the new politics
a socialist reconnaissance
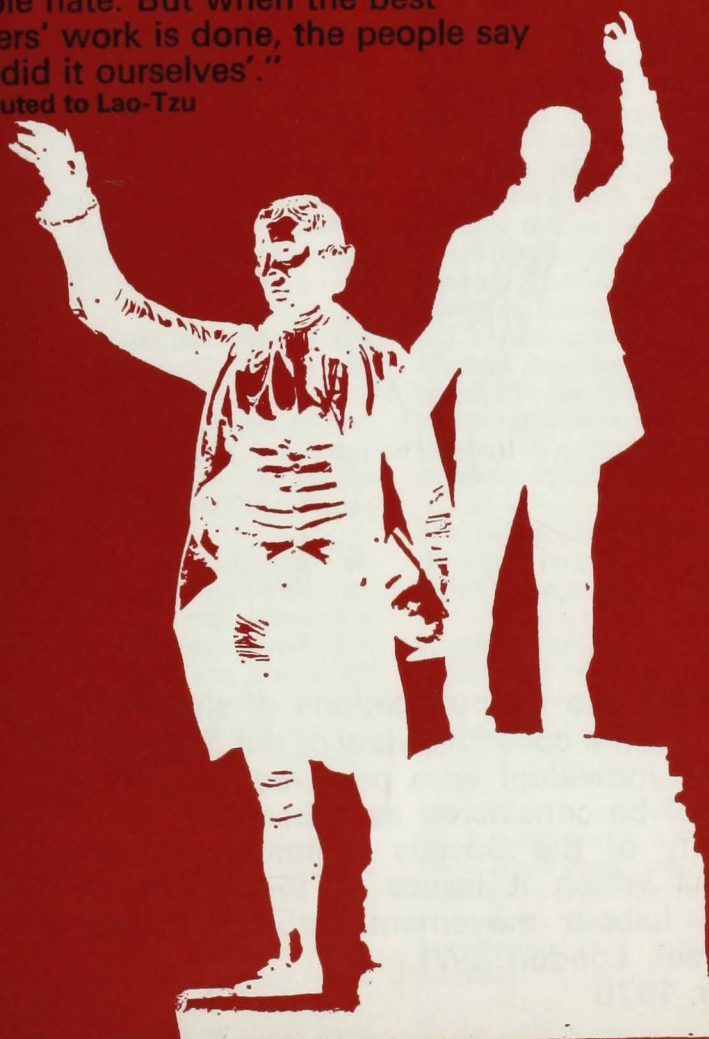
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" As for the best leaders, the people do not
notice their existence. The next best,
the people honour and praise; the next
the people fear; and the next the
people hate. But when the best
leaders' work is done, the people say
'we did it ourselves'."
Attributed to Lao-Tzu

fabian tract 402
the new politics:
a socialist reconnaissance

1. introduction

This pamphlet is a reconnaissance of some of the issues, arising from industrial and technical change, which may be moving into the centre of politics in the seventies; and it suggests ways in which a socialist party working within the limits of democratic consent might approach them. It does not seek to spell out detailed policies.

Parliamentary democracy and the party system have in recent years, been criticized not only for their inability to solve some of our problems but also for their failure to reflect others adequately. It is not sufficient to congratulate ourselves on having avoided some of the tragedies that have beset other countries. We cannot be so very certain, as events in Ulster have proved, that we shall be able to cope with human and community tensions better than anyone else has done.

t is not only some members of the public who are disenchanted. There are people inside active politics, of whom I am one, who have long begun to feel uneasy, and to believe that the alienation of Parliament from the people constituted a genuine cause for concern.

Political debates concentrating on economic and other management issues between government and opposition (whether Labour or Conservative) sometimes appear to blank out everything else, especially on the mass media, while a number of other issues are not sufficiently discussed because they have not been fitted into the current pattern of political debate.

Since the war the underlying problems of Britain's economic performance have occupied a central position in all political argument and government competence in handling them has been regarded as of over-riding importance. Both parties believed they would have

been assured of election, or re-election, at any time if they could have demonstrated their ability to produce a balance of payments surplus, a steady rate of growth, full employment and stable prices all at the same time. Both Conservative and Labour Governments believe they have been defeated, in turn for failing to perform this quadruple feat. The Treasury dominates British government because the nation allows economics to dominate British politics. Even the proposal for Britain's admission to the EEC followed from the fact that each party, in turn, has been driven, somewhat reluctantly, to the belief that it was only through a " merger " with the Six, that Britain could hope to escape from its economic straitjacket. This — more than the political inspiration of a wider Europe which has played a significant part in winning continental support for the Treaty of Rome—has been the basis on which our approach to the Common Market has been generally recommended to the British people. The idea of finding a new role in Europe after the loss of empire has been secondary in public debate.

The public have been assumed by the strategists on both sides to be moved by economic arguments above all others.

Important as these issues are, and will continue to be, they are not the only ones that matter, and the public may have sensed this more quickly than the political parties. Fewer people now really believe that the problems of our society can be solved simply by voting for a Government every four or five years. More people want to do more for themselves, and believe they are capable of doing so, if the conditions could only be created that would make this possible.

If the Labour party could see in this

rising tide of opinion a new expression of grass roots socialism, then it might renew itself and move nearer to the time when it is seen as the natural Government of a more fully self-governing society. Unless we succeed in doing this there is a danger that the Labour Party might get bogged down in stylized responses and fail to attract the support of those, especially among the young, who want to see more real choices in politics, and less of a personal contest between alternative management teams.

By contrast, some conservative criticism of the present system appeals to those who have become disenchanted because they believe that democracy, as it is developing, acts as a break on the managerial imperatives of modern society, and that what is needed is the exercise of additional authority to direct the nation towards the more rapid and efficient achievement of its national economic objectives, set from the top. These two views about the role of government in relation to the people are only the latest expression of a philosophical difference that has existed since the birth of the Labour movement, and they throw light on a whole host of other issues, such as taxation, education, industrial policy, industrial relations and the degree of participation that workers and students and others should be allowed.

If we want to make the Labour party more relevant, we must, as socialists begin with an analysis of the underlying changes which are now taking place in our industrial system.

Karl Marx, in *Das Kapital,* wrote : " Technology discloses man's mode of dealing with nature, the process of production by which he sustains his life and thereby lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations and the mental

conceptions that flow from them." This view, which has been amply confirmed by subsequent experience, provides a convenient starting point.

We can safely leave aside the scientific principles that have made technological advance possible and confine our attention to the result of their application. It is not how modern technology works that concerns us, as citizens, but what effect it has had on life. It is the development of power in this, third, industrial revolution that has fundamentally affected the lives and long-term prospects of mankind and has helped to trigger off some of the most important political movements of our time.

Professor Buckminster Fuller, has defined technology as meaning a capacity to get " more out of less " and if we try to quantify the advances technology has made in the last fifty years, in terms of sheer machine capability, we can get an idea of the pace of that change, and what it has meant.

In 1920 an aircraft flew at 100 miles per hour for the first time ; in 1945 the first jet passed the sound barrier at just about 700 miles per hour ; today a spacecraft moves at 25,000 miles per hour.

In 1920 the most lethal instrument of destruction was the bomb or machine gun that could kill a few hundred if aimed at a cohesive human target ; in 1945 two hundred thousand people died at Hiroshima from a primitive atom bomb ; today up to eight million people could be killed outright and millions more injured by radiation if a single hydrogen bomb landed in the middle of London, New York or Tokyo.

In 1920 the fastest calculations were made on a mechanical adding machine. Even in 1945 there were no computers in use ; in 1970 the latest generation of

computers can perform a million calculations a second.

In 1920 radio was in its infancy ; in 1945 there were only 60,000 television sets in use in Britain and no international links for it ; in the summer of 1969 1,000 million people world-wide saw and heard Neil Armstrong step down the ladder on to the surface of the moon.

This is the scale of power the world is now attempting to cope with, using institutions that were largely devised before this power reached its present level. In this country our parliamentary, political party, civil service, trade union, educational and legal systems, all of them now under stress, were developed at a time when the machine capability was infinitesimal compared with what it is today. Many of our problems stem from institutional obsolescence. We live at a time in history when both the personal and collective material options open to us, and the expectations we have, are far greater than ever before. Yet a large number of people feel that they have progressively less say over the events that shape their lives, because the system, however it is defined, is too strong for them.

Many of the social tensions in Britain which we are now struggling to resolve actually derive from this feeling of waning influence. It is impossible to believe that the only liberation required can be achieved, as conservatives suggest, by freeing a few thousand entrepreneurs from some government interference and providing them with higher material incentives by cutting personal levels of taxation. Nor can public ownership, economic planning and improved and more egalitarian social services, essential as all these are in providing the basis for further advance, alone provide the answer. There must be further fundamental changes to liberate people and allow them to lead fuller and more satisfying lives.

The process of re-equipment of the human race with an entirely new set of tools, for that is what has happened, has produced two trends—the one towards interdependence, complexity and centralisation requiring infinitely greater skills in the management of large systems than we have so far been able to achieve—the other, going on simultaneously, and for the same reasons, towards greater decentralization and human independence, requiring us to look again at the role of the individual, the new citizen, and his place in the community.

It is to a brief account of these two trends that I now want to turn, in order to see both how to improve the complex systems we need and to gain effective control over the human ends they serve. Without a socialist framework of analysis we cannot relate the industrial, human and political factors to each other.

2. interdependence, complexity and centralisation

The growth of machine capability in all advanced societies whether capitalist or communist, has been made possible by the adoption of techniques of production which have allowed a degree of specialisation of labour only attainable in very large units. Henry Ford's revolution has now spread world-wide and no nation wishing to industrialise and raise its living standards, and no firm competing for markets, has been able to avoid following the same pattern of production. With the arrival of true automation the scale of production has increased still further and the optimum return on investment in research, manufacturing and marketing is now only possible when the whole process can be kept near its capacity.

This is one of the factors which has contributed to the growth of the big firm within nations and the multi-national corporations which now span the world, crossing frontiers as if they did not exist and building up an annual turnover that in many cases exceeds the national budgets of even major industrial countries. General Motors, the greatest multi-national of them all, has a turnover in excess, in money terms, of the Japanese national budget, and it is growing more rapidly. The multi-nationals operating in Britain have achieved a higher rate of growth, and of exports, than the national average—partly because of their world-wide operations and partly because they are operating in those areas of new technology which are expanding fastest for that very reason.

It is widely assumed that the dominance of the multi-nationals will continue and will be extended in the years ahead. These are the very firms that generate most new technology, use new technology and control new technology. They will almost certainly employ more and more people by growth and take-over and will increasingly be making their key investment, research and design decisions on a global scale to gain the benefits of low labour costs and good industrial relations in one country, high skill content in another, good market prospects in a third, and advantageous tax measures wherever they exist.

If the framework of control can be got right and this will certainly require the development of effective international trades unions, these companies can act as major elements in developing industrialised societies more quickly, or in permitting the more rapid take-off of the under-developed areas of the world. Without a framework of political control they could, almost literally, take over the world.

But it is not only the ownership and top management that are tending to become centralised. The whole system of world trade has become infinitely more complex and the economic prospects of every nation are now intimately interwoven together by a fabric whose threads include patents and royalties for inventions and production technology; management skills that may come from abroad and the indivisibility of the market—quite apart from the earlier international links reflected by foreign share ownership or the influence of bankers in Wall Street, the City of London or Zurich.

Seen as a political phenomenon these tendencies represent the emergence of an entirely new type of economic organism, more akin to the chartered company of the first Elizabethan era and later, than to the early type of capitalist firm that emerged in the nineteenth century as a result of the adoption of laisser faire economics. They also represent a new source of

real power no longer anchored to the geography of a particular nation state, and greater than many states. For the people who work for the multinationals the problem is one of remoteness from the centre of authority in organisations whose real managers they might never meet in a lifetime of service within the vast bureaucracy of the firm.

Another aspect of this centralisation, complexity and interdependence which also stems from technological development arises in the military field. Military technology—its power and international implications—first forced themselves upon our attention in two major world wars and a host of more limited ones, and the political significance of modern weapons systems does not have to be stressed. What may not however be fully realised is the sheer size of military establishments. The Pentagon in Washington disposes annually of resources that exceed the sums spent by the British Government on all expenditure of all kinds. NATO in the West, and the Warsaw Pact in the East, each in their own quite different ways, represent an internationalisation of sovereignty in defence matters that has gone far beyond the sort of joint High Command arrangements reached under old-style treaties or alliances. Joint intelligence work, standardised specifications and interdependence for equipment and spares, joint targeting of weapons with double-key safety devices, have made defence integration almost complete.

The third great new power centre that technology has directly and indirectly built up is of course Government itself. This growth is partly in response to the growing demands of people for collective action either to promote, control, or deal with the social consequences of change ; and partly be-

cause, as the level of power elsewhere rises, the management and regulatory function in government grows just as it does in business or the armed services.

All these tendencies towards big industry, big defence forces and big governments—national and local—have occurred in all developed societies whether capitalist or communist. Interdependence, complexity and centralisation are functions of technological development not ideology.

International organisations—not one of which is yet effectively controlled by an assembly directly elected by a multinational franchise—have also proliferated, as nations have come together to grapple with the inter-relationship of civil and military technology. The United Nations, Intelsat which handles world satellite communications, GATT and the IMF, the military alliances, EEC and EFTA, COMECON and OECD have all sprung up in a single generation to regulate the system, by administrative means.

Any nation could theoretically turn its back on all this and legislate itself into a siege economy free from this intricate network of national and international power structures. But, as with the individual drop-out, it could only do so at a price in lower living standards that would not be politically acceptable.

We have instead to turn our minds to ways of acquiring more power to modify, improve, influence, democratise, restructure and ultimately gain greater control of the system to make it serve human ends. There are no instant Utopias and even revolutionary socialism has proved only to be the starting point for those countries forced by circumstances to adopt it. The evolution of a system that really reaches

the objectives that have long inspired socialists will take much longer to achieve and will disappoint many people who have, in both capitalist and communist societies, looked for some new dawn to break. What is clear is that the most radical people living under both systems have rejected the old formulae and are seeking, sometimes blindly and sometimes inadequately, for a more flexible format within which humane values could be accorded a higher priority in the development of society.

But here is the difficulty. Democratic government today means working within a complex system that extends far beyond your own frontiers, far beyond the small areas of policy that you yourself can control; and it means carrying people with you at the same time. The power of a national government is far more limited than political leaders and the public either realise or like to admit. It is unwise today for any candidate to suggest, in an election campaign, that if elected he, or his party, will be able to acquire through election, sufficient authority to solve the major problems that confront the nation.

One of the underlying causes of Labour's defeat in 1970 could well have been that we did not appreciate the changing nature of our relationship with the people, and that in our preoccupation with exercising our authority we failed to give leadership on some of the issues that required, above all, vigorous public education if they were to be successfully tackled.

More and more people are coming to understand that, if we want to make politics, parliament and government relevant again we have got to speak about them more realistically. For we are dealing with a new sort of citizen,

nowadays, who is far more intelligent than most people in positions of authority yet accept that he is. It is to the nature of the new citizen that I now want to turn—because his new power derives exactly like the new power of big organisations—from the impact of technology upon society.

3. decentralisation and the emergence of the new citizen

The tendency of technology to produce bigger and bigger units is in many ways a familiar one. The growth of big firms, huge military machines and big government has been accepted, however reluctantly, as a part of the life we now lead. Some accept them willingly as the necessary sinews sustaining the high living standards we enjoy ; others dislike them but accept their inevitability ; a few are actively engaged in fighting them, relapsing into protest or apathy whenever the machine looks like winning ; or into violence in those parts of the world where there is no mechanism for peaceful transformation and civil war or revolution is the only answer. Even in countries where this mechanism does exist, there has been a widespread rejection of the system by groups of young people.

But to limit our account of the impact of industrial change to its effect in centralising power and the big organisations that appear to control it, would be to leave out of account other developments of equal long-term importance which point in quite other directions, and which have a genuinely revolutionary role to play.

For technology also releases forces that simultaneously permit and encourage decentralisation, diversity and the fuller development of the human personality. These trends are far less well understood and when described are often received with considerable scepticism, if not frank disbelief. But it is, none the less true that given time and the right strategy, people can exercise far more influence than they now think they have. If they can be shown how to do it, more people might be wooed away from defeatism and into relevant social action.

Let us therefore turn our attention to the new citizen to see how he compares in power and influence with his forefathers.

The abolition of feudal slavery corresponded with the development of modern methods in industry and agriculture. The evolution of the factory system under early capitalism produced a tremendous social upheaval which led to the emergence of the trade union movement and then the battle for the vote. These various human responses, expressed through popular pressure groups later created the Labour Party to fight in parliament for socialist reforms to create a just society.

The vote by itself, exercised by citizens still deprived of the education and information and power that alone could make it real was not sufficient, but we should not under-estimate its influence. That governments can be removed bloodlessly in Britain and a few other countries has brought great benefit in terms of the popular accountability of political power. Slow but steady social progress has been made towards a much fairer and more stable society free from the brutality experienced by countries denied the franchise. The winning of the vote must be clearly recognised for what it was—a major decentralisation of power following industrialisation.

As industrialisation accelerated the process of decentralising power accelerated too, in both a technical and a financial sense. The technical sense derived from the start of mass production, beginning when the T-model Fords began rolling off the world's first real production line. It was only by mass production that the motor car could be brought within the means of millions ; and as each new family acquired its own car it was free to travel when and where it wished instead of being limited to the public transport timetable and route structure of the railways, buses and trams. Trans-

port decisions were thus decentralised right down to the car owner by the very same process that centralised car design and manufacture.

But the effect did not stop there. Workers in the mass production industries where unit costs were low and the articles they made were very competitive, acquired the power to wrench from their employers by determined trade union action a larger share of the profits made. Industrial action was much more effective because all large volume mass production is so much more vulnerable to stoppage. Thus centralised production decentralised some economic power.

With higher earnings most workers were able to afford to buy more goods. The first group to realise how important this new source of purchasing power was were the big firms themselves, who diverted increasing sums of money into advertising designed to attract that purchasing power back into a demand for their own products. The citizen in his capacity as a customer was seen to be powerful—even though as workers the very same people were still subjected to the indignities of authoritarian industrial discipline.

The political consequences of higher living standards did not end there. The families that enjoyed them now had options opening up that had been previously throughout history limited to the very rich. They had money they could spend and more leisure ; and the right to make their own choice between the two.

They acquired access to information and opinions previously denied to workers ; and demanded far better educational and social provision for their children. And all the time as the industrial system grew in size and expanded in technical capability and became more specialised, it also became progressively more and more vulnerable to industrial stoppages or any disturbance in the flow of raw materials or products or the transfer of funds.

It is, at least arguable that the technological revolution that really matters is not the discovery of new materials and components and products—but the genuine social revolution it has produced by first creating and then distributing new wealth and the considerable potential power that goes with it.

The revolution triggered off by economic growth in capitalist societies has in turn created such serious problems that the demand for collective action to deal with them has now become so insistent that measures of state intervention on a hitherto undreamed of scale are now being urged, and undertaken.

These developments, all involving decentralisation, derive from industrial change and are an essential part of the background which goes to make up the potential power of the new citizen, as yet not matched by an equivalent increase in real responsibility conceded to him.

Let me briefly recapitulate the powers enjoyed by the majority of new citizens as I have identified them, here in Britain.

1. He has the vote and hence shares the power to destroy the Government of the day.

2. He enjoys a steadily rising real income or more leisure or a mixture of both.

3. He has access to far better education, training, re-training and further education for himself and his family, all of which improve his analytical capability.

4. He has access to a mass of information about current affairs which was almost entirely denied to his father and grandfather ; and he hears something of the alternative analyses of events— Capitalist, Marxist, Socialist, Freudian, Christian, Maoist or Buddhist and the time and opportunity to broaden the range of his own direct experience and his relations with wider groups of people.

5. His bargaining power in industrial negotiations is immensely greater than it was, and is the greatest in those advanced industries where interdependance has gone furthest, and the cost of dislocation is greatest.

6. He can and does make increasing real demands on government for action to deal with industrial and community problems and social spending to provide the infrastructure he thinks he wants.

People today—these new citizens with this new power—have responded to the pressure of events by banding themselves together with others of like mind to campaign vigorously for what they want ; and thousands of such pressure groups or action groups have come into existence : community associations, amenity groups, shop-stewards movements, consumer societies, educational campaigns, organisations to help the old, the homeless, the sick, the poor or under-developed societies, militant communal organisations, student power, noise abatement societies, and so on. These, like the early trade unions or political groups during the first industrial revolution derive their causes, their influence and their power in some way from industrial change. Some of these groups come into being for a specific purpose and then dissolve again; others emerge as continuing organisations with political objectives to press certain issues but usually not to nominate candidates for election locally or nationally. They are a most important expression of human activity based on issues, rather than traditional political loyalties, and are often seen as more attractive, relevant and effective by new citizens than working through the party system.

They also are producing a new style of political leadership committed to a cause rather than the search for elected authority. The relationship that develops between this new structure of issue politics and the political parties, especially the Labour Party, is of crucial importance. Some such groups will be working for causes hostile to our own objectives. But the majority, being the expression of human values against oppression by authority and the system of centralised power would be natural allies if only we can discover the right sort of relationship with them. We must not mistake their criticism for hostility, nor resent the fact that those who work in them have chosen such a role in preference to work exclusively within the Party. Each side his its own part to play in the process of socialist construction, and this is, in practice, recognised by the fact that many individuals work both in the action groups and in the Party. Their importance lies in the proof they offer, by their existence and their successes, that people do have more power than many of them realise in achieving change from below.

In practice, most people do not think of themselves as having all this power, or even regard these groups as being an expression of it ; and because they don't, they often don't even attempt to use it. What they are aware of are the pressures that modern society imposes on them. They work for big organisations and feel trapped in the bureaucracies which run them. They are afraid

that their jobs will go in some merger, or that a new machine or process will render them redundant. They see their own skills, which a generation ago would have lasted a lifetime, becoming obsolete within a decade. They find themselves living in a man-made environment that can be as terrifying and unintelligible as the jungle was to primitive man. They are surrounded by experts who claim to know more than they do, and are conscious that as human knowledge expands the percentage of it known by them steadily shrinks.

They see the escalating risks of war and other civil technical disasters. Everything changes with startling rapidity, and a great number of the comfortable landmarks of national, racial, local, family and personal identity seem to be disappearing around them. Their children rebel against the old values and, worse still, seem to understand the world they live in better than their parents. They are treated on television to the horror of life in parts of the world of which their own parents knew nothing, revealing problems they find it hard to understand, let alone solve ; or entertained by programmes of simulated violence exploiting the rawest human instincts for commercial purposes. Advertising is forever raising expectations which for a large minority who suffer real poverty and relative deprivation is little short of a continuing affront.

The new citizen, despite his fears and doubts and lack of self-confidence, is a far more formidable person than his forebears. Increasingly he dislikes being ordered around by anyone, especially if he suspects that those who exercise authority under-estimate him.

A growing number of them—everywhere—are just not prepared to accept poverty, oppression, the denial of human equality, bureaucracy, secrecy in decision-making, or any other derogation from what they consider to be their basic rights — and are gradually acquiring the power to enforce that view upon the societies in which they live.

4. towards new objectives

In sketching in the changing relationship between democratic politics, the huge new organisations on the one hand, and the new citizen, both created by technology on the other, there is a common thread of argument. It is this. Authoritarianism in politics or industry just doesn't work any more. Governments can no longer control either the organisations or the people by using the old methods. The fact that in a democracy political authority derives from the consent of the electorate expressed at an election instead of by inheritance, as in a feudal monarchy, or through a coup d'etat, as in a dictatorship, makes practically no difference to the acceptability of authoritarianism. Except in a clear local or national emergency when a concensus may develop in favour of an authoritarian act of state, or if imposed it is accepted, big organisations, whether publicly or privately owned, and people, whoever they are, expect genuine consultation before decisions are taken that affect them.

It is arguable that what has really happened has amounted to such a breakdown in the social contract, upon which parliamentary democracy by universal suffrage was based, that that contract now needs to be re-negotiated on a basis that shares power much more widely, before it can win general assent again.

As far as relations with industry and non-governmental organisations are concerned what is required is a much closer link with government so that there is a two-way flow of information about policy all the time. This information flow is an essential ingredient of all systems operations control, large and small, and it has the merit of avoiding the much publicised eyeball-to-eyeball crunches and confrontations once beloved of political leaders and political commentators, and the substitution of a more intimate inter-relationship covering the entire area of public interest. Government, acting in its representative capacity must monitor the activities of the corporations and adjust the ground rules as the need arises, to secure the interests of the community. The development of new regulatory agencies, like the monopolies commission and the prices and incomes board will certainly be necessary to extend the area of public supervision.

Both government and its agencies must maintain a continuing dialogue with management and workers and administrators of non-governmental power centres, and hold them accountable for the major decisions they take.

The relationship between government and the new citizens will need to undergo a very similar transformation, using much the same methods and with much the same objectives. The two-way flow of information, explanation and policy thinking once thought to be adequately provided for by periodic general elections and parliamentary debates is now not sufficient ; and needs to be supplemented by new means of contact of a continuing nature. Socialists must concern themselves at least as much with how government works, as with the policies it pursues.

The need for a more mature inter-relationship, of a continuing kind, between government and non-government organisations and the people, has acquired added importance from the lengthening time scale before decisions become effective. Indeed the pace of scientific development may be quicker, and it is, but the complexity of the whole industrial, social and international system is now so great that

the period of gestation from problem identification through the search for a remedy, on to the policy decision and finally to fully effective action may well be a decade or more. Unless the information and communications network is really working, problems will be identified late, and perhaps inaccurately, remedies, when they come, will not take account of all the related factors, and policy decision taken without discussion may be frustrated in implementation by lacking the necessary public consent.

Perhaps the hardest thing for politicians to understand is that government no longer rotates entirely around Parliament and the old cycle of inner party policy formulation—intense electoral propaganda—voters' mandate and legislative implementation, important as they are. Winning an election without winning the argument may well frustrate at least a part of your purpose ; and conversely winning an argument may be sufficient to solve certain problems by creating an atmosphere favourable to the achievement of your objectives. This is because most democratic countries, including Britain, are what they are because of the structure of values of those who live in them and are not just monuments to the skill of the statesmen who have governed them, or the legislation that has been enacted. Anyone aspiring to political leadership who really wishes to shape the society in which he lives has now got to devote a part, and probably a majority, of his time and skill and effort to persuading people, and listening in return to what is said to him.

The Labour Party is uniquely fitted to understand that modern democracy requires a revitalisation and reformulation, on a more sophisticated basis, of the old communications philosophy of government enshrined in the idea of Parliament as a talking shop. Indeed, unless we can develop such a framework we will never succeed in reconciling the twin realities of the age in which we live—on the one hand the need for supremely good national and international management of complex systems and on the other hand the need to see to it that the new citizen, who is also a potential beneficiary of much new power, is able to direct and control more effectively the uses to which technology is put.

The alternative philosophy of government, now emerging everywhere on the right, takes as the starting point of its analysis the argument that modern society depends on good management and that the cost of breakdowns in the system is so great that they really cannot be tolerated and that legislation to enforce greater and more effective discipline must now take priority over other issues. The new citizen is to be won over to an acceptance of this by promising him greater freedom from government, just as big business is to be promised lower taxes and less intervention and thus to be retained as a rich and powerful ally. But this new freedom to be enjoyed by big business means that it can then control the new citizen at the very same time as Government reduces its protection for him.

A socialist, by contrast should never forget that he is in office in a representative capacity, regarding Government as the people's instrument for shaping their own destiny. He must remember that it is management in trust working through information and communication. Legislation may confirm a victory in argument already won ; occasionally be used to educate, more often to protect, regulate or organise, but only as a last resort to enforce settlements that cannot be reached in any other way.

This theme of continuing responsibility by leaders to the people, and by the people to each other, runs throughout the twelve issues next identified for a further socialist reconnaissance.

1. human dignity through development and diversity

It does not follow automatically from man's incredible scientific discoveries either that industrial development will come quickly enough to save us all from starvation, or that he will gain control over the new power that he has created, or that with higher living standards he can develop in real freedom. Indeed, the possibility that human dignity could be as easily suppressed by the new centres of power as it was by the old forces of authority certainly cannot be excluded. Poverty and destitution in the world are still widespread ; discrimination by race and class and sex is still deeply entrenched, even in the richest countries, and people are still held down by force by the exercise of military, political or financial power.

Traditional socialist concern, with money as a measure of inequality, remains of fundamental importance, but it must also be seen as a problem of power. Where ownership is, or can be, separated from the power of management in industry that ownership loses its capacity to dominate ; where, through social action, money can no longer purchase advantages in health and education it loses some of its capacity to maintain privilege at the expense of the many. In recent years socialists have concentrated so much on the financial aspects of politics that they have underestimated the problems of power, and have allowed themselves to be deflected from effective policies to control it directly, by supposing that nothing could be done until ownership was communal, and that when it was

communal nothing remained to be done.

If we are to make human dignity our first objective, not only have we got to eliminate poverty by using technology, secure the best possible management of our resources ; eliminate old economic inequalities and guard against the creation of new ones ; construct new safeguards against the abuse of new power ; but we must also see that our new-found capabilities do in fact permit human dignity to express itself in diversity.

One of the subtlest forms of tyranny practised by the elite, over the centuries, has been the confidence trick played on those who did escape from poverty into affluence of persuading them that in their new station they should abandon their own culture and assimilate into the culture of the elite which they were joining. Those who did so were thus stripped of their sense of identity and the dignity that went with it at the very moment when the material restrictions on them were lifted.

Unless everyone adopts the philosophy associated with the phrase " Black is beautiful " by which is meant " I am proud of what I am and want to develop within the best tradition of my own culture," we shall progressively detribalise and dehumanise people as, one by one, they pass into plenty. Our objective must not be to create a standardised, unisex, multi-racial classlessness but actively to encourage diversity in the human race so that each feels proud of his or her individual identity. Mass produced housing and equipment and products may offer the physical means by which we get " more out of less " fast enough to provide sufficient for everyone. But with that sufficiency we must try to ensure that those who obtain it will be free to develop in diversity and use their material resources to do just that. There is not

one new citizen but over 3,000 million different ones. The main organisational problem for mankind is how to create conditions in which we can live together in mutual respect within a system which protects what we want to be, without destroying the right of others to be different and proud of it.

This aspiration is not a new one—but it happens that this generation has acquired the power to make it possible.

2. towards a new view of world affairs

Of all the semantic tyrannies that make serious analysis difficult the use of the phrase " Foreign Affairs " is one of the most absurd. Technology started to abolish foreign affairs when the first real travellers conquered man's geographical imprisonment at the place of his birth, and by the time Marconi's radio messages first crossed the Atlantic and international aerial bombardment started in the First World War, foreign affairs had outgrown their old diplomatic definition. In a world where colour television pictures, carried by satellites, can reach us from anywhere in less than a second, and when missiles with nuclear warheads can be targetted to any city, from any place in the world it is meaningless to regard the Cliffs of Dover as being of anything but scenic, cultural and nostalgic significance to the British people, as a frontier against foreigners, and the rest of the world.

The idea that all the meaningful relations of any people, with others who live in other countries, can be squeezed through a network of narrow channels called foreign offices is at least a hundred years out of date.

There are world affairs, full of problems which affect the whole world. To help solve these problems we have

many resources, technical and material, human and financial, ideas and people and information that can be brought into play. There are multi-lateral organisations of which every country is a member which cover as wide a field of human activity as government—or life itself. There are bi-lateral relations with other peoples that extend equally widely. Finally, there are those diplomatic and political contacts between governments which have traditionally been handled through the Foreign Office. It would be foolish to minimize their importance, but they now represent a tiny sector of the interface between nations. Moreover, inter-governmental political relations necessarily concern themselves mainly with clashes of supposed national interest, ideological differences, and all the points of friction which, emphasized to the exclusion of other considerations, can blind all peoples to the reality of their common interest in co-operation in the war against hunger, oppression and indignity.

The new younger generation in most countries understands this better than their parents. They are more instinctively internationalist, and they realise better than their elders that the relationship between the races is a world issue that will affect their future and that of their unborn children, more than any other.

We shall never discover the full potential for the unity of mankind through foreign policy or diplomatic talks. Our best hope may well lie in trying to bypass our differences by opening up new areas of co-operation. Trade and technology, the transfer of knowledge and know how, the freer movement of ideas, these are what we should seek to promote.

Across a world communications net-

work, once it is established, we must also seek to pass accurate information about each other's problems and achievements and transfer more of the teachings of the world's greatest thinkers, so that we can all gradually come to share the same sources of human inspiration as we educate ourselves and our children to realise that we live in a world no bigger in real terms than the television screen on which we observe each other's doings every day.

Later we might consider a world bonfire to burn all our national history books and start together to re-write mankind's story so that future generations might acquire in childhood a world historical perspective of human success and failure, and learn not to repeat the disastrous mistakes we have all made in the name of nationalism and patriotism.

3. an intensive study of organisational problems

The theme of institutional reform emerged more strongly in Britain in the 1960s than at any time for a hundred years, following developments of the same kind in other countries.

Political revolutions, industrial change, schools of business studies and the evolution of control theory following the invention of computers, all in their own way, gave an impetus to these worldwide developments. It is clear that unless the world as a whole can find better means of managing all its many organisations, and unless more efficient means of creating and developing new resources can be devised, the technological revolution will take too long to realise its full potential; and will not deliver the goods necessary for their material improvement in living standards of millions of people, now living in

poverty, within their own lifetime. For a socialist in a non-socialist society to speak approvingly of the key role of management makes him, for some people, suspect, because management is associated automatically either with private industry, authoritarianism or bureaucracy, or most likely all three. But this cannot blind us to the fact that management skills are of the greatest importance and are in critically short supply. In any case, ownership has long been becoming separated from management, at least in large corporations, and that process of disentanglement can be assisted by, among other things, vigorous action by the workers.

The overwhelming majority of managers are, in effect, salaried workers, able to be hired and fired like those they supervise, even if their pay and conditions of service are vastly better. To the extent that the ownership function of control can be weakened still further, the manager and the workers should be able to identify a greater common interest in the wealth-creating processes, or else, in non-industrial enterprises, in a partnership to achieve whatever social, communal or service objectives the organisation in which they work is there to serve.

The old crude industrial authoritarianism of the past is now being attacked as directly by modern management thinkers as it is by the trade unions who are determined to change it. For management, like modern government, is simply not practicable on an authoritrian basis any more. It just won't work without a high degree of real devolution and a most sophisticated information network that feeds back continuing reports on how the human, as well as the mechanical and financial parts of the system are coping with their work. The problems of bureaucracy are not only being studied by Mao and students in-

fluenced by his thinking. Initiative, and even survival, can be threatened by it and these are of equal concern to management.

One of the most difficult problems in the evolution of institutional forms is the construction of a decision-making system that makes it possible to take decisions at the right level. If they are all made too high up the result will be authoritarian, bureaucratic and unworkable. If they are all made too low down the result can be duplication, incompatibility and anarchy.

Here, too, the twin tendencies to centralisation and decentralisation have to be studied and their contradictions resolved. In practice both tendencies are going on simultaneously in all organisations as power moves up and down in response to changing methods. It does not follow that the level at which certain decisions need to be taken will remain static, and this requires a regular re-examination to keep the system in balance.

It is this very plasticity of management structures which creates such difficulties. Until quite recently it was assumed that institutions lasted for a hundred years, leaders perhaps for ten years, and only policies changed frequently. Now the position may be reversed. The idea of disposable institutions created for a purpose, and then closed down or replaced, is a difficult one to grasp and can be most disturbing—not only in Whitehall. But it may well be that this is the right way to approach institutional, organisational and management problems, and that Mao's theory of the continuing revolution has, insofar as it means this, some relevance for all countries.

For government all this study is both necessary and difficult. It may well

lead to the hiving off of large chunks of government activities into self-contained units under the supervision of men publicly accountable, unlike civil servants, for what they do ; much more substantial devolution of real power to regions and localities and at the same time the assumption by the centre, perhaps temporarily, perhaps permanently, of some decisions that were previously taken lower down.

It will certainly also mean international discussions to learn from foreign experience ; experiments in ways of running existing international operations, including multi-national companies, more efficiently and responsibly ; and the development of entirely new international management organisations to solve those problems that cross frontiers, as many important problems now do.

The risk of unmanageability is perhaps one of the world's greatest long term problems ; and when we see the effects of even quite minor breakdowns in the management of part of our world system, or even the near breakdown of a city's organisation, the results are frightening enough to make us realise how important organisation is, and to make us give it a far higher degree of importance in socialist thinking.

4. towards workers control

Here in Britain the demand for more popular power is building up most insistently in industry, and the pressure for industrial democracy has now reached such a point that a major change is now inevitable, at some stage. What is happening is not just a respectful request for consultation before management promulgates its decisions. Workers are not going to be fobbed off with a few shares—whether voting or

non-voting. They cannot be satisfied by having a statutory worker on the Board or by a carbon copy of the German system of co-determination.

The campaign is very gradually crystallising into a demand for real workers' control. However revolutionary the phrase may sound ; however many Trotskyite bogeys it may conjure up, that is what is being demanded and that is what we had better start thinking about.

The claim is for the same relationship between government and governed in factories, offices and shops as was finally yielded when the universal adult franchise brought about full political democracy, or what it might be more helpful to re-name, " voter's control," first advocated by the Chartists, and finally conceded in 1970 when eighteen year olds won their rights.

On the face of it the perils of yielding ' production by consent ' when we have already survived the far riskier experiment of ' government by consent ' would seem less daunting. It would have been, on the face of it, more logical if the experiment in democracy had begun with industry ; and only then, when proved successful, extended to Government.

Certainly there is no more reason why industrial power at plant or office level should be exclusively linked to ownership of shares, than that political power should have been exclusively linked to the ownership of land and other property as it was in Britain until the ' voters control ' movement won its battle.

Nor, and this is the important point, is there any reason why the new demands should be any more revolutionary, in the sense of paving the way for violence, than were the old demands. It is true that some of the advocates of workers' control are believers in the violent overthrow of the existing order. But then so were some of the advocates of the wider franchise. In the event, by one of these characteristically skilful and long drawn out withdrawals in the face of the inevitable which is the genius of the British—that mixture of realism, laziness, decency and humanity that has given us 300 years free of violent revolution—the powers that be, in the end, granted the demands in full.

Consider the position on the industrial scene. Workers now have, through interdependance, enormous negative power to dislocate the system. Workers' control—if it means the power to plan their own work and to hire and fire the immediate plant management just as MPs are now hired and fired by the voters—converts that existing negative power into positive and constructive power. It thus creates the basis of common interest with local managers struggling to make a success of the business and to get devolved authority from an over-centralised bureaucratic board of management now perhaps sitting on them from above. The gap between some of the best management thinking that is now leading to the devolution of power right down to the working level on the one hand, and the workers' demand from below for real power at the place of work, is now so narrow as to be capable of being bridged and indeed it constitutes a natural convergence of two streams of thinking towards a common solution to the problem of how human satisfaction can be found in work.

One could go further and see in workers' control of individual plants as natural and inevitable a development of the role of the new citizen as is the

evolution of the international company itself; and also imagine multinationals whose plants all over the world were subject to local workers' control, constituting a sensible division of functions and working well.

This development, if it comes about, will not do so tidily, or all at once. However strong the views in favour of it may be, they are still only shared by a politically conscious minority of workshop leadership together with their academic associates. The reservations and outright opposition from the majority on the management and trade union sides are still formidable. But gradually the tide is likely to turn in its favour and when it does it will all seem less frightening if we know what is happening and why.

Probably the most important thing to be done now, is to stimulate public discussion about it as an emerging issue. It cannot, almost by definition, be imposed from above, having to grow from below in discussion between those concerned, creating a new leadership in the process of discussion and negotiation and conflict which must accompany such a radical change in the relationship between workers and the owners of capital.

It is important that those who advocate workers' control, or are sympathetic to it, should not mislead anyone about its likely effect. It will prove to be no more, and no less, a panacea for industrial workers than parliamentary democracy has been for the electors. With real power will come real responsibility for dealing directly with some of the outer realities of our competitive world, including the inescapable market mechanisms and other inter-connections which will set severe limits on the freedom the new power will bring. This is not to say that there

will not be real gains in self-respect, self-fulfillment, improved working conditions, better management and productivity. There will be. But there will almost certainly be failures too. These could hardly be worse, in their human consequences, than those experienced by many thousands of workers who became redundant every year under the owner-imposed management system of today. One of the real potential beneficiaries will be the community itself, since an effective workers' control system probably stands the only real chance of creating the sort of responsibility in industrial affairs that is now lacking and that the legislative proposals for dealing with prices and incomes or industrial relations seemed or seem unlikely to achieve.

It must also be noted, in passing, that some of the problems of control of the mass media would be easier to solve if such a radical change as the one implied by workers' control could be made to work constructively in the press, radio and television.

5. direct action against bureaucracy

But we cannot wait for the evolution of ideal organisational systems before we, as new citizens, begin to seek to realise our objectives at the working level. The overwhelming majority of us now work for, and in, large organisations; or some part of our lives are guided or controlled by them, and we thus all have some experience of how they work.

Bureaucracy is not necessarily, nor even mainly, motivated by malevolence. It survives because no one challenges it; or worse still because most people do not even question it. Many people calmly accept it even when it classifies us, categorizes us, divided us up, blocks off our opportunities and initiative and

presumes to tell us to what heights we can aspire in life.

Better organisational techniques and good leadership can reduce it, but we really cannot all wait for that to happen. The case for a strategy of confrontations with bureaucracy is very strong ; and indeed without it is is hard to see how we can ever liberate ourselves. The justification for any sort of direct action, even when it is wholly non-violent, must be precisely defined in a democratic society where the theoretical possibility of change by traditional means is held to exist. But who really believes that without direct action represented by demonstrations and even orderly civil disobedience we would ever have won our present rights, or women would have won the vote ; or students would ever have secured their present levels of participation ; or the constituency of Bristol South East have ever retained its MP by compelling a constitutional change to allow the renunciation of peerages ? Each of these campaigns worked on the stiletto heel principle : that if you put all your weight on one place you can go through almost anything.

The quality of organisations will never be improved unless their defects are actively resisted. Change from below, the formulation of demands from the populace to end unacceptable injustice, supported by direct action has played a far larger part in shaping British democracy than most constitutional lawyers, political commentators, historians or statesmen have ever cared to admit. Without direct pressure from below operating on and through the political system we should never have got state education, our social security system, the health service or any serious attention paid to the environment.

Direct action also welds people together and helps them to move on and tackle other problems effectively. It discovers talent that would otherwise have gone unrecognised, re-stocks the community with new leadership and creates new checks and balances against the abuse of power.

Direct action in a democratic society is fundamentally an educational exercise ; and its victories can only be won when they achieve the conversion of those in power through winning a majority of people to the viewpoint of the activists. In other circumstances, and in other countries where the machinery of peaceful change does not exist, the use of real force from below is right and must be organised to succeed against everything that can be mustered against it, and it must be accepted and supported as legitimate in the battle to secure or enlarge human freedom. Here in Britain it is only justified—and effective—as a means of alerting the community to what is wrong, and of making it clear that a body of new citizens want to see it put right.

6. a frontal assault on secrecy in decision making

If a mature and more self-regulating society is to have a real chance of success, people must know much more about why and how the decisions that affect them are actually made. Unless this information is made available people will never discover what the alternatives are, early enough, to have any influence on which of them to support and which to oppose.

As far as Government is concerned this must mean a completely fresh look at all the many barriers that exist to ensure that ordinary people do not know what is going on in Government. The practice of secrecy that has grown up over the

year, in Britain and all other countries, goes back to the very distant past. The medieval privy councillor's oath pledging utter secrecy and administered to each new Minister on his knees when assuming office is a symbolic, but interesting example. It was written centuries before democracy was even contemplated, at a time when the only responsibility of a Minister was to the Crown. The Official Secrets Act of 1911, to which each official is also sworn, entrenches secrecy in statute.

Obviously there are matters of high national security, short-term diplomatic or other negotiating positions, commercial secrets and information about individuals that have to be dealt with by Ministers, and officials, on a strict need-to-know basis, which it would be a plain betrayal of trust to divulge—even to other Ministers and officials who do not require the information, let alone the public. But beyond that most of the current business of Government could easily be made more generally known to those who were interested in it. There could certainly be a full description of the Cabinet Committee structure together with all its sub-committees, Ministerial and official, including a full list of their membership. It is hard to criticise the mass media for trivialising politics by continually harping on personalities and gossip, while the real story of developing argument within the government machine, which is quite well equipped to resolve differences and reconcile varying interests, is still held behind a tight security screen.

The justification given for secrecy is usually based on a complete and deliberate confusion of the national interest with the political convenience of Ministers, buttressed by the natural preference of civil servants for the full protection of their role as completely anonymous ministerial advisers.

Fortunately this screen of silence is being pierced more and more often by hard working, knowledgeable and responsible journailists, helped by better briefings and, increasingly, by ex-Ministers writing their memoirs. Leaks, now accepted as a fact, do not however provide a sufficient account of what is going on. Some slight official relaxations have taken place. The amendment of the 50 year rule to 30 years was a move in the right direction ; the invention of Green Papers which allow Ministers to share their thinking before decisions are finally taken was a real advance. The new specialist select committees can now probe policy much more deeply ; and the Ombudsman can search official records in pursuit of enquiries into suspected maladministration.

A move towards much more open government would not need amending legislation. A clear policy decision in favour of a progressive relaxation of secrecy, in practice, would be quite sufficient to deal with the problem. It would constitute a real gain for the community and would also be good for government, in that Ministers and officials would be in a position to receive more relevant comments and advice from those outside, who would know more accurately what was at issue and when the matter concerned was due for decision.

I have put the government's responsibility to provide more information first because it lies directly within its own power to change its practice. But the same arguments apply with equal force to the publication of much more information by industry. The case for this is so very well known, and has so often been argued, that it does not need labouring. But since knowledge is power, a more general statutory requirement to publish information would be a

ery important way of seeing that the
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his theme of publicity versus secrecy
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7. the democratisation of
he mass media

'arliament exercised significant power
n Britain long before it was demon-
ratic, deriving from its freedom to
ssemble, to discuss and debate. These
ights were so important in the struggle
or political power that the nineteenth
entury popular battle for participation
oncentrated on the right of access of
rdinary people to Parliament.

'oday, the freedom of debate and dis-
ussion remains central to the control

of power. But unless this freedom is
amplified by high speed printing presses
or powerful transmitters it need not
amount to very much more than the
right to set up a rostrum at Speakers'
Corner in Hyde Park. Regular access
to the public at large is virtually the
prerogative of publishers, newspaper
proprietors, the massive BBC, com-
mercial TV programme companies and
those business organisations that use the
mass media to advertise their products
—and their values. That about sums up
the list of those with *effective* power to
publish, apart from organisations which
issue their own material.

It is just not good enough. No wonder
that some people are driven to demon-
strations, using a technique of informa-
tion dissemination that has not changed
for 2,000 years or more. Minority views
and even specialist opinions still do not
get adequate expression in the press or
on the air, unless they are expressed
through an event—preferably acquiring
its newsworthiness through expected, or
actual, disturbances, in which case the
communication moguls will readily
report it all as news. The main message
may never get through this way, though
those who watch or read about it do
gradually become aware that a large
body of people are " protesting about
something " and the more interested
amongst them may think about it or
seek more information.

The public, as a whole, are denied
access or representation in these new
talking shops of the mass media as com-
pletely as the 95 per cent without the
vote were excluded from Parliament
before 1832. The real question is not
whether the programmes are good, or
serious, or balanced or truthful. It is
whether or not they allow the people
themselves to reflect, to each other, the
diversity of interests, opinions, griev-
ances, hopes and attitudes to their

fellow citizens and to talk out their differences at sufficient length.

The democratisation, and accountability of the mass media will be a major issue for the seventies and the debates on it are now beginning. The press and boardcasting authorities have a responsibility for providing enough accurate information, at the time when it really matters, to allow people to acquire greater influence. The people, for their part, have the right to demand a greater ease of access to the community through the mass media and some more effective redress by a body with power to examine complaints, especially against the broadcasting authorities. What is wanted is more diversity of expression and not, repeat not, the centralisation of power in the hands of government or a bureaucratic monopoly.

The potentiality of greater industrial democracy in the mass media forcing the owners of existing outlets to share their power with those who work for their papers, or on their stations, may have a significant part to play in this. Fortunately, new techniques in printing and recording which are relatively cheap and easy have been coming into use in recent years and more are now on their way. The possibilities these offer both in allowing people to plan what they want to see and hear in their own homes (as they can with books and records) and in opening up low cost publishing, in all its forms, to the new pressure groups are of great potential importance, and should be encouraged.

8. new priorities in education

Education, like information and communications, is moving into the centre of political controversy. Indeed it has already become the focal point of debate and political controversy.

Education is the key to the development of the individual ; it equips him to work and earn ; it allows him to share in the world's richest treasures of wisdom and art and it offers him some of the keys to political power. The denial of access for the many, by an elite, has proved to be a most powerful instrument for long-term popular subjugation. The majority of children have been—and still are being—branded as failures at 11, then told they do not merit real secondary education ; only to discover later that, as a result, they cannot qualify for higher education. Then, for the rest of their lives, they are kept out of many positions of responsibility, which are reserved for graduates.

The battle for comprehensive education is only half-way won at the secondary level, and is only just beginning at the level of higher and further education, where the massed ranks of the elitists are already in position to repel the expected assault by the many, with the familiar cry of " more means worse." It will be just as hard, but just as necessary, to win that battle and the sooner it is won the better.

But the need for change goes much further than the provision of equality of opportunity. Education has been made subservient to examinations which were devised, at worst to ration education, and at best to test certain, and not necessarily the most important, qualities in men and women. Education has got far too far segregated from the problems of the community. It is all crammed in too early in life, leaving most adults without really adequate provision for training and re-training and scope for reflective analytical thinking at an age when most people could get, and give, so much more if only the opportunities were provided.

Qualifications have become an idol to

be protected at all cost. Experience is generally under-estimated and adequate opportunities do not yet exist to lift those who have it to greater heights of development. The old, who were the traditional teachers of the young, have been all but shut out from their natural role in education to tell the young what they knew, and in turn to be revitalised by the ceaseless interrogation of their impatient young pupils. Academic studies have been elevated out of all proportion to their real importance, and even in science, greater honour still attaches to pure research than to application where many, if not most, of the really difficult and intellectually taxing and important problems that must be solved are to be found. Specialisation has been allowed to run rampant even though the overwhelming majority of graduates never practise in their field of special study.

Both the need for really highly skilled people of all ages to be trained in the broad area of management and the need for a fuller life for individuals within our society require us to look again at our educational philosophy and system.

At the moment we still accept a wastage of human ability which is so massive that if we could only tap a small proportion of the reserves of talent that exist, we could raise both our standard of life, and the quality of it, much more rapidly than now seems possible. But we can only achieve this if we concentrate far more attention on raising the level of the average in both people and performance rather than continuing to focus so much of our effort on the so-called best ; and if we are also prepared to see the potential of education in helping us to overcome the hard-core problems of the poor, the sick and the deprived. A real programme for education that set itself these new objectives would be bitterly resisted, but without

a change in our existing educational priorities we shall go on exploring the frontiers of knowledge as brilliantly as we have done ; and then wonder why the problems of application and community organisation seem so insoluble.

9. beyond parliamentary democracy

The main theme of this pamphlet is that the new citizen wants and must receive a great deal more power than all existing authority has so far thought it right, necessary or wise to yield to him.

This demand for more real power by people is slowly but irresistibly building up on every front here and in every country in the world. Some people want it to replace the power of the tyrants who oppress them, others to protect existing rights or to assert new ones which they believe their dignity and self-respect require.

The British Parliament cannot expect to be exempted from this general demand for greater participation both from within and without. The welcome erosion of the power of the whips has gone much further than most people outside politics realise in restoring to MPs the power to limit the automatic exercise of executive power by cabinets.

The next stage in public participation in government is bound to come from the first serious reconsideration of the possibility of adding some direct decision-making ; or at any rate comprehensive opinion-testing mechanism, to that of the ballot box, on specific issues.

The most discussed form of direct decision-making has been the idea of holding nation wide referenda on specific issues—either those which transcended party loyalties and were of

supreme importance—or those on moral questions which are now by general consent left to a free vote of the House.

The arguments against adopting such a course are too well known to need elaboration : it would undermine representative government, pave the way for dictatorship sustained by plebiscites; frustrate all liberal reform ; pander to the worst instincts of the public and so on. Both front benches and the overwhelming majority of back bench MPs —either because of their intimate knowledge of politics, or possibly from an understandable reluctance to see their representative status eroded by being shared with their constituents—are wholly opposed to any concession whatsoever on this score, and anyone who even raises the subject is immediately made aware of the fact that he has broken one of the unwritten rules of the club.

But quite apart from the intrinsic merits or demerits of referenda as a means of decision-making in a democracy, we have to face the fact that a demand for a referendum has begun to emerge over the Common Market issue where there are such sharp differences of opinion within each party that it would not be possible to decide the issue at a general election even if the leadership of the two major parties were taking contrary views. A decision taken by the House of Commons that committed Britain to membership of EEC might or might not conform to the popular view as ascertained by the (somewhat discredited) public opinion polls. But if it did not, and those who were opposed to entry refused to accept the reasons given for joining (or vice versa) something like a breakdown in the social contract might occur.

Some demand for a procedure for a

national consultation on this, or some other issue, is bound to be strongly pressed at some stage, and if it is to be rejected, and its rejection made acceptable, far stronger and more compelling arguments than those hitherto advanced against it will have to be produced and argued convincingly.

The idea of a national institute of public opinion which acted as the independent agent for assessing and reporting the national view *before* Parliament reached its final decision on some issues is another possibility. This would lack the mandatory nature of formal referenda which would present certain difficulties, whilst at the same time furnishing a significant focus for debate that would encourage the protagonists on either side to release far more facts than are now made available, and compel them to campaign on the issue up for decision instead of, as now, always on the far less precise issue of their own qualifications for office.

The establishment of machinery for testing the strength of certain views under official but independent auspices, comprehensively and not by sampling, might also be a constructive way of diverting the energy now put into street protest, into educational campaigns in support of a certain view before the formal consultation was allowed to take place.

It does not follow that organised comprehensive consultations would have to be limited to matters requiring an immediate decision. Indeed, given the time lag between decision and full execution, and the case that has been argued for real consultation with the public before strategic options of various kinds are closed, it might well be possible to allow people to express a view about broad priorities for the future—what has been called antici-

atory decision sharing—that would be helpful to Government and reassuring for the public.

Nor should it be thought that direct participation of this kind need be limited to national issues. It might be specially appropriate for, or indeed the only instrument of consent capable of being used to guide decisions on a local level or as part of a campaign to gain more effective participation in non-governmental organisations, the professions, trade unions or any other body where the members wished for a much larger say in their own affairs.

It might also be that through internationally run consultative referenda we could begin the slow but inevitable process of democratising some of the new international bodies and organisations, where at present unknown administrators have too much real power just because they are only imperfectly supervised by national Ministers at international conferences, and are never confronted by an electorate or even an elected assembly to whom they are accountable.

These then are some of the ways in which more power for the people might be demanded, and in which it might be thought right, or at the very least prudent, to yield.

It would, however, be wrong to end a section on popular power without reminding ourselves that if change from below is to be—as seems likely—a growing force in politics and industry —the most effective pressures will come from those who band themselves together to win support from their fellows, and then present their demands for change or improvement with the weight that comes from articulating a real requirement in a representative

capacity. That way lies the do-it-yourself society that is now being born.

10. redefining the role of national government

If government has now got to accept that many of its functions are being taken over by international institutions beyond its shores, or are to be devolved, or hived off, or shared with the people below who are claiming greater rights as new citizens, we shall have to consider afresh exactly what the role of national government is to be.

In dealing with institutions abroad or other centres of power, it must speak for the interests of the British people, assuming a representational role ; and when it has done its best, it must convey back to its own people the reasons for unpopular policies which may have been devised to serve longer term interests, or ones that are wider than those of any one country. In short, it has to convey the outer reality of life to those who live in its home territory.

In dealing with the bodies subordinate to itself in their range of responsibilities, government must set some of the objectives, lay down the limits of derived authority, and if conflict arises it must reconcile the differences of interest that will occur between them.

National government must retain the supreme responsibility for the nation's fortunes in the broadest sense of the term and be the custodian of its national culture and identity. It must concern itself with security, now redefined to include the provision of a degree of protection for the individual against many of the new hazards of life that goes far beyond the provision of defence against invasion and civil disorder. It must legislate the framework structure of rights within which people can confi-

dently live and work, including the provision of new safeguards against the abuse of information it has gathered for its own purposes or which has been gathered by non-governmental organisations or firms. It must allocate the nation's resources, not only of money raised by taxation, but perhaps even more importantly of qualified and skilled manpower and apply them to meet needs that are most pressing. It must present the alternative strategies for public discussion, *before* the final and irreversible decisions are made. It must secure the accountability of all power centres operating within the frontiers of the state, and may find that control on behalf of the people is best secured by organic consultation.

It must also develop a consultancy function to help people to do things for themselves by the provision of technical or other information or advisory services, and it must actively discourage the idea that the government can, or should itself, seek to solve all the problems confronting everyone. Indeed, it should look very critically at the well-established myth that government exists to do things *to* people, instead of making it possible for them to do things for themselves. Authoritarianism proper will still be necessary in the event of military, civil, economic, industrial, technical of communal emergencies, which could occur at any time. But except for those occasions it should seek always to act by consent, after full debate.

In short, government should concern itself mainly with the big decisions within the state, concentrating its attention on its major objectives ; adjusting the system and the organisation structures to allow their realisation at various levels ; and inter-acting intelligently and professionally with all those parts of other systems that touch upon govern-

ment's own broad range of responsibilities for promoting the human welfare and dignity of its citizens.

But wherever it is necessary to intervene it must have a capability for doing so, as competently as possible, either directly or through one of its own agencies. One of the reasons why government today does play such a large part in industry and the community, is that more and more people expect it to do whatever is necessary to protect human beings from any misfortune that may befall them. That is one clear message that the new citizen has already got through to governments of all parties.

11. a new role for political leaders

It naturally follows from this argument that the role of political leadership is likely to change in a number of significant ways in the years ahead. New-style political leaders at national level will need to establish a new sort of relationship with the people. They will have to recognise that the real limitation on their power to shape events will be the extent to which they can connect themselves through proper information, and communications systems, with the two new realities of our time — the managements of other centres of power, and the new citizen with his developing organisations.

Political leaders may have to interpret their role as requiring them to remain well this side of the " we/they " frontier even when, through election, they will be in charge of government operations. That frontier between government and governed has changed its character significantly and ought to be seen as less rigid. They will see it as their job to listen more intently to what is being said and to provide more effective means for

ascertaining public opinion, and for connecting together the issues that are brought to their attention by these means ; to analyse, educate, to persuade, as well as to exercise executive responsibilities. They will necessarily need to keep in close touch with the new leadership emerging from below, and to engage in organic consultation with other power centres as the main instrument for making all power accountable. They will know that unless they can inject their ideas, evolved after real discussion, into the structure of values of the society in which they work they may win elections, but they won't achieve all their objectives. They will need to be much more modest in their claims for what they can do, but much more confident in their predictions of what the people they serve can achieve, for themselves, if only they are allowed greater responsibility and are willing to use their new power, constructively and fully.

They will have to be leaders, rather more in the Moses tradition, drawing their power less from the executive authority they have acquired by election and more from influence, helping people to see what they can achieve for themselves, and acting as a consultant, equipped with all the necessary support and facilities, to allow them to do it. This is not a charter for anarchism, nor a dream of creating a wholly self-regulating economic and political system. Leadership there must be, but not all from the top. Leadership is inseparable from responsibility and responsibility is inseparable from power, and if, as I have argued, power is now being disseminated more widely, leadership will have to be more widely shared too. Indeed, in a world bulging over with new power, the sheer volume of work for leaders to do is so great that unless far more men and women take their share of the load of leadership

and management, and become responsible, the whole system will break down through sheer unmanageability. No one could possibly be wise enough, or knowledgeable enough, or have the time and skill to run the world today even if he had all the authority and all the expert advice he asked for to do the job. Individual people have got to do it themselves and argue it out as they go along.

More than five hundred years before the birth of Christ, Lao-Tzu, the Chinese philosopher, had this to say about leadership : " As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best the people honour and praise. The next the people fear, and the next the people hate. But when the best leader's work is done the people say, ' we did it ourselves '."

To create the conditions that will allow the people to do it themselves is the central task of leadership today.

12. rethinking the role of the Labour Party

If any of the territory reconnoitred in this pamphlet proves, on closer study, to be suitable for a further advance towards democratic socialism, the only party in Britain capable of guiding people towards it is the Labour Party. But it must necessarily follow that the way in which it approaches its task, the nature of its own organisation and its own leadership role could also be altered if some of the arguments spelled out here have got any validity.

As a political party concerned to acquire power under the present system it cannot afford to pre-occupy itself too much with the philosophical considerations or mid-distance forecasting that underlie much of what has been argued here. But it cannot present itself again

as the champion of democratic socialist development without paying some attention to what this could mean for its own structure, nature and role. The debates that must necessarily take place on just these very matters could release a great deal of creative energy within the party and the movement. Only if we can learn how to do that to ourselves, can we really be confident of our ability to do the very same thing on the much larger, national, scale which will certainly be necessary if any of our visions of the future of Britain are ever to be realised, by us all, as people, rediscovering the fact that this is our country and its future is what we want to make it—nothing less and nothing more.

conclusion

Most of the emphasis in this whole argument has deliberately been about the method of politics rather than the content of specific policies to deal with specific problems. It is becoming more apparent every day that the best chance of getting the content right will come if the method is right. Certainly the case for real industrial democracy, for greater equality and the ending of privilege, the case for higher public expenditure to meet community needs and for strengthening human rights would emerge more strongly from the institutional changes designed to give people far more scope themselves. One reason why Labour lost power in 1970 may well have been because this theme did not come out strongly enough, and the ground of political debate was too tightly geared to economic decisions, and concentrated on the role of Government to the exclusion of the part that the people themselves could play in solving their own problems.

People who want to change the community in which they live, the conditions under which they work, and the world in which their children will grow up, are now everywhere engaged in a struggle to get the power that will allow them to do all these things. It must be a prime objective of socialists to work for the redistribution of political power to allow them to acquire more of it to work out their own destiny in their own way. Strong government to control the abuse of power will certainly be necessary ; strong leadership too to articulate clear objectives, but above all the creation of a strong and responsible society in which more people exercise more responsibility than those in authority anywhere yet seem ready to yield to them. In the seventies the debates inside the party and between the party and the public will increasingly need to centre around this key question.

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