

# **New Labour's Attack on Public Services**

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**Dexter Whitfield,  
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**STAR RATING: 5/5**

In a few months' time New Labour will be celebrating 10 years as Her Majesty's Government, *says Keith Popple*. Much will be made in the period up to this anniversary of the achievement - the longest the party has ever been in power.

On their watch New Labour have achieved a good deal, particularly in introducing a statutory minimum wage, and moving some of the poorest parents and children, and the oldest people in our population, out of poverty. However, New Labour will also be known for their adherence to neo-liberal economics and the marketisation of public services. In the past decade, New Labour have moved the expectations and perceptions of the population to a position where greater credence is given to individual choice and self-interest than to supporting the collective approach to common public issues.

New Labour has demonstrated a desire to move as much of the public sector into the hands of the private market as is possible. Ideas that were only in germination during the previous Conservative government are now being put in place at an amazing pace. Dexter Whitfield's book is a key text for all those who want chapter and verse of one of the biggest changes to have taken place in the public sector since most of it was created in the post-war settlement. Whitfield provides us with the arguments and the detail that clearly demonstrate what New Labour have been up to during the last 10 years in this accessible yet, at times, scholarly work.

Not a happy read for those who had visions of New Labour delivering a fairer and more democratic society.

*Keith Popple is professor of social work at London South Bank University*