



## How Labour Can Power The New Era in UK-China Relations

by Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP, Shadow Minister for Universities, Science and Skills

It was long predicted that this would be the Asian century. 'Beware the sleeping dragon' said Winston Churchill decades ago 'For when she awakes the Earth will shake'. Now, the crater made by the global crash means something big. The Asian century is arriving twenty years faster than we thought.

When Xi Jinping swept to power as president of China, he offered the Chinese people a powerful vision of a 'Chinese dream', a doubling of living standards by 2020. Since then the 'decisions' of the Third Plenum of the CCP has sent a clear signal that serious reform is on the way.

Once upon a time, forecasters thought that China might become the world's largest economy in perhaps 2041. Now experts say we might hit that point in 2016. And the problem is we're not ready.

If there's a phrase the Prime Minister likes to quote it's the idea we're in a global race. I happen to think we are. The problem is that we're losing it while others streak ahead.

Just before Christmas, the deputy governor of the Bank of England, Charlie Bean, lamented that despite the whopping fall in the value of the pound, our export growth of recent years has been in Mr Bean's words, "distinctly underwhelming". Our economy is certainly not 're-balancing' towards exports, and while export growth to China is picking up, no doubt, we still trade far more with Ireland, that Brazil, Russia, India and China put together. We invest more in Belgium than China. And German investment in China is twice the size of ours. Germany is in fact comprehensively beating us in what may soon become the world's largest market. Germany now accounts for nearly half of Europe's exports to China, coordinated by close ties between German and Chinese leaders and an unbelievably impressive operation at the Deutscher Industrie & Handelskammertag, the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry, from its magnificent polished granite, glass and steel headquarters on Breite Strasse in Berlin.

So we need to act together. And I see Labour at the core of helping us foster a new win-win era of relations for China.

For the past five years I've been fascinated by this question of how we're going to pay our way in an Asian century. I've travelled all over China, and talked to anyone with an opinion. And what people have said to me is simple. We need to focus like a laser on just what China needs in its next move forward — and think hard about how we can help.

So what does China need? There are basically three big things.

First, China wants to build a big home-grown consumer economy so it doesn't have to rely so much on exports. But right now, Chinese workers save not spend a third of their wages for the proverbial rainy day because the country doesn't have much of a pension system or a national health service.

Second, China wants to become a creator not a copier of intellectual property. In China, it's called 'the iPhone problem'. China's leaders bemoan their failure to produce their own Steve Jobs, the legendary founder of Apple. On the back of any iPhone you'll see the words, 'Designed by Apple in California, Assembled in China'. But making an iPhone costs a little over £4.00. Most of the rest of the £529 cost is Apple's profit. China is not taking much of the pie. That's why China wants to 'move up the value chain' fast.

Third, China needs to find a home for something like £100 billion of foreign investment every single year. Today, China only invests abroad about the same as Denmark. Over the next decade that's going to change radically. We've heard of Made in China. We need to get used to Owned by China.

Now I've worked long enough in Westminster and Whitehall to know that there are some things that you can get done in the capital. Making sure the tone and tang of the relationship is right can make a big difference. So, Labour in Westminster, led by Shadow Foreign Secretary, Douglas Alexander are determined to make sure the UK-China relationship is positive.

But in the real world, the new era of UK-China relations will not simply be driven by capitals, London and Beijing, it will be driven by cities — and Britain's cities are over-whelmingly run by Labour.

In my book, *Turning to Face the East*, I set out how forecasters believe 440 cities across the developing world will generate half of the growth in world wealth over the next 10 years, adding an immense \$10 trillion to worldwide consumer spending. Over half of these cities — 242 to be precise — will be in China. These Chinese cities alone will contribute over a quarter of the world's \$50 trillion of economic growth between 2010 and 2025. And these cities need a win-win relationship with cities here in Britain. Cities that are run by Labour.

Let me explain why. Our cities are home to all the things that China needs to build a safety net like ours; teaching hospitals, insurance and pensions companies, courts and law firms. We've an awful lot of knowledge to share.

Second, our cities the most innovative places on earth. They are home to some of the world's greatest universities, helping educate thousands of Chinese students. Epicentres like Cambridge, Oxford, Warwick, Leeds and Manchester The UK, said China's ambassador to Britain recently, 'is the land of thinkers'. So we should be thinking much more strategically about how we inter-connect our hi-tech firms, investors, innovators, and universities to the great growth hubs in China.

Finally I think we need to be make sure our cities are China's favourite places to invest. Chinese investment in Britain is

growing at a rapid pace. But China is not investing as much in Britain as elsewhere: it's invested four times more in Germany — and 60% more in France. We need to change that because let's face it, our investment starved economy needs it. We need a lot more deals like the Advanced Business Park in the Royal Docks, of Chinese investment in Manchester Airport, of even the mooted China Southern Railways investment in HS2 connecting London and Birmingham.

This year, I'll be convening a number of summits in Parliament to bring our cities together with Chinese investors — and for the first time, the UK-China Leadership Forum will explore the question of city to city links in my home town of Birmingham.

Winning in China isn't going to happen overnight or on its own. This is not about a few more trade trips organised at late notice. It's about a real national strategy here at home thought through for the long term — with Labour's national and local politicians pulling together as a team to seek the win-wins.



Liam Byrne is the Shadow Minister for Universities, Science and Skills. He sits on the board of the GB-China Centre, is a patron of Chinese for Labour and is vice chair of the All Party Group on East Asian Business. He co-founded the UK-China Young Leaders Roundtable. His book, *Turning to Face the East* was published yesterday.

### 工党如何在新时代推动英中关系

作者：影子内阁大学、科学和技能部部长、白里岩议员阁下

关于本世纪将由亚洲主宰的预言由来已久。温斯顿丘吉尔几十年前就曾说过：“小心那条沉睡的巨龙，当她苏醒的时候，世界将为之震颤。”如今，全球大萧条的影响意味着不同寻常的后果。我们预想的亚洲世纪提早二十年来到了。

当习近平宣誓就任中国国家主席之际，他向中国人勾勒了一个伟大的愿景“中国梦”，即到2020年中国城乡人均收入要翻一番。自那时起，中共十八届三中全会就发出了一个明确的信号，一场认真的改革开始了。

曾几何时，预言家认为中国可能在2041年左右成为世界上最大的经济体。而今，专家们认为这一预言将在2016年变成现实。但问题是，我们还没有准备好。

如果现任首相阁下要引用一个词，那就是我们参与的是一场国际赛跑。我恰好也是这么想的。问题是当别的国家奋力向前时，我们已经落后了。

圣诞节前夕，英格兰银行副行长查理·比恩遗憾表示，尽管英镑贬值巨大，我们近些年的出口增长仍旧萎靡不振。我们的经济在出口领域明显没有恢复平衡，尽管对中国的出口正在增长，我们与爱尔兰的贸易额仍然高于我国和巴西、俄罗斯、印度和中国的贸易总和。我们对比利时的投资比对中国投资还多。而德国对华投资已经是我们的两倍了。事实上，在这个即将成为世界最大市场的竞争中，德国已经全方位地甩掉了我们。德国目前对华出口几乎占欧洲对华出口额的一半。德国和中国领导人的关系也愈发密切，而坐落在柏林布莱特大街用花岗岩、玻璃幕墙和钢筋铸成的德国工商协会总部发挥着令人难以置信的积极作用。

因此，我们也要行动起来。我看到工党在帮助我们加强和中国之间的双赢合作中正发挥着核心作用。



过去的五年里，我总在琢磨我们怎样才能在一个亚洲主导的世纪继续发展。我已经走遍了 中国，与所有有识之士交流。他们告诉我这很简单，我们只需要关注中国在下一步的前进过程中需要什么，并努力思考我们怎样为此提供帮助。

那么，中国需要什么？基本上有三件大事。

首先，中国渴望构建一个庞大的本国内需市场，这样就不必过多地依赖出口。但目前，中国劳动者更注重储蓄，花销不足其工资收入的三分之一，以应对可能的苦日子，因为这个国家的养老金制度和全民医疗服务尚未成型。

第二、中国渴望成为知识产权的创造者而不是模仿者。在中国，这被称为“iPhone 问题”。中国领导人对无法培养他们自己的斯蒂夫·乔布斯（苹果传奇创始人）耿耿于怀。在每一部苹果手机后盖你都可以看到“加利福尼亚苹果公司设计，中国组装”的字样。制作一部苹果手机的成本只有4英镑多一点。售价中其余529英镑的绝大部分都是苹果公司的利润。中国只得到了大饼的一角。这就是为什么中国希望尽快在这条价值链上攀升到更高的位置。

第三□中国需要为每年可能接近千亿英镑的对外投资寻求目的地。目前，中国的外海投资只相当于丹麦的对外投资的规模。未来十年中，这种状况将得到根本转变。我们已经知道了中国制造，我们对 中国收购也不会陌生。

通过在国会和中央政府工作多年，我知道有些事情是可以在上层解决的。确保英中关系通过正确的对话沟通来进行，能够让两国关系获得很大改观。因此，在影子外交大臣道格拉斯·亚历山大的领导下，工党的国会议员们致力于维护积极的中英关系。

但在现实的世界中，新时代的英中关系不仅仅是通过伦敦和北京的互动来推动的。这种关系也可以通过其它城市间的互动得以加深，而英国的城市基本上是由工党主政的。

在我写的《转视东方》一书中，我提到预言家们相信发展中国家的440个城市将在今后10年带来价值高达10万亿美元的巨大购买力，为世界财富增长贡献一半的力量。其中多一半的城市，准确地说是242个城市来自中国。从2010至2025年全球经济50万亿美元的增长额将有超过四分之一的贡献来自这些中国城市。这些城市需要与英国城市，那些工党所主导的城市结成双赢的伙伴关系。

我为什么这么说呢，中国建设一个安全社会所需要的所有东西都发源于我们的城市：教育机构、医院、保险、养老金公司、法院和律师行。我们有着很多的知识与中国分享。


此外，我们的城市是世界上最富有创意的地方。这里有一些世界上最出色的大学，每年有数千中国留学生在这里接受教育，集中在剑桥、牛津、华威、利兹和曼彻斯特。中国驻英国大使最近说英国是思想家的国度。所以，我们应该从更具战略性的角度思考一下，我们怎样让我们的高科技公司、投资人、创意者和大学与中国的增长点连接和互动。

最后，我认为我们需要让我们的城市成为中国所乐衷的投资场所。中国对英投资正在快速增长。但是英国获得的中国投资相对其它国家而言仍有差距，德国获得的中国投资比英国高四倍，法国也比英国多60%。我们需要改变这种状况，必须直面现实，我们对外资饥渴的经济需要中国的投资。我们需要更多皇家码头商业园、曼彻斯特机场、仍在酝酿中的中国南方铁路投资伦敦至伯明翰高铁等诸如此类的大型投资项目。

今年，我将在国会召集一系列高级会议，向中国的投资者推介我们的城市，而且今年在我的家乡伯明翰举行的英中领导人论坛将第一次探讨英中城市之间的合作议题。

赢得对华关系不是一夜之间或自然而然就能实现的。临时组织几次贸易访问是无法解决问题的。我们需要的是一个真正在国家层面着眼于长远的战略规划，由工党的高层和 地方政治家们像一个团队那样同心协力去争取双赢的目标。

白理岩是影子内阁大学、科学和技能部部长。他是英中协会的董事会成员，华人工党赞助人和国会东亚商务跨党派小组的副主席。他还是英中青年领袖圆桌论坛的共同创办人，他著有《转视东方》。



# Book Review

Reviewed by Dr. Jenny Clegg

**Turning to Face the East: how Britain can prosper in the Asian Century** by Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP (Guardian Books, 2013)

In 1999, the much-acclaimed Sinologist, Professor Gerald Segal advised China was ‘a second rate power punching above its weight...only when we understand how little China matters will we be able to craft a sensible policy toward it’. Just months later, China announced its goals to double its economy by 2010. Now its economy is set to overtake the US in the next 10 to 15 years. Segal’s advice did not serve us well. We are in a worse commercial position in China today than other leading economies. In 2009, we accounted for only 10 percent of EU exports to China; we invest more in Belgium whilst China invests more in the Netherlands than Britain. China is predicted to contribute over a third to global growth for the foreseeable future, more than the US and EU together. We need to re-orientate towards China – and fast.

Fortunately Liam Byrne has cast his net beyond elitist scholarship, consulting key figures from business, academic, political and diplomatic communities from China as well as Britain to put together a powerful argument with concrete proposals. Drawing on his background as an economist, businessman, and MP for one of Britain’s most deprived communities, he presents a straightforward, accessible discussion.

It is not simply its market expansion, nor the huge investment funds that are now being unleashed globally, that makes China so important. Aiming to become a ‘leading power in science and innovation’, it is undertaking a great leap in R&D. Britain will become increasingly vulnerable to this technological challenge and, given China’s considerable resources and application, it will be hard to compete. A new collaborative approach is demanded. At the same time, China’s own enormous challenges create openings for others to grow ‘with and within China’: by helping for example to find greener ways to develop and to build a modern welfare system, we can transform the China ‘threat’ into an opportunity.

To match what we are good at and what China needs, to fashion win-win deals, and to innovate together is not something, argues Byrne, that can be delivered by the invisible hand of the market. It requires an ‘innovation policy’ with ‘partnerships in innovation’ forging hub-to-hub linkages, taking cities as the ‘drivers of growth’ and universities as the ‘cutting edge’, backed by networks of businesses, politicians, universities and cultural leaders at national and local levels broadening out beyond industry to people. Coordination within Europe is essential.

But is Britain prepared for this? The teaching of Mandarin in schools is still startlingly low; the media all but ignores China. For Byrne, the chief problem is mutual lack of trust. Yet his own thinking bears evidence of this for example when he calls for the EU to act as a ‘big battering ram’ to knock down China’s trade barriers. Better for mutual trust to put oneself in the shoes of the person opposite, as the Chinese say. Some really important questions are barely addressed: how should we partner China in Africa? how should we two, as nuclear weapons states and permanent members of the UN Security Council, work together to speed multilateral nuclear disarmament and to foster cooperative security in the world? A Sino-British mutual nuclear non-targeting agreement would go a long way to improving two-way trust.

As the chap who left the note on the Treasury desk after the last election saying ‘all the money’s been spent’, Byrne has certainly done some serious thinking about how to secure Britain’s economic future, his robust approach in contrast with the Party centre’s caution. Labour needs to convince the voters in 2015 that it can deliver sustainable growth. Byrne’s views chime with the big idea of a ‘white hot’ technological revolution for the 21st century; they point to a creative, rather than protectionist, approach to industrial policy, vital in finding a third way between austerity and spending. We have a window of opportunity of only about 5 to 10 years for us to reposition ourselves to partner China globally. Innovate or we’re finished, Byrne says: we miss the opportunities at our peril. For a Labour government after 2015 to do so would be disastrous.

*Liam Byrne is Labour’s Shadow Minister for Universities, Science and Skills; Dr Jenny Clegg is a senior lecturer in Asia Pacific Studies at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston.*



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## From the Vice-Chair...

WISHING all readers a Happy & Prosperous 2014.

In this issue of The Orient we speak to the Shadow Minister for Universities, Science and Skills, Liam Byrne MP, about how we can improve UK-China trade links and Dr Jenny Clegg reviews Liam’s book ‘Turning to Face the East: how Britain can prosper in the Asian Century’. Meg Munn MP tells us about her work on cooperative schools whilst Joe Hallgarten (Director of Education at the RSA) calls for a pause in education reforms.

Along with the British Chinese Project, Sarah Owen (Hastings and Rye Labour PPC) and I visited Guangdong Province and Hong Kong in December. Coming just a few weeks after China’s Third Plenum which committed to key social and economic reforms we met with a number of officials working in economic development as well as political advisors in Guangdong, Dongguan and Shenzhen. It was a great introduction to China and brought home how vast and diverse the country is, the cultural familiarity as well as differences, and the opportunities there are for British business and how we are failing to take advantage of them. Liam is right to highlight the need for city-to-city links but Labour nationally and locally needs to go further in promoting region-to-province links if we are serious about rebalancing the British economy. Our visit showed us how devolution and government activism can work for regional economies. It is vital that Labour frontbenchers continue gain a better understanding of China whilst in opposition - the UK has paid a price for David Cameron’s naiveté.

We arrived in Hong Kong just as the Hong Kong Legislative Council was launching a consultation on methods for selecting a Chief Executive and forming the Legislative Council (LegCo) and we were privileged to meet British Consul General to Hong Kong and Macao,



# It's time to give our education system a year off from reform - a politics-free period in schools could improve outcomes faster than any policy change

by Joe Hallgarten (@joehallg), Director of Education at the RSA

SINCE the 1988 Education Reform Act, English schools have experienced 25 years of frenetic change. It is difficult to assess what impact, if any, these changes have had on outcomes – Robert Coe’s recent analysis points to minimal change, as do more recent PISA comparisons of England over time (these are far more revealing than the cross-country comparisons). Even if outcomes have improved, and those of us who have been in and out of schools during that time have generally perceived positive changes, it is impossible to know which interventions may have caused these improvements, beyond the addition of money. Although again impossible to prove, I would argue that the pace and regularity of these changes have had the most negative impact on schools in the most challenging circumstances, and on low-income pupils. Nothing might close the gap more effectively than a period of long term education stability.

The coalition government has turned the frenetic into frenzy, although this may ultimately amount to more felt noise than genuine change. What may appear radical and liberating in terms of inputs (for instance, the conversion of thousands of schools to academies), actually seems far more conservative and prescriptive when these translate to outcomes and practices. Although curricula are slowly changing in preparation for September 2014, and reacting more rapidly to the market signals from changes to accountability, in general, most schools, regardless of status, seem remarkably unchanged from three years ago.

Before Christmas, the teacher blogger Andrew Old courageously opened a conversation about teacher stress, anxiety and depression. The responses from teachers should cause all of us who ask more of schools to pause. Whilst many might feel empathy rather than sympathy – it’s not as if teachers have a monopoly on increased levels of depression – if you visit all but the most confident schools

now, it does feel like there is a rising watermark of stress, caused partly by the noise of policy change, but also by an Ofsted regime which still needs to avoid self-edification and understand and demonstrate its value. As headteacher Geoff Barton articulates brilliantly in his New Year blog, in 2013 he found it more difficult than any previous year to concentrate on the improvement of teaching in his school.

Although Geoff and others have been optimistic about the opportunity to bed down changes during 2014 and focus more on teaching and learning, this misses the looming panic-policy-fest of the 2015 general election, and the already-emerging development of party manifestos. Add to this the publication of various inquiries, including the ASCL’s “Great Debate” and the Compass Education Inquiry, and it looks inevitable that policy ideas and changes will continue to pour into schools.

Our short investigation into SMSC in schools across the UK is discovering how the issues which used to define the purpose of schools have moved to the periphery, overwhelmed by attainment-related accountability pressures to a by-line in the national curriculum and in Ofsted’s thinking. It has been increasingly difficult for schools to think about anything other than short term gains in short term attainment outcomes. The deeper thinking about purpose, ethos, and the development of those values and skills which are anything but soft is not impossible, but has been rendered far more difficult by the constantly changing terrain of policy priorities.

What could be done? Here’s a modest proposal. 2015-16 (the academic year after the next general election) should be designated as a “year of reflection” when:

- No schools-related policies are announced by DfE or any other national or local agency;
- No schools are forced or permitted to become academies
- No Ofsted inspections take place apart from re-inspections of those schools which have been judged inadequate, and inspections of new free schools and academies
- No organisations (and yes, that means the RSA too) should publish any new policy proposals for schools. The phrases ‘DfE should’ or ‘schools should’ would disappear for a year.

Anybody who thinks that such a gap year would really damage standards needs to show me the evidence. Schools

will, of course, carry on teaching, improving teaching, and responding to changes that already require implementation, temporarily free from the fear of the Wednesday afternoon Ofsted phone call. Pupils will carry on learning and taking exams. Local authorities, academy sponsors and others will continue to drive improvements in their own ways, without the distractions from the department, or, for academy chains, the pressure to grow.

Reflection is a tough, active process. During the year, school communities should be encouraged to exploit a period of relative stability to ask questions about their deeper purposes. Thinking carefully and expansively about purpose, as well as properly using evidence to understand the effectiveness of existing practices and cultures, is genuinely demanding work that requires proper time and space to accomplish. Governing bodies should have a central role, making sure that all schools look outwards as well as inwards and upwards. When, in Summer 2016, people ask schools what they “did in their gap year”, all schools should be expected to have an answer.

This idea makes political sense. The

current government also deserves a year of reflection, both holding its nerve on and understanding the impact of five years of education reforms. If elected, the opposition could move into listening mode, operating a precautionary principle to launch no changes until it fully understands the system it is trying to improve. Instead of schools, government departments could focus on more neglected areas of policy, in particular early years, further education and youth services. Even Ofsted could take a break from the treadmill of inspections, survey and changing frameworks to consider how it uses its considerable resource and clout to add the most value. Although I am mainly thinking of England, the idea might have traction across the UK. And if, in the Summer of 2016, one year has not felt like long enough, there is always the possibility of an extension. I have always thought that arguments for the “depoliticisation” of education are flawed, but a couple of politics-free years in schools could improve outcomes faster than any policy change.

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## A quiet schools revolution: The number of cooperative schools is growing rapidly

by Meg Munn MP for Sheffield Heeley

THE number of cooperative schools is growing rapidly —The current education system is more fragmented than at any point in the past 25 years. There are dramatic variations in schools’ success, and in the accountability they have to the communities they serve.

The Labour government introduced the academy programme to turn around underperforming schools, predominantly in areas of deprivation. Many of these proved that greater freedom coupled with community control was a winning formula, transforming their students’ future prospects. Unfortunately, this government allows any school to become an academy. We then saw scandals, such as at the Al-Madinah free school, where schools fail to deliver even a satisfactory level of education. There are also schools forced to become academies, some scooped up by expansion-hungry chains who limit the involvement of parents, students and the wider community.

Earlier this year I introduced a bill into parliament to enshrine in legislation the structure of cooperative schools. There are already over 600 across the country, and the number is growing. Cooperative trust schools are at the forefront of a quiet revolution, and the national Cooperative Schools Network is now larger than any of the major academy chains. Launched by the last Labour government, the cooperative model ensures that everyone with a stake in the school’s success – parents, teachers, support staff, local community organisations and pupils – has the opportunity to be involved in running it.

Cooperative schools benefit from their links to the wider cooperative movement with its tens of millions of members. The key is having control in local hands, not exchanging local education authority control for Whitehall, or for unaccountable education chains.

Emerging results show cooperative schools provide a well-rounded curriculum and equip pupils with the social and personal skills they need to thrive. They raise aspiration and attainment by instilling in pupils cooperative values such as self-help, social responsibility, equality and a global outlook, delivered within a faith-neutral environment. This is a model that delivers academic excellence driven by

local accountability.

The new shadow secretary of state for education, Tristram Hunt, has already called for parent-led academies. Theoretically, cooperative schools enjoy cross-party support: David Cameron said in 2008 that there should be ‘a new generation of cooperative schools funded by the taxpayer but owned by parents and the local community’. The trade union NASUWT is also supportive of the model.

The most recent convert from the Conservative benches is Steve Baker, member of parliament for Wycombe. He saw for himself the difference that becoming a cooperative made to a school in one of the most deprived areas of his constituency. In a recent debate he described how he learned about the values of the cooperative movement, and felt that, separated from state power, they represent values and ideals that any fully formed human being should support.

However, the legal forms of cooperatives are determined as industrial and provident societies, or cooperative or community benefit societies. There is no provision in the relevant acts for cooperative schools. Currently, the majority of these schools operate within an informal network of cooperative trusts.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 needs to be amended to allow nursery schools to become school trusts and cooperatives. Cooperatives, by their nature, are based in a geographical area that serves a local community. A cooperative trust could be a school from nursery through to secondary level, and perhaps through to further education.

To secure a solid foundation for their continued development we have to formalise the framework within which they operate. I have called on the government to work with me and the Cooperative party to bring forward legislation to ensure cooperative schools can work on a level playing field with other school structures.

If this government fails to support cooperative schools, then the next Labour administration must introduce legislation to strengthen their legal framework. This is an important step to ensure the cooperative model is able to develop to serve local communities.

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Caroline Wilson and LegCo President, Jasper Tsang to discuss this and relationships between the UK, Hong Kong and China. We also saw the fantastic work that the British Council in reaching out to local communities through in arts and culture, by supporting local innovation and by teaching English.

At Labour Party Conference Chinese for Labour held a fringe event titled, “Gambling with our Communities Future?” with David Lammy MP, Rowenna Davis (Southampton Itchen PPC), Jim Orford (Founder of Gambling Watch UK) and Claire Loussuarn (Goldsmiths). In a wide-ranging discussion we looked at what was happening on our high streets, on the nature of gambling addiction and the specific context within the Chinese community. There were calls for local councils to be given more power to limit the number of fixed odds betting terminals and bookies and their opening hours, for better mental health and debt counselling services and for more improved regulation to be overseen by the Home Office rather than DCMS.

We were pleased that the Labour Party brought the gambling debate to Parliament recently and hope that when in government it will act on the issue. Unfortunately despite it being an adopted policy of the LibDems, they failed to back Labour’s calls for better regulation of bookies and FOBTs - another issue of concern to the Chinese community where LibDems merely talk the talk.

Our Gala Chinese New Year Banquet to celebrate the Year of the Horse is on Monday, February 10, 2014. The event will be held at the Phoenix Palace Restaurant, 3-5 Glentworth Street, London NW1 5PG.

As in previous years, the banquet will no doubt be a highlight of the Labour social calendar and we are pleased to welcome Ed Balls and Chuka Umunna as our keynote speakers. It promises to be a wonderful occasion, providing an excellent opportunity to enjoy an evening together with supporters, business colleagues, friends, and a cross section of the Chinese community.

For those interested in attending, please contact Mee Ling Ng on 07896 227600 or email her on meelingng@btinternet.com. I look forward to seeing you there.

