

YOUNG
FABIANS

A NATION DIVIDED

BUILDING A UNITED KINGDOM

Edited by Ria Bernard

Executive Summary

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INTRODUCTION

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Set in the context of the underlying divisions behind the Brexit vote, our Nation Divided pamphlet explores the extent to which the UK is divided along social, economic, cultural, regional and intergenerational lines and the impact of these inequalities on our sense of community cohesion and social integration.

Globalisation and immigration have brought huge benefits – economically and socially. However, we seek to examine whether the diverse nature of modern Britain in terms of ethnic background, social class and age has been accompanied by a downward trend in engagement between social groups.

We are delighted that our final publication will include contributions from the **Resolution Foundation**, **IPPR North**, the **Co-operative Party**, **Chuka Umunna MP** (Chair, Social Integration APPG), **British Future** and **Dan Jarvis MP** (Mayor of South Yorkshire).

Through interviews, case studies, and examining data from secondary sources, the contributors explore the extent to which cohesion within and between neighbouring communities has broken down in modern Britain. The following executive summary provides an insight into the issues raised in the publication and the recommendations proposed by our team of researchers.

CHAPTER 1

IMMIGRATION & INTEGRATION

Written by Arran Parry-Davies & Nick Plumb

Immigration and integration has never been a more divisive issue in British politics. The Left has failed to sufficiently engage with public anxiety in this area. Integration is the key to ensuring that both migrants and native citizens are able to lead interconnected lives and access the same opportunities.

Recommendations

- **Abandon the net migration target** and instead produce an Annual Migration Report of skills migrants bring.
- **Introduce an 'Immigrant Integration Levy'** to fund local interventions aimed at boosting migrant integration.
- Put migrants on a **pathway to citizenship on arrival** in the UK.
- **Reduce the exorbitant cost of citizenship** from £1200 to £400.
- Expand access to **free English lessons**
- **Establish a place-based co-ordination unit within the MHCLG** to support local government, other public agencies and the third sector to work in a more joined up way.
- **Youth services should become part of a local authorities' statutory duty** as they facilitate the 'meaningful mixing' of young people from different ethnic and cultural groups.

CHAPTER 2

INTERGENERATIONAL INEQUALITY

Written by Tom Knight, Anjali Mukhi & Imogen Tyreman

Generations are experiencing a different life and a different Britain altogether, whether it be in the housing market, their expected retirement outcomes or even their experience with the welfare state. Reconciling the intergenerational contract is key to our recommendations.

Recommendations

- **A Property Speculation Tax (PST)**, targeting high-end speculative investment, applied at the point of purchase for overseas buyers not living in that property.
- **Long-term, low-risk bonds** with yield and redemption linked to the current housing market would provide the government with funds to build more social housing.
- **Reassess & expand auto-enrolment** to make contribution rates between employers and employees more equitable.
- **Collective Defined Contributions** as an alternative occupational pension scheme. A smoothed earnings link to replace the triple lock.
- Introducing **votes at 16** alongside a stronger programme of civic education
- Initiatives that foster intergenerational dialogues, e.g. a ring-fenced **budget for youth services**, investing in **shared care facilities for children and the elderly**, and increasing **access to apprenticeships**.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVISIONS

Written by Jesse Coleman, Uther Naysmith & Robert Williams

There are serious social and economic divides that exist within our nation—and they are growing. The rise of food banks, growing job insecurity, the accumulation of zero hours' contracts, erosion of workers' rights—are all contributing to a distinct lack of social mobility and social justice. We recommend a number of strategic initiatives based upon three strands of government:

Economic and Health inequality

- Offer an auto-enrolment scheme for those 25 and under into trade unions, and those working in the gig economy
- Reintroduce Child Trust Funds.
- Introduce a range of changes to the rental market influenced by the German rental sector such as rent brakes, diverse housebuilders etc; and support co-operatives and renters' unions
- Reduce VAT to 17.5%.
- Reduce the tax free allowance to £10,000 in order to partly fund uprate of benefits and scrapping the benefits cap.
- Overhaul council tax with a progressive property tax

Education and Employment

- Oracy education that promotes communication skills to break down socio-economic barriers to academic attainment
- Mindfulness meditation in schools that promotes mental health and resilience
- Increasing access to apprenticeships that provide skills to compete in a global market

Deindustrialisation and regeneration

- Create a **National Regeneration Commission [NRC]** made up of national and local government, trade unions, chambers of commerce, universities and centres of knowledge, and special interest groups. The Commission's remit would be to survey areas in need of regeneration, to assess the skills and resources the community and landscape has to offer the national economy, and formulate policy and objectives on that basis.
- Create **elected, nonpartisan Community Regeneration Forums [CRFs]** at a district level across the nation. The CRF's remit would be to work in partnership with the NRC and other CRFs to formulate local policy implementing nationally set objectives, through utilising the resources, identity and talent of the local community and area.
- Enact a **Codetermination Act** applying to companies of 2,000 or more employees, mandating that the supervisory boards of all affected companies must have a number of members democratically elected from the workforce.

CHAPTER 4

REGIONAL DIVISIONS

Written by **Daniel Davies, Nicky Stubbs & Mark Whittaker**

The consolidation and centralisation of political and economic power in London has resulted in vast parts of our country – as well as vast parts of the capital – being ‘left behind’; under-resourced and ill-equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Recommendations

- Establish **a network of regional investment banks** - fulfilling a similar role to Germany’s Sparkassen
- Prioritise **access to the European Single Market and the Customs Union as part of the Brexit negotiations**, as this is crucial for Britain’s manufacturing industry
- **Scrap free school and academisation policies** in order to re-focus funding and effort on increasing school places and quality in the places that need them most
- **Rethink current plans to reform local government funding** – at a minimum, the 50% Business Rates Retention level should be retained, with the remaining half of Business Rates helping to fund the Revenue Support Grant.

CHAPTER 5

COMMUNITY COHESION

Written by **Matthew Clarke, Alexander Naile & Anna Rehfish**

The decline of industry across the UK, combined with a cocktail of concatenating circumstances, have left communities across the country more divided than ever. Worse, because many of the publicly run shared spaces such as libraries, youth clubs and parks, are seen as less immediately important than other local services, a disproportionately large number are falling victim to austerity cuts.

Recommendations

Promoting collective responsibility

- **Support Village Agent and Good Neighbour schemes** to address the health and social care challenges for isolated people and reduce the pressure on hard-pressed public services.

Strengthening the Social Value Act

- Ensure that contracting authorities have the option to reserve **some contracts for not-for-profit enterprises**.

Community assets

- **Extend the Land Reform Act** (Scotland) to England and Wales.
- Strengthen rights under the Localism Act (2012) – giving community groups **a first right of refusal to purchase listed assets through ‘right to try’** and provide proper support for communities to form co-operatives to take on the running of community assets.
- **Legislate that assets transferred by local authorities remain in the public interest**, and accountable to the community that they serve.

Crime and policing

- **Police forces should establish 'participatory budgeting units'** to ensure greater involvement by communities in allocating local police resources.
- Lower tiers of government should be given powers to **set priorities for neighbourhood policing**
- Mandatory training for young people in schools, through partnerships with specialist community groups, **addressing gang violence and knife crime**

Housing

- Where local authorities hold ballots on stock transfer, residents should have **the right to have the option of voting** for a community-led transfer.
- Support the **development of Neighbourhood Plans** that enable local communities to proactively engage in the planning process.
- **Higher council tax on second homes**, or bans and other limits where appropriate, such as in St. Ives' Neighbourhood Plan

Transport

- Local authorities should review procurement strategies to ensure that they **give not-for-profit and community transport operators equal treatment.**

CHAPTER 6

NATIONAL IDENTITY

Written by Tristan Grove, Ollie Lund & Ben West

There is growing evidence that in large sections of the UK population – especially younger generations – the sense of British national identity and pride is declining. Having a strong and shared national identity is, however, vital for a functioning polity because it links citizens to each other, the institutions of state and political leaders.

The following policy recommendations aim to create a framework in which British people can develop a shared civic national identity that includes everyone as fully as possible.

Recommendations

- **Restore local government grants to pre-2010 levels** as a matter of urgency, incentivising investment in local shared spaces.
- **A national campaign to promote standing for local council** and, more broadly, engaging with local government.
- **Designate a UK-wide holiday** for celebrating Britain, civic values, local communities and citizenship, **alongside specific holidays for each of the constituent nations** of the United Kingdom
- Implement an immigrant integration strategy, including a **compulsory civic integration programme for new arrivals** based on the Dutch ‘Inburgeren’.
- Put England on an equal footing to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland by **establishing an English Parliament** outside London **within a wider Federal framework** for the UK.
- Take steps to **foster a public debate around Britain’s Imperial past**, modelled on German Vergangenheitsbewältigung. This should include the foundation of a commission to establish a **National Museum** of British History, and design of a **memorial to Empire**.

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