



People for Proper Policing in North Wales

How realistic is 'New Realism'

This story via the Driver's alliance newsletter www.driversalliance.org.uk/

New Realism is the name given to a movement of **academic transport theorists** who, led by **Professor Phil Goodwin**, advocates a different direction in transport policy. Their core belief was that congestion could not be relieved by road building but instead demand for road space should be **managed through adding cost or difficulty**. The successful 'Predict and provide' policy was out and the new buzz word in Government was '**sustainability**'.

Goodwin chaired a panel of advisors that helped **John Prescott write the 1998 white paper on transport**. This White paper eventually became the Governments £180bn 10 year transport plan which aimed for a;

- 50% increase in public transport use, measured by passenger kilometres
- Congestion reduced below 2000 levels, particularly in large urban areas
- Up to 25 new rapid transit lines in major cities and conurbations, more than doubling light rail use
- Eight of our largest towns and cities to introduce congestion charging schemes and a further 12 to bring in workplace parking levies

On a recent BBC program a fellow New Realist, **Professor David Begg**, was forthcoming about what New Realism and the 10 year plan would mean for road users;
www.safespeed.org.uk/begg.html

"You really have to make it more difficult and expensive to drive. There was a series of measures to incentivize buses priority and take space from cars. The whole thrust of the policy was to make it more attractive to use public transport, walk and cycle and more difficult to drive"

2010 will see the conclusion of the 10 year plan yet you would be hard pressed to find any reference to it in Government circles. Put simply, **the plan has missed every one of its targets** from increased public transport usage to congestion reduction. Despite this Prescott is bullish about his transport legacy claiming it has succeeded. As **David Begg relates**, New Realism and the 10 year plan was undone almost from its inception by **the fuel duty protests of 2000**.

"The fuel duty protest is burned on the memory of people like Gordon Brown... you cannot have a dispassionate conversation with the prime minister on road pricing without memories of that 2000 protest. That's where the backlash came."

Although Prescott and the New Realists ultimately underestimated the strength of opposition to their 10 year plan, they fully understood the contentious nature of their scheme. In a recent Radio 4 programme '**Derailing Transport 2010**', Prescott admits that in hindsight his failed Regional Assemblies scheme would have enabled congestion charging to be implemented *"without local councillors having to worry about three year election cycles"*.

Subsequent events such as the Downing Street road pricing petition and referenda in Edinburgh then Manchester against congestion charges have delivered an unambiguous public rejection of most aspect of the 10 year plan. Despite this, the New Realists are still pushing for the

introduction of pay-per-mile road pricing and presumably accept that by necessity, its implementation would have to be forced upon the public through a very undemocratic process. Given that the chief beneficiaries of the 10 year plan were **the public transport companies** it is unsurprising that we can find close links between them and the New Realists. **In 2005 Professor Begg was a made a director of First Group and amongst the most radical of New Realist advocates, the Campaign for Better Transport has acquired charitable status and have received funding by both the Government and public transport operators.** www.firstgroup.com/

There is however a more fundamental issue. As Begg alluded to, public transport has been given every possible advantage over the last decade with dedicated bus lanes, traffic light priority and government subsidies including cheap subsidised fuel. To that we can add support from government 'spin doctors' demonising the car with negative and unjustified environmental claims while glossing over the environmental failings of public transport. As driving lobby groups were marginalised and all but ignored, public transport funded lobby groups such as **the Campaign for Better Transport acquired charitable status and were lavished with public funding.**

Yet given all these advantages, public transport companies have still failed to provide an attractive alternative to the car.

Surely it is time for the New Realists to accept that the reality of the situation is that public transport never provides an alternative to the car as it is rarely convenient, often expensive & uncomfortable and doesn't go where you want.

Not only has Labour's transport plans failed but it has left our **road infrastructure underinvested and crumbling**, has created congestion through reallocation of road space and has left Britain even further behind our European competitors.

The PPP comments ... Despite massive subsidies (from our taxes) and persecution of motorists by draconian & corrupt speeding and parking laws, public transport is unpopular and totally impractical for most people. The lucky few, like Begg and Co., live close to their 'work' and cycle or walk and no doubt have their groceries and other goods delivered by white vans. They are paid several times over for their dishonest support for these policies by the government and the major Transport Companies and even by 'Green' pressure groups masquerading as road safety charities.

We publish these stories BECAUSE they highlight the political corruption that is moving us towards a police state where the Police are used (often reluctantly) against the public.