

**Refreshing
the parts
that others
cannot
reach**



**Peter Hain
On Reviving the
Labour Party**

CREATING A MASS PARTY

The 1979 general election may have signalled the start of an onslaught against working class people, but it has at least encouraged Labour Party members to begin to come clean with ourselves. There is now a growing acceptance that things cannot go on as before. All the main warning signs are on: a long term decline in Party membership; subsiding voter commitment; and, above all, the erosion of the Party's base in the working class both politically and culturally.

In response, there have been two main courses suggested for the Party's future. The first has come mainly from the Right of the Party with the enthusiastic support of the media and proposes both a more 'efficient' organisational structure and a switch to centrist policies. The second, coming mainly from the Left, argues that the Party's crisis electorally and organisationally is due essentially to the failure to implement socialist policies when in Government or to provide a radical socialist lead whilst in opposition. The Labour Right's prescription, when it is not breathlessly haranguing those in the Party who have the temerity to want genuinely socialist policies, really amounts to a call for a social democratic Party, possibly drawing in others on the centre-right.¹ In short it wants not only an abandonment of the Party's socialist *raison d'être* but a reliance upon precisely the kind of consensus politics which has dominated all post-War British Governments and has so abjectly failed. Those are the policies which have presided over Britain's economic decline and paved the way for Thatcherism. And, if it is accepted that the Party itself has suffered over the last two decades, then is it too much to ask Labour's social democrats to acknowledge that they have been in power whilst the demise which they now so eagerly seize upon occurred? That is not to say that all the organisational remedies suggested from the Right have no merit. But it is to reject the ideological perspective upon which they are predicated.

This pamphlet will therefore confine itself to discussion the Left's general prescription. Whilst broadly endorsing that prescription it will nevertheless be argued that it suffers important defects which, unless remedied, will make remote indeed the prospect of a significant advance towards socialism through the Labour Party. It will be argued that, whilst the Left's emphasis on the problem of Party *leadership* is critical, it is by no means the whole story. Indeed, too great a pre-occupation with the consistent renegeing by Labour leaders on the Party's policies can obscure the real problems we face. Accountability of the leadership to the Party rank-and-file is a crucial pre-condition for socialist advance, but there is little point winning internal democracy reforms in what may turn out to be an empty shell in terms of its real working class base.

There is equally little point in pretending that the Party's problems are primarily *organisational*. They are not. They are *political*. Creating a mass party will not be done by improving the agency system, restructuring the conference or having a realistic subscription rate – whatever individual merit there may be in such reforms.² It will only be done by re-casting the Party's politics and strategy, and this pamphlet attempts to suggest how that might be tackled.

Immediate Context

There are many reasons why socialist activists have cause to be sceptical of the Party's prospects, including of course the record of the last Government. But, equally, there are a number of reasons why creating a mass membership should be more possible now than at probably any time since the War.

First, we have had since May 3 1979 a right-wing rather than a social democratic government in office, heralding an end to the post-War consensus politics that have been practised whatever Party was in power. That consensus politics – whether the 'Butskellism' of the 1950s, the technocratic 'Wilsonism' of the 1960s or the 'Corporatism' of the 1970s – stifled the possibility of radical socialist measures. It had a debilitating effect on politics, draining it of the sense of ideological purpose without which activists (especially of the left) can see little point to their involvement. Moreover, social democracy's permanent stranglehold on post-War Government has not delivered the economic goods as its apostles – whether Anthony Crosland from the left or Harold MacMillan from the right – had claimed it would. The option of giving British capitalism a human face and managing it 'better' has now been demolished, not so much in the eyes of socialists for whom it always was fraudulent, but by its own intrinsic failures. Radical socialism is now on the agenda, partly because of these failures and partly because of the Conservatives' own break with middle way politics and their lurch into right-wing monetarism. It may take a little while for the implications of the stark choice between monetarism and socialism to seep through but, as recession bites deeper, there is the real possibility of winning mass support for socialist policies again. The only question is whether the Labour Party will be equipped to take full advantage of this.

Second, the Tories' policies are exacerbating the more general economic recession and crisis of capitalism, and will increasingly provoke opposition from workers regardless of what the Labour Party does. Thatcherism is specifically designed to attack working class living standards and to undermine working class power. As resistance on wages, jobs and cuts grows, so the opportunity for a political input to struggles that would otherwise remain 'economistic' will grow. The question is therefore likely to be less whether socialism will offer a rallying point, and more *which* socialists will have the credibility to assume the leadership of such struggles. Without doubt there will be an upsurge in political consciousness and participation and the Labour Party is potentially best placed, both to benefit from this and give it cohesion.

The *third* advantageous factor is that a political vacuum has opened up within the trade union movement at the key level of rank-and-file activists. The shop stewards movement is much weaker now than in the 1960s and early 1970s, partly

because of the anaesthetising effects of successive incomes policies – particularly the 1975-77 social contract – on rank-and-file activism. The decline of the Communist Party's industrial base has been important in encouraging a political vacuum and, although other groups (notably the SWP) are trying to provide leadership at this level, their role is largely peripheral and their effect minimal as compared with the period when the shop stewards movement was at its height. Workplace activists are crying out for a radical socialist lead, both politically and organisationally, yet it should also be understood that the Labour Party will have to intervene in ways which have hitherto been avoided if we are to fill that vacuum.

Fourthly, there is a growing feeling amongst many of a progressive or radical persuasion who busied themselves in 'single-issue' politics in the 1960s and 1970s, that a broader political movement is necessary. Single-issue campaigns (e.g. CND, Vietnam, Stop the Seventy Tour, ecology, Anti-Apartheid, Anti Nazi League) have enjoyed a boom period during the past two decades, partly in response to the failures of parliamentary politics and the Labour Party in particular.³ They involved large numbers of people, especially youth, and achieved important successes. Yet, at the end of the day, they have come up against power structures which it is simply not possible to combat within a 'single-issue' framework: a socialist response is needed.⁴ Similarly, community action groups have been able to generate immense activity and enthusiasm for short periods – frequently putting local Labour Parties to shame – but have been unable to sustain their momentum.⁵ Radical community activists too, have started to look back to the Labour Movement.⁶ But they will not join the Labour Party unless we make a break with tradition.

Fifth, the growth of the women's movement has opened up a vital extra dimension to socialist politics and enabled women to get involved in political action on *their* terms, pushing specifically women's issues onto the political agenda. Although groups to the left of the Labour Party have responded far more effectively to the women's movement, their Leninist mode of organisation has now come under attack from important layers in the women's movement.⁷ And although that attack has also been directed at the Labour Party, we are in a potentially better position to accommodate their legitimate criticisms.

Sixth, the far left is emphatically not enjoying the expansion that might have been anticipated in the aftermath of the Wilson/Callaghan regimes and under the threat of Thatcherism. Indeed the organised left outside the Labour Party is in crisis. The Communist Party's membership is continuing to drop (partly because its programme is insufficiently distinct from that of Labour's left). The International Marxist Group, too, is in decline. Whilst the Socialist Workers Party, although retaining its political position and consolidating its organisation, has notably failed to grow. The right-ward lurch in the student movement is symptomatic of the present plight of left-wing politics. Yet the left *inside* the Labour Party has increased its strength – a factor which, coupled with the wider decline of the left, has encouraged many socialists previously hostile to the Labour Party to join it.⁸

Seventh, youth politics – which in the late 1960s especially developed its own distinctive momentum – is now in disarray. The alternatives to the Labour Party look far less attractive than they did in the days of the hippies and the student revolt. There is none of that brash confidence amongst radical youth that inspired

them to feel they could take on the system by themselves only a few years ago. Given an open campaigning orientation, the Labour Party could attract in tens of thousands of young people literally crying out for such an opportunity. Yet the Labour Party Young Socialists, hamstrung by the sterility of Militant's politics, appear incapable of grasping the opportunity now before them.

But if all these seven factors give cause for encouragement, they also face the Party with a moment of truth: in order to create a *modern* mass party, a serious and quite fundamental change of strategy is required. For there are also formidable obstacles in our path which can no longer be ducked.

The Main Problems

Perhaps the most crippling problem is that the Party today is, and historically has been, far too committed to parliamentarianism. The dominant perspective has been that socialism could be achieved through the ballot box alone. Such a perspective has not been confined to the Party leadership: the Left too have been guilty of endorsing it. Whatever the attributes of Bevanism and however important is the role of *Tribune* today, both have suffered from too unhealthy a preoccupation with Parliamentary politics. This is not to argue against the primary importance of winning control at Westminster or town hall level. It is simply to suggest that Party activists have neglected the vital task of creating a mass movement *outside*, capable of exerting sufficient power to make feasible socialist changes through Parliament or the local Council.

We have to be clear about where we think power really lies. Those who travel the Parliamentary road alone presumably do so in the belief that real power lies in Parliament: on that reasoning the task logically becomes one of winning a majority in order to execute that power. Yet surely our actual experience — quite apart from a decent socialist analysis — tells us different? Effective power, as opposed to the trappings of it, really lies in big business, the multinationals and the private and public bureaucracies which serve them. Power in short lies in the edifice of capitalism for which the parliamentary system is a front.

That being the base, the real priority must be to tackle the sources of power at their roots. In opting for a largely electoralist strategy, the Labour Party has imposed a self-inflicted wound which, besides restricting the possibilities for socialist advance, has meant that the Party has been unable to involve its own membership and potential membership in active political campaigning. There has been no conception of mass mobilisation or struggle.

Part of the reason for this is the fact that the historical division of the Labour Movement between the trade unions and the Party was accompanied by a more or less strict demarcation between the 'industrial' and the 'political'. The trade unions set up the Party to gain representation for the working class in *Parliament*; the priority was not seen as being to build a mass political movement based upon struggles outside. Another corollary was that the Party only intervened on the shop floor through the unions — and usually only through official channels. The result of this is that the political links between trade unionists and the Party have been steadily ossified, weakening both wings of the labour movement. It has bred economism

amongst trade unions. It has also meant that the Party has not seen the need to create an extra-parliamentary movement in the *community* to mirror that in the workplace.

A further problem about which especially the left in the Party is misguided is the nature of contemporary trade unionism. There is too ready an assumption that the steady increase in trade union strength (*viz.* better organisation and greater membership) *necessarily* strengthens the forces for socialism. It of course goes without saying that such advances are welcome and strengthen the defensive capacity of working people. But too many on the left have a totally romantic view of the trade union movement which exposes their lack of knowledge and involvement in it. Whilst it can be argued that the politicisation of the membership of public sector unions (e.g. NUPE, CPSA, SCPS) over the cuts and wages has been an important advance in a socialist sense, that must be set against two other trends to which insufficient acknowledgement is given and which are more significant. First, the national trade union leadership has been absorbed into the power structure through a corporatist mechanism. Incomes policy has been the central cog of this mechanism which has forced union leaders into the position of acting as brokers for government between the interests of their membership and employers. One result has been to weaken the political independence of the whole movement and to smother rank-and-file activism. The second worrying trend has been — far from the media accusation of increased trade union politicisation — an actual decrease in serious political commitment by the membership at large. This is partly a fault of trade union organisation and leadership. But it is equally a product of the kind of wage militancy that has recently predominated. It has often reflected the ethics of American-type trade unionism, narrowly self-interested and, crucially, not linked to socialist struggle. This does not mean that wage militancy is not justified — there is not a single recent major strike which should not have been supported to the hilt. All that ought to be questioned is whether collective bargaining as it is now conventionally carried out positively advances the prospects for socialism. Unless the trade movement orientates itself towards struggling for workers' control it will remain trapped in the role of imitating capitalism rather than replacing it.

Looking now at the Party itself, far too much of what passes for political activity is geared to 'declaratory politics' rather than 'activist politics'. Typically, discussion at CLP level is followed by the passing of a motion which is sent elsewhere, thereby neatly passing the buck and avoiding the pressing problem of implementation or campaigning for such a policy at CLP level. In that way, not only does much of a local Party's politics occur in a vacuum divorced from the real world outside and from linking into working class struggles, but it also fails to face up to the structure of power that usually makes such 'resolutionary politics' irrelevant. The left of the Party is no less guilty of this. Indeed in some respects, it is *more* guilty, inclined to rest its laurels on ritual denunciations and rhetoric which produces a strong sense of self-satisfaction but again sidesteps a rather less comfortable reality. This is no less the case at national level. The National Executive Committee, despite its left composition in recent years and its important stands, appears not to conceive its role outside elections in *campaigning* terms. It is far too orientated to Parliament, to making demands on the Government (or Opposition as the case may be). For

instance, in the case of a national strike, the Party's function nationally ought to be to mobilise maximum support for picketing and so forth, not just by issuing appeal circulars, but by practical intervention. Similarly, it was noticeable that the Party's national campaign against racism, launched in 1977-78, was limited in effect to producing briefings, posters and leaflets. That compared with the huge momentum geared to *action* generated by the Anti Nazi League during that same period.

The fact is that the Party does not consider strategy in sufficient depth. There is no clear view of how capitalism will be replaced by socialism, except by reliance upon securing electoral office which has to date been conspicuously unsuccessful.

From the standpoint of mass politics, the Party's *style* of politics is also a major problem. Particularly to outsiders, it is overly bureaucratic, cumbersome and organisationally conservative. It is actually very difficult to get actively involved in, which is ironic to say the least! By contrast, pressure groups or community groups offer a sense of immediacy and informality which is very attractive to new recruits wanting to do something positive but lacking in the confidence necessary to cope with relatively formal structures or responsibilities. The new member's first real contact with the Labour Party is usually at a Ward meeting and that can be enough to put you off for life. Ward parties hold the key to a vigorous Party, yet they frequently appear to be 'all talk and no action'. People who join want to do something *political* and the Party will only be able to satisfy that unexceptional desire by becoming a continuously campaigning movement rather than one which only really comes to life around elections.

There is also the crucial question about the organisational ideology of a Party professing to be socialist. This was raised sharply by the women's movement in the 1970s and is argued by the authors of a seminal work, *Beyond the Fragments*.⁹ They mount a trenchant criticism of male dominated and essentially authoritarian left-wing groups, but also focus on the more general problem of attempting to build socialism with a Party structure that actually reproduces in itself many of the worst features of hierarchy and elitism present under capitalism. We must evolve a form of politics and of organisation that enables us as far as is possible to live out our socialism in the course of our Party activity.

Strategy

We need therefore to reorientate the Party so that it adopts an outward campaigning strategy in order to grasp the opportunities now before us. That of course assumes acceptance of the principle that it is necessary to create an extra-parliamentary dimension to our politics, to complement work within the Westminster and town hall systems. Indeed, we need to go further and give a priority to extra-parliamentary action, even to the point of subordinating electoral politics to it. For, unless we build from the bottom upwards, involving ordinary people and Party activists in struggles for power over their workplace, their neighbourhoods, schools, estates and so forth, then we shall be unable to create an authentic form of socialism rooted, not in hierarchical structures, but directly in the people.

The mistake made by the Labour Party has been to assume that socialism could be grafted on from above through Governmental action in a hostile capitalist

environment. Equally, the defect of so-called revolutionary left groups is their overriding pre-occupation with building a centralised Party structure which it is envisaged will mount a centralised coup against the capitalist state. Both approaches seek to impose or introduce socialism from the top down. Yet unless people have actively been involved in the process of themselves building socialism the result will be not socialism at all, but a mirror image of the present highly centralised and increasingly authoritarian capitalist structure.

Moreover, it is necessary to dispel the myth that parliamentary and extra-parliamentary strategies are necessarily in conflict, that there is a straight choice to be made between reform or revolution. As has been cogently argued, it is quite false to pose the choice for the left in that way.¹⁰ What is required is to press for parliamentary change as far as the system will allow it, from the base of extra-parliamentary activism. Any other strategy in contemporary Britain is doomed, either to absorption by the State (in the case of an exclusively electoralist approach), or to frantic irrelevance at the margins of society (in the case of fringe left groups). For example, the value of the Alternative Economic Strategy, contained in Labour's programme but espoused most vigorously by Labour's left, is that it offers a means of mobilising politically behind tangible policies which could then be extended. In other words, it is not simply that the AES policy package, of increased public expenditure, planning, public ownership and planned trade, offers a solution to the immediate problems of unemployment and industrial decline, but that it could become the focus for a political strategy, pressing such concrete policies as far as is feasible within the present capitalist system and thereby creating the opportunity to push further through and beyond that system.¹¹

In orientating the Labour Party towards such a form of extra-parliamentary based politics, the aim would be not only to rejuvenate the organisation itself, but to create a mass mandate for socialism and for the next Labour Government. To make socialism a genuinely popular crusade once more requires us to go back to our roots, to the base of society and build from there.

Immediate Targets

Clearly, our objective must be to involve the working class as a whole in the Party. But, in the short term, we need to increase the Party's political activists and this should be attempted immediately by appealing to four 'target groups' of activists, for their participation will be a prerequisite to a much broader appeal.

First, the many shop stewards and branch officials who would respond to co-ordinated rank-and-file trade union action organised by the Labour Party. Traditionally, it has been accepted that the Labour Party, being both child and the political arm of the trade unions, should leave industrial intervention as the exclusive preserve of the trade union movement under its official leadership. That position should no longer be tenable. We need to intervene at workplace level and organise politically as others have done, for only in that way will we involve the crucial layer of the local leadership of the trade unions.

Second, the Party at local level must forge links with single issue campaigns and community groups, not necessarily seeking to embrace those groups formally, but

ensuring that they see us as their *natural* political allies. This will involve a sharp change in the Party's politics but will reap the rewards of involving those who now have a healthy scepticism for what they see as successive sell-outs by local and national Labour administrations and the complicity of the Party's membership in this.

Third, those outside and nominally to the left of the Party who have legitimate reasons for being critical but who nevertheless would be sympathetic to a campaigning, socialist Labour Party. Many such activists are not actually members of any left-wing group but associate with the left's activities. They are on the *periphery* of groups like the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party or the International Marxist Group (for example, the *Morning Star*, *Socialist Worker* and *Socialist Challenge* all have far bigger readerships than the shrinking memberships of the CP, SWP or IMG).

Fourth, there are many disillusioned people who are likely to have been involved at one time or other in political action and who could be attracted into the Party if it changes direction. Whole constituencies of activists believe that conventional party politics is a sham and yet they drift aimlessly for the lack of a political alternative. This is especially the case for youth; we are long past the golden age of youth politics in the late 1960s to early 1970s and, significantly, students throughout the educational system have dropped out of organised politics; even the far left groups who recruited so heavily in schools and universities in the 1960s and 1970s now find their appeal has slumped.

Priorities

Given these target groups and the context discussed earlier what, then, should be the priorities for revitalising the Labour Party and building a mass membership?

The first and most pressing priority is politically to revitalise constituency parties. If we want to draw in new members, and keep them, several comparatively modest changes are required. CLPs ought to be taking the lead in active campaigns, now often initiated by community groups, trades councils, single-issue groups etc., so that the local Party is seen as a natural focus for radical change. The Labour Party should automatically be viewed as the source of leadership and cohesion in local campaigns, not out of any divine right, but by setting an example. Linked with this, CLP's headquarters should present an outward-looking image, becoming "action centres" for the community, involving people not necessarily in the Party and allowing them to use the Party's resources (e.g. meeting room, duplicator). A sense of political excitement must be built to replace the grey atmosphere of old canvass cards which predominates between elections in too many local Parties. Also crucial to renewing the vigour of CLPs is to develop our own newsletters, ideally Ward-based, delivered regularly door-to-door and written in a style which is rather different from the Party's conventional leaflets. We need to learn from community newspapers. Basically, the style needs to eschew open Party propaganda which the uncommitted view with total cynicism. Indeed, parochial interests and issues should be covered, based on a feed-back from local people and preferably containing news about the Party's plans to take up the relevant matter. Once having gained sufficient

interest locally, a harder socialist message can be introduced, but only in a way which avoids haranguing readers and which excludes inter-Party sloganeering. In short, we need to relate to immediate local concerns and use those as a means of bridging the gap towards socialist ideas. It would, of course, be easy to degenerate into mere populism as has been the case for the vast majority of the Liberal's "community politics" newsheets. Equally, it would be wrong to pretend that there is any virtue in pouring out socialist or Tory-bashing slogans when people are not listening; they have heard it all before and Labour's record in office gives no cause for believing a new version of the same old story.

Next, CLPs should help to set up or become closely involved in tenants associations and to work with tenants organising for control of their estate. The same principle could apply to residents associations or even street committees.

It is also vital that local Labour Parties support and relate to local women's movements and the various campaigns they initiate. Working class women especially are often trapped at home and, in their isolation, both lack the opportunities to fulfil themselves personally and are vulnerable to media stereotyping of political ideas. The Labour Party could assist them to organise, but only if we learn from the women's movement and avoid paternalistic or bureaucratic modes of involvement and organisation. There could be considerable value in establishing renewed women's sections in CLPs, not imitating the old, politically moribund, women's sections but reflecting the modern ethos of the struggles for women's rights and equality. These could draw women into the Party whilst also providing them with the base to re-orientate the Party to their concerns.

We need to mount specific drives amongst black people, especially black youth, on a basis of working together on the major issues of racism blacks confront daily. The Party has taken the black vote for granted for too long; we must cease appealing for the support of the black communities at election time alone; we need to campaign alongside and in support of black people continuously.

At national and local levels, the Party should be involved in single-issue campaigns such as the Anti Nazi League and the Anti Nuclear Campaign. This should be with a dual objective of both mobilising the maximum impact on specific, important issues, and building left unity where possible. Sectarianism is the cancer of the left and there is no shortage of it in our own ranks. On the other hand, we should not advance a model of left unity around a lowest-common denominator consensus, where a breadth of opinion is only brought under one banner at the cost of politically anaesthetising any impact. Such unity tends to give a priority to gathering respectable supporters and to a bureaucratic style of lobbying rather than to grass roots action, building up the base of support and involvement. We should not fudge political differences or go for a minimal consensus that means all things to all people. Instead, we should make a careful selection of key issues within pressing problems around which maximum activity can be generated; it is no accident that successful recent campaigns such as the ANL have concentrated on relatively narrow targets within problems (e.g. racism) which were clearly much bigger. Above all, we want *unity in action* rather than pursuing futile exercises in crossing t's and dotting i's to try and arrive at a mutually agreeable *unity in theory*.

There are, however, two models for specific-issue campaigns. The first (usually

favoured by the present LPYS and some groups on the far left such as the WRP) is to organise on the basis of a campaign run and controlled by the sponsoring group, and invariably requiring acceptance of a particularly narrow socialist programme as a pre-condition for involvement. Such an approach does not involve large numbers of people and is often merely a recruiting front for the organisation concerned. The second model is to involve the maximum support possible on the basis of agreeing to a programme of action. The latter approach has been found to be more successful, provided it is led on the basis of clear though not doctrinaire socialist instincts and a commitment to organising at grass roots level, rather than to passing resolutions in smoke-filled rooms.

For it is locally that a mass party will be built. Party activists ought to be initiating local campaigns against the cuts because these have the potential of winning to socialist ideas huge layers of people not previously politically aware but forced into awareness by cuts in their services or facilities. To do that however, Labour Party members will need both to offer clear socialist policies (the last Labour Government, after all, started the cuts) and clear ideas for action. So far as the latter is concerned, it is difficult to visualise how the anti-cuts campaign can be successful without the use of nationally orchestrated industrial action. For without the powerful leverage industrial action would exert, there is a great danger that brave localised acts of resistance (like in Lambeth) will be isolated and crushed. There is no possibility of successful local anti-cuts campaigns in the present hostile economic environment without a mass national response. But, again, that will not be forthcoming by relying upon appeals to trade union executives; local Party activists must be organising actively for it.

Which brings us to the crucial area of workplace action. Having rejected the argument that it is not legitimate for the Labour Party as such to organise industrially, there are two main areas of priority for intervention. The first is to implement the Party's existing commitment to set up workplace branches. We need desperately to carry our message into factories and offices and provide our members with a framework for recruitment and organisation, whilst integrating workplace branches within local Parties through direct constitutional links.¹² The second area is perhaps more controversial and concerns the need for the Party officially to organise support for strikes, resistance to closures, struggles for recognition etc. At one level Party headquarters ought to have organisers co-ordinating activity amongst CLPs so that support for workers is maximised. At present, the Party's official response tends to be confined to the level of the NEC passing a resolution or sending an appropriate delegation. Welcome though that is, it is not sufficient and in the case of major confrontations like Grunwick or so-called secondary picketing, an organised campaign of political support from the Party could immeasurably strengthen trade union struggles. Such a course will also have the advantage of making the Party directly relevant to the action taken by workers, rather than a body which periodically asks for their vote.

Conclusion

There is consequently no short cut to creating a mass Labour Party. Organisational

changes are needed, doubtless financial ones too, and certainly constitutional changes to extend the accountability of the leadership to the membership. But above all, the Party has to change its *politics*. We ought to be campaigning in the community, providing a radical socialist lead nationally and actively supporting trade unionists. We ought also to be offering a vision of socialism as a genuinely liberating force, of a decentralised form of socialism, based upon workers' control and neighbourhood self-management. Our task is not to manage capitalism better. Neither is it to allow socialism to become synonymous with the dead hand of the State and centralised control. Of course we will have to wrest power away at a national level. But this can only be achieved through a fusion of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary pressure built from the bottom upwards. Once the Party follows that path, it will be possible to construct a mass membership with mass support in the country. Meanwhile, we need to redress the balance of debate within the Party in favour of *strategy* as opposed to *policy*.

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