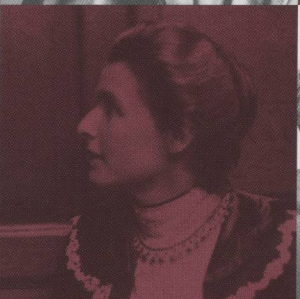
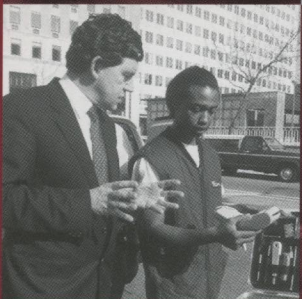
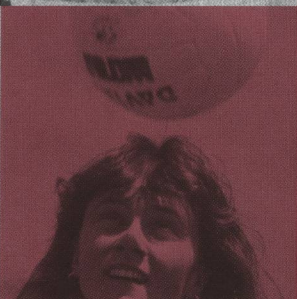
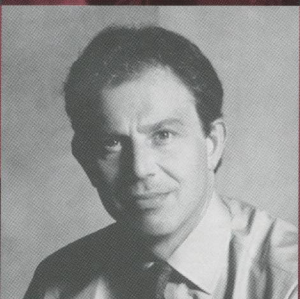
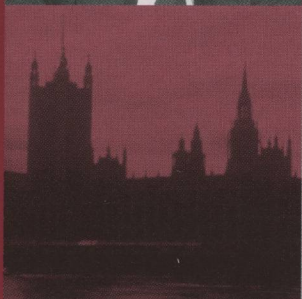
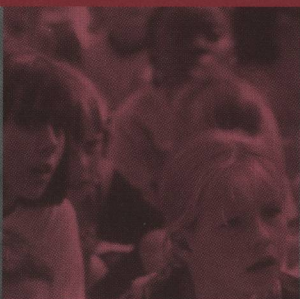
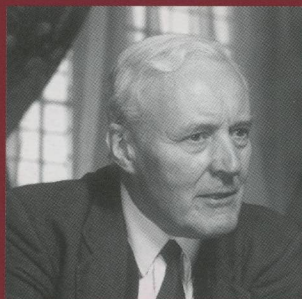


# *The Case* for socialism



**YOUNG  
FABIANS**

New Labour and the 'S-word'

by Paul Richards  
with a foreword by Rt Hon Tony Blair MP

# YOUNG FABIANS

The Young Fabians are the under 31 year olds of the Fabian Society, Britain's leading centre-left think tank. The Fabian Society was founded in 1884. The Young Fabians were founded in 1960 and are the first think tank to be run entirely by and for young people.

The Young Fabians seek to encourage debate and political education amongst members and within the wider Labour movement. Since our foundation in 1960, our members have included many Labour MPs, as well as leading academics, journalists and others. We currently have approximately 1000 members.

We publish pamphlets, a regular quarterly journal, *Anticipations*, with articles by members and external guest writers. We operate an internet discussion and information site at [www.fabian-society.org.uk/yf](http://www.fabian-society.org.uk/yf). We also organise evening seminars, events and weekend conferences around the UK on policy issues. Our regional groups in Scotland, the North and London and University groups also produce their own publications and organise their own events.

Membership of the Young Fabians is open to anyone under the age of 31 who is eligible to join the Labour Party and includes full membership of the Fabian Society. For more information please contact **The Young Fabians, c/o Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1H 9BN** or via [yf@fabian-society.org.uk](mailto:yf@fabian-society.org.uk)

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New **Labour** and the '**S-word**'

by

Paul Richards

*with a foreword by Rt Hon Tony Blair MP*

YOUNG  
FABIANS

The Young Fabians  
C/o The Fabian Society  
11 Dartmouth Street  
London  
SW1H 9BN

Tel: 020 7227 4900

Fax: 020 976 7153

Website: [www.fabian-society.org.uk](http://www.fabian-society.org.uk)

Email: [yf@fabian-society.org.uk](mailto:yf@fabian-society.org.uk) or [info@fabian-society.org.uk](mailto:info@fabian-society.org.uk)

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## NOTE ON AUTHOR

Paul Richards serves on the executive of the Fabian Society. He is Labour's prospective parliamentary candidate for Lewes.

He has been a member of the Labour Party since 1986, and has worked for Labour at the House of Commons and at party headquarters. Paul Richards was Labour's candidate in Billericay at the 1997 General Election, and has been a local government candidate twice.

He is author of '*Long to Reign Over Us?*' (1996), '*Be Your Own Spin Doctor*' (1998), and '*Is the Party Over? New Labour and the Politics of Participation*' (2000), and contributor to '*The Modernisers' Dilemma*' (1998) and '*Radicals and Reformers – One Hundred Years of Fabian Socialism*' (2000).

“Most are accepters, born and bred to harness,  
And take things as they come,  
But some refusing harness and more who are refused it  
Would pray that another and a better Kingdom come.  
Which now is sketched in the air or travestied in slogans  
Written in chalk or tar on stucco or plaster board  
But in time may find its body in men's bodies,  
Its law and order in their heart's accord,  
Where skill will no longer languish nor energy be trammelled  
To competition and graft  
Exploited in subservience but not allegiance  
To an utterly lost and daft  
System that gives as few at fancy prices  
Their fancy lives  
While ninety-nine in the hundred who never attend the banquet  
Must wash the grease of ages off the knives.”

From *Autumn Journal*, Louis MacNeice

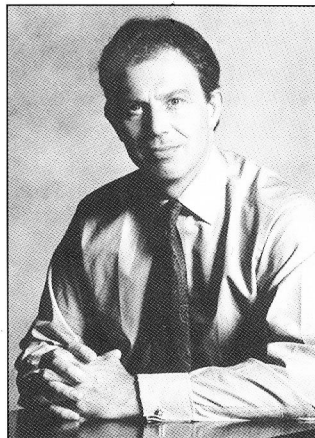
for Sarah

**FOREWORD by Rt Hon Tony Blair MP**

“Political education and discussion is vital to the renewal of progressive politics.

The Young Fabians have an important role to play.

There are few bigger questions than the meaning and future of socialism, and I hope that this pamphlet provides the basis for lively and fruitful discussion.”



**NOTE from Derek Hodgson, General Secretary, **

The CWU is pleased to sponsor this Young Fabian pamphlet on “The Case for Socialism” as a contribution to the wider “heartlands” debate within the Labour Party.

My Union has a long and proud record in promoting political debate and education throughout the labour movement. We hope that the ideas generated in the following pages will stimulate and provoke constructive argument over placing Labour’s traditional values in a modern setting.”



## INTRODUCTION

As the current Chair of the Young Fabians, the under 31 year olds of the Fabian Society, I welcome this pamphlet by Paul Richards, which acts as a timely trigger for the challenges facing the centre-left and its ideology in the 21st Century.

The debate around the meaning and case for socialism has for too long been polarised by certain socialist “camps”, as if the answers have all been found and are simply there for newcomers to politics and development of political philosophy on the centre-left to learn and to accept.

I became convinced of the need for a pamphlet such as this some years ago, when working in my constituency Labour Party with first time voters. I saw the difficulty of many to understand what the political parties stand for, and how to decide which to align with. There are few documents that are easily accessible that debate the principles and philosophy behind policy, to enhance real political understanding that can grow over a lifetime.

There are certainly as many definitions of socialism as there are socialists. The important challenge is to allow them to have equal validity, within a wider framework that understands the solid underlying principles of socialism. There is a need to reclaim the term socialism from simply being a symbol of an outdated ideology, that has had its place but from which we have moved on.

Socialism is about a journey, a social journey, and as Paul Richards says, it is a term we should use with pride. We should be able to use it for what it means to us rather than feeling, particularly as those just starting on our political journey, that we must study for years in order to become experts in the “real” definition of socialism, and only then be confident to call ourselves socialists.

The pamphlet seeks to trigger a debate about socialism in the 21st century, to celebrate the British ethical socialist tradition and to argue the case for socialism, today, a modern socialism which can deliver a stable economy, low inflation, a national minimum wage, and the necessary spending on public services. A socialism that has a human side, as Barbara Castle’s definition outlines, as well as an economic and political drive. It also argues that the Labour Government under Tony Blair has been true to the values of traditional British ethical socialism, standing tall in the tradition of Keir Hardie and Clement Attlee — with traditional values in an ever-changing world.

I hope it will inspire an interesting and informative, as well as inclusive debate on the philosophy of New Labour, for all those interested in thought development on the centre-left – whether Young Fabian members, students, trade union members or members of the general public, wanting to discuss and debate where we as a society are going, and the values we wish to take with us.

Finally, I'd like to thank the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Tony Blair MP for his support in our endeavours, to thank our sponsors, the Communication Workers Union (CWU), Giles Wright, Adrian Harvey and Rory Fisher at the Fabian Society, the Young Fabian executive, in particular Greg Rosen, Samantha Dowling, Chris Underwood and Ashton McGregor and the Young Fabians for helping to keep the debate open and accessible to all.

Seema Malhotra

*Chair, Young Fabians.*

## CHAPTER ONE: THE LONG JOURNEY



Writing a pamphlet on socialism during a Labour Government's first term may seem like an odd thing to do. Labour has enjoyed unprecedented popularity in the opinion polls for the majority of its term of office and a parliamentary majority of 180. Across Europe, there are socialist and social-democratic governments in power in 13 out of 15 European countries. Even across the Atlantic, it seems likely that the Democrats (not Socialist by any means, but progressive on a number of fronts) may win a third term in the White House in November 2000.



But Labour's electoral success is only the first step in transforming Britain and creating a socialist society. Winning elections is not the same as winning the battle of ideas. For Labour in Britain to succeed in its historic mission to create a fair society, to harness the forces of the market in the interests of the people, to defeat reaction, prejudice and conservatism, and to win a majority of the population, not parliament, over to socialism, then winning a General Election is only the first step on a long journey.

Socialism is of course more than just 'what Labour Governments do' as Herbert Morrison suggested. Labour Governments are capable of taking important strides towards socialism and making real and lasting changes to peoples' life chances, but they are also capable of making mistakes.

Without a clear basis in values, and an agreed, popular, and practical programme, Labour in office would be as rootless and buffeted by events as any Tory administration. The current Labour Government has already secured some significant 'early gains', from major and irreversible constitutional reform to the long-standing socialist demand of a national minimum wage and trade union rights. But there is much, much more to do along the journey to socialism.

Labour Governments are better than any of the alternatives. They must be defended and nurtured by those who support progressive politics. The leader of the Transport Workers Union Bill Morris once commented that ten minutes of Labour Government is preferable to ten years of the Tories.

Perversely, the natural inclination of some in the Labour Party is to work ceaselessly for a Labour Government, get one elected, and then mercilessly attack it for perceived failure and tardiness in delivering the New Jerusalem. The phenomenon is nothing new. In 1908, just eight years after the Labour Representation Committee was founded and just two years after they had changed their name to Labour Party, Ben Tillett MP had published a pamphlet entitled 'Is the Parliamentary Party a Failure?' (Somewhat prematurely he concluded 'yes').

Some socialists' attitude towards Labour in Government is sometimes like a gardener striving to get a delicate plant to take root and grow, and once the first leaves appear, taking a chain-saw to it.

This Fabian pamphlet is therefore written to support Labour in Government. Unlike so many previous attempts to explain and define socialism, this one is not written against a context of failure and defeat. For once, the chapter headings are not 'what went

wrong?’ or ‘where next for the Left?’ But victory in one election is never enough. Labour’s project relies on a sustained period in office to deliver lasting changes to our society and economy. A Labour Government which implements its manifesto then runs out of steam is no use to anyone. Without constant revision and re-thinking, the socialist project becomes a moribund and sectarian.

Labour should be proud of its record, not merely during the past three years, but during the past one hundred. Labour should also have the confidence to claim the ‘s-word’ — Socialism — as its own. Socialism is what distinguishes the Labour Party from its rivals, gives heart to its supporters, and what drives its actions in office. The Labour Party, its members and leaders, should reclaim, redefine and apply a new socialism for the new century with the same confidence and self-belief that inspired Labour’s pioneers at the party’s foundation.

Because socialism is not a creed or dogma, but instead is a mental framework and series of political tactics, there are as many socialisms as there are socialists.

I do not claim any special insights or expertise. I have read and discussed Marx, Gramsci, Tawney, Orwell, Durbin, Crosland and the rest with friends and comrades, attended endless seminars, listened to and learnt from contemporary politicians from Tony Benn to Tony Blair, and tested their insights against the common sense and practical inquiry of the British public as a Labour campaigner.

In the Labour movement in all parts of the country, I have met men and women who have worked, in some cases for many decades, in pursuit of Labour values and Labour electoral victories. They strive tirelessly, and all too often thanklessly, without seeking advancement or celebrity, to civilise our world. It is perhaps those people who can provide the greatest influence and inspiration of all.

Occasionally in political life there comes a moment which puts the endless hard work in perspective and makes it all worthwhile. Anyone present at the Labour Party conference in Brighton in 2000 will remember the address by Nelson Mandela as one such moment. Nelson Mandela looked out at the packed hall of Labour members and said: ‘Around the world there are good men and women who are worthy candidates for immortality. Many of those good men and women are to be found in the British Labour Party’. His words could easily apply to the millions of men and women around the world who have fought for a better life for all throughout the history of civilisation.

My socialism, described in this pamphlet, is no more ‘correct’ than that of any other

thinking member of the Labour Party. I have always shared the view of Tony Benn that *'many books have been written about socialism, and some have had a profound influence on those who have read them. But the most important socialist teacher of all is experience.'*

As someone actively involved in recruiting new members of the Labour Party, I have long been aware that there is no one single publication which can answer a potential supporter's questions about the fundamentals of Labour's values. There are plenty of Labour Party policy documents to answer specific policy points, but nothing which looks behind the policies to the values which guide them. A sustained course of study of the classic socialist texts, pamphlets and speeches is something few would have the time or inclination to engage in. So this pamphlet is written to fill the gap, and provide a useful starter for anyone intrigued to know more about Labour's philosophical roots and the values of socialism.

I hope that this pamphlet can also be used to provoke discussion amongst socialists – especially Fabians. By going back to basics on the fundamentals, exploring differences, and rethinking and re-evaluating our views, we shore up our beliefs and make them stronger. The Labour Movement will only succeed if it can win the battle of ideas — and to win that battle, we need to be sure of our ground. More importantly I hope the arguments presented here will persuade interested parties that socialism is a viable, living alternative to the injustices and inefficiencies of Conservative politics and economics, and provoke them into joining the Labour Party.

The journey towards socialism is a long one, fraught with dangers and potential diversions, but a journey well worth making.

## CHAPTER TWO: DEFINING SOCIALISM



JOHN HARRIS

**F**ew political terms have been as used and abused as the term “socialism.”

For some it conjures images of revolutionary terror, of firing squads and death camps, of grey, drab industrial cityscapes with downtrodden factory workers working to Five Year Plans.

For others it is guiding principle for a lifetime of public service and campaigning, the political tag which best describes a set of values which embody all that is noble and

decent in human nature. From the mouths of some, socialism is spat out as an insult, for others the word expresses the hope for the future of humanity.

As with all contested concepts, socialism can mean many different things to different people. This pamphlet does not seek to offer a comparison of different systems which have been described as “socialisms” — from Marxism, Mao-ism, Leninism, Trotskyism, to hundreds of other –isms. Others have done that far better than I could manage within the confines offered by a Young Fabian pamphlet.

This pamphlet is about British democratic socialism, in the form accepted and practised by the only mass socialist political party in Britain, the Labour Party. Whilst sharing features in common with variants of socialism around the world, and other types of politics such as those of the New Democrats in the USA, British democratic socialism is unique in key ways, both in its historical lineage, and its modern applications. Socialism, in the British ethical tradition, is not some watered-down version of some other socialism; nor is it a halfway point between capitalism and communism.

It draws on a rich tradition of radicalism and dissent, on the writings, songs and literature of some of the most famous creative talents Britain has produced, on the theories and polemics of great thinkers and politicians, and on the lives of countless, nameless millions dedicated to political struggle and activity, often in unfavourable or even dangerous circumstances.

There is no one democratic socialist text: no blueprint or credo. Ideological purity can be best left to the free-market Right or religious cults. People arrive at socialist conclusions by a variety of routes: from academic study of political theory, from direct personal experience of poverty, disadvantage or struggle, from family tradition, upbringing, from reasons of compassion or altruism or anger at the plight of others, or from a combination of all these and more. The influences on our thinking can be varied and myriad, from the Bible to Billy Bragg. For each of us it is a personal journey, which continues to be made throughout our lives.

No one socialist believes exactly the same as another. To paraphrase George Bernard Shaw, the moment one socialist opens his mouth, some other socialist will disagree with them. Socialists do not believe in uniformity of thought or blind obedience to a monolithic creed. The British socialist tradition is rich and varied, drawing on many different themes and strands, and that diversity gives it great strength and durability. The Labour Party is, in Harold Wilson’s phrase, a “Broad Church”.

## WHAT DO SOCIALISTS BELIEVE?

### **Socialists believe in equal worth**

At the heart of socialism lies a very simple truth – that all human beings have equal worth. Although different people have different aptitudes and interests – some may excel at music or football, others at maths or art – we are all equally valuable members of the human race. Where inequality and injustice prevent human development, then socialists seek redress. A socialist is one on the side of the underdog.

### **Socialism is driven by values**

Socialism as a political force is driven by values. The famous trinity of socialist values, which formed the slogan of the French Revolution, is '*liberty, equality, fraternity*' (discussed in detail later). These values are central to the formulation of political strategies and policies, and inform the attitudes and actions of individual socialists. Socialists should not be dogmatic, but should not be simply pragmatic either. By the application of values, political action can be measured and tested.

### **Socialists celebrate diversity**

Socialists believe in a diverse culture and respect cultural and racial differences. We want individuals to flourish within a strong community, regardless of their background or aptitudes. Uniformity, 'leveling-down', and the politics of the lowest common denominator have no place in modern socialist thinking. We want an active, not an over-arching state, which allows individual talents, aptitudes and entrepreneurialism to thrive.

### **Socialists are optimists**

Socialists believe that human beings are capable of mastering their destiny, and moving the human race forward in a progressive direction. We reject a superstitious belief in the unseen hand of market forces or a malign fate which condemns humankind to poverty and misery. We are optimistic about the future, and that as a world community we have the creative abilities and common sense to create a better future. Socialists reject and battle against the notion, often promulgated by Conservatives, that things are meant to be as they are, that nothing will ever change, or that no one person can make a difference.

### **Socialists are do-ers not talkers**

There's more to being a socialist than simply saying you are one. Self-definition no more makes a socialist than the man in the asylum to claims to be Napoleon. The socialist is one who believes in action, not merely words. Given the choice between



taking responsibility and power, or protesting from the side-lines, the socialist chooses to get stuck in. That is why socialists are active as councillors, teachers, school governors, magistrates, on health boards, as trade union officials, in business, as charity and voluntary workers, as elected representatives and as party activists. As Keir Hardie said '*socialism does not come by shouting*'.

### **Socialists are realists as well as visionaries**

The socialist tradition is rich with visions of Utopia. William Morris's *News from Nowhere* stands as the archetype of the genre. But socialism is about more than visions; it is about the practical steps to get there. The transition to socialism is like walking towards the horizon: no matter how long the journey, you never arrive. It is the journey that matters, not the destination.

As the German socialist Eduard Bernstein said: '*The movement is everything – and by movement I mean both the general movement of society ie social progress, and the political and economic agitation and organisation to bring about this progress.*'

Socialism is all around us. You don't need to read a textbook to see the practical application of socialist values. The hospitals of the NHS, the open spaces created by the National Parks Act, the system of education for all, equal pay for women, the Open University, the national minimum wage, decent social housing, race relations legislation, and a thousand other improvements and ameliorations are tribute to the work of Labour Governments and Labour councils. Of course, there are still terrible inequalities and poverty in Britain and around the world which cry out for change, and Labour seeks to make those changes. Socialists seek to move as far and fast as objective circumstances and the will of the electorate allow.

### **Evolution not revolution**

Some believe that the only way to create a socialist society is through a political and social revolution, such as that of Russia in 1917. However, the British socialist tradition, rooted in parliamentary democracy and democratic institutions, has rejected revolution as a viable strategy. That small number of British Marxists who claim the collapse of capitalism is around the corner have been waiting in vain. Like Godot, the revolution is always on the way, but never actually arrives.

The contribution of the early Fabians, especially Beatrice and Sidney Webb, was to show how socialism could be an evolutionary process, based on steady social progress and step-by-step advance. The Fabians' confidence led Sidney Webb to coin the phrase '*the inevitability of gradualness*'. The lesson of the twentieth century is surely that

progress is not inevitable, but the point about evolution not revolution is well made. The approach is well expressed in the saying '*it is better to light a candle than curse the dark*'.

Because democratic socialists in Britain have believed in this approach, their contribution to improving the lives of countless men and women has been immense, while the contribution of those who claim to be 'more socialist', such as the Trotskyist groups active around the universities and the other various splinters and factions on the ultra-left, has been absolutely nothing at all.

## SOCIALISTS **AND THE REVISIONIST METHOD**

'Revisionism' is the political method whereby socialists ensure that the policies they espouse reflect the times they live in. While values remain constant, the ways in which they are expressed through practical action must be constantly revised and updated. Policies must be tested against the practical tests of what works and what people want. Without this constant scrutiny, debate and revision, the Labour Party would still be campaigning on an end to the Boer War, Temperance, and Votes for Women.

An issue like crime, which is today rightly at the top of the political agenda, was irrelevant to previous Labour Governments. The issue did not even merit a line in Labour's 1945 manifesto. Labour ignored the issue at its peril, for although the rising crime rate was of direct concern to Labour's 'core supporters' on the council estates and run-down inner cities and should have provoked serious socialist inquiry and policy formulation, it was the Tories who expropriated the 'law and order' issue.

The irony of a Conservative Party in the 1980s positioning itself as in favour of law and order, whilst simultaneously creating conditions of social fragmentation and lawlessness, was lost along the way. It was not until Tony Blair, as Shadow Home Secretary, addressed the issue head-on from a socialist perspective, that the Labour Party could speak with credibility on the issue, and regain peoples' trust as the party to fight crime.

Take another issue – the environment. Environmentalism in its broadest sense – access to clean and air, an open countryside, unadulterated food – has been part of the Labour movement's agenda since its beginnings. But the modern environmental agenda of climate control and world-wide environmental protection would have been wholly alien to Clement Attlee or Harold Wilson. Yet today, the need to promote environmental sustainability lies at the heart of socialist policy. As conditions change, so socialism

must change to meet new demands.

The earliest revisionist was Eduard Bernstein who published his *Evolutionary Socialism* in 1899 after studying with the Fabians in London. In this major work, Bernstein demolished the Marxist case point by point. He showed that the Marxist predictions of economic collapse and a working-class revolution were becoming more unlikely as the franchise extended and trade unions won small but important improvements. Bernstein showed that the tactics, policies, language, tone and appearance of socialism all change as societies change, and opened socialism to revision in the future. In 1956 the Labour cabinet minister Tony Crosland published *The Future of Socialism* which again sought to update socialist thinking.

Crosland wrote: '*traditional socialism was largely concerned with the evils of traditional capitalism, and with the need for its overthrow. But today traditional capitalism has been reformed and modified almost out of existence, and it is with a quite different form of society that socialists must now concern themselves.*'

In the 1980s Neil Kinnock led the party through a tough period of revisionism – culminating in the *Policy Review*, and laid the ground for further modernisation under John Smith and Tony Blair. By creating a debate around socialist fundamentals and redrafting Clause IV of the party's constitution Tony Blair marked the early phase of his leadership as a committed revisionist. Labour's Clause IV appears at the end of this pamphlet. John Prescott neatly made the revisionist case with his call for '*traditional values in a modern setting*'.

Revisionism is a permanent process. Today, socialists, particularly young ones, should question and scrutinise today's political leaders and the policies they espouse. A political party of blind obedience and mindless loyalty can have no long-term future. If new ideas and better alternatives can be fashioned, they should be given the intellectual room to be tested. Socialism is bigger and more important than whoever happens to be the Leader of the Labour Party or in the Labour Cabinet at any one time. That does not mean loyalty is not a crucial element of the socialist movement — certainly voters do not tend to support divided or warring parties. Just as crucial is debate, dissent, discussion and the willingness of leaders to listen to new ideas.

Again, Tony Crosland makes the point: '*the means most suitable to one generation might be wholly irrelevant to the next.*'

### The confusion of ends and means

Where Labour has gone wrong in the past, it was because ends and means became confused. People became attached to particular policies, and substituted them for values or principles.

There needs to be a clear idea of the difference between socialist values, strategies and tactics, as Figure 1 sets out:

**Fig. 1: Socialist Values, Strategy and Tactics**

<b>values</b>	equality liberty community
<b>strategy</b>	full employment national health service lifelong learning and training sustainable environment, etc
<b>tactics/policies</b>	New Deal University for Industry NHS Direct Kyoto agreements, etc

The means to achieve a particular outcome at a particular time became synonymous with a cherished principle. When the policy became outmoded and some suggested its revision, others denounced them as traitors.

Take the example of council housing. Councils built and owned housing to secure a social end – the elimination of slums and to tackle the homelessness caused by wartime bombing. One of the main achievements of the 1924 Labour Government was John Wheatley’s Housing Act which saw the massive expansion in council houses and slum clearances. Municipal ownership of houses was not in itself socialist, but the ends it delivered was.

However, the huge post-war municipal estates and tower-blocks, optimistically named after Labour Cabinet Ministers like ‘Bevan Court’ and ‘Attlee Towers’ have thrown up their own social difficulties. Social exclusion, vandalism, drugs, noisy neighbours – all problems unforeseen by the city architects and town planners. So today, the answers lie

not in vast publicly-owned estates, but in creating viable local communities with a mixture of tenure, different size houses for families and single people, and access to local jobs, schools, shops, leisure and transport.

Today there is no more need for councils to own municipal houses than municipal public baths.

Another example might be nuclear weapons. Socialists want a nuclear-free world. One way of achieving it might be for a British Government to engage in ‘something-for-nothing’ unilateral disarmament. This presupposes that any British political party could ever be elected on such a platform, which history suggests is unlikely.

But another, more successful tactic might be negotiated, bi-lateral or multi-lateral disarmament, whereby twice or more numbers of weapons are disarmed. The end of a nuclear free world is better served by multi-lateral disarmament than unilateral disarmament. Inside the Labour Party from the 1950s to the 1980s, those advocating unilateralism denounced those advocating multi-lateralism as traitors to the cause of socialism. Yet, the ends being sought, *are the same*.

It is hard to imagine how much division this debate used to have in the Labour Party, and today the issue provokes none of the anger and bitterness of twenty years ago. For decades, the political debate about peace was scarred by those who believed that one particular way of disarming was a socialist principle, rather than simply a tactic.

Tony Crosland wrote: *“The worst source of confusion is the tendency to use the word [socialism] to describe, not a certain kind of society, or certain values which might be attributes of a society, but particular policies which are, or are thought to be, means of attaining this kind of society or realising these attributes.”*

### **Towards a definition of socialism**

There have been plenty of attempts to define British socialism in a single memorable phrase, but few have succeeded to stand the test of time.

Barbara Castle said: *‘socialism to me is the quality of human relationships’*, which works well because it focuses on the human element rather than economics or politics.

RH Tawney said *‘the socialist society envisaged is not a herd of tame, well-nourished animals, with wise keepers in command. It is 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 utmost limit the varying capacities with which nature has endowed them.'*

Those who call themselves socialist, and those who do not but are socialists nonetheless, all know what they mean by the word. For me, socialism is a system whereby men and women can live out their potential to the full, free from the fear of poverty, ignorance or disease, in a clean and safe world.

Academic Andrew Gamble characterised Thatcherism as '*the free economy and the strong state*'.

Modern socialism might be defined as the '*enterprise economy and the enabling state.*'



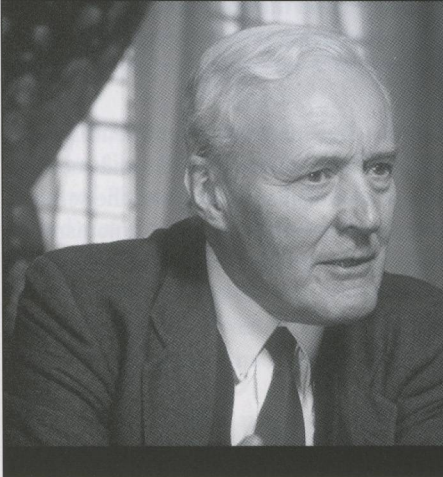
## CHAPTER THREE: INFLUENCES AND INSPIRATIONS

JOHN HARRIS



LONDON BOROUGH OF BETHNAL GREEN & BOW

PHILLIP WOLMUTH



JENNY MATTHEWS

Socialism is a product of the industrialism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but many of the values and themes are as old as human civilisation. Indeed, the instinct of individual humans to group together in societies, to protect the interests of all, is as old as the human race.

Whenever social progress has been made, from the ending of slavery, the abolition of child labour, the introduction of clean water and sanitation, safety in the workplace,

extension of the vote to working men, and then to women, reduction of working hours, to the introduction of old-age pensions, the National Health Service and National Minimum Wage, it has been because radicals and reformers have struggled for it against the supporters of the status quo and the vested interests who stood to benefit from it.

From the slave trade in the eighteenth century to poverty pay in the twentieth, there has been a radical prepared to stand up and oppose injustice, and a conservative ready to defend it. The arguments used by William Hague and Michael Portillo against the national minimum wage in our times will sound as outrageous as those deployed by their ideological antecedents against the abolition of child chimney sweeps, the factory acts, and votes for women in past ages. Today's Conservative Party stands in the same political tradition and philosophical lineage as the defenders of the slave trade and opponents of the Factory Acts. Echoes of the defenders of apartheid or those opposed to the equal pay act can be heard in the modern Tory Party under William Hague.

History is made up of struggles between the powerful and the powerless, and their allies, and the lesson of history is that nothing worth having is ever won without a fight.

Socialism in Britain is a heterogeneous philosophy, drawing on many influences and inspirations. The Labour Party was founded as a coalition of trade unions and socialist societies, including the Fabian Society, the Independent Labour Party, and the semi-marxist Social Democratic Federation (which soon departed). From trade unionism came the importance of solidarity and experience of the realities of the workplace. That role of the trade unions (of course themselves transformed since 1900) remains important to the modern Labour Party. Trade unions perform an invaluable role in a modern economy. Indeed a healthy trade union movement is an indicator of a vibrant economy.

The Fabian Society was founded in 1884 as a meeting place for socialists and platform for debate. It gave British socialism a distinctive 'evolutionary' ethos, which has distinguished it from its European counterparts. The Fabian Society has worked to provide a free flow of new ideas and policies throughout its history, and its local societies give space for socialist debate. The Co-operative Movement has played an important role in helping to fashion economic alternatives to the free-market, especially new models of ownership and control, and in giving consumers a voice.

Labour's onetime General Secretary Morgan Phillips said that socialism in Britain

owed “*more to Methodism than to Marx*”. If he had included other forms of non-conformist Christianity and Roman Catholicism, he would have been spot on. The influence of Christian thinking on British socialism is immense, and particularly on Labour’s central players, from the first leader Keir Hardie to the latest, Tony Blair.

Christian Socialism marries ethical concerns with practical political action. Unlike the Marxist conception of socialism as a ‘science’ and the belief in inexorable historical laws, Christian Socialism placed the emphasis on morality and individual activity. As Keir Hardie, converted to Christianity by George Lansbury in 1897, said ‘*The only way you can serve God is by serving mankind.*’ Christian Socialists argued that mid-Victorian poverty, preventable disease, and ignorance were moral outrages and that society as a whole should act to ameliorate them. It should not be preserve of philanthropy and individual action to combat poverty, but of the Churches and of wider society to help create a Christian community worthy of the name.

William Temple wrote that ‘*the primary principle of Christian ethics and Christian politics must be respect for every person simply as a person... consequently society must be so arranged as to give to every citizen the maximum opportunity for making deliberate choices and the best possible training for the use of that opportunity.*’

British socialism has been blessed with more than its fair share of theoreticians and propagandists. In the early years of the last century, Robert Tressell’s novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* was the best recruiting sergeant for socialism. RH Tawney helped create a moral and theoretical basis for British socialism in his many books including *Equality*, and other politician-thinkers can added to the canon, including Evan Durbin’s *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, Tony Crosland’s *The Future of Socialism*, Aneurin Bevan’s *In Place of Fear*, Roy Hattersley’s *Choose Freedom*, and Tony Wright’s *Socialisms*.

The Labour Party does not have a monopoly on good ideas, and socialists should always be ready to learn and listen from other progressive movements here and around the world. New political movements have often been in non-party form, such as the environmental campaigns and the liberation movements for women, black people and gays and lesbians. Socialism must learn from and adapt to new political and protest forces. Indeed, the Labour Government has not been adverse to working with those from other political parties who agree with certain progressive policies.

Finally a word on Marxism. Karl Marx was a brilliant social scientist. His investigations into the condition of society in the mid nineteenth century were filled with insights.

However as a predictor of social change, he was wrong in a number of key regards. He thought that capitalism would lead to ever-greater numbers of poor workers; in fact the opposite happened. He thought that capitalism would collapse; in fact it has survived and transformed itself over the past two hundred years. He predicted revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries like Britain, yet they happened only in less well-developed countries like Russia, China and Cuba, with terrible consequences.

Marx's view of society as 'two great camps', bourgeoisie and proletariat, also failed to materialise. Modern society is a myriad network of communities and interests, a multi-faceted, ever-changing kaleidoscope, but could not ever be characterised as simply two great camps. Where political movements claimed 'marxism' as their philosophy, the result has uniformly been a disaster. Instead of the state withering away, the state became all-powerful; instead of the spread of personal liberty and happiness, there were restrictions on free-speech and repression of dissent; instead of the abolition of classes, there have been the establishment of rigid oligarchies and party elites.

The Labour Party and British socialism has never been much influenced by Marxists. There has never been a large Communist Party in Britain, unlike other European countries. The collapse a decade ago of the system that bore his name ended any realistic belief that Marx or Marxism had anything to offer socialist thinking and action.

### **The Labour Party**

The expression of British socialism and the place where socialists breathe life into their theory is the Labour Party. The Labour Party was born on 27th February 1900, when representatives of all the socialist groups in Britain met with trade union leaders at the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street, London. The objective of the two-day conference, convened by the TUC, was to secure working class representation in parliament. Keir Hardie moved the second resolution, in favour of "*a distinct Labour Group in Parliament, who shall have their own Whips, and agree upon a policy*", which was passed amid cheering from the 120-odd delegates. Thus the Labour Representation Committee, the first 'New Labour', was born. Ramsey MacDonald was elected as Secretary, with Frederick Rogers of the Vellum Bookbinders union as Chairman.

The new Labour Party was spectacularly successful in its early years. After rebranding itself as 'The Labour Party' in 1906, it grew in strength at each General Election, and formed the first, short-lived, Labour Government in 1924. In 1929 Labour again formed a Government, but in the face of economic crisis Ramsay MacDonald led some of the party into an alliance with the Conservatives and formed the National Government, splitting the party in two. In 1940 Labour was invited into the wartime

coalition government, and with Germany defeated in war, Labour won the 1945 election with a huge majority. Despite winning more votes than the Conservatives, Labour lost the 1951 election and stayed out of power until 1964. In the 1950s, Labour was split on ideological lines, and stayed out of power for thirteen years. Harold Wilson led the party to four victories – 1964, 1966, and twice in 1974. In 1976, the Labour Government with Jim Callaghan as Prime Minister was reliant on the support of other parties, and lost in 1979, succumbing to a sustained period of division in the eighties. The Labour Party was out of office from 1979 until 1st May 1997.

The Labour Party's achievements in just one hundred years are impressive and myriad. Labour succeeded in supplanting the Liberal Party as the opposition to the Conservatives within years of being founded, and with a quarter of a century had formed a Government. Throughout the twentieth century Labour worked to civilise the century – arguing against slums, poverty, and slump. The enduring image of the pre-war slump was the Jarrow Crusade, with Labour MP Ellen Wilkinson at its head, highlighting the plight of the industrial north of England.

The party's role in 1940 helped save Britain from defeat by the Nazis, and the 1945 Government created a welfare state and social institutions such as the NHS which have endured for fifty years. Labour has always been a party of modernisation. 'New Labour' was created in 1900, by moderniser Keir Hardie. The NHS was an act of modernisation, by that great moderniser Nye Bevan.

By providing a voice for ordinary people, Labour has allowed great political leaders and local heroes to emerge and flourish. Through Acts of Parliament, and in local councils, Labour has improved the lives of millions and made Britain a better place to live. Through its internationalism, its work in Government to increase aid, and its solidarity with progressive forces the world over, Labour has helped millions in other countries.

This list of achievement is no mean feat when put in the context of Labour's poor electoral record. Labour has been in power for just 23 out of the 100 years of the century. Labour has never won a full consecutive term of office. The party has been capable of pointless diversions up ideological cul-de-sacs. In 1983, Labour nearly ceased to be a major political party. Labour has failed to attract more than a small percentage of its supporters into membership of the party. Sometimes one of the greatest obstacles to socialism is not the opposition of those who stand to lose their power, but instead the apathy of those who stand to benefit.

The Labour Party's historic mission has always been to become more than simply a

Party of Labour. In other words, Labour must reach beyond its core industrial and trade union base and reach new supporters from all classes and occupations in all parts of the country.

When Labour has lived up to Harold Wilson's aphorism that '*Labour is a moral crusade or it is nothing*' it has achieved greatness. But history tells us that Labour cannot take its support for granted, nor rest on its laurels, no matter how impressive.



## CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIALIST VALUES



MARTIN JENKINSON

Policies change, politicians come and go, but the values of socialism remain constant.

As Tony Wright puts it: *'policies are for changing, as circumstances and problems change. Values are for keeping, as the enduring reference point by which policy compasses are set.'*

The trinity of socialist values are Liberty, Equality, and Community.

### What do we mean by liberty?

Liberty means freedom. Liberty is a multi-layered concept which has been contested down the ages.

At its most simple, liberty is the freedom of the individual from constraint. Citizens should enjoy civil freedoms – the freedom from unfair imprisonment, the freedom to assemble with others, to hold political and religious views and to practice them, the freedom from threat of injury or death, and equal treatment under the law. Where these freedoms do not exist, as in repressive regimes like South Africa under apartheid, then socialists struggle to establish them. In Britain, the struggles to establish political freedoms have been fought by socialists and their progressive antecedents. The Chartist Movement fought for political freedom. The Suffragette Movement fought for votes for women. The trade unions struggled for representation in the work-place. Today socialists work to eradicate barriers to political freedom, such as Section 28, or the hereditary House of Lords.

But the granting of political freedoms, still an unrealised goal in many parts of the world, is not the end of the story. Liberty remains a theoretical concept if there are not the means to exercise it.

At the start of the nineteenth century the progressive thinkers like LT Hobhouse and JA Hobson were differentiating between classical liberalism and a more positive conception of liberty. This social liberalism took many of its adherents, like Christopher Addison and Hobson, into the Labour Party.

The point is made by the oft-used example of the poor man who wants to dine at the Ritz. No law forbids him — he is ‘free’ to do so — yet he cannot. Why? Because he does not have the economic means to do so. His theoretical liberty is made a mockery of by the reality of his situation. Take that example, and multiply it by the millions who are denied educational chances, or the chance to work, or the opportunity for leisure and personal fulfillment. While poverty or prejudice exists, there can be no real freedom. The freedom to walk unencumbered down the street is no consolation if you have to sleep on it.

So liberty must mean *realisable* freedoms, which means that the framework for their pursuit must be established first. Real freedom is not merely the right to exercise choice, but the means to do so — not just the freedom to do things, but the freedom *from* barriers and obstacles. This positive concept of liberty is what distinguishes socialists from those on the right who abuse the term. For all the talk of freedom, the policies of Margaret Thatcher removed freedom from millions, by creating unemployment, a thriving low-wage economy, homelessness, and a crime explosion which removed from many the freedom even to leave their homes after dark.

Labour's founder Keir Hardie believed that socialists were *'believers in freedom for the individual so long as it is consistent with equal freedom for others.'*

Clement Attlee, Labour's post-war Prime Minister stated that *'the aim of socialism is to give greater freedom to the individual. British socialists have never made an idol of the State, demanding that individuals be sacrificed to it.'*

Another Labour leader, John Smith, made a similar point forty years later: *'I believe that the Labour Party must be bold in demonstrating our commitment to enhance and extend individual freedom by building a society which is dynamic and responsive to the aspirations of all of our people.'*

If liberty can only be made real through an enabling society, then what values must be applied to create such a society? That question brings us the second socialist value, equality.

### **What do we mean by equality?**

The belief that all human beings are created equal to one another is one of the most powerful concepts in human history. Human societies have always been structured around inequalities of wealth, education, material possessions, or opportunities for fulfilment. Some societies, such as the United States of America have been based on actual slavery, others, like Britain and India on rigid class or caste structures, or unequal treatment of certain minority groups. All have put men above women. These inequalities have been justified by those at the top with explanations that inequality was 'the natural order of things', the will of God, or down to iron laws of society. Children in the last century were taught to sing *'The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, God made them high and lowly, and order'd their estate.'*

Modern day conservatives defend the class structure of Britain, and decry attempts to level the playing field.

Wherever inequality exists, radicals have argued the case for equality. The instincts of Christians, rationalists, humanists, and socialists converge around the idea that differences in life chances and opportunities are not down to unseen forces but unfair economic and social systems. Poverty, ignorance and disease are not symptoms of personal failings, lack of moral fortitude or individual weaknesses, but of unequal distribution of material and social goods.

In the fourteenth century the preacher John Ball stood on Blackheath in London and

asked: ‘*When Adam delv’d and Eve span, who was then the Gentleman?*’ Men and women driven by a desire for equality pursued the English and French revolutions. The Labour Party sees equality as the means whereby true liberty and community might be realised.

Socialists do not believe that equality means ‘sameness’, nor some future vision of drab, regimented uniformity. As Bernard Crick has written, the egalitarian ‘*need not get drawn into the parody argument which assumes exact equality of income and wealth: that is somebody else’s nightmare, not his dream.*’

By equality we do not mean equality of outcome, but we mean more than equality of opportunity. Equality means equal treatment, equal opportunity, equal respect and equal chances for all men and women, not merely in a realm of laws and regulation, but in every-day human interaction and discourse. Legislation can outlaw certain types of unequal treatment, for example the Race Relations Act, but the socialist seeks more than legal safeguards. The equality we seek might be thought of as ‘democratic equality’ – equality in practice, not just in theory.

An egalitarian society has at its heart the shared belief that we are all of equal worth, and that we should be treated as such. Class distinction and snobbery are social attitudes which can be eradicated. Socialists craft policies which create greater equality, seek to end social division, and bring people together in partnership and community.

### **What do we mean by community?**

The third part of the triumvirate of values is “fraternity”. However, because fraternity technically means brotherhood, the term “community” is a better way of expressing it.

Community means that human beings come together in joint enterprise and endeavour for the good of all. Humans are social animals – we live alongside one another and with one another. Co-existence and co-operation are the natural order of human civilisation. As William Morris said: “*Fellowship is life; lack of fellowship is death.*”

Margaret Thatcher believed there was no such thing as society, only individuals and their families. What a terrible indictment of Conservatism! But it explains so many of their divisive policies. Socialists believe that for the individual to thrive, it must be done so in the context of a strong community. We are not atomised individuals, in competition with one another, but instead are reliant on one another for mutual support. The trade unions are founded on this principle – that an injury to one is an injury to all. Young people learn the important lesson of inter-dependence and co-

operation within the family, which is why socialists strongly support the family as a building block of society. Communities depend on more than families, especially in a society where the family comes in all shapes and sizes. We see communities as more than geographical – they can be communities of interest as well, based on faith, profession, hobbies, or sport. Here the ideas of communitarianism and the writings of Amitai Etzioni and others have some relevance. Communitarians see communities as self-reliant, and self-policing, establishing their own rules and order, free from undue interference by the state.

Socialists do not seek to create mythology about the traditional working-class community of old. The old communities based around factory, mine or mill might have bred social solidarity and mutualism at one level, but were hostile to outsiders and those perceived to be ‘different’, for example Commonwealth immigrants. The front doors of the terraces of industrial Britain also concealed domestic violence and child abuse which ‘the community’ would refuse to acknowledge or tackle.

So the modern socialist ideal community is tolerant, open, egalitarian, and heterogeneous. It is based on the Christian teachings that we are our ‘brother’s keeper’ and that we should not walk by on the other side. It is a community an individual’s rights are balanced with his or her responsibilities to other people.

Socialists are not alone in holding one or more of these values, but it is the combination of the three together which form the socialist philosophy and mark socialism apart from liberalism or conservatism.



## CHAPTER FIVE: SOCIALIST PRACTICE



Just as a political programme devoid of values is sterile, so values without application to the real world are merely academic. Socialist values only have a purpose if they are married to socialist practice. In developing a political programme, socialists must ask three questions:

- Is it socialist?
- Is it popular?
- Will it work?

To answer the first, policies must be matched against values. To answer the second, policies must be crafted with the aim of having them accepted at an election (and not just at the Party conference). To answer the third, policies must be tried against real life. If the answer is no to any of these, socialists should go back to the drawing board.

RH Tawney wrote that *'the only sound test of a political doctrine is its practical effect on the lives of human beings.'* This section looks at how socialist values can be applied in a Britain entering the new century and how they should be tested against Tawney's stricture.

### **Socialists are democrats**

Socialists believe in democracy. We believe that in order to gain and exercise political power, we must win support from the electorate. As we have seen, part of the socialist heritage lies in the struggles for political reform in the nineteenth century, especially the Chartists and Suffragettes, and this strong attachment to democratic forms of governance guides modern socialists.

Even if there was another way (and the only other way is some form of putsch or revolution) it would be undesirable because a socialist society cannot be founded on a non-democratic basis. Socialism without democracy is like a body without oxygen.

During the long night of Communism in the Soviet Union, socialists in Britain would usually add the prefix 'democratic' to 'socialism' to ensure that people understood there was a distinction. But as has been proved in our own times, there is no such thing as 'undemocratic socialism' the phrase is tautologous. Undemocratic socialism leads inexorably to distorted, tyrannical regimes which misuse the word socialism to justify repression and oligarchy.

This belief in democracy has two practical applications for socialists. The first is the need to improve democratic systems and to oppose arbitrary and unelected power; and the second is that through the Labour Party socialists put forward candidates at every level of representation, from Parish Council to European Parliament. Our belief in democracy also leads socialists to work for a democratic Labour Party where all members are treated equally and the principle of one member one vote is sacrosanct.

Democracy is more than casting a vote every few years. Socialists explore new forms of democracy and participation, in the workplace, in industry, in local government and in education.

### **Socialism is about opportunity**

People want to get on and do well. They want to acquire wealth and knowledge, and create prosperity for their families. Socialism is the means whereby individuals can live out their full potential.

Because we believe in the inherent value of every human being, and that each of us is capable of huge achievements in a range of aptitudes, we believe in a society where individuals can flourish to the best of their ability. Opportunity comes through the creation of framework of positive rights; and through the removal of constraints and barriers. The opportunity to enjoy a good education, to have rewarding and fulfilling work, to participate in leisure activities, to live in a clean and safe environment are at the heart of Labour's programme.

But socialists concern themselves too with the removal of barriers and obstacles to opportunity. Opportunities are denied to those living in poverty, or in fear of crime, or in run-down neighbourhoods, or who face unfair treatment because of their sex, race, or beliefs.

Former Labour leader Neil Kinnock made one of the best expositions of the case for opportunity during the 1987 General Election. It is worth reminding ourselves of what he told his audience on 15 May in Llandudno:

*“Why am I the first Kinnock in a thousand generations to be able to get to university? Why is Glenys the first woman in her family in a thousand generations to be able to get to university? Was it because all our predecessors were ‘thick’? Did they lack talent, those people who could sing and play, and recite and write poetry, those people who could make wonderful, beautiful things with their hands; those people who could dream dreams, see visions; those people who had such a sense of perception as to know in times so brutal, so oppressive, that they could win their way out of that by coming together?*

*Were those people not university material? Couldn't they have knocked off their ‘A’ levels in an afternoon?*

*But why didn't they get it? Was it because they were weak? Those people who could work eight hours underground and then come up and play football? Weak? Those women who*



*could survive 11 childbearings. Were they weak? Those people who could stand with their backs and their legs straight and face the people who had control over their lives, the ones who owned their workplaces, and tried to own them, and tell them, 'No I won't take your orders.'*

*Does anybody think that they didn't get what we had because they didn't have the talent, or the strength, or the endurance, or the commitment?*

*Of course not. It was because there was no platform upon which they could stand."*

Through the Labour Party, platforms can be built on which people can stand.

Socialism aims to unlock, in the words of John Smith, the “*extra-ordinary potential of ordinary people*” which is why the Labour Party is the party of aspiration and achievement in modern Britain.

### **Socialist economics**

Put simply, socialist economic practice means intervening into the market to secure socially desirable outcomes. We believe in active Government. Reformers and early socialists rejected the *laissez-faire* philosophies which allowed and excused the horrors of the industrial revolution. Today, socialists reject the free market dogma of modern-day conservatives which lead to similar horrors of poverty pay and unregulated workplaces.

Of course socialists do not oppose the market *per se*. No sensible person wants the state to run everything. When such a system has been tried, for example in Russia or Cuba, the result has been economic inefficiency, shoddy goods and poor supply, and ultimately less choice for individuals. The market is an efficient way of ensuring the distribution of goods and services, of keeping costs at levels people can afford, and of ensuring customers have a choice of goods and some influence over producers. However the market cannot efficiently supply *social goods*, such as education and health. Market forces pressure private companies into short-term activity, without much regard for medium and long-term needs such as staff training, and investment in research and development.

Socialists seek to intervene to correct *market failures*, such as unemployment, homelessness, unequal regional development, and a degraded environment. Where the market succeeds, socialists leave well alone; where the market fails, socialists step in. The approach is well expressed in the German SPD slogan – the market where possible, the state where necessary.

Socialist economics seek to blend social justice with efficiency.

Take the example of unemployment. A purely free, unfettered market will create a large pool of unemployed workers. Unemployed people claim benefits; they do not pay tax; they have far less disposable income. Directly and indirectly, unemployment is a financial burden on society and the state (not to mention a terrible blow to the individual). A large social security budget is a sure-fire indicator of a government's failure.

The socialist response to unemployment is to step in to correct the failure of the market to create enough jobs. This does not mean an increase in state-sponsored jobs, as in the Soviet Union where everyone had a job, whether there was a job to do or not. It means creating the framework for individuals to get jobs themselves – by providing training, re-skilling, and tax breaks for employers. The New Deal for young unemployed people and the long-term unemployed, introduced by Gordon Brown, has been a great success, showing the Conservatives who said unemployment was a price worth paying to be heartless and impotent stewards of the economy.

Under the Conservatives, three million people were unemployed; under Labour, Britain is nearing full employment. The New Deal is an act of socialist redistribution – taking money from the excess profits of the privatised utility companies and diverting it to help people find work. It is proof that Governments can act to correct the failures of the market.

Take the example of pensioners. Once a person has reached old age, a pure market system ascribes no further value to them. Because elderly people are no longer economically efficient, the market does not deliver protection or support. That is where socialists see a role for intervention into the market – providing a secure foundation for old age, and ensuring that society lets its elderly people enjoy security and respect in old age. Since 1997, Labour has introduced a winter allowance for every pensioner household and every winter every pensioner over 75 will be able to receive their television licence free of charge. The top rate of income tax will be extended to savings. As a result, over 2.5 million people will be better off. The Government targeted resources to pensioners who needed them most – in line with the socialist principle from each according to their ability to each according to their needs.

Another example is government borrowing. The Tories were happy to run up an enormous government debt, and spend billions paying back the interest. By the mid-nineties, the Conservatives were spending more on servicing their debts than on

education and the police. Since 1997, Labour has made a priority of cutting back government borrowing. As the debt has come down, the interest payments have fallen, and so more funds are available for spending on public services.

In Gordon Brown's actions as Chancellor, we have seen socialist economics becoming a reality.

### **Socialists and the environment**

On the question of the environment – an unfettered free market delivers only short-term results without regard to long-term environmental damage. The same is true of a state-owned economy – the old Soviet Union in its dash for industrial growth was guilty of enormous environmental crimes.

In Britain concern for the environment has always been part of the socialist tradition – especially in the struggles for clean air and water, unadulterated food, safe housing, leisure and play facilities, and safe workplaces. Socialists led the campaigns to let ramblers have access to the open spaces, and a Labour Government introduced the Clean Air Acts.

As socialists have gained an understanding of environmentalism in its global sense, socialist policies have been adopted to deal with pollution and to create sustainable growth and development. Socialist Governments must now deal with issues like climate change, sustainable development, developing countries' debts, and the spread of HIV and AIDS. Because environmental problems are international, so the response must be international, and socialists must work with others around the world to find solutions.

### **Socialist taxation**

Socialists believe in fair, not high, taxes. There is nothing inherently socialist about high levels of personal or business taxation. There is nothing *at all* socialist about a policy of high taxation which drives voters away from Labour and lets the Tories win elections.

Tax is the way national governments raise income to spend on 'social goods' which citizens need and desire. The traditional view of tax is that it should be levied on income, with more tax taken from those who have higher incomes. An increasingly global economic environment places enormous pressures on such a system of taxation, because the rich can either move their income, or themselves, abroad if faced by high taxes. As goods are trading internationally over the Internet, levying tax on the

transaction of goods by national governments becomes harder. Middle-income earners, and those to aspire to higher income, have shown by their votes in General Elections that parties which promise to raise income tax lose support.

In the future, new ways of levying taxes which on the one hand meet peoples' desire for better public spending, and on the other are considered to be fair and affordable, must be found. Two solutions might be firstly the hypothecation of taxation – where taxes are raised against specific expenditures so that people can link their taxes with tangible benefits, and secondly the move way from taxing social 'positives' such as personal income, savings and purchasing, towards taxing social 'negatives' such as polluting companies, cigarettes, and international currency speculation.

Socialists believe in redistribution – to ensure that the fruits of economic prosperity are enjoyed by all sections of the community and by all parts of the country. But that's not enough. We believe in a prosperous economy so that there is growth to fund extra investment and spending on public services. Socialism is not just about cutting the cake in a different way, but ensuring there is more cake to go round.

### **The question of ownership**

The question of ownership of industries and services by the state has dominated socialist debate. In 1945 the Labour Government embarked on the nationalisation of several key industries and services such as coal, steel, and the railways. Through the 1960s and 1970s many more sectors and companies were acquired by Labour Governments, to create a large state-owned 'public' sector. But somehow along the way, the original purpose of nationalisation was lost. Nationalisation by itself was never socialist – fascist and conservative governments had followed similar policies.

The purpose of nationalisation was to create a fair economy and better conditions for workers. When the coal industry was nationalised in 1948, red flags were hoisted above the mines, and the Labour MPs sang as they voted the Bill through parliament. But despite an immediate improvement in conditions, the long-term future for the industry was as precarious in public ownership as private ownership. State ownership meant very little in real terms.

Because Margaret Thatcher was so keen to 'privatise' industries, many socialists make the mistake of assuming that creating a mirror image of privatisation, and taking BT, the water and gas companies, the railways, and so on back into 'public ownership' (which inevitably means ownership by a few government-appointed placemen) is the answer to all our problems. There are obvious political difficulties with such an

approach – it would cost billions of pounds (which might be spent on education or the NHS) with very few obvious benefits, and so a Labour Chancellor would be failing in his or her duty if they made such a choice.

But secondly, there are ways of creating the positive outcomes socialists want, without blowing billions on an outmoded economic model. Through state regulation and inspection, and rigorous systems of customer scrutiny, industries can be made responsible corporate citizens. Care for customers, fair pricing, environmental protection, and fairness in the workplace can all be delivered through a regulated private sector. Through redistributive taxation such as the Windfall Tax on the excess profits of the privatised utilities, schemes such as the New Deal can be paid for. This is what is meant by Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution which calls for *‘a dynamic economy in which the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition are joined with the forces of partnership and co-operation to produce the wealth the nation needs’*.

Those today who call for nationalisation for the sake of it, as though the state buying up private industries is some kind of panacea to years of under-investment, have confused ends and means. The lessons from service delivery in local government point to new forms of partnerships and coalitions being available which are neither public nor private. The co-operative movement has shown that socialistic enterprises can operate within a market system.

The removal of the old Clause IV from Labour’s constitution in the 1990s, which called for the “common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange” (without any explanation of what that actually meant) has removed any ambiguity from Labour’s *credo* and programme. Labour does not advocate nationalisation because nationalisation does not deliver socialism, and Labour is a socialist party.

### **Education**

In the modern economy, resources can be moved around the world like pieces on a chess board. Factories can close on one continent and open on another over a weekend. Raw materials can be transported thousands of miles. Information and finances can be sent around the world in an instant. The only truly national resource of a country is its people. The skills and aptitudes of a nation’s people are what will mark its success or failure in the future. That means that education, long seen by socialists as a means of individual liberation and fulfilment, is now a means of national economic advancement.

Those societies which prosper are those whose members are well-trained and educated

and continue learning throughout their lives. Socialists reject absolutely the concept of a 'school leaving age' when education comes to a halt and work begins.

In the 1960s, the Labour Party under Harold Wilson introduced the Open University which aimed to give the opportunity for a university education for tens of thousands of people denied one by the traditional university system. Today the University for Industry and the National Grid for Learning continue the same ideal.

In primary schools, government should take responsibility for national standards and attainment. No child should have their future blighted by poor teaching or a lack of school equipment. The basic tools of education – numeracy, literacy, as well as social skills – should be bequeathed to every primary school child. At secondary level, no child should be condemned to a second-rate education because of a two-tier system, nor suffer the psychological scars of rejection because of the old 11-plus. But we should not be fooled by the myth of 'comprehensive' education either. The old comprehensive system was nothing of the kind – comprehensive schools vary hugely from school to school, making a good education a lottery for millions of children. Because socialism celebrates diversity, so the secondary education system should allow schools to cater for different aptitudes and talents, and nurture excellence in sport, science, arts or maths.

Since 1997 Labour has invested in schools – more than 11,000 have been upgraded — and created nursery places for every four year-old. Education spending as a proportion of national income is rising over the lifetime of the parliament, and Labour is pledged to do the same over the second term. By introducing a system of student fees, there will no longer be a cap on student numbers, and because the system is based on ability to pay with the poorest third of students paying nothing at all, universities will be accessible to more students.

Labour's drive for a world-class education system is not simply for reasons of altruism. It is a case of national survival.

## Health

Aneurin Bevan, the architect of the National Health Service, wrote that "*Society becomes more wholesome, more serene, and spiritually healthier, if it knows that its citizens have at the back of their consciousness the knowledge that not only themselves, but all their fellows, have access, when ill, to the best that medical skill can provide.*"

That principle – of healthcare supplied free at the point of need – remains the foundation of the modern National Health Service. The NHS was introduced by the

post-war Labour Government after the legislation was skillfully piloted through the Houses of Parliament by Health Minister Aneurin Bevan in 1948. Prior to the NHS, healthcare in Britain depended on the ability to pay, and for many people treatment was missed because of lack of funds. The Conservatives at Westminster voted against the NHS, and opposed its creation every step of the way.

After the resounding success of the NHS, and its huge popularity with the British people, the Tories grudgingly accepted it. But they never accepted the principle – and when in government in 1980s and 1990s undermined the centre of the NHS and privatised it around the edges, such as dentistry.

Labour created the NHS, and only Labour can protect and modernise the service. Since 1997 Labour has established the Commission of Health Improvement, a new standards watchdog for the NHS to promote good practice and to help ensure high-quality care. Labour has abolished the divisive Tory internal market. Nurses' pay has increased.

Labour has embarked on perhaps the biggest hospital building programme in the history of the NHS and is modernising every A&E department that needs it. Labour is committed to an extra £21 billion of investment in the NHS over three years.

The National Health Service is socialism in action. It is living proof that socialist values can be made real on a grand scale for the good of all – and that socialism can be enduring and popular.

As with all public services, ways of delivering healthcare will change. Labour now places emphasis on preventive medicine and the general health of the population. The link between poor housing, unemployment and a bad diet and ill-health is now understood by Government (the Conservatives pretended there was no link). Socialists now understand that the health of the nation will rely on a range of reforms, from housing, education, and jobs, to better diets and the eradication of smoking, to ensure that people can live healthy lives free from the fear of the doctor's bill or crippled by private insurance premiums.

### **The Constitution**

Constitutional reform is as pressing and important an issue for socialists as reforming the economy or welfare state. For early socialists, reforming the constitution was an essential part of securing liberty. Social movements like the Chartists and the Suffragettes agitated for radical changes to the constitution.



Keir Hardie was a great advocate of a new constitutional settlement. His role in breaking the mould of the old two-party system was as great an act of constitutional reform as any. Because socialists are democrats, special attention must be paid to systems of governance, and all forms of decision-making and power must be tested against democratic criteria.

Under the Conservatives between 1979 and 1997 Britain became a less democratic country. Simon Jenkins has described the process as the ‘nationalisation of Britain’ – where successive Ministers adopted greater powers, where unelected quangos took over more and more decision-making roles, and where local government was undermined and side-stepped.

Now Labour is crafting a new constitutional settlement. The Third Way theorist Anthony Giddens writes: ‘in a society where tradition and custom are losing their hold, the only route to the establishing of authority is via democracy.’ That means that new accountable and representative forms of governance must be found.

Power has been devolved to Wales and Scotland. London has the chance to directly elect a Mayor. Local councils are being forced to create streamlined decision-making structures and scrap the old committee systems. Britain’s cities may adopt elected Mayors, breathing new life into local politics. More and more power is being devolved and dissipated to the people.

But the price of democracy is eternal vigilance. Socialists must always look at structures and systems and check they do not promote secrecy, patronage, favouritism or abuses of power. Future Labour Governments may decide to change the system of elections to the House of Commons, further democratic reform the Second Chamber, and create a debate around the future of the Monarchy.

### **Socialists are Internationalists**

‘Internationalism’ is a belief that we are part of a human family which extends beyond the borders of nation states. We work with other socialists around the world, through collective institutions. In Government, Labour has worked to build international alliances through the Commonwealth, United Nations, NATO, and the European Union. The European Union and its predecessors have rightly been described as the ‘longest peace process in history’. After the war, strong international institutions were created to prevent further war, and through the European project, Europe has been at peace for the longest period in its history. Those who attack the European ideal should be reminded of that. We look beyond Europe – to the developing world and the poorest

nations, and to peoples suffering under repressive regimes. No better example of the difference between Labour and Conservative values can be cited than their respective attitudes towards South Africa under the apartheid system. Labour party supporters flooded to the Anti-Apartheid Movement and gave political and material support to the African National Congress. Conservatives supported the apartheid regime, and some even wore 'Hang Nelson Mandela' badges.

Today socialists are working towards the elimination of world poverty. In 2000 the richest nations will be writing off 100 Billion Dollars, more than two-thirds of the debts of the world's poorest countries, thanks to the efforts of the UK's Labour Government and like-minded allies. Efforts are being made to tackle curable deadly diseases and to stop the spread of AIDS and HIV in the developing world.

The application of socialist values do not stop at the Channel Tunnel. Our belief in community, and in an older word – solidarity – means that where injustice and poverty occur no matter where in the world, socialists feel a responsibility to act.

### **Is 'New Labour' socialist?**

New Labour is criticised by the Right for being too socialist, and by those critics on the left and trendy-lefty newspaper columnists for being not socialist enough. So is New Labour a socialist party? I believe it is.

The purpose of this Young Fabian pamphlet has been to show socialism in its true colours, to highlight traditional socialist values, and to demonstrate their practical application in a ever-changing world.

If you mean by socialism high taxes, state-control, and nationalisation, then today's Labour Government is no more socialist than the Conservative Party of William Hague.

If by socialism you mean a socialism of liberty, equality and community, a socialism of opportunity and enterprise, in the British ethical tradition, then it is clear that the trajectory established by this Labour administration can be justifiably described as socialist. Were Tony Blair, Keir Hardie, Clement Attlee and James Callaghan to sit down for some hypothetical dinner together, they would disagree over tactics, but you would find it hard to find any difference in their personal and political values.

Only history can properly judge this present Labour administration. By any standards the constitutional revolution and the ending of the hereditary House of Lords is radical stuff. The introduction of the national minimum wage is a lasting and significant

improvement. The pledge to abolish child and pensioner poverty is as bold a socialist ambition as any before attempted. But lasting changes can only come from a sustained period in office — a second, third and even a fourth term.

It is sometimes said that the difference between Labour and Conservative is just half an inch – but it is the half an inch where we all want to live. In just two years, Labour has introduced measures which, put together, add up to the Good Society we want. The ban on handguns, the reform of licensing laws, extra nursery places, allowing trade unions back at GCHQ, partnerships with business — these accumulative measures make for a civilised decent and humane society.

By seeking out the values and inspirations of socialism, and investigating the actions of this government, it is clear that ‘New Labour’ is ‘True Labour’ and this Government is one which future socialists will look back on with pride.

## CONCLUSION: SOCIALISM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



STEFANO CAGNONI



JOHN HARRIS

**G**lobalisation is the *leitmotif* of the new millennium. New technology is forging a social revolution as significant in its changes to the way we live, learn and work as the Industrial Revolutions of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. Patterns of employment are transforming, with the rise of the ‘no collar’ worker – moving from job to job, contract to contract, with a portable portfolio of skills. Home working will become increasingly prevalent. Already 15 per cent of the population regularly buy goods over the Internet. By 2010 40 per cent of households will contain only one person. We are fast becoming a society of individuals, interacting with one another through a nexus of real and virtual overlapping networks.

Old institutions, including political parties, are under threat, and all must justify their existence in order to survive. The conditions which created the spread of socialist parties throughout Europe – Fordist production, social homogeneity, class-consciousness – have disappeared.

The challenges modern socialists face are every bit as momentous as those faced by the

founders of the Labour Party, and will demand as equally bold solutions as those devised by the socialist pioneers. Tomorrow's socialist-revisionists will have to confront social and economic problems which we can only just start to understand.

As recently as 1994 Paul Kennedy's book *'Preparing for the 21st Century'* was hailed for its solid research into demographic, societal and economic change, and its projections for the next hundred years. Yet this book did not even once mention the internet. Just a few years ago the internet, now seen as the major driver of the information revolution, was of interest only to a tiny elite of academics and the defence industry.

The only predictable thing about even the near-future is the scale of its unpredictability.

The emergent new bio-technologies, genetic engineering, and other scientific advances are new territory for traditional socialist thinkers, as are the challenges of the new global economy with 'virtual' working, shopping and leisure.

Socialism is about the future. There is nothing as modern as the belief that poverty, war and social classes can join witchcraft, slavery and plague in the history books. There is nothing as backward-looking as a philosophy such as Conservatism which holds to old ideas of inequality and laissez-faire. Labour must respect its traditions and have a full understanding of its remarkable history, its failures as well as triumphs. There is no room for nostalgia and misty-eyed reminiscences. The old world is gone, and with it the old solutions to old problems. Labour is a movement – but moving forward, not back. As Aneurin Bevan wrote: *'socialism is a child of modern society'* and as such must move with the times.

Today some use the phrase 'Third Way' to describe the new confident brand of socialism that Labour is practising. The 'Third Way' is helpful shorthand – in an age where politics must be packaged for a television and tabloid audience. But the phrase does not indicate that socialism has been reincarnated in some fundamentally distinct new form. In time, new phrases will replace it.

What matters now is the case that lies behind the packaging – the case for socialism. I believe that the case is a powerful one. Powerful because it speaks to the good in human nature, and powerful because it provides answers to the social, economic and spiritual challenges of the age. In the depths of the economic and moral maelstrom which gathers around modern society, tearing communities apart and creating uncertainty and confusion, it is through faith in the enduring values of socialism that new answers will be found.

## Appendix One: **Labour's Clause IV**

One of the first acts of Tony Blair as Leader of the Labour Party was to join with John Prescott in proposing a new Clause IV of the party constitution. The original text, drafted by Sidney Webb in 1918, called for the 'common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange'. Its meaning had been contested throughout Labour's history, largely because Webb had constructed a form of words which would mean whatever you wanted. Labour leader Hume Gaitskell attempted to reform Clause IV in the 1950s, but was rebuffed.

In 1995, Tony Blair succeeded in winning the argument for a revised statement. The immediate impact was to bolster his position as leader and prove his leadership abilities. But the impact on the wider political debate was of greater significance. As Tony Wright MP wrote at the time:

*"The Blairite revolution, converting socialism into 'social-ism' and constructing a liberal communitarianism anchored in a broad intellectual inheritance of the left centre, succeeded where the putative revisionism of a generation earlier had failed. The means and ends of socialism had finally been disentangled, not through evasion or obfuscation but through a direct and explicit process of theoretical reconstruction. On any test it was a decisive and defining moment for the British Left, both politically and intellectually, with a significance for socialism that went wider still."*

The Clause IV passed by Labour Party members nine-to-one in 1995 has been untouched for five years. Before too much longer, it may be time to look again at Clause IV and ask Labour members if it still reflects their values and aspirations.

Here is the 1995 version:

### **1. "The Labour Party is a democratic socialist party.**

*It believes that by the strength of our endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone, so as to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential and for all of us a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many not the few, where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe, and where we live together, freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect."*

To these ends we work for:

*(a) A DYNAMIC ECONOMY, serving the public interest, in which the enterprise of the*

market and the rigour of competition are joined with the forces of partnership and co-operation to produce the wealth the nation needs and the opportunity for all to work and prosper with a thriving private sector and high-quality public services where those undertakings essential to the common good are either owned by the public or accountable to them

(b) A JUST SOCIETY, which judges its strength by the condition of the weak as much as the strong, provides security against fear, and justice at work; which nurtures families, promotes equality of opportunity and delivers people from the tyranny of poverty, prejudice and the abuse of power

(c) AN OPEN DEMOCRACY, in which government is held to account by the people, decisions are taken as far as practicable by the communities they affect and where fundamental human rights are guaranteed

(d) A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT, which we protect, enhance and hold in trust for future generations.

Labour is committed to the defence and security of the British people and to co-operating in European institutions, the United Nations, the Commonwealth, and other international bodies to secure peace, freedom, democracy, economic security and environmental protection for all.

Labour shall work in pursuit of these aims with trade unions and co-operative societies and also with voluntary organisations, consumer groups and other representative bodies.

On the basis of these principles, Labour seeks the trust of the people to govern.”

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## The Case for Socialism

New Labour in government is Socialist, argues  
Paul Richards in *The Case for Socialism*.

The pamphlet seeks to show how the 'New'  
Labour Government has been true to the values of  
traditional British ethical socialism, and stands tall  
in the tradition of Keir Hardie and Clement Attlee.

It makes the plea that Labour in Government  
should be proud of its socialism.

However, Labour's electoral success is only the  
first step in transforming Britain. Winning elections  
is not the same as winning the battle of ideas. For  
Labour in Britain to succeed in its historic mission  
to create a fair society, to harness the forces of  
the market in the interests of the people, to defeat  
prejudice and conservatism, and to win a majority  
of the population over to socialism, then victory at  
a general election is only the start of  
a long journey.

Socialism is of course more than just 'what  
Labour Governments do' as  
Herbert Morrison suggested. But without a clear  
basis in values, and an agreed, popular, and  
practical programme, Labour in office would be as  
rootless and buffeted by events as any  
Tory administration.

This pamphlet aims to reclaim our heritage and  
tradition, and rehabilitate the term socialism. Not  
the socialism of Karl Marx or Engels, but the  
socialism of today which *can* deliver a stable  
economy, low inflation, a national minimum wage,  
necessary spending on public services and still be  
true to the solid underlying values of liberty,  
equality and community.



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