

The End Of The Party

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND

2A. The Issues Facing the United Kingdom

1. Introduction

UK society has gone badly wrong. With the benefits of science, technology and greater human understanding our average real income after allowing for inflation is now well more than twice what it was in 1957 when Harold Macmillan said "*Let us be frank about it: most of our people have never had it so good*". However society has become increasingly fragmented, people increasingly rootless, and citizens have lost faith in Government and in the areas of life over which it presides.

This Proposal describes a way in which the governance of the UK political system can be improved. It is not designed to harp on about the many problems we see each day on the television, hear about on the radio or read about in our newspapers. It is however important to set in context the scale of the need to improve our Government system by looking at the pressures which Government is likely to have to oversee and outflank in the next few years and decades.

The Jury Team does not back specific political (rather than governance) policies because it believes that this is the responsibility of those elected. However in order to describe many of the issues facing the country, the section below shows extracts from a recent Government report, the Autumn 2008 Party Conference speeches by the three main party leaders, reports from the key think tanks and some relevant polling data.

2. Cabinet Office Report

The Cabinet Office Strategy Unit identified a number of issues facing the UK in its February 2008 report *Realising Britain's Potential: Future Strategic Challenges for Britain*. These included:

- *globalisation*
- *economic prosperity*
- *life chances, talent and social mobility*
- *the ageing and increasing diversity of the population*
- *family life and communities*
- *crime and public safety*
- *public services*
- *climate change, and*
- *the modernisation and renewal of the constitution and democratic institutions*

The Report commented:

- *"The world around us is going to change profoundly. By 2020 China will be the 2nd and India the 6th largest economy in the world; 40% of the world's labour force will be in China and India; the world's population will have grown by another 1.2bn; and there will be increasing effects of climate change and increased pressure on global resources.*
- *There remain persistent gaps between the life chances of people from different backgrounds.*
- *There will be major demographic and social changes. As a result of ageing and net migration, the UK population is likely to grow to 67m by 2020. The number of people over 85 is expected to grow by 50% by 2020 adding further pressures to health, social care and other services.*
- *Climate change, driven by human activity, is the greatest long-term threat facing the world today. Taking action to mitigate it is possible, but this will require decisive international*

action. The UK will need to play its role both as a leader of international change but also through its own domestic commitments.

- *The increasing skew in political and civic participation - with the young and disadvantaged half as likely to participate in politics as other groups – will need to be addressed. The Government's agenda for modernising the constitution and renewing our democracy at national and local level will be central to addressing this."*

3. Party Leaders' Conference Speeches

Another perspective on the issues facing the country is shown by extracts from the speeches of the leaders of the three main political parties at their Autumn 2008 Party Conferences:

Gordon Brown - Labour Party Conference – 24th September 2008

- *I know people have real concerns about the future of the country, the future of the economy.*
- *You know, each generation believes it is living through changes their parents could never have imagined - but the collapse of banks, the credit crunch, the trebling of oil prices, the speed of technology, and the rise of Asia - nobody now can be in any doubt that we are in a different world and it's now a global age.*
- *But the continuing market turbulence shows why we now need a new settlement for these times - a settlement that we as a pro-market party must pursue.*
- *And so there are tough choices and I have to say that as a result of the events of recent weeks there are going to be tougher choices we will have to make and priorities we will have to choose.*
- *I am asking the climate change committee to report by October on the case for, by 2050 not a 60% reduction in our carbon emissions, but an 80% cut.*
- *People feel their communities are changing before their eyes and it's increasing their anxiety about crime and anti-social behaviour.*
- *For the first time ever we've got more British pensioners than British children - more people living longer on fixed incomes and worried about whether they'll need long term care.*
- *There are new pressures on parents - worrying about balancing work and family life but also about advertising aimed straight at their children and what their children are watching or downloading from the internet.*

David Cameron – Conservative Party Conference – 30th September 2008

- *In Afghanistan, the number of our troops has almost doubled but the number of helicopters has hardly increased at all. We've got troops' families living in sub-standard homes; we've got soldiers going into harm's way without the equipment they need.*
- *At the heart of the financial crisis is a simple fact. The tap marked 'borrowing' was turned on - and it was left running for too long. The debts we built up were too high. Far too high. The authorities – on both sides of the Atlantic – thought it could go on for ever.*
- *This attitude, this whole health and safety, human rights act culture, has infected every part of our life. If you're a police officer you now cannot pursue an armed criminal without first filling out a risk assessment form. Teachers can't put a plaster on a child's grazed knee without calling a first aid officer.*
- *Top-down target after top-down target, with another thirty seven targets added last year. Endless bureaucratic re-organisations, some of them contradictory, others abandoned after just a few months.*
- *When families fail, school is the way we can give children a second chance. The straightforward truth is that there aren't enough good schools, particularly secondary schools, particularly in some of our bigger towns and cities.*
- *Welfare reform is the full, pitched battle. This problem goes very deep – and dealing with it will be very tough. There are almost five million people in Britain of working age who are out of work and on benefits. That's bad for them. It's bad for our society. And it's bad for our economy.*

Nick Clegg – Liberal Democrat Conference – 17th September 2008

- *A firestorm is raging through our financial system, ignited by reckless bankers and fuelled by complacent politicians.*
- *There are huge challenges. Keeping our economy competitive as globalisation shifts the power centres of the world.*
- *Government has proved itself incapable of keeping people's data secure.*
- *Our need for dirty energy is crippling us economically. There are growing links between climate change, biofuels, and rising food prices. And inflation is fuelled by fuel. One way or another, together we are going to have to use less energy. And much less dirty energy.*

- *One in three children growing up in poverty. A million in cramped and unsafe homes where they don't get space to play. More children in prison than any other country in Western Europe. Our children are some of the most unhappy in the world.*
- *We can have a better education system, and through it a better Britain. But, inequality today isn't just about what happens at school. The crisis reaches so deep that where you are born, and who your parents are, affects everything about how your life will pan out. It even affects how long that life will be. Some day, if you're in London, get on the tube at Westminster, on the Jubilee line. Take an eastbound train towards the Docklands. Every station you pass, every time the train stops, every time the doors open and close, for every stop you travel east, life expectancy drops by a year.*
- *We are the most spied upon country in the developed world. More surveillance cameras than anywhere in the world. Parents snooped on by council officials checking up on where children spend the night. They're even putting tracking chips in our bins.*

4. Think Tank Perspectives

A further way of reviewing the issues facing the country is to see those identified by the major political think-tanks of various political backgrounds. The following are extracts from recent reports:

Democratic Audit: *It is not easy to gauge how far people in Britain feel excluded from the political process, but the latest State of the Nation polls, in 2004 and 2006, provide some basic answers. The 2004 poll records that 90 per cent of the public believe that 'ordinary voters' should have a great deal or a fair amount of power over government policies, but only a third feel that they have such power. Two thirds say they have a little or no power at all over their government. People also think that they and Parliament should have more power than they do.*

Unlock Democracy: *In 1929, the Wall Street stock exchange collapsed, and Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald formed a united government of all the major parties to deal with the problems we faced. 70 years on, we need unity, and this is the only way to get it. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats keep having a go at Labour policies; and it has led to a cycle of party politics. And it is party politics that is letting down the public when we need it most. It's time for politics to be about the people, and not about the party. That's what we elected them for, and that's why we should have a national government, 'of all the talents'.*

Centre for Policy Studies: *According to the most recently published data, in September 2008, the UK's Public Sector Net Debt (including Northern Rock) is £632.7 billion. This is equivalent to 43.3% of GDP. This is a significant underestimate of the true scale of Government debt. It fails to account for the full cost of projects financed through the PFI, the extent of unfunded public sector pension liabilities, the debt incurred by Network Rail and the recent nationalisation of Bradford and Bingley. If these liabilities are included, the real level of Government debt is £1,854 billion – three times greater than the official figures. This is equivalent to 126.9% of GDP, or just under £76,000 for every household in the UK. If the cost of the recent bail-out of the UK banking sector were included, this could add up to £500 billion to the debt figure. This would imply a total debt of £2,354 billion – the equivalent of 161.1% of GDP or over £96,475 per household. (The Price of Irresponsibility by Brooks Newmark MP, October 2008).*

The TaxPayers Alliance: *The performance of any organisation should be judged on the quality of its output. Judged on this basis the management of public services by politicians and civil servants has been extremely poor. Although the UK is the fifth richest country in the world:*

- *Standardised tests conducted by the OECD show that, since 2000, British 15-year-olds have fallen from 8th to 24th place in maths; from 7th to 17th in reading; and in science – an area in which the UK as a whole excels – from 4th to 14th*
- *The standard of care provided by the National Health Service is now ranked 16 in a comparison of 19 peer countries*
- *Crime levels in England and Wales are the third highest of 39 peer countries*
- *Even worse is the fact that the poor and disadvantaged get the worst education and the worst healthcare and suffer the highest rates of crime.*

Government management falls short in each of three areas:

- *Sector experience: Government departments have become so diverse that no-one could have the knowledge to manage so many different sectors. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport, for example, has 63 subsidiaries ranging from historical sites to delivery of the 2012 Olympics*
- *Management experience: none of the current cabinet has any experience of managing large businesses, and only 1 in 7 MPs has any management experience at all, let alone of giant organisations such as Government departments.*

- *Tenure: the average appointment for a Secretary of State is 2 years, for a senior civil servant 2 years and 8 months, and for a minister just 1 year and 8 months.*
(Structure of Government No. 2, TPA, July 2008)

Centre for Social Justice: *Our care system, despite good intentions, fails to support some of the most vulnerable people in society: children whom the state has decided cannot be brought up safely by their parents. Despite over a decade of reforming legislation and initiatives, the treatment of many children in care and those leaving the care system deserves to be a source of national shame. These children too often go on to experience lives characterised by unemployment, homelessness, mental illness and addiction:*

- *A third of homeless people were formerly in care*
- *30 per cent of children in custody have been in care*
- *23 per cent of the adult prison population has previously been in care, even though children in care and care leavers account for less than 1 per cent of the total population*

(Centre for Social Justice, 2008)

Reform: *At present the provision of schools and school places is not demand-led by parents but centrally planned by Local Education Authorities. The effect of planning decisions over the last two decades has been to reduce the number of state schools and to limit the choices available for parents. Reform has published a new ICM poll showing that three-quarters of the public think that state education in the UK is in need of fundamental review. Half of voters think that real education reform based on school choice – with taxpayer funded choice of independent as well as state schools – would be a good idea, with only a quarter thinking that it would be a bad idea. Half of Labour voters think that it would be a good idea. Young people – the group with the most recent experience of education – are the strongest supporters of school choice. 63 per cent of 18-24 year-olds think that the policy is a good idea, with only 15 per cent thinking that it would be a bad idea.*

Fabian Society: *Shifting health resources into the community - with a nurse in every school - is essential to improve health outcomes and convince the public that there is more to the NHS than hospital treatment. The new NHS should be about public health and health prevention. But if the dominance of the hospitals continues we will find ourselves unable to make substantial improvements in health outcomes, and the NHS will be ill-equipped to cope with the pressures it will face in the 21st century.*

- *Ensure that there is a school nurse in each and every primary and secondary school.*
- *Abandon the foundation trust model and integrate primary and secondary care services to form single care trusts with single budgets to remove the divide between the primary and secondary sectors.*

(How to put public health first, by Howard Stoute, Bryan Jones, 2008)

Institute of Economic Affairs: *While it is popularly held that markets would neglect the poor and the chronically sick, this perspective invariably ignores the comparative empirical record of the state in healthcare. Instead of recognising that the market mechanism delivers built-in incentives to level social power, erode producer capture and encourage greater inclusion, the market is causally associated with problems that are actually created by the state. In reality it is the state that neglects the poor and the chronically sick because they hold less power under its auspices. Famously, the health economist Julian Le Grand demonstrated that in the UK, relative to need, professional and managerial groups receive more than 40% more NHS spending per illness episode than those people in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. (Tim Evans and Helen Evans, December 2008)*

Institute of Public Policy Research: *Although the UK population is living longer and is in better health than ever, and older people are wealthier than they were, like the rest of the population, older people are not getting any happier. There is some evidence that older people may be becoming decreasingly satisfied, lonelier and more depressed and, due to demographic changes, there are increasing numbers of older people, many of whom are living with low levels of life satisfaction and wellbeing. This is particularly so if you are poor, isolated, in ill health, living alone, in unfit housing or rundown neighbourhoods and worse still if you are a carer or living in a care home: and all of these risk factors apply to a large proportion of the UK's older population. (Older People and Wellbeing by Jessica Allen, July 2008).*

Politeia: *In transport there are fears that things will get worse: the Government's ill - thought - out schemes for mass housing development and the influx of new people are adding to the strains on an already overburdened transport system – air, rail and road.*

Britain took a very different view to its neighbours – a distinct 'Anglo-Saxon' view - about the future of its railways in the 1960s. Virtually every other major industrial country apart from the USA chose to invest in a balanced transport system in which new motorway networks were built to meet the dramatic

growth in car ownership and new high speed rail networks were created to provide more trains at competitive speeds. Britain almost uniquely in the 1960s decided that rail demand was doomed to decline and sought to limit its investment in increased transport capacity to the motorway programme. This was the 'Beeching period' in which a third of rail mileage was closed and only the West Coast mainline saw significant investment. Not surprisingly, demand for rail steadily fell from 1955 to 1982, almost as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The number of passengers using rail fell from over 1,000 million in 1955 to just 700 million in 1982. Freight tonnages suffered an even bigger collapse. (Reviving Rail: What Strategy for Success? By Chris Green, Politeia, February 2008)

Smith Institute: *Over 40% of all UK businesses are now homebased, according to BERR. Yet we are still planning our use of property as if we were still in the industrial age, designing-in unsustainable working practices for decades to come. A fundamental rethink amongst policy makers is necessary in order to realise the full benefits of a low carbon economy. The case for homeworking goes beyond the proven environmental benefits. There are also other tangible advantages to both employees and employers from working at home. With commutes becoming ever longer and more unpleasant, homeworking offers the opportunity for a much less stressful working experience and a better work-life balance. Individuals can work more flexibly, while cutting out the need to commute regularly gives people more free time. (Smith Institute, 2008)*

Bruges Group: *The [third and] most comprehensive layer of management over us is of course that of the European Union. It has a bureaucracy, and a kind of Parliament, but its powers could not for a moment be understood as democratically responsive. Its directives and regulations are recognised as taking precedence over Parliamentary legislation in Britain, and any appeal against them must be heard in its own European Court, in which the literal meaning of the words of an EU law is subordinated to their consonance with the basic purpose of the Union. The Commission is a fecund creator of regulations affecting many things in our everyday life, ranging from land-fill disposal of waste to the design of buses on our streets. There is, I think, no satisfactory way to quantify how much of our national life is determined by this body and estimates vary from ten percent to eighty. It is certainly true that while in principle the House of Commons should be monitoring this avalanche of legislation, much of it goes through 'on the nod', if even that. (Are the British a Servile People? Idealism and the EU by Kenneth Minogue, 2008)*

Open Europe: *Open Europe today condemned the EU's decision to restrict flexible employment by passing the Agency Workers Directive. Mats Persson, a spokesman for Open Europe said: "Eight out of ten of the people affected by this law will be in the UK. It is a backwards step to the 1970s, and will mean fewer jobs, just at the point when we need them most. This shows that the EU is not reforming. Instead of trying to make the EU as a whole more competitive, EU ministers seem more concerned about raising the costs of their rivals. We need flexibility and light regulation, if the EU is to survive in the 21st century. The Directive seems designed to lock member states into a corporatist way of doing business. (Open Europe, June 2008)*

Centre for European Reform: *Are the Doha trade talks finally dead? Europeans do not seem to care very much. They worry more about the impact of the global downturn on their mortgage, job and pension. Many EU Governments have also appeared distinctly unenthusiastic about trade liberalisation lately. French President Sarkozy blamed the Irish No to the Lisbon treaty on the 'overly liberal' trade policies of Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson. During the Geneva talks, eight other EU countries lined up behind France (including Italy, Greece, Poland and Hungary). They argued that Mandelson's first responsibility was to protect European jobs and incomes – in particular in the farm sector – not to finish a round of trade talks of dubious economic value. Would the failure of Doha be a disaster for Europe? Not on the face of it. With many of its biggest trading partners – China, Russia, ASEAN, the EFTA countries – the EU has special agreements on trade and investment, or is in the process of negotiating them (albeit with limited success). And many poorer countries may be more willing to grant the EU better access to their markets on a bilateral basis – without having to extend the same privileges to China. (Should Europeans care about Doha? by Katinka Barysch, July 2008)*

Policy Network: *For once there is a vision of Europe's future that Britain shares. It is not directly about the future of the European Union, though I believe it is highly relevant to it. Rather it is a striking mood of pessimism about the social trends in our societies: we may be the first generation since the great advance of material progress which began with the industrial revolution that believes life will not be as good for our children and grandchildren as it has been for us. At the heart of this pessimism there is a profound paradox. Surveys repeatedly show high levels of self-reported individual life satisfaction and happiness. These have been broadly stable in the most prosperous European countries for a generation, with no tendency to rise once a certain level of material prosperity is attained: a fact that is significant for the growing debate about "wellbeing" in affluent societies. But high life satisfaction and*

happiness goes alongside quite deep pessimism about prospects for the long term. (Social pessimism - The new social reality of Europe by Roger Liddle, October 2008)

Demos: *Both public servants and politicians will face challenges in developing a more agile set of public institutions. Policy makers at the heart of Government will need to become much more comfortable with the idea of innovation being driven by frontline workers – central agencies need to become talent spotters for new ideas and initiatives or risk becoming bottlenecks. Joining up Government around outcomes will require a significant investment of political and managerial leadership to break down entrenched barriers. Effective shaping of the future environment will often require public sector leaders to take an unfashionably long view of policy problems. (Towards Agile Government by Simon Parker and Jamie Bartlett, 2008)*

5. The Electorate's Perspective

There are no simple answers to the questions facing modern societies, especially not from a "bloc" view of many issues compacted together to try to fit in with traditional party philosophies. Socialism is discredited in New Labour. Capitalism is unloved by the Conservative Party leadership. Social democracy leads to stagnation and a dangerous dependence of the bottom quarter of society on those above them and on the state. Individualism corrodes the bonds of community and, even for successful individuals, feels selfish and unsatisfying.

There are many areas which have been identified as generating serious concern among voters. The Ipsos/MORI polls for August 2008 and for August 2009 showed the following percentages of voters who responded positively, unprompted, to the two questions: *"What would you say is the most important issue facing Britain today?"* and *"What do you see as other important issues facing Britain today?"* It is noticeable that many of the responses are different or in a different order (e.g. climate change/environment) from those identified by the Cabinet Office and some of the think tanks:

	<u>Aug</u> <u>2008</u> %	<u>Aug</u> <u>2009</u> %	<u>Change</u>
Economy/Economic Situation	41	54	13
Crime/Law & Order/Violence/Vandalism	47	32	(15)
Unemployment/Factory Closure/Lack of Industry	7	30	23
Race Relations/Immigration/Immigrants	25	25	0
Defence/Foreign Affairs/International Terrorism	15	17	2
NHS/Hospitals/Health Care	15	16	1
Education	12	12	0
Morality/Individual Behaviour	9	10	1
Inflation/Prices	26	9	(17)
Drug Abuse	7	7	0
Poverty/Inequality	6	6	0
Housing	13	5	(8)
Pollution/Environment	7	5	(2)
Taxation	5	2	(3)
Low Pay/Minimum Wage/Fair Wages	4	1	(3)
Petrol Prices/Fuel	10	1	(9)

During the past year, it is clear that the Economy and Unemployment have become more dominant issues but that Inflation has become less important, as has the issue of Crime. Race Relations, Defence, the NHS and Education remain important and broadly constant.

People do not generally see the UK Government as the dominant influence in their lives. In a November 2006 survey, Ipsos/MORI asked: *"From this list, which two or three of the following do you believe have most impact on people's everyday lives?"* (Wales/Scotland/Northern Ireland questions* were only asked in the respective areas):

	<u>%</u>
Media	54
Local Councils	48
Business	37
Westminster Parliament	26
Prime Minister	24
Civil Service	20
European Union	20
Cabinet	7
National Assembly for Wales*	2
Scottish Parliament*	1
Northern Ireland Assembly*	1

This is also illustrated in another Ipsos/MORI poll from September 2007 which showed that, other than having a higher salary, better quality uses of leisure time are the most important factors people believe would increase their happiness. The responses to the question: "Which four or five of the following things do you think would make you happier?" were:

	<u>%</u>
More time with family	37
Earning double what I do now	35
Better health	30
More time with friends	23
More traveling	22
More time for leisure/sport	21
Better community spirit	19
Having a happy marriage	17
More contact with nature	16
Better housing	15
Learning new skills	13
Moving abroad	12
Moving jobs	6
More time to think/be alone	5

6. Political Leaders' Unfulfilled Aspirations

These matters have, perhaps surprisingly, been recognised by the leaders of all of the three main political parties although their words have not been matched by the actions of themselves or their parties:

In his May 2007 speech on becoming leader of the Labour Party, Gordon Brown stated that:

"We must address new challenges today – challenges very different and more pressing to which we must respond:

To those who feel the political system doesn't listen and doesn't care;

To those who feel powerless and have lost faith;

To those who feel Westminster is a distant place and politics simply a spectator sport:

And to build trust in our democracy, we need a more open form of dialogue for citizens and politicians to genuinely debate problems and solutions."

Similarly in his speech to the Conservative Party Conference in October 2008, David Cameron said:

"But no-one will ever take lectures from politicians about responsibility unless we put our own house in order. That means sorting out our broken politics. People are sick of it. Sick of the sleaze, sick of the cynicism. Copper-bottomed pensions. Plasma screen TVs on the taxpayer. Expenses and allowances that wouldn't stand for one second in the private sector.

This isn't a Conservative problem, a Labour problem or a Liberal Democrat problem. It is a Westminster problem, and we've all got to sort it out. In the end, this is about the judgment to see how important this issue is for the credibility of politics and politicians. And it's about having the character to take on vested interests inside your own party."

On the same theme, at the Liberal Democrat Conference in September 2008, Nick Clegg said:

"And there are problems in Britain today. Too many. Families stuck in grinding poverty. Liberty taken and abused by Government officials. Climate change starting to tighten its deathly grip. But they aren't problems with the British people. They're problems faced by the British people. We are not the problem. It's the system that's the problem.

No wonder people are tired of politics. Tired of a system that swings like a pendulum between two establishment parties. Tired of the same old politicians, the same old fake choices, the same old feeling that nothing ever changes. But this isn't a story of indifference. People do care about issues. Climate change. Poverty. Their local school or hospital. There are marches and campaigns and petitions launched every day of the week. People care. They just don't care about politicians. So this is the end of the line for politics-as-usual. If we want a political system that works for the future, we need to start again. From scratch.

The establishment parties will manipulate the system to get the power they want. But they'll never change it. They like having power and privilege sewn up between a few chums in the Westminster bubble."

7. The Failure to Reform the Current Party Political System

There is therefore agreement that the current party political system is at the root of the UK's problems because it fails to reflect the will of the people, to allow informed discussion of new laws and to have sensible and proportionate management of the areas of the country's life with which the Government is involved.

However the current system has clearly proven itself incapable of reform from within.

Indeed the existing political parties have deliberately tried to make it even harder for Independents to stand. The Electoral Commission stated in a 2003 report which discussed the effects of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA):

"Independents

4.11 Independents have a long-standing place in the political system in the UK and have traditionally been an important force in local elections. However, the regime introduced by PERA has introduced significant change. Between 1969 and 2001, all candidates standing at election in the UK were entitled to use a description, and the change introduced by PERA is a fundamental shift that many independent candidates feel discriminates against them. Under the existing system, the only way that independent candidates can use a description is by registering the description as a party name (perhaps by registering a friend or supporter as a second party officer).

4.12 Perhaps unsurprisingly, in a House of Commons dominated by party members, little or no consideration appeared to have been given during the passage of PERA to the impact the legislation would have on independents. During the 2001 election campaign, some independent candidates raised concerns with the Commission that the new legislation had created a significant disadvantage in severely constraining the wording they could use on ballot papers. Many of those who made their views known in advance of this review expressed the opinion that PERA had gone 'too far' and had failed to strike the right balance between avoiding confusion for voters and enabling candidates to describe themselves effectively on the ballot paper."

The existing political parties have tried to ignore the clearly expressed views of the electorate for more dynamic and less "lobby fodder" politics. The parties have tried to stop the emergence of Independent candidates.

However people in the UK do not like to see independence penalised as an underdog. By organising Independent candidates at a national level the Jury Team will reinvigorate UK politics by providing voters with the opportunity to elect independent people from outside the existing parties who are close to their community and who are pledged to improve the governance of the country.

2B. History of Parliament

1. The Early Years

From the signing of the Magna Carta almost 800 years ago the British people have fought and generally won the battle to tame the autocratic power of those set over them. Building upon Anglo Saxon traditions, King John at Runnymede accepted that he was subject to the law as well as benefiting from the "divine right of kings". Many centuries of conflict followed between the monarch and those representing the people. The British also repelled those from other countries who wished to impose autocracy upon them.

Gradually the kings and queens began to appreciate that they required popular support. They could no longer rely on apparently being anointed and realised that in order to give themselves legitimacy they needed to bring together an assembly of representatives which has evolved into our modern Parliament.

2. The Evolution of Parliament

The word Parliament originally meant a "talk" with the word being used in the 13th century to describe after-dinner discussions between monks in their cloisters. In 1239 the Benedictine monk Matthew Paris applied the term to a council meeting between prelates, earls, and barons. Modern Parliaments trace their history to the 13th century when the sheriffs of English counties sent knights to the king to provide advice on financial matters. These assemblies were based on the proceedings of the City of London's Common Council. The Parliament called in 1295 is widely regarded as the first representative Parliament and included two knights from each county, two burgesses from each borough, and two citizens from each city.

Early in the 14th century the practice developed of conducting debates between the lords spiritual and temporal in one chamber, or "house", and between the knights and burgesses in another. Meanwhile, the greater cohesion of the monarch's Privy (private) Council achieved in the 14th century separated it in practice from Parliament. Bills, if assented to by the monarch, became Acts of Parliament. For five hundred years following Magna Carta, Parliament continued to operate on the basis of individuals being elected to represent their constituencies and to use their best judgment in deciding on issues.

In the early 15th Century there were just over 250 members of the Commons: two knights from 37 counties, two citizens from around 80 cities and 14 members from the Cinque Ports. This number gradually increased and by 1673 there were 513 members. Union with Scotland in 1707 added 45 members and Union with Ireland in 1801 a further 100 for a total of 658. The number grew to 670 in 1885 and to 707, the highest ever, in 1918 but Irish independence reduced this to 615 by 1922. This again increased to 659 by 1997 but the number of Scottish seats was cut by 13 post devolution to give the current total of 646. Following the latest boundary review there will be 650 seats at the next general election.

3. Development of Political Parties

Political parties began developing at the beginning of the 1700's, initially the Whigs (horse thieves) and then to counter them the Tories (papist outlaws). These parties were designed not to achieve particular policies for the good of the nation but to provide greater Parliamentary pressure against the king.

The parties were however very fluid until after the 1832 Reform Act which extended the franchise and increased the need for campaigning. This led to local registration societies and then constituency associations. From these developed the central political party organisations with an increasingly dominant leader. In Parliament, as the scope of Government grew from the mid-Victorian time onwards, the party in power increasingly "whipped" its MPs to support it (the word "whip" coming from the use of the same word in hunting as the person who gathers or "whips in" the hounds). After the 1872 Ballot Act, which introduced secret ballots for general elections, the powers of the parties slowly increased. In HMS Pinafore (1878) W. S. Gilbert wrote:

*"I always voted at my party's call.
And I never thought of thinking for myself at all."*

Throughout the Victorian era private members' bills nevertheless remained a vital source of legislation and party allegiance remained much weaker than now. Subsequently during the 20th Century "whipping" in Parliament inexorably strengthened and for election campaigns a centrally directed party system developed in order to run national campaigns and identify likely local supporters.

4. The Whipping System

In cases where MPs try to stand up to their party such as during the debates on the Maastricht Treaty or on the introduction of 42-day detention, massive pressure is brought to bear on all MPs, even from different parties, to support the Government.

In an article about the House of Commons vote on 42-day detention Jim Pickard and Jimmy Burns wrote in The Financial Times in June 2008:

"Diane Abbott, a leading Labour rebel in last night's vote, was a picture of anger and despair as she described the desperate efforts by government whips to win support for the 42-day detention plan through a series of concessions, bribes and threats. 'Is it right that our civil liberties should be traded in this kind of bazaar?' she asked. The rumours included one unnamed MP being offered softer European Union sanctions against Cuba and another losing her 'special envoy' status.

Ministers, whips and the prime minister have spent recent days pleading with backbenchers in person and by phone to step into line. They offered not only carrots but also - in the words of one backbencher - 'bone crunching pressure'."

Rather than ministers having the objective of trying to achieve the solution which best represents the popular and indeed expert will of properly elected Members of Parliament, their overriding objective becomes the preservation of the reputation of the governing party.

Similarly when facing difficult issues a Prime Minister may bring forward legislation which he knows will be popular with his backbench MPs in order to divert them and ensure their solidarity. A recent example of this was the Fox Hunting Bill which took many hours of Parliamentary time in the main chamber and in committees at a time when Tony Blair otherwise faced severe criticism from Labour MPs about the Iraq War and various domestic policies.

2C. History of Government

"A Government is an organised hypocrisy."
~ Disraeli

1. Development of the Cabinet

In medieval times the monarch appointed, and operated through, a Privy Council. The main Government function was the collection and disbursement of taxes, with the Exchequer (Treasury) being given a dominant role. Historically the Cabinet began as a sub-group of the Privy Council with the name meaning a small and private room used as a study or retreat. The OED credits Francis Bacon in his *Essays* (1605) with the first use of "Cabinet Council", where it is described as a foreign habit, of which he disapproves: *"For which inconveniences, the doctrine of Italy, and practice of France, in some kings' times, hath introduced Cabinet counsels; a remedy worse than the disease"*. Almost certainly Bacon's problem with Cabinets was that they deliberated in private rather than in the open court where all could hear the issues.

Charles I began a formal "Cabinet Council" from his accession in 1625 as his Privy Council was evidently not private enough. The first recorded use of "Cabinet" by itself for such a body comes from 1644 and is again hostile and associates the term with dubious foreign practices. However with its benefit of secrecy the Cabinet gradually emerged as the main coordinator of the executive functions of Government.

The Act of Settlement with Scotland in 1701 specified that no *"placemen of the monarch"*, i.e. ministers, could sit as MPs but this was repealed in 1705. We would otherwise have a system very much like the modern US one.

During the 17th and 18th Centuries new departments of state were slowly introduced but remained very small with typically no more than 30 staff right through to mid-Victorian times. For those simple circumstances, in 1854, Northcote and Trevelyan introduced their reforms of the civil service. These were based on the Chinese Mandarin system, with the senior grades being filled by young men recruited from the best universities for a lifetime career. Ministers oversaw them and reported to Parliament.

Government grew substantially in the late 1800's and early 1900's with the introduction of areas such as social insurance but both departmental structures and Cabinet meetings were described right up

until the First World War as having a country house party atmosphere. The civil service increased from 21,000 in 1832 to 282,000 in 1914.

In 1916 a formal Cabinet system was introduced with agendas and minutes. During the First and Second World Wars many new people were brought temporarily into Government to deal with the urgent enemy threat but otherwise the Government machine continued to consolidate along the lines of the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms.

2. The US Mirrors the 18th Century UK Position

The US Constitution, drafted in 1783, was very much based on the then UK unwritten constitution and is an interesting description of the structures then in place in the UK. The President (the equivalent of the monarch) was given essentially the same powers as the monarch, as this was the system that the Revolutionaries knew, but they decided that their problems of unfair representation or taxation could be solved if the President were elected. As a result the elected President assumed the same powers as the monarch, acting as commander-in-chief, being in charge of the executive branch and appointing the judiciary.

This is discussed in a letter from Thomas Jefferson to James Sullivan in 1797:

Where a constitution, like ours, wears a mixed aspect of monarchy and republicanism, its citizens will naturally divide into two classes of sentiment, according as their tone of body or mind, their habits, connections and callings, induce them to wish to strengthen either the monarchical or the republican features of the constitution. Some will consider it as an elective monarchy, which had better be made hereditary, and therefore endeavor to lead towards that all the forms and principles of its administration. Others will view it as an energetic republic, turning in all its points on the pivot of free and frequent elections."

The one area that is often cited as being different in structure between the US and the UK is that the UK has a Parliamentary Government whereas in the US the members of the Cabinet, and consequently all administrative officers such as ambassadors and commissioners, are appointed by the President. However this is in fact also just a reflection of the process in 18th Century England when the King appointed the Privy Council, the main executive arm of the Government from which the Cabinet was drawn, which did not then necessarily have to reflect the views of Parliament and certainly not of the House of Commons.

The US Constitution set this position in stone so that the (now elected) President/Monarch could appoint his own Cabinet without worrying about the composition of Congress (Parliament). The US Cabinet still does not function as a legislative body but rather keeps its primary role as the group of ministers who run the major departments (only seven) and form an unofficial advisory council to the President, as it was in the 18th Century to the King.

These modern constitutional differences between the two countries highlight how the separation of legislative and executive powers, which ironically was a royalist concept, was enshrined in the US Constitution but has been substantially eroded in the UK.

3. The Coalescing of Parliament and Government

The executive and the legislature in the UK are now essentially amalgamated. In the early 19th Century UK monarchs continued to appoint their Privy Council, which had the main executive authority, but they began to adjust the composition of the Privy Council according to that of Parliament whose popular legitimacy increased with the extension of the electoral franchise. The convention that Governments would automatically resign if they lost an election developed, taking away some power of appointment from the monarch.

In the UK, without a written constitution, the executive and legislature continued to coalesce, compared with the defined US position, with Queen Victoria eventually being required constitutionally to appoint her Cabinet from those supported by the House of Commons.

"The reason for alarm is not that the English executive is too strong, for weak Government generally means bad administration, but that our English executive is, as a general rule, becoming more and more the representative of a party rather than the guide of a country"

~ Albert Venn Dicey, 1885

4. The Domination of Power

This system gives the party with a Parliamentary majority, whose leader is appointed as Prime Minister, access to all of the levers of state. All ministers, not just the Prime Minister, act in the name of the monarch, and therefore command absolutely the organs of the state such as the armed forces. They have greater powers of decision and patronage than in almost any other Western democracy. Their intentions are normally rubber stamped by their party's MPs through the whipping system.

"The British constitution is an elective dictatorship"
Lord Hailsham, 1978

As the Government machine has become stronger, Parliament has become weaker. Being the leader of the majority party in Parliament, the Prime Minister can normally expect all of his or her Government's legislative proposals to be supported by calling on the Whips to seek votes from the party's Members of Parliament, by definition the majority of the House of Commons, to support his or her views. Patronage gives the Prime Minister considerable coercive power both with members of the Government who depend on him or her for promotion and also with backbench MPs, especially those who hope to achieve ministerial office or a role as a member or chairman of a Select Committee.

5. The Modern Cabinet System

The Cabinet has an input into the legislative programme and is meant to be the country's main executive decision making body. Members of the Cabinet are collectively responsible for decisions taken in Cabinet and all members of the Government, whether in the Cabinet or junior ministers, must publicly support the policy of the Government, regardless of any private reservations.

Although, in theory, all Cabinet decisions are taken collectively by the Cabinet, in practice most decisions are delegated to the various sub-committees of the Cabinet which rarely report to the full Cabinet on their findings and recommendations. Matters are normally only referred to the full Cabinet if a disagreement remains to be resolved or the issue is so important that the Cabinet should decide it anyway. Cabinet deliberations are secret and documents dealt with in Cabinet are confidential. Most of the documentation associated with Cabinet meetings will only be publicly released a considerable period later, normally after thirty years.

The functions of Cabinet have also changed. Cabinet meetings now rarely discuss any major issues or make decisions contrary to those already taken elsewhere. In his chapter of the compilation *The British Constitution in the Twentieth Century* edited by Vernon Bogdanor, Anthony Seldon describes how the main feature of the Cabinet since the 1980s has been presentation and media management:

"a purely presentational function, with meetings always ending just in time to feed the lunch-time news bulletins"

The constitutional expert Sir Bernard Crick said in 2003:

"We need a return to the old conventions of cabinet Government with the prime minister as 'first among equals', not 'democratic dictator' or pseudo-president."

6. The Kitchen Cabinet

The historic process of moving from a Privy Council to a Cabinet has repeated itself in recent times. Prime Ministers (now acting as monarchs in function) have felt the need to have their own inner group, a Kitchen Cabinet. Wilson, Callaghan, Thatcher, Major, Blair and Brown all had confidants and influential advisers who were not in the official Cabinet. The influence of these advisers is well documented, not least in the memoirs they tend to write on leaving office in order to capitalise on their brief period in the corridors of power.

Britain consequently has a very centralised political system which has substantial control over many aspects of life with local areas and councils having minimal autonomy. This is in contrast to the position even in other parliamentary systems such as Australia, Canada or India where states and provinces have specific power over many aspects of Government. Similarly, in France the *départements* and local *mairies* are powerful and in Germany the *Länder* provide a strong federal structure with both countries having a constitution which specifically separates the executive and legislative branches as in the United States.

7. Civil Society

One great strength of the UK however is the breadth of civil society outside of the Government, operating through what are generally described as non-governmental organisations ("NGOs"). These include registered charities, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based groups, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy services. Such organisations have a tremendous sense of independence and integrity.

For instance in 2008 there were about 170,000 main charities with a total income of £46 billion, over a quarter more than the country's defence budget, with 600,000 paid staff. They have 900,000 trustees and millions of other volunteers, all giving their time for nothing. Some enjoy huge individual support with the National Trust having over 3.5 million members and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds having over one million, double the membership of all political parties combined.

There are also many organisations with the "Royal" accolade which range from charities such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to a wide series of expert societies such as the Royal Astronomical Society, Royal Geographical Society, Royal Horticultural Society, Royal Philatelic Society and Royal Photographic Society. Similarly there are many "Chartered" bodies, normally Institutes, which are for members of a particular profession ranging through the alphabet from Accountancy and Arbitration to Taxation and Waste Management.

There are additionally a vast range of other groups operating locally which provide a bedrock of UK society. These include the Scout Association and Girlguiding UK, which together have more than a million members, Boys Brigade, Salvation Army, Rotary International, Lions Clubs, Samaritans, St John Ambulance, Wildlife Trusts and car, railway, music, drama and other hobby interest societies.

The contrast between the ethos and practice of these many voluntary organisations and the world of politics is stark. There is no doubt that the standards and experience of civil society can be better used in providing potential Parliamentary candidates and in helping to choose those who run our major departments of state.

2D. The Loss of Public Involvement in Politics

1. The Political Parties in the Country

The local membership of political parties has hugely decreased from over 3 million in the 1960s to now about only 1% of the UK population. There are many parts of the country where either the Labour or Conservative parties (and sometimes both) no longer have viable constituency associations.

The remaining local organisations are not typical of the electorate in terms of age, gender and ethnic background in any of the major parties. The average age of Conservative Party members is said to be 62 and of Labour Party members to be 50.

Local parties are now just shells of political enthusiasts, often motivated to belong mainly by the social networking opportunities, who have little influence on policy development. Their only real task is to select their Member of Parliament but this typically takes place only every 10-15 years when they anyway have to choose between a centrally sanctioned group of people.

The grass-roots party political system therefore now has little legitimacy. In July 1999 The Economist stated:

"Belonging to a British political party is more like being a supporter of some charity: you may pay a membership fee, but will not necessarily attend meetings or help to turn out the vote at election time".

John Major wrote in 2003:

"At the grass roots, our political parties are shrinking in membership from mass movements to the size of special interest groups. The broad mass of the nation is detached from politics. Many feel a distaste for it. All the party machines are moribund, near-bankrupt, unrepresentative and ill-equipped to enthuse the electorate."

Jackie Ashley, daughter of a Labour MP, said in 2003:

"You cannot have a Parliamentary system based on political parties if across most of the country they have ceased to exist."

2. The Lack of Proper Representation

At local level, individual party candidates play only a minimal role in the overall result and even the national election campaigns address only a small proportion of the issues facing the country.

Democracy is essentially a way to select leaders. It has stood the test of time against more autocratic systems. However one of its necessary tests is that it should be able to demonstrate greater strength than the alternative of using a lottery, as practiced by the Greeks, to select who should make decisions on behalf of the rest of the country. A lottery at least ensures that all sections of the community have an equal chance of being selected which is sadly not true for our current democracy.

Parliament should represent the population as well as possible in terms of gender, ethnicity and occupational experience. However in Parliament women currently have only about 40% of their proper representation. Similarly ethnic minorities have only about 30% of what would be required to reflect the ethnicity of the population as a whole. The inability of the party political system to provide sufficient women or ethnic minority candidates means that those groups have a strong argument in denying the legitimacy of Parliament. The use of single member constituencies means that constituencies have little flexibility in their choice of candidates and therefore tend to choose a white male if they are only given one shot at who should be selected to fight for their party.

This point was made clearly in November 2008 by Trevor Phillips, Chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, who told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: *"The political system has a problem....My point is a very simple one - the political system is to some extent closed to outsiders, to people who are not of a particular stamp. This is not just about race, this is a wider point that our leadership class is really basically white, male and professional. It is very hard for women to break in and very hard for working-class people to get to the higher reaches of parties."*

3. The Representation of Women

From 1922, when the first two women MPs were elected, until 1959, women accounted for no more than 4% of all MPs. This figure gradually rose to 9% in the 1992 election and then approximately doubled to 18% in 1997 and 2001.

In the 2005 election there were 433 women candidates from the three main parties: 166 Labour, 122 Conservative and 145 Liberal Democrat. The number of women MPs increased by 10 over the number in 2001 to 128, comprising 98 Labour (28% of their party), 17 Conservative (9%), 10 Liberal Democrat (16%) and 3 representing Northern Ireland parties. The 38 new women MPs made up nearly a third of the new intake and the new total of 128 women MPs represents 20% of the House of Commons. Although Labour did its best with the election of 26 new women MPs this was only three more than the number of women Labour MPs who retired or were beaten in the election.

In his 2005 leadership election, David Cameron ruled out all women shortlists, as Iain Duncan Smith had done before, knowing that this was usually unpopular with the local membership who would soon vote on whether they wanted him as their leader. Charles Kennedy was in contrast very clear about wanting to have quantity guarantees for women but he, followed by Menzies Campbell when he became leader, was unable to get his party to accept the necessary regulations.

At the next general election, the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives look set to improve their own parties' gender balance. However the potential loss of dozens of marginal seats currently held by female Labour MPs would offset any gains in the overall representation of women in the House. If, as currently expected, Labour does not do well in the next general election then a large number of its current women MPs, who largely hold less safe seats, are likely to be eliminated from Parliament. This means that given the resistance of other parties in selecting female candidates then it is likely that the proportion of women in Parliament from the traditional parties will be reduced after the next general election unless there is a substantial change in the political system. This is a further reason why it is important for the Jury Team to succeed.

The Electoral Reform Society confirmed in its research published in July 2008 that, with the current party political system, there is no prospect of increasing the number of women MPs at the next election. Beatrice Barleon, the Electoral Reform Society's Women's Officer, said: *"The parties talk a lot about the need for greater equality but in every likely scenario for the next election, they can't deliver"*.

4. The Representation of Ethnic Minorities

Parties are also not usually good at embracing people from ethnic minorities. As well as being a new element coming into a traditional hierarchy, if the ethnic group has a particular policy view then this

may not easily fit with the rest of the party. This is especially so on issues such as immigration control, war or the rights of asylum seekers where an ethnic group may well have a different view from the party leadership, even if it subscribes to many of the party's other policies.

There were 117 ethnic minority candidates at the 2005 election, 34 from Labour, 41 from the Conservative Party and 42 from the Liberal Democrats. However the new total of 15 non-white MPs (13 Labour and two Conservative) was only three more than the 12 (all Labour) chosen in 2001. They represented just 2.3% of the 646 MPs against the national ethnic minority representation of 7+%.

In January 2009 Trevor Phillips, Chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, said that *"Parliament may be the pumping heart of our democracy, but its lifeblood is white, straight and male. That has to change."*

5. The Representation of Minority Parties

In all the election process decisions made since 1997, such as for the UK's devolved assemblies, mayor led local authorities and European Parliamentary contests, proportional representation is used in order to give a fairer result and to allow minor parties to be represented.

However both major parties at Westminster have resisted this for general elections without explicitly explaining why. However it is clear that their real reason for this failure is that they realise that introducing proportional representation at Westminster would lead to both major parties losing a substantial number of their current MPs who, perhaps understandably from their point of view, act like turkeys who do not want to vote for Christmas.

2E. The Party Political System and Elections

"The Emperor has no clothes!"
~ The Child, Hans Christian Andersen

1. The Party System

The Encyclopedia Britannica states:

"Political parties, like all organisations, tend to manipulate their members, to bring them under the control of an inner circle of leaders that often perpetuates itself. Members tend to be manipulated by powerful committees containing cliques of influential party leaders. In mass-based parties, leaders are chosen by the members, but incumbents are very often re-elected because they control the party apparatus, using it to ensure their continuation in power."

Democratic political systems, while performing the function of representation, thus rest more or less on the competition of rival oligarchies."

The concept of loyalty to a political party can be seen as completely opposite to what it should mean to be a democratic politician whose prime responsibility is to represent his or her constituents. Their party forces politicians first to be loyal to it and only then to the public.

MPs may try to be loyal to their constituents but there is a line they cannot cross if it becomes a party matter. A graphic example of this has been the recent proposed closure of local post offices where Labour MPs sympathised with their constituents and said in writing that they would support them but actually voted for the closure programme in the Commons.

2. The Key Objective of Modern Political Parties

"Senior politicians and their political parties are power-crazed for electoral victory and powerless when it comes to understanding the content and ideas required of political leadership."
~ President Richard Weizsacker of Germany

Nowadays it appears that more time, money and effort is put into getting elected than actually working for the people supposedly represented. People see that political parties have as their "bottom line" the winning of elections.

This perception was confirmed by Tony Blair in his speech to the TUC in September 1995: *"But what has come home to me more than anything else is the utter futility of Opposition. I did not join the Labour Party to protest. I joined it as a party of Government and I will make sure that it is a party of Government."*

Given statements like these it is not surprising that a 2001 election survey showed that 60% of the UK electorate felt that the parties were *"more interested in winning elections than in governing afterwards"*.

People perceive that what may be best for the party leaders in pursuit of their own or their party's self-interest may well conflict with the public good and that if it does then it is unlikely that the public good will win.

3. The Growth of the Central Party Organisations

Parliament operated successfully during much of the Victorian era with independent MPs themselves deciding how to vote. The Victorian electoral reforms extending the franchise however supplied many more electors which led to the formation of local party constituency associations which were set up to record the names of the electorate and their voting intentions.

Local election expenses were restricted by the 1883 Corrupt Practices Act. However as central party organisations hardly existed in the late Victorian era then no restrictions were put on central electoral expenditure.

The central party political organisations have consequently become powerful and even now have minimal limits on their expenditure other than during the short election campaign period itself.

4. The Narrow Focus of Election Campaigning

*"Élections - piège à cons" (Elections - a trap for idiots)
~ French 1968 May revolt*

UK general election campaigns are legally and formally quite short, typically around four weeks, but in practice there is essentially continuous campaigning for several years before each general election. Politicians seek to appeal to people who are nowadays much less hidebound by the political voting choices of their class or parents with most of the electorate not having any strong party political convictions.

The first past the post (FPTP) system operating in individual constituencies means that most votes are wasted as they are cast in the over three quarters of Parliamentary seats which are safe under any likely political balance between the two main parties.

The FPTP system concentrates electoral power in the target constituencies which represent only about 20% of the total of 646 seats. Within these seats only about 10% of the voters are seen as key as they may be persuaded to change their voting allegiance. This means that just 10% of 20%, being 2%, of the 45 million registered voters are actually targeted. These 900,000 people are bombarded by personalised messages, most of which do not relate to policy but to the personal characteristics of the leadership which also dominate the broadcast and press media.

As a US campaign leader once said:

"You can fool some of the people all of the time, and those are the ones you should concentrate on"

For the 2005 general election the Conservatives set up a call centre in the Midlands and had a staff of 50 in London for the same purpose. They used the "Voter Vault" system pioneered by Karl Rove, George W. Bush's Campaign Manager. Together with Experian, the people data services company, this identified the most likely floating voters in each marginal seat. These 838,000 people received a substantially enhanced level of direct mail, telephone calls, CDs/DVDs and visits from local campaigners. The Conservatives used ORB for their main polling which took place in the 130 Labour held and 33 Liberal Democrat held target seats. During the main campaign they researched 500 voters every night to give a rolling 1,500 voter sample by combining three days of polling. They also conducted about 90 focus groups in target seats.

The Labour Party communications centre in Gosforth employed over 120 people for the 2005 general election. During the campaign it made more than 2 million phone calls and sent out 10 million items of direct mail. To identify floating voters Labour used a similar system to the Conservatives called Contact. The party's objective was to have seven contacts with each target voter by polling day. Labour concentrated on feedback from 130 marginal constituencies and produced a monthly poll and then six tracking polls during the four weeks of the actual campaign. They had frequent focus groups

with one among target voters every night and with Philip Gould also arranging up to four focus groups a week.

In writing about the July 2009 Norwich North by-election, Alex Barker of the The Financial Times described similar honing of the message there:

"In an attempt to protect their flanks, the well-resourced Tories have tailored literature to particular groups. Voters leaning towards the UK Independence Party, for instance, are sent leaflets featuring William Hague, the Eurosceptic Shadow Foreign Secretary."

It becomes increasingly difficult for most people to know what a party stands for as the message is honed relentlessly for the floating voters. In contrast to the overriding efforts expended by the parties on the 2% of floating voters, only a fifth of all voters received a visit in 2005 from a party member according to the British Election Study.

5. Party Funding

The funding of political parties has become a major issue. The key reason for this is because of the centralised power of the political parties. It is the justified belief that one or at most a few people can make political decisions with no real challenge from Parliament that makes it possible for there to be such suspicion about donations.

If candidates were elected as independent individuals then party political funding would no longer be as important. Coupled with the need for any significant policy changes to be debated properly in Parliament or subject to independent scrutiny within departments, there would be less suspicion that policies were being corrupted by donations.

6. The Use of Issues in Campaigning

Anthony Downs, the political scientist, said in 1957:

"Competition between the two main parties just entails both situating themselves towards the middle of the political spectrum to maximise their market share".

For instance, following the House of Commons vote on the 10 pence income tax rate in April 2008, Camilla Cavendish wrote in The Times:

"Mr Brown has rescued his Finance Bill. But this arcane-sounding row has lost him something more profound. He has been exposed as putting political advantage before principle even on the issue that he is supposed to care most about - poverty. He only introduced the 10p band in the first place to wrong-foot the Opposition. He abolished it for the same reason. It has been, from start to finish, a brazen political fiddle."

When there are two main parties they will tend to adjust their policies, candidates and leaders to maximise their popular vote. This means that they will always tend to the middle and find it difficult to espouse any strong policies. This can be seen by considering the political spectrum from left to right. Such a line was used in economics by Harold Hotelling to explain how two shops might locate in a single street in order to maximise their revenue. He assumed an experiment with 100 houses located on a street. Two shopkeepers wish to put their shops in the best place. For the customers the best place for the shops is to have one between houses 24 and 25 and one between houses 75 and 76. In this way consumers are as close as possible on average to a shop and nobody is more than 25 houses away from a shop.

However, if the shops are competing and are more interested in maximising their own revenue than in the welfare of their customers then it is worth the shopkeeper who would otherwise have been at shop 24/25 to move towards the shopkeeper between houses 75/76: he will still keep those houses at lower numbers closer to him but he will also begin to encroach on the people closer to the shop at 75/76. The other shopkeeper will then move towards him and the stable position is that one is between 49/50 and one between 50/51. They are now back in the same position of each having half of the business. But it is less convenient for the shoppers as, for instance, the person living at house No 1 or house No 100 now has to walk a long 49 houses to get their shopping, rather than just 24. The positioning of political parties is similar. They inevitably move to the centre which does not give the best representation for the voters.

As political parties pander to the floating voters to get elected, they find it increasingly difficult to discuss bad news that could upset any part of the population. They therefore have to try to be

favourable to all. In particular they have to foster "growth" to try to show that they can deliver more for their citizens. There is however now ample evidence that economic growth over the last 15 years has been built on too much debt which has unwound to cause the credit crunch. It was clear to many on both sides of the Atlantic that lending someone 5 or more times their income or providing a mortgage for more than 100% of the value of a house could not be sustainable. However no politician put forward any proposals for limiting such practices, and in some cases they actually eased the regulatory burden, as to have tried to limit economic growth would have brought short term unpopularity (even though a country like France has had a 3 times income mortgage limit for many years).

In an article in The Daily Telegraph in August 2009, Simon Heffer described how this was affecting David Cameron ("Dave") and the Conservative Party:

"With the luxury of being so far ahead in the opinion polls, Dave does not need to offer any specific policies. He certainly doesn't need to vacate what he calls the "centre ground", or what the rest of us would call the position of orthodox Leftism. To many voters, a reduction in the size of the state, a contraction of many of the public services and a drive for value in all of them are utterly necessary, and long overdue. So, too, is the severe contraction of Gordon Brown's client state.

But Dave won't publicly embrace any of this, because he fears that it reminds people of the Tory Party they threw out in 1997. No doubt he feels that talking about "progressive" policies will create that warm bath of approval that he needs to get elected: and if traditional Tories don't like it, too bad.

I fear he misunderstands (as do so many of his colleagues) the public mood. The old loyalties have gone. Fringe parties like UKIP, usually only given big support during marginal electoral contests, could find themselves the repository of protest votes by those who wish – as a result of the widespread disillusion caused by the expenses scandal – to smash up the old, cosy system."

There are countless other examples of when Governments have chosen the soft immediate option rather than the long-term one, ranging from failures to establish proper national infrastructure to the need to develop an agreed balance between private and public sector pension entitlements. In practice party leaders compete for the popular vote by offering competitive bribes to the electorate, often using the electorate's own money, especially in relation to state benefits.

7. The Relationship of Electors to Political Parties

Following the 2005 election the Labour pollster Philip Gould wrote about the voters:

"They felt cut out, bored, detached and disempowered. They did not believe what politicians said and did not trust their motivations. The election just watched over them, leaving them more cynical than ever. If there's one thing I would draw from this election it is this: people are switching off from politics".

Rod Liddle, BBC Editor, said in 2005:

I have never witnessed an election where there was so much disillusion and contempt shown for the people we are about to elect to govern us".

In May 2008, Matthew Parris wrote in The Times about the result of the local elections:

"There was nothing constructive in the voters' message. These elections were not an invitation to change. They were a big two-fingered salute, a raspberry, a pressing of the detroused national buttocks to the window of the polling station. The voters are bored, tired, disillusioned and out of love."

The reasons for this political malaise have been clearly identified and stem from the contrast between people's aspirations and increasing knowledge and the arrogance of the current party political system. This has been recognised by all of the major parties but the existing oligarchical political system, where politicians with little leadership or management experience gain credibility from rising up their party's hierarchy, has proven itself unable to reform. Too many party politicians are in politics for the sake of their own career rather than for the benefits they can bring to the country and its people.

Indeed political parties have been accused of having little purpose anymore other than to provide careers for people from university politics departments! They are not focused on positive outcomes for their constituents but on gaining or maintaining power.

8. Conclusion

The problems with the UK system can therefore be seen to be more acute than in many countries because of the confluence of issues in all four key areas of politics:

1. **Parliament:** the reduction of its ability to hold the executive to account
2. **Government:** the increase in its power but with substantial defects in its governance
3. **Parties:** the dominance of the party leadership group and the reduction in membership and importance of the local constituency associations
4. **Elections:** The shallow nature of the debate and the focus on marketing to the 2% of voters who are marginal seat targets

The UK led the world in the evolution of Parliamentary Government as society was transformed and political ideas developed. Following the huge human, technological and philosophical changes in the last 200 years since our current structures were established, the UK is now in a position to lead the world in further improving the governance of the country and the involvement of its citizens.

2F. The View of the Electorate

"A plague on both your houses"
~ Mercutio, Shakespeare

1. Turnout

The result of the 2005 general election was:

	<u>Votes</u>		<u>Seats</u>	
Labour	9,547,944	35.2%	356	55.1%
Conservative	8,772,473	32.3%	198	30.7%
Lib Dem	5,981,874	22.1%	62	9.6%
UKIP	612,707	2.3%	0	0.0%
SNP	412,267	1.5%	6	0.9%
Plaid Cymru	174,838	0.6%	3	0.5%
Others GB	906,665	3.3%	3	0.5%
Others NI	714,884	2.6%	18	2.8%
Total	<u>27,123,652</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>646</u>	<u>100.0%</u>
Turnout:	61.3%			

Only 61.3% of the electorate actually voted at the 2005 general election. In fact, as further described below, about two-fifths voted at both the 2001 and 2005 elections, two fifths voted at one or the other, and one fifth voted at neither.

"I never vote. It only encourages them."
~ Anonymous US Voter, 1972

The loss of party loyalty and the disquiet with the current party political system are demonstrated by the abstention of so many voters from the electoral system as well as by the huge swings in voting behaviour which occur over specific issues. There is clear evidence that people in the UK are now ready, and indeed wanting, to vote for people of quality who are not bound by the old party system.

As it champions the issues which people in the UK really want changed in our political system the Jury Team will not only appeal to those who normally vote for the existing oligarchical parties. It will also attract many of the majority of the electorate who did not vote at both the 2001 and 2005 general elections as they saw little point in it. It may even attract back into the political system some of the estimated 7% of eligible adults who are not currently registered to vote.

2. Lack of Party Political Allegiance

The two main British political parties have had their same broad policy positions since the 1920s. For 40 years after that time political affiliation was frequently handed down through families in the same

way as for religion or for support of a particular sporting team. People were able to use the party political system to simplify their decision about how to vote by relying on cues of class or job status.

Following the societal changes of the 1960s and the influence of television programmes like *That Was The Week That Was*, people's party affiliation began to weaken. Today's electorate is much more sophisticated and feels less bound by class or family ties. There is often little correlation between people's attitude on social issues and their economic background or preferences. Additionally there are now many issues which do not fit into neat party boxes and voters will support whichever party seems to them to champion their point of view.

A wide range of changes all point in the same direction of increasing voter volatility:

- voters are better educated with wider experience through television, travel and the Internet
- social and family networks have become fragmented and apply less pressure to conform
- there is less deference to authority with a greater challenge to existing structures
- economic growth means that the class issues of the 1920's are now only a part of the way in which voters evaluate parties
- the political process itself is viewed with greater suspicion
- membership of political parties has greatly reduced
- with the expansion of Government, voters see for themselves how effective or otherwise is spending on public services

In the mid-1960s 93% of the electorate had a clear preference for a political party and 42% identified strongly with it. By 2005 the number of strong identifiers with any political party had dropped to only 10% of the electorate.

The remaining 90% are potential floating voters. They make up their mind on the issues, which have converged between the parties, and on their immediate perceptions of the parties and their leadership. They also tend to make up their minds later during the campaigns which have themselves therefore become more important.

Younger people believe in their right to influence their lives. They have generally grown up in conditions of greater affluence and security than previous generations as well as having mobility and wide access to information. However they are the group most disaffected from conventional politics. A 2005 survey showed that although 74% were interested in issues such as global warming, education and immigration, only 42% were at all interested in party politics.

There is substantial evidence that voters are prepared not to vote for the traditional parties. For instance in 2005:

- a YouGov poll showed that 24% would vote for "none of the above"
- 12% of voting was for tactical reasons but as these voters were necessarily concentrated in particular seats, well over a third of the electorate in the relevant constituencies voted tactically
- only 45% of people thought that their views were properly represented by any one political party
- only 335 of the 646 constituencies had both Conservative and Labour in the top two places: in the other 311 another party came first or second
- only 41% of the electorate voted for the Conservative or Labour parties in the 2005 general election

Where there have been elections with proportional representation the combined share of the electorate of the Conservative and Labour parties has dropped to even lower levels. Only 18% of the electorate voted for these two parties combined in the 2004 European Parliament Elections, only 25% at both the 2007 Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly Elections and only 15% in the 2009 European Elections.

There have now been twenty five local mayoral contests. Ten of these have been won by Independent candidates and they have a near-perfect re-election record. Most of them were not politicians before their initial election to mayor.

3. Volatility of Voting Intentions

The flow of the vote is very fluid. Only 38% of registered voters voted for the same party at both the 2001 and 2005 general elections. A further 21% did not vote at either election. The remaining 41% were made up as follows:

- 19% voted at one election but not the other
- 11% switched to or from the minor parties
- 7% were new voters in 2005
- only 3% switched between Conservative and Labour

Similarly of all those who voted for Labour in 2005 only 61% had voted Labour in 2001 and of those who voted Conservative in 2005 only 74% had voted Conservative in 2001.

There remains volatility within the campaign itself. The 2005 British Election Survey research showed that in their pre-election poll 46% of the electorate said that they had not yet decided how to vote. Of the 54% who said they had decided, 14% in the end did not vote and 5% voted for another party meaning that only 35% actually voted as they expected when the campaign began, i.e. the other 65%, nearly two-thirds of voters, made a decision during the campaign, changed their minds or did not vote.

MORI's 2005 survey showed that 27% of voters were still uncertain how to vote even on the day before the general election.

Another example of the opportunity for substantial change in the voting result is the Green Party jumping from 0.3% of the vote in the 1987 general election to 14.9% in the 1989 European Parliament election. Similarly in 1997 Plaid Cymru gained 10% in the general election but in 1999 achieved 28% in the Welsh Assembly election. UKIP rose from 1.5% in the 2001 general election to 16.2% in the 2004 European elections.

4. Previous Campaigns

The underlying dissatisfaction with the two-party system was demonstrated as far back as 1981 by the formation of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) which subsequently allied with the Liberals. As Labour moved to the left after 1979 a number of Parliamentarians including four former Labour Cabinet Ministers (Roy Jenkins, David Owen, Bill Rodgers and Shirley Williams) and 26 Labour MPs decided to "*break the mould*" by forming a new centre party between Labour under Michael Foot and the Conservatives who they saw as having moved to the right under Margaret Thatcher.

The "Gang of Four" said in the 1981 Limehouse Declaration that they would appeal to:

"those from outside politics who believe that the country cannot be saved without changing the sterile and rigid framework into which the British political system has increasingly fallen in the last two decades.

We do not believe in the politics of an inert centre merely representing the lowest common denominator between two extremes. We want more, not less, radical change in our society, but with a greater stability of direction."

This passage, 28 years later, is still important and relevant and very close to the mission of the Jury Team.

Even though traditional party allegiance was much greater a quarter of a century ago than it is now, and they were dependent on conventional newspaper and broadcast media, being before the Internet, the SDP were nevertheless successful in getting more than a quarter (25.3%) of the vote in the general election of 1983. Unfortunately for them as they had wide appeal across the country, the electoral system gave them only 23 MPs whereas the Labour Party, with only 2.3% more of the vote (27.6%) but concentrated in particular areas, won 209 seats. The Alliance was similarly successful in 1987 when it won 22.5% of the vote although because of its broad based support it lost one seat to claim just 22 MPs.

Although there has not until now been a national campaign for Independent candidates, where Independents have stood on special issues they have demonstrated that a large proportion of the electorate will vote for them. For instance in the last three general elections:

- In 1997 Martin Bell stood as an Independent candidate in Tatton, one of the safest Conservative seats in the country, with only a 24 day campaign from when he resigned from the BBC. He overturned the majority of over 20,000 of the sitting Conservative Member of Parliament, Neil Hamilton, who was embroiled in "sleaze" allegations, and Bell was elected an MP with a majority of 11,077 votes and 60.2% of the votes
- In 2001 Dr Richard Taylor stood in Wyre Forest in protest at the closure of the local accident and emergency unit. He won in 2001 with a majority of over 18,000 and 58.1% of the vote and won again in 2005
- In 2005 Peter Law, a member of the Welsh Assembly, resigned from the Labour Party in protest at an all women shortlist being imposed in Blaenau Gwent and beat the official Labour candidate. Labour had enjoyed a majority of 19,313, making it the safest Parliamentary seat in Wales, but Law won the seat with a majority of 9,121 and 58.2% of the vote

This voter volatility is a trend throughout the western democracies. For instance Ross Perot gained 19% of the US Presidential vote in 1992 and in Europe instant parties such as Berlusconi's Forza Italia, Jorg Haider's Freedom Party in Austria and List Pym Fortuyn in the Netherlands all show the increased volatility of the electorate. In August 2009 the opposition Democratic Party of Japan unseated the Liberal Democratic Party whose share of the vote dropped from 48% to 27%.