



## The definitive assessment of New Labour in government

New Labour in government “failed in its own mission”, according to a new book by an Oxford University professor.

In *The Economic Consequences of Mr. Brown*, Professor Ringen, Oxford’s Professor of Sociology and Social Policy, analyses the economic policies of New Labour from fiscal management to outcomes in child poverty, health, crime, education, and inequality.

From 1997 to 2007, Britain had a government of exceptional strength. Its failures have nothing to do with the credit crunch that followed.

By any ordinary political logic, this government should have succeeded in putting its mark on British life and society. In fact, its story is a tragic one. It tells how a government that had everything going for it, and that should have represented a break with the past, came to rule in a continuation of the discredited regime it had ousted.

Under New Labour, Britain became an even more unequal society than when the Conservatives left office. Mr. Blair and Mr. Brown inherited Mrs. Thatcher’s centralised government and then centralised further. Thereby they undermined their own cause and condemned themselves to ever harder effort for ever less gain.

In spite of firm fiscal management and additional public spending and investment, the government has next to nothing to show for it in policy outcomes and nothing at all in turning the tide on Britain as a society of entrenched inequality.

As Professor Ringen concludes: “This government of power was finally defeated by the system of governance it had to work through. Britain now has the most centralised system of government in Europe. All policies emanate and are run and managed from Whitehall, and preferably from Downing Street. Parliament, and notably the House of Commons, has virtually no role in the formulation of policy and very little role even in its scrutiny. Local government has been reduced to implementing commands from Whitehall. A structure of command has replaced the traditional partnership between ministers and top civil servants. The professions are not rallied and encouraged but subjected to a technocratic regime of rigid targets, performance indicators, league tables and the like.”

“The lesson of New Labour is that Britain needs, more than a new government, a new constitution”.

*Professor Ringen is available for interview. Contact: 07803 159 383; [stein.ringen@gtc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:stein.ringen@gtc.ox.ac.uk)*

### Notes to editors

*The Economic Consequences of Mr. Brown: How a Strong Government was Defeated by a Weak System of Governance* is by Professor Stein Ringen, University of Oxford, and published by The Bardwell Press (September 2009), £5.95, ISBN: 978-1-905622-24-5.

Cover image and photograph of Stein Ringen available from Bardwell Press.  
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