3

THE MAKING OF THE LANGUAGE OF NEW LABOUR

In this chapter I shall look at the language of New Labour 'in motion' so to speak – at the dynamics of New Labour's political discourse. I consider first the development of the political discourse of New Labour in its relationship to other political discourses both in Britain and internationally, including the political discourse of Thatcherism in Britain, the discourse of Clinton and the New Democrats in the USA, and political (including social democratic) discourse within the European Union. Although there are differences across this range of political discourses, there also appears to be a dynamic in the development of political discourses which they are all involved in and which transcends both national boundaries and traditional political divisions between left and right. What seems to be emerging is a new international political discourse of the centre-left – an international discourse of the 'Third Way'. It is worth noting in this connection that New Labour has been instrumental in setting up a series of international 'seminars' on the 'Third Way', attended not only by Blair and Clinton but also by leaders from other countries, including Brazil, Sweden, Italy, and more recently Germany. However, in so far as such a new political discourse is emerging, it seems to me to be a centre-left strain within neo-liberalism rather than an alternative or even serious corrective to it.

One important feature of this development is that it goes beyond politics and government to include, for instance, business, non-governmental organisations, and international agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It is beyond the scope of this book to trace these connections in detail, but there do seem to be grounds for considering whether a new discourse is emerging across these organisations. This question is part of a broader one to do with shifts in the nature of governance, which I discuss in chapter 5: New Labour is committed (though in part only rhetorically) to a 'reinvention' of government. This involves giving

more power to 'networks' or 'partnerships', which include all the various types of organisation to which I have just referred, and is in line with wider international developments in governance.[1] One way of putting this is in terms of the emergence of a powerful new complex of organisations (in the sense that the left used to refer to the 'military-industrial complex' in, for instance, the USA), which is partly a new discourse in common.

My second concern in this chapter is in a sense a corrective to the first. Despite the inclusive 'one-nation' discourse of New Labour, its mitigated version of neo-liberalism does not serve all interests equally: there are winners and there are losers, and there are consequently political differences which arise and which are constituted as differences in discourse. These differences are evident between political parties, including on the left between the Labour Party and other parties and groups, some of which are made up of former Labour Party members (such as the Socialist Labour Party associated particularly with the Miners' Union leader, Arthur Scargill). The differences are also evident within the Labour Party in divisions between supporters and opponents of New Labour, as well as within New Labour. I should also add that politics and government are complex and many faceted, and that this diversity (e.g. between the areas of social policy and foreign policy) itself entails diversity within political discourse. But the main point is that the convergences, to which I have referred in the above paragraphs, take place within a field of difference and contestation, which they can never eliminate though they may more or less succeed in marginalising. Moreover, critique of the language of New Labour is grounded in such differences and contestation, which is another reason for referring to them. See the discussion of critique of language in the Introduction and in chapter 6.

My final concern in the chapter is to represent the political discourse of New Labour as something which is changing and developing over time. This is partly a matter of showing contrasts between earlier and more recent New Labour discourse. It is also more fundamentally to do with how we see the documents, speeches, and interviews of New Labour. The basic question is this: Does language work expressively, or constitutively? In other words, does (for instance) a speech by Tony Blair simply give expression to a political position that was already worked out before and outside the speech? Or, on the contrary, does the speech actually constitute and produce a political position that will be certainly similar to positions in other speeches, yet nevertheless distinct? I shall adopt the second,

constitutive, view of political language, and illustrate it with reference to a particular speech of Blair's. The ongoing constitutive work of political language is framed and shaped by (and contributes to the framing and shaping of) the shifting overall constitution of the political/governmental field in its relations to other fields (e.g. business), nationally and internationally. That is to say, it is framed and shaped by the convergences, differences, and contestation I have referred to above.

New Labour and neo-liberalism

New Labour and the New Democrats

The victory of Bill Clinton and the New Democrats in the 1992 US presidential election was a crucial external factor in shaping New Labour – in strengthening the conviction of Blair, Brown, and others in the need for the Labour Party to 'modernise' itself in order to win power, to move towards the middle class and the political centre, and to incorporate elements of the political themes and discourse of the right and especially the new right.[2] Blair and Brown visited the USA together in January 1993. According to Rentoul, the visit 'marked a turning point in Blair's development as a politician'. It was not a matter of Blair (or New Labour) borrowing piecemeal from the New Democrats, but recognising similarities between the 'modernisers' in the two parties and applying 'some of the Democrats' vivid language to a body of ideas which he had already largely developed'. In particular 'Blair had at last found a populist language in which to express the ethical socialist ideas which had formed his political convictions.'[3] What these claims of Rentoul suggest is that the political discourse of New Labour was significantly shaped by what they learnt from the New Democrats. As Rentoul points out, the traffic has been two-way – e.g. Clinton took the theme of 'one nation' from New Labour in his campaign for re-election in 1996, and has recently used the term 'Third Way'.

My first concern in this section is to show that Clinton's political discourse is indeed strikingly similar to Blair's. Both have selectively assimilated elements of the discourse of the new right into new political discourses that cannot however be simply seen as new right. The politics and discourse of New Labour can appropriately be seen as 'post-Thatcherite' in the sense that it does not seek to ground itself in social democratic traditions which preceded Thatcher, but takes Thatcherism as its starting point accepting elements of it while

rejecting and seeking to go beyond others.[4] By the same token, the New Democrats might be called 'post-Reaganite'.

I shall refer to a book published by Bill Clinton in 1996, *Between Hope and History*. As in the discourse of New Labour, Clinton's political strategy is anchored in a representation of 'change' as an abstract, external and unquestionable process, which presents us with 'opportunities' as well as 'challenges', and which we must be prepared to 'embrace'. The discourse and rhetoric are similar to New Labour's:

> As we move from the Industrial Age into the Information Age, from the Cold War to the global village, the pace and scope of change is immense. Information, money and services can and do move around the world in the blink of an eye. There's more computing power in the Ford Taurus than there was in Apollo 11 when Neil Armstrong took it to the moon. By the time a child born today is old enough to read, over 100 million people will be on the Internet. Even our family cat, Socks, has his own home page on the World Wide Web. The opportunities this age presents us are extraordinary ... But the challenges of this age are also extraordinary and the costs of failing to meet them is high.

The rhetorical figure I referred to in chapter 1 as the 'cascade of change' is prominent here as in New Labour, giving a sense of the inevitability of change (and the need therefore for radical change on the part of government), and favouring a logic of appearances rather than an explanatory logic (recall the discussion on p. 28). There is also the same elision of agency, causality, and responsibility when it comes to processes in the global economy – information, money, and services simply 'move around the world' apparently under their own steam, and there is no indication of social relations and responsibilities behind these movements.

Although Clinton does not use the expression the 'Third Way' in this book (he has used it elsewhere), he sees his own politics as going beyond the existing left and right alternatives, government 'spending more money on the same bureaucracies working in the same way' or government as 'inherently bad', to 'break out of yesterday's thinking and embark upon a new and bold course for the future'. 'A strategy', he goes on, 'rooted in three fundamental American values: ensuring that all citizens have the *opportunity* to make the most of their lives; expecting every citizen to shoulder the *responsibility* to seize that

opportunity; and working together as a *community* to live up to all we can be as a nation.' The book is an elaboration of the three italicised themes of this strategy. In his Fabian Society pamphlet[5] on the 'Third Way', Blair writes: 'Our mission is to promote and reconcile the four values which are essential to a just society which maximises the freedom and potential of all our people – equal worth, opportunity for all, responsibility and community.' The 'new politics' for both Blair and Clinton involves a combination of the centre-left theme of equality of opportunity, the theme of responsibility which they have appropriated from the new right, and the theme of community which shows a shared orientation to communitarianism.

There are striking similarities in themes, in arguments, in particular policies, and in language. Both New Labour and the New Democrats advocate a role for government in equipping people to succeed in the global economy. In so doing, they distance themselves from the excessive reliance on market mechanisms and retreat from government of the new right governments that preceded them. In Clinton's words: 'We need government to do those things which are essential to giving us the tools we need to make the most of our lives.' At the same time, both advocate 'the reinvention of government', though for Clinton this prominently involves government being 'smaller' as well as 'more responsive' (I am focusing on similarities, but there are also of course significant differences). Both use the language of 'investment' with respect to education: government 'investing in education', 'investing in people'. And both use the same sort of strategy and language with respect to standards in schools:

> [W]e have worked hard to help them establish clear standards for what we expect out teachers to teach and our children to know, assess their performance in attaining those standards, and ensure accountability when they do not. ... Teachers must also demonstrate competence, and we should be prepared to reward the best ones and remove those who don't measure up fairly and expeditiously. In the same way we should reward the best schools and shut down or design those that fail.[6]

For both New Labour and the New Democrats 'freedom' or 'opportunity' or 'rights' must go with 'responsibility'. In Clinton's words: 'freedom works only when it is exercised with responsibility ... from the beginning [of the USA], opportunity and responsibility have gone hand in hand'. For both governments there has been a failure to accept responsibility, which they are committed to

correcting – again in Clinton's words: 'so many of our social problems require people to reassert control over their own lives and to assume responsibility for their conduct and their obligations'. For both, welfare reform is framed in terms of the theme of responsibility. Both use the expression 'welfare-to-work' to focus what they see as the priority for a reformed welfare system. 'Moving people from welfare to work' is seen by both as 'moving people from dependence to independence and greater dignity' – both regard their existing welfare systems as the new right does, as 'trapping' people in 'dependency'; both see ending the cycle of welfare dependency in terms of people taking more 'responsibility' (all the quotations are from Clinton). Furthermore, both favour the word 'tough' – being 'tough on work and responsibility', as well as being 'tough' on crime.

In chapter 1 I quoted Tony Blair on the relationship between family and community (see pp. 42–3). Here is Clinton on the same theme:

> Today our 'yeoman farmers' are America's families. [Clinton is alluding to Thomas Jefferson's argument that the yeoman farmer was the bedrock of American democracy – people who 'hold a stake in, and take responsibility for, how our society works'.] The values they represent, the lessons they pass on to their children, the responsibility they take for shaping their own future, and the dreams they seek to achieve determine much about who we are as a people and what we can become as a nation. But families can be strong only if American democracy provides a climate in which they can thrive. Families can't be strong if they're mired in welfare. They can't be strong if the opportunity to earn a living and support their children is uncertain. They can't achieve economic security unless they have access to education. They can't be strong if the streets in their neighbourhoods are dangerous, if the environment is unsafe, or if events elsewhere in the world seem threatening.
>
> America has a stake in, and a responsibility for, strengthening families, the building blocks of our national community. Families, in turn, have a stake in and a responsibility for strengthening America. That process of strengthening, of taking responsibility, begins in the home, extends into the neighbourhood, grows out to the community, and creates a better America.

There is a close similarity between the two extracts in terms of main themes: the responsibility which is crucial to community at all levels develops first in the family; the values of the family affect the sort of society we have; families are under threat and need support from government. There are also similarities in the language – the key terms 'values', 'opportunities', 'responsibility', and 'community', but also the language of 'stakeholding' ('having a stake in' – I discuss this in some detail in the last section of this chapter). There are however differences both with respect to more specific themes (for instance the themes of unsafe environment and threatening events 'elsewhere' are absent from the Blair extract) and with respect to major themes: the theme of nation has a salience in the Clinton extract which is absent in the Blair extract, which refers to 'society as a whole' where Clinton refers to 'America'. Anticipating the concerns of the last section of this chapter, the two politicians produce, despite the common features, texts that articulate (substantially shared) political themes together in distinct ways. Blair and Clinton work similar themes and arguments into distinct (if still similar) political discourses.

New Labour and Thatcherism

I suggested above that New Labour is 'post-Thatcherite' – taking Thatcherism as its starting point and accepting certain elements of it while seeking to go beyond it in others. Although the discourse of New Labour is a new discourse, a new mix of elements, some of those elements are derived from the political discourse of Thatcherism. Here is an extract from a lecture given in July 1979 by Margaret Thatcher, shortly after her first election victory, which was entitled 'The renewal of Britain':[7]

> The mission of this Government is much more than the promotion of economic progress. It is to renew the spirit and the solidarity of the nation ... we need to inspire a new national mood, as much as to carry through legislation. At the heart of a new mood in the nation must be the recovery of our self-confidence and our self-respect. ...
>
> The foundation of this new confidence has to be individual responsibility. If people come to believe that the State, or their employer, or their union, owe them a living, and that, in turn, the world owes Britain a living, we shall have no confidence and no future. It must be quite clear that the responsibility is

> on each of us to make the full use of our talents and to care for our families. It must be clear, too, that we have a responsibility to our country to make Britain respected and successful in the world.
>
> The economic counterpart of these personal and national responsibilities is the working of the market economy in a free society. I am sure that there is wide acceptance in Britain going far beyond the supporters of our party, that production and distribution in our economy is best operated through free competition.
>
> A basic function of Government is to ensure that this market remains in being. The Government must be responsible, too, for ensuring the maintenance of social cohesion ... Governments can purify the stagnant and corrupt parts of an economy and correct irregularities in the market, but they should not seek to regulate the market itself. Governments may provide certain goods and services which cannot easily be supplied competitively, but they should accept that one of their essential tasks is to define their limitations and those of the State.
>
> ... We need ... to create a mood where it is everywhere thought morally right for as many people as possible to acquire capital; not only because of the beneficial economic consequences, but because the possession of even a little capital encourages the virtues of self-reliance and responsibility, as well as assisting a spirit of freedom and independence.

The themes of national renewal, individual responsibility, maximising competition, and the limitations of government are all themes in New Labour discourse. On the other hand, the theme of spreading ownership of capital is not (though New Labour has accepted Conservative policies to practically encourage it). Another significant commonality however is the view that part of the business of government is 'creating moods' – or, in the more sociological language of New Labour, 'changing cultures' (though it was the Conservatives who launched the initiative of 'enterprise culture', which has also been taken up by New Labour). The Conservatives under Thatcher realised that their project for radical social change was best achieved through the relatively slow and patient groundwork of changing attitudes, moods, and cultures rather than head-on – through ideological means, and therefore through

discourse. This is one respect in which New Labour has followed Thatcherism, and it is of particular interest here because it implies a language turn in politics – an enhanced salience for language in achieving social and political change.

Thatcher elaborates on the limitations of government and the state:

> It is certainly the duty of Government to do all it can to ensure that effective succour is given to those in need. Where Conservatives part company from Socialists is in the degree of confidence which we can place in the exclusive capacity of the Welfare State to relieve suffering and promote well-being. ... the collectivist ethos has made individuals excessively prone to rely on the State to provide for the well-being of their neighbours and indeed of themselves. There cannot be a welfare system in any satisfactory sense, which tends ... to break down personal responsibility and the sense of responsibility to family, neighbourhood and community.

This is reminiscent of the theme of 'rights-and-responsibilities going together' in New Labour, but also the theme of strengthening communities and civil society, and strengthening the family.

The commonality of themes is clear enough, as are certain thematic differences. And to a degree this is also a commonality of language, of political discourse. For instance, there are strong similarities between Thatcher and Blair in the representation of nation – both, for example, refer to the national 'spirit' ('the British spirit has always been able to rise to challenges '[8]). They also share a propensity to tough, populist language – Thatcher speaking of people believing that others 'owe them a living', Blair writing of ending the days of 'something for nothing'[9] and, of course, keywords such as 'responsibility'. But there are, at the same time, differences. One difference which I shall discuss in chapter 4 is that Thatcher's discourse is highly polemical and very much oriented to identifying enemies of her new right political project, dividing 'us' from 'them', whereas Blair's discourse is inclusive and consensual.

The European Union

There is little public recognition of the extent to which the policies, themes, and language of New Labour are also those of the European Union. Significant elements of the political discourse of New Labour

flow across national boundaries in Europe, as well as in many cases between Europe and other regions, including North America. For example, Piper[10] notes that the concept of 'human capital' and of educational expenditure as a form of 'investment' which developed in the early 1960s in the USA are now a central theme of European Union policy. For instance, the European Commission White Paper on education and training[11] proposes to 'treat material investment and investment in training on an equal basis'. Piper shows that both in the language of the European Union (1996 was the 'European Year of Lifelong Learning') and in the language of New Labour (as well as of the preceding Conservative government) 'lifelong learning' is a keyword which is part of economic rather than educational language – as if 'learning' had become an economic rather than an educational process.

The language of New Labour is conditioned and partly shaped by the requirement of giving national shape to European Union policies. A case in point is 'social exclusion'. As I pointed out earlier (see chapter 2), 'social exclusion' has largely replaced 'poverty' in the discourse of New Labour (though 'poverty' does periodically reemerge as a focus). The direction of flow in this case is clearly from the European Union into Britain (in contrast, for example, to 'flexibility' where Britain under New Labour – like Britain under the Conservatives before them – is seeking to impose Anglo-American policies and language). But what is at issue is not simply the term 'social exclusion', but the language of policies oriented to social exclusion.

The standard view of 'social exclusion' in the European Union is summed up in the following extract from a report by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions:[12]

> Over the past 20 years, Europe has been facing an economic and social situation characterised by rapid, complex and profound change. While the majority of Europe's citizens have benefitted with increased opportunities and improved living and working conditions, a significant and growing minority have suffered poverty, unemployment and other forms of social and economic disadvantage ... that restrict their ability to cope with and master change. The longer these disadvantages persist, the wider becomes the gulf between those vulnerable to change and those who benefit from it.

This leads to two challenges for the European Union:

> What can we do about the gulf which has appeared, and is widening, between those who benefit from change and those who do not?
>
> How can we best support and assist those who have been adversely affected by change, both to cope with its effects upon them, and to turn it from threat to opportunity?

New Labour has taken on this view of social exclusion, and also policies to 'tackle social exclusion' and promote 'social cohesion' (the usual European Union word) or 'social inclusion' (the term New Labour prefers). The themes and, to some extent, the language of European Union social exclusion policy are also taken on by New Labour. For instance, the same publication gives a summary of 'common and consistent messages for policy-makers', which includes advocacy of an 'integrated approach to social, economic and environmental policy' (what Tony Blair calls 'joined-up government'), 'prevention is better than cure', improving the 'delivery' of services (which is 'more important than what they are'), encouraging the 'participation' of the people involved and 'local initiatives and community organisations', and forming 'partnerships for action', including government, business, trade unions (which tend to be ignored by New Labour), and voluntary and community organisations.

An international neo-liberal discourse?

A fundamental aspect of what makes New Labour 'new' is its abandonment of an economic role for the state – its assumption that it is faced with a 'new global economy' whose nature it cannot change and should not try to change. This is in contrast with social democratic and democratic socialist traditions, which have seen the state as having the capacity and the responsibility to modify the capitalist economy, notably through nationalisation and the formation of a 'mixed economy'. When the expression 'mixed economy' is used in a speech by Blair, it is used metaphorically to refer to 'partnerships' – 'we are building new public and private partnerships. There needs to be a mixed economy in the funding of welfare comprising the state, private and voluntary sectors.'[13] (Similarly, another term from the left tradition 'internationalism' is regularly used in a totally different sense – no longer for solidarity between workers, but for the sort of cooperation within the

'international community' which has led to NATO attacking Yugoslavia. See chapter 6 .)

New Labour is not unique. Its abandonment of the 'economic state' is broadly shared by the social democratic parties, which constitute governments in most European Union countries at the time of writing, as well as the New Democrats in the USA. But so too is its strategy of containing and reducing the 'social state'. Although there are significant differences in detail, reform of welfare systems along broadly similar lines is on the agenda of all of these countries. At the same time, there is a common orientation to strengthening the 'penal state' – to 'tougher' government action against crime.[14]

One interpretation of these commonalities is that they constitute elements of an international neo-liberal politics: governments are accepting the globalisation of the economy and the neo-liberal argument that it entails a drastic revision and reduction of the welfare state, and adopting a punitive stance towards those who are the victims of economic change and of the retreat from public welfare. This politics is being implemented by the New Democrats in the USA and by the resurgent social democrats of Europe. Social democracy has from this point of view embraced economic neo-liberalism, though that does not mean it is simply the same as the new right. Rather, what is emerging is a distinctively centre-left version of a neo-liberal politics. One account of this process, which suggests the emergence of an international discourse as part of it, is that being developed by Pierre Bourdieu and his associates. Here is my translation of a description by Lois Wacquant of the international spread of the new 'penal state':

> We have to reconstruct link by link the long chain of institutions, agents and supporting discourses (advisory notes, committee reports, visits by officials, parliamentary exchanges, specialist seminars, academic and popular books, press conferences, newspaper articles, television reports, etc.) through which the new penal common sense (incubated in the USA), which is directed at criminalising deprivation and thereby normalising insecurity in employment, is becoming international.[15]

The international spread of a penal discourse (including such expressions as 'zero tolerance', used initially in the USA, then in Britain, then in other European countries) is part of the process. New 'tough' ways of dealing with youth crime or people sleeping rough in public places or begging are sustained and supported by this new

penal discourse. Bourdieu and Wacquant refer more generally to 'a new planetary vulgate' which includes 'fetishised' terms such as 'globalisation', 'flexibility', 'multiculturalism', 'communitarianism', as well as more specific terms such as 'zero tolerance'.[16] The proliferation of political 'think-tanks' is relevant here – they have contributed 'new thinking' to the political field which contributes to spreading the international discourse of neo-liberalism.

It is not only governments that are incorporated within this new international order and discourse, it is also various other types of business and community organisations, and, importantly, the powerful international agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. For instance, the World Bank published a policy research report on the 'old-age crisis' in 1994.[17] The 'old-age crisis' is the perception that demographic and social change mean that public welfare systems cannot provide adequately for the old without detracting from economic growth. The proposed solution is a combination of three systems:

1 A publicly managed system with mandatory participation and the limited goal of reducing poverty among the old.
2 A privately managed mandatory savings system.
3 A voluntary savings system.

The study concludes that 'a combination of different income security policies is more effective than any single approach and ... all countries should begin planning for their ageing populations now'. This combination of a reduced state provision focused on the poor, greatly expanded private pensions for those who can afford them, and an emphasis on personal saving is the basis for New Labour's pension reforms in Britain, but also for reforms being initiated in many other countries. The contraction of the social state is becoming an internationally harmonised process.

Part of international harmonisation of policy is the emergence of an international political discourse. Let me refer, as an example, to a discussion paper by the President of the World Bank published on the Internet in January 1999.[18] The paper is concerned with the development of a comprehensive, integrated and long-term approach to development and the alleviation of poverty, bringing together different international agencies (the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank itself, etc.) with national governments, the private sector, and civil society. The paper

actually sets out a comprehensive framework for aspects of development which are the particular concern of the World Bank – 'the structural, social and human aspects'. What I want to focus on, however, is its view of what is now increasingly referred to as 'governance'. One striking similarity to New Labour is the focus on civil society and the use of the originally academic term 'civil society' in governmental discourse (rather common in the language of New Labour):

> In all its forms, civil society is probably the largest single factor in development ... by engaging civil society in projects and programs, better results are achieved both with design and implementation and usually greater effectiveness ... we all recognize more and more that local ownership is the key to success and project effectiveness.

The view of governance centres upon 'partnership' or 'cooperation' between 'participant groups' (including 'civil society'), and on the 'transparency' and 'accountability' of their activities – for instance: 'Such development should, in our judgement, be a participatory process, as transparent and as accountable as possible.' All of these words are part of New Labour's vocabulary of governance, and 'partnership' is one of the New Labour keywords.

A new language of governance appears to be emerging on an international basis and transcending boundaries between governmental and other types of organisation. An example of how this language of governance is being taken up by business comes from the contribution of a representative of a major international mining company at a seminar organised within the Economic and Social Research Council's project on global environmental change. According to a summary of the discussion in the seminar, the company representative referred to their 'experience in engaging with stakeholders as part of its global operations', and to a project with the World Bank on the formation of 'trisector partnerships' between industry, the World Bank, and 'civil society' for handling industrial development.

Difference and contestation in the field of political discourse

I referred in the Introduction to interviews with the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott in January 1999 which included a focus on

differences of language within New Labour. Prescott's interviewer on Radio 4 referred to these differences as follows:

> The point though is that the way that people in government talk about these things is important, you'd acknowledge that. Indeed it was Mr Mandelson's credo that the way you talked about things, the way you used language was very important, because it sent out messages. And you don't need to be told that a lot of Labour MPs – when they saw what you were saying, the language you were using, 'traditional values' albeit 'in a modern setting' – were saying: 'Look, here at last is a little more of the stuff we want to hear. He doesn't talk about "The Project" doesn't talk about "New Labour", he talks about "Labour".'

Such differences within New Labour are framed by differences within and around the Labour Party as a whole. Not everyone within the Labour Party is New Labour, and a number of important Labour Party figures are now outside the Labour Party, in many cases as a result of the dominance of New Labour. These divisions within the left and the centre-left can be seen, as I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, as a manifestation of the different effects New Labour's mitigated neo-liberalism has on different sections of the population, and they are constituted as differences in political discourse.

I have taken the following example from a book[19] written by two long-standing members of the Labour Party, Ken Coates (who is a member of the European Parliament) and Michael Barratt Brown. (They are now operating within the Independent Labour Network.) They are writing here about New Labour's view of what they call 'capitalist globalisation' ('the new global economy' in New Labour terms):

> Capital has always been global, moving internationally from bases in the developed industrial countries. What has changed is not that capital is more mobile ... but that the national bases are less important as markets and production centres. In other words, the big transnational companies are not only bigger but more free standing ... the European Union, far from offering a lead and a challenge to the nation-states of Europe, reinforces their status as clients of the transnational companies. Indeed, this clientism applies not only to

> companies based in Europe ... While it is true that a national capitalism is no longer possible in a globalised economy, it is not true that national governments – and by extension the European Union – are totally lacking in powers to employ against the arbitrary actions of transnational capital. There is much that governments can do in bargaining – in making or withholding tax concessions for example ... But such bargaining has to have an international dimension or the transnational companies can simply continue to divide and conquer ... New Labour appears to have abandoned what remained of Labour's internationalist traditions ... Yet the ICFTU, the European TUC and the Geneva trade groups all offer potential allies for strengthening the response of British labour to international capital.

One notable difference between this extract and the discourse of New Labour is that 'transnational companies' are referred to as dominant actors in the global economy. In New Labour discourse, as I pointed out in chapter 1, they are elided. Their presence in this other Labour discourse helps to make the point that part of the character of the political discourse of New Labour is relational – its relationship to other political discourses which coexist with it in the same political field. That is what makes certain absences from the discourse of New Labour (such as the transnational companies) 'significant absences' or pointed absences, part of a covert dialogue with other discourses, a covert process (which may also on occasions become overt) of taking a distance from others.

What is also striking in this extract is the relationship of equivalence between 'transnational companies' and 'transnational' or 'international capital' (later also 'global capitalism'). Moreover, national governments (and the European Union) are represented as in a potentially antagonistic relationship to them ('employing powers against' them and acting in 'response' to them). This is a characteristic of certain left political discourses – 'capital' is to be contested, fought against. National governments are represented moreover as acting in alliance with trade union organisations (as well as non-governmental organisations more generally – see below) on an international basis in accordance with 'internationalist' traditions. 'Internationalism' here maintains its sense of the solidarity of labour, whereas in the discourse of New Labour it has come to refer to 'ooperation' between nation-states in the 'international community' (e.g. in bombing Yugoslavia). Notice also the concept of 'clientism', set up against 'employing powers

against' or 'bargaining' with capital, which has no part in the political discourse of New Labour.

In discussing non-governmental organisations as 'essential allies for parties of the left to encourage and unite with in developing radical internationalist programmes in response to global capitalism', Coates and Barratt Brown write:

> Some NGOs ... have developed in their international relations what professor Diane Elson, the Manchester economist, has called 'the economy of trust'. Most commercial organisations spend much time and energy on controlling, monitoring, checking and counter-checking their business transactions. In a highly competitive market they simply do not trust their suppliers or customers not to take advantage of them. There is an alternative – to build up a relationship of trust ... one of the lessons learnt by some NGOs working in the Third World, where for long there was a relationship of domination and exploitation [was that] nothing less than total openness and respect could build up a new relationship ... if all the words in New Labour's pronouncements about partnership and social markets, cooperation and not confrontation were to be taken seriously, the economy of trust would surely have a special appeal. Instead we find that 'the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition' are always put before 'partnership and cooperation'.[20]

Part of the dialogue and polemic across different political discourses may be a critique of the other's discourse – though characteristically it is not New Labour in its position of dominance in the field that engages in such critiques (its dialoguing tends to remain implicit), but rather its more marginal opponents. In this case there is a critique of what New Labour says about 'partnership' and 'cooperation'. This is partly contesting the meanings given to these words within the discourse of New Labour, setting up a different discourse in which 'partnership' and 'cooperation' are articulated with 'trust', 'openness', and 'respect'. And it is partly claiming (in an apparent allusion to New Labour's favoured 'not only but also' relations, e.g. 'cooperation as well as competition') that there is a covert hierarchy in New Labour discourse, for example: 'enterprise' and 'competition' always come before 'partnership' and 'cooperation'. Recall my discussion in chapter 1 of how such relations and other lists cover over hierarchy and asymmetry.

There are other political discourses within the spectrum of the left and centre-left, some of them more marginal than the example above. Under the heading 'A Dud Deal', the Scottish anarchist publication 'Counter Information'[21] writes as follows of the Government's 'New Deal':

> Labour are restructuring the welfare system to benefit the bosses to an extent the Tories could only dream about. The New Deal attacks the entire working class. Resistance is vital.
>
> Under 25s unemployed for over 6 months are forced to attend the 'Gateway' interviews. They aim to find/pressurise 40% into an unsubsidised job.
>
> All others will be forced into [a number of alternatives are specified].
>
> Claimants who won't participate, or leave early, face having their Job Seeker's Allowance benefit cut completely for 2 weeks (4 weeks for a 2nd 'offence').
>
> The details for over 24s unemployed for over 2 years (starts in June), single parents, and disabled are not yet clear. Compulsion is probable for the unemployed. Labour deny compulsion will hit single parents, but increasing harassment is likely.

The key social actors in this representation of welfare are the Government (notice that it is simply 'Labour', not 'New Labour'), 'claimants', and 'the bosses', a vernacular way of referring to employers which is used in some sections of the left but never by New Labour. Nor indeed is 'the working class'. A metaphor of warfare is used ('attack', 'resistance'), and Government actions are represented as a form of violence ('compulsion', 'harassment', people being 'forced' or 'pressurised' into things). The penal language of New Labour is ironically referred to by the word 'offence' being used in 'scare quotes'.

Change in the political discourse of New Labour

In this section I am concerned both with how the political discourse of New Labour has changed over time, and with how that political discourse is actively constituted in documents, speeches, interviews, and so forth.

Let me begin with some points about the development of the

political language of New Labour. The transformation of Labour into New Labour did not take place overnight, and it began well before Tony Blair became leader of the Labour Party. The 'modernisation' of the party was already underway while Neil Kinnock and John Smith were leaders. The Commission on Social Justice was set up by John Smith after the 1992 election defeat to consider in particular the relationship between social justice and economic efficiency. The 'Third Way' theme of 'economic efficiency as well as social justice', which claims that hitherto irreconcilable demands can be reconciled, is central to the Commission's report,[22] as is the language of 'social exclusion'. The report sets up what Levitas[23] describes as one of a number of 'false antitheses' between policies aimed at redistributing wealth and policies aimed at creating wealth.

The language of New Labour has been in formation since the beginning of the 1990s, and its development manifests an ongoing dialogue with the language of Thatcherism, in part an appropriation of it and in part an attempt to go beyond it (see the section on New Labour and Thatcherism above). Phillips[24] shows for instance how the Thatcherite thematisation of 'value for money' and 'waste' within public services were taken into the language of the Labour Party from the early 1990s (e.g. in a speech by Neil Kinnock in 1991: 'Value for money: that's what you get when you stop wasting £18 million of taxpayers' money a day propping up the Poll Tax'). She also quotes Tony Blair as shadow employment spokesperson in 1990 using a collocation which was subsequently to become a prominent element in the language of New Labour – 'rights and responsibilities' ('These are the issues of the new agenda. Rights and responsibilities, justice within the law, not injustice outside it.')

In a series of speeches at the beginning of 1996 Tony Blair elaborated the idea of 'stakeholding'. For a time, 'stakeholding' was seen to be the 'big idea' which provided a link between different parts of the emerging political position of New Labour – specifically between its commitment to 'enterprise' and strengthening Britain's competitiveness, and its commitment to social justice and community. However, it ran into difficulties. It proved to be a difficult concept to pin down, and was interpreted in many different ways, including ways which evoked forms of ('old Labour') corporate arrangement between government, business, and labour (trade unions) from which the Government were eager to distance themselves. The term had virtually dropped out of use before the general election in 1997, though according to Gould[25] 'the language

of stakeholding may have withered, but the new approach underpinning it has prospered'. 'Stakeholding' is an interesting case for my purposes in this section of the chapter, first because it is a graphic illustration of how a political discourse can undergo quite major transformations over time, but second because it illustrates rather well the process of building and elaborating political discourse.

The texts of Blair's speeches at this time were so to speak doing political work – they were working the new vocabulary of 'stakeholding' together with other existing vocabularies, they were weaving new and existing vocabularies together into a new web. The result of this work is a new product – a new political discourse which is in many ways recognisably the same as previous New Labour discourse, but nevertheless also significantly different. Politicians and political analysts see particular speeches as landmarks or watersheds, and often refer to them. What gives a speech this special status is the quality of the political work it does. There are two aspects to the quality of the political work of a speech: intellectual and rhetorical. One question concerns the intellectual quality of a speech, the quality of the political position it articulates, its contribution to constructing a political discourse. Another question is about its rhetorical power, its capacity to enthuse and mobilise people, to capture their imaginations. Great political speeches do both – they put a coherent political vision in an enthralling way.[26]

Blair gave a speech in Singapore on the 'stakeholder economy' in January 1996[27] which may not have been a great speech, but was a good speech, and was seen as a watershed – as intellectually significant in launching 'stakeholding' as the big, integrating idea for which New Labour had been searching. I shall come to the Singapore speech shortly. Actually, some other speeches on the same theme around the same time were perhaps more rhetorically powerful – for instance here is part of a speech given in Derby on 18 January 1996:

> The stakeholder economy is the key to preparing our people and business for vast economic and technological change. It is not about giving power to corporations or unions or interest groups. It is about giving power to *you,* the individual. It is about giving you the chances that help you to get on and so help Britain to get on too: a job, a skill, a home, an opportunity – a stake in the success we all want for Britain. We will fight for that stake, working with you, in partnership.

> The Tories fight only for the privileged few. We stand for the majority, the many.[28]

The audience for the Singapore speech was the Singapore business community, whereas this speech was addressed to a local British audience. Of course, most speeches by Blair reach much larger audiences through the media and are designed with that in mind; nevertheless their immediate audience also affects the way they are written. The extract from the Derby speech seems to be more fully worked rhetorically, more carefully designed to win a British audience to the new political vision. It works together a surprising number of important New Labour political themes in a short space (stakeholding, the link between greater equality of opportunity and Britain's economic success, partnership, the many not the few), putting a complex argument in a simple and accessible way.

Let me list some features of the extract which contribute to its rhetorical power. It is made up of quite a lot of simple sentences, which are effective in breaking up the message into easily digestible parts, and which are set off from and related to each other in a clear and pointed way. These include clear antitheses between what stakeholding is and is not (the second and third sentences – not 'giving power to the corporations' etc., but 'giving power to you' etc.) and between Tory and New Labour concerns (the last two sentences – 'the privileged few' versus 'the many'). The specialist and, for most people, unfamiliar term 'stakeholder' is reworded as an expression which is used in everyday language, '[having] a stake in' is glossed in everyday terms as 'chances that help you get on', and made concrete through specific examples – 'a job, a skill, an opportunity'. The complex link between equalising opportunity and economic success for Britain is made through metaphorically extending the everyday language of individual success to Britain – you 'getting on' leads to Britain 'getting on'. The idea of government enabling people to act rather than acting for them is worded first in an everyday way ('working with you'), then reworded as the key New Labour term 'partnership'. The audience is addressed directly ('you'), and the speech uses 'we' both exclusively (just for New Labour) to set up a 'we'–'you' relationship, and inclusively ('we all') in the 'one-nation' way.

Rhetorical work cannot ultimately be separated from intellectual work because any public elaboration of a political discourse is also working to persuade people. A great deal of preliminary talking and thinking goes on behind the scenes – Gould[29] provides a fascinating

account of this. But as soon as political discourse goes public, it is rhetorically constructed, part of a political performance. The distinction between conceptual and rhetorical work is fine as an analytical distinction as long as we do not lose sight of their intimate relationship in practice.

Having said that, I want to focus on the intellectual work of the Singapore speech, the building of a new political discourse through weaving different themes and vocabularies together. For this we need rather a long extract from the speech:[30]

> I want Britain to be one of the really dynamic economies of the twenty-first century. ... We must ... make ourselves world leaders again.
>
> The key words are 'investment', 'quality' and 'trust'. The reason for investment is to create long-term strength. ... we must be moving up continually to higher-value-added products. That comes through quality. ... The creation of an economy where we are inventing and producing goods and services of quality needs the engagement of the whole country. It must be a matter of national purpose and national pride.
>
> We need to build a relationship of trust not just within a firm but within a society. By trust, I mean the recognition of a mutual purpose for which we work together and in which we all benefit. It is a stakeholder economy, in which opportunity is available to all, advancement is through merit, and from which no group or class is set apart or excluded. This is the economic justification for social cohesion, for a fair and strong society – a traditional commitment of left-of-centre politics but one with relevance today, if it is applied anew to the modern world.
>
> ... There is a real risk that, in this era of change, some prosper but many are left behind, their ambitions laid waste.
>
> We need a country in which we acknowledge an obligation collectively to ensure that each citizen gets a stake in it. One-nation politics is not some expression of sentiment, or even of justifiable concern for the less well off. It is an active politics – the bringing of the country together, a sharing of the possibility of power, wealth and opportunity. The old means of achieving that on the left was through redistribution in the tax and benefit regime. But in a global economy the old ways won't do. Of course a fair tax system is right. But really a life on benefit – dependent on the state – is not what most

people want. They want independence, dignity, self-improvement, a chance to earn and get on. The problems of low-pay and unemployment must be tackled at source.

The economics of the centre and centre-left today should be geared to the creation of the stakeholder economy which involves all our people, not a privileged few, or even a better-off 30 or 40 or 50 per cent. If we fail in that, we waste talent, squander potential wealth-creating ability, and deny the basis of trust upon which a cohesive society – one nation – is built. If people feel they have no stake in a society, they feel little responsibility towards it and little inclination to work for its success.

The implications of creating a stakeholder economy are profound. They mean a commitment by government to tackle long-term and structural unemployment. ...

The stakeholder society has a stakeholder welfare system. ... it holds the commitment of the whole population, rich and poor. This requires that everyone has a stake. The alternative is a residual welfare system just for the poor. After the Second World War, the route to this sort of commitment was seen simply as cash benefits ... But today's demands and changed lifestyles require a more active conception of welfare, based on services as well as cash, child care as well as child benefit, training as well as unemployment benefit.

... we must build the right relationship of trust between business and government ... we need neither old-style dirigisme nor rampant laissez-faire. There are key objectives which business and government can agree and work together to achieve. This 'enabling' role of government is crucial to long-term stability and growth.

The same relationship of trust and partnership applies within a firm. Successful companies invest, treat their employees fairly, and value them as a resource not just of production but of creative innovation. ... We cannot by legislation guarantee that a company will behave in a way conducive to trust and long-term commitment, but it is surely time to assess how we shift the emphasis in corporate ethos from the company being a mere vehicle for the capital market – to be traded, bought and sold as a commodity – towards a vision of the company as a community or partnership in which each employee has a stake, and where the company's responsibilities are more clearly delineated.

Let's begin with the sentence in which 'stakeholder' first appears (beginning in the 14th line of the extract): 'It is a stakeholder economy, in which opportunity is available to all, advancement is through merit, and from which no group or class is set apart or excluded.' The sentence weaves 'stakeholding' together with three other established themes in New Labour discourse – equality of opportunity, meritocracy, and social exclusion. It works the new theme into a new articulation with the established themes, which constitutes a new version of the political discourse of New Labour. It does so through setting up equivalences between words and phrases – 'stakeholder', 'opportunity is available to all', 'advancement is through merit', and 'no group or class is set apart or excluded'. What makes them equivalent is a common grammatical relation to *economy*: economy is a noun of which they are all modifiers. The three phrases also constitute a list. The preceding sentence sets up an equivalence between 'trust' and 'the recognition of a mutual purpose for which we work and in which we all benefit' in a different way – through explicit definition ('By trust, I *mean* the recognition of a mutual purpose', my italics.) The two sentences are linked by the pronoun 'It' which refers back to 'the recognition of a mutual purpose', and sets it up as equivalent to 'a stakeholder economy'. So a complex chain of equivalences, which works the new term 'stakeholder' into an articulation with a set of familiar ones, is built up in these sentences.

This is essentially what the conceptual work of political language comes down to: working different vocabularies (and, in more general terms, different languages) together into new articulations, and thus producing new articulations of political themes, i.e. new political discourses. But equivalence is only one relationship into which words and expressions are worked. There is also antithesis.* The next full paragraph (beginning in line 23) includes a combination of the two. First, an equivalence is set up across the first two sentences between 'an obligation collectively to ensure that each citizen gets a stake' and 'one-nation politics' through an implicit assumption – the second sentence only makes sense if we assume they are equivalent. In the third sentence, 'It' refers back to 'one-nation politics', which is set up as equivalent through the equative verb 'is' with 'an active politics' and then through a list with 'the bringing of the country together' and 'a sharing of the possibility of power, wealth and opportunity' (note that 'power', 'wealth' and 'opportunity' constitute their own embedded equivalence). So, once again, 'stakeholding' is articulated with established themes (especially 'one-nation politics').

The second and third sentences also set up an antithesis through the move from a negative verb ('is not') to a positive verb ('is'), between 'some expression of sentiment, or even of justifiable concern for the less well off' and 'an active politics' – implying the former is not 'active'. Presumably 'passive'? But the main antithesis is later in the paragraph. An equivalence is set up between 'redistribution in the tax and benefit regime', 'the old ways', 'a life on benefit', and 'dependent on the state'. Notice that these are contentious and persuasive equivalences – not everyone would accept that redistribution is 'old', nor that it entails 'a life on benefit', or being 'dependent'. The latter evokes controversial new right theories of welfare as causing 'dependency'. An antithesis is then set up between this chain of equivalences and another in the list: 'independence', 'dignity', 'self-improvement', and 'a chance to earn and get on'. These equivalences and antitheses in the latter part of the paragraph are not new. On the contrary, they are an established and relatively stable element in New Labour discourse. What is new is that 'stakeholding' is being woven into them.

I shall comment on equivalences and antitheses in the rest of the extract in a more selective and summary way. In the paragraph beginning in line 36 an equivalence is set up between stakeholding and 'which involves all our people'. There is an antithesis between success in establishing a stakeholder economy and failure. The latter being represented in negative terms through equivalences between 'waste talent', 'squandering potential wealth-creating ability', and 'deny the basis of trust', and between 'have no stake', 'feel little responsibility', and 'little inclination to work for its [society's] success'. Equivalences between the corresponding positive terms are implied (having a stake, feeling responsibility, feeling inclined to work for the success of the society). Notice particularly the implied equivalence between stakeholding and the important New Labour theme of responsibility.

With regard to a 'stakeholder welfare system', an equivalence is set up between stakeholding and 'the commitment of the whole population'. An antithesis is set up between a 'stakeholder' and a 'residual' welfare system – this can be seen as a reworking of a more familiar contrast between 'residual' and 'universal' welfare systems. Another antithesis, which we came across earlier, is between 'active' and (by implication) 'passive' conceptions of welfare. A series of equivalences is set up between 'active' and 'not only but also' relations ('services as well as cash', 'child care as well as child benefit', 'training as well as unemployment benefit').

The final paragraph (from line 62) deals with the stakeholder company rather than the individual stakeholder which is the main focus of the speech. These are the two main forms of stakeholding in New Labour discourse according to Driver and Martell.[31] A chain of equivalences is set up in the paragraph between 'trust', 'partnership', 'long-term commitment', 'invest', 'treat their employees fairly', 'value them [employees] as a resource not just of production but of creative innovation', and 'each employee has a stake'. And an antithesis is set up between this chain of equivalences and 'the company being a mere vehicle for the capital market'.

The cumulative and overall effect of these interconnected equivalences and antitheses is to work 'stakeholding' into an evolving web or network of political themes. Although equivalences and antitheses are important relations within that web, they are not the only ones. What they have in common is symmetry: if x is equivalent to y, then y is also equivalent to x; if x is in antithesis with y, y is also in contrast with x. But there are also asymmetrical relations. Actually, a few of the examples I have identified as equivalences are, on closer inspection, asymmetrical. For instance, the relationship between 'feel they have no stake in a society' and 'feel little responsibility towards it' in the sentence: 'If people feel they have no stake in a society, they feel little responsibility towards it and little inclination to work for its success.' We can call this asymmetrical relationship 'entailment' – feeling you have no stake entails feeling little responsibility, but feeling little responsibility does not entail feeling you have no stake.

The relation of entailment makes the connection between webs or networks of political themes and, what I called in the first chapter, the 'logic' of New Labour's political discourse. In this speech Blair develops that logic. The extract above incorporates an argument: if Britain is to be competitive, it has to be in the quality market, which requires the engagement of the whole country, as 'one nation'; but that depends on everyone having a stake in the economy. If they don't, then we lose both potential wealth-creating ability and the relationship of trust on which a 'one-nation' society is built. In terms of this argument, 'having a stake' or 'stakeholding' is what links together the two great themes of New Labour, its Thatcherite legacy, and its communitarianism: making Britain competitive and making Britain a cohesive, 'one-nation' society. Or in different terms: 'enterprise' and 'community' (which is the route to 'fairness' and 'social justice'). But the argument is built upon relations of entailment between major New Labour themes: being competitive

entails entering the quality market (or: the knowledge-based economy); entering the quality market entails the whole country working together ('one nation'); being 'one nation' entails everyone having a stake in the economy.

We can generalise from this link between argument and entailment by connecting it to the link discussed above between rhetoric and discourse. There are two interconnected processes simultaneously going on in the speech. On the rhetorical side, there is the process of argument – Blair is trying to persuade people by constructing a convincing argument in the course of the speech. On the discourse side, there is the process of classification, which includes the three relations discussed above (equivalence, contrast, and entailment). Any political speech is simultaneously working intellectually on the classification of political themes, and therefore on the political discourse, and working rhetorically on the political argumentation. There will be continuity as well as change in both – a speech may to a greater or lesser degree reproduce established classification and argumentation at the same time as being innovative in both.

The extract above comes from one of a series of speeches on the theme of 'stakeholding' which Tony Blair gave early in 1996. These speeches can be seen as exploratory attempts to extend the theme of 'stakeholding' across various areas of New Labour policy, attempts to work 'stakeholding' into an intellectually coherent and rhetorically convincing web with other New Labour themes – an exploration of its potential as a 'big idea'. The Singapore speech on the 'stakeholder economy' was followed by speeches dealing with the 'stakeholder society' and 'stakeholder politics'. The former included a new working of the relationship between 'stakeholding' and the theme of 'rights and responsibilities': 'We accept our duty as a society to give each person a stake in its future. And in return each person accepts responsibility to respond, to work to improve themselves.'[32] The latter included a new working of the relationship between the themes of 'stakeholding', trust, and devolution: a 'stakeholder democracy', 'trusting people to make their own decisions', 'devolving power outwards to the people'.

By contrast, a speech given by Blair to the South African Parliament in January 1999[33] made no reference to the theme of 'stakeholding', but there is a different attempt at a 'big idea' through working a new relationship between the theme of 'rights and responsibilities' and other themes. What is particularly striking is the working of the theme of 'rights and responsibilities' into the field of international relations, for instance:

> The developed world has a responsibility to transfer resources, expertise and assistance to the developing world. The developing world has a right to expect this but also a responsibility to ensure that resources are used productively and for the benefit of the poor, not on misguided policies, white-elephant projects or even worse, the cancer of corruption.

The same language of 'rights and responsibilities' is applied here to international relations as to 'civic society' and the welfare state.

Summing up, the political discourse of New Labour is a process rather than a finished product, and we can see it in process by looking carefully at the language. But it is not an even process. It is not a matter of a single person (e.g. Tony Blair) or for that matter a team working single-mindedly on developing and elaborating the discourse. It is rather a process that involves a number of people who may be pulling in more or less different directions. It is a process that is cut through by different concerns, different occasions, and different circumstances. For instance, a central location of the process is in Tony Blair's speeches, yet they deal with many diverse issues, are addressed to many diverse audiences, and give many different inflections to the process.

I have referred to the ongoing search for 'the big idea'. The 'big idea' which has been prominent, if not always dominant, through the history of the Labour Party was replacing capitalism with socialism or at least changing capitalism in fairly radical ways to force it to respond better to the needs of working class people. New Labour arguably does not have a 'big idea' in anything like that sense – a cynical view is that it puts a lot of energy into trying to make the 'Third Way' look like a 'big idea', which it isn't.

Finally, it is important to appreciate that the process of constituting a political discourse is to some extent at the mercy of events. To what extent politicians and governments control events is contentious, but they are certainly always having to react to events they could not have foreseen, and thus develop their political positions and political discourse on territory they would not have chosen.

Conclusion

My concern in this chapter has been with process – with how the discourse of New Labour is continuously constituted in shifting

relations with other discourses within and beyond the political field, which it draws upon, informs, contests, and so forth. This chapter concludes the discussion of the political discourse of the 'Third Way' which began in chapter 1. In the next two chapters I move on to my other major concerns in the book – first, the rhetorical style of the leader of New Labour, Tony Blair; and, second, the language of government under New Labour.