

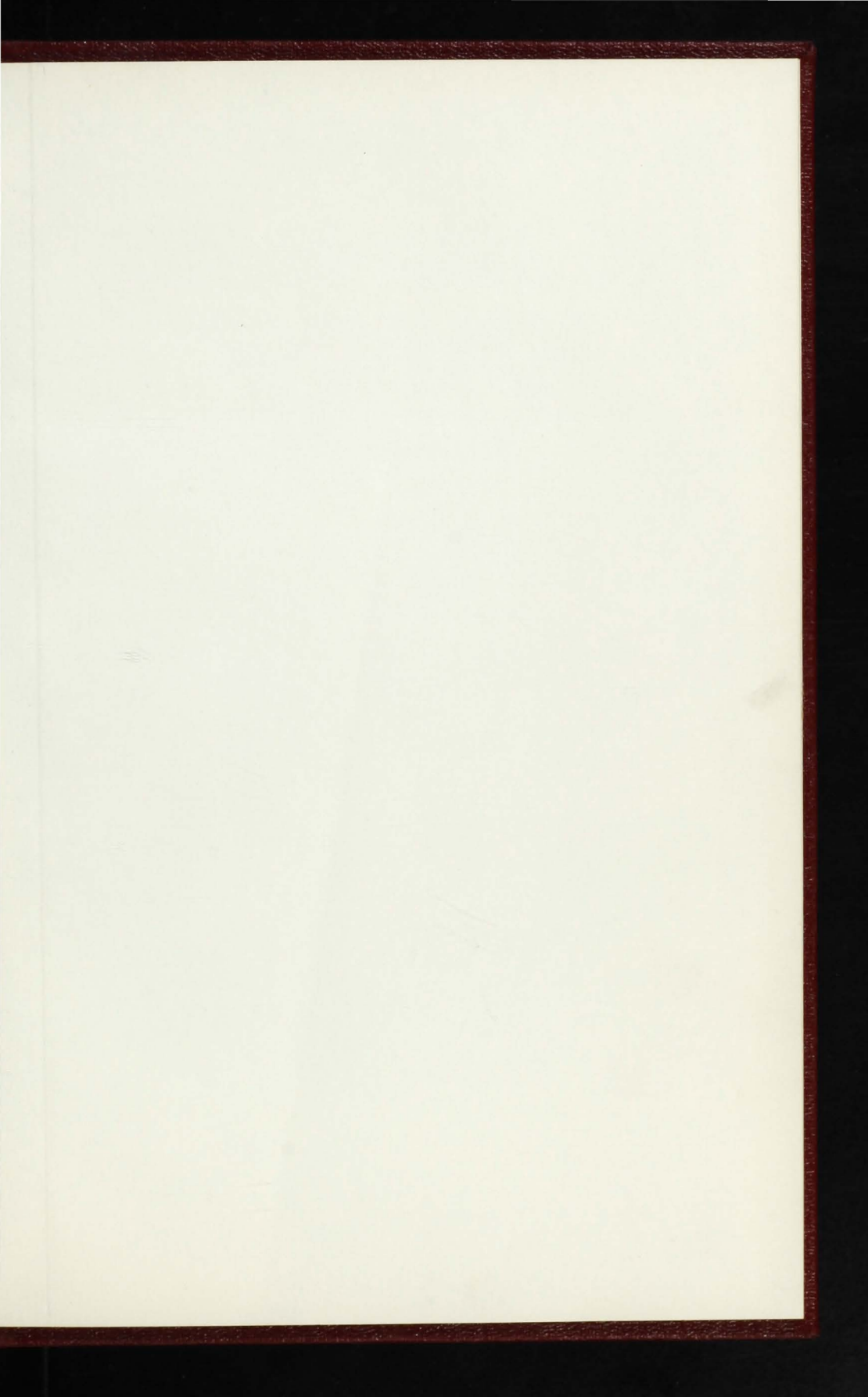
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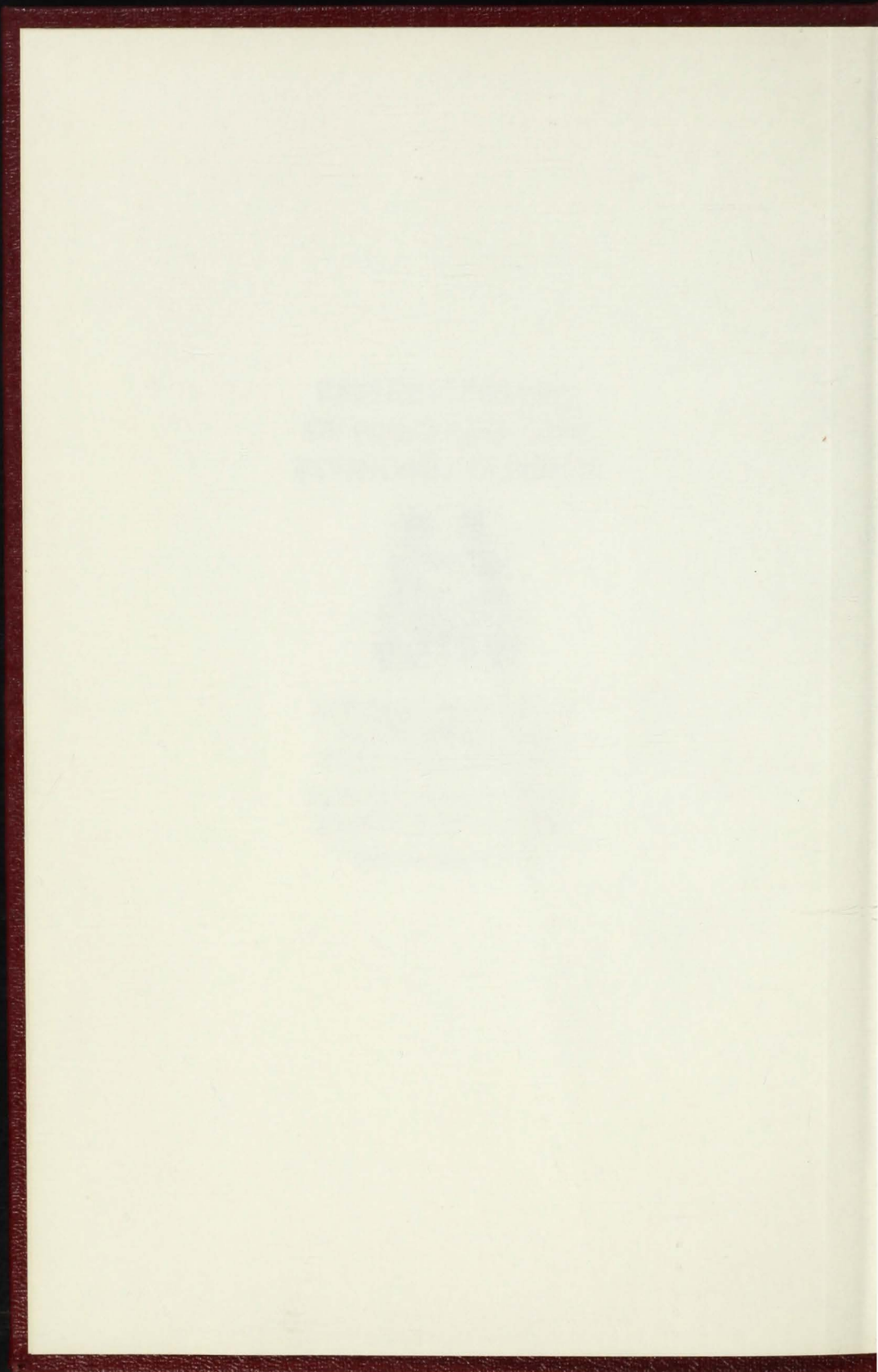


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THE FUTURE OF
SOCIALISM

By H. H. C. ...

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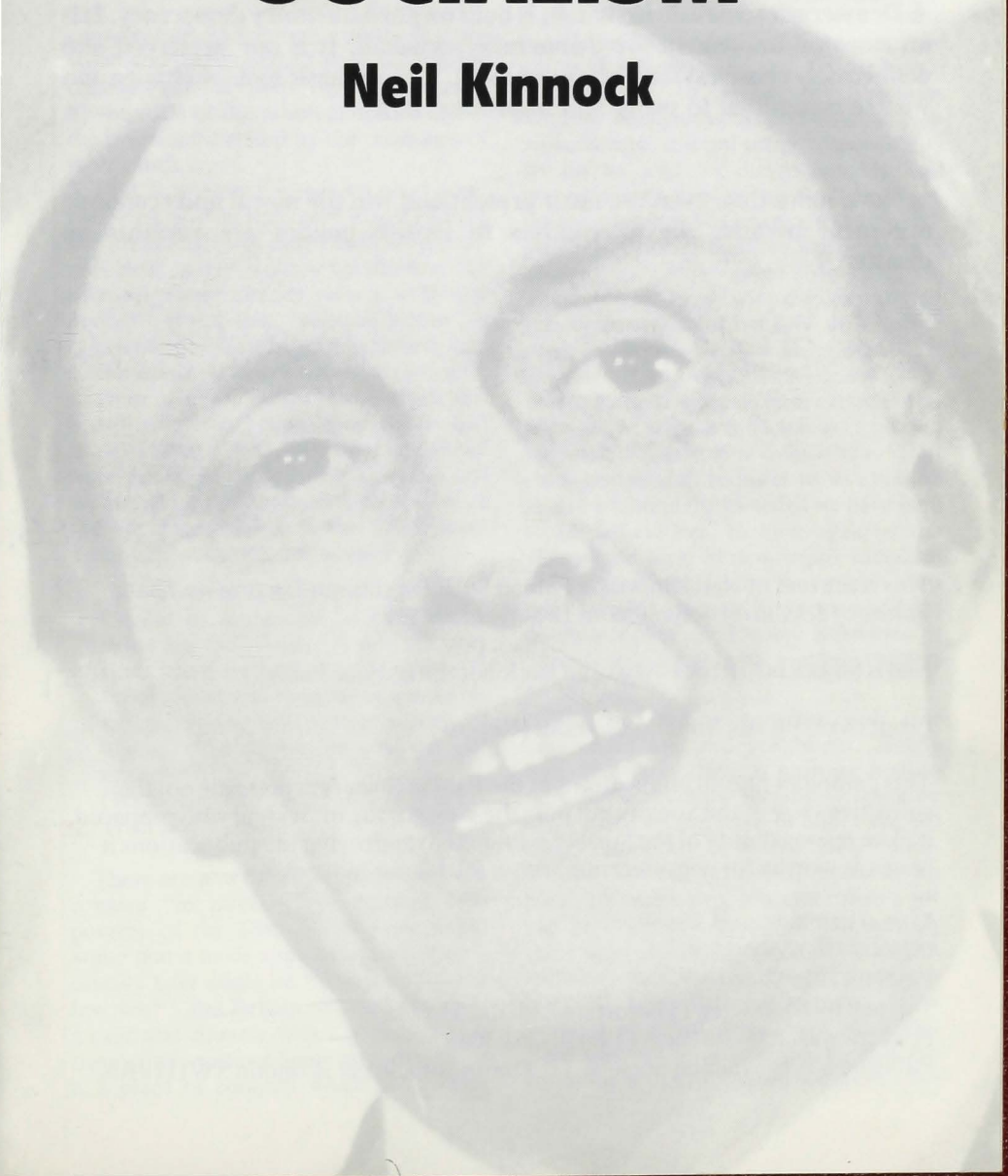
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THE FUTURE OF SOCIALISM

Neil Kinnock



Fabian Tract 509

The Future of Socialism

❶ Democratic socialism in Britain is built on parliamentary democracy. It is an essential implement for democratic socialism. It is our preferred and deliberately chosen system of government. It is our basic tool for change and we are committed to using and improving it.❷

❸ Now, more than ever, we must present and win the moral and economic argument because the alternatives in British politics are variants on disaster.❹



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This is the text of Neil Kinnock's Fabian Society Autumn Lecture on *The Future of Socialism* delivered on 12 November 1985:

Neil Kinnock is MP for Islwyn and leader of the Labour Party.

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This pamphlet like all publications of the Fabian Society represents not the collective view of the Society but only the views of the individual who prepared it. The responsibility of the Society is limited to approving the publications it issues as worthy for consideration within the labour movement.

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The Future of Socialism

For over a century the Fabian Society has contributed to the appraisal and analysis which is essential for the confidence and the relevance of socialism in theory and practice. Like us, the early Fabians were part of a society which was turbulent, economically depressed, politically divided and confronted by great and speedy change. Yet they were neither dismayed by the scale of the problem nor unsure of the priorities dictated by the condition of their times.

That is a temper which we need now, believing as — in their own words — they did “that socialism may be most quickly and most surely realised by utilising the political power already possessed by the people”. But if that “political power” is older, wider and stronger now than it was, so too is the challenge which it confronts.

Those who are aware of the depth and breadth of poverty in our own country and those who are conscious of the scale of want in the world must be shocked and saddened by the continuing relevance of the opening sentence of the first Fabian Tract published 101 years ago:-

“We live in a competitive society with Capital in the hands of individuals. What are the results? A few are very rich, some well-off, the Majority in Poverty and vast number in misery. Is this a just and wise system worthy of humanity? Can we or can we not improve it?”

(*Why Are The Many Poor?* Fabian Tract no. 1, 1884)

There are now fewer people in our own country “in poverty” — certainly the poverty of the 1880s — and we might argue that a more appropriate question a century later might be “Why are only the few rich?”. But Britain obviously remains a capitalist country with a society that is competitive without being meritocratic. It is a place of contests which are grossly

unequal from the start of life, a place where the combined inefficiencies and injustices of the system still cause “moral revolt” to be a main chord in the tone of British socialism.

We still therefore ask “Is this a system worthy of humanity?”, “Can we improve it?” and as democratic socialists we have a responsibility to answer the questions without defensiveness, and without evasion. Indeed, it is our prime responsibility to do so and to do so quickly and convincingly, employing at all times the advice of Antonio Gramsci to “combine pessimism of the intellect with optimism of the will”. Now, more than ever, we must present and win the moral and economic argument because the alternatives in British politics are variants on disaster. Our opponents know this. Democratic socialism is under attack from the right because it *is* socialism; from the ultra-left because it *is* democratic. That combined assault requires us to examine and re-examine truths which we have held to be self-evident, to look again at the variety and form of democratic socialism and our prescriptions for the future — not least in order to create that strong body of opinion which as Tawney described it “knows what it fights for, and loves what it knows”.

We are making progress with that assessment and redevelopment. Slowly but satisfyingly there is growing realisation that democratic socialism cannot be established on the basis of either the old social democracy or on the “new” ultra-leftism. Nor can it be constructed on an amalgam of the two, any more than a wit can be fashioned from two half-wits. A third way is needed; separate and distinct from the stale vanguardism of the ultra-left and from the atavistic and timid premise of social democracy. And that third way has always existed — it is the socialism which, in Aneurin Bevan’s de-

finition, "is based on the conviction that free people can use free institutions to solve the social and economic problems of the day".

It is, of course, an audacious view. It dispenses with the idea (fiercely clung to by sectarian socialists and by anti-socialists) that socialism requires a perpetual threat to private freedom. It rejects the defeatism of those who think that problems are beyond solution and who would therefore be better called immobile than "moderate".

If Labour is to form a government we have to relate to and draw support from the modern working classes whose upward social mobility, increased expectations and extended horizons are largely the result of opportunities afforded them by our movement in the past.

That democratic approach is not blithe. On the contrary, it recognises that the re-examination of strategy, attitudes and style of socialist politics is a continual imperative. Unlike the Tories or the SDP and Liberals, we are in the business (and always have been) of eradicating the very social conditions which necessitated our existence in the first place. We cannot, therefore, afford to be either paralysed or blase. We have to draw confidence from accomplishment without breeding complacency.

An understanding of this obligation is crucial to the development of Labour's strategic approach. The harsh electoral reality is that Labour cannot rely merely on a combination of the dispossessed, the "traditional" and increasingly figmentary working class and minority groups for the winning of power. If Labour is to form a government we have to relate to and draw support from the modern working classes whose upward social mobility, increased expectations and extended horizons are largely the result of opportunities

afforded them by our movement in the past.

These are our people and we should rejoice in their advance, especially since my generation are most definitely products and beneficiaries of that progress. We should never assume that the relative security of the so-called "new" working classes forbids active sympathy with the plight of the disadvantaged. Their roots, their background and their family relationships militate against such selfish forgetfulness and every investigation of opinion testifies to their beliefs in compassion, the values of community and a strong sense of fairness. But we must appeal directly to them and convince them that greater aspirations of merit, justice and security are realistic. We have to join up their instincts with our policies. We have to show that the decent objectives are not only desirable but also practical. Only a Labour Party which can illustrate the relevance of socialism to the manager as well as the mechanic, to the technician and the teacher, the home owner alongside the council tenant, the majority as well as the minorities, can hope to convert its plans into effect by gaining the power to nurture success properly and defeat disadvantage conclusively.

This — as the majority of the labour movement recognises — requires a shift in attitudes and presentation, not a change in principles. It does not need an abandonment or dilution of values. It demands practical education in the truth that the great majority of people — whatever their occupation or status — who depend entirely on the sale of their labour as their only means of enjoying a tolerably comfortable and secure life have a direct vested interest in standards of care and opportunity which can only be provided with sufficient quantity and quality by collective, democratically administered services.

The potential for making and winning that case is great and immediate. Labour, for instance, has a claim to present itself as the party of efficiency with far more justification than a Tory Party committed

obsessively to the *Sozialmarktwirtschaft* which is rapacious in its use of finite resources, requires the mass unemployment of labour, cannot make up its mind whether it wants expensive money for the rentier or cheap money for the producer, and squanders the oil revenue and sells off invaluable assets of the nation to sustain the fantasy that it is "not borrowing".

We are far more entitled to claim the status of protector of Britain's industrial capacity than a government whose record has been one of wholesale industrial destruction. Our concept of the welfare state has far more to offer as the means of real individual emancipation by the removal of the inhibitions of poverty, fear, inadequate care and lack of opportunity than has the Thatcherite fixation with liberty by purchase. And our commitment to production for use and retention of capital in Britain gives us a stronger claim to the title of patriots than those whose desire for the fast foreign buck invariably overrides any dedication to investment in our country's future.

Efficiency, individual liberty, wealth creation, patriotism; such a vocabulary is thought to be unfamiliar to the labour movement even though they are — along with justice, compassion and equality — the words and, more important, the purposes and principles on which the movement was founded and from which it has always drawn its vitality. The Labour Party must no longer allow others to usurp what are surely its legitimate claims and aims. Above all, it must re-assert democratic socialism as an effective body of values for modern needs rather than the ghost from the past.

Socialist Values

Democratic socialism in the UK belongs to that broad coalition at the heart of British politics which is committed to the survival and extension of an effective, humane and democratic society. British socialism, however, has never adopted or pursued the rigid, codified, or disciplined theories characteristic of European con-

tinental socialism. We have had no shortage of theorists. But reflecting as they do the "peculiarities of the English" as E. P. Thompson has described it (I suppose he meant the British), they represent the variety and diversity of thought and experience coming from humanists and Christians, historians, philosophers, sociologists, writers, practising politicians, co-operators and trade unionists.

British democratic socialism is a tapestry and the thread that runs through the weave is above all a deep concern with

We are far more entitled to claim the status of protector of Britain's industrial capacity than a government whose record has been one of wholesale industrial destruction.

fellowship and fraternity; with *community* and participation. The emphasis, exemplified in the work of that democratic socialist *par excellence* (as Gaitskell described him) — Tawney — is that political economy is not ultimately a question of economic organisation or historical inevitability, but of *moral* choice and that all social institutions must be subject to a test of moral purpose.

It is that inheritance which has inspired the labour movement since its inception. These are the values which underlie the creation of the National Health Service, the building of public sector housing, the inaugural acts of de-colonisation, the development of comprehensive education, the equal opportunities legislation and a host of other measures where Labour government at national and local level has worked to reduce disadvantage for the primary purpose of enhancing individual liberty and giving people greater control over their own destiny.

That is the objective past, present and future of democratic socialism — individual freedom. And the means which democratic socialism has chosen to protect that freedom are equality and democracy. Just as freedom unqualified by law

leaves the weak unprotected from violence, so freedom unqualified by democracy and equality leaves the weak unprotected from power. That is why the values of liberty, equality and democracy are interdependent to democratic socialism. And it is that belief in their *interdependence* which makes the analysis, the code of beliefs and the criteria for success employed by democratic socialism different from the approach taken by other ideologies which may, with sincerity, believe in liberty and equality or democracy as single purposes.

The liberty of individuals and of societies is an absolute value to democratic socialists. But, too often, socialism has been associated with the very opposite — parodied by its association with an uncaring bureaucracy. At times we seem to have permitted a set of beliefs that begins from this practical desire to foster the political and economic liberty of all people to look like a dogma that regarded liberty as a tedious bourgeois fad.

It is hardly a new problem. In 1937 George Orwell urged, with desperation in his voice — “Justice and Liberty! Those are the words that have to ring like a bugle across the world”. But that “underlying ideal of socialism”, he said, “had been buried beneath layer after layer of doctrinaire priggishness, party squabbles, and half-baked progressivism until it is like a diamond hidden under a mountain of dung”.

Freedom

As socialists it is not, however, sufficient simply to endorse freedom as a universal good. Indeed it would be simplistic to do so. The pursuit of freedom can entail conflict as the freedom of many collides with the privilege of few.

Socialist doctrine and policy need to reflect our respect for the nature of these conflicts. In practice we need to ensure a balance which provides for the good of society as a whole and also to secure recognition of the fact that the boundary of freedom is drawn at the point where its exercise by one individual or group begins

to impinge upon the freedom of another individual or group. We need to convey, too, that there is no essential contradiction between collective provision and individual freedom since the one reinforces and makes possible the other. As socialists the advancement of collective freedoms is central precisely because it offers the best hope of advancing individual freedom.

It is essential to reassert that primary value at a time when every malaise from commercial failure to crime is blamed upon the mythical “degeneracy” which allegedly resulted from thirty or so years of feather-bedding, family-splitting welfare state provision. And the deeds and words of freedom also need energetic emphasis at a time when institutions and customs of autonomy and independence from GCHQ to the GLC and rate fixing to the *Real Lives* documentary have been torn up, or — at very least — shaken to the

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roots in the name of a form of freedom which promised to “roll back the state” and release the country from the “coils” of government.

The words of G.D.H. Cole ring true in our time:-

“Liberties,” he said, “are largely fictitious until men and women have the practical means of enjoying them; and the most important of all these means are, first, the possession of democratic government pledged to defend them and supported by popular power, and secondly, security, which enables a man or women to express and assert themselves without fear of the consequences . . .”

That striving for personal security is the essence of democratic socialism. And to

give proper strength to the cause we need to reassert the practical fact that since most of the people, most of the time, do not provide surpluses of income in the right amounts on the right occasions to permit themselves and their dependents sufficient supply of the personal services of opportunity, learning, care, security and employment, the co-operative and collective action of limiting liability for immediate payment by providing collective and co-operative contribution has been the greatest single source of individual emancipation of our century.

Collective provision has not been the enemy of individual freedom, it has been the agent of individual emancipation and for that reason it will occupy a central position in the forging of the future of socialism.

It has not diminished vitality, it has increased fitness. It has not eroded talent, it has multiplied it. It has not frustrated inventiveness, it has given the inventive the facility for development. It has not subordinated peoples, it has stimulated their self-confidence. Even though the state has been the most dependable source of provision the result has not been a supine mood of dependency but an increase in critical faculty.

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Liberty

The New Right would have us believe that the role of the state is repressive; that it reduces or robs us of liberty; that it is inefficient and bureaucratic.

They are not so New — as an illustration from Charles Dickens makes clear.

“Surely there never was such a fragile china-ware as that of which the millers

of Coketown were made. Handle them ever so lightly, and they fell to pieces with such ease that you might suspect them of having been flawed before. They were *ruined*, when they were required to send labouring children to school; they were *ruined*, when inspectors were appointed to look into works; they were *ruined* when such inspectors considered it doubtful whether they were quite justified in chopping people up with their machinery; they were utterly *undone*, when it was hinted that perhaps they need not always make so much smoke . . . Whenever a Coketowner felt he was ill-used — that is to say, whenever he was not left entirely alone . . . he was sure to come out with the awful menace that he would “sooner pitch his property into the Atlantic”. This has terrified the Home Secretary within an inch of his life on several occasions.”

Victorian values with a vengeance. And set against them is the reality of progress away from the tyranny of the powerful individual backed by a state which the powerful owned. Progress towards a situation in which the state itself is a positive agency working on behalf of the individuals who make up the state.

Collective provision for individual purposes relies for its principles and its practical administration on political democracy and for that among other reasons the commitment to democracy as a means and an end is an absolute value in democratic socialism. Evan Durbin, writing in 1941, said that “to betray democracy was to betray socialism”. In the Labour Party our commitment to representative and elected parliamentary democracy is explicit in Clause IV of the Constitution. Indeed, in the *New Social Order*, published in 1918, it was made clear that this would be built (in terms of national and international policy, in industry as well as government) on “that equal freedom, that general consciousness of common and that widest possible participation in power which is characteristic of true democracy”.

Power and participation — watchwords of socialism — are expressed in the rights and responsibilities of freedom and democracy combined. But democratic socialism stands for far more than a *defence* of democracy. It must enhance it wherever possible. We do not believe in the centralisation of power in the hands of unaccountable bureaucracies.

When we read the work of early socialist writers such as Robert Owen or William Morris, we will search in vain for an autocratic or state dominated vision of socialism; more recently, sociologists such as Titmuss and Townsend have pointed to the failure of our bureaucracies and to the need for more vigilance and greater humanity in both management and operation.

We do believe that wherever possible decisions must be taken on a corporate and collective basis; that everyone at the level of the community and the workplace is endowed with responsibilities and should consequently exercise rights. That is, of course, not easy to achieve. It can fall victim to inertia, indifference and incompetence and it can then degenerate into the pastime of small, energetic groups who use democracy as a tactic for manoeuvre rather than a principle for application. In its full expression as people join together in the community to form self-help groups, tenants associations or housing co-operatives, it demands energy, confidence and commitment. Not easy qualities — but democracy depends on them. It depends too upon the willingness of volunteers to accept office and to take on legal obligations as local councillors. That is less easy than it has ever been.

Over the past six years local democracy has been squeezed through the imposition of restrictive legislation, financial penalties, and ultimately by the abolition of whole authorities. Still it cannot be so easily dismissed or dismantled; the soul goes marching on. We know that there are many decisions which are more appropriately and efficiently taken at a local level. We believe that central and local government work better when they work

in partnership and we are committed to the restoration of the proper balance of decision making on the return of the next Labour Government. Meanwhile we have seen models developed — even in adversity — in the revival of municipal efforts at socialism, in the Enterprise Boards, in the transport undertakings and — perhaps most interesting — in the efforts to introduce true decentralisation of administration.

The next Labour Government must use these experiences as rehearsals for greater development of local initiatives, prompted by local need and sustained by local democracy. In this — as in many other particulars — we stand apart from Toryism, ancient and modern.

Democratic socialism in Britain is built on parliamentary democracy. It is an

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essential implement for democratic socialism. It is our preferred and deliberately chosen system of government. It is our basic tool for change and we are committed to using and improving it. We require Parliament — not just the institution but the whole system of government by deliberation — as a platform for our views, a champion for those we seek to help, the most dependable means for securing and sustaining progress. That means that extra-parliamentary efforts related to the same objectives complement Parliamentary methods. The two go together.

We can agree, again, with Tawney, who believed so passionately in the parliamentary arena as an opportunity for attack and a means of defence and advised that:-

“Given the existence of political demo-

cracy . . . the only possible course for socialists is to take the rough with the smooth, throw on their opponents the odium of tampering with it, and exploit to the utmost the possibilities which it offers. Secure in the knowledge that they always have one Chamber to themselves the privileged classes have hitherto acquiesced in so much democracy as that absurdity permits. But their enthusiasm for it remains this side of idolatry. For socialists to give the impression that they, too, have reservations would be to give the enemies of socialism a present of what should be one of socialism's chief assets."

It was good advice in times even more trying than ours and it is needed and followed by all who know that a future for socialism must be constructed by the methods and through the means afforded by parliamentary democracy at local and national level. There is no superior, more satisfactory or more sure course.

Equality

Equality stands alongside freedom and democracy in the vocabulary and values of socialism. Yet it is not of the same order. Equality is possibly the most problematic of all values insofar as it is not an absolute objective, but, rather, an implication and a means towards achieving freedom and democracy. Equality is not built or secured, as some would believe, on envy. It is, indeed, the very opposite. It is implicit in fellowship and provides the basis for community. Yet it, too, has been distorted and associated with a tolerance — indeed a pursuit — of mediocrity and uniformity.

How absurd that it should be. Socialism *celebrates* diversity. It believes in the flowering of all talents, the elevation of all individuals. This does not mean a romantic belief that everyone can be *made* equal. It does not mean uniformity of human beings or anything so socially repulsive; it does not mean accepting that all human beings are equal in ability or anything so

biologically preposterous; and it does not mean believing that there can be mathematical parity of incomes or anything so economically impractical. But it does mean that those institutions and influences which protect, reward and perpetuate those inequalities which are *not* natural and *not* earned must be removed. And it does mean that as a conscious purpose of policy every means should be exploited to establish an equal right for individuals to realise and fulfil their capabilities, regardless of background, sex or race. But — despite the welfare state — the key pillars of social and economic inequality remain intact. While the very rich have lost some of their riches to the less rich, over time, the poor have hardly profited proportionately. That has been true through the history of the welfare state.

In the past six years, however, the dispossessing of the dispossessed has been intensified. In that time there has been a massive redistribution from poor to rich

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through the tax system while the poor have been made poorer as the benefit floor has been dug away from under their feet. At the same time, occupational benefits, tax subsidies and privatisation create high walls between classes which reduce community of interest and commitment to the welfare state. The sources and the exercise of economic power may have become more obscure but they are no less powerful. Occupational and social class divisions may seem blurred, but inequalities persist and they derive from income, occupation, status and region. And within these groups there are, as Alex Nove has described it, "different kinds of lifetimes".

Inequalities of income are reflected in inequalities of power and status. We have at the moment a society which wilfully

wastes its material and human resources; where "equality" is derided and yet where children in different regions, different towns, different families, different schools, stand different chances of health, education, employment and even life and death. To those who sneer at equality as a useful or relevant objective, I have to say "Look around you!!". Look at the million young people under 25 on the dole; at the evidence of increased mortality and morbidity rates for those at the bottom end of the social scale; at the difficulties faced by women and people from ethnic minority groups in finding and keeping well-paid jobs. I would also say to those who complacently see equality as something automatically consequent upon our institutions — our schools or the health service — listen to the evidence that disproves the idea that left to themselves without the stimulus of constant policies of equality our present institutions and past policies can serve the interests of all the people more effectively. I would also say — look at the vulnerability of children born in our inner cities, to families on the dole, in ill-health, in multiple disadvantage, and listen to those who know tell us that these disadvantages are transferred across generations. And then ask the question — have we achieved equality? Should we abandon it — or apologise for it as an objective? Should we succumb to the argument that the constructive efforts for equality are "social engineering" when we know that deprivation, poverty, the ignoring of talent, the failure to treat disease are themselves the very worst forms of social engineering that have constructed a society which is undereducated, depressed and divided?

The problem is not with our objectives, but with the institutions and patterns of provision, produced by past policies. Policies for positive discrimination in education, policies designed to achieve equal access, have been insufficient, inconsistent and uncoordinated. The problems of our inner cities grow worse because our strategies have been incomplete, ill-thought out, and — usually —

externally imposed by people who will not have to live with the consequences. Equally seriously, we have failed to tackle the roots of real inequality — the bastions of privilege built into our social and economic institutions and perpetuated in our education system. Unless we tackle these problems at source we will continue to accept a system based on fundamental inequality, hoping that the occasional escape will prove that the system is not without some virtue.

We do understand now that we must act across a broad front. Better schools alone cannot spring children out of poverty; better housing will not solve all social problems; a free health service does not guarantee an equal chance that all children will thrive; more police will not eradicate crime or by themselves reduce the insecurity which pervades whole districts. Indeed, we understand better than ever the inadequacies of our institutions. Equality of opportunity must inform all policies, and must be asserted, not simply through statutes and limited financial gestures, but directed through a range of policies which all have the explicit aim of helping people to lift themselves out of poverty of resources and poverty of aspirations whether they endure multiple disadvantage in our most deprived communities or carry an extra burden of disadvantage because they are black or are among those — the majority — who because they are women and girls are still not afforded access or encouragement on the same basis as boys and men.

Freedom, democracy and equality are values which, separately, can belong to other philosophies and applied for other ends. What cannot be borrowed, however, is that economic and social analysis which democratic socialism brings to the structural economic and social problems of capitalism, and the commitment to radical but realistic methods and objectives which are not only part of our historical tradition and our philosophical apparatus, but which inform our view of what democratic society is, and could be.

Social Democracy

Social democracy knows nothing of this. It brings neither serious analysis nor prescription in policy. And at the same time, the means and ends of democratic socialism are very different from the superficially radical, but ultimately destructive and reactionary tactics and strategy of the

The essence of social democracy is that it is not concerned with the structure of property ownership, or the transfer of economic power; rather, it is defined in terms not of social *change*, but social *relief*; not of eradicating inequality, but relieving its most gross manifestations.

ultra-left. In the present, as in the past, democratic socialists will fight on both fronts.

The essence of social democracy is that it is not concerned with the structure of property ownership, or the transfer of economic power; that it is defined in terms not of social *change*, but social *relief*; not of eradicating inequality, but relieving its most gross manifestations. Always charity, never parity. In short, that is sufficient "to erode by inches the conditions which produce avoidable suffering" without confronting the system which creates distress in the first place. During the 1950s that complacency seemed to some to be credible. That short and misused period of boom, of near-full employment, increases in production and consumer spending, and a bi-partisan support for the central decencies of the welfare state engendered the view that with a little modification here and there the economy would continue to grow, and all choices would be almost painless, matters of degree rather than substantial principle. Growth itself, it was assumed, would eradicate economic and social inequality and the market would actually

promote welfare as it profited from the stability sustained by advancing affluence. When that climate changed and the political consensus appeared to move to the right, so too did the social democrats. They gave up on equality which they had previously espoused as the main credential of their "radicalism" and because they content themselves with describing ends without committing means they gave up on liberty too, except as a desirable and decorative alternative to totalitarianism.

For some it was a sad descent to lower common denominators with conservatism. For others it was merely the public expression of their private contempt for a democratic socialist movement which had given them everything they possessed. Some thought it was a lunge in the direction of modern times. Others knew that it was a step backwards into the shadow of Mrs Thatcher — and they took the step gladly.

Now they have a mathematical and therefore a political significance in the division of the anti-Conservative vote. They have a certain appeal, too. It is among the people who believe that the problems of our society and our economy are so monstrous that there is no answer in policies and that the search must be for an administration of vaguely defined goodwill that will be as benign as circumstances allow. Such attitudes are understandable but profoundly wrong since as the record shows the benign would quickly be as malevolent as necessary for the sake of securing political opportunity. The absence of policy is therefore not evidence of responsiveness or realism. It is a political pig in a poke. And as in all previous cases any peacetime government formed by "the best men of all parties" would, in Aneurin Bevan's felicitous phrase, "end up in the Tory knackery".

Democratic Centralism

Such a fate does not await the ultra-left — although by their antics and with the exaggerated reports of their influence

they can, of course, be of assistance to the Conservative Party.

The recently exposed frolics of the Workers Revolutionary Party generate some amusement, but the publicity reminds us that their form of organisation is exactly similar to all the other ultra groups — including those which have battened on the Labour Party in the past and those which continue to do so. In a previous incarnation the WRP was — as the Socialist Labour League — an entryist organisation. Common to such groupings and their system of organisation — the so-called “democratic centralism” which employs the most undemocratic methods to stifle dissent in their organisations — is the secretive network by which they control their own membership when it is operating within another party.

All these “democratic centralist” groups follow a theory of “vanguardism”. They are the self-appointed elite who pose themselves to spring into the leadership of the working class movement at the very moment of the downfall of capitalism, which all foretell with the same frequency and accuracy as the exotic religious sects which forecast the end of the world. Ninety years ago they were advised by Frederick Engels that “the time of political surprises, of the revolutions of small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses” was “at an end” and the task was “to work for an uninterrupted increase in votes” and “carry on a slow propaganda of Parliamentary activity”. Still they persist. Some exist as separate jargon-swapping cliques at the margins of politics. Others, in the knowledge that they could never gain political currency or popularity, opt for a parasitical life inside the mass labour movement.

The strategy of entering or using the mass Party without publicly proclaiming ideological methods and motives requires a particular kind of dishonesty. It involves systematically abusing the open and tolerant character of the Labour Party and having contempt for the purposes and the people of the mass party. But since — in their view — the ends are held to justify

the means, a neat and nasty tactic called “revolutionary truth” provides a licence to lie about their organisation, their funding and their aims. That is essential to them for they could hardly acknowledge that they have a “programme, principles and policy” that is not only distinctive and separate from that of the Labour Party but directly hostile to the Party’s democratic socialist objects as defined in Clause IV of the Constitution. Yes, Clause IV — which

The strategy of entering or using the mass Party without publicly proclaiming ideological methods and motives requires a particular kind of dishonesty.

makes clear the Party’s commitment to Parliament, to co-operation with the trade unions allied with but independent of the Party, to common ownership subject to “popular” and not Party control, and to “emancipation” and not the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In these and other respects the objects of the Party are directly opposed to those who take their politics from Lenin and Trotsky, had they but the integrity to openly admit it. Still, there is formally nothing in that Party constitution or in the conventions of the Party which actually denies membership to people simply because they hold particular opinions. The prohibition relates to organisations which have a programme, principles and policy. And what makes the “democratic centralists” different in nature from others who may hold distinctive ideologies in the Labour Party is the fact that for them ideology is inseparable from organisation. Leninists and Trotskyists consider that the “vanguard” is essential to the form of political change which they want to bring about. Such groups cannot follow their ideology without having a secretive, disciplined organisation and an organisation of that form is incompatible with membership of the Labour Party.

It is for that reason that the Militant Tendency has no place in the Labour Party. It is too dishonest to acknowledge that it has membership, too cowardly to organise and operate as a separate Party, too contemptuous of the people that it calls "comrades" to tell them the truth. It abuses the trust and exploits the libertarian instincts of the Labour Party. It makes a deliberate practice of campaigning for unattainable objectives and cynically encourages expectations — especially among the young — of "guarantees" of work and income. It employs "impossibilism" as a calculated means of setting unachievable demands in order to charge Party lay officials, local councillors, trades unionists and anyone else who takes responsible office in the movement with timidity or "betrayal" when those demands are not realised.

The Labour Party, because of its worthwhile traditions of breadth and openness and tolerance, is not readily equipped to deal with such political perversity. The Party was not anxious to expend time and energy on overwhelming the "democratic centralists" even when it has good cause to

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be deeply antagonistic towards them. But because in organisation and purpose, in caucusing and conniving, the Militant Tendency eventually exhausted even the extensive patience of the Labour Party, action was needed and action was taken. Firstly, when there is clear proof that someone is formally and personally committed to the Tendency organisation they can be and are put out of the Labour Party. Secondly — and in many ways more

importantly — when the Party becomes acquainted with the methods, motives, ideological position and organisational unscrupulousness of Militant, the Tendency is engaged and defeated by argument and by numbers.

Democratic centralists . . . are the self-appointed elite who pose themselves to spring into the leadership of the working class movement at the very moment of the downfall of capitalism . . .

By this combination of means those who try to undermine our democratic socialist methods and beliefs will be overcome and in the process we shall win over those who are superficially attracted by the simplistic slogans and strategies of the sect, just as we have won over many in the past. To some in the Labour Party the action required to defeat Militant appears to be a distasteful over-reaction to a group which is, after all, small in number and has no influence whatsoever on the decisions and direction of the Party. To them I say that democracy must always defend itself and that democratic socialists cannot permit their Party to be defaced by a secretive group whose whole purpose is to contradict the values, feed off the vitality of and disgrace the reputation of the Labour Party.

Conclusion

Tawney described socialism as:-

"A community of responsible men and women, working without fear in comradeship for common ends, all of whom can grow to their full stature, develop to their upmost limits the ranging capacity with which nature has endowed them."

The state as community — the state as an enabling power — the idea of collective and purposive action — this is not some-

thing that either Marxists or monetarists can comprehend. But it can work. Freedom, justice and equality are meaningless as abstractions. As I have suggested, they encompass contradictions and complexity. They can only be translated into living reality through the interaction of men, women and children in the everyday world which for most of us means the neighbourhood, region or country in which we live. Diagnosis and prescription is only a starting point. The next two years will prove, as the Webbs might have said themselves, that "there is no substitute for hard work". We must revive our faith and

energy in that public process of education which worked in 1945, building on the experience, and on the altruism and commonsense of the people of this country.

We must tap this imagination and those civic virtues which are in effect, socialism in action — mutual care and mutual aid. It is not sufficient to offer programmes and plans; we must offer vision as well as theory; and as Tawney said in 1945 "put the nation on its mettle". I have no doubt the country is willing and ready to respond.

Conclusion

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The Future of Socialism

Neil Kinnock argues that the aim of democratic socialism is individual freedom protected by equality and democracy. The state has an essential role to play in underpinning freedom and equality through collective provision for individual purposes. And parliamentary democracy is the essential implement for democratic socialism offering the most dependable means for securing and sustaining progress.

However, if Labour is to form a government, it must relate to the modern working classes whose support it needs. These people owe upward social mobility, increased expectations and extended horizons largely to the opportunities afforded to them by the labour movement. And, Neil Kinnock believes, they can be convinced of the desirability and practicality of democratic socialism provided that Labour adjusts its attitudes and presentation to the new circumstances.

Democratic socialism is under attack from the right and the left. On the right, social democracy is unconcerned with eradicating inequality and only relieves its grosser manifestations. On the left, democratic centralists appoint themselves leaders of the masses and use the most dishonest methods to achieve their ends through the Labour Party. Socialism can only be built, he concludes if the Labour Party builds on the experience, the altruism and the commonsense of the people of this country whilst tapping the virtues which are in effect socialism in action, mutual care and mutual aid.

This pamphlet is the text of Neil Kinnock's Fabian Autumn Lecture on *The Future of Socialism* delivered on 12 November 1985.

Fabian Society

The Fabian Society exists to further socialist education and research. Since 1884 it has enrolled thoughtful socialists who wish to discuss the essential questions of democratic socialism and relate them to practical plans for building socialism in a changing world. Beyond this the Society has no collective policy. It is affiliated to the Labour Party. Anyone who is not ineligible for membership of the Labour Party is eligible for full membership; others may become associate members. For membership and publications details, write to: John Willman, General Secretary, Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1H 9BN.

