



SHAPING THE DEBATE

The Centre for Policy Studies in 50 papers



About the Centre for Policy Studies

The Centre for Policy Studies is one of the oldest and most influential think tanks in Westminster. With a focus on taxation, business, and economic growth, as well as housing, energy and innovation, its mission is to develop policies that widen enterprise, ownership and opportunity.

Founded in 1974 by Sir Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher, the CPS has a proud record of turning ideas into practical policy. As well as developing much of the Thatcher reform agenda, its research has inspired many more recent policy innovations, such as raising the personal allowance and National Insurance threshold, reintroducing free ports and adopting 'full expensing' for capital investment.

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Introduction

Upstairs in 57 Tufton Street there is a room, barely bigger than a cupboard, which contains 50 years' worth of condensed history: the Centre for Policy Studies archive. Along three walls, from floor to ceiling, shelves bulge with thousands of copies of CPS papers – reports, briefings, speeches – by more than 450 named authors and countless other contributors.

It has been an invaluable resource for reflecting on how 50 years of CPS policies have helped shape modern Britain. Our ideas transformed the country's political economy in the 1980s. We were an early advocate for the phonics revolution in England's schools. On tax reform, housing and in many other policy areas we have consistently led the way.

The archive is also a treasure trove to delight any historian of modern British politics, and historians of conservatism in particular. Moving along the shelves and down the years, you can sense the ebb and flow of the tides which have shaped conservative political thought since 1974. Pretty much every major policy debate or political event of the last 50 years is represented.

Although it was not included in the job description, as Research Director at the CPS, I have found myself the de facto curator of this wonderful collection. And with this being our 50th anniversary year, I have not only had an excuse to spend many hours in this slightly dusty room, but to think about how to share the contents with our many friends and supporters.

Under former CPS Director Tim Knox, a substantial proportion of the CPS archive was digitised and can now be accessed through the CPS website. This is extremely useful if you have a specific paper in mind. However, it's harder to get a feel for the full sweep of history, and there's less chance of stumbling across a hidden gem.

To mark the 25th anniversary of the CPS in 1999, Matthew d'Ancona – then on the CPS board – compiled a catalogue of CPS reports, published as 'The First Modernisers: The Centre for Policy Studies, Past & Future' (a rather fascinating choice of title). It contained a list of 298 CPS publications published up until that point, organised thematically and each accompanied by a short blurb. It was a superb insight into the way the CPS had shaped the political climate in the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

This booklet, marking the 50th anniversary of the CPS, takes inspiration from d'Ancona's example – though on a more limited scale. Rather than summarising every single one of the 688 printed papers (not to mention scores of briefings published solely in digital format), I have attempted to select 50 papers which reflect 50 years.

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In each case, I have sought to provide a brief description of the argument, something of the political and intellectual context in which it was written, and a sense of why it is important – including in relation to the work we still do today. By putting the papers in chronological order, a sense of the broader sweep of history is also retained.

I have had to make some very difficult choices. Inevitably, some brilliant papers and brilliant names have been left out. In particular, I tried to restrict myself to one paper per author – otherwise there would be page after page of contributions from Keith Joseph and other early luminaries. To those left out, I can only apologise. But I hope my selection succeeds in showcasing the range and importance of the work done by the CPS over 50 years, and its absolute centrality to the conservative tradition.

50 Years in 50 Papers

Monetarism is Not Enough (January 1976)

The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph Bt MP (foreword: the Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP)

It was the speeches of Sir Keith Joseph that launched the CPS, and set the enduring blueprint for its work. All repay reading today, but I have selected his Stockton Lecture, since its message rings as true now as it did in 1976. Sir Keith pointed out that the economic stimulus deployed to stem unemployment, well-intentioned though it may be, ultimately fuelled inflation. The classic CPS solution would be a monetarist approach to central banking. But he argued that while maintaining control of the supply of broad money is essential for a functional economy, it is not enough. Without a reduction in the overall size of the state to accompany it, we are condemned to remain 'over-governed, over-spent, over-taxed, over-borrowed and over-manned'.

Monetarism: An Essay in Definition (October 1978)

Tim Congdon (foreword: William Rees-Mogg)

By the late 1970s, 'monetarism' was firmly embedded in the political vocabulary of the day. But as is usually the case with 'isms' kicked around by commentators, there was little consensus over what it meant, or whether it was a good or bad thing. Tim Congdon set out to clarify the debate and argue the monetarist case. Much of the paper was taken up with the economic content of the theory in the context of modern British economic policymaking. However, it is the penetrating intellectual history of 300 years of monetarist thought which really marked this intervention out. As William Rees-Mogg (then Editor of the Times) pointed out in the foreword, monetarism was as much a traditional as a new doctrine. Congdon was not able to stop 'monetarism' being used as a term of abuse – less than two years later the Guardian would refer to the CPS as the 'Potlacha of monetarism manned by fanatical lamas' – but he did help to cement monetarism at the heart of the early Thatcherite agenda.

History, Capitalism and Freedom (January 1979)

Hugh Thomas (foreword: the Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP)

There is nothing new under the sun – and that includes the 'culture wars'. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, beleaguered bands of 'New Right' academics and intellectuals such as Roger Scruton, Kingsley Amis and Caroline Cox tried – mostly unsuccessfully – to stem the rising tide of left-wing activism in educational institutions. In this paper, based on a lecture at the 1978 Conservative Party Conference, Hugh Thomas – the ex-communist and historian who would soon become the Chairman of the CPS – stressed the need for rigorous scholarship to combat the beguiling comfort of simplistic ideologies. As Thatcher wrote in the foreword, it seemed 'that a whole generation has been brought up to misunderstand and denigrate our national history'. Thomas made a powerful plea for a restored pride in our past and appreciation for the importance of the freedoms which have been the essential ingredients of British achievement and prosperity down the centuries.

An Arts Policy? (January 1979)

Kingsley Amis

The idea of a novelist of the stature of Kingsley Amis speaking at a Conservative Party Conference today is, frankly, laughable. But reading his remarks, it becomes less surprising that the author of Lucky Jim – the 'Angry Young Man' who satirised the stultifying conventions of post-war society – would associate himself with the early radicalism of the CPS. In what must be the funniest paper ever published by a think tank, Amis set out his vision for an arts policy – which was that no government should have one.

The Economic Adviser's Role: Scope and Limitations (October 1981)

Professor Alan Walters

Professor Alan Walters was Thatcher's personal economic adviser from 1981 to 1983, and again in 1989. He helped craft Geoffrey Howe's famous 1981 Budget, which decisively broke with the quasi-Keynesian economic consensus of the post-war decades. In this pamphlet – the text of a speech given by Walters for the CPS at the 1981 Conservative Party Conference following that Budget – he described the intellectual courage required at that time to be a monetarist. He also described the qualities necessary to be an effective adviser, most importantly an independent mind – presaging his later public break with Nigel Lawson over the Exchange Rate Mechanism, and the resignation of both men in 1989.

Property and Poverty: An Agenda for the Mid-80s (November 1984)

Ferdinand Mount

In this paper – the text of a speech given for the CPS at the 1984 Conservative Party Conference – Ferdinand Mount (Thatcher's policy chief) lamented the destruction of property rights under the Attlee government, and pointed towards an economic agenda for Thatcher's second term: expanding ownership still further. While he recognised that the Attlee government had been trying to help the poor, Mount noted that it had done the opposite, not least by putting them at the mercy of a new class of interventionist bureaucrats.

He argued that 'if we are serious about levelling up income and the standard of living, we must be serious too about levelling up property rights' – Johnsonism before Boris Johnson. Right to Buy was just the start – an argument that would be taken up by CPS authors like John Redwood and Shirley Robin Letwin in the coming years.

Terrorism and Tolerance: Flaws in the Liberal Tradition (April 1985)

T.E. Utley

In 1985, at the height of the Troubles, the legendary journalist and 'Tory seer' T.E. Utley delivered the annual Ross McWhirter Memorial Lecture. McWhirter – a Conservative activist and co-founder of what is now Guinness World Records – was murdered by the Provisional IRA in 1975. Given Utley's connections to Margaret Thatcher (he was an early and vocal supporter, and later one of her speechwriters) it is no surprise that the CPS should have published this speech just a few months after the Brighton hotel bombings. Expressing his personal views, Utley used the speech to explore tensions between individual liberty and national security which he thought had been thrown into sharp relief by IRA terrorism.

Put Pits into Profit: Alternative Plans for Coal (September 1985)

Keith Boyfield

By the summer of 1985, parliamentary democracy had prevailed: the National Union of Mineworkers under Scargill had gone down to a defeat from which it would never recover as a political force. The careful planning and iron resolve of Norman Tebbit and other key Cabinet ministers had won out. Thatcher and the Conservative Party had the future of the nation's coal industry in their hands.

A common accusation from the left – then and now – is that there was no thought given to the future of the industry. That is not so, as this pamphlet by Keith Boyfield shows. Noting that the pattern of British energy consumption was changing by the mid-1980s, he set out both short-term and long-term reforms to forge a profitable coal industry: denationalisation and removing the near-monopoly of the National Coal Board, opencast mining, and bringing output into line with demand.

Greening the Tories: New Policies on the Environment (September 1985)

Andrew Sullivan

This pamphlet, written for the CPS when Andrew Sullivan was still a Master's student at Harvard, argued that 'the environment is essentially a conservative issue, springing from conservative sentiments. It is not a liberal or intellectual abstraction but a detailed and humane reality... as Conservatives, it is our natural territory.' In making such a forceful argument for green conservatism long before it was fashionable, Sullivan was in many ways foreshadowing the environmental accomplishments of both the Thatcher government and later Conservative administrations. Sullivan went on to become one of the most influential American journalists of his generation, writing his famous blog *The Daily Dish* from 2000 onwards.

Equity for Everyman: new ways to widen ownership (February 1986)

John Redwood

John Redwood wrote this report in the brief window between leaving Thatcher's policy unit in 1985 and entering Parliament in 1987. It was the first of a dozen or so CPS papers he would write over the years, most recently 'The Power of Ownership' (2023). In his 1986 paper, he outlined the profound democratisation of ownership over the 20th century, first as private renters became affluent enough to buy their own homes, and then when social tenants were enabled to do so by the Thatcher Government.

He argued for extending this to share ownership, detailing a scheme for the public to be given equity in the next tranche of privatised firms: 'Instead of three million shareholders, we could have 35 million'. Alongside a host of similar CPS papers in the mid-to-late 1980s, Redwood's report was instrumental in transforming the venerable conservative idea of a property-owning democracy into the idea of a capital-owning democracy.

Every Adult a Share-Owner: The Case for Universal Share Ownership (October 1986)

Shirley Robin Letwin & William Letwin

A key feature of 1980s privatisation was the diffusion of ownership, with substantial shareholdings passing to employees and the general public. In this report, the distinguished Anglo-American academics Shirley Robin and William Letwin proposed a radical version of democratic privatisation – not unlike John Redwood's vision – 'Universal Share Ownership'. They defended it both on grounds of liberal political principle, and as a means of embedding broad support for free markets and private ownership. As with Redwood's piece, this paper did much to shape the Thatcherite vision of a capital-owning democracy.

Morality and Markets: The Gospel of an Economist (October 1986)

Lord Harris of High Cross

In recent decades the Conservative Party has often had a troubled relationship with the upper echelons of the clergy. One fierce critic of the Thatcher reform agenda in the 1980s was the then Bishop of Liverpool. In this paper, Lord Harris quoted the Bishop on the sad necessity of church closures, and pointed out that the same market logic applies to coal mines. Sticking with the religious idiom, he also hailed the great 'prophets' of the free market: F.A. Hayek, Adam Smith, Milton Friedman and many others. But he had a serious point. Contrary to the 'Loadsamoney' caricature, Thatcher's agenda was a moral project. More recent papers such as Robert Colville's 'The Morality of Growth' (2023), while eschewing an explicitly religious idiom, have continued the CPS tradition of making the moral case for free market enterprise from first principles.

Victorian Values and Twentieth-Century Condescension (August 1987)

Gertrude Himmelfarb

In a subtle polemic peppered with dry irony, historian and American neoconservative luminary Gertrude Himmelfarb intervened on the side of Margaret Thatcher and Victorian values. Much of Himmelfarb's argument was directed at the various historiographical

schools associated with the 'New Left'. The paper's title was of course an allusion to E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) and his desire to rescue ordinary people from 'the enormous condescension of posterity'.

However, Himmelfarb persuasively argued that in employing ideas of 'false consciousness' and reducing all social relations to structures of oppression, the new mode of history 'professes to celebrate the common man while demeaning the virtues usually associated with the common man'. She argued that unlike the radical historians then ascendant in the universities, Thatcher's government truly understood and was on the side of ordinary working people (millions of whom had voted Conservative in the general election only a few months previously).

Britain Resurgent: Return to a Wealth Creating Economy (October 1987)

Lord Young of Graffham

In this pamphlet, based on a speech delivered to the Conservative Party Conference in Blackpool in 1987, Lord Young chronicled how Britain brought itself back from the brink after decades of post-war decline. He argued that renewed national prosperity was down to three key elements: 'individual initiative, the spur of competitive markets and the efficiency of our industries'. The power of all three was harnessed by Margaret Thatcher following her victory in 1979, when her government rejected industrial strategy in favour of creating a climate of enterprise where individuals and businesses could create wealth free of direct state intervention. Thatcher was in her pomp when Lord Young (then Secretary of State of Trade and Industry) gave this speech – and no wonder, considering how far Britain had come from the malaise of the 1970s.

The New Britain: The Tide of Ideas from Attlee to Thatcher (February 1988)

Nigel Lawson

In 1988, Margaret Thatcher became the longest-serving UK Prime Minister of the 20th century. Nigel Lawson, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer and served in Thatcher's Cabinet for most of her time in office, here compared her transformative effect on British politics to that of Attlee. Lawson argued that politicians routinely

underestimate the importance of ideological shifts and 'moral initiatives'. Whereas Attlee rose to power as part of the sea-change in favour of big government and egalitarianism that followed the war, Thatcher rose to power in the mid-1970s when the tide turned again. Lawson highlighted the achievements of the Thatcher administration, particularly in supporting freedom and individual responsibility. Conservatives, he argued, must continue to support these principles by defending the free market and transferring the power of bureaucrats to the people.

The Conservative Community: The Roots of Thatcherism and its Future (January 1989)

Robin Harris

Writing towards the end of Thatcher's third term, Robin Harris – a member of her No 10 Policy Unit who was later asked by Thatcher to help with writing *The Downing Street Years* – reflected on the meaning of 'Thatcherism'. Harris provided a critical interpretation of the history of Conservatism to highlight the difference between the Conservative and socialist understanding of 'community'. The 'Conservative Community', in Harris' view, is one that limits the power of the state. It is also one that stresses the primacy of local ties, especially to the family, while maintaining the importance of individual freedom. The key for Conservatives is to balance the cohesion of the national community with the independence and change that must exist within it in order for individuals to thrive. Harris argued that it was Thatcher, more than any Prime Minister before her, who made the greatest progress toward realising this Conservative vision of the community.

Nimbyism: The Disease and the Cure (August 1990)

Richard Ehrman

The CPS has for decades been the evangelical wing of the pro-housing movement in Britain. Richard Ehrman's influential 1990 paper is a striking example. Ehrman recognised early that the underlying cause of the housing shortage was 'Nimbyism' – the opposition of local people to development near them. Nimbyism mainly arises, in Ehrman's view, because the people who are most affected by development receive no share in its benefits. To cure it, we need to share uplift with local people, thereby winning consent

and even support. His arguments have become increasingly influential in recent years, and the boldest parts of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) – community land auctions and street votes – were shaped by them.

Sense on Sovereignty (November 1991)

Noel Malcolm

A number of historians and intellectual heavyweights have written for the CPS over the decades, and Noel Malcolm stands high among them. In this paper, written in a year which began with the Gulf War and ended with the European summit in Maastricht, he waded into the great debate then beginning to open up in the Conservative Party over Britain and Europe. Oliver Letwin had fired an early salvo in his 1989 CPS paper 'Drift to Union: Wiser Ways to a Wider Community'. Malcolm took an even more sceptical stance, challenging the conceptions of sovereignty being deployed to argue for a federal state and bemoaning the 'appalling lack of conceptual clarity shown by so many of our leading politicians'. He feared that Britain in a federal Europe would lead to indifference in public life and a sense that Britain had lost control over its own destiny.

The Blue Horizon (October 1993)

Michael Portillo MP

In a lecture given to Conservative Party Conference in 1993, Michael Portillo preached the importance of setting out a vision for the electorate that was not just appealing to them, but that was also honest with them. Crucially, that included being open about what is and is not the job of government. Government, he argued, must pursue the policies it believes to be right for the country, not shirk difficult or controversial decisions for the sake of short-term gain. Governments can only reflect society's values, not create them.

Portillo had held several ministerial portfolios already and was, at the time, Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Not yet the face of Conservative electoral defeat, this speech contains the line 'If a government believes that a policy is right for the country, then it must pursue it, even if it leads to unpopularity'. Many may say it, but Portillo certainly lived it.

Public Spending: A Twenty-Year Plan for Reform (November 1995)

Patrick Minford & Paul Ashton

If ever there was a time to forestall the fiscal challenges of an ageing population, it was in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the Baby Boomers were at the peak of their careers and Britain was benefiting from the post-Cold War peace dividend. In this 1995 paper, Patrick Minford and Paul Ashton took the long view and made an eloquent case for reducing public spending, cutting taxes and going for growth. Thatcher herself called the paper 'brilliant and provocative', and said it 'reminded us how far we still might go, and how great the potential gains'.

Unfortunately, New Labour would go on to abandon public sector reform and turn on the spending taps. As noted in the recent CPS essay collection 'Justice for the Young' (2023), we are now in a position where, unless we have economic growth averaging 2.9% per annum for the next 50 years, the welfare state as currently constituted can only be sustained by a doom-spiral of economically damaging tax rises. If only Minford and Ashton had been heeded back in the day.

How to be British (December 1995)

Charles Moore

There is no shortage of romanticised descriptions of the British character, but in his 1995 CPS lecture to Conservative Party Conference, Charles Moore identified a more active, vigorous and entrepreneurial spirit as this country's greatest contribution to civilisation. This, he argued, was under threat from the vast expansion of the welfare state, and the decay of the constitution – particularly the creeping influence of European institutions. 'How to be British' is both a plea for political revival and a defence of national exceptionalism.

Blair's Gurus: An Examination of Labour's Rhetoric (June 1996)

David Willetts MP

Prior to becoming an MP, David Willetts had spent two years in the Downing Street Policy Unit under Thatcher, leaving to run the Centre for Policy Studies. As an MP, he continued to be closely associated with Conservative policy development, so it is notable that in 1996 his attention had turned to what was happening on the other side of the chamber, to the 'intellectual environment' sustaining the New Labour project.

Many criticisms are familiar. Blair's gurus bemoaned short-termism in the City, low investment, a state that was ineffective but fairly expensive, an unaccountable quango class, the damage wrought by globalisation and an outdated constitution. What is interesting is Blair's record against this analysis. He either failed to solve – or made far worse – the very problems his supposed gurus fretted about. It also raises the question: what would a similar paper about today's Labour Party look like? Who are Keir Starmer's gurus?

Conservative Agenda: Proposals for a Fifth Term (October 1996)

Tessa Keswick and Edward Heathcoat Amory

Unaware of, or perhaps undaunted by, the colossal defeat looming on the horizon, Keswick and Heathcoat Amory brought together a systematic and compelling narrative for what a Conservative government could achieve beyond 1997, touching on the economy, the constitution, public services and Britain's role in the world. Priorities included simplifying the tax system, fighting protectionism, a transferable personal allowance, publishing information on the performance of doctors to improve patient care, and better quality control for universities. Which of these recommendations isn't as valid today as it was in 1996?

The Performance of Privatised Industries (June 1996 – February 1997)

National Economic Research Associates (NERA)

In the year leading up to the 1997 general election, the CPS commissioned a series of extensive studies on the results of privatisation from National Economic Research Associates, an economics consultancy. The studies revealed that privatisation

had been a significant success. For example, the third study found that labour productivity had improved significantly, with 'especially strong improvements being registered in cases such as British Steel, Associated British Ports, BA, and British Coal, all of which operate in broadly competitive product markets'. This series vindicated the CPS and Thatcher government's privatisation agenda.

The End of Illiteracy? The Holy Grail of Clackmannanshire (March 1999)

Tom Burkard

The CPS has long been at the forefront of evidence-based education reform, not least through the 'Education Study Group' chaired by Baroness Cox in the early 1980s. By the 1990s, the CPS was championing synthetic phonics. In this paper, one of many on the topic from the CPS at the time, Tom Burkard highlighted how the literacy trials held in schools in Clackmannanshire had provided the empirical evidence that phonics was by far the best way to teach children how to read. Although phonics at first proved unpopular among the teaching establishment, the synthetic phonics method eventually prevailed, not least due to the tireless work of Nick Gibb (Schools Minister throughout most of the Conservative governments from 2010 to 2024). As a result, children in England today rank 4th out of 43 countries in an international comparison of literacy at age seven.

Conservatism, Democracy and National Identity (March 1999)

John O'Sullivan

The third Sir Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture was given by John O'Sullivan, then Editor-at-Large of the National Review in the United States and Editorial Consultant for the National Post in Canada. A former special adviser to Margaret Thatcher, O'Sullivan drew upon his experience of conservative politics on both sides of the Atlantic to argue that British Conservatives must be the party for democracy, pushing back against the undemocratic expansion of the regulatory state.

Speaking in a time of relative peace and prosperity, O'Sullivan warned that Conservatives – historically defined by recalcitrance toward radical upheaval – must be alert to the more insidious threats posed to democracy by increasing bureaucracy in matters

of everyday life, the tribalisation of politics via the ideology of multiculturalism, and the rise of supranational bodies such as the EU. Looking back from today's vantage point, O'Sullivan looks to be as much the 'Tory seer' as T.E. Utey.

Mr Blair's Poodle: An Agenda for Reviving the House of Commons (June 2000)

Andrew Tyrie MP

Andrew Tyrie is not only one of the CPS's most prolific authors over the years, but one of the most influential. In this paper, and a sequel focusing on the Iraq War, he made the case for greater parliamentary scrutiny of the executive, especially significant at a time when the Labour Party had such a large majority that it could rule with relative impunity. In this paper, Tyrie made a series of proposals for improving the operations of Parliament so as to lessen the executive's control and promote greater transparency and accountability. Two of the most impactful were for the Prime Minister to appear regularly before a Scrutiny Committee drawn from the chairs of the various Select Committees, and for those Select Committee chairs to be elected by secret ballot. That last proposal in particular has had a transformative impact on the House of Commons' business, exposing both Labour and Conservative governments to far greater scrutiny than was the case when the Whips had control.

Second Amongst Equals: Women and the Conservative Party (October 2000)

Tessa Keswick

The Conservative Party may well have been the home of the UK's first female Prime Minister (and unbeknownst to Keswick at the time, the second and third). But in 2000 the party was struggling to attract or retain female voters – historically vital to Conservative electoral success – let alone get women on to the green benches. In fact, when the CPS's first female Director delivered this speech to Conservative Party Conference, the party had only 14 female MPs.

Keswick outlined a plan of party organisation and proposals which would recognise the pivotal role women played in the success of the Conservative Party over the last century, and which would reflect their more equal status in the labour market. She praised women

who were 'determined to combine work and family' in unleashing new swathes of entrepreneurial talent, but reflected on the need for flexible working arrangements to accommodate the needs of mothers and children.

A New Conservative Century? (October 2001)

Anthony Seldon & Peter Snowdon

Historians Anthony Seldon and Peter Snowdon drew upon the lessons of the past to chart the road back to power for a Conservative Party in crisis. For Seldon, by now eminent in his profession, this was something of a personal return to beginnings too – he had been the first CPS research intern back in the summer of 1974, when the CPS was founded.

Writing in the aftermath of a landslide Conservative defeat in 2001, Seldon and Snowdon began by diagnosing the problems within the party, among them 'bitter divisions' and general exhaustion with Conservative rule. Looking back to the period of Conservative opposition in the late 1990s, they argued that the party's biggest problem then was 'the absence of a considered strategy capable of reclaiming the centre-ground of British politics'. In their view, 'the Party threw itself into a haphazard fervour of activity that led it further away from the everyday policy concerns and the subtleties of public mood and opinion'. Through a comprehensive analysis of the history of British Conservatism, Seldon and Snowdon identified three areas in which the Conservative Party must make progress, post-defeat: policy renewal, party organisation, and leadership.

No System to Abuse: Immigration and Health Care in the UK (May 2003)

Harriet Sergeant

Net migration to the UK passed 100,000 for the first time ever in 1998, and by 2003 unprecedented levels of immigration were a hot topic. Fusing long-standing CPS concerns over NHS productivity, value for money and better outcomes for patients with a relatively new (for the CPS) focus on migration policy, Harriet Sergeant highlighted both the problem of 'health tourism' by visitors to the UK, and the NHS as a pull factor for migrant workers. With 10 new

countries set to accede to the EU in 2004, these problems were only going to grow. The CPS continues to highlight many of the issues first touched on by Sergeant, including the paucity of data on numbers and of solid cost-benefit analysis of migration's impact.

The Erosion of Parliamentary Government (October 2003)

John Major

Writing for the CPS in his first (but certainly not his last) significant public intervention since leaving Downing Street, John Major launched a blistering critique of the corrosive effects of the Blair project on Parliament, the Civil Service and the truth itself. While Brexiteers might see a degree of irony in Major's defence of parliamentary sovereignty, he was undeniably right when he wrote: 'New Labour's style of governing – and its adoption of spin and soundbite as its weapons of choice – has done immense damage to politics. Such black arts are political tricks, not statesmanship.' Nearly 20 years on, it is a vivid reminder of the nature of politics under a notionally 'centrist' Labour government.

Too Much of a Good Thing? Towards a Balanced Approach to Immigration (March 2005)

Peter Lilley MP

Peter Lilley lamented that the debate over immigration all too often falls into two camps – those who oppose any immigration at all, and those who oppose all limits on immigration – with no room for nuance or moderation in the middle. In Lilley's view, 'If moderate mainstream politicians do not present the public with a reasonable case for allowing some, but not unlimited amounts, of immigration, voters will become increasingly susceptible to the irrational appeal of extremist parties like the BNP.'

He also criticised the way Tony Blair's government was trying to distract from surging legal migration by cracking down on illegal migration. A proper debate was needed, which considered such matters as the effects of immigration not just on GDP but on GDP per capita; the need for better data; the implications of immigration for housing; problems of over-stayers and chain migration; and the need for a cap alongside a points-based system focused on

high-skilled workers. Much the same is still being said today, but with even more urgency – when Lilley was writing in 2005, the most recent net migration figures (151,000 in 2003) were barely a fifth of the 745,000 in 2022.

Tax Simplification: How, and Why, it Must be Done (March 2005)

David Martin

Tax simplification has been at the heart of the CPS credo for decades, but the explosion in tax complexity under Chancellor Gordon Brown made the issue more important than ever. In this pamphlet, David Martin showed just how absurdly complex the system was becoming, outlined the principles of tax simplification and developed a strategy for simplifying the British tax system. This work has continued down to the present, for example through Tom Clougherty's 'Make Work Pay: A New Agenda for Fairer Taxes' (2018). But while the CPS has had some major wins on tax reform (most recently permanent full expensing), there is much still to do. When Martin was writing, the complete Tolley's Tax Handbook was over 11,000 pages in length. The latest edition is over 16,000.

The NHS Since 1997: Modest Improvements at Immoderate Cost (May 2005)

Ruth Lea

At the start of Tony Blair's third term, CPS Director Ruth Lea took stock of how the NHS had performed since Labour's general election victory in 1997. She noted that while there had been some improvements, they came at significant expense to the taxpayer. The paper raised concerns about NHS productivity that are still with us today and concluded with a prescient observation that 'transferring resources from the private sector to the NHS has undermined economic growth'.

Creating Wealth and Eliminating Poverty: At Home and Abroad (November 2005)

David Cameron MP

When David Cameron delivered this speech in November 2005, he was on the verge of being elected Leader of the Conservative Party. In it, he set out his vision for a modern, compassionate Conservative Party pursuing a new doctrine of 'economic empowerment'. He argued that 'markets are essential for the creation of wealth', that 'Conservative values are essential for the creation of free markets', and that these values were also 'essential if everyone is to share in the benefits of free markets'. He sought to create a ladder of prosperity that would make capitalism for everyone, not just the elites.

The Nationalisation of Childhood (March 2006)

Jill Kirby

Reflecting on the 'Every Child Matters' policy introduced by New Labour in 2003, Kirby argued that this massive reorganisation and centralisation of childcare and child protection services was a new frontier for the welfare state that would cause more harm than good. In her view, the idea of 'progressive universalism' would lead providers to overlook the particular needs of families and overstretch the provision of services to the point that the most important cases were neglected.

Above all, Kirby warned against the nationalisation of childcare because it would fundamentally change the relationship between parents, children and the state. Foreshadowing Labour's current plans to integrate nurseries into schools, Kirby raised concern about how oversight by the Department for Education and Skills into reading material for babies and pre-school children would impose a state 'curriculum for toddlers'. Kirby offered a timely reminder that 'the more power is accrued to the state, the weaker the family becomes'.

Too Big to Live: Why We Must Stamp Out State Monopoly Capitalism (October 2009)

Niall Ferguson

When Keith Joseph, Margaret Thatcher and their allies founded the Centre for Policy Studies in 1974, Joseph stated that its purpose would be to make the case for a social market economy, which he defined as 'a free market economy operating within a humane system of laws and institutions'. In this essay for the CPS, Professor Niall Ferguson carried the torch by arguing that the financial crisis of 2008 was not caused by the free market but rather by what he called State Monopoly Capitalism. He argued the problem was not deregulation, but rather the unprecedented concentration in the financial services sector (particularly in companies considered 'too big to fail') as a result of excessive regulation. The way forward, in Ferguson's view, was to dismantle this monopoly by reducing government intervention in the financial system.

Guilty Men (September 2010)

Peter Osborne & Frances Weaver (foreword: Peter Jay)

In a nod to Michael Foot's 1940 polemic against perceived Tory appeasement of fascism in the 1930s, Peter Osborne and Frances Weaver comprehensively took to task the 'errors, falsehoods and libels' employed by advocates of Britain joining the euro, singling out remarks from Danny Alexander, Paddy Ashdown, Tony Blair, Ken Clarke, Nick Clegg, Chris Huhne, Peter Mandelson, Chris Patten, David Aaronovitch, Oonagh Blackman, Diane Coyle, Andrew Gowers, Johann Hari, Will Hutton, Philip Stephens and Hugo Young, as well as institutions such as the BBC, Financial Times and CBI which had 'surrendered any pretence of impartiality'. Having been proven right by events then unfolding in the Eurozone, the authors argued it was now 'time to celebrate those who fought to save sterling'.

The Atomic Clock: How the Coalition is Gambling with Britain's Energy Policy (January 2012)

Tony Lodge

At a time when Nick Clegg was arguing against new nuclear power because it wouldn't come online until 2022, Tony Lodge was writing about Britain's need for a 'nuclear renaissance'. Nuclear is 'well established as an internationally proven low carbon technology' that, crucially, 'provides secure, large-scale, baseload electricity'. Lodge argued that the Coalition government needed to put nuclear at the heart of its energy strategy, as 'low-cost, reliable and abundant energy is essential to the future competitiveness of British industry'. Events have vindicated Lodge and the CPS, but rather depressingly, 12 years on, the UK has still to bring a single new nuclear reactor online.

After PFI (May 2012)

Jesse Norman MP

The CPS and its supporters are sometimes caricatured as blind worshippers of the private sector. But our authors have been among the first to expose cases of market failure – not least when it comes to the state's appalling record of purchasing services. In this paper, Jesse Norman became one of the first prominent figures to raise the alarm about the extraordinary liabilities that had been accrued through New Labour's vastly expanded use of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) – £200 billion by 2012 (over £270 billion in today's money). Drawing together data and analysis from an array of sources, Norman's paper was a damning indictment of Gordon Brown's use of PFI to move major capital projects off the balance sheet, and the failure of many of those projects to deliver value for money. Today, we are still living with many of the explicit and hidden costs of PFI, and of poor government procurement – but thanks in part to Norman's paper, there is a lot more focus on this area than once there was.

A Distorted Debate: The Need for Clarity on Debt, Deficit and Coalition Aims (August 2012)

Ryan Bourne & Tim Knox

This pamphlet by Ryan Bourne and former CPS Director Tim Knox exemplified much of the economic and fiscal policy work being done by the CPS in the late 2000s and early 2010s, as politicians were trying to steer the UK back to economic growth and financial sustainability after the financial crisis. Bourne and Knox highlighted the conceptual confusions surrounding the Coalition government's deficit reduction programme, not least the tendency of commentators and the public to conflate the deficit with debt, and the widespread belief that the national debt was falling. Other research in this vein included Bourne's 10 'Factsheets' on marginal tax rates, inflation, Treasury forecasts and similar topics, and work on key fiscal challenges by some of the 2010 intake of MPs, including Jesse Norman and Dominic Raab.

The Local Government Pension Scheme: Opportunity Knocks (November 2013)

Michael Johnson

In the early 2010s, the Coalition Government made an overdue attempt to address the state of the pensions system, in both the public and private sectors. The CPS was of course at the heart of the debate. In this 2013 paper, Michael Johnson – almost certainly the most prolific report author in the history of the CPS – turned his gaze towards improving the workings of the Local Government Pension Scheme, which he showed to be opaque, poorly run and not delivering for investors. With pension fund reform once more on the cards, the principles behind his proposals remain as relevant as ever.

The Free Ports Opportunity: How Brexit Could Boost Trade, Manufacturing and the North (November 2016)

Rishi Sunak

The fourth PM to appear in these pages, in this paper written when he was still a relatively new MP, Rishi Sunak made the case for the establishment of free ports – special economic zones within the UK offering various tax and customs reliefs – as a key ingredient in Britain's international competitiveness post-Brexit. He has remained a

consistent advocate of this policy ever since, in No 11 and No 10. As a result, in another sterling example of CPS policy proposals being turned into action, there are now eight free ports across England, from Teeside to the Thames.

A Royal Commission on the NHS (February 2017 & January 2018)

Maurice Saatchi & Dominic Nutt

Lord Saatchi, the CPS's former Chairman, is one of the many authors who could have a catalogue of their own. We might have chosen 'Poor People! Stop Paying Tax!', which persuaded the Coalition to take millions of people out of income tax. But even more topical under current circumstances is his campaign for an NHS Royal Commission. In a pair of papers, Lord Saatchi (with the assistance of Dominic Nutt) set out the case for an NHS Royal Commission, the problems it should investigate, and the powers it should have to do so. He argued that only a cross-party commission could 'cut through the Gordian knot' and put the NHS on a firm footing for the decades to come. Given the health service's travails in the wake of the pandemic, it is an argument that remains just as relevant today.

The Cost of Nationalisation (January 2018)

Daniel Mahoney

In 2018 a spectre haunted Britain – that of re-nationalisation. In the wake of the 2017 snap election, Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell were riding high and selling government ownership as a panacea for the country's ills. Energy networks, water, rail, mail and more were to be brought into public ownership. Yet the Corbyn project insisted (incredibly) that this programme would both be cost-free to the Treasury and cut household bills.

Having done so much to drive forward the privatisation agenda of the Thatcher era, the CPS was not going to let this pass unchallenged. In this paper, Daniel Mahoney laid bare the staggering up-front costs of Labour's policies. While the Corbyn era is now thankfully in the rear-view mirror, the dead horse of nationalisation continues to reappear from time to time – and the CPS will always make the case for private ownership and a smaller state.

Popular Capitalism (September 2019)

Robert Colville

What is Conservatism without capitalism? Robert Colville put pen to paper in a passionate plea for the Conservative Party to rediscover its roots and implement policies which embodied the voters' values. No longer seen as the party of low taxes, home ownership, small business or ordinary workers, the Conservatives were (and are) most likely to be seen as supporting 'international bankers and billionaires'. Colville argued that the Labour Party of 2019 – of Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell – recognised Thatcher's push for ownership was popular but had repurposed it for their own ends, to push renationalisation and 'public ownership'.

Colville urged the Conservatives to adopt policies which not only generated and spread wealth across society, but that also gave people control over their lives and a stake in the economy – much as Ferdinand Mount, John Redwood, Shirley Robin Letwin and other CPS authors had in the 1980s. A key recommendation, raising the National Insurance threshold to let people keep the first £1,000 they earn tax-free, was adopted by Boris Johnson.

Resentful Renters (December 2019)

Graham Edwards

There is little the British prize more than home ownership. Yet for an increasing number, getting on the housing ladder isn't just difficult, it's nigh on impossible. Home ownership is an aspiration across the country, across demographics, and across age groups. However, Edwards calculated that between 2008 and 2019, rising house prices and moves by regulators to make it harder to get a mortgage created 3.9 million 'resentful renters' – people with secure earnings and good prospects who would have been able to buy pre-2008, but who were trapped renting or living with parents. He argued that these young, and increasingly middle-aged, people were finding it difficult to move into the next stage of their lives – and that the consequent resentment was turning them against the Conservative Party.

This paper contained one of many CPS proposals which would find its way into the Conservative Party's 2019 general election manifesto: long-term, fixed rate mortgages (similar to the US model of 25+ years). By removing the impact volatile inflation can have on mortgage costs, and the subsequent need for mortgage products to be so rigorously stress tested, affordable home ownership would be brought within reach for millions of people.

After the Virus: A Plan for Restoring Growth (June 2020)

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP

Like much of the country, CPS staffers spent most of the first half of 2020 in lockdown. However, this time was not wasted. Making the most of new remote working arrangements, a team led by Sajid Javid and consisting of James Heywood, Nick King, Tom Clougherty and Robert Colvile drew up a plan for reigniting economic growth once the pandemic had passed. When the first lockdown was eased in June 2020, the CPS was ready with a blueprint for growth containing 63 separate recommendations.

Recognising the fiscal strain imposed by the Government's interventionist response to the Covid pandemic, Javid also proposed a new fiscal rule to bring the current budget into balance within three years once a stable recovery had been achieved – fiscal rectitude and economic growth were to go hand-in-hand. While events sadly conspired against a smooth recovery, the report still contains many excellent policy proposals ripe for the plundering.

Why Choose Britain? (May 2022)

Tom Clougherty, Robert Colvile, Nick King, and Gerard B. Lyons

'Why Choose Britain?' was based on one of the biggest focus groups of its kind. Drawing from interviews with more than 100 founders, funders, CEOs, and entrepreneurs, the paper produced one of the most comprehensive and authoritative analyses of the UK's investment appeal. The good news is that we were better placed than most of our European peers to attract international capital. The bad news is that we were falling even further behind the United States. The authors argued that Britain should be a natural home for business, as our prosperity has long depended on an openness to talent and investment. Post-Brexit, however, that story is not being told.

In addition to the unique insight into the thoughts, hopes, and concerns of the business elite, the report also put forward a simple 10-point plan to dramatically improve Britain's international investment appeal. In the short time since its publication, 'Why Choose Britain?' has shifted the dial on attitudes towards business. Measures originating in the report which have since been announced include retention of investment schemes, reform of the cap on pension fund charges, and wholesale changes in the way the Civil Service approaches foreign investment.

The Right to Own (June 2022)

Alex Morton

The Right to Buy was one of the seminal policies of the 1980s, allowing a third of social tenants to buy their homes and so transforming British society. Most of the remaining social tenants would like to own their homes too, but few are able to raise the capital to make a deposit. So in 'The Right to Own', former No.10 adviser Alex Morton – author of a series of agenda-setting CPS papers on housing, including The Case for Housebuilding (2023) – argued for a renewal of Right to Buy, allowing social tenants to buy equity in their homes incrementally, with no initial deposit and security against default if their financial position deteriorates partway through the purchasing process. He outlined the enormous potential uptake of such a programme, which would bring Britain to its highest ever rates of homeownership and renew its character as a property-owning democracy. This paper offered a plan for adapting a key part of the CPS and Conservative heritage for the 2020s and beyond.

CPS Authors 1974 - 2024

In the preceding pages, we have used the author's name and titles at the time of publication, but this alphabetical list of all named CPS authors (or at least those whose work is represented in our archives) includes their most senior and complete title.

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