevance of Conservative influence over the established Church of England and other dominant sectors of society such as education, the monarchy and the police force writing that it is expected that Conservative values will be prominent in all classes (Stacey & Green, 1971) however in relation to Blue Labour, Conservative influence over the Church is the most significant. Andrew Village the sense of 'resistance' felt within their conservative compared to its liberal Anglican sister, Village states that "Conservatism can also mean a

general resistance to change, and in particular to the loss of cherished religious traditions.” (Village, 2019) the ‘cherished religious traditions’ such as being against acts such as abortion and same-sex marriage which members of Blue Labour.

Another reason why there was a need for Blue Labour is to finally create a bridge between the ‘Old/New Labour’ divide that has been prevalent since the 1945 election win for the Labour Party. Lawrence Black’s article *Blue Labour or Political History Blues* Black understands that the “old-new binary” was old and Blue Labour needed to move beyond whilst using the colour blue to both “signal a nostalgic sense of loss and a conservative tinge” (Black, 2019). However, in Blue Labour’s manifesto, Marc Sears argues that you can in fact be a radical conservative, one that differs from ‘Old-Labour’ but understands the shortcomings of New Labour. Sears example of this is Christmas Day where he states that the typical Christmas Day in most UK families consists of the same events happening (opening presents, arguing with family, eating turkey etc) are all part and parcel of the Christmas season. Adding that, “These traditions remind us, that is, of the fundamental importance of truly human relationships” (Sears, 2011) as well as also discussing the fact in an ever-changing world, we as a nation, hold on to these values thus making the idea of radicalism and conservatism attainable, Sear sees Blue Labour as an expansion of this belief system. In support of this, Stuart White article seems to indicate that Blue Labour is needed to push forward radical conservatism on the Left, White describes radical conservatism as those with sympathies towards a politics of “community organization” and “conservation” as well as creating a new sense of ownership within politics writing that “Radical conservatism can helpfully serve to press Labour to revisit some basic questions about the nature of property and the ownership of wealth” (White, 2011).

Stears belief for why Blue Labour is important to the Labour Movement comes down the criticism of New Labour and its overt neo-liberal and globalisation approach to politics, writing that Labour must be conservative in order to “resist the commodifying tendencies of capitalism” (Sears, 2011). In addition to this, Rutherford’s argument in his article *The Future is Conservative* is that without Blue Labour or conservative values within the Labour Movement, the Labour Party is at risk of losing England. Rutherford’s main point for this is that, in order to win, Labour must “rediscover England’s radical traditions that are rooted in the long political struggle against dispossession” (Rutherford J. , *The Future is Conservative*, 2011) Rutherford states that the Labour Party has abandon its ‘cultural roots’ in favour for a globalisation that does on benefit the individual only the elite, as well as going on to write that “New Labour abandoned traditional supporters, along with the idea of an ethical commitment to mutual support” thus abandoning its once loyal supporters to far-right and racist movements across Britain (Rutherford J. , *The Future is Conservative*, 2011). Rutherford concludes his essay stating that “Labour’s future will be conservative because the decade ahead requires a

reparative politics of the local, and a re-affirmation of our human need for interdependency” (Rutherford J. , *The Future is Conservative*, 2011) all points which are reaffirmed in Blue Labour’s policies and in Rutherford opinion this is the only version of Labour which can be electable to the culture and communities that made Labour successful. However, *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox* isn’t just a criticism of New Labour as well proving why Blue Labour is an important faction of the Labour movement. The article *New and Blue* written by Graeme Cook argues that both factions can work together to create a better Britain. Cook writes that New Labour’s weakness was “lack of a clear political economy or critique of capitalism” (Cook, 2011) and that Blue Labour fails in “turning its insights into a plausible economic strategy; giving a credible account of how society can be strengthened without simply resorting to the state” as well as “showing how conservative instincts can provide momentum for the centre left.” (Cook, 2011). In Cook’s belief Blue Labour didn’t come into existence to completely discredit New Labour but to work together to rebuild Labour’s legacy despite the strong paradox between both ideologies. Cook makes the point that the tensions and division which has been long suffered within the Labour Party, creates electoral failures, a harmony of ‘New’ and ‘Blue’ Labour would create a debate around what the Labour is and the fact that it is “rooted in democracy, people and relationships” (Cook, 2011).

Similarly, Maurice Glasman’s take on why Blue Labour came into existence comes down to the paradoxical tendencies of the Labour Party. His paper, *Labour as a Radical Tradition* argues that Labour’s history of communitarianism and the sense of belonging felt by member of the Labour Party has been lost in a New Labour wave, he writes that “ Distinctive labour values are rooted in relationships, in practices that strengthen an ethical life” (Glasman, *Labour as a Radical Tradition*, 2011), Glasman goes on to say that this commitment to Labour’s tradition is ‘vital’ to maintain Labour’s “political relevance” as well. Glasman goes on to write that the current party is neglecting both an Aristotelian Tradition and Ancient Constitution, stating that “any institution, in all aspects of life, there should never be one sovereign dominant power but a balance of interests” (Glasman, *Labour as a Radical Tradition*, 2011). Matt Beech and Kevin Hickson’s article *Which Path for Labour* discusses that the reason why Blue Labour became a significant faction within the Labour movement due to their nostalgic outlook on socialism, but their policies (or lack thereof) need refinement with the policies they have in place, stating that “in order to revive it, advocates would need to refine their view of the central state and show how its ideas could be applied in practice” (Beech & Hickson, 2012). Beech and Hickson also discuss that the lack of detail within Blue Labour, arguing that “It does not adequately explain how we get from A to B – from the current situation to a mutualised economy” (Beech & Hickson, 2012). Overall, it appears the reasons why Blue Labour came about is varied and down to a mix of history of conservative values within the working-class community and a disapproval of New Labour and their neo-liberal/globalisation approach to politics.



## Conclusion

What this Literature review indicates is a sense that Blue Labour has several flaws within their ideology in terms of what they want to be. On the one hand we see the likes of Maurice Glasman writing nostalgic papers on returning to the days of community led social-democratic socialism that creates and emphasis on family, country and religion. However, there are several flaws that have been discussed in this review, Helen Goodwood explained the historical inaccuracy regarding trade with other countries before joining the EU. The key thread of criticisms throughout this review has been down to policy inconsistencies, with Beech & Hickson discusses a lack of refinement and unity on what Blue Labour should be and Goodman arguing that Blue Labour fails to discuss the significance of how modern manufacturing is done today. What appears to be the consensus is Blue Labour is not clear on its goals, however, I think one of the flaws missed is Blue Labour's narrowmindedness on religion and who they represent. A heavily Christian orientated party is not representable in today society, as well as this Glasman's questionable comments on migration and his once interests in an open dialogue with the English Defence League. The Labour Party has a strong BAME community which the party is proud of. A deeper explanation to the extent Blue Labour represents those in minority communities is something which I feel is missing within the current literature and something to which I could expand on in this project. As for why Blue Labour became a significant faction of the Labour Party post 2010 comes primarily from an overt criticism of New Labour. Although Graeme Cook's article articulates a multitude of similarities between both New and Blue Labour which could have been expanded on in more of the literature. One of the flaws I found was a lack of writing on the consequences of Blue Labour, this could be down to the fact that Blue Labour as an idea has only been around since 2009 and has gone up and down in popularity both from campaigners and academics. However, Rutherford article articulates the need for conservatism within the Labour Party in order for it to electorally survive within its 'Heartlands', this provides an interesting discussion on current trend within the Labour Party to be accommodating to a younger more 'woke' membership which started during Corbyn tenure. Overall, the literature on Blue Labour provides several discussion points which can be expanded upon within this project.

However, now the broad scope of the subject has been discussed and analysed, it is my view that the most appropriate subject to discuss next is its key players, whom I have aptly named the 'Founding Fathers' as a humorous play on the Founding Fathers of the United States of America in 1776. The Founding Fathers have been cemented in history as radical revolutionaries who fought against the political norm of that time to carve a new path for them, similar to Blue Labour's vision to create a new radical tradition for a better life experience.

## The Founding Fathers of Blue Labour: Glasman, Rutherford, Stears and Cruddas

To first find the answer to this thesis we must firstly define who the key thinkers and philosophers around Blue Labour. This chapter will be taking influence from the work Rowena Davis did in her book *Tangled Up in Blue: Blue Labour and the Struggle for Labour's Soul* in which she discusses the “Founding Fathers” of Blue Labour being a selection of academics and politicians. In its barest form, Blue Labour is the doctrine of Maurice Glasman, an academic and Labour Peer who founded Blue Labour in 2011 however Glasman’s ideas about Radical Conservatism dates to as early as 1996. Following the failed 2010 General Election for Labour and the subsequent ending of New Labour, the now Labour Leader Ed Miliband sought to take a different route in the upcoming 2015 election and appoint Glasman as one of his key advisors during the election, which proved unsuccessful electorally. However, by 2015 Blue Labour had grown as a significant campaign group within the Labour movement, with the likes of academics Jonathan Rutherford and Marc Stears as well as Labour Member of Parliament Jon Cruddas MP. However, one of the limitations of this chapter is going to be the lack of access I had to published work by one of the named ‘Founding Fathers’ Jon Cruddas and the limited work of Marc Stears. whilst I still believe that Jon Cruddas and Marc Stears has a place in this chapter due to their significant contribution to Blue Labour, neither of them possesses a significant number of publications or that I can access.

My methodology for this chapter is to examine key literature that each member wrote prior to the Oxford Seminar on Blue Labour that took place in 2011. My goal with this is to get a better understanding of how and why these people became involved in Blue Labour and if any of their previous work indicates an interest or relates to Blue Labour. In the context, of the political discourse surrounding New Labour and the fall out of the illegal Iraq Intervention and a sense of national tiredness of the New Labour project. Blue Labour was set to show a new path, and an ideology surrounded by ideas of community, traditions and religion. What this chapter will set out is a clear timeline of what was going on during this period, the context surrounding the need for Blue Labour was well as what led the four key thinkers to come together and build Blue Labour as it is today, with all the controversies that go with it. As New Labour became more performance focused and moderate in their views this left a gap and a weaker attachment for those within the Labour Party who have clung on

to the traditional aspects of the Labour Movement (Ford & Sobolewska, Identity conflicts from New Labour to the Coalition, 2020), this is the true void that Blue Labour have tried to fill. Since 1994 Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson had set out to create a new vision of what the Labour Party can be. The Blair/Brown Project has an unwavering controversial legacy, with Tony Blair seen as a war criminal from members of the Labour Party due to Iraq. With Labour divided Miliband became Labour Leader to establish a new version of the Labour Party commonly known as the ‘One Nation Labour’ Project, to which his selection of Maurice Glasman proved to show that Blue Labour is a key political player amongst the Labour movement.

### Jonathan Rutherford

Rutherford comes to Blue Labour from an expertise in Identity politics and an overt criticism of neo-liberalism. One can better understand how Rutherford became invested within Blue Labour by studying two of his books, the first being *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* written in 1990 and to which he edited and *After Identity* published in 2007. Both of which discusses the concept of what identity means to him and how identity takes form under capitalism. For example, Rutherford discusses in his chapter *A Place to Call Home: Identity and Cultural Politics of Difference* that a poem by artist Laurie Anderson which focuses on loss and lack of sense of where to go speaks to Rutherford writing that “Laurie Anderson’s postmodern elegy on loss and displacement speaks to my own uncertainty in writing politics from within a tradition that has held ‘lines’ and ‘positions’” (Rutherford J. , *A Place to Call Home: Identity and Cultural Politics of Difference* , 1990). In the sub-section of Rutherford’s chapter *Identity on the Left: Two to Tangle*, Rutherford states that he was a member of the Communist Party joining in 1983 creating an interesting discussion surrounding Rutherford’s early political preferences. Indication that his membership exposed him to the “often fraught relationship which the more thoughtful parts of the organised Left had with the politics of difference” (Rutherford J. , *A Place to Call Home: Identity and Cultural Politics of Difference* , 1990). Rutherford’s understanding of what identity means has created a paradox between his interest in Gramscian politics and the politics of traditions to which he would later become associated with. Rutherford also discusses a need to confront a society which he believes is fragmented and turning on itself poised by the Class system, as well as stating that the

country needs more from the Labour Party current “caring values” as it does not go far enough. Whilst this proves that Rutherford’s mindset only thinly addresses the main cultural issues, he believes faces the country, Rutherford does not explain what steps and/or political party would adhere to this set of cultural politics. But what this essay shows is Rutherford’s desire for tradition and his concerns over a fragment society which has been broken by the class system. Rutherford understood that there was a fundamental issue with how to identify ones identity, writing that “Our struggles for identity and a sense of personal coherence and intelligibility are centred on this threshold between interior and exterior, between self and other” (Rutherford J. , *A Place to Call Home: Identity and Culteral Politics of Differance* , 1990) In the context of Blue Labour, Rutherford’s argument would relate to someone relationship with their community, a sense of identity that pins down one of the fundamental beliefs within Blue Labour.

Aside from this, Rutherford’s essay ‘After Identity’ affirms’ a sense of loss when it came to how people live their late 2000’s. Rutherford claims that “People’s traditional ways of life, their social interactions and settled institutional arrangements were brutally uprooted by the logic of the market” this disapproval of the neo-liberal market comes down to his belief that adhere to his sense that identity. This book merely expands on what was discussed in his essay discussed previously. Expanding on his thought on neo-liberalism, Rutherford argues that that at its very core neoliberals “destroys the social relation necessary for its flourishing” (Rutherford J. , *After Identity* , 2007). Rutherford’s criticism of neoliberalism relates to his feeling of England’s lost identity, he writes that neoliberalism destroys individual freedoms and that “social values are displaced by price and proxies of price, for example targets and performance indicators” (Rutherford J. , *After Identity* , 2007) whilst a find this point an interesting analogy, I find that Rutherford is being overly critical of neoliberalism, in my view, social values are not displaced by prices and proxies of prices but enables freedom of choice which only expands on people ‘social values’ although it does lack the sense of security needed to which Rutherford discusses later on within the text. However, as a critic of New Labour, Rutherford is right to dismiss neoliberalism as it is a major factor of the Blair/Brown premiership and something of which Blue Labour is a critic of.

Rutherford work on the 'Common life' shows a key thread of his belief that relates to Blue Labour. Although not strictly religious, Rutherford argues that neoliberalism is destroying "our two greatest- and incompatible- wants in life: freedom and security" (Rutherford J. , After Identity , 2007) Rutherford criticism of neoliberalism seems to continuously stem back to his desire for a reconnection of 'our' identity. On the one hand, Rutherford key argument in this essay is that if we relinquish neoliberalism from society than one's identity and sense of community will return (thus leading to a Blue Labour led policy). However, one could argue that Rutherford argument is more based on his interest conservative traditional values which were once a part of the Labour Party. Expanding on this, Rutherford discusses in his article Labour's Big Society, that it has become a "social and relational life has been an increasing concern to government and academic policy-making circles." (Rutherford J. , Labour's Good Society, 2010) However, Rutherford makes the point that New Labour believe that communities have neither conflict, nor do they have contradictions (Rutherford J. , Labour's Good Society, 2010) the current form of localism seen in the eyes of Rutherford as flawed but repairable, as Rutherford states "New Labour policies encouraged network and association in neighbourhoods to develop thick bonding and bridging capital" (Rutherford J. , Labour's Good Society, 2010) but also demonstrates New Labour's shortcomings in regard to deindustrialisation and that is the removal of the symbolic culture surrounding it, people begin to lose who they are. Rutherford makes an interesting point here as many towns in places such as South Wales and the Northeast were built around industries such as mining and once Thatcher began to deindustrialise these towns the sense of community and importantly identity vanished with it. Finally, one of Rutherford key discoveries in this essay is the current Labour Party's inability to understand how and why nationalism is on the rise. Rutherford claims that Labour is "currently in not fit state to counter a virulent, nationalist movement, but it needs to take on this English Populism and its social conservatism to win back former supporters" (Rutherford J. , Labour's Good Society, 2010) This is really Rutherford's place in Blue Labour's philosophy. Rutherford is passionate about identity and culture as well as being overtly critical about neoliberalism and New Labour. We can see from the examples I have given that from 1990, Rutherford has been critical of policy's that would eventually become part of Blue Labour desire top change how the Labour Party views community and local politics. As Rutherford is one of the leading thinkers within the Blue Labour you can't help but conclude that Rutherford help shape policies surrounding identity and community because of the work he has written previously.

## Maurice Glasman

As the founder of Blue Labour, Maurice Glasman's provides the intellectual undercurrent for a significant portion of Blue Labour's doctrine. Described by Rowenna Davis as a populist (Davis R. , 2011, p. 6). Glasman became an unpredicted tyrant within the Labour movement, ripping up all current forms of 'traditions' found under New Labour. Evidence of Glasman's interests in reshaping Labour values to form a new sense of 'traditions' can be seen in his early work as an Academic. one of the first book he wrote was *Unnecessary Suffering: Managing Market Utopia* written in 1996. Glasman argues that West Germany has one of the most productive economies in Europe citing its use of "labour market restrictions, democratic interference, structure of solidarity and apprenticeship systems" (Glasman, *Unnecessary Suffering: Managing Market Utopia* , 1996) the idea that a State can reshape and transform its political and economic system following the fall of a dictatorship left Glasman with an idea of how British political system under New Labour could change. The book's overall intention is to make the case that for countries and their markets will function at a maximum capacity when driven by the needs of the inhabited communities.

Glasman criticisms of the Labour Party can be seen in his work stretching back to the 1990s. but first and foremost, Glasman has a particular respect for the German political system and his aspirations for the Labour Party to recreate it. In an article Glasman wrote in 2013, he states that Britain should learn from Germany. Arguing that following the global financial crash of 2008 which Glasman described as the "the most important event in the politics of the next twenty years" (Glasman, *To reform the economy, Miliband should learn from Germany*, 2013) The German Political Economy far exceeded the New Labour Political Economy due to its " federal republic and subsidiarity, with its works councils and co-determination between capital and labour, with its regional and local banks and vocational control of labour market entry – a democracy locational and vocational" (Glasman, *To reform the economy, Miliband should learn from Germany*, 2013) when best handling the crash.

From this book, Glasman expands on his interest in the German Free Market Economy and the failures of the British economic system. Writing in his article, *The Siege of The German Social Market* Glasman makes the point that “the ‘flexible’ British economy is upheld as an exemplar of market efficiency in contrast to Germany” (Glasman, *The Siege of The German Social Market*, 1997) the Framework Germany has put in place roughly revolves around supporting communities and creating a state that’s economy “was independent of society and based upon an equilibrium of supply and demand between the factors of production—labour, land and money” (Glasman, *The Siege of The German Social Market*, 1997) this rings similar to what Blue Labour stands for economically, an economy which is distant from globalisation as well as also creating wealth distributed within the UK first. Glasman desire to take inspiration from the German political economy is seen through both his essay and the book mentioned above. Another part of Glasman, Blue Labour doctrine is his religious background. In His chapter *The Church and Labour*, Glasman expresses his admiration for the work of Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Kettler who argued that working class (or proletarian) issues were at the heart of Catholic social teaching and that the “absence of the Welfare system previously provided by local communities through charity, people would become directly dependant on the owners of capital for survival” (Glasman, *Unnecessary Suffering: Managing Market Utopia* , 1996, p. 37). Kettler’s philosophy has clearly resonated with Glasman and helped shaped his vision for Blue Labour. As established earlier, Blue Labour is built on a communities and families working for the ‘Common Good’. A community without a welfare state and/or support from a local council would become dependent on the ‘owners of capital’ to survive, something which Glasman and Blue Labour strongly oppose as we can see in Glasman book ‘Labour as a Radical Tradition’ written in 2010. Another example of the link between the work of Kettler and Blue Labour is the belief that a person could only become their true selves by associating themselves with others which is threaded through the ‘Catholic theology’. In order to become for someone to become a “subjective, rational, purposive agent” an active association with others is required. From reading this chapter Catholicism is a necessity in living a prosperous life. Whilst Blue Labour is not strictly religious the bare bones of their beliefs (working together, common good, community spirit) are cornerstones of a large proportion western religions. Kettler’s influence on Glasman is evident and the evidence suggests that Glasman wanted to replicate Kettler’s philosophy within Blue Labour.

Finally, one of Glasman most significant pieces of work is *Labour as a Radical Tradition* published in 2010. This book lays the foundation of what Blue Labour is, as Glasman describing his ideal vision of the Labour Party of being a political party born from a middle class educated mother and a working-class trade unionist father (Glasman, *Labour as a Radical Tradition*, 2010, p. 5), the mother possessing the “Fabian Society, Hyndman’s Social Democratic Federation, The Anglican Church” (Glasman, *Labour as a Radical Tradition*, 2010) and the Father representing “Common Good and Traditional Descent” (Glasman, *Labour as a Radical Tradition*, 2010). These two strands of thought combined to create Glasman idea of a ‘Good Society’ something in which Labour has lacked recently, Glasman’s belief that for society to thrive a return to traditions is needed. Expressing the opinion that society “would be made from relationships built on reciprocity, mutuality and solidarity, all the way up and all the way down, in politics and within the economy” (Glasman, *Labour as a Radical Tradition*, 2010, p. 10). In short, this is Glasman vision. From the essays discussed previously, he wrote on his interest in the German Political economy as well as the teaching of Bishop Wilhelm have consolidated and create the foundation of Glasman’s vision for Labour. However, the answer to how Glasman created Blue Labour isn’t as simple as that. From reading his early work, it suggests the single thing that he values most comes from community, from being raised in a poor Jewish community where his father was a member of the Labour Zionist to becoming a Labour Peer and one an influenceable voice in the conservative Labour movement, Glasman understands that in his eyes community and hard work equal success. Overall, the work Glasman has written has clearly set a timeline to lead us to why he founded Blue Labour.

### Marc Stears

Like Glasman and Rutherford, Marc Stears came from an academic background working in the Universities such as Oxford, Bristol and Sydney. Stears is a political theorist and his expertise’s come from his interest in political ideology. This section of the chapter is going to



be slightly different to what was written about Glasman and Rutherford. As Stears does not have any work that directly correlates with his interest in Blue Labour (unlike Rutherford and Glasman) I will analysis the work Stears has done both in his essay on Blue Labour and in how one should read his work in political theory in the hopes of presenting a reflection on how his work as a theorist works in relation to Blue Labour. From his essay in *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*, it's clear that Stears vision of the Labour Party is one that rebuilds relationships and provides a 'means to an end' and the necessity of idealist and realist working together to create a better society. In an interview given to Open Democracy, Stears states that the reasoning for his involvement in Blue Labour was to help "build a Labour Party that is genuinely responsive to people across the country, a party that gives people the opportunity to come together and shape their own lives" (Stears, What is Blue Labour? An Interview with Marc Stears, 2011). An answer no different to the likely reasonings for Glasman and Rutherford to be involved, however its Stears work as a political theorist that helps better understand how he became to be apart of Blue Labour in such a big way.

One of his most successful books is *Progressive, Pluralist, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies to Reform in the United States and Britain 1909-1921*. Although most of the book has very little/no relation to Stears impact within Blue Labour the section titled *From Pluralist to Community* to which Stears discusses the necessity of communities in order individuals to become successful, none of his previous work has many relations to Blue Labour. However, his essay in *The Labour Traditions and the Politics of Paradox* provides an interesting insight into how he became involved in Blue Labour. His chapter, *Democracy, Leadership and Organising* Stears which at its core asks the question what kind of Labour Party do we want to be apart of? Stears writes that the Labour Party has been struggling with an identity crisis for the past forty years arguing that, unlike the Conservative Party, The Labour Party has become Bipolar in its nature, writing that the "attitude to leadership lies in an even more fundamental difficulty for the party. Labour has struggled of late to relate its values to its practices, or, in other words, its ends to its means" (Stears, Democracy, Leadership and Organising, 2011, p. 58), something which I agree with, As the Labour Party continues to struggle with who it represents within the membership and the wider electorate. the question of how Stears concluded that the Labour Party is struggling to relate its values to its practice can be seen in some of his earlier literature. In his article *The Vocation of Political*

*Theory*, Stears discusses the role of a Political Theorist in the broader spectrum of political academia citing that “The task of the political theorist is to engage in abstracted, noncontingent reflection, and the task of someone else (the empirical social scientist, the politician, the activist) is to assess the realizability of the particular goal and to adumbrate some particular policy suggestions accordingly” (Stears, *The Vocation of Political Theory*, 2005) with this in mind, Stears ‘reflection’ on Labour leadership is that in its current form (as of the date of *Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*) it is flawed. Stears states previously that Political Theorist must take aspects of both empirical and theoretical perspective, it is that statement which I believe to be a key term when assessing Stears reasonings for becoming involved in Blue Labour. Stears argument is that the Labour Party is failing is an overt disconnection between the relationship of its leaders and the wider political landscape. Understanding that it won’t take a simple gesture or a “‘touchy-feely’ sense of ‘we’re all equal in this together.’” Since it is Stears belief that this would overlook key issues thus creating a greater gap between the leadership and the electorate (Stears, *Democracy, Leadership and Organising*, 2011). The empirical example Stears discusses relates to Barack Obama’s 2008 Presidential Campaign to which he uses the slogan ‘*We are the change we have been waiting for*’ the use of ‘we’ makes it “clear that change in politics cannot come about through individuated action. It needs solidarity” (Stears, *Democracy, Leadership and Organising*, 2011) this also bring as a reduction of victim mentality. Another example from Obama’s campaign would be the use of the slogan ‘*Yes we can*’, evidently this style was a success as Obama won the election and Stears could see the possibility with this style of campaigning.

Overall, Although Stears emphasis on political theory instead of cultural/historical academic like Glasman and Rutherford where there is a clear timeline between the literature they have written and their influence in Blue Labour. Stears comes from a point of view which is more focused on the Labour Party becoming a political party that’s foundation is based upon a ‘means to end’. Using his own framework written in the *Vocation of Political Theory*, Stears understands that in order to gain success, one must understand the theoretical and empirical aspects of politics. In short, practicality and a sense of community is the best way to create a ‘genuinely responsive’ Labour Party which can only work under Blue Labour. Although

Stears had not written much that relates to Blue Labour prior to the Oxford Seminars in 2011, he has since written several pieces since which I will examine in later chapters.

### Jon Cruddas MP

Jon Cruddas has been the Labour Member of Parliament for Dagenham & Rainham since 2001. During his career as a parliamentarian, he has published several outputs regarding the Labour Party and subsequently became heavily involved in the creation of Blue Labour in 2010. Reading through his publication, his interests appear to be based in understanding the relationship the Labour Party has with the working class and how the connection between them both started to decrease following the New Labour landslide in 1997. For example, Cruddas article *New Labour and the Withering Away of the Working Class?* Written in 2006 brings together evidence that suggests a “slight rise in those jobs that can be considered white collar and above up from some 35 per cent to 37 per cent of the total stock of directly employed and self-employed occupations in the British labour market since 1992.” Making roughly around 2/3 of jobs in the UK (Cruddas, *New Labour and the Withering Away Working Class?*, 2006, p. 208). However, according to the data at the time the forecast for 2010 would be that Jobs requiring wither a first-class degree or a postgraduate would only 22.1% leaving 77.9% of none-degree jobs open to a predominately working-class community, a community in the eyes of Cruddas underfunded and underappreciated. Cruddas criticizes New Labour for the economic model writing that “New Labour is efficient at winning elections due to its ruthless scientific analysis of the preferences and prejudices of the swing voter in the swing seat and its key seat organisation. It is another common observation that many working-class people are rendered invisible by the current political system they appear to have no voice” (Cruddas, *New Labour and the Withering Away Working Class?*, 2006, p. 213), in other words New Labour appear to be looking down or demonizing the Working Class. It appears to be a continues thread throughout this chapter, the criticism of New Labour is what brings each one of these academics together. Whilst I understand that part of New Labours goal was to reach a wider electorate, it is appearing to have done it at the expense or security that the ‘red wall’ voters would still support the New Labour project, something which the Labour Party continued to do until the red wall fell to the conservatives in 2019, understanding that Labour Party should take them for granted to a critical point Cruddas made and I believe Labour should have listened to him. One final note from Cruddas

which is worth mentioning is his fear that if the situation does not change soon, he feared Labour voters would defect to BNP (Cruddas, *New Labour and the Withering Away Working Class?*, 2006, p. 213). This indicates another reason why he became involved in Blue Labour, as he stated in our interview that the Labour Government at time were failing to recognise this rise of BNP councillors in his constituency.

An increasing paradox to this is that in an interview with Jonathan Rutherford, Cruddas states that he was “drawn” to the New Labour Project and worked with Blair in Downing Street following his graduation from Warwick University, however Cruddas states that he saw New Labour morphing into a party of “power retention” as well creating a “contradiction between the language used by Government and the empirical realities on the ground” (Cruddas, *A New Politics of Class: an Interview with Jon Cruddas MP*, 2008). Cruddas makes several valid points; one could argue that New Labour had by this point become a political party with the goal power retention. New Labour had three successful elections and like with Thatcher’s governments one must asked the question ‘what more can a government do?’ after ten years in power. Another piece of work Cruddas which is of significance is his article, *Is it Time to Replace New Labour*, Cruddas expresses concern over New Labour’s social insecurities, writing that if New Labour continued down the “humane” neoliberal revolution, which disconnected activists and unions from policy-making, Cruddas stated that this will indefinitely “thus, the life of the party had been purposefully sucked from it” (Cruddas, *Is it Time to Replace New Labour*). Finally, if we examine Cruddas essay in the *Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*, we can come to understand that Cruddas core belief and, in my opinion, the key reason for his joining of Blue is that his initial belief was “New Labour encompassed both the progressive and the traditional,” but overtime “embraced a dystopian, destructive neoliberalism, cut loose from the traditions and history of Labour.” (Cruddas, *Democracy of the Dead*, 2011). The evidence I have given concludes that Cruddas reasoning for become a part of Blue Labour stems from a breakdown in his relationship with New Labour and, like Rutherford, a disapproval of Neoliberal politics within the Labour Party.

## Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to set out ‘how’ we came to a point where Blue Labour became a necessity within left wing politics. Each of the key thinkers mentioned above have come to be a part of Blue Labour through different reasons, but the continuous thread I have seen throughout this chapter is each member has a disapproval of wither neoliberal economics or an overall distaste for the New Labour Project. Every member has at some point criticised New Labour and what I have found particularly interesting especially is the relationship Jon Cruddas has with New Labour, first being associated and proud to be a part of the project to eventually criticizing it and subsequently being a part of Blue Labour. However, at its core Blue Labour is Glasman child, he has taken aspects of each one of the ‘key thinkers’ discussed above values and turned it into a campaign group focused on religion, community and anti- New Labour sentiment. Glasman being influenced by Catholic theology to work towards the ‘Common Good’ strike a chord as to what Blue Labour ‘is’ and who it wants to represent. Rutherford influence on Identity and Culture or Cruddas anti- New Labour sentiment play a supporting role. Overall, this chapter has set a clear timeline to how we have gotten to the Oxford Seminars in 2011 and the subsequent formation of Blue Labour. Throughout this thesis, I reference the work of Adrian Pabst as well as also interviewing him for this project, the reason why I do not deem him to be a ‘founding father’ is due to my belief that his contribution to the ‘Blue Labour’ story has not been as significant as Glasman, Rutherford, Stears and Cruddas.

Now we have assessed the founding fathers of Blue Labour, I wanted to understand their economic stance in more detail. Through the research I conducted this subject appeared to be a clear and significant part of their story. It is a prime example of something which appears only simple and nostalgic on the surface but once you scratch at the surface you can find a deeper understanding which plays one of the most important parts of

### [Blue Labour & The Economy](#)

At first, the economic policies surrounding Blue Labour seem simple and nostalgic, however it appears to have created a dichotomy between a poorly fleshed out romanticised look at working class economics where the local economy was based around mining and factory work as well as other manual labour institutions and a legitimate reasoning to return to this, a return to national economics where, especially in a post-Brexit United Kingdom is a necessity. Glasman has written and discussed several times both in his chapters in *Blue Labour Forging New Politics* and *Blue Labour and the politics of paradox* that his belief is for a return to a localised politics (define as Localism by Kevin Hickson 2014) this chapter is going to assess this idea, especially in references to how the ‘Founding Fathers’ views the economy, From Glasman perceived interest in the success of the West-German Social Market to his desire to create a new ‘national economy’ as well as how Rutherford, Stears and Cruddas view the economy in their party-centric ideological thinking. This chapter will include interviews I conducted with Rutherford, Glasman and Cruddas in which we reflected on each of their individual beliefs in relation to the overall economic stance that Blue Labour has.

### Blue Labour’s Key Thinker’s stance

Firstly, Blue Labour state on their website that their belief is that the economy should be “reciprocal and equal relationship between state, market and society, a balance of power. Society is threatened as much by an over mighty market as it is by a domineering state” (Labour, n.d.). However, it is important that we understand and breakdown the key thinkers of Blue Labour’s opinion of the economy and how it should operate within the 21st Century. The literature indicates that there is some correlation between the four key thinkers, which were defined in a previous chapter. However, to an extent they have all taken a different approach with how they define Blue Labour’s economic stance. For example, Jon Cruddas chapter *The Common Good in the Age of Austerity* Cruddas makes several criticisms about globalisation as well as making the case that Isolationism is significantly better than globalisation writing that “detaches economic and political power from locality, tradition and interpersonal relationships” assuming that human nature is at most a “selfish” (Cruddas, The

Common Good in the Age of Austerity, 2015). Cruddas appears to also take inspiration for his critical thinking from the work of John Milbank Emiratis Professor at the University of Nottingham, referencing Milbank's ideas of religious traditions, which concludes to "Exemplary story. Relational covenant. The principle of reciprocity. These aspects of our religious legacy are crucial to the rediscovery of a sense of identity and economic justice in the UK today" (Cruddas, *The Common Good in the Age of Austerity*, 2015). Cruddas argument can be summed up into two distinct areas, on the one hand Cruddas believes that a significant wage increases along with restoring a sense of pride in the workplace is vital for reducing the hiring/firing ratio which plague across zero hour contract within the UK and secondly a completely restructuring of the overly 'centralised' economic system in place, which, in the eyes of Cruddas has forced the electorate to support minor parties such as UKIP to "express their anger with Brussels and Westminster alike" (Cruddas, *The Common Good in the Age of Austerity*, 2015, p. 93). Overall, Cruddas belief is that the Labour need a decentralised political economy which, not only benefits the towns and cities that have been mostly affected by austerity but also to assist in banishing market driven, New Labour type economics which Blue Labour strongly opposes. In addition to this, Maurice Glasman suggests that a return to localist economies based around industries and particularly mining communities.

Similar to this is Marc Stears, who, in an interview conducted in 2011 stated that he is a "firm believer in a dynamic economy" (Stears, *What is Blue Labour? An Interview with Marc Stears*, 2011) that is grounded in a private enterprise which must be supported by public and community support in order to prevent the markets "tendency to treat people as commodities, as things rather than as human beings" (Stears, *What is Blue Labour? An Interview with Marc Stears*, 2011). Stears suggests a blend of cultural and structural changes in order to achieve this dynamic new economy created an element of coherence between each of the key thinkers' economical stances. Interestingly, reviewing the 2015 Labour Manifesto one can see elements of the cultural and structural changes that Stears discussed, as the manifesto states their intention to "create an economy based on mutual obligations, encouraging employers and employees to build partnerships for improving both business performance and job quality. Outdated practices, like blacklisting, have no place in a modern economy." (Britain Can Be Better-The Labour Party Manifesto 2015, 2015, p. 21).

Glasman seeks to retain a 'British originated' skills economy, which is based on a foundation of a skills economy, which is defined as an economy focused on creating skills and ultimately enabling easier access for young people to find work in areas such as construction and manual labour. Glasman influence can be seen once again in the 2015 Labour Manifesto which states a plan for "Young people who do not have the skills they need should be in training, not on benefits. We will replace out of work benefits for 18 to 21-year-olds with a new Youth Allowance dependent on recipients being in training and targeted at those who need it most." (Party T. L., 2015, p. 25).

This rejection of mass globalisation or in particular a focus on creating a job market that'll suit a more localised economy is at the heart of what Blue Labour stands for and is one of key themes that runs through the literature published by each one of the key writers and it appears to set out an anxiety that each writer has for working class communities. However, a skills economy makes sense for what Blue Labour set out to achieve. An economy, which in essence lowers unemployment and build an economy which isn't based on the current cognitive skills-led culture. Skills economics is not a theory created by Blue Labour, with its history tracing back to the Training Act 1964, which as Marius Busemeyer describes it "Highly interesting because it shows that policy-makers and economic actors in the United Kingdom did attempt to build up collective institution in skills formation" (Busemeyer, 2014). More recently, Skills economics have been implemented by the conservative government, an example would be a speech from 2014 made by former Prime Minister David Cameron stating that "Aiden Rogers who showed me round the Rolls Royce apprentice academy last year and who is here with us today. Aiden told me he was studying for a degree while also earning - and learning - his trade. He feels that being able to say, "I started as an apprentice" is something that gives him "instant respect and credibility". And he describes how his apprenticeship has given him the confidence to communicate ideas and the opportunity to apply everything he has learned in a hands-on industrial setting" (Cameron, 2014). However, Blue Labour's relationship with skills economy goes hand in hand with Glasman own economic desire and values. Previously discussed Glasman was fond of the German Social Free Market, which is defined as "capitalism more caring, and to the use of market mechanism to increase efficiency of the social function of the state" (The Economist , n.d.). a clear connection between what is defined as the German Social Free Market and Blue Labours economic values pose a clear connection. Glamans, influence by the German Social



Free Market discussed in the previous chapter has played a part in how Blue Labour have shaped their economical thinking, which in of itself creates an interesting observation, during my interview with Jon Cruddas we discussed his relationship with Blue Labour and how it relates to his work and the Member of Parliament for Dagenham, Cruddas argued that traditional labour values would what's needed in his consistency as an uneasy increase in support for the British National Party and the election of "about fifteen councillors" this increase in far right support was due to, in part, by a "one two punch from Margret Thatcher"<sup>1</sup> (the closing of the Ford Factory and the Right to Buy Act), Cruddas belief was that that Dagenham was spiralling down an economical discourse which eventually crowned at the financial crash of 2008, the Right to Buy act enabled private landlords to fleece the communities due to Dagenham being the "cheapest housing in London". Cruddas saw traditional Labour economic values as a way to prevent an increase in far-right support. Cruddas assessment of why he supports Blue Labour's economic values coincides with the assessment from academics such as Robert Ford and Mathew Goodwin, who, in their shared article *Understanding UKIP: identity, Social Change and the Left Behind* write that there are two elements to this change, the first being "Britain's economic and social structure that have pushed to the margin of voters who we described as the 'left behind': older, working-class, white voters with few educational qualifications" (Ford & Goodwin, *Understanding UKIP: identity, Social Changes and the Left Behind*, 2014) and the second being generational changes in relations to British values and ideals which, in part, shape how people vote (Ford & Goodwin, *Understanding UKIP: identity, Social Changes and the Left Behind*, 2014) Cruddas described to me the anxiety of his constituency they were getting minimum economic support from the Labour Government at the time as they were too busy "focusing on swing voters in middle England". It appeared to me that Cruddas felt himself disconnected from the New Labour government and particularly how the Treasury treated those 'safe' labour seats at the time.

In an interview conducted by myself and Blue Labour writer Jonathan Rutherford on August 10<sup>th</sup> 2022, I asked Rutherford about his personal views on globalisation and why he disagreed with it, Rutherford stated that he believed globalisation had "ran its course"<sup>2</sup> and that

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<sup>1</sup> Aitchison, Arthur- an Interview with Jon Cruddas via zoom-2022

<sup>2</sup> Aitchison, Arthur- an Interview with Jonathan Rutherford via zoom-2022

although it has raised the living standards for “hundreds of millions of people across the globe” it has also “brought the industrial working class to an end in western economies” citing that this was due to outsourcing to the likes of China. Whilst I understand where Rutherford is coming from, I don’t necessarily believe globalisation is the sole reason for the decline in industrial working-class communities, I believe a cultural change in attitudes and education played a role. For example, Tony Blair and New Labour made attending university and standards of education across the country significantly better, the culture of generations of families (particularly men) having to all work in the same job (for example, in the coalfields). Poorer students offered a financial incentive to stay in education under the Education Maintenance Allowance Act 2004 providing more vocational work and more opportunities for working class children to go to university. In Anthony Heath et al assessment report on New Labour’s educational policies between 1997-2010 states that in relation to academic achievement at GCSE level “there does appear to have been a substantial rise in the proportion achieving level 2 or above, which is designed to be roughly equivalent to a GCSE A–C grade (from 44 to 57 per cent overall). While this does indicate a clear improvement, we find that a similar improvement between 2003 and 2011 occurs in older age groups, too” (Heath, Sullivan, Boliver, & Zimdars, 2013). Overall, A rise of educational standards under New Labour helped a reduction of in the number of communities classed as industrial working-class communities.

In contrast to Rutherford’s belief, in an interview I conducted with Maurice Glasman on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022 via Zoom, Glasman stated that his belief was in the long term that “Globalisation was wicked, you cannot live in a borderless world” as well as stating that “democracy is imperil” also reminding me that the Labour Party made a mistake when elected into government in 1945 under Attlee in terms of an overreliance on the state, which, in the eyes of Glasman, “prevented working class leadership from coming through”<sup>3</sup> which in the end, leadership roles went to “the PPE graduates”<sup>4</sup>, This point slightly confused me from Glasman as I wasn’t sure how he interpreted it. On the one hand, I wasn’t aware of working-class leadership roles pre 1945 which would determine qualities for leadership in the mass nationalisation to which the Attlee Government which to do. However, Glasman does expand slightly better in his 2022 book *Blue Labour: The Politics of Common Good* in which

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<sup>3</sup> An Interview with Maurice Glasman, conducted by Arthur Aitchison via zoom, September 20<sup>th</sup> 2022 8:50

<sup>4</sup> An Interview with Maurice Glasman, conducted by Arthur Aitchison via zoom, September 20<sup>th</sup> 2022

Glasman suggests that Globalisation was “bult upon this alliance between western capitalism and eastern communism” (Glasman, *Blue Labour: The Politics of Common Good*, 2022, p. 128) Glasman concept that globalisation is influenced by eastern communism could be perceived as sweeping statement, however there is legitimacy in his point. As it is suggest in William Robinson article *Globalization and the Sociology of Immanuel Wallerstein: a critical appraisal* in which he argues that globalisation can assessed by modern world system theory, which is defined as two fold “The first is the core, or the powerful and developed centers of the system, original comprised of Western Europe and later expanded to include the United States and Japan” and “The second is the periphery – those regions that have been forcibly subordinated to the core through colonialism or other means, and in the formative years of the capitalist world-system would include Latin America, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe” (Robinson, 2011). The validity of Glasman argument suggest that his beliefs can occasionally be grounded within the literature and his philosophical views are important in the wider discussion regarding the coherence of Blue Labour.

In the article by Jon Lawrence, it is suggested that during the pre-war years London’s working class stating, “Booth’s London poor, and even more his ‘working classes’, had included large numbers of clerks and other office workers” (Lawrence, *Study of Everyday Life in Britain 1930-1964*, 2013). However, at no point during this article does Lawrence suggest that there were leadership roles for people from working class communities, my belief is that the culture and lack of workers’ rights at the time made it near impossible for people from working class backgrounds to attain leadership roles. Glasman went on to state that the essence of Blue Labours economical stance comes from its ‘paradoxical nature’ although this was never expanded upon until we discussed the religious aspects of it. The conversation then went to the discussion of globalisation, Glasman highlighted that, although he has a disapproval of capitalism. With an economic stance such as this, where Blue Labour seeks to create skills economy that appears to decrease globalisation in favour of a more nationalised stance. In an article written by Rutherford in 2019, Rutherford states that the revolution Labour needs in order to be successful lies within its leftist route, stating that the Party will be “radical, rebuilding the everyday economy of work and wages, supporting family life and spreading capital, power and opportunity to local places across the country” (Rutherford J. , *Labour Needs A Post-Brexit Politics: Here’s How We Get One*, 2019) this statement is the real heart of Blue Labour’s economic stance and presents some positive points regarding building communities back together by supporting families and creating a

fairly disrupted economy which benefits all in society not just the few. From this, we can see that Blue Labour has a leftist ideology when it comes to economics and its 'conservative' values appear to stem from their social policies. Similar to this, another article by Rutherford supports the argument that Blue Labour have a distaste for globalisation, writing that "Globalisation and government policy concentrated economic power into rent seeking that extracted wealth from the economy and put little back in" (Rutherford J. , *A Covenant For The Future*, 2022).

### Brexit & Conclusion

One interest avenue of discussion is how Blue Labour's economic stance relates to Britain's decision to leave the European Union. For example, Glasman's article *All Hail Good King Boris*, praises Johnson for his strong Brexit stance writing that "ripped into the Labour heartlands by aligning Brexit with national renewal and exposing the class divisions within Labour by siding with the poor." (Glasman, *All Hail Good King Boris* , 2020) the apparent economic advantages of Brexit coincide with Glasman & Blue Labour's vision of the economy and it would appear that Brexit would greatly assist in creating this national Britain-led economy which Glasman and Blue Labour desire. Glasman continues to double down on his Brexit beliefs by suggesting that it has forced an ideological shift within the Labour Party, arguing that however, the main question here is 'is Blue Labour's economic ideas practical and/or achievable' according to an article by Jon Bloomfield titled *Progressive Politics in a Changing World: Challenging the Fallacies of Blue Labour* this is unattainable. Bloomfield discusses several flaws in Blue Labour's argument but his position on the economy presents a clear failure in their thinking.

Bloomfield writes that, the 'writers' or key thinkers fail to acknowledge that times have moved on and that their idea of Britain being a leading global power is no longer the case, going on to write that "there is no way that they are going to be forced back into their national boxes. The days of a set of independently owned British car companies trading primarily within a domestic market have gone. Rootes, Humber, Austin, Triumph, Morris will never return" (Bloomfield, *Progressive Politics in a Changing World: Challenging the Fallacies of Blue Labour*, 2019). I agree with Bloomfield's stance here as Blue Labour once again paints itself into an idealist box of romanticising industrial working class jobs which are incredibly unlikely to return to the mainstream given that globalisation is still well locked in across the world. The concept of having a British-led skills economy which can compete on the global stage is unattainable, as well as also criticising what Stears desired as cultural and structural changes, describing it the "cultural programme 'defending faith, flag and family'. This phrase should send shivers down the spine of all progressives" (Bloomfield, *Progressive Politics in a Changing World: Challenging the Fallacies of Blue Labour*, 2019).

In conclusion, it's clear that there is a sense of coherence between the Blue Labour thinkers, almost all of them writing similar ideas regarding the economy however, on the broader spectrum their critics believe it is backwards and therefore unattainable, similar to Helen Goodman analogy that Blue Labour's economics is compared to a roundabout writing that "You can't get off the roundabout, redesign it and step back on again. You've got to redesign it while it's moving round." (Goodman, *Tradition and Change: Four People A Response to the Politics of Paradox*, 2011). Blue Labour are ambitious in their economic thinking but fail to grasp the understanding that progressive change is better than sudden change. The idea that the UK can suddenly reject globalisation in favour of an almost 'rule Britannia' economics is a pure fantasy which would do more damage than good for the UK.

The next chapter in my view is the most significant and plays a vital role in our understanding of Blue Labour. New Labour criticism is at the core of Blue Labour's doctrine and as I was conducting my research, I began to understand quickly that New Labour was at the heart of Blue Labour and that's why this chapter is fittingly, in the centre.

## Blue Labour & New Labour: A Conflict of Interests

One of the real cornerstones of Blue Labour's doctrine is a significant amount of criticism for the New Labour era of the Labour Party, which began 'officially' from Tony Blair's leadership election in 1994 to the end of Gordon Brown's Premiership in 2010, although one could argue the foundation of New Labour can be traced back to the leadership of Neil Kinnock. Despite being successful electorally, New Labour has been criticised on both wings of the political spectrum, especially by the Old Left of the Labour Party. All key thinkers involved with Blue Labour have criticised New Labour one way or another and this chapter, along with analysing the work of scholars such as Harold Laski and Karl Polanyi. My reasoning for choosing both of these political theorists comes down to their interpretation of the Labour Party and more importantly how ideological differences within the Party can prove catastrophic. This chapter is going to set two main threads of discussion, the first being the multiple differences between New Labour ideology and Blue Labour's ideology and the second is going to be why this is the case. I want to establish that, although both New and Blue Labour are very different that they both do share some common ground. The conflict of interests between these two factions of the Labour Party, including debates over ideological differences, is vital in the overall discussion of Blue Labour's coherence as an ideology and this chapter will set out the opinion of people outside of both the New and Blue Labour circles. What is ostensibly apparent is the relationship between both New Labour and Blue Labour, New Labour's goal to modernise the Labour Party into an electable party at the expense of its core values held closely by Blue Labour. However, Ed West makes the point in his chapter *The Gentle Society; What Blue Labour can offer Conservatives* in the book *Blue Labour: Forcing New Politics* is that "long before Tony Blair's rebranding, Labour had evolved from being a largely working-class, socialist party into a predominantly middle-class, liberal one." (West, 2015). As discussed previously, the Old Left which Glasman et al affiliate with what Blue Labour stands with had been replaced by the New Left which began to surge in popularity under the leadership of Neil Kinnock. Although, what this chapter will set out is several threads of familiarity between both New and Blue Labour as Madeleine Davis writes in her article *Can One Nation Labour Learn from the New Left*, "Jon Cruddas acknowledges the importance for Labour of its encounters with critical traditions 'half in, half out' of the party, therefore, as he did at the final plenary of last year's conference, is surely welcome" (Davis M., 2013). Davis acknowledges that Cruddas et al need to find a middle ground between both the Old and New Left of the Labour Party and this Chapter explores this throughout.

## Blue Labour's stance

As previous chapter have stated, it is important to first understand where each of the key thinkers come from when discussing New Labour before critically analysing the ideological differences between both Blue and New Labour. In his book *The Dignity for Labour*, Jon Cruddas discusses the 'Blair effect' and how his leadership transformed how one sees leadership and policy making. Describing that "once he (Blair) became prime minister, polling dominated policy." (Cruddas, *The Dignity of Labour*, 2021, p. 46) which in turn made way for New Labour's desire to focus the election on "swing voters in swing seats – to reproduce Middle England political domination, Blair's marketplace" (Cruddas, *The Dignity of Labour*, 2021). Cruddas criticism of New Labour also coincide with parts of Blue Labour's doctrine, a rejection of neoliberalist policies which, in Cruddas opinion, deterred from the post-war labour regulations and instead became a driving force to "bolster working-class disposable incomes" (Cruddas, *The Dignity of Labour*, 2021). At the real heart of Cruddas argument is that New Labour and Blue Labour cannot coexist due to their strong ideological differences which fails to create a pluralist sense of 'togetherness' within the Labour Party as a whole. Cruddas importantly states that Blair and New Labour's market trends only benefited those in middleclass or above jobs, stating that "Labour Force Surveys pointed to only a slight rise in those jobs considered white-collar and above – up from some 35 per cent to 37 per cent" (Cruddas, *The Dignity of Labour*, 2021, p. 49) and with New Labour's 'hourglass' job market model which saw an increase in support and/or funding for progression in the upper end of the job market, the bottom of the hourglass which predominately made up the Labour Party's backbone voters felt left behind. Cruddas states that "a neglect of the vocations and labour market realities underneath – with disastrous political consequences for the left over the following two decades as the working class deserted the party." (Cruddas, *The Dignity of Labour*, 2021, p. 49). As previously discussed, Blue Labour economic model is built on a revival of 'vocational' and 'labour' jobs, a complete reversal of the hourglass discussed by Cruddas, the Traditional working-class job/community which is at the core of Blue Labour's values is clearly forgotten or not important to New Labour in their minds. Cruddas goes on to state that one of New Labour's key failures was an inability to "correct the long-term shift in the balance of economic forces between capital and labour" (Cruddas, *The Dignity of Labour*, 2021, p. 49). The contrast of values between both Blue and New Labour is shown throughout Cruddas book, the relation between capital and labour is significant, Blue Labour want to lower the necessity of capitalism whilst increasing labour and New Labour want to find an alternative balance of both capital and labour.

Maurice Glasman takes a similar approach to assessing New Labour, in *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*, Glasman makes it clear that in the book, “The focus on a politics of paradox enabled us to appreciate both the scale of the success and the depth of failure of New Labour” (Glasman, *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*, 2011) from this Glasman has an understanding that New Labour had successes in certain areas, however Glasman goes on to state that looking back on the history of the Labour Party it was founded on the principle of being a localist, cooperative/community led party which had, under New Labour become “liberal and consumerist one that ceased generating the leadership necessary to sustain a democratic movement” (Glasman, *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*, 2011), the vitality of a democratic movement within the Labour Party holds strong to Blue Labour’s values. Their community led politics almost goes hand in hand with the democratic movement Glasman discussed, however this does beg the question of Glasman thoughts on a Corbyn led Labour Party. For example, when Corbyn was elected Labour leader in 2015 he stated in his victory speech his thanks for those who “took part in this election, this huge democratic exercise of more than half a million people all across this country”<sup>5</sup>, going on to discuss his election as leader as a movement, something which he based in leadership campaign on. As well as this, Glasman makes it clear that he does see some positivity with New Labour, stating in his article *Society not State The Challenge of Big Society* that New Labour created a country built on “skilful, loyal, flexible, literate, healthy and maturely parental citizens – open, loving and patriotic” however the ‘model’ that New Labour adapted which saw an increase in both societal and market power failed to grasp what Glasman describes as a violation of “egalitarian justice” (Glasman, *Society not State The Challenge of the Big Society*, 2010). This is also well documented in Karl Polanyi book *The Great Transformation* in which he makes the point that “A clash of group interests that resulted in paralysing the organs of industry or state— either of them, or both— formed an immediate peril to society.” (Polanyi, 1957) the idea that Polanyi presents that the ‘clash’ of interesting (in this case, power and market) highlights a significant flaw in New Labour policy as Glasman writes that “here was a conflict between them and it was zero-sum: more state meant less market and vice versa.” (Glasman, *Society not State The Challenge of the Big Society*, 2010) .

Glasman makes a clear criticism over the lack of social changes under the New Labour government, making the case that problems such childhood obesity, anti-social behaviour and social mobility which Glasman defined as ‘real-life’ problems did not subside to the extent in which New Labour promised it would, Glasman goes on to describe this as “As people pursued their careers, as the public and private sectors became the dominant employers and the ‘third sector’ found itself entirely dependent on both, society was as besieged as it ever was under the previous Conservative government.” (Glasman, *Society not State The Challenge of the Big Society*, 2010). Glasman

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<sup>5</sup> Corbyn, J, Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn Victory Speech-video, Guardian News, 12<sup>th</sup> Sept 2015, YouTube



criticism of New Labour seems to boil down to a lack of engagement with the increase of social mobility and welfare and instead focusing on the market and career progression, a staunch contrast to Blue Labour 'localist' economic policy. Glasman criticism of the lack of social mobility enabled during the New Labour is echoed in the work by Lee Elliot Major and Stephen Marcent in their book *Social Mobility and its Enemies* describe the Blair government education policies as failing to increase mobility, writing that "evidence-led education movement shows how hard it is to raise school results, particularly for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, and points to a much thornier problem" (Major & Mercher, 2018). Overall, Glasman makes the argument that New Labour lack a sense of common good within their ideology, which is a unfair assumption to make as the evidence suggests that New Labour had made strides with support those in unfortunate situations, A market and career driven politics leaves those most vulnerable behind and fails to support those communities which mean the most to Blue Labour. Moreover, what is apparent is that Glasman does not take any real issue with Tony Blair or his leadership style unlike Jon Cruddas, Glasman's more ideological based criticism provides an interesting coherence between both Glasman and Marc Stears.

Marc Stears makes it clear in his article *Everyday Democracy* that his argument against New Labour closely relates to what Glasman argues. Stears writes that New Labour "exacerbated, rather than resolved, many of the deeper cultural problems that we face" (Stears, *Everyday Democracy* , 2011, p. 18). In short, what is developing is a conflict over priorities within the Labour Party, New Labours lack of emphasis on cultural and social issues (or not as much emphasis as Blue Labour would hope) has created one of the key conflicts between both ideological factions. Stears goes on to write that New Labour also suffers with creating a 'cut throat' development of public services, a necessity described Stears. However, the manner in which New Labour went about improving public Services created "most cut-throat of commercial planning, in its drive to improve 'performance'" (Stears, *Everyday Democracy* , 2011, p. 19). Stears analogy that New Labour took the necessary steps to help rebuild Britain after several successive Conservative governments provides a similar point of view of both Glasman and Cruddas in that New Labour were not as bad as originally suggested. Stears goes on to expand on the relationship between expertise and social change, suggesting that, firstly, in simple terms, we define technocrats as mostly middle-age, middle-class professional, with a lack of real-life experience (Stears, *Has Labour had enough of Experts?*, 2021) which especially plays a vital role in the discussion when talking about the bulk of the Labour Party's voters in the northern 'Red Wall' seats. Stears makes the important point that "They (technocrats) can often be quite disconnected from the rhythms of everyday life as experienced by people who have different kinds of lives" (Stears, *Has Labour had enough of Experts?*, 2021). This point is one of the major discussions point within this chapter and where one truly begins to see where Blue and New Labour separate. For example, if

we paint the ‘Technocrats’ and New Labour with the same brush we can see that, in the eyes of Stears, the cultural divide is far more significant than the administrative one. If any political party cannot relate to their voters on a cultural level first, how can it expect to govern on an administrative scale? This is where Blue Labour suggests that New Labour fail to comprehend.

The pamphlet, *The Limitation of the Expert* by Harold Laski written in 1931, relates similarly to what Stears discusses. Laski writes that “It too often fails to see round its subject. It sees its results out of perspective by making them the center of relevance to which all other results must be related. Too often, also, it lacks humility; and this breeds in its possessors a failure in proportion which makes them fail to see the obvious which is before their very noses” (Laski, 1931, p. 372). Taking into consideration what Laski is trying to convey to the reader, we can see that Stears theory of separation of policy and culture is a longstanding and established idea. Laski point regarding the failure to see what is under their nose rings a parallel between Stears point of the progression that New Labour saw under popular policy making but not seeing the problems it was causing for the working class. Stears chapter in the *Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox* highlights the key failings of New Labour leadership, suggesting that the Labour politics of the late 1990s/early 2000s were characterised by “Spin and personality-assault” (Stears, *Democracy, Leadership & Organising*, 2011) politics. As Stears suggests, New Labour did bring a different style of governing and management, with the likes of Blairs Director of Communication and Strategy Alastair Campbell known for his aggressive management of Blairs Cabinet and famously expressing a desire to ‘sex up’ the Weapon of Mass Destruction dossier before its wider public release. One could assume from this that Campbell embodied everything that Stears found distasteful about New Labour’s management. Stears describes this type of ‘leadership frenzy’ as being a realist and that idealist and realist tend to clash. Stears writes that, “Realists suppose that decent ends in politics can be straightforwardly secured by indecent means” (Glasman, *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*, 2011) and that “Social cohesion and the common good cannot emerge from a politics of outright domination” (Glasman, *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*, 2011). Stears understands that an increased desire for domination politics will lead to a break down in social cohesion and common good, two things which are at the heart of Blue Labour’s doctrine. Political management which sees a lack of remorse for social issues which mean a lot to Blue Labour. Finally, Stears also discusses, in part, that New Labour was the final nail in the coffin for Old Left Labour values, writing that “by the late twentieth century this alternative – a socialism of the everyday – was entirely forgotten” (Stears, *Ideology, socialism and the everyday: forgotten*, 2017, p. 282), this provides an interesting validation for the conflict of interest felt between both Blue and New Labour because, as discussed in the previous chapter regarding economics, Blue Labour generally sympathise with Corbynist economic policies, if New Labour brings about an abrupt end to the ‘socialism for everybody’ then this will clearly not resonate well with the Blue Labour faction.

Jonathan Rutherford highlights similar criticism to those of Cruddas and Stears, in the chapter *New Labour, the market state and the end of welfare* in his book *After Identity*, Rutherford heavily criticises New Labour legislative legacy, by identifying key connections between New Labour and the insurance company to ensure a reduction of eligibility for sickness benefits. In this article, Rutherford states that when New Labour introduced the Welfare Reform Act, which was designed to amend the Conservative Party's All Work Test, which had failed to "reduce the inflow of claimants with mental health disorders" (Rutherford J. , *New Labour, the market state and the end of welfare*, 2007), this change would change from the Benefit entailment system but to be based on "on what a person was able to do and the action needed to support them in work" (Rutherford J. , *New Labour, the market state and the end of welfare*, 2007) which was predominately computerised and was not led anyone within the medical profession. the result of this was a failure to competently assess those in particular with mental health problems and allowed them to slip through the cracks thus creating a significant failing (Rutherford J. , *New Labour, the market state and the end of welfare*, 2007). One could argue this issue is still felt today. Rutherford defines this transition as an accessory to "serves the need of the market, attempting to turn the individual into an efficient, docile unit of consumption and productivity" (Rutherford J. , *New Labour, the market state and the end of welfare*, 2007), Rutherford argument relates closely to what Stears and Glasman had criticised, the fact is that New Labour goal is to serve the market which comes at the expense of the many, according to Corbynist faction of the Labour Party. In a similar chapter, *The Future is Conservative*, Rutherford makes the point that New Labour did not comprehend the relationship between the "consumer culture and the glamour of celebrity and money" (Rutherford J. , *The Future is Conservative*, 2011) to which New Labour enabled under the Free Market, however, what Rutherford points out is that New Labour did not "recognise its impact on either its own party or on society and human relationships" (Rutherford J. , *The Future is Conservative*, 2011, p. 93), the greed and desire appears to come at a cost of solidarity and working together, both of which Blue Labour pride themselves on in their work. Rutherford goes on to write that "Labour's role was to prepare individuals for the global economy not protect them from it: in effect society should be subordinate to market forces" (Rutherford J. , *The Future is Conservative*, 2011). Rutherford makes the concluding point that the reform "around welfare, education and health are now being taken to their logical conclusion by the Coalition", the idea that welfare reforms made under a Labour government could come to a logical conclusion by the Cameron/Clegg coalition and not require major reform from their governments, proves the point that by moving to the liberally economic right, New Labour and the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition had found some common ground. This sentiment, in the eyes of Rutherford, "New Labour abandoned traditional supporters, along with the idea of an ethical commitment to mutual support." (Rutherford J. , *The Future is Conservative*, 2011) And by doing this, Rutherford stated that "New Labour abandoned traditional supporters, along with the idea of an ethical commitment to mutual

support.” (Rutherford J. , *The Future is Conservative*, 2011). This provides an interesting discussion point, as New Labour grew within the Labour Party, a significant portion of the Labour’s traditional membership sought to find a political home elsewhere, especially to voice concerns social concerns that New Labour were adequately addressing. For example, in the *article Emotions in politics, affective-discursive in UKIP and Labour*, scholar Ruth Breeze argues that “UKIP also makes greater use of ‘anger’ than does Labour[...] the emotional subject position of right-wing populists is often coloured by resentment” (Breeze, 2018), this ‘anger’ is similar to that of Blue Labour, especially since Blue Labour and UKIP both overtly share the same opinion in regard to immigration and the UKs relationship with the European Union. As stated in the ‘Thinkers of Blue Labour’ chapter, Glasman makes it clear regarding his distrust for the EU and desire for a pure domestic led economic policy. With all this consider, it is clear through Rutherford’s writings that his primary concern with New Labour is an abandonment of the traditional Labour supporter. Something which Rutherford highlights in his article *Labour’s Big Society* to which he states that Blair made a serious political error and allowed traditional labour voters to be pushed into “racial social movements” (Rutherford J. , *Labours Good Society* , 2010). This is evidently a cause for concern for Rutherford and one could make the case that one of Blue Labours goals in to bring back the lost voters to the far right with the promise of bringing about traditional Labour values.

### New & Blue Labour; What’s the difference?

After discussing what each one of the key thinkers within Blue Labour think about New Labour, it is important to try and decipher where their core differences lie. Overall, it appears that core issues Blue Labour have with New Labour fall into three key areas: disconnection with the traditional Labour supporter, the embracing of globalisation and the free market and finally a failure to enable social mobility. However, what Adrian Pabst suggest is that contrary to New Labour “Blue Labour hopes to demonstrate how strong civic traditions can point to a renewal of the movement as it seeks to forge a politics that meets the demands of our time” (Pabst, *Blue Labour and the Politics of Common Good*, 2015). This is what separates New Labour and Blue Labour, where New Labour sought to reinvent the Labour Party as a political party that can hold its own on the global stage and strengthen the ‘Special Relationship’ with the United States, Blue Labour desired a more traditional Labour Party which focuses more on the UK and more importantly the working class. Although, upon assessment, there are certain elements that New and Blue Labour can agree on, an example of this would be in New Labour 1997 General Election manifest, which states that their desire to remove the ‘under class’ writing, “We will establish one-stop regional development agencies to co-ordinate regional economic development, help small business and encourage inward investment.” (Party L. , 1997) this economic development draws parallels with Blue Labours economic goals discussed in a previous chapter. The

desire to invest in small businesses and 'co-ordinate regional development' rings like Blue Labour's goal of investing in communities and promote localist ideas. However, where Blue and New Labour separate is when discussing economic management, as New Labour writes that "we accept the global economy as a reality and reject the isolationism and 'go-it-alone' policies of the extremes of right or left." (Party L. , 1997), the acceptance of a global economy and rejection of isolationism goes completely against what Blue Labour stands for as a Eurosceptic, traditionalist campaign group. In the article From New Labour to Blue Labour, an unnamed writer for the Socialist Worker argues the point that what has made the Labour Party currently unelectable is a failure to acknowledge that they have lost the working-class vote, stating that "Labour refuses to accept the real reason it lost the last election—that it abandoned its working class "core vote" by cosyng up to the rich. Now the rich have gone home to the Tories, Labour knows it needs the support of workers to fight and win elections." (N/A, 2011). What this author importantly gets across is a necessity for unity between both New and Blue Labour. If New Labour are able to create an electable Labour Party, it must also be able to connect to its traditional working class support group. However, this position is unattainable, New Labour and Blue Labour cannot work together as their policies are too much in conflict with each other, New Labour relies on a free market as well core cosmopolitan middle-class supporters to give them power, both of which Blue Labour strongly disagrees and does not have.

#### Conclusion: is there a conflict of interest?

What this chapter has set out is an understanding of why Blue Labour, on paper, vehemently disagrees with New Labour via the four key thinkers: Maurice Glasman, Marc Stears, Jon Cruddas and Jonathan Rutherford. What has become clear is that although there are some agreements between both factions, neither one of them would be able to work together. Blue Labour's strong nationalist ideas and individualist economic model goes completely against New Labour's globalised economics and strong desire to work with other countries. This chapter has set out the three key areas where Blue Labour conflicts with New Labour: disconnection with the traditional Labour supporter, the embracing of globalisation and the free market and finally a failure to enable social mobility and work with community on a local level. My belief is that there will never be any unity between both New and Blue Labour and the conflict of interests will always be there. Both Blue and New Labour represents the two sides of the Labour Party that have never found much room for agreement. Blue Labour's working class, community led, Brexit leaning, and domestic values will always conflict with the more middle class, cosmopolitan, Remain supporting, internationalist. There has always been this conflict and its only recently we have now more or less placed them in two factions of the Labour Party. In terms of the wider question regarding Blue Labour's coherence as a campaign group, it is evidently clear that the four key thinkers have more or less agreement on why they dislike the New

Labour project and looking forward to now as the Labour Party is currently running under Kier Starmer, a call back to the right from Jeremy Corbyn left wing Labour Party, It will be interesting to see how Blue Labour reflect on Starmerism and if they will disagree with it just as much as they disagreed with New Labour.

This next chapter, is in my view as vital as the discussion of New Labour, although it does play the heaviest role in the Blue Labour conversation, I believe that it aides in laying the foundation of understanding for all chapters within this thesis.

### Blue Labour & Religion

The topic of religion is something that is not overly discussed in the Blue Labour conversation, but it is something I personally have wanted to explore since the beginning of this project. After a conversation I had with one of Blue Labour's writers Ian Geary some time ago, he made it clear to me that his Christian values were at the core of his political beliefs, and I believe I can find this theme throughout Blue Labour's key writers and their overall belief. What this chapter will set out several themes and ideas revolving around Blue Labour (and on border sense the Labour Party) and their relationship with religion touching on subjects such as ethnic minorities, atheism, left-wing Christianity and finally Red Toryism. firstly, it is important understand each of the key thinkers' religious values and how that correlates with their political belief and secondly the relationship between Blue Labour and its counterpart Red Toryism. By Nathan Coombs definition, Red Toryism is "a triangulation of the current impasses of both left and right, compelling a reach back to 'a conservatism with deeper roots than 1979, and whose branches extend into the tradition of communitarian civic conservatism'" (Coombs, 2011), as well as this I will be discussing the broader sense of Blue Labour apparent disconnection with ethnic minorities and their disinterest in religions such as Islam and Sikhism, which is due, in part, to their inherent Christian/catholic values. In both *The Labour Tradition & The Politics of Paradox* and *Blue Labour Forcing New Politics*, there is little to no mention of ethnic minorities and how Blue Labour will set out to work for them or is there a racist undertone set out throughout the traditional ideas and values of Blue Labour. Finally, this chapter will also evaluate the relationship between the Labour Party and the rise of atheism within the UK and if this has played a significant role in the foundation of the Labour Party's voters.

## Red Toryism and Blue Labour, what's the difference?

The comparisons between Blue Labour and Red Toryism get made regularly within the appropriate literature and with good reason. It is difficult to not make comparison between both ideologies regardless of the fact that on paper they sit in their respected left- and right-wing ideologies, as Malcolm Brown describes in his article *Red Tory and Blue Labour; More Theology Needed* “Similarities between Blond and Glasman’s work, especially their shared desire to reinstate strong community bonds and intermediate institutions to stand between the individual and an overweening state coupled with an overweening market, inevitably led to Glasman’s project being dubbed “Blue Labour.” (Brown, *Red Tory and Blue Labour: More Theology Needed*, 2012). Brown makes an interesting comparison here; Glasman and the founder of Red Toryism Phillip Brown appear inseparable in their ideological beliefs. Both aspire for tradition and religious values to become the centre of their political belief, the approval of Cameron’s ‘Big Society’ project and finally a need for community led politics. Brown writes that “Blond sees himself standing within the Christendom movement of the twentieth century, of which Radical Orthodoxy is, perhaps, the latest and most rigorous manifestation.” Radical Orthodoxy is one of the key phrases for this chapter as it is, at first, the heart of what Red Toryism is. John Milbank’s conceptive idea that, at its core, Radical Orthodoxy is seen as a new way of participating in religion. Milbank breaks down what he means by the term ‘radical orthodoxy’ describing the Orthodox side of it as, “Orthodox in the most straightforward sense of commitment to credal Christianity and the exemplarity of its patristic matrix. But orthodox also in the more specific sense of re-affirming a richer and more coherent Christianity which was gradually lost sight of after the late Middle Ages.” (Milbank, *Suspending the Material: The Turn of Radical Orthodoxy*, 1999) the reaffirmance of Christianity is the important part of this quote as later Milbank defines the ‘radical’ aspect as, “The central theological framework of radical orthodoxy is ‘participation’ as developed by Plato and reworked by Christianity, because any alternative configuration perforce reserves a territory independent of God.” (Milbank, *Suspending the Material: The Turn of Radical Orthodoxy*, 1999).

Milbank’s new way of viewing theology through the telescope of Radical Orthodoxy provides an interesting take on how one participates in religious theology and how this can relate to modern politics. How this links to radical orthodoxy comes down to the idea of what makes radical orthodoxy ‘radical’, which is due to its supposed rejection of both modernism and postmodernism, in favour of a social construct where all life’s pleasure and problems are assessed through theology, instead of the reason vs faith dichotomy.

Milbank goes on to describe that Radical Orthodoxy recognising and understands one's historic roots in relation their culture and their own morals and values which rings very similar to what Blue Labour wishes to celebrate, Milbank overall presents a similar vision through his Radical Orthodoxy that creates a link between both Red Toryism and Blue Labour. However, where this link is best shown is in Milbank's article the Politics of Paradox written in 2009. In this Article, Milbank discusses at length the relationship between Anglo-Christianity and Politics, the significance of this article was highlighted in an interview I conducted with Blue Labour writer Jonathan Rutherford who described it as part of the "core literature for Blue Labour". Milbank argues that Christians must pursue at its core, a desire to create a society where financial aide and wellbeing support is attainable through 'welfare' and an equal distribution of wealth. As well as this, Milbank goes on to write that Christians on the left must also "recognize a wider family resemblance with many variants of Christian social teaching that characteristically stress subsidiarity" (Milbank, The Politics of Paradox, 2009) with all things considered, Milbank understands that one cannot easily categories Radical orthodoxy in to simple 'left/right' politics but must come to one own decision and path in which they wish to follow. Highlighted by Milbank's statement that "some within Radical Orthodoxy may follow Phillip Blond in his espousal of a new British form of "Red Toryism." Others, currently the majority, will follow my own brand of "Blue Socialism"—socialism with a Burkean tinge, now common to many of the more reflective on the left, including some within the centre-left (anti-New Labour) British Labour party "Compass Group." (Milbank, The Politics of Paradox, 2009) Milbank's points out the popularity of ideological thinking of Blue Labour before Blue Labour was officially coined by Glasman in 2011, the 'Burkean tinge' which Milbank references is in relation to Edmund Burke, who is widely considered one of the 'founding fathers' of modern conservatism.

The comparison of what Blue Labour stands for in its comparison to Burkean philosophy is an interesting thought and bares a slight comparison as Edmund Burke most popular ideas are associated with the role of Christianity on a wider scale of social normalities, for example, in The Cambridge Companion of Edmund Burke, the chapter focused on Burkes religious values reference a speech given by Burke in which he states that "Christian morality excels the beast heathen by refining our passions [...] we stand in two great relations the one to Society and the other too our Creator- It only teaches the first" (Harris, 2012, p. 93) Burke in theory then suggest that one use of religion can teach us about society and how to behave, providing an similar parallel to that suggested by Milbank in regard to Blue Labour, Milbank's work reflects themes of a necessity for conservative values within modern day political philosophical discussion as well as complimenting the paradoxical nature of Blue Labour. To suggest that a 'Burkean tinge' runs through Blue Labour doctrine especially in its religious aspects reflects a sense of understanding that Blue Labour is truly left-wing, we may have seen in the economics chapter that Blue Labour has an appreciation for mass nationalism and a rejection of capitalism (certainly the most significant in the series of interviews I conducted with



Glasman) which on the surface would make Blue Labour appear very left wing however, with Milbank analysis of the religious undertones of Blue Labour. The common theme of paradox which runs through Blue Labour adds to the argument that Blue Labour lacks real coherence.

Now we have concluded that Red Toryism and Blue Labour have similarities through their grounding in Radical Orthodoxy, they also share very similar economic policies, which, as Mark Chapman discuss in his article *Red Toryism: A Historical Reflection*, that Phillip Blond heavily criticises “Thatcherite laissez-faire economics with its neo-liberalism and its consequent destruction of civic life. In attempting to liberate citizens from the state all she succeeded in doing, according to Blond, was in making the state more “central, powerful and pernicious.”<sup>15</sup> She created “an authoritarian state,”” (Chapman, 2015) the concept of a centralised state where power is not distributed equally goes against both Red Toryism and Blue Labour’s ideas. It becomes clear to me that, after all of the above considered, that there are more things in Common with both Blond and Glasman’s ideologies than that which divides them. Small details such as Red Toryism use of the Catholic School of Thought (an ideology which is respected by Glasman and discussed in a previous chapter) is only narrowly different to the work the likes of Ian Geary and the Christian Left of Blue Labour. Outside of this, there are criticism of Red Toryism as highlighted by Graeme Smith whose argument lays a foundation that Red Toryism is not as radical as once believed and is in fact far more elitist, Smith writes that “This is not a positive elitism, in which some proper place is given to expertise, but a more patronising elitism in which the poor and oppressed, characterized as working classes by Blond” (Smith, 2012), highlighting one of the key contrasts between Red Toryism and Blue Labour, Glasman and Blue Labour do not comply with this elitist mentality, as Glasman stating to me during my interview that the real heart of Blue Labour comes from working class communities.

Smith’s analysis of Red Toryism being an elitist ideology wrapped up in a working class mentality is something I agree with, you cannot claim to be an ideology for the working class yet promote a sense of overt romanticized and non-radical policies that only begin to highlight what Blue Labour have already discussed. Glasman has highlighted this several times in his criticism of Red Toryism even though, on the surface level, Blue Labour and Red Toryism appear to relate in several different areas, most significantly in their desire to depend on religious traditions to get across their political philosophy.

## Religious traditions within the Labour Party

Since its inception, The Labour Party has had strong links with religion, its messages on family values and working together coincide with many teachings of the church and has since expanded, from its Catholic School of Thought beginning to now seeing large Islam/Muslim ideas and voters for the Party. This section of this chapter is going to dissect Labours religious traditions and why they are so important for the party and indeed Blue Labour. I interviewed senior Blue Labour writer Adrian Pabst to discuss this more in depth.

When asked about the Labour Party's history with religion, Pabst stated that "it is absolutely vital to not forget the connection between religion and the Labour Party"<sup>6</sup> and to never forget the Labour was "a home for different faiths and nationalities, because, unlike the conservative party which was more aligned with Anglicanism, Labour was actually more plural in a sense"<sup>7</sup> Pabst expresses an interesting paradox one would assume from Labour's religious history and the relationship between religion and Blue Labour which, as far as I can see, is more focus on Christian fundamentals over religious theology from religions such as Hinduism and Islam. The relevance of this stems from Pabst's belief that a lot of members so the Labour Party are still religious, "not just the old but the young"<sup>8</sup> which is supported by how the Labour membership is, although on the decline, is still significantly larger than both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat membership (Burton & Tunnicliffe, 2022) and with large portions of labour party membership coming from communities with 75% of Muslim councillors being members of the Labour Party (About LMN, n.d.) there is a clear home for non-Christian religious members of the Labour Party. One of the key themes that runs through Blue Labour is a desire to support the working class, as Glasman states in my interview with him that New Labour and a Globalised economic "prevented the working class from coming through" this draws a similar parallel to the work by Rafaela Dancygier in her article *The Left and Minority Representation: The Labour Party, Muslim Candidates, and Inclusion Trade-offs* in which he states that "Muslims tend to be of relatively lower socioeconomic status" (Dancygier, 2013) as well as also arguing that these lower socioeconomic Muslim communities would be in conflict with "other low-income voters (traditionally core supporters of the Left) in the competition over material resource" (Dancygier, 2013) Dancygier is effectively discussing the racial and/or religious tension felt in lower socioeconomic communities which do not reflect what Blue Labour and particularly Adrian Pabst believe in. one of Blue Labours' key criticism is highlighted in the work by Satnam Virdee and Brandon McGreever who states that Blue Labour "fail to recognize is the increasingly multi-ethnic nature of the contemporary English working class and how their rhetoric is likely to only appeal to

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<sup>6</sup> Adrian Pabst, 2022, interviewed by Arthur Aitchison via Zoom in personal communication

<sup>7</sup> Adrian Pabst, 2022, interviewed by Arthur Aitchison via Zoom in personal communication

<sup>8</sup> Adrian Pabst, 2022, interviewed by Arthur Aitchison via Zoom in personal communication

certain categories of workers, particularly those most concerned about questions of race, immigration and Europe” (Virdee & McGreever, *Racism, Crisis, Brexit*, 2018) this is where I disagree with this statement and highlights a common theme when criticising Glasman et al and basing their opinions on a caricature of Blue Labour. I think McGreever and Virdee provide a mere service level response to Blue Labour’s religious and racial ideology, Glasman, Pabst et al believe that the shared fundamentals within the most popular religions (family values, shared community, tolerance and respect) is what unites people. It is easy for writers to make sweeping statements regarding who supports Blue Labour and the mentality behind it however to simply address it as a single channel of racist, working-class people, which it appears to be its sole supporters when in matter of fact this appears to be incorrect. Granted, one can make the case that Glasman in particular has made some questionable statements in his time, the main one being his interest in starting a dialogue with the far-right organisation the English Defence League. However, upon speaking with and discussing the racist banner that flies over the Blue Labour name with Glasman, Rutherford and Cruddas, I believe that none of them are the racist that they are portrayed to be. Although Glasman has gone on record in the past, stating that he has had meeting with members of both UKIP and the English Defence League, when met with criticism, Glasman stated to me that we shouldn’t “polarise against the poor, do not polarise against the poor. Polarise against the rich”<sup>9</sup>, however this response appears to be an excuse for his , pointing out a class difference appears to be a deflecting from racist accusation. which is a struggle within the Labour Party because “the Labour is managed by a bunch of wealthy individuals” what Glasman appears to be understanding is that a significant number of people from

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lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to be more far right, which, although could be seen as sweeping statement can post some validity. Following the 2015 General Election, there was a shift in voting tendencies in the Labour Heartlands as many voters switched from voting Labour to voting UKIP, this was discussed in Goodwins book *Revolt the Right*, where, in short, New Labour had failed to grasp key issues surrounding the Labour Heartlands and subsequently took them for granted. This inevitably began to distance the heartland from the Labour Party and eventually led to its collapse in 2019.

it’s my belief that Blue Labour could been seen a buffer state between the Labour Party and UKIP. Because not only does it incorporate traditional labour values but also, as Glasman puts it, has a more honest discussion with the poorest in society about issues revolving round migration. Issue of religion and migration play parallel to one another when discussing Blue Labour. Glasman hinted to me during our interview an interesting point, when discussing what Blue Labour stands for, he said that “I would

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<sup>9</sup> An interview with Maurice Glasman, conducted by Arthur Aitchison via Zoom

abandon London and Manchester, vote green, do whatever you want” and his focus would be on “unifying the small towns between the north and south [...] bringing together Muslim and non-Muslims in Blackburn, have a go at that if you’re hard enough!” essentially what Glasman is saying here is that the Labour Party is so focused on other issues that it fails to understand a religious/cultural differences felt in working class towns. A sense of working out the uncomfortable side of politics drives Blue Labour’s rhetoric, yet during our interview Glasman did not provide, again, any kind of policy that would best solve those problems. Furthering the idea that Glasman is more or less just a thinker without any real understanding of how best to tackle those issues he holds dear to him.

Another key point in Blue Labour’s religious traditions is the idea that, in fact, Blue Labour’s religious ideas only truly stem from their desire for the ‘common good’ in the article written by Rutherford and Glasman, they state that Blue Labour derives its ideology from “not homogenous but a plural that must be brought together in a participatory and representative democratic politics of the common good that draws upon a diverse range of political, ethical and religious traditions” (Rutherford & Glasman, What is Blue Labour, 2020), the religious traditions are in my opinion the most important to drive the message of ‘common good’ within Blue Labour. Adrian Pabst subsequently drew parallels between Blue Labour and the Islamic faith, arguing that “there’s lots we can learn from Muslim communities, the fact they try and lead a more integrated unified life, the fact they hold things dear like time for prayer or a day in which they don’t work, the basic practice of charity” Pabst continues to list off several things he admires in the Muslim faith and which links to the overall theme of common good. Interestingly, what Pabst describes draws out similar theme in the work of Clare Amos in their article *For the Common Good: The Church of England, Christian Muslim Relations and A Common World* in which she discusses the Christian-Muslim relation within the UK, arguing that the establishment of the Christian-Muslim forum in 2005 was “To weave a web of open, honest and committed personal relationships between Christians and Muslims; To encourage shared reflection on the spiritual, theological, scholarly, ethical and practical values of the two traditions in order to offer resources for citizenship in our society” (Amos, 2009). Amos is clear that both Muslims and Christians can live and work in a shared society and that Muslim-Christian do not overly differ theologically, highlighted by what Pabst discussed with me. Amos goes on to discuss what is meant by the term ‘common good’, highlighting that “It is not a phrase which features in the original Muslim letter itself. [...] It is a phrase that has a range of meaning, but it has been recently used in the United Kingdom to draw attention to the role of religion in promoting social harmony and in offering a spiritual perspective on current moral, social and political question.” (Amos, 2009). I agree with Amos conclusion, it is a phrase that gets thrown about a lot, particularly within Blue Labour, but with

no actual substance to what it means, we can take it on face value that Blue Labour uses it to highlight a sense of unity between communities in strive of a better life or we can see it for its religious context, through the catholic school of thought or through its place within the bible. Blue Labour religious values, at its core, is about helping those who need it most and from what Pabst and Glasman describe to me during our interviews it appears to play a key role in their thinking. However, if this was the why are their religious tension within communities? We have seen, since the Brexit vote a steep rise in racially motivated discourse and with the likes of far-right campaigner Tommy Robinson calling Islam a 'failed ideology', how come If there was such commonality between Christian and Muslims that there is such discourse within the country? As Adrian Pabst

It appears Blue Labour and/or Maurice Glasman's view of this would be My belief is that it is a cultural problem, a failure to understand the similarities between both faiths and the current cultural differences felt across the nation. We can see plenty of similarities with Muslims and Christians at a foundation level, however, it can appear that a contrast in western and middle eastern traditional values could play a key factor. This is something to be discussed more broadly in the following chapter.

### Conclusion

It appears to me that Religion plays a very big role in Blue Labour's thinking and how we can best understand the coherence of their thinking. Several writers have long argued that Blue Labour is a racist organisation with severely outdated values, however, upon research and understanding the layers to their theological thinking I can see that Blue Labour cares deeply about communities and relates to Islamic and the traditions they hold, which is supported by the traditions held by both its founders and Blue Labour's doctrine, Adrian Pabst stated in our interview about this. It is my understanding from writing this chapter that, upon looking a broader scale, Red Toryism and Blue Labour are very similar, as Milbank's article Radical Orthodoxy very much lays the foundation for Blue Labour according to Rutherford. Where I draw criticism is the fact that that none of the Blue Labour writer ever fully addressed why there is a supposed conflict between white working-class communities and ethnic minority communities. Upon suggesting it cultural issue, Glasman stated that it was the middle classes that were causing class conflicts and when pulled on certain attacks on mosques which, in my opinion, shows a clear religious element to the attack, I never gain a sustainable argument. What one can take away from this chapter is despite what other writers and indeed the media try and portray Blue Labour and particularly Glasman as a racist/racist campaign group I could see first-hand how much their religious traditions meant to them, both within the Labour

Party and in their own lives, however this does not absolve them of the allegation of racism and Glasman conversations with the English Defence League are inexcusable.

Finally, we approach the last chapter in this thesis, I wanted to place this at the end as, although it does play an important role in the Blue Labour conversation, I came to understand that it does lack the substance compared to my other chapters, during the interviews I conducted it became clear that almost all (bar Glasman) wanted to stay clear of the culture wars, which I can understand, it is an incredibly volatile subject in today's political climate but I still felt a chapter discussing the Blue Labour stance was important.

### Blue Labour & Culture

As we approach the final part of this thesis, I wanted to fully address the relationship between Blue Labour and the religious and political culture within the United Kingdom. Blue Labour has an outwardly traditional set of values which, at first, contradicts the rapidly growing liberal cultural values felt across the UK and especially those views by young voters and the influence of social media as a platform for political discourse. This chapter will analyse where Blue Labour 'fits' in the current cultural climate, coming from both its key writers and their overall stance on key issues such as racial and ethnic diversity, feminism and the decline of traditional gender roles. I will also be discussing Blue Labour's relationship with the new 'woke' agenda and the subsequent 'culture wars' that appears to dominate modern politics. Looking at Blue Labour at face value, it would appear that its key writers and thinkers are males (white and mostly religious) which begs the question of 'is there a place for women within its ranks. As with each interview I have conducted the overt answer has been, yes of course, however there is not any real substance to why they haven't been able to attract more female academics/politicians to its ranks. An interesting point to firstly dissect is during my interview with Jonathan Rutherford, I asked him whether there was a unified stance on topical issues such as Gay marriage, abortion etc and Rutherford replied with "a couple of years ago we took a stance to stay clear from all these 'so called' culture wars" which made it clear to me that Rutherford is aware of how Blue Labour's traditional cultural values can conflict with what the modern day Labour Party believes in. There is self-awareness that Blue Labour has between the differences between their cultural values and the popular cultural values felt across both the Labour

Party and the wider public, however this doesn't matter to them. As long as Blue Labour's cultural values run parallel with those working-class communities, they represent then what concern is it of them that a wider public disagrees with them. My opinion of this can also be supported by that of Jon Bloomfield, who also states that "Blue Labour supporters have been cautious in this arena, anxious to deny accusations of pandering to racism, but their direction of travel is increasingly clear. This is taking a political trend originating on the left into very dangerous territory" (Bloomfield, *Progressive Politics in a Changing World: Challenging the Fallacies of Blue Labour*, 2020, p. 93) Feminism

Throughout its literature, Blue Labour does not overtly discuss feminist ideas and values as it doesn't concern their overall narrative. However, there are two contrasting sides to this argument, Shadow Foreign Secretary David Lammy wrote in his article *Blue Labour: A Politics Centred on Relationships* in the *Blue Labour: Forcing New Politics* that in his opinion, "the family has come under pressure since women have entered the workforce, we shouldn't simply shout them down. Rather, we should ask how we can help families adapt to a world in which women rightfully have the chance to pursue their ambitions and earn a living. In particular, we might consider how we help fathers take on more of the caring at a time when mothers do more of the earning. Feminism and 'the family' don't have to be at odds." (Lammy, 2015), what Lammy attempts to dissect is that Blue Labour's value have shifted with time and although one may hold traditional family values, they can still be adapted for a change in the patriarchal workplace. However, I tend to disagree with Lammy's take, my view of it is that Blue Labour, at its core, most closely relates to the second wave feminist ideals, Glasman explicitly stated this to me during our interview "absolutely, its closest aligned (Blue Labour) with second wave feminism", to which it is Glasman belief that both his beliefs and the ideology of second wave feminism connect over the trans debate. In a historical sense, in Britain, women have typically been more affiliated with the right-wing ideology, with the likes of Suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst standing as a Conservative Party candidate during the 1926 General Election as well as the Conservative Party itself boasting three female leaders/prime ministers, one would imagine that Blue Labour would see these trends and adapt their doctrine to bring in a larger support base, however this has clearly not been the case. If we study the 'Old Left' within the Labour Party, which Blue Labour stands as the campaigning group for. Anthony Arblaster points out in the book *The Struggle for Labour's Soul* that following the 1951 General Election, where the Labour Party were voted out of office, they "accumulated its highest ever vote of nearly 14 million, 200,000 more than the Conservatives" (Arblaster, 2004)

Glasman et al do not believe in restriction in things such as reproductive rights and a belief in sexual exploration, however, the importance of the nuclear family and a mother's role within that

family remains at the core of Blue Labour's cultural values. The long-written narrative that Blue Labour's success rides on a sense of nostalgia reflects in its view of feminist ideals, female Labour MPs such as Diane Abbott have long criticised this within Blue Labour, as Abbott states that Blue Labour solely "an exclusively white male version of Labour's past" (Abbott, 2011) an understandable point made but as Glasman, Cruddas et al would state that Blue Labour is for the regeneration of the Labour Party's 'Old Left' which include the politics and work of MPs such as Barbra Castle, who laid the foundation for the 20<sup>th</sup> century old left. However, as we have seen throughout this thesis, Blue Labour lack a sense of coherence in its argument. In an interview by Ivana Bartoletti to the Fabian Women's Network in 2011, Glasman states that "Women are central to Blue Labour" (Glasman, An Interview with Maurice Glasman, 2011) although admitting Blue Labour, at the time, was still in its infancy. Analysing what Glasman means by this provides a sustainable argument for the paradoxical nature of Blue Labour itself. How can women be at the centre of Blue Labour when Glasman, Rutherford, Cruddas et al have not provided a substantial policy which reflects the advancement of women's social and economic rights? In fact, in a majority of the literature written by the key thinkers of Blue Labour it does not mention women or women's rights, apart from if it was within the context of providing a stable family dynamic which is reflective of their aspirations for a traditional 'community-led' policy. Blue Labour, at its core, does not speak for women, but does speak for those working class men who feel left behind by the Labour Party.

### LGBTQ issues and debates

Each of the key writers of Blue Labour have stated to me their apprehension regarding discussing the issues surrounding the trans debate, all apart from Glasman, who during our interview stated that "this whole thing we (trans women) are women, fuck off you're not"<sup>10</sup> Glasman was, of course, self-aware of the controversy surrounding this statement yet felt confident enough to say it in such a brutally honest way, the evidently suggests that Glasman and Blue Labour as a whole do not care about if their belief offend you or not. They are, however, tired of having to argue their own belief against academics and other political commentators that they choose routinely not to discuss anything related to the culture wars. Glasman's slip of the mask statement once again provides another example of the paradoxical nature of Blue Labour. On the one hand, Glasman states that women are integral to Blue Labour and their beliefs yet its founder refuse to believe that Trans women are women even if the

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<sup>10</sup> An interview with Maurice Glasman, conducted by Arthur Aitchison via Zoom



Equalities Act 2010 states that it is illegal to discriminate someone on the grounds of their gender and sexuality thus making it unlawful to look unfavourably against a certain group of people in the workplace or any other formal setting. In conclusion, Glasman statement also highlights a struggle that goes beyond a Blue Labour problem but also a wider Labour Party issue. The Labour Party has failed to compose a unified response to the wimple question of ‘are trans women, women?’ with the Labour MP for Canterbury Rosie Duffield making it clear that she does not believe that Trans women are women whilst also belonging to the Trans Exclusive Radical Feminist affiliation (TERF).

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Racial and Class Diversity the like this can be Blue Labour’s relationship with racial diversity throughout the UK. Throughout its history, The Labour Party has played a significant role in pushing those from a BAME background into mainstream politics with the likes of senior Labour Party politicians such as Diane Abbott being an MP for over thirty years. However, where does Blue Labour stand on this subject? Glasman stated to me that “Nottingham to Hull is Blue Labour through and through” yet the racial demographic of Hull is 94.1% white British, suggesting that blue Labour primarily speaks to white working-class communities. This is support in the article by Satnam Virdee and Brandan McGreever ‘Racism ,Crisis, Brexit’ in which they discuss that Blue Labour audience is primarily white working class, stating that the Blue Labour doctrine is “likely to only appeal to certain categories of workers, particularly those most concerned about questions of race, immigration and Europe” (Virdee & McGreever, Racism, Crisis, Brexit, 2018, p. 1813). The subject of immigration is something of importance to Blue Labour and tighter migration laws, as Jon Cruddas stated in our interview that

“wages were, even though we weren’t talking about it, flatlining in the early 2000s when migration was a 21<sup>st</sup> century income policy, so the government accepted all the macroeconomic benefits without helping the communities, the poorest who were disproportionately taking the strain” Cruddas provides an interesting Blue Labour paradox as his view of migration/immigration differs from how Glasman interoperates it. As highlighted by Bloomfield, what do we mean by ‘white’ working class? Because I

share the same opinion as Bloomfield that I don't believe "The working class is making a reappearance amongst Blue Labour authors—but only in a certain narrow sense of 'white'. The working class of which Goodwin writes is not black, Asian or mixed race. Indeed, this 'white working class' does not appear to be Irish, Polish or Latvian either." (Bloomfield, *Progressive Politics in a Changing World: Challenging the Fallacies of Blue Labour*, 2020) I don't believe Blue Labour is racist but its writing and tone can strike a sharp comparison of those by Goodwin.

Cruddas concern for his constituency and those who are the poorest in society being left behind by the New Labour policy of mass migration to support the globalisation rhetoric, arguing that the problems affecting the poorest in society were, to an extent, being pushed aside, in favour of mass migration to help increase the economic stability within the UK during the New Labour years whereas Glasman concerns revolved around his disapproval of the European Union and how migration became a catalyst for the increase of unemployment felt across working class regions of Northern England. Blue Labour subsequently and quite frequently get painted with the 'racist' brush. In a historical context, white working-class boys have consistently been the group who achieve the least GCSEs following the end of their secondary school education, enabling, from a young age, a sense of division between groups based on age, sex and family income and/or background. In the article *The White Working-Class, racism and respectability: Victims degenerates, and interest-convergence* written by David Gillburn, its highlighted that the newspaper the Daily Mail purposefully highlighted an inequality in funding between white and ethnic minorities writing that "Just 24 per cent of disadvantaged white boys now leave school with five or more good GCSEs. This compares with 33.7 per cent for black African boys from similar low-income households" (Gillburn, 2011) highlighting that in the UKs culture, from an early age, white working-class people, are told that those from ethnic backgrounds are considered 'more valuable' compared to them. Jon Bloomfield also argues for the mass migration model which is heavily criticised by Blue Labour stating that the dominance of the working class industrial industry has taken over by migrants but has simply been reincarnated in other roles within the workplace, writing that "the traditional working class has not completely disappeared: it just no longer dominates the world of work. Today more people are economically active than ever before, but it's a fragmented workforce: with factory workers combined with a precariat at the lower end of the labour market, a growing self-employed sector, along with millions of technical, administrative, supervisory and service jobs." (Bloomfield, *Progressive Politics in a Changing World: Challenging the Fallacies of Blue Labour*, 2020) the working class work culture hasn't been destroyed by the ever growing mass migration to this country but of what one deems the iconography of working class jobs being eroded and replaced with the 'technical' and 'administrative' jobs. Blue Labour very much plays on this idea and subsequently puts them in a position to gain support from those 'left behind' communities and one could argue Brexit played an important role in pushing Blue Labour campaigning style to

something that is more coherent with tones which resemble the far right. In our interview, Glasman spoke of his support for Brexit being brought on by a “working class desire to get out”, which can be interpreted in several ways; the first being his interpretation of getting out, which, in my belief is a ‘no deal’ Brexit, the second being how does Glasman know this was a ‘working-class’ decision, he stated to me that he had been to ‘so many pubs’ around the Blue Labour heartland and asked question/gathered research but this is my opinion is not a concrete way to over simplify an entire communities decision on a very complex question. I tend to support Jon Bloomfield reasoning for this, which was “Blue Labour has converged with those unchanged voices from the 1970s left, who still believe in ‘socialism in one country’.Embery, Goodhart, Glasman and Goodwin are all signatories to ‘The Full Brexit’ manifesto which claims that, ‘Brexit offers an unprecedented opportunity to reshape Britain for the better...to develop a genuinely internationalist and democratic politics of national sovereignty’. This nationalism plays into the hands of the hard right.” (Bloomfield, *Progressive Politics in a Changing World:Challenging the Fallacies of Blue Labour*, 2020) overall, Blue Labour has a worrying Brexit stance which, as always, is based on ideas and fails to rationally flesh out the policys and legislative issues surrounding the UK withdrawal from the EU.

In conclusion, Blue Labour’s cultural values very much play into a traditional outlook. The Blue Labour writers I interviewed were all hesitant in going into depths about their cultural views (apart from Glasman) and really its hard to pinpoint an exact coherent view of each key point referenced within the culture wars. However, one can point out a level of consistency with their values, Glasman and others within Blue Labour do not want to ‘rock the boat’ when it comes to sharing seemingly radical cultural as the potential of losing their support base would hurt them too much. I do see that Glasman has no real care if he offends someone or not regarding his stance issues that plague the culture wars. His brash response to the trans debate which could seriously hurt thousands of people reflects a casual outlook of Glasman own views. I believe that Blue Labour do have a coherent stance on cultural issues and that stance is to shy away from discussing it. However, if Glasman is able to share such opinion, who is to say that this isn’t reflected by the other key writers? I think that it is important that those who hold these cultural views haver a platform to debate and discuss but this does enable an easy platform to be attacked by the Labour Party and other key academic writers in the field, such as Bloomfield. Overall, Blue Labour has shown a cultural standpoint of tradition over feelings it is their belief that these values are held by their support base, it does not matter to them if it rejected by others, even if that ‘other’ is the majority.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has taken a qualitative approach to answering if Blue Labour is a coherent campaign group. When I started research this subject, it came out of a curiosity for why the Labour Party lost its 'heartland' seats during the 2019 General Election. The idea that the political party to which I have been a member of since before I sat my GCSEs could lose so badly in a certain part of the country yet succeed so well in other parts. This subsequently landed me on Blue Labour, a small campaign group in the Labour Party which, I thought of at the time, had very little relevance in the overall conversation within the Labour Party, I was proven wrong. The question of the extent of how 'coherent' Blue Labour is a campaign group is not as black and white as I have shown throughout this body of work, because, if we take a deeper analysis, what do we mean by coherent? If we assess in the literal sense of a unified position on key problems facing both the Labour Party and the wider country absolutely not. Secondly, what are the key topics that Blue Labour 'campaign' for? The chapters I have written focusing on the economy, culture, New Labour and Religion have identified key threads of discussion which relates to what Blue Labour campaigns for. What has been discussed is that Blue Labour's rationale is heavily based on a vision of society that has since been forgotten, the 'Old Left' which Blue Labour draws such inspiration from has become an impractical vision for the country. The idea that working class communities can once again be support by industries such as the mining and steel is a Blue Labour pipe dream.

The research I have done on the four key writers suggests that each one of them interpreters what 'Blue Labour' means to them differently. Maurice Glasman is the best thinker out of all the writers, yet he provides very little substance to his arguments, his belief that the current economic discomfort is due to the working class being underrepresented in leadership positions yet failed to articulate the evidence and/or reasoning apart from a vague referent to how successful the Attlee Government was between 1945-1951. as well as also stating in our subject on culture his belief that trans women are not women, again, with little evidence or reasoning why he believes that. Yet, despite this, I see Maurice Glasman as an important voice within the Labour Party, he appears to represent (or at least he claims to) those who feel left behind by the Labour Party. His determination to represent a voice he feels has been let down by Labour Party suggests a significant strand of Blue Labour which trumps being a coherent campaign group.

The work of Rutherford shows clear, rational thinking through actual evident and policy discussions throughout their relevant literature. We can see, in my character study of Rutherford in the first chapter, that his work prior to becoming associated with Blue Labour was mostly based on one's identity and how his criticism of neoliberalism plays a factor in his political thought. Thoroughly representing another factor of Blue Labour's doctrine; community and identity. I wrote that Rutherford work "In the context of Blue Labour, Rutherford's argument would relate to someone relationship with their community, a sense of identity that pins down one of the fundamental beliefs within Blue Labour." (Aitchison, 2022). From this, it is suggested that Rutherford's view is moulded by his desire to reject globalisation (seen in our interview discussing the economy) and provide an economic formula that benefits working class communities over big cities to once again allow engagement with our own identity. Jon Cruddas interview with myself suggested a completely different reasoning for his decision to become associated with Blue Labour, as a Labour MP for Dagenham Cruddas rationale for working with Blue Labour came from an anxiety within his constituency due to a rise of British National Party councillors being elected within the area. Cruddas believed that a return to traditional left-wing policies would help ease a rising tension felt within his community as well as also responding to what he feels as a lack of support from the current Labour Government at the time.

These ideological difference and lack of coherence within Blue Labour is supported by the work of Michael Freedens discussed in my theoretical framework. Freedens idea that ideologies are not as static as traditionally interpreted but is more a belief system coincides with how the research, I have done reflects Blue Labour's position. One cannot label a 'Blue Labour' supporter or writer because the spectrum to be associated with Blue Labour is not as black and white as originally interpreted, however some of the core concepts of Blue Labour come down to conservative social traditions and values as well as an anti-globalisation rhetoric. The evidence I have found suggests that all key writers as well as those who support Blue Labour either are in favour of at least one of those core values. Finally, after over a year of working on this thesis, and from what I have seen, there has been significantly limited research conducted on Glasman and Blue Labour. I feel that this body of work has its importance in informing the wider public on an important faction of the Labour Party. I do not agree with a lot of what Blue Labour stands for but I cannot deny the fact that they are an

important voice for the a vital faction of the Labour Party who do feel left behind. If I reflect on my reasoning for choosing to research this project, stated at the beginning of this conclusion, I am left thinking that in order for the Labour Party to have a grounded understanding of those communities who feel left behind by an ever-growing middle class Labour Party than it must take Blue Labour seriously and listen to what they deem to be important problems within these communities. In short, I do not believe Blue Labour is coherent campaign group, but I do feel their desire to support the most vulnerable and forgotten in society is an important one and something the Labour Party should take seriously.

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