

Family background is the most important factor in determining the quality and length of someone's life, Harriett Harman, the Labour deputy leader will say in a speech to the Trades Union Congress today, suggesting that class "overarches" racial and sexual inequalities. She will announce plans for a National Equalities Panel to study social inequalities. The panel will report in November 2009, and be chaired by Professor John Hills of the London School of Economics.

Labour set up a social justice commission in the early 1990s. It proposed nothing useful, in fact, if I recall, it just died a death, like all the other Labour committees and commissions - Lyons, Barker, to name just two. At the most, it will suggest just a bit of ineffectual tinkering round the edges. The Chairman of this panel is an economist but the decrepit state of modern economic theory is part of the problem.

To be fair, they dare not propose anything that would be effective, because what is needed would be gently but radical. There are too many vested interests in the way. Nobody likely to propose anything radical and effective would not get into a position where they would be selected to sit on such a commission. [Article in Daily Telegraph](#)