

No doubt there will be lots of media attention given to the Conservative Party new policies for the family and their independent social justice policy group research see <http://povertydebate.typepad.com/>

However quick analysis of the research assures the Public following the debates, research and facts that these problems are endemic to any and all UK Political parties and that the cause needs to be addressed not some headlining grabbing sticking plasters to some of the symptom for Political gain.

The speech by David Cameron see

http://www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.story.page&obj_id=137507&speeches=1

may recognise some of the symptoms so caused but not the cause and certainly not the remedy as detailed in the so-called independent social policy research groups finding, see;

http://povertydebate.typepad.com/home/files/family_breakdown.pdf

The symptoms are caused and will forever be caused by the breakdown of the family, alongside failure to follow or even organize independent and impartial research, accountability of State bodies and independence of the Judiciary.

Soundbites such as cold turkey for drug abusers, reorganisation of tax credits, more involvement of State bodies or state funded bodies to seek to lessen the symptoms but not the cause will not work. Continuation of relying on partial or bad theory such as attachment theory seriously implies any change of Government will continue the same malaise.

Perhaps the Political Parties could show the guidance, procedure and policies in assessing attachment or even the cause of and cure to mental illness. We await the response with comprehensive thought not soundbites to avoid another millenium of transferring Public and Private wealth to the Pockets of the lawyers, judiciary and State bodies.

After all in the UK the 'industry' no longer exists. The Public are just a tool for such to take place.

July 9, 2007

Tories identify family as battleground with tax cuts for married couples

Francis Elliott, Chief Political Correspondent

David Cameron will welcome a proposal this week to hand tax breaks to married couples as he seeks to make the family a key dividing line with Gordon Brown.

New tax and benefit payments to support marriage are among options included in a policy report by Iain Duncan Smith, the former Tory leader, to be published tomorrow, *The Times* has learnt. In response Mr Cameron is expected to say that the tax system should “affirm” marriage, as in every other large European country, and say that family breakdown in Britain is “extreme”.

The Tory leader will, however, emphasise that restoring the institution of marriage is a long-term aim

and that single parents and unmarried couples must in the meantime be given more help to bring up their children.

The Social Justice Task Force led by Mr Duncan Smith makes recommendations across a broad sweep of policy, including proposals on addiction, debt and volunteering. It is, however, the section on supporting marriage, which includes the options of tax breaks, that will attract the most attention.

Tory strategists have decided to make the family a key battleground of the next election. Mr Cameron said yesterday that there was a gulf between the two main parties on the issue of social breakdown. “It is not now necessary in the same way to mend Britain’s broken economy, but it is absolutely necessary to mend Britain’s broken society,” he said.

In an early warning of potential pitfalls ahead, he appeared to accept that the unmarried would be worse off by comparison. Speaking on the BBC One *Sunday AM* programme, he said: “I think [marriage] is an important institution, it should be recognised and that would be a benefit.”

Single-parent campaigning groups served notice immediately that they would strongly oppose any proposal to discriminate against the unmarried. “Tax incentives for marriage are not untried policy in Britain,” a spokesman for One Parent Families said. “Tax allowances for married people existed throughout the 1970s and 1980s, which saw a massive expansion in divorce rates.”

Other proposals contained in Mr Duncan Smith’s report include making drinkers pay up to £400 million a year extra in tax to fund tough new treatment for drug addicts. The tax would add about 3p to a pint of beer, 15p to a bottle of wine and 25p to a bottle of whisky.

“We think that, as alcohol has its consequences, it is time for us to look at readjusting the price to bring it back in line with pricing that existed on alcohol before.” His task force also wants cannabis upgraded to a class B drug and heroin users encouraged to go “cold turkey” rather than be treated with substitutes such as methadone.

The report will claim that the Government’s drug policies have become part of the problem and call for an end to “nonjudgmental, politically correct and scientifically inadequate” school programmes. In its interim *Breakdown Britain* report last year, the group gave warning that severe debt, drug addiction and the breakdown of the family were creating a growing underclass.

In the meantime, Mr Cameron faced criticism over his calls for a referendum on the proposed EU reform treaty from two Tory grandees. Kenneth Clarke, the former Chancellor, said that referendum demands had “an inner absurdity” and argued that moving away from Euro-scepticism would boost Tory electability.

Speaking on the GMTV *Sunday Programme*, the strongly pro-European Mr Clarke said: “One thing that will make a Conservative Party electable . . . will be if we continue to dilute this absurd, extreme Euro-scepticism that swept over the party in the last ten years.”

Lord Hurd of Westwell, a former Foreign Secretary, credited Mr Cameron with “draining the poison” from the issue, but said that a referendum was unjustified.

Lord Hurd told GMTV that referendums should be reserved for “the most extraordinary earthquakes which are proposed”, adding: “I don’t think there is anything in this treaty, insofar as we can see it now, which actually justifies that.”

Tories: 'We'll stand up for marriage'

Cameron pledges tax shake-up to repair Britain's 'broken society'



David Cameron laid out his new proposals to mend Britain's 'broken society'

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David Cameron will pledge to tear up the tax and benefits system in favour of marriage as part of a Conservative crusade to mend Britain's 'broken society'.

The Tory leader said that there was something 'deeply wrong' with the nation despite its continued economic prosperity.

He highlighted high rates of teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, failing schools, crime rates and prison populations in Britain compared with other European countries.

A landmark Tory report to be published tomorrow is designed to draw clear battle lines with Labour, paving the way for tax breaks and benefit reforms in favour of married couples and families. It will also recommend:

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- Raising tax on alcohol by up to 10 per cent to combat binge drinking
- Reclassifying cannabis as a Class B drug;
- Forcing heroin users to go 'cold turkey' rather than be given substitutes such as methadone.

Mr Cameron said the major cause of society's ills was family breakdown. And he claimed Labour policies encouraged couples to split up by discriminating against two-parent families.

"We need to go right through our tax and benefit system and ask ourselves why is it encouraging people to live separately," he said.

"Many couples choose not to get married, and that is absolutely their decision. The point I'm making is that marriage is a good institution. It should be supported. It should be recognised in the tax system."

Mr Cameron's analysis was backed by former Labour welfare minister Frank Field, who argued that Gordon Brown's tax system 'wallops' two-parent families.

He said a single parent with two children working 16 hours a week gained a weekly income of £487 thanks to tax credit payments.

But the breadwinner in a two-parent family, also with two children, is required to work 116 hours to get the same income.

The Prime Minister has firmly rejected the idea of tax breaks in favour of married couples, arguing they would unfairly penalise children with unmarried parents.

A Labour source said last night: "Lewis Hamilton was racing today at Silverstone, having been raised single-handed by his father doing three or four jobs to give him the best opportunities in life.

"For the Tories to be saying they would rather support a father on his fourth marriage and eighth child, just because of a wedding certificate, than people like Lewis Hamilton's dad is going to take some explaining."

But Mr Cameron said he made no apology for speaking up for marriage. Half of all unmarried couples separate by their child's fifth birthday, compared with just one in 12 married couples, he told the BBC's Sunday AM programme.

"The evidence is incredibly strong," the Tory leader said. "We need a big cultural change in favour of fatherhood, in favour of parenting, in favour of marriage."

"I think this is absolutely the big question, the big argument of our times. Kids do best if mum and dad are there to look after them.

"And today we have a benefit system that encourages families to break up, encourages couples to be separate. These things have got to change."

The report - Breakthrough Britain - will set out radical policy proposals to address the causes of social and family breakdown.

Drawn up by a policy group headed by former Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith, it will not be binding on the party, although Mr Cameron has let it be known he is hugely impressed by the arguments. He is expected to set out firm policy pledges at this autumn's party conference.

MELANIE PHILLIPS: We have a choice. Face up to this crisis or commit social suicide

13:32pm 9th July 2007 [Comments \(16\)](#)



What William Beveridge did in the Forties, Iain Duncan Smith is set to do for our current era. Beveridge's famous report produced a blueprint for addressing the social problems of the day, and laid the foundations for the Welfare State which has shaped British society for the past six decades.

But now Britain's social fabric is crumbling round the edges with shockingly high rates of crime, drug and alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancy.

Far from meeting need, the State is either ignoring it or even actively making things worse. In our advanced, spoiled consumer society, we no longer have mere poverty.



Iain Duncan Smith is to publish his report detailing the social collapse of our country

Shamefully, we have created an entire class apart - people who are permanently trapped in an economic, cultural and social limbo-land which lies outside the mainstream of our society.

Tomorrow, Mr Duncan Smith will attempt to change all that when he publishes the final report of his Social Justice Commission. His interim report, last year, laid out the enormous scale of the social collapse which has resulted from a steep decline in traditional values.

Now he is providing no fewer than 190 recommendations to tackle it. Idleness Where Beveridge identified the five giant social problems of want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness, Mr Duncan

Smith lists the five giants that the Welfare State has helped create instead - family breakdown, serious personal debt, drug and alcohol addiction, failed education and worklessness.

Grasping the key point that morality has all but collapsed into the free-for-all of 'lifestyle choice' and 'non-judgmentalism', he is effectively drawing a line in the sand to end the culture of dependency and the appeasement of wrongdoing that the Welfare State has fostered, and to restore the notion of individual responsibility that it has so badly undermined.

According to the advance billing, his report will propose an unpicking and restitching of our entire social and welfare tapestry. It will attack the crazy situation where we are relying on migrants to fill job vacancies even though there are now more than five million people dependent on benefits, 3.5 million of whom are 'economically inactive'.

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- [Tories pledge to 'stand by marriage'](#)
- [Tories plan 7p a pint 'treatment tax' in blitz on bingers](#)

It will suggest how to stop the spiral of drug and alcohol abuse, proposing to get to grips with binge-drinking by raising the tax on alcohol by as much as ten per cent and calling for an entirely fresh approach to drug addiction.

Apart from saying that cannabis should be reclassified upwards again as a Class B drug because it is so dangerous, it wants a new, unambiguous message to be sent out that 'all drugs are wrong and harmful'.

Treatment programmes based on prescribing methadone to heroin addicts should be abandoned and replaced by schemes to help users get off drugs.

Such ideas will be vociferously attacked by a drug abuse establishment which is largely a front for a worldwide push for the normalisation of drug use and its eventual legalisation. All the more reason, then, why this sane and sensible proposal must be adamantly supported.

At the very heart of this report, however, lies the issue of the fractured family which Mr Duncan Smith has correctly identified as the foundation of our social problems.

It is family fragmentation which is fuelling crime, drug and alcohol abuse, educational failure, worklessness, mental and physical ill-health and teenage pregnancy. And at the core of this issue lies the progressive and systematic undermining of marriage.

This is why the State must privilege married people over other types of household. It is not a question of 'moralising', or being beastly to lone parents.

It is simply worse than absurd for the State to subsidise family fragmentation and the billions of pounds of social damage that it causes.

It is also not enough to provide incentives for all two-parent households, since cohabiting partnerships break up more than twice as often as married couples. The rise and rise of cohabitation has been the rocket fuel behind our accelerating disaster of mass fatherlessness.

Already, the usual suspects are cranking out the tired refrain that the State must not penalise needy lone parents. But it has hugely penalised needy *married* parents for years. A couple with children would have to work 100 hours a week more than a single parent with the same number of children to receive the same amount of disposable income.

While it is certainly true that there are a great many lone mothers who do a wonderful job of raising their children alone, lone parents are undoubtedly among the least able to cope with life.

And unforgivably, loading the financial dice so heavily in favour of lone parenthood has sucked many

more people into such misery.

Of course, encouraging marriage is about more than financial incentives. We should also be providing advice networks before and after marriage to challenge couples' impossible expectations of each other, which turns every marital setback into an insurmountable hurdle.

The crucial thing is to change the default setting of our culture which tells people that all lifestyles are equally beneficial to everyone.

The truth is that they are not. Marriage protects not just children but men and women. Fragmented family life does not. It is a misfortune to be avoided.

For a man who was so unceremoniously dumped as party leader, Mr Duncan Smith has remarkably made his social justice agenda the hottest property in domestic politics. Both Gordon Brown and David Cameron are circling round it with the wariness of those who can't decide whether they are looking at an electoral goldmine or a landmine.

Doubtless because of raw nerves over the grammar school row, Mr Cameron has reportedly already blue-pencilled a suggestion in the report that parents should be given credits to send their children to any school they choose, which would allocate its places on a lottery system. But highly commendably, Mr Cameron has not wavered in his insistence that the Tories will restore marriage to a privileged position.

Mr Brown, meanwhile, is reported to be preparing to cherry-pick some of Mr Duncan Smith's ideas while bashing the Tories over the head with the others. In particular, it seems he will accuse them of callously abandoning lone parents.

But the argument should be made forcibly that it is Mr Brown's welfare incentives that have callously created so many lone-parent households in the first place.

Social justice is the great domestic issue of our time. For too long, this terrain has been commandeered by the Left, which claims the moral high ground of conscience.

On the contrary, the sorry truth is that under the banner of tackling poverty, social exclusion and all the rest of it, they have actively encouraged social fragmentation and the abandonment of the most vulnerable - particularly children - to serial disadvantage, illness and harm.

The essence of social justice is that while true need must be met, irresponsible or harmful behaviour must be discouraged and responsible behaviour should be rewarded. Instead, irresponsible behaviour is incentivised - as everyone's 'rights' - while responsible behaviour is penalised. This is the essence of injustice. It is also socially suicidal.

Mr Duncan Smith's great insight is that the kind of poverty that exists in Britain - the fourth-largest economy in the world - is not at root an economic issue.

It is a moral issue. It is all about behaviour, and the choices we all make. Now our political leaders themselves have a choice - to accept or reject this analysis.

On which side they decide to come down, Britain's social and moral health now depends.

From The Times
July 9, 2007

How many times must I tell you?

Anjana Ahuja: Science Notebook

Can I have a word in your ear? Because I know what people are thinking. Yes, I know I told you the same thing last week. And I'll keep mentioning it. Because if I say it often enough, you'll begin to believe it really is what people are thinking.

Psychologists have found that, if you want the public to buy an opinion, you should persuade many people to voice it. But – and this is alarming – you can achieve comparable success by getting just one person to repeat the same opinion over and over. The key is to make that opinion seem familiar. Familiarity, it seems, breeds belief.

A group of American researchers, led by Kimberlee Weaver, of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, enlisted more than a thousand students to voice opinions in controlled settings. The experiment's conclusion is encapsulated beautifully in the title of her recently published paper: "Inferring the Popularity of an Opinion From Its Familiarity: A Repetitive Voice Can Sound Like a Chorus". The article appears in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

Makes you think, doesn't it, about the whole tricky field of public consultation, hijacked with tiresome regularity by special interest groups. Just a small number of coordinated calls to a politician, Dr Weaver argues, could lead to that politician believing that an opinion is more widespread than it is.

Now think of religiously motivated, anti-science lobby groups, animal rights extremists, climate-change deniers. Through repetition, their dangerous whispers carry farther than their small constituencies merit, sometimes awarding them a disproportionate influence over public policy. We should not close our ears but we should remember that such groups do not speak for all.

Why did the chicken cross the road? Because it had an inbuilt compass guiding it to the other side of the thoroughfare. Scientists at Frankfurt University set out to test whether chickens, like migrating birds, possess an internal magnetic compass. They trained newly-hatched chicks to regard a red ball as their mother (don't ask). The ball was hidden behind one of four screens, always the northerly one, and the chicks learnt to find it.

The researchers then created an artificial magnetic field pointing east; the chicks started searching behind the easterly screen. This, according to a paper in the *Journal of Experimental Biology*, proves that domestic chickens are indeed steered

College, London, whom I met at the Royal Society's summer party last week. "Some people decide to give up learning and become an authority," he said, lamenting older scientists who stifle new ideas to protect their own interests. Professor Nelder is 82. And an example to us all.

Tory mission to repair Britain's 'broken society'

By George Jones, Political Editor

Last Updated: 2:18am BST 06/07/2007

The Tories "mission" will be tackling poverty and social breakdown that is costing the taxpayer £102 billion a year, David Cameron said yesterday.

The party leader pledged to put the battle against social deprivation at the heart of his campaign to win the next election. The decision to focus on repairing Britain's "broken society" marks a change of emphasis from traditional Conservative issues such as cutting tax, immigration and law and order.

A policy document published yesterday painted a picture of Britain as a broken society riddled with debt and addiction, welfare dependency, family breakdown and educational failure. It said that family breakdown costs £24 billion a year, educational underachievement £18 billion and crime £60 billion.

Mr Cameron told local government leaders that social breakdown was the "big challenge" of our times - "broken families, broken neighbourhoods, lives blighted by addiction, generational unemployment, crime and disorder".

"I want this to be the modern mission of my party," he said. The "big idea" was not for more state cash but to encourage more voluntary and community action - the welfare society. "In order to deal with social breakdown, everybody has got their part to play," he said.

The best way to help people in areas of social breakdown was to give them the tools to help themselves and not "pay people to be idle".

A social justice policy group headed by Iain Duncan Smith, the former Tory leader, yesterday published plans to freeze out loan sharks and expand credit unions offering moderately priced loans to low income families.

Credit unions, financial co-operatives owned by their members, offer savings and credit facilities and are widely used abroad. But they account for only a tiny proportion of the British market, which is dominated by mainstream lenders, doorstep lenders charging high interest rates and illegal sharks setting extortionate rates.

The report paints a chilling picture of the level of personal debt in Britain, which now stands at £1.38 trillion, the equivalent to an average debt per household of £54,452, twice the level of the Continent's. This is triple the level of 30 years ago. Between seven and nine million people in Britain confess to having had a serious debt problem.

The report is highly critical of the home credit industry, which targets the low paid and routinely applies interest rates of 150 per cent to short-term loans.

"We are frankly dismayed that the industry is doing less than it should to respond to criticism," the



The average British household is £54,452 in debt

report said.

It stops short of advocating capping interest rates in the home credit market in which loans are sold door to door. Such a step, it fears, would kill off the home credit market and force the poor to turn to illegal lenders with even higher loan rates and aggressive debt collection methods.

Instead, the report calls for measures to increase transparency, data sharing and compliance procedures in the home credit market - changes that have been backed by the Competition Commission.

The report also recommends that the voluntary banking code is replaced by a statutory bank customers' charter to strengthen good practice. The charter would ban unsolicited increases in credit limits and automatic issuing of credit card cheques.