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Beyond Pessimism of the Intelligence

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DOI (link to publication from Publisher):
[10.5278/freia.14135809](https://doi.org/10.5278/freia.14135809)

Publication date:
1997

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Showstack Sassoon, A. (1997). Beyond Pessimism of the Intelligence: Agendas for Social Justice and Change. Aalborg: Department of History, International and Social Studies, Aalborg University. (FREIA's tekstserie; No. 42). DOI: 10.5278/freia.14135809

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**Beyond Pessimism of the
Intelligence: Agendas for Social
Justice and Change**

FREIA

Paper
August 1997

42

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Phone: +45 96 358080

Print: Kopicentralen, Aalborg University, 1997

Layout: Inger Jensen and Ellen Nyrup Pedersen

ISSN: 0907-2179

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Anne Showstack Sassoon

**Beyond Pessimism of the
Intelligence: Agendas for Social
Justice and Change**

Preface

The papers in the paper series nos 40-42 were presented at the international workshop, "**Engendering Welfare States and Democratic Citizenship**", organized by FREIA - Feminist Research Centre in Aalborg, 5-6 December, 1996.

The workshop was organized as a part of FREIA's Ph.D. programme "**Gender Relations - State, Market and Civil Society**", which is integrated in the national Ph.D. programme: "**Meanings of Gender in an interdisciplinary perspective**". It addressed Danish senior researchers and Ph.D. students within the Social Sciences. The conference was financed by the Department of Development and Planning, and the Social Science Faculty at Aalborg University.

The objective of the workshop was to analyse the problems engendering welfare states and democratic citizenship from different theoretical perspectives as well as from different policy contexts from the United Kingdom and Denmark. The aim was to understand the interconnection between gender and democracy as well as the potentials and problems for women's agency in the modern European welfare states.

A main purpose of the workshop was to strengthen the national and international cooperation between Ph.D. programmes in Gender Studies in the Social Sciences. And more specifically the aim was to develop the dialogue between international and Danish researchers working with Gender Research on Welfare States and Democracy. The two invited guests professor Ruth Lister from Loughborough University and Professor Anne Showstack Sassoon from Kingston University, who at the time was a Guest Professor in Feminist Research in the Social Sciences at FREIA, both participate in research networks and research projects with members of FREIA. They were each asked to present a theoretical paper and a more policy oriented paper, and members from FREIA as well as colleagues from the two Research Programmes "Welfare States" and "Democracy and Citizenship in Transition" at Aalborg University were invited as discussants.

FREIA is happy to be able to publish the three conference papers. The fourth paper by Anne Showstack Sassoon "Gender and Civil Society - A Critique of the Anglo. American Debate" has been published in a book that contains a the most recent collection of articles by members of FREIA: Christensen, Ravn & Rittenhofer eds. "Det Kønnede Samfund", (Gendered Society) Aalborg University Press 1997.

The programme of the workshop will be found at the end of this publication.

Birte Siim

Beyond Pessimism of the Intelligence: Agendas for Social Justice and Change¹

Cynics inside the Labour Party and in abundance beyond in the media like to prove their independence and powers of professional scepticism by scoffing...; to display enthusiasm, interest or understanding is to depart from the unwritten code. All politicians are knaves and propagandists; all their ideas are confused, inadequate or boil down to the same old left/right divide in the end.²

In the absence of understanding clearly the complex analysis which lies at the bottom of the new directions of so much New Labour policy, most critics do not have much more than sound bites.³ This reflects the enormous gap which exists between policy announcements and a more profound understanding of the analysis which underpins them. Consequently, the desire for change easily turns into diffidence and suspicion that what is being advocated is just electoral calculation. Yet it is also obvious that much of the country has been impressed by Blair's leadership of the party and transformation of Labour's policy agenda. The negativity of so many academics, journalists, pressure group campaigners and others on the left is therefore all the more striking.

Prior to putting the notion of a stakeholder society on the agenda in early 1996, Blair reflected on the widespread suspicion and dismissal of his ideas as a move to the right. An interview with him in **The Observer** just before the 1995 Labour Party conference, noted that "one of the remaining problems is to persuade the liberal-left intelligentsia...to abandon their pessimism of the intellect and adopt some optimism of the will." There (is) a very great defeatism that (grips) the left intelligentsia.

If I can put it politely, there is a distinction between the Guardian-Observer left and what I would call the broader Labour supporters in the country....What I would like to see more of on the left is genuine intellectual debate."⁴ This was referring to the oft-quoted phrase which Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist, used on the masthead of **L'ordine Nuovo**, the radical newspaper he edited in Turin after the first world war.⁵ The original phrase, "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will", meant that clear, hard-headed analysis, undistorted by any illusions, had to inform the determination to make the world a better place. But it also meant that realism on its own without political will can lead to resignation to the status quo.

Shaping Change

The roots of this dialectic between human knowledge and the capacity to intervene in nature can, of course, be traced back all the way back to the Greeks. It is certainly found in Machiavelli's depiction of the interplay between princely virtù, or what we might today call leadership skills, on the one hand, and fortuna or chance, on the other. In **The Prince** Machiavelli joins incisive analysis of the attributes needed by a political leader to overcome the chaos existing in the Italian peninsula to a passionate plea for a united Italy. It is no accident that later, writing in a fascist prison in the 1930s, Gramsci builds on this Italian tradition and uses the term "Modern Prince" to challenge Mussolini's claim to follow in the footsteps of Machiavelli's Prince, and to be the heir of the Risorgimento, as the **duce**, or the leader who can complete Italy's imperfect unification and modernize Italian society.

In **The Prison Notebooks** Gramsci writes that modern society and twentieth century politics is so complex that no one individual could provide the leadership needed to transform society. The Modern Prince could only consist in a political party able to forge a collective will to transform society in a progressive direction.⁶ Gramsci describes a particular kind of party and politics capable of analysing social and historical development as it reaches out to learn from the experiences of the widest possible cross-section of society and from what we would now call the cutting edge of socio-economic change. On the basis of what is **possible** and what is **necessary**, the aim is to develop a strategy to achieve what is **desirable**, and in so doing provide a focus for gaining widespread and continuous popular consent.⁷ Whereas Lenin was most concerned to establish doctrinal correctness and party discipline⁸, Gramsci was much more worried about political isolation when a party loses touch with reality and when unity becomes purely mechanical.⁹

The first key to retaining consent to a party's policies was to make sure that they reflected the real needs of the vast majority as they actually lived and not as some political ideology or political force wished that they did.¹⁰ This was why the party had to be deeply rooted in the society. Secondly, these policies could only succeed if they were based on the understanding that historical development was not a mechanical, inevitable, mystical process. Rather, it was the product of human activity. But neither was it within the control of any single political force. Referring again to Machiavelli, Gramsci examines the complex relationship between analysis of the situation confronting a political organization, a reality in which, he argues, the aims of that organization are themselves an element, and the attempt to transform that reality in line with new political priorities to influence the direction of change.¹¹ Historical change could not be stopped, but it did provide opportunities for progressive politics as it brought both advances and losses. That was

the lesson Gramsci drew from the impossibility of simply opposing one of the major challenges of his period, what he called Fordism, that is, assembly line production as developed by Henry Ford, and the "scientific management" of Frederick Taylor. Some American trade unions and, indeed, some conservative elements in Europe, had tried to oppose these trends but had been defeated. Nor, for a progressive politics, was it possible simply to endorse the productive potential of these developments as representing "progress" and "rationality" as did a wide range of people from the fascist right to the Bolshevik left.¹² Any progressive potential could only be fulfilled by a fundamental re-think about the enhancement of the skills and knowledge of the majority of the population. This was the pre-condition for a creative contribution to a democratic discussion about the uses to which expertise and technological advancement could be put in relation to a progressive political agenda.¹³

Just as Gramsci himself was clear that Lenin and the Russian Revolution provided no model for the West European Left,¹⁴ much of Gramsci's writing is not relevant for us today. What still is absolutely relevant, however, is Gramsci's special insistence on the need to base politics on a clear understanding of the nature of change and the experiences of the widest possible sections of the population in order to unite people and to earn their support for a progressive transformation of society. This is what Gramsci meant by hegemonic politics.

Fortunately, our situation today is quite different from the traumatic post-World War I period. However, we are living through major political, social and economic transformations that are leading to a level of political confusion unprecedented in recent times. As the century ends, it is getting harder and harder to determine what is progressive and what is not. How often today the word "left" seems to connote "leftover"

or indeed at times reactionary. This is meant in the historical, post-French Revolution sense of **reacting to** a major change by looking backward to an **ancien régime**. On the other hand, claims by the "right" to be radical, for all the changes which have been initiated, are hardly borne out, at least if we understand the word as a fundamental reorientation of society.¹⁵ As Ross McKibbin has commented in the **London Review of Books**, Conservative government policies have in fact preserved significant aspects of British society, for example, the Beveridge welfare state, but "in an utterly degraded form".¹⁶ There is no shame, then, in feeling anxious because the old goal posts not only keep moving, but the boundaries of the political football pitch seem so blurred.

Social Justice in a Changed World

Indeed, anxiety and confusion have marked the reception given to the most ambitious attempt since Beveridge to redefine and to reorganize provision for the social and economic wellbeing of the British people, Labour's Commission on Social Justice Report.¹⁷ "The size of the problem," the report states in the introduction, is so great that there is "no 'quick fix', for the U.K.'s difficulties, and if politicians or others suggest that there is, no one should believe them. ...(O)ur world is so different from that which William Beveridge addressed fifty years ago, and it is now changing so fast, that there is no way in which the prescriptions that suited an earlier time can merely be renewed, however much goodwill, money or technical sophistication one might hope to call up in their support."¹⁸

Echoed subsequently in Blair's idea of a stakeholder society, the report maintains that in addition to social justice being an ideal in its own right, "economic success requires a greater measure of social justice....Squalor and crime carry enormous economic as well as social costs; unemployment uses resources simply to sustain people who might sustain themselves and contribute to the economy....Social justice stands against fanatics of the market economy, who forget that a market is a social reality which itself requires trust, order, goodwill and other forms of support....Social justice does indeed attend to the needy...but in doing so it can be an enabling force for everybody....something that society requires because everyone's quality of life is dependent in part on a high degree of social well-being. This conclusion, that social justice is not simply a moral ideal but an economic necessity, is at the heart of this report."¹⁹

The dimensions of the change which the report's perspective depicts and the dramatic nature of the UK's predicament which it describes require a leap of imagination to reformulate the very terms of the debate. This has confounded people and led to no little anxiety. The UK's problems, it argues, "are not simply the product of Conservative mistakes. The causes reach back well before the onset of the Conservative administration in 1979, and they will not be tackled by trying to recreate the country that existed before that....The reality was that the foundations of the post-war settlement had been destroyed by national and international change."²⁰ If the "tragedy of the 1960s and 1970s was that the Left, which had created the successful post-war settlement, failed to come to terms" with change, "the Right, which grasped the need for change, failed to understand what was really needed."²¹

Agreeing with the statement made to the Commission by Bill Morris, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, that

"many of the principles on which the post-war welfare state was based still hold good today," the report argues that, "If the values of the welfare state - opportunities, security, responsibility - are to have real meaning in the future, then they will require new institutions and policies to give them practical effect. We have no option but to engage with the three great revolutions - economic, social, and political - which are changing our lives, and those of people in every other industrialised country."²²

The UK has been left behind by the global economic revolution of "finance, competition, skill and technology," while neither government nor employers have caught up with the social revolution which has taken place "of women's life chances, of family structures and of demography" even though "social change has been faster and gone further in the UK than in most other European countries." Nor do political institutions escape the challenge, particularly "the UK's old assumptions of parliamentary sovereignty and ...its growing centralisation of government power. "The political revolution "involves a fundamental reorientation of the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed."²³

Doubts, Confusion, and Negativity

Reflecting on the period since the publication of the Commission on Social Justice report in October 1994, what is striking in the general response by academics and others on the left, is the negativity of most of it. As Christopher Pierson has written that "the Commission's Report has faced that mixture of weary cynicism, vested interests and quack cures which seem to greet any attempt at deep-seated welfare reform. It finds

itself condemned in just about equal measure for having been both too bold and too timid."²⁴

It would be worthwhile considering some of the reasons for this negativity. It is one thing to feel pessimistic confronting the scenario of economic mismanagement and institutional arteriosclerosis depicted by Will Hutton in **The State of the Nation**.²⁵ It is another to give up all hope of influencing change for the better and to mistake the attempt to depict the nature of current trends, in order to ground policy in a clear assessment of the dynamic of contemporary reality and the way millions of people live their lives, with an outright endorsement of those trends.²⁶ Weary cynicism, or pessimism of the intellect without optimism of the will, leads to defeatism. After all, as Gramsci also argued, the way to undermine the old is to construct the new.²⁷ But if this optimism of the will is to result in real change, it cannot be based on what we would wish but what we endeavour to construct in the difficult conditions we face, conditions which are not of our choosing. Wishful thinking by another name is ineffectual utopianism.²⁸ The problem is determining what is indeed new, and progressive, and how to achieve it. If this cynicism and negativity are understandable, they are ultimately a self-fulfilling prophecy. Valid reasons for being doubting Thomases (and Thomasinas) are certainly not hard to find. There is, of course, the collapse of old certainties in this postmodern, postfordist, and postcommunist yet still socially unjust and violent world. There is also the habit, strongest in academia perhaps, but which, as Will Hutton notes, marks a whole style of polemical debate, of a type of critique which tells us what is wrong but often does little to draw out what is positive or useful in the contributions of others or in policy proposals which do not conform to favoured prescriptions in which individuals have an intellectual, political or professional investment.²⁹ Here, too, are vested interests of a sort

which need to be taken into account, especially as the depth of psychological investment must not be underestimated.

Yet, if this psychological investment is at the root of much of the confusion, perhaps most importantly, some of the political messages coming from the Labour Party have been no less confusing, to say the least. Mixed with sound bites, by-election leaflets and comments which seem recycled from the Conservatives' dustbin of black propaganda are radical policy proposals like abolishing the assisted places scheme and GP fundholding, transforming the House of Lords, establishing a Bill of Rights and a Freedom of Information Act, holding a referendum on proportional representation, providing for Scottish devolution, applying a windfall tax on excessive monopoly profits, signing up for the Social Chapter, legislating for a minimum wage---and the list thankfully goes on.

One possible response to what is being proposed is to play the "up the ante" political game, where it is considered left-wing to oppose any suggestion for change by raising the stakes. Even those of us who have no interest in participating in this particular game³⁰ are nonetheless still left with the doubt whether the mixed messages from Labour are intentional. What appear, at least from the sound bites which the media pick up, opportunistic moves to win an election combine with heartfelt and inspiring ethical commitments together with convincing explanations why an up-to-date and realistic analysis of the world requires a different radical strategy today.³¹ The desired effect may be to unbalance the opposition, but the result is very often confusion and the closing down of spaces for constructive criticism.

Fears and Desires

Beyond this confusion, there are genuine psychological reasons why it is easier to make a negative critique than join in constructing a progressive alternative at the very moment that change seems most possible. On the one hand, there is the fear of loss, and, on the other, the anxiety of having to assume responsibility without being able to blame someone else. The familiar is held onto for dear life, however uncomfortable, be it the memories of long, hard fought battles, and defeats, or cherished beliefs. We hold onto **everything** for fear of losing **something**. It may appear highly contradictory, and both politics and individual psychology **are** contradictory, but going beyond blaming others for defeat, accepting one's own responsibilities, leaving isolated opposition and joining a majority, and after so many years plunging into the unknown, can feel very dangerous. Worries about losing what we know, however imperfect, for what we do not is quite real. Vested interests are not just material but are the result of psychological and ideological investments as well.

Furthermore, a strategy to dampen down expectations given harsh realities, however politically intelligent in the long run, can easily feed widespread cynicism about any possibility of change today. And yet, reaction to the Social Justice report, also reveals an enormous desire to believe that Britain **can** be changed for the better. As one respondent put it, "At first, I was worried about what would be lost, but then I thought, I would be delighted to live in a country with the kind of provision it argues for."³² That person was thinking about, for example, universal nursery provision, the possibility to combine part-time work with part-time benefits, a minimum wage, a Jobs, Education and Training programme to ease the transition into work and between jobs, the right

to a minimum second pension with pension contributions guaranteed even when unemployed or not employed from choice, for example, while caring for a child - in short the kind of programmes aimed at eliminating the kind of social exclusion that large sectors of British society suffer at the moment. But what is certain is that unless widespread consent is developed around the kind of fundamental reforms that the report calls for, given the very real difficulties of getting a complex society to shift in new directions, much of its promise will be stillborn, even if it is beginning to show through in many of the Labour Party's policy choices,³³ and even with the most optimistic and determined political will in the world.

Beyond Beveridge

But developing such active consent will not be easy. The Social Justice report comes out of a very different context than the 1942 Beveridge report. An official government document, the product of a civil service interdepartmental committee with Beveridge the only non-civil servant, Ross McKibbin points out that it had "an 'official' character which raised expectations that it would be implemented." Discussed widely in the armed forces, "(I)n many ways, and quite deliberately so, it summed up what the Allies were fighting for."³⁴ The Beveridge Report was a cornerstone of wartime national unity and encapsulated hopes for the reconstruction of peacetime Britain. As McKibbin so well describes, "The long queues outside HMSOs; the hurried reprintings; the intensity of public discussion and, to judge by wartime diaries, private discussion as well; the enormous publicity given to Beveridge by the **Mirror**: all contrived to give the Report a social centrality inconceivable today."³⁵

Fifty years later the situation was dramatically different when the Commission on Social Justice was set up by John Smith from opposition in the wake of Labour's 1992 general election defeat. Created as an independent, broadly based group, chaired by Sir Gordon Borrie, it was at arms length from the Labour Party and far from effective political power. The difference could hardly be greater than the excitement which greeted Beveridge and the way in which its message was spread and its proposals discussed, although the need was hardly less. The Commission was set up in a moment when the argument for dropping the policy of a minimum wage and for targeting benefits such as child benefit was gaining ground. The question was bound to arise then, and is still relevant - in a period when even the Nordic welfare states, often looked to as providing a model of advance, are facing serious challenges - whether any of the "principles on which the post-war welfare state was based", referred to by Bill Morris³⁶, when Britain itself seemed to many to provide a model internationally,³⁷ could be adhered to by any party seeking to form a government. The conclusion it came to has to be reiterated: society, and especially its economic performance, cannot do without adequate social provision.

By the time the report was published in the autumn of 1994, after almost 2 decades of neo-liberal Conservative governments, international economic restructuring and UK decline, and a dramatic increase in social polarization,³⁸ the need to go beyond restoration to reconstruction was becoming more and more obvious on the centre left.³⁹ The Commission on Social Justice report was the most ambitious amongst several important publications from the centre and left of the political spectrum addressed to reconstructing the British welfare state and the economy. Although they vary in perspective and policy prescriptions, their very proliferation is a manifestation of a widespread conviction that it is impossible to go back to the **status quo** from before 1979 nor would it

be particularly desirable. There are real differences in perspective, but there are also real points of contact and overlaps both in analysis and prescription. Indeed, James McCormick and Carey Oppenheim argue that far from Labour filling in a blank sheet, there is a broad left-of-centre consensus on which to build.⁴⁰ However much this is true, there still remains the fact that as long as debate focuses on details without a wider understanding of the underlying analysis, there is a danger that the opportunity for a radical, progressive reconstruction will be opposed by those who feel the loss of what they know and fear the unknown more than anything else.⁴¹

A Report Little Read and Less Understood

The Social Justice report sparked widespread press coverage, but the changes in the Labour Party's Clause IV soon came to dominate debate, and discussion about the report soon died out. Yet, without the process being very clear to anyone not involved, and without it being the **only** source, the report's impact is gradually becoming evident in a range of Labour Party policy proposals and pronouncements.⁴² But because of its length, wealth of detail, and breadth of scope, going well beyond Beveridge, few Labour Party members have read it. Those who have are faced by a document which steadfastly refuses to be organized into the kind of categories, policy proposals, frames of analysis or concepts which most people are familiar with, and which describes an expansion of choice which is lacking at the moment and which many people find hard to imagine.⁴³ The report goes well beyond Labour's traditional, and simple, commitment to a redistribution of financial resources, while still highlighting the costs to individuals and to society of increasing poverty. To grasp what is radical in the report requires an investment of time,

good faith, hope, and optimism---quantities which far too few people will have.

The report has not been backed by any campaigning organization at least until the founding of the Labour Campaign for Social Justice and of the Social Justice Group (a network affiliated to Unions '95 and linked to Democratic Left) more than a year after publication. The negative reaction of sincere doubt, weary cynicism and vested interests noted by Pierson plus backward-looking leftism consequently expanded to fill the political vacuum. As Blair's concept of a stakeholder society begins to fill out,⁴⁴ the analysis in the Commission on Social Justice Report, even if not cited, has regained a greater prominence. The very desire to get rid of the Tories has tended to silence most outright opposition from the centre and left, but the doubt remains whether most people really understand the radical nature of the changes suggested.

Political Conviction Rooted in Analysis

So on what grounds can it be argued that this report is radical, progressive, and deserving of support? First, it puts women at the very centre of its analysis and their life chances at the core of its proposals. We are well beyond tokenism here.⁴⁵ Secondly, it puts overcoming poverty and providing the conditions to achieve greater social justice at the very top of the agenda. And thirdly, it is convincing because of its mode of arguing from the grain of change that it is possible to influence it for the better. It all adds up to a fundamental and welcome shift in perspective. Its ambition is no less than to refound the welfare state in Britain considered in a world perspective, posing questions for the next 2 decades. It is a radical document not just because of its concerns, but

because of its mode of analysis: it joins pessimism of the intellect with optimism of the will. It goes well beyond Labourism where the old left/right divide so often ran between grand rhetoric and resigned pragmatism covered with a gloss of moralism. With few exceptions Labour programmes, whether influenced by the Labour left or the right, have never been derived from an analysis of contemporary trends in order to shape the future. What is emerging here is an attempt to ground conviction in analysis. The Social Justice report has contributed to that process.

A New Deal for Women

The debate has certainly come a long way since the early 1980's when **Women and the State**⁴⁶ was published. At that time very few analysts focussed on the dramatic social changes taking place as more and more women were entering formal, paid work at the same time as having major family responsibilities, or on the implications of these changes for the organization of the welfare state, in the broad sense, the world of work, and the household all of which still assumed the primacy of a male-breadwinner.⁴⁷ Today all these spheres still continue largely to operate according to a logic which ignores the fact that very few women are full-time housewives for more than a short period in their lives, and that most households depend fundamentally on their income from paid jobs to keep above the poverty line.⁴⁸ That is, major social institutions operate in a way which is in contradiction with the way millions of people in fact live. One of the main reasons the Social Justice Report is so progressive is that it defines the social revolution which has been taking place, above all, with regard to "women's life chances, family structures and demography".⁴⁹ Indeed, the preconditions for eliminating

poverty and transforming the economy are organically linked in the report to establishing what has been called in the Nordic countries and elsewhere a new gender contract⁵⁰ in which the relationship between work and family needs changes, and in which women, and men, are given the possibility to live more flexible and productive lives with greater freedom of choice and fewer constraints.

More concretely, to give just one example, counting part-time work for pensions and other benefits without penalizing the partners of the unemployed, backed by a minimum wage and guarantees of employees' rights, would especially help women and their families.⁵¹ Analysing trends does not mean endorsing them, but understanding change is the pre-condition for developing policies to influence outcomes for the better. The report does not **advocate** part-time work. Rather, it recognizes that part-time work is convenient for many people at different times in their lives.⁵² As it argues, "Full employment in a modern economy must recognize that, for both men and women, the world of work has changed fundamentally. In the 1950s, full employment involved full-time, life-time employment for men; in the 1990s and beyond, it will involve for both men and women frequent changes of occupation, part-time as well as full-time work, self-employment as well as employment, time spent caring for children or elderly relatives (as well as or instead of employment) and period spent in further education and training. Forty years ago the typical worker was a man working full-time in industry; today the typical worker is increasingly likely to be a woman working part-time in a service job. Already, there are more people in Britain employed as child care-workers than as carworkers."⁵³

Far from endorsing those labour market trends and management strategies which make part-time work a synonym for insecurity, and flexibility the equivalent of marginalization, or those social policies

which encourage some households to be "work rich" with two, exhausted, partners in employment, and others kept "work poor" because benefits are withdrawn if either works even part-time, the report describes a series of inter-related policies which will facilitate women, and men, to combine family, education and training, and paid work in ways which suit new living patterns. For example, an immediate priority is placed on free, universal nursery education, which is considered the "first goal" of investment,⁵⁴ and on a learning bank to be drawn upon over the life cycle.⁵⁵ Justice across genders, a greater contribution by men to household responsibilities, minimizing the current loss to the economy and society more generally of women's skills, better educational opportunities for all social groups at different ages are some of the aims of the report. These are connected to its radical perspective in arguing for a redistribution of time and not just money between the genders and over the life cycle and the clear influence of feminist debates on social policy, economic organization and citizenship.

Towards a Social Strategy of Inclusion

The report's damning critique of poverty and of the increasing inequalities in British society has contributed to putting social exclusion back at the centre of the political agenda. Describing the state of Britain, it explains, "In January 1994, a 28-year-old Birmingham engineer sent us his payslip. He earns £2.50 an hour - £101 a week. 'I am scared to put the heating on as I would not be able to afford the electricity bill,' he told us. 'Please do not tell my employer I wrote to you as I would be straight on the dole'....For those at the top, these are the best of times. For those at the bottom, horizons are even narrower than they were a decade ago and the gap between rich and poor is greater than at any time since the

1930s. For most people - those in the middle - insecurity and anxiety are rife. Comparison with the past is important....But the real comparison - the comparison to shock anyone concerned with the future of this country - is the one between what we are and what we have it in ourselves to become, the gap between potential and performance. Most people in this country are doing less well than they want to and less well than they could, if only they were able to learn more, work more productively (or work at all), live more safely, more securely and more healthily. Too often, opportunities are distributed not on the basis of ability, but on the basis of ability to pay; not on who you are but who your parents were; not on the basis of merit, but on grounds of race or gender."⁵⁶

The fact that it speaks in the language of inclusion, considering the needs of the vast majority of the population, without losing sight of the situation of those who are excluded is one of the main features which recommends its approach. Another is the conviction that expectations can and must be raised. "Doing better than we used to is not good enough when (other countries) set their sights far higher."⁵⁷ The report talks about a flexible, intelligent welfare state to help people into work and to enable individuals to change jobs "upwards" rather than be trapped in low skill, low pay jobs or no jobs. The object is not to eliminate uncertainty, which is inevitable, but insecurity, deskilling and long term unemployment.⁵⁸

In an argument now familiar on both sides of the Atlantic, education and training, understood widely over the life cycle are presented as the necessary pre-condition, if not guarantee, of economic regeneration.⁵⁹ This flies in the face of Tory arguments that the way forward consists in keeping wages down and in preserving the kind of labour market flexibility which encourages low investment in skills and to suits the

needs of poor employers rather than those who work. Indeed, the report turns the usual argument on its head: it maintains that social justice is a pre-requisite for economic success.⁶⁰

Throughout the Social Justice report there is a strong argument for universalism with redistributive consequences. It is important to avoid confusion here by differentiating between targeting and means-testing. To take the example of child benefit, if every mother has the right to a considerably higher child allowance than at present, as the report strongly argues she should, taxing that allowance for those earning at the higher rate signifies targeting the **affluent, within** universal provision, **without** a means test for the poor as usually understood. **All** mothers would receive the **same**, higher child benefit, but the affluent would repay a proportion as part of the existing taxation system, without increasing costs in any significant way in administration. The same is true of the **right** to a second, "topping up" pension for those people whose pension provision falls below a certain level, most likely because they do not have an occupational pension, which would be of particular benefit to women, although the report suggests different ways of calculating this, and also applies to a graduate tax for those earning above a certain amount.⁶¹

In fact, with regards to redistribution, the report is much more ambitious than the usual definition which relies so heavily on higher income tax. Much can be achieved, it argues, from changes in existing allowances, for example phasing out mortgage tax relief and the married couple's allowances would release, it is estimated, £9 billion to increase substantially child benefit and to help to provide for a second pension, without raising a penny on income taxes, while a minimum wage and facilitating women's contribution to household incomes would help to

cut down on the **de facto** welfare subsidies given to poor employers who pay low wages.

The report follows best Nordic practice in linking labour market strategies with family policy.⁶² It expands our horizons and demands a new way of thinking as it takes into account life cycle perspectives for women and men to facilitate a better fit between individual and family needs for employment, for care work, and education and training when the likelihood of lifelong, fulltime, family wage male employment has almost disappeared. In short, the report argues that a radical rethink is necessary, that tinkering is inadvisable, and that a return to the past neither possible nor desirable since it would be inadequate for today's needs.

There are, of course, problems. More emphasis could have been placed on the need to provide for those who are not able to undertake paid work, for example, the severely disabled.⁶³ Those **not** in waged work must be part of the included. The report is not perfect. Racism is named as one of the major evils to be eliminated without being given due prominence. Some issues are fudged. There are some contradictions between helping people **now** and building for the future. As Ruth Lister writes, "A new Labour Government, committed to social justice and the extension of citizenship, will need to combine the kind of long-term structural strategy proposed by the Commission with some immediate help for those who have been the main victims of over a decade of redistribution from the poor to the rich."⁶⁴

More fundamentally, the fact that what is presented is a complex package, not a political manifesto, leads to the question of where to start and in what order. Although some things are clear priorities, if Labour chooses to pick some parts but not others, the outcomes may well not be

the progressive ones hoped for. What is required is a long time span, at least 15 years, and the question arises how to organize and maintain consent around such a programme of reform, and how to keep a government in power devoted to this kind of change. This, of course, necessitates consent across a larger section of the population than the Labour Party has traditionally achieved, at least without the horrific experience of a world war to galvanize support. The implication that the electoral system should be changed to some form of proportional representation to allow a more pluralistic form of government is not spelt out. And finally the economic perspective leads to the question of how an expanding economy in Europe can be achieved, and which policies should be pursued to ensure that enough jobs are created or if not created quickly enough, although the door is left open to some type of guaranteed income outside the labour market.⁶⁵

There have been several critiques by political philosophers of the definition of social justice in the report, and the argument in it that **those** inequalities which are unjust, (implying that some are), should **where possible** be eliminated, suggesting that the elimination of inequality is to some extent contingent on what can be achieved. Certainly there is an ongoing discussion to be had about the conditions which are necessary to bring about greater social justice.⁶⁶ But it is desperately short-sighted to miss the contribution the report makes to opening up a wider discussion about social justice because it does not **in the abstract** provide a perfect definition. These questions are complex in the extreme.⁶⁷ One thing is certain, the radical perspectives in the report will never come to fruition unless current cynicism and pessimism are undermined by different narratives of what is possible and needed.

This, then, is an invitation to engage in a much more adventurous and imaginative debate than has taken place so far. The report is aimed at all

those who are ill served as things are and who deserve something better, an attempt at hegemonic politics if there ever was one. What is at stake are not just documents or detailed policy proposals, but fundamental questions about how the future can be influenced and how we determine what is worth fighting for, what is feasible, and how to achieve it. In short, how we can construct a version of change which is progressive, for change there will be, as sure as death and taxes. Analysis of society as it **is**, in an international context, for any decent social science or political strategy, can help us to think about what it **might** be, no less today than for Marx or Gramsci. That is precisely what the report sets out to do.

Certainly many people, inside the Labour Party, including many on the Labour backbenches, and likely some also on the frontbench, remain to be convinced about the validity of the analysis and the policy conclusions to be drawn from it. Even more importantly there is still much work to do to make the analysis intelligible, the policy conclusions acceptable, and the conviction convincing to the country at large. We must not underestimate how difficult it is to convey policy let alone complex analysis to those inside or outside the Labour Party, or how necessary for that analysis to exist in dialogue with the widest possible range of ideas and experiences. The Labour Party does not have a tradition of debating the rationale of policy, as opposed to resolutions. It cannot do it on its own inside or outside Parliament. But it cannot do without such a debate either. Tony Blair may talk in terms of common purpose rather than collective will but what is required is a widespread understanding of the nature of the dilemmas facing Britain in order to construct a better place in which to live. The hope, desperation and excitement ensuing from a change of government might make it possible to forge a new hegemony, a widespread consent which will inevitably be full of contradictions and diversity, but willing to unite around a project to renew Britain. We need space, tolerance and acceptance of

constructive criticism, to keep people on board, to maintain consent, to construct a hegemonic politics.

As the Commission on Social Justice report argues, "Ours is a long term strategy, designed not to amend a few policies but to set a new direction. That is what people want, and that is what the country needs. But the fact that change will take a long time does not mean that there is time to spare; it means that we have to get on with it. Ours is a call for urgent action....When the challenge is so urgent, our timescale of ten to fifteen years may seem too long. Imagine, however, that fifteen years ago, government had determined to invest the revenues from North Sea Oil in the long-term development of the UK economy; that ten years ago, it had embarked upon a programme to expand nursery education; that a Jobs, Education and Training programme to prevent long-term unemployment had been initiated five years ago, and a welfare-to-work reform was already under way. We would not be living in utopia, but this would already be a very different country. What we need from government now is willingness to help develop a political and economic culture in which long-term strategies can flourish."⁶⁸

Notes

- 1 This originally appeared in Mark Perryman, ed. **The Blair Agenda**, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1996.
- 2 Will Hutton, "Raising the Stakes", in **The Guardian**, Wednesday, January 17, 1996, p. G2. This chapter is an expanded version of my inaugural lecture as professor of politics, Kingston University, Kingston upon Thames, 26 October 1995. I would like to thank Geoff Andrews, Paul Auerbach, Nina Fishman, Jane Lewis, James McCormick, Alan MacDougall, Mark Perryman, Ann Sedley, Birte Siim, Ken Spours, Stuart Wilks, and Michael Young for comments and help.
- 3 It should be pointed out that not all of New Labour policy are all that new. Some, for example, goes back to years of innovatory Labour practice in the tier of government where the Labour Party has been in power, at the local level. For example, public-private partnerships to regenerate inner-city areas pre-date the Conservative government city challenge initiative. In fact, it could be argued that this restored powers which the Tories had previously taken away. Parts of Labour education policy explicitly also builds on good practice in some Labour controlled local authorities. Conversation with Rima Horton, Labour councillor, London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.
- 4 Interview with Andrew Jasper and Sarah Baxter in **The Observer Review**, Sunday, 10 September 1995, p.2.
- 5 See Antonio Gramsci, **Selections from Political Writings, 1910-20**, Lawrence and Wishart, London 1977.
- 6 Gramsci refers to a piece written by Mussolini in the early 1920's, **Prelude to Machiavelli**. Antonio Gramsci. **Selections from the Prison Notebooks**, Lawrence and Wishart, London 1971, p. 276. On the more general point he writes, "The modern prince...cannot be a real person, a concrete individual. It can only be an organism, a complex element of society in which a collective will, which has already been recognized and has to some extent asserted itself in action, begins to take concrete form." *op.cit.* , p. 129. The specific context is a discussion of Sorel, but there is little doubt that Gramsci, who had to be careful about being too explicit in prison, is thinking of

- Mussolini. His comments could be extended to Stalin. With regard to the aim of founding a new type of state, **op.cit.** p.147. But a few passages cannot adequately convey his ideas. See **op.cit.** pp. 125-143, pp. 169-175, 247-252, 266-267, and 413-414 for further references. For a much fuller discussion see Benedetto Fontana, **Hegemony and Power. On the Relationship between Gramsci and Machiavelli**, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1993.
- 7 Antonio Gramsci, **Selections from the Prison Notebooks, op.cit.**, p.171.
 - 8 The classic statement is found in "What is to be Done?", in **Selected Works**, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1946.
 - 9 He writes that one "of the most important questions concerning the political party (is)the party's capacity to react against force of habit, against the tendency to become mummified and anachronistic....Parties...are not always capable of adapting themselves to new tasks and to new epochs...."Antonio Gramsci, **Selections from the Prison Notebooks, op.cit.**, p.211. Discussion of the need to adapt to changing circumstances and avoid purely formal unity is found in his notes on democratic centralism which he contrasts to bureaucratic centralism, an approach which could not be more different from Lenin's concept. See **op.cit.** pp.188-190. I have a fuller discussion of these themes in Anne Showstack Sassoon, **Gramsci's Politics**, second edition, Hutchinson, London 1987.
 - 10 See, for example, his criticism of the inability of the "left" in the Italian Risorgimento to develop a programme reflecting popular demands. See Antonio Gramsci, **Selections from the Prison Notebooks, op.cit.**, p. 61 and p. 168.
 - 11 See Antonio Gramsci, **Selections from the Prison Notebooks, op.cit.**, pp. 169-172. The question, he writes, "is one...of seeing whether what 'ought to be' is arbitrary or necessary; whether it is concrete will on the one hand or idle fancy, yearning, daydream on the other. The active politician is a creator, an initiator; but he (sic) neither creates from nothing nor does he move in the turbid void of his own desires and dreams. He bases himself on effective reality...to dominate and transcend it (or to contribute to this)." **op.cit.** p. 172.
 - 12 See "Americanism and Fordism" in Antonio Gramsci, **Selections from the Prison Notebooks, op.cit.**, pp. 277-318.

- 13 I discuss this at greater length in "Postscript. The People, Intellectuals, and Specialised Knowledge," in **Gramsci's Politics**, 2nd edition, Hutchinson, London and University of Minnesota Press, New York 1987. For contemporary applications of some of these ideas see Ken Spours and Michael Young, "Beyond Vocationalism" in **British Journal of Education and Work**, vol. 2, no. 2, 1988, and Michael Young, "A Curriculum for the 21st Century: Towards a New Basis for Overcoming Academic/Vocational Divisions" in **British Journal of Educational Studies**, vol 40, no. 3, 1993.
- 14 See Antonio Gramsci, **Selections from the Prison Notebooks**, *op.cit.* pp. 237-238 and Anne Showstack Sassoon, *op.cit.*, p.93.
- 15 Radical is defined as "Original, fundamental; reaching to the center or ultimate source; affecting the vital principle or principles; hence thoroughgoing; extreme." **Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary**, G. & C. Merriam Publishers, Springfield, Mass., U.S.A. 1961.
- 16 Ross McKibbin, "On the Defensive - Ross McKibbin Asks Who's Afraid of the Borrie Report, And Gets a Surprising Answer", in **The London Review of Books**, 26 January 1995, p.7. This is not to overemphasize continuity or to ignore the changes which have been made, the nature and profundity of which are being widely debated. See, for example, P. Taylor-Gooby and R. Lawson, **Markets and Managers: New Issues in the Delivery of Welfare**, Open University Press, Buckingham 1993, and John Baldock and Clare Ungerson, "Money, Care and Consumption: Families in the New Mixed Economy of Social Care", a paper prepared for the ESRC funded seminar Welfare and Culture in Europe I, December 1995.
- 17 Commission on Social Justice, **Social Justice**, Vintage, London 1994. (CSJ)
- 18 **CSJ**, p.16. The Commission's terms of reference were: "To consider the principles of social justice and their application to the economic well-being of individuals and the community; to examine the relationship between social justice and other goals, including economic competitiveness and prosperity; to probe the changes in social and economic life over the last fifty years, and the failure of public policy to reflect them adequately; and to survey the changes that are likely in the foreseeable future, and the demands that they will place on government; to analyse public policies, particularly in the fields of employment, taxation and social welfare, which could enable every individual to live free from want and to enjoy the fullest possible social and

economic opportunities; and to examine the contribution which such policies could make to the creation of a fairer and more just society." *op.cit*, p.412.

- 19 **CSJ**, pp. 18-19. In his Singapore speech Blair argued, "The implications of creating a Stakeholder Economy are profound. They mean a commitment by Government to tackle long term and structural unemployment. The development of an underclass of people, cut off from society's mainstream, living often in poverty, the black economy, crime and family instability is a moral and economic evil. Most Western economies suffer from it. It is wrong, and unnecessary, and incidentally, very costly....The Stakeholder Economy has a Stakeholder Welfare system. By that I mean that the system will only flourish in its aims of promoting security and opportunity across the life-cycle if it holds the commitment of the whole population, rich and poor. This requires that everyone has a stake. The alternative is a residual system just for the poor. After the Second World War, the route to this sort of commitment was seen simply as universal cash benefits, most obviously child benefit and pensions. But today's demands require a more active conception of welfare based on services as well as cash, child care as well as child benefit, training as well as unemployment benefit." Press release, Monday, January 8, 1996. See also Tony Blair, "A Stakeholder Society", in **Fabian Review**, vol. 108, no. 1, Feb. 1996. In a speech to Church and community workers on the tenth anniversary of the publication of the report, "Faith in the City", published in **The Guardian**, Blair maintained that "social justice is a necessity not a luxury. The most meaningful stake anyone can have in society is the ability to earn a living. So we propose education, employment and community initiatives for the young unemployed that would slash youth unemployment over a parliament. Benefit reforms would provide hope for the one-in-five workless households, trapped on benefit by a system designed for a labour market and family structure that no longer exists. A jobs, education and training programme for single parents would offer help to a group of people on a 16-year ticket to reliance on the state." **The Guardian**, Monday January 29, 1996, p. 11. In Singapore, he argued that "a life on benefit - dependant on the State - is not what most people want. They want independence, dignity, self-improvement, a chance to earn and get on." *op.cit*.

20 **CSJ**, pp.62-3.

21 **CSJ**, p. 64.

- 22 CSJ, p.64.
- 23 CSJ, pp. 3. For a summary of each "revolution", see p. 64, p. 77, and p. 84.
- 24 Christopher Pierson, "Doing Social Justice: the Case of the Borrie Commission," in **Contemporary Political Studies**, vol.2, no. 2, 1995, p. 240. For just a few examples of critiques: G. A. Cohen, "Back to Socialist Basics", **New Left Review**, no. 207, September/October 1994 (in response to the Commission on Social Justice discussion documents, "The Justice Gap" and "Social Justice in a Changing World" published prior to the report, London: IPPR, 1993); Editorial, "Labour's Currant Bun", **New Statesman & Society**, 28 October 1994; Ian Aitkin, "Borrie Ducks Commission to Explore", **New Statesman & Society**, 11 November 1994, p. 12; David Purdy, "Commission Opts for Caution", **New Times**, 12 November 1994, pp.6-7; Anthony Arblaster, "Don't Follow the Tory Agenda", **Red Pepper**, December, 1994, p.30; **Action for Health and Welfare**, Bulletin of the Welfare State Network, no. 2, 1994, pp.10-11; Megnad Desai, "Borrie Is No Beveridge: Citizen's Income Now!", **Citizen's Income Bulletin**, no. 19, February, 1995; "A Critique of the Report of the Commission on Social Justice", **Socialist Campaign Group News**, n.d.; Anne Kane, Ann Pettifor, and Pam Tatlow, "The Hijacking of Feminism", Labour Women's Action Committee, n.d.; John Pilger, "Emily Wouldn't Like It", **New Statesman & Society**, 7 July 1995; (For responses to Pilger see Letters, **New Statesman & Society**, 21 July 1995, pp. 25-6.); Miriam David and Dulcie Groves, "From Beveridge to Borrie and Beyond", in **Journal of Social Policy**, vol. 24, no. 2, 1995, pp. 161-2; Stuart White, "Rethinking the Strategy of Equality: a Critical Appraisal of the Report of the Borrie Commission on Social Justice", paper for IPPR "Back to Basics" Seminar, 21 March 1995, unpublished; Peter Townsend, "Pessimism and Conformity: an Assessment of the Borrie Report on Social Justice" in **New Left Review**, no. 213, Sept-Oct., 1995. For a few examples of more positive discussion, excluding pieces by people who served on the Commission, see: Malcolm Wicks, "A New Beveridge?", **New Statesman & Society**, 28 October 1994, pp. 18-21; Richard Thomas, "Strong Welfare and Flexible Labour? Why Kenneth Clarke Is Wrong"; Chris Pierson, "From Words to Deeds: Labour and the Just Society"; Fran Bennett, "Ambition Checked by Caution: the Commission on Social Justice Reviewed"; all in **Renewal**, vol. 3, no. 1, January, 1995, pp.37-61; Shelagh Diplock, "Recognition at Last. Women Should Not Allow the Borrie Report to Gather Dust on the Shelf", **Towards Equality**, The Fawcett

Society, winter, 1995.

- 25 Will Hutton, **The State of the Nation**, 2nd. ed., Vintage, London 1996.
- 26 See the letter from Jim McCormick and Carey Oppenheim in response to John Pilger's article, both cited in note 23 above.
- 27 See Antonio Gramsci, **Selections from the Prison Notebooks**, *op.cit.*, p. 129; p.168.
- 28 See Antonio Gramsci, **Selections from the Prison Notebooks**, *op.cit.*, pp. 172-3.
- 29 See Townsend, *op.cit.* and Peter Townsend and Alan Walker, "Revitalising National Insurance" in **Fabian Review**, vol. 107, no. 6, December, 1995.
- 30 I have to confess that I have personally done so in an earlier, youthful Trotskyest incarnation.
- 31 Anna Coote has made some similar points in "A Bit Too Much", in **The Independent**, 3 July 1995. "In the fine print of his speeches, Blair is often a sophisticated, liberal social analyst. The sound-bites and the silences tell another story." The fine print also varies. Although it was only a paragraph in a whole text in which Blair discussed a variety of educational initiatives in the aftermath of the Harriet Harman affair, his mention of examples of accelerated learning in his Southwark Cathedral speech dominated media coverage. The fact that he specifically cited Birmingham 11 year olds who do GCSEs early, which presumably had the desired effect of focusing middle class minds in the Southeast, did not help Birmingham's Chief Education Officer to get the point across on BBC 2 Newsnight that Birmingham is piloting a wide variety of enrichment programmes aimed at all youngsters. What ended up being reinforced in the public debate (cf the letters in the **Guardian** which followed) was the confusion between selection, streaming, and setting subject based teaching groups. This as most policy is extremely complex and difficult to convey in a speech, and the confusion which remains is huge.
- 32 The comment was made during the discussion at a Signs of the Times seminar on the report in London in February 1995. On a broader note, Will Hutton has written that the report represents "(o)ne step nearer to genuine citizenship...a remarkable document, for throughout there is the

point/counterpoint between the economic, social and political that must be at the heart of any reform programme. And if a **still** intellectually timid Labour Party could be persuaded to sign up wholeheartedly there would be a transformation of British political life - and a genuine threat to sleaze and social injustice at the same time. Quoted in Ruth Lister, " 'One step nearer to genuine citizenship': Reflections on the Commission on Social Justice Report", in **Soundings**, no. 2, 1996.

- 33 See, for example, Gordon Brown, "Modernising Tax, Employment and Benefit Policies", an extract from a speech he gave to the Unions '95 conference, **New Times**, 25 November 1995 or in answers by Brown to questions in **Labour Party News** in the same period. Evidence is also found in the Labour Party 1995 policy document on education, and in statements that the ideas in the report are among those being considered by Chris Smith. It should be noted that the report reflects knowledge of many of the of programmes in Australia that Smith investigated in his fact-finding trip there in January 1996.
- 34 Ross McKibbin, **op.cit.**, p.6.
- 35 **loc.cit.**
- 36 **CSJ**, p.64.
- 37 Ross McKibbin finds the fact that this is no longer the case particularly depressing. **op.cit.**, p. 6.
- 38 This is well portrayed in the first 2 chapters of the report. Peter Townsend's criticism of a lack of attention to increasing poverty and social polarization in the report is not justified. Nor is the kind of international strategy which he suggests is necessary by any means precluded by its perspective. **op.cit.**
- 39 The best-seller status of Will Hutton's book **op.cit.** and the success of Andrew Marr's **Ruling Britannia: the Failure and Future of British Democracy**, London: Michael Joseph, 1995 are indicative of the changing mood.
- 40 James McCormick and Carey Oppenheim, "Options for Change", **New Statesman & Society**, 26 January 1996, pp 18-21. They compare the **CSJ** with two other major reports: Joseph Rountree Foundation, **Inquiry into Income and Wealth**, York: Joseph Rountree Foundation, 1995 and

Dahrendorf Commission, **Report on Wealth Creation and Social Cohesion in a Free Society**, London: Commission on Wealth Creation and Social Cohesion in a Free Society, London: 1995 which was initiated by Paddy Ashdown. Another important contribution to the debate has come from Frank Field, **Making Welfare Work: Reconstructing Welfare for the Millennium**, London: Institute for Community Studies, 1995 although this stands out for the stress which is placed on the need to overcome the "play the system" culture because of the existing incentives which exist for those on welfare to stay on welfare, and for taxpayers to feel they have an individual stake in pension and other funds, which it suggests should be in the hands of a non-state corporation. See a summary of his argument in Frank Field, "Making Welfare Work - Assaulting Means Tests", in **Fabian Review**, vol. 107, no. 4, August, 1995. Malcolm Wicks has also argued that "the Left cannot afford a lingering look back to 1979. For by the late 1970's Labour's welfare statism represented a faded and jaded project." See "A Modern, Democratic Welfare State" in **Fabian Review**, vol. 106, no. 6, December, 1994, p.13 and Malcolm Wicks, **The Active Society: Defending Welfare**, Fabian Discussion Paper, no.17.

- 41 It is the lack of depth of analysis to explain the reasons for the policy proposals they suggest which makes Peter Mandelson's and Roger Liddle's **The Blair Revolution - Can New Labour Deliver?**, Faber, London, 1996 much more part of the old labour tradition than they might like to admit.
- 42 In addition to the references above, the following extract from a speech Gordon Brown gave to the Unions 95 conference shows how much of the analysis in the Social Justice report is shared. We "must be aware," he said, "that changes in the global economy and the world of work demand a very different approach to the problems of unemployment than that of 50 years ago. In a global economy where techniques and capital are more mobile than ever, and markets are truly international, success depends on the skills and talents of people. That is why, while ensuring sufficient demand in our economy is essential, it must be accompanied by increased investment in our infrastructure, industry and people.
"Also the old model of work - men working 40 hours a week in the same job for 40 years of their lives with a non-working wife- is gone for good. Both men and women are working part-time as well as full-time. Work is increasingly casualised and in-work poverty is a reality for millions.
"Employment, tax and benefit policies have not been modernised to take

account of these changes. As a consequence we now face a two-tier labour market dividing working and non-working families. This work-rich/work-poor division is, in large part, a product of the interaction of the benefit system, the tax system and the wages that are on offer to those with low or no skills...."Lessening the tax burden on low-paid worker and accepting that government had responsibilities "to provide new opportunities to work and train" particularly for the under-25s and the long-term unemployed," we need a modern welfare state which promotes independence rather than trapping people in unemployment and dependency....(and) a minimum wage which underpins the benefit system and prevents exploitation" while recognising the limitations of reform of in-work benefits to help everyone." Gordon Brown, op.cit. See also Gordon Brown, **Fair is Efficient - a Socialist Agenda for Fairness**, Fabian Pamphlet 563, London: Fabian Society, April, 1994.

- 43 The way the report is organized gives a sense of its general perspective. In the section "Strategies for the Future", the first chapter is "Investment: Adding Value Through Lifelong Learning" which expands the notion of education well beyond schooling. "Opportunity: Working for a Living" goes well beyond Beveridge's definition of full employment as full-time male employment with men earning a high enough wage to cover family needs (family wage) to consider the need for family-friendly employment practices, a minimum wage, etc. See for example, **CSJ**, p.205. "Security: Building an Intelligent Welfare State" argues for working with the grain of change to develop ways to combine work, benefits, caring, and education in new ways. See for example, **CSJ**, p.223. "Responsibility: Making a Good Society" concerns facilitating local initiatives for community regeneration, investment in children, and housing, whereas "Taxation: Investing in Ourselves" makes the case for fair and acceptable taxation. None falls easily into the usual academic or government department categories. For illustrations of the report's down to earth tone see the page long letter from a lone parent in Belfast about her struggle to get a job and her description of how the benefit system undermines her once she finds one, **CSJ**, p. 238; narratives of different welfare to work strategies, **CSJ**, pp. 238, 256, 259; or "Emma and the Learning Bank", **CSJ**, p.146.
- 44 For discussion of the implications for redistribution and participation in the notion of a stakeholder economy, which focusses on reform of corporate governance, see Andrew Gamble and Gavin Kelly, "Stakeholder Capitalism and One-Nation Socialism", in **Renewal**, vol. 4, no. 1, January, 1996.

- 45 Of all the recent reports on reconstructing the welfare state and the economy only the Commission on Social Justice report places women's roles at the heart of its analysis. See James McCormick and Carey Oppenheim, "Options for Change", *op.cit.*, p. 18.
- 46 Anne Showstack Sassoon, ed. **Women and the State**, London: Routledge, 1992. The book first came out in 1987.
- 47 In "Women's New Social Role: Contradictions of the Welfare State" I talk about a male model of work which assumes that whoever is in fact employed, the premise around which paid work is organised is that another person has the main responsibility for household needs. In Anne Showstack Sassoon, ed. **Women and the State**, *op.cit.* The term male-breadwinner model is, however, more widely used. See Hilary Land, "The Family Wage," **Feminist Review**, no. 6, 1980.
- 48 I argue this more fully in "Introduction: the Personal and the Intellectual, Fragments and Order, International Trends and National Specificities", and in my piece, "Women's New Social Role: Contradictions of the Welfare State" in **Women and the State**, *op.cit.* Current information reinforces this view. The **Financial Times**, Tuesday January 30, 1996, p.2, reports that a European-wide survey shows that women "with jobs make significant contributions to their household incomes. Fifty-nine per cent of employed women in the survey, covering France, Germany, Britain, Spain and Italy, provided half or more of the incomes of their households. Highest contributors were in France and Germany where more than one-in-three supply all the income, according to the survey by the Mori research organisation for Whirlpool, a US charity. British women were least likely to supply all the income. This may be associated with their relative concentration in low-paid, part-time work." This refers to **Women: Setting New Priorities**. Whirlpool Foundation, 400 Riverview Drive, Suite 410, Benton Harbor, MI49022, USA.
- 49 **CSJ**, p. 3. Not only the centrality of this perspective but the coherence with which it is argued is most certainly due to the composition of the Commission itself. Without suggesting that it was only the women members (7 of 16), or that they necessarily agreed on all details, a tribute must be paid to them, and their fellow commissioners, for making this analysis the core theme that it is, and therefore rendering the report a leading edge document internationally. Patricia Hewitt, who until September 1994 was the deputy

director of the IPPR, was deputy chair of the Commission, has written a very thoughtful and relevant discussion based on a wide range of up-to-date research: **About Time. The Revolution in Work and Family Life**, London: IPPR/River Orams Press, 1993.

- 50 This concept derives from an essay by Yvonne Hirdman, "The Gender System. Theoretical Reflections About Women's Social Oppression" in **Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift**, no. 3, 1988 (in Swedish). It attempts to take account of the social agreements which arise around the divisions of labour between men and women and between the state and family-households with regard to services, paid work, caring, and financial and other arrangements and which become part of a country's political and wider culture.
- 51 It is noteworthy that Townsend, **op.cit.**, and Townsend and Walker, **op.cit.**, despite recognizing that poverty in old age is mainly a problem for women, treat these questions almost as asides. One of the contentious issues in the report is the suggestion that retirement should be equalized between men and women at 65. However, as with many of the policy proposals in the report, it must be taken into account that this is suggested within a perspective of facilitating periods of full-time and part-time work, if desired, of education and training, and of caring work over the life cycle without disruption of pension contributions.
- 52 See the letter from James McCormick and Carey Oppenheim to the **New Statesman & Society**, **op.cit.**
- 53 **CSJ**, p.154. It should be noted that given that Britain had almost the worst child-care provision in Europe when this was written, (see **CSJ**, pp. 122-3), one might reflect on how few car workers there are left!
- 54 **CSJ**, pp. 122-128.
- 55 **CSJ**, pp. 141-147. The report argues for the establishment of a learning bank for **all** to enable people to have the **right** over a lifetime to financial support for education and training, rather than devote government resources so overwhelmingly to the tuition costs of full-time students between 18 and 21 as at present.
- 56 **CSJ**, pp.28-29.
- 57 **CSJ**, p.28.

- 58 As someone from Newcastle told the commission, "Unemployment is not about why you lost the last job: it's about why you don't get the next one." **CSJ**, p.154.
- 59 See, for example, OECD Center for Educational Research and Innovation, **Education at a Glance. OECD Indicators**. Paris: OECD, 1992; Robert Barrow, "Human Capital and Economic Growth" in **Policies for Long-Run Economic Growth. A Symposium Sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City**, Jackson Hole, Wyoming, August 27-29, 1992; Ray Marshall and Marc Tucker, **Thinking for a Living. Education and the Wealth of Nations**, New York: Basic Books, 1992. A subtitle for Chapter 4, "Investment: Adding Value through Lifelong Learning" is, in fact, "Thinking for a Living" with the Marshall and Tucker book cited.
- 60 These arguments are echoed in Andrew Glyn and David Miliband, eds. **Paying for Inequality**, London: IPPR/Rivers Oram Press, 1994. Miliband was secretary to the Commission and was then appointed head of policy in Tony Blair's office. See also David Miliband, ed. **Reinventing the Left**, Oxford: Polity Press, 1994. Gordon Brown has similar arguments in **Fair is Efficient**, *op.cit.*
- 61 A learning bank would in part be financed by a progressive graduate tax linked to earnings levels and spread over a long periods, and only invoked when people earn above a certain amount. It would be important, of course, to make sure that the funds thus raised were ringfenced. See Ruth Lister *op.cit.* for further discussion of the difference between targeting and mean-testing. The conflation of the two is found, for example, in the which Peter Townsend and Alan Walker *op.cit.* See the same problem in Townsend, *op.cit.*
- 62 **CSJ**, p. 223.
- 63 See Fran Bennett, *op.cit.* and James McCormick and Carey Oppenheim, *op.cit.*
- 64 Ruth Lister, *op.cit.*, p.7.
- 65 See **CSJ**, pp.263-5.
- 66 See **CSJ**, pp. 17-22. See also the Commission's interim reports, **The Justice Gap**, and **Social Justice in a Changing World**, both London: IPPR, 1993.

These latter 2 are criticized by G.A. Cohen *op.cit.* while Stuart White *op.cit.* provides a critique of ideas of social justice in the report itself. For other, earlier contributions to the discussion see Anna Coote, ed. **The Welfare of Citizens. Developing New Social Rights**, London: Rivers Oram Press, 1992, and Raymond Plant, "Social Justice, Labour and the New Right", Fabian Pamphlet 556, London: The Fabian Society, 1993.

67 On a different plane, which social and political philosophers would take account of, there is a clear recognition in the report of the need to invest in social capital and to involve local people to facilitate community regeneration, that is, to invest in creating those conditions which are needed to underpin citizenship rights and responsibilities. Ruth Lister comments that this last point has not received the attention it should. *op.cit.* See **CSJ**, Ch. 7 "Responsibility: Making a Good Society", pp. 306-373 which discusses social capital, support for children and families, and building strong communities through regeneration from the bottom up and reform of housing provision.

68 **CSJ** p. 398

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