

Facing Up To The Future

The Left has been in retreat for a decade. It has lost out badly in its contest with Thatcherism. Even more seriously, it has failed to address the new world of the 80s. Too often it has seemed more interested in the past than the future. The Labour Party is seeking to respond to this problem through its Policy Review for the 1990s. At its congress last November, the Communist Party decided to redraft its programme, *The British Road To Socialism*, which, when last published in 1977, was a pioneering document in the reconstruction of the Left. Earlier this year the Communist Party's executive committee appointed a group of eight to work, with a completely free hand, on a discussion document as a preliminary to the actual redrafting of *The British Road To Socialism* next year. The group took as its main brief, in preparing **Facing Up To The Future**, the need to confront the radically-changed world in which we now live, and how that requires us to rethink the Left's policies and perspectives.

The group that prepared the document were: *Beatrix Campbell, Marian Darke, Bill Innes, Martin Jacques, Monty Johnstone, Paula Lanning, Charlie Leadbeater and Jeff Rodrigues*, with *Margaret Woddis* as secretary. **Facing Up To The Future**, which we publish here as a special Communist Party supplement, will also be carried, together with subsequent discussion, in *7 Days*, the Communist Party weekly



Unemployment was about 1m, there were more than a quarter of a million miners, North Sea oil production was building up, Jim Callaghan was in 10 Downing Street, it was 1977. The Communist Party produced the fourth edition of the *British Road To Socialism*, the party's statement of socialist aims and principles. It was the year that Mrs Margaret Thatcher took over as leader of the Tory Party.

More than a decade later, unemployment is close to 3m, oil production is in decline, there are fewer than 100,000 miners, Lord Jim Callaghan carries out civic duties, and Mrs Margaret Thatcher talks of a transcendent Conservatism reaching into the next century.

The *British Road To Socialism* needs redrafting. This document is intended to promote discussion around the issues facing the Communist Party and the Left, to prepare for redrafting the *British Road* in 1989.

This will be central to the party's political work, its involvement in popular struggles, by giving a sense of strategic direction to the socialist project. It will play a role in reorienting the Left and progressive forces within Britain, continuing the party's pioneering work over the last decade in developing the Left's analysis of the changing economic, social and political terrain.

The New Terrain

Western industrialised societies are being fundamentally reshaped. New technology is transforming the way people work and what they produce. Cultural and social life is becoming more diverse. Most women have a dual social role, in employment and domestic work. Old industrial areas are in decline and new sunrise corridors are growing.

Society is in transition to a new phase of development after a decade of stagnation and structural crisis in the 1970s. In the 90s restructuring will spread and gather momentum.

This fundamental restructuring of the economy and social life requires an equally fundamental restructuring of political forces. Already Thatcherism has recognised this new terrain and sought to appropriate it for itself. However, much of the Left, far from moving onto this new ground, wants to remain within an 'old order' which is disintegrating beneath its feet.

The old order

At the economic core of the old order, established after the second world war, were large factories, which enveloped armies of mainly semi-skilled workers, carrying out repetitive tasks within a strict division of labour. They pumped out standardised products from flow lines of machinery, dedicated to production of that item.

Production was routine. Competition was predictable. Companies competed mainly through price differences on similar products, rather than through innovation or significant product differentiation.

The mass workers were also the mass consumers of the products of these plants. The spread of these products - cars, televisions, washing machines, fridges - were part of a social revolution in leisure and consumption.

The postwar consensus, between organised labour, business and the social-democratic state was built on these economic and social foundations. It represented the gains of working class political pressure. But not simply that.

Keynesian economic policies maintained full employment. But this was also vital to ensure rising profitability.

The welfare state provided mass housing, the national health service, and unemployment relief. But with it came poor quality, lack of choice, and paternalism.

Women had filled the labour market during the war. But the postwar consensus reasserted men's social and economic privileges. The postwar political consensus was underpinned by a conservative social consensus about women's role.

The decay of the old order

By the beginning of the 1970s the old order had started to decay. A decade of stagnation culminated in a structural crisis



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for the postwar social-democratic project, from which it could not recover.

Its economic managerialism was incapable of tackling Britain's deeper economic malaise - low productivity growth, and failing competitiveness. Its political structures were unable to contain mounting social conflict over the distribution of failing growth. Its paternalism left it unable to respond to aspirations for greater choice and more flexible state services. Its social conservatism tried to muffle a range of social upheavals from feminism to punk, which were irrepressible.

Society and the state seemed adrift, rudderless. Thatcherism took charge with its authoritarian but populist solution to the crisis.

The new order

Almost a decade after the election of the first Thatcher government, British society is entering what might be called a 'new order'. The exact shape of this new order is not predetermined. It will be the outcome of political struggle. But its outline is becoming clear.

At its heart will be information technology and micro-electronics - the new technological core of the economy. Robots, computers, word processors, facsimile machines, are becoming the currency of work. Information technology allows production to be both more flexible, but more integrated, through centralised control.

The workforce is being fundamentally reorganised around new technology. Traditional demarcation lines between skilled and unskilled, blue collar and white collar workers, are being abolished after massive redundancies in manufacturing. The new order will be about flexibility, team working, and service-sector work.

Beyond that, restructuring is creating more fundamental divisions - between those trained to work with new technology and those left behind; the 'core' full-time workers, and the growing number of part-time service sector workers. Around the high-technology offices and factories cluster low-technology, low-wage subcontractors and small companies.

Women could make up half the workforce by the mid-1990s, but mainly confined to low-skill, low-wage occupations. The rise in women's employment fundamentally undermines the social and economic assumptions of the old order, that workers were male breadwinners for traditional families.

These changes in technology and work are linked to important changes in the way companies organise production and the way they compete. Innovation, product differentiation and quality have become much more important. Companies no longer compete primarily through cutting price on standardised products.

The intensification of competition has brought important changes in corporate power. Power has further concentrated in the hands of global companies, who can afford enormous investments in product development. But many large companies no longer attempt to make everything they need, so in tandem small companies have become more important as subcontractors and innovators.

Many companies no longer produce for a homogeneous market of mass consumers, but for market segments, made up of consumers with distinct tastes and lifestyles. In the old order mass consumption was linked to mass production. In the new order, new divisions within the workforce and more flexible production are producing more segmented consumption, and more diverse forms of social life.

Lifestyles have become more diverse in a revolt against the centralising sameness of the old order. Designer labels have replaced mass fashion. The BBC and ITV will no longer dominate our living rooms. They will be joined by a multiplicity of European satellite television channels.

But this diversity and individualism masks deeper social fragmentation. Many middle and working-class families will in the next decade become not merely homeowners but property inheritors. But council tenants will be stuck in crumbling tower blocks. While affluent consumers will reach for their compact discs, courtesy of their credit cards, the poor will be ghettoised in deepening poverty.

Towns in the new growth corridors - Swindon, Basingstoke, Silicon Glen - are the cauldrons for the new order. The cultures of steel towns, coal towns and textile towns are in decline. The sunrise culture of the hi-tech service towns is on the rise.

The uncertainty over the shape of the new order in Britain is matched by instability internationally. The power of the nation-state is in decline with the rise of international financial markets, and the power of global companies.

But economic power is also shifting. The old order was formed within the international hegemony of the United States. The dynamic forces behind the creation of the new order are the Far Eastern economies - Japan and South Korea.

Politics and the new terrain

Much of the old order took its form from the mass production pioneered by Ford, and has become known as 'Fordism'. The new era can be called 'post-Fordism'. The 1990s will see myriad political and social struggles. But in essence they will come down to a single question: on what terms will this new order be created?

The Left's most urgent task is to defeat Thatcherism's reactionary restructuring, its attempt at a 'conservative modernisation'. But the Left will only break Thatcherism's grip if it mobilises opposition around the aspirations and antagonisms bred by the new order. This will require an alternative vision of a progressive restructuring of society, a 'socialist modernisation'. The immediate political task of defeating Thatcherism will only succeed backed by a more fundamental rethinking of socialist struggle, which matches the fundamental restructuring behind the creation of the new order.

This will require a thorough reorientation of left politics. Most of the Left's imagery, programmes, forms of struggle, resonate with the ideas of the old order or 'Fordism' - standardisation, scale, homogeneity, mass consumption, mass production, mass housing, all within a national economy. In future the Left's imagery, programmes and struggles will have to flow from the new order or 'post-Fordism' - flexibility, diversity, differentiation, decentralisation, internationalisation.

The question will not be whether there will be labour flexibility: there will be. But on what terms?

There will be greater diversity and individualism in social life. Will this lead simply to social fragmentation, or can it be complemented by social solidarity?

The local and central state will have to intervene directly in the productive base of the economy. But how and with what aims?

The demand for more decentralised, higher-quality public services, open to choice, is clear. This could either lead to privatisation and greater inequality, or new democratic forms of socialised welfare provision.

Work and social life are dissolving the old social blocs, which were the symbolic armies of social conflict. How can coalitions of diverse interests be welded into a political force?

It will be pointless to attempt to resurrect the power of the nation-state. The real debate of the 1990s will be about what kind of international alliances Britain will have to form to control the international economy.

These questions will be the focus for politics in the 1990s. Unless the Left faces them, it will leave the field open to Thatcherism.

Thatcherism

Thatcherism's rise must be located in two contexts. Its initial arrival marked the complete exhaustion of the postwar social-democratic project. Its first task was to dismantle the rusting political infrastructure of the postwar consensus. But Thatcherism's project has since moved on. Its aim now is a 'conservative modernisation', to ensure the new order is created in a conservative image.

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ing change. Politics is no longer simply the art of the possible. Thatcherism has changed what is politically possible, in a sweeping conservative transformation which for most people was unthinkable 10 years ago.

It has coalesced diverse interests behind its programme, but not merely by offering economic rewards. It seeks to cement its support by articulating a range of strongly-felt and popular fears, prejudices and aspirations.

At the centre of its political drive is a combination of individualism and authoritarianism.

It has articulated demands for greater choice and individual responsibility with an ideology of assertive individualism.

Individualism offers the alluring myth that individuals can be self-sufficient. It denies wider collective responsibility for social problems. If collective solutions like state education, or the NHS do not meet individual choices, people are encouraged to buy their way out, to opt for private provision.

Its individualism is dynamic and in a sense radical, because it encourages people to remake their worlds. But simultaneously it is an aggressively conservative view of how society should be organised.

It sanctions the marketisation of society: the private sector and the market are symbolically associated with flexibility, efficiency and choice. It enfeebles the public sector, which is associated with inflexibility, inefficiency and lack of choice.

So those who can afford to opt for private provision, those in full-time employment who have prospered in the last five years, benefit. The poor, the unemployed, who have had the main burdens of restructuring forced upon their shoulders, become more chronically and acutely dependent on an impoverished public sector.

Individual choice appears as a neutral ideology, something that everyone can ascribe to. But it has justified growing inequality, the collapse of social cohesion, and the abandonment of social responsibility.

It is Thatcherism's most fundamental and extensive privatisation: the privatisation of social aspiration, obligation and responsibility. It explains the fundamental nature of its attack on socialism, for it undermines the sense of the social upon which socialism is based.

Thatcherism's individualism is in part drawn from a right-wing libertarianism. But it moves in tandem with an authoritarianism aimed at restoring social and economic discipline.

Its socially authoritarian agendas on crime, law-and-order, immigration and homosexuality, are a response to the permissive egalitarianism of the 1960s, which it blames for a collapse of respect for social order. It has sanctioned a cultural racism, a little-Englandism, an attack on those who do not accept Thatcherite British values.

While its ideology is anti-state, it has both centralised state power and used it more strategically than any previous government.

Local government and local education authorities are being stripped of their powers. The old public industries which threatened to darken the dawn of the enterprise economy - coal, shipbuilding, steel, cars - have been restructured. The welfare state has become an increasingly coercive part of its economic strategy. It has also sanctioned the rise of corporate authoritarianism: international capital is being given a free hand to restructure the economy.

Its individualism and authoritarianism combine, to allow a socially divisive privatisation and marketisation of society. Thatcherism's answers for the key questions for the 1990s flow from this cocktail.

Its free-market economic strategy means new technology and labour flexibility are being introduced to the benefit of employers. Its conservative individualism means choice is largely confined to consumerism in the market; diversity masks deeper social fragmentation. Its 'decentralisation' of welfare state services will promote choice only with inequality. It has strategically intervened in the economy, but to open it to unconstrained international capital.

Meanwhile, it well understands that politics is about building alliances. It does not rely on a single class; it has constructed an alliance of diverse social forces behind its conservative modernisation.

Challenging Thatcherism

Since Thatcherism came to power there has been no period in which it has not faced unpopularity and opposition. But despite crises which seemed to threaten its future, Thatcherism has maintained the momentum it needs to overcome opposition. There are two vital components to this.

It has to reproduce a broad, popular consensus for its politics. Its success in this cannot be measured purely electorally, but by whether people take up the values of enterprise culture and popular capitalism, in everyday life in shops, banks, schools, homes, offices and factories.

But in addition it has to continue to deliver the economic goods for enough of society, by reversing Britain's economic decline, and maintaining real income growth for those in work.

These two conditions are vital if it is to maintain a coalition of social forces behind its reactionary restructuring. Any assessment of the future of the Left must start from an examination of whether Thatcherism can secure these conditions.

Issues

Even in areas where Thatcherism has been successful there are weaknesses which can be exploited. And there are a range of issues on which it has occupied the high ground, but failed to fully capture it.

It remains the only force which appears to have a strategy to modernise the economy.

But productivity and competitiveness cannot be improved again by another wave of mass redundancies. In the next decade the real task will be to enact a positive modernisation of the economy, through boosting education and training, research and development, investment and innovation, design and marketing.

Private initiative alone will not achieve this. It requires a co-ordinated, sustained strategy. But Thatcherism's free-market economic ideology inhibits it from intervening to thoroughly modernise the economy. Productivity growth and competitiveness may well start to fail; the balance of payments deficit will rise.

So popular confidence in Thatcherism's much-trumpeted economic success is far from guaranteed. But maintaining this is vital because many of the constituencies it has created depend on growing incomes.

But nor does it completely command the moral high ground over how the costs and benefits of restructuring should be distributed.

It has encouraged a pessimism about whether the welfare state can tackle social problems. But opposition has prevented it from completely refashioning welfare and relinquishing the state's responsibilities to the poor.

It has been least successful over the health service. Since 1983 it has fostered ambitions to radically restructure and privatise health care. But repeatedly it has been forced to retreat in the face of popular protest.

It faces growing criticism over its toleration of the inequalities it has created. The north-south divide is a metaphor for much wider concern about its social divisiveness.

Criticism of its social harshness is matched by opposition to its authoritarian use of power. For many, Mrs Thatcher's government has become close to an elective dictatorship.

Resistance to authoritarianism is not just about opposition to the undermining of local government. It reflects a resistance to the spread of an authoritarian social culture, reflected in Thatcherism's policies on official secrets, law and order and gay and lesbian rights.

Finally Thatcherism is vulnerable on a range of international issues which have been the focus of domestic protest. It is estranged from the anti-apartheid movement, from movements on peace and Third World aid. These are based on an international, progressive humanism, which is in conflict with its nationalistic, materialistic individualism.



'As the opposition in Scotland shows, the breadth of the poll tax creates the potential for broad, popular protest'

Constituencies

Thatcherism has also failed to either fully incorporate, or entirely marginalise, a range of social groups which resist it.

Black people have been defiantly resistant to Thatcherism. The riots of the early 1980s and since, are evidence of the hostility latent in many black people's response to Thatcherism's law and order policies, its British bulldog nationalism.

Thatcherism's support among women is also unstable. Its shifting sexual and moral agenda is vulnerable to pressure from women on a range of issues from child benefit, to pensions, health, and law and order.

Its harsh materialism has politicised the churches, which have mounted the most sustained challenge to Thatcherism's claims to moral superiority.

While Thatcherism champions economic growth at almost any cost, support for the green movement and environmentalism has grown across society.

While Thatcherism stresses the importance of voluntary action, the voluntary sector is increasingly a focus for coalitions pressing alternative policies and solutions to social problems. And a majority of the public sector professional classes refuse to give it support.

There are also areas of the country which emphatically reject Thatcher's new Britain. This is most obvious in Scotland where dissident nationalism and the labour movement speak more authoritatively for the nation than Thatcher's besieged ministers. Much of the north of England, Wales, and the inner cities have cultures and coalitions of social groups which are resistant to Thatcherism.

But widespread resistance to Thatcherism will only be mobilised into opposition around political struggles which create an alliance among different groups.

Thatcher's flagship, the poll tax, could well provide the ground for such an alliance. It epitomises Thatcherism's values, with an individual paying the same tax, whether dinner lady or duke. It will shift resources from poor to rich. It will further centralise state control at the expense of local democracy. All are issues which have before become focal points of opposition to the government.

Many of the constituencies Thatcherism has already failed to incorporate will be further antagonised by the tax. Indeed, as the opposition in Scotland shows, the breadth of the tax creates the potential for broad, popular protest, involving the labour movement, local authorities, community groups, black, youth and women's organisations.

But turning resistance into opposition is not enough. This will at best limit Thatcherism. The opposition has to be transformed into a movement in support of a progressive, alternative strategy. The Left cannot merely contest Thatcherism's terms for the creation of the new order. It has to develop its own vision of what that new order should be. It has to become a force capable of commanding the new terrain.

The Left

The obstacles to this are evident in the divisions which disable the opposition parties as an electoral force. But these divisions cannot be overcome simply by electoral pacts. For they are symptoms of more fundamental pressures for political realignment which are redefining what the 'Left' could stand for.

The new divisions in the British labour movement, with the breakaway of the EETPU electricians union, the formation of the SDP and the SLD, the reformation of the Left into its so-called 'hard' and 'soft' factions and the rising energy of progressive social movements, are not separate developments.

This is a single restructuring of the Left: the product of the dissolution of the Left's old constituencies formed by the old order, and the emergence of new ones, which the traditional organisations of the Left cannot fully represent.

This has created three major problems for the Left.

Firstly, there is a division between those parts of the Left which want to struggle around the aspirations, antagonisms and opportunities of the new terrain, and those which want to keep alive old policies, in the hope that this will resurrect the

old world for which they were fashioned.

Secondly, there is a division over how to come to terms with the new terrain. The Right of the old labour movement - the EETPU and the SDP - have their own version of modernisation which recognises the new order but largely acquiesces in the Thatcherite settlement. As yet, however, the Left of the labour movement, even where it recognises the new terrain, has failed to produce a modernising perspective which is up to the historical task.

These divisions have in turn created the third and most important problem: how to construct a vision of socialist modernisation, which could provide the common reference point for a social coalition for progressive change. How can a sense of collective purpose, and social solidarity be constructed on the new terrain?

In the past, the Left's project has provided a common reference point for a progressive social coalition - popular fronts in opposition to fascism in the 30s, the progressive expansion of the public sector in the postwar period. The Left will need such a vision in the future. But as things stand the dissolution of the Left's old constituencies is leading to fragmentation, rather than the consolidation of a new coalition around an alternative political perspective.

The difficulties of renewing a sense of common purpose run throughout the Left's politics. How can a coalition be built from diverse social groups, with different interests? What forms of political organisation and struggle will represent and mobilise these groups, many of whom do not identify with the labour movement? What ideological perspective might provide a sense of common purpose and values for this coalition?

Social forces

Central to realignment on the Left is the recomposition of the working class, because assumptions about the character and interests of this class have provided the collective purpose for left politics.

Class in modern capitalism is not the product of a single polarisation between a ruling class, which owns the means of production, and a working class of wage labourers. Class is produced by the intersection of different kinds of exploitation, which produce different class positions within the workforce.

The working class is that class which has no productive assets to counter capitalist exploitation at work. But the development of postwar capitalism has produced a great swathe of wage earners and the self-employed, who control some kind of productive asset - skills, knowledge, organisational power over production - as part of the means of production. They are both exploited and exploiters. An increasing number of people in modern capitalism occupy these 'contradictory class locations'. And this complexity has increased with the new divisions created by the transition to the new order.

The importance of these contradictions within the workforce means that class cannot straightforwardly provide the collective interest for modern socialism.

As importantly, there is no such thing as a 'pure' class identity. Everyone comes to their sense of their class through their sense of gender, and ethnicity, as well as regional and religious attachments.

Exploitation through work is not the only determinant of how power and resources are distributed. Other forms of oppression and domination systematically structure inequalities in power. The preponderance of women and ethnic minority workers in low-wage, low-skilled jobs cannot be explained by capitalist exploitation. It can only be explained by the way that gender and racial discrimination allot people to different places within the workforce.

Women and black people thus have a potential point of common interest which cannot be reduced to class, and goes well beyond the workplace. Sexism and racism affect their sense of self, their identification with other people, throughout social life.

What does all this mean for a socialist strategy aimed at mobilising a movement with a common interest in a progressive restructuring?



'Socialism will not succeed on the basis of an appeal to a single 'pure' class identity'

Socialism will not succeed on the basis of an appeal to a single, 'pure' class identity. It will need to construct an alliance of social forces, made up of diverse class and social interests. This does not mean that 'class struggle' should be downgraded. It means that class politics will have to take new forms: more than ever it will be about building alliances. But as importantly the social arena will be a key area of contestation. Socialist strategy must connect economic struggles with social, moral, sexual and ethnic struggles. This can no longer be a secondary agenda, after the 'class' struggle. It must be alongside it, centre stage.

The interests of the majority of the workforce in the next decade - women - can only be advanced if working time, domestic responsibilities and child care are transformed together. Action at work - class struggle - will be pointless unless it is conceived as part of a wider social struggle against women's oppression.

The importance of the social agenda is not confined to women. For most workers social life has become more important with the decline in male working time, and rises in real earnings. Increasingly coalitions will be most easily constructed around issues which affect the quality of social life - health, education, ecology - rather than around the workplace.

Popular alliances

In tandem with the dissolution of the Left's old constituencies and the emergence of new social forces, the 1980s have witnessed a weakening of traditional forms of socialist struggle, and the strengthening of alternative forms of popular struggle.

It is vital the Left develops popular ways to mobilise people in political action, because Thatcherism is privatising politics, squeezing the public spaces for political action. The unions are no longer the focus for political mobilisation that they were in the late 1970s, local authorities are no longer able to provide the innovative models of municipal socialism that were produced in the early 1980s, by the GLC for instance. The freedom of higher education, theatre, the arts, the media, are under attack. The infrastructure which supported left political action in the 1970s is being dismantled.

Despite this, new popular movements have grown around voluntary organisations, community groups, the churches, music, and single-issue campaigning groups. Live Aid and the Mandela concert showed that hundreds of thousands of people could be mobilised around political events, which were implicitly anti-Thatcherite.

The decline of traditional struggle and the rise of novel forms of struggle have produced a crisis of representation and organisation among the opposition to Thatcherism.

Many social struggles go unrepresented in formal politics because they do not fit within the culture and priorities of the labour movement. The labour movement is weakened as a result. But so too are the social movements which have no systematic access to parliamentary power or to collective bargaining.

The key to the future of the opposition to Thatcherism, and the character of the Left, will be strategic alliances between the labour movement and popular forces outside it. This will require a transformation of the labour movement's culture.

The Labour Party's election defeats are symptoms of a far deeper crisis in the party's relationship with the society it seeks to govern.

It is unable to develop a vision of socialist modernisation, because it is still trapped within its inheritance of social-democratic managerialism. It does not recognise that the crisis of socialism is not a set of election setbacks, but a failure to modernise itself alongside the social and economic forces behind the creation of the new order.

As yet it has been unable to come to terms with the dissolution of its traditional constituencies, and to reach out to new social forces. The political momentum for change can only be built through a wide range of campaigns on health, housing, the poll tax, which cut across society. But too often the Labour Party seeks to substitute itself for broad social movements.

The confines of the Labour Party's narrow political culture will only be broken by a transformation of union culture. In the past eight years industrial struggles have provided a focus for political struggle. Unions have been vital to defend workers from more assertive employers. The labour movement remains an important obstacle to Thatcherite restructuring, and the unions are beginning to respond to the new terrain with recruitment aimed at growing sections of the workforce.

But as yet this is not based on a recognition that the restructuring of the unions' role requires a strategic response. The recomposition of the workforce, the influence of new technology, the international competitive forces carried by foreign companies setting up new plants, the ideological and legislative attack on the logic and power of collective action, are not separate crises. They are a single, fundamental restructuring of the unions' position.

Collective bargaining is no longer about regulating predictable economic routines, but about setting the terms for the creation of the new order. Bargaining agendas have to be expanded to cover training, working time, and industrial democracy, if the unions are to effectively contest capital's terms for the creation of the new order.

The industrial agenda will have to be simultaneously a social agenda if the priorities and culture of unionism are to reflect the interests of women workers. Industrial struggles will have to have a wider political dimension written into them: they will only be won if unions reach out to speak for, and win the support of, a wider public.

The conduct of the miners' strike in South Wales and Scotland, the NHS campaigns, the activities of the Scottish TUC, are all examples of how the labour movement must operate at the centre of alliances in society rather than as a sectional force.

Political perspective

The Left can again command the times, but only if it develops a political strategy which generates a social coalition in support of a socialist modernisation on the new terrain.

Thatcherism and the private sector are creating their version of the new order by tearing down established 'demarcation lines', not just on the shopfloor, but throughout society, for instance between the private sector and the state sector.

The trouble is that much of the Left is still trapped within its own demarcation lines which divide economic struggles from social struggles; state action from private initiatives in society; individual choices from collective solutions; national policies from international issues. If the Left is to step into the new terrain it must break these political demarcation lines which it inherited from the old order.

A new left perspective cannot be a list of revised demands, policies or slogans. The Left's entire project must be re-fashioned: it has to develop a set of principles which should guide the organisation of the new order, of post-Fordist society.

The aim must be to renew a sense of social solidarity and common purpose, but based upon a recognition that society has become more plural and diverse.

The key to this is to develop a vision of democratic modernisation. These twin themes of democracy and modernisation would set the trajectory for society's development.

The aim would be to ensure democratic development in the broadest sense, through expanding decentralisation, diversity and choice, but within a reinvigorated culture of collective responsibility. To be popular and legitimate, socialist strategy must be driven from the 'bottom up' rather than brought in from the 'top down'. The state must encourage change from within society, not insert socialism into society from the outside.

Democratic modernisation cannot just offer collective solutions. It must give a clear place to individuals. It must guarantee a set of rights and entitlements to life chances, recognise the basic democratic importance of individual choices in consumption, lifestyle, housing and sexuality, as well as in politics. It must match the plurality and diversity of society and aim to empower people in a range of economic and

social settings, from the home to the high street, the workplace, and the council chamber.

Modernisation would proceed within this democratic setting. It must be economically modernising, embracing the new technology revolution. It must be socially modernising, fashioning new forms of social welfare to match the needs of modern workers and families. It must be politically modernising to reform Britain's political structures to match a more plural, diverse society, in which there is a strong desire for greater decentralisation of state power. It must be internationally modernising. Rather than attempt to resurrect the power of the nation-state, it must seek international alliances to exert control over the international setting for democratic modernisation in Britain.

We take up these themes of democratic modernisation in the following four sections.



'British politics is caught between a depressing sense of paralysis and a defiant Britain-will-be-great-again nationalism'

The Economy

The Left has yet to establish its credibility as a force with a strategy to modernise the economy. This is a vital disablement, for it leaves the Left without a coherent strategy to match the new technology revolution and the internationalisation of the economy.

A key part of socialist modernisation must be the development of a new economic strategy. This would aim at a continuing modernisation of the economy to make it more internationally competitive. This is a prerequisite for rising living standards and more extensive redistributive policies. But the trajectory of modernisation must be directed by social goals rather than the interests of private capital. To ensure this, relations of economic power will have to be transformed through regulation, social ownership, economic democracy and state intervention.

Such a strategy faces several major problems.

There will be competing demands: investment will be needed to reduce unemployment, but it will also be needed to modernise the economy.

Britain's income from oil exports will decline in the next decade. But there are few signs that manufacturing industry is in a position to fill this gap through high-productivity, high-skill production.

The restructuring of the last decade has created new patterns of corporate power which will complicate the task of controlling the economy to social ends. In particular, control has further internationalised with the extending reach of multinational corporations and banks. It will be impossible to completely disengage from these international economic pressures.

Finally the Left needs to be clear what the means and the aims of the strategy are. Social ownership is in part an end in itself: to ensure the nation's assets are owned by the working majority rather than a minority. But in part it is a means: to achieve a different kind of corporate performance. The Left will only win support for its strategy if it lays out the benefits social intervention will bring, whether this is increased efficiency, higher investment in the UK, more spending on training, or tighter environmental controls.

The goals will differ for different kinds of businesses, for instance, whether they are public utilities, or internationally competitive manufacturers; large established companies or small innovators. In many cases social control will not exempt companies from market pressures: it should ensure that companies respond to these pressures in a different way. Working people demand value for money in the high street. They will demand the same as investors in socially-owned enterprises. Social control cannot be an excuse for inefficiency; it must develop efficiency within a social context.

The Left's strategy needs to be based upon the recognition that in the long run the British economy will only be as efficient and innovative as its units of production. Thus, the strategy needs to focus on modernising the productive, economic base.

This does not mean that macro-economic policy has no role. Managing the exchange rate, interest rates and private and

public borrowing, will still be vitally important. In addition, the real productive economy will have to be insulated from disruptive, speculative, international capital movements, through taxes, quotas or direct controls on international capital transfers. But in the long run what matters is building a productive economic base.

Achieving this will require a mix of decentralised initiatives and strategic direction.

Innovation of new products and production processes will be crucial to the future strength of the economy. This requires more than lines of robots to make the same old products, for the same old markets. It requires attention to all aspects of a business from design through to marketing. Planners and civil servants cannot innovate new products through a grand plan. It can only be done on a decentralised basis by technologists, designers and managers within companies responding to changing demand.

The need for decentralisation in turn implies that the market will play an important role, simply because it is the best way to co-ordinate lots of economic decisions, and to ensure that production responds to consumer choices.

But the market left to itself creates unjustifiable inequalities; it does not account for the social costs and benefits of economic decisions.

Most importantly, private initiative through the market is incapable of tackling many of Britain's structural economic weaknesses. This requires a national strategy to strengthen the foundations of a modern economy - science and technology, research and development, education and training. Here the state will have to play a strategic role in combination with schools, universities, companies, local authorities, trade unions and pressure groups.

This raises the most troubling question for any left economic strategy.

Most of the economy's productive assets, which will be vital to the modernisation of the economy, are controlled by private companies. How can social control be exercised so that these assets are developed within a social economic strategy?

Control

Control will not be achieved through a single policy. It will require a mix of measures to reshape the economy - through democratic regulation, social ownership, and other measures of economic democracy.

Traditionally left strategies have been based upon two ideas of power which are drawn from the old order. Firstly, that the central power lay with a company's owners, who could set the imperatives for the company's development. Thus a change in ownership would bring the power to set a company on an entirely different course.

Secondly, ownership of the high volume production units was central to the control of the remainder of the national economic flow line which was dominated by production. These were the commanding heights of the economy.

It is not the supposed electoral unpopularity of social ownership which demands a reassessment of the position, but shifts in corporate power in the transition to the new order.

Many companies' room for manoeuvre is limited, not by the directives of their owners, but by their position within their market sector - whether they can dominate, or whether they are dependent upon other companies.

In addition, in many companies and industries power has shifted away from production towards marketing and retailing. It is here, 'close to the consumer', that key decisions are being made about what should be produced. Production is losing its old dominance.

This has had important consequences for corporate power. In many sectors the key power lies with retailers and marketing companies, rather than producers. These are the new commanding heights of the economy. For instance, Marks and Spencer control much of the textile industry through controlling producers' access to the market.

On top of this control has internationalised. For instance, in the car industry the key company to control is not Ford UK - the largest producer - but Nissan, the smallest, most efficient producer, which is setting the pace which all the other

producers have to follow. But controlling either will be difficult because both companies rely on highly integrated international operations; indeed this is true of almost every vehicle producer in Britain.

These developments set three criteria for any viable strategy. To influence a single firm it will be necessary to influence the development of entire sectors; that is, relations between companies, rather than single companies. It must take account of the shift of power away from producers towards retailers. And finally it must deal with the internationalisation of control.

A central element of the economic strategy must be more extensive and intensive regulation of particular companies but also entire sectors. This will be vital to influence power relations between companies, how suppliers and producers develop together, the process of innovation and to protect consumers and the environment from abuse.

It would also provide some leverage over a range of companies it would be difficult, if not impossible, to control through ownership. A key power a UK government would have over foreign companies wishing to locate or expand production, would be to regulate, or deny, their access to the market. Common European codes would allow control to have an international dimension often lacking in social ownership strategies.

Statutory regulation covering investment in the UK, purchasing, employment and training policies, and industrial democracy, would have to be fairly intensive. Regulatory bodies would have to become deeply involved in corporate decision-making to be effective.

But this regulatory framework, covering every major sector, could not be mechanistic. It would have to be a form of democratic regulation, to ensure that the regulators did not become completely ensnared by the companies they were seeking to regulate. Local regulatory boards could become organising points for campaigns by alliances of consumers, workers and the local community. Democratic external regulation would be accompanied by internal industrial democracy.

Thus democratic regulation could have a dynamic of popular involvement which is lacking in most static, statist notions of social ownership. It would politicise economic decision-taking.

There is an important corollary to this. As control over access to the market is such an important regulatory power, the strategy would have to command the support of consumers. Only with their support would it be possible to credibly deny companies access to the market.

But regulation alone would not achieve control. Social ownership will have a vital role, particularly of key infrastructures - telecommunications, electricity, water and gas - because they provide essential services which affect the rest of the economy. But the forms that social ownership takes need to be modernised.

If state corporations are established they would need to be tightly regulated, decentralised and in parts opened up to competition, to ensure they did not exploit their monopoly power as they undoubtedly have in the past.

Social ownership strategy should be aimed at a transformation of the culture of ownership and control, as well as being an instrumental economic tool. If the working majority are really going to own the nation's assets they have to feel it in their everyday lives, as tangibly as their building society accounts. The strategy needs to develop an expanding popular culture of social ownership.

For instance, legislation could be passed forcing the top 200 companies to make over 10-15% of their shares to workers' trusts, or wage-earner investment boards, or the state could take strategic stakes devolved to regulatory bodies. The strategy should include tough inheritance taxation to provide each 18-year old with a social capital stake.

To have a tangible sense of ownership people have to be able to sell their shares. To avoid this leading to a reconcentration of ownership, social capital markets would have to be established, separate from the stock exchange, through which individuals would be able to sell their stakes back to the state



'To influence a single firm it will be necessary to influence the development of entire sectors'

or to wage-earner funds.

This cannot be a 'left strategy'. It must generate and arise from real popular demands. In the next few years there will be considerable potential demand for such a strategy. Even the limited regulation of British Telecom has mobilised consumer disenchantment with the company. The wave of hostile foreign takeovers which will sweep the economy in the run-up to the creation of the single European market will lead to demands for state intervention. The growing saturation of traditional forms of saving and investment - pensions and housing - will lead to new demands for more direct forms of investment in the economy.

The Left needs to fashion a strategy which articulates these demands within a social economy strategy, as an alternative to enterprise culture and popular capitalism.

Social Strategy

A new social strategy must break out of the confines of the debate over the welfare state. The welfare state is underfunded. But the real crisis of the welfare state is a social crisis. It was erected on the economic and social foundations which have crumbled.

The social crisis is the product of two factors.

First, despite the rise of the welfare state, most welfare is still provided within families, or not at all. But the rise in unemployment, single-parent households, and women's employment, has dramatically altered families' capacity to provide welfare. Most women are no longer 'available' to care for dependents. In many households income for care has declined with unemployment and low wages. But in tandem social needs are changing and intensifying, particularly as the number of dependent old people rises.

This has produced a crisis because of the second factor: the failure of socialised welfare to adapt to the changes in family resources for welfare provision. There is a deep social contradiction between a welfare state fashioned in 1945, for the workers, families and dependents of the old order, their housing and social needs; and the needs of workers and families in the new order in the 1990s.

This suggests several themes which should guide the renewal of the Left's approach to welfare.

It cannot primarily be about expanding the welfare state through pumping in more resources. Social welfare provision has to be transformed, as well as expanded.

The key focus for this transformation cannot be the welfare state, but how income and the organisation of work combine to determine the ability of the state, families and individuals to provide for welfare.

Thus a new agenda must examine how the economy of work has to be reorganised - for instance, through minimum incomes and more flexible working time - to allow people the time to better provide for their welfare. It must not be about how the welfare state can accommodate to an organisation of work which cannot be changed.

This also means that welfare cannot simply be about state provision. Thatcherism has set up a simple dichotomy between private provision, which is flexible, efficient and driven by choice; and public provision, which is inflexible, inefficient and driven by bureaucracy. The Left must break through this dichotomy by stressing the ways public provision must work with individual, family, and collective initiatives outside the state, to deliver socially-guaranteed levels of welfare.

Finally this agenda cannot just be about helping people in poverty. It will only be possible to construct a new coalition in support of an expansion of socialised welfare - which will benefit the worst-off - if it also offers benefits to the better-off. This means the stress must be on universal, rather than means-tested, benefits.

The debate over welfare in Sweden is conducted in a much more positive way because most benefits are universal. Child benefit here is second only to the Royal Family and the NHS in popular esteem because it is universal.

The guiding theme for the agenda must be social citizenship.

It must guarantee a choice over how a set of rights which make up modern welfare are delivered - rights to health, education throughout life, flexibility of working time, childcare and a reasonable standard of living.

We take three issues as illustrations of how this new welfare strategy would work in practice: unemployment, childcare and working time, and housing.

Unemployment

The best way to guarantee a reasonable standard of living, and thus welfare, is through providing reasonably-paid employment. Thus a vital part of the welfare strategy must be the reduction of unemployment.

The persistence of unemployment requires the state to play a major role in planning the provision of work, based on a high-quality training and employment programme which would offer a guaranteed place for anyone unemployed. This is in effect, a shift from the goal of full employment to the goal of a universal employment guarantee.

Beyond that, the links between economic growth, job generation and training for the unemployed have to be planned more closely. In the next year, for instance, more than 30 building projects worth more than £1 billion each will start in the UK, but there has been no programme to train more building workers in advance.

The phased introduction of a minimum wage would push employers towards high-productivity, high-wage production, rather than low-wage production. It would contribute to efficiency as well as social justice.



'Despite the rise of the welfare state, most welfare is still provided within families, or not at all'

Childcare and working time

Social provision is organised as if most women do not work, and thus can take care of children, the elderly, and the sick within the home.

The lack of socially-provided child minding, nursery provision, post-school day care for children, care for children when sick, means that by and large women still take this responsibility, as well as working.

A renewed welfare agenda must build upon the informal solutions which abound among networks of women, to provide a universal entitlement to socially-guaranteed childcare for any employed parent.

But this will not eradicate the strains of most women's dual shift unless there is also a reorganisation of working time. For work is still organised as if most workers are men without domestic responsibilities. Thus a range of measures to make working time more flexible would need to be introduced - improved maternity and paternity rights, sabbaticals, care leave and shorter working days.

Universal childcare and reorganisation of working time would appeal across the classes of working women. But it would disproportionately benefit the least well-off. It would be the biggest attack on family poverty since the introduction of child benefit.

It would help to free women from the burdens of the double shift and provide the basis for reforming the domestic division of labour between women and men. It could thus be part of a cultural and sexual reformation.

To provide for the myriad childcare needs, it would be best pursued through alliances between the local state and autonomous groups, which would be funded by the former but which would take responsibility for care themselves.

It would be a popular example of the benefits social control of the economy can bring - the organisation of work around domestic needs, alongside the needs of production.

Housing

A universal entitlement to housing could be financed through a single housing allowance, paid to homeowner, private tenant, or council tenant alike. This would replace mortgage tax relief and housing benefit, and cut across the housing divide by putting all householders on the same footing.

The local state must have a crucial role in providing housing for the homeless and people who cannot afford to buy. But this **should** mainly be pursued through genuinely democratic decentralisation, based on housing co-operatives, which

would have much greater freedom to arrange for maintenance, decoration etc.

But in addition the Left needs to address the needs of those on below-average earnings who want to buy their home. For instance, a state equity scheme could be introduced which allowed people on below-average earnings to buy half a house with the local authority buying the other half. Over time the householder could buy out the state's share. On sale, the state could take out its share and return it to a fund to finance further joint purchases.

Mortgage tax relief means the state already has a massive involvement in the private housing market. A left strategy has to redirect the state's involvement to the needs of the least well-off, promoting an alternative culture of state-supported homeowners.

This is not a complete agenda. These proposals are illustrations of the kind of universalistic, non-statist welfare policy that could be applied equally well to health, education or care for the elderly.

People And Politics

An alternative social and economic strategy will only succeed with a parallel democratisation of political decision-making. Just as the inherited institutions of economic and social policy are ill-matched to the challenges of the new terrain, so too are Britain's political structures.

The Left must campaign for a system of political decision-making which matches a more flexible, diverse society, in which people have a strong desire to take greater responsibility for decisions which shape their lives.

Britain is one of the most centralised societies in the West. The dangers are evident in Thatcherism's authoritarian centralising of state power.

Thatcherite solutions rely on an alliance between the centralisation of state power, which symbolises 'taking determined action'; privatisation, which symbolises 'efficiency', and individualism and consumerism, which symbolise 'decentralisation and choice'.

Thatcherism's centralisation of state power, combined with privatisation, is destroying the middle tier of democracy which lies between the individual and the central state.

The Left's strategy cannot be based on an attempt to redirect the central state to new socialist goals. It cannot be a list of demands for state action.

The state cannot simply be occupied, it must be transformed. A socialist strategy must aim to establish a new relationship between the central state, decentralised democracy and individuals.

At the heart of this must be the decentralisation of state power, to ensure the state has to respond to the constituencies it is meant to serve. The Left should campaign for strengthened local government, regional government and national governments for England, Scotland and Wales, as well as an elected second chamber.

Similarly state services - education, housing, health and the public utilities - must be opened to decentralised control, through local elected boards and councils.

But this decentralisation must not be a new form of corporatism - of unions, employers and government getting together to make deals. That simply will not represent the diversity of interest among consumers and the community which need to have the major role in determining the needs services should meet.

The state's role must primarily be enabling. To enable people to come up with their own chosen solutions to problems through a plurality of autonomous collective organisations in society. The enabling state would have to be genuinely plural - it cannot be a subsidisation of leftwing causes. The aim would be to promote cultural and social change from within society, rather than relying on the state to insert change from above. We take two examples of how the enabling state might work in practice: football violence and child abuse.



'Peace, aid, ecology and anti-apartheid are all causes which have brought hundreds of people into political action'

Thatcherism's solution to football violence is strengthened state surveillance, through identity cards, tougher policing and stiff jail sentences. That kind of approach is not merely authoritarian - it will not solve the problem. For football violence is a problem of mass behaviour within society, which can only be tackled effectively from within society.

The Left's agenda should enable football supporters' clubs, local authorities, the clubs and the police, to solve the problem from within, by developing their own strategies for dealing with troublemakers. It must change the culture in and around football.

On child abuse, Thatcherism's solution is tighter surveillance of families and children. But what is required is a deeper cultural revolution in men's behaviour, and an examination of the resources available to women and children to escape from and control male violence.

Thus local, non-state solutions, involving women's groups, the Women's Institutes, charities, churches and voluntary organisations, could provide a social infrastructure of support and care which people could turn to, without plunging into bureaucratic state procedures.

The Left's aim should be to promote responsible self-regulation to give people the resources and tools to take control of the situation for themselves in alliance with the state.

In the long run, the political system and state power will only reflect the plurality of interests in society with the introduction of proportional representation.

But short of that, the state can be opened to control by more plural interests, through a strategy aimed at promoting self-management.

The International

The transformation since 1945 of Britain's place in the world is one of the most striking examples of the decay of the foundations upon which the old order was built.

A former great power has become a medium-sized European power. This is in part due to the rise of other economic powers, in Europe and the Far East. But in part it is the result of more pervasive forces which are diminishing the power of all nation-states: the internationalisation of the economy. And yet, at the same time, Britain still has a distinctive world role, formed by the legacy of imperialism.

This combination has produced one of the most powerful but least contested parts of the nation's politics - its schizophrenic national identity. In the face of internationalisation, British politics is caught between a depressing sense of paralysis and a defiant 'Britain-can-be-great-again' nationalism with powerful popular appeal.

This is a clear case of where economic strategy, and political culture, cannot be separated. It will only be possible to develop strategies which match the internationalisation of power, if there is a parallel transformation of Britain's national identity, our understanding of our place within the world.

Far from encouraging such a change Thatcherism plays upon the national schizophrenia. It stresses Britain's powerlessness in the face of international recession and competition. But it also plays upon the symbolism of making Britain powerful and independent once more, with its defiant anti-Europeanism, its little-England nationalism.

But the Left too has a considerable investment in the mythic power of national sovereignty. Most left strategy is based upon the assumption that if progressive social forces can take control of the national state, socialism will follow. Foreign influences are constraints to be resisted. Much of the Left's attitude towards the European Community has been informed by such thinking.

Reworking Britain's position within a changing international order, to break the cycle of paralysis and knee-jerk nationalism, will be a major part of socialist modernisation.

The key to this is to locate Britain's place within Europe. Increasingly, large businesses are becoming Europeanised, with cross-border mergers and trade expanding. Tourism,

fashion and television are becoming increasingly European.

The Left must seek opportunities in this process by setting domestic campaigns and strategies within a European dimension.

Europeanisation may create the setting for people to demand higher standards in a range of areas. More integrated European production could lead to collective bargaining being aimed at higher continental standards of working time, pay, training, and industrial democracy. British social provision and environmental controls are much worse than those of most of our EC partners.

The creation of the single European market in 1992 will give these trends added impetus, but a particular form.

The shape of a more integrated Europe is being determined by international companies because they are able to act in a political void. There are no equivalent democratic institutions capable of controlling them. The Thatcher government's reluctant approach to Europeanisation, rejecting the establishment of strong European economic institutions, only increases the freedom of these companies.

The overriding aim of international socialist alliances must be to create a movement for institutions capable of democratically controlling European development. For all its failings, the EC will be the focus for this strategy. The Left must campaign for the democratisation of decision-making within the EC. But to underpin this it must seek out firmer multilateral links with European socialist and communist parties to develop a common approach to Europeanisation.

The Left's agenda must be to expand Europeanisation, rather than resist it. It should include European social policy, based on common laws and codes about rights at work; common industrial and regional policies; and a wider foreign policy which gives Europe a distinctive place in international affairs untrammelled by the United States.

The second major force shaping Britain's international role is the change in superpower relations.

The USA's transatlantic role is likely to become more problematic. The expense of the US commitment to Nato may become increasingly prey to isolationist pressures in the USA, and the need for retrenchment in government spending. The rising Pacific Rim economies, particularly Japan and South Korea, may become a more important arena than Europe for US policy.

In parallel, *perestroika* in the USSR is likely to have important repercussions for the Soviet Union's international role. The opening of the Soviet economy to greater international investment and trade will lead to a lowering of other barriers which divide Europe. This could open an alternative focus for political alliances. The full implications of *perestroika* for the shape of Europe will only begin to be felt in the next decade.

The USSR is likely to enter the International Monetary Fund, and along with India and China could become a focus for a new progressive international alliance, which could regenerate the United Nations and other international institutions.

The importance of these developments for British politics should not be underestimated. For the third major development around international politics in Britain has been the growth of a popular, progressive humanism around international issues. Peace, aid, ecology and anti-apartheid are causes which have brought hundreds of thousands of people, from all sections of society into political action.

They have their core principles of social solidarity and social responsibility which are one of the strengths of progressive forces in Britain. They are based on an explicit recognition of the interdependence of national struggles. No domestic issue, apart from the miners' strike, has generated anything like this kind of political response.

Any reassessment of the Left's position on disarmament must be set within the context of these developments. It must draw on the opportunities of Europeanisation, changes in American policy towards Europe, the energy of international campaigns in Britain, but most importantly now the changes in the USSR.

The most obvious aspect of the Gorbachev initiatives on nuclear arms is that they have opened up multilateralism as a genuine route to disarmament. Gorbachev's willingness to

negotiate means there is no longer any excuse for Western multilateralists not to press ahead with disarmament.

Yet in addition the Gorbachev initiatives also make unilateralism more feasible. But only if the Left takes up the momentum of *perestroika*, the opening of the Soviet Union, to transform the basis for the defence and disarmament debate.

As links with the USSR grow, as political reform moves on so it will become more and more difficult for the European Right to maintain its imagery of the looming threat of Soviet invasion which is the key justification for keeping nuclear weapons.

The Left's response to these developments should not be to search for new formulae to stick into Labour's election manifesto.

The Left's aim must be to translate the international momentum of the Gorbachev initiatives into the domestic arena. It must campaign for a defence and disarmament policy, based on growing European-Soviet co-operation, and reject the imagery of the Soviet threat.

Such a political campaign would open up a range of unilateral, bilateral and multilateral routes to European disarmament and demilitarisation.

Unilateral disarmament of Britain's nuclear capability should remain part of the Left's strategy. But it should be accompanied by strategies for multilateral European moves, as well as bilateral moves to establish co-operative relations with the USSR.

Europeanisation should add another dimension to disarmament policy. US bases, for instance, will probably only be removed through developing an alternative European defence strategy, which does not rely in the United States.



'Much of the Left is still trapped within its own demarcation lines which divide economic struggles from social struggles'

The Party

The Communist Party has played a vital role in the Left's reassessment of its position in the wake of the crisis of the 1970s. However, the party has not escaped the pressures which have affected most of the Left. The bitter divisions within the party in the early 1980s reflected deeper questions about what the party's role should be.

The party needs to move into a new phase of political work. The analysis and critique of Thatcherism needs to be extended into a wide-ranging debate about how to develop the ideas and forms of struggle that would mobilise people around a modern socialist prospectus. This will require theoretical and ideological work.

But the party also needs to examine how its influence can be expanded within the institutions and movements of the Left, to expand this debate, and propagate it. How can the party's industrial infrastructure be rebuilt? How can the party take up the energy and politics of the new social movements, to appeal through new forms of struggle? How can the party's role be maintained given its size, and how can more people be recruited to the party? What is the party's long-term relationship with the Labour Party and other parts of the opposition to Thatcherism? These are among the questions that the party will need to address in the process of modernisation.

Socialism

It is important to locate this strategy along the road to socialism. Socialism will not be made in Britain in the 1990s or the first decade of the next century by this strategy. There will be distinctive stages in the development of society towards socialism. But the shape of that society will be prefigured in what socialists do now. The principles which guide socialist struggle must be consistent, but must gradually extend their influence throughout society.

Those principles are, at root, about a democratic, pluralistic self-managing socialism in which people take responsibility for the forces which shape their lives. It must be a socialism which lives and grows with people's everyday lives. For socialism is not centrally about a party, or the state, but about empowering people to take control of their lives. •