**Bryson, V. & Fisher, P. Eds (2011) *Redefining social justice: New Labour rhetoric and reality* Manchester, Manchester University Press**

This edited collection presents a comprehensive overview of how social justice was expressed by New Labour across the period 1997-2010. The chapters examine the issue of social justice across a number of different policy areas (education, health, criminal justice and devolution) and in relation to several interest groups (disabled people, families, minorities, public sector workers) and topics (electoral strategy, social class, multiculturalism). The book is more far-reaching than much of the current literature in offering insights into the conceptualisations, and their effects, of social justice in the New Labour era. An accessible collection, each chapter introduces the reader to the topic under discussion with a descriptive overview before going into more specific details and arguments. Consequently, it is of use to students new to the issue of social justice as well as those interested in New Labour politics and policies.

Underpinning the book are two related issues prevalent across much of the literature on New Labour: the relationship between discourse and policy and, the relationship between social justice and economic competitiveness. On the first point, the editors situate themselves as being sympathetic to the ‘turn to language’ within social theory highlighting in particular the dialectical relationship between the power of discourse and the material conditions of people’s lives (page 8). While only one chapter conducts a specific linguistic analysis of key concepts within the New Labour era (chapter three), remaining chapters include some level of analysis of New Labour discourse.

On the second point, the book echoes the now orthodox view that not only is there a tension between these two objectives but also, contrary to New Labour’s stated discursive proclamations emphasising the importance of social justice, in policy choices at least, social justice is being subordinated to economic competitiveness (see chapters 2, 7 and 9; however for an exception see page 69). Thus many chapters highlight the contradictory nature of New Labour’s discourse and policy and, emphasise the extent of conflicting policy choices (chapter four). However, these conclusions may be limited by the extent that it rests upon what has elsewhere shown to be a false dichotomy between social and economic objectives (see Kenny 2010). Recent research in the area of education has shown the two goals to be intimately connected within New Labour’s language, with social justice inherently bound up with concerns about economic competitiveness. Thus, rather than being in conflict, New Labour discourse and policy may be consistent.