

# Socialism for a Sceptical Age

## *Speakers:*

Tony Benn, Professor Anthony Giddens, Professor Leo Panitch, Hilary Wainwright

## *Chair:*

Professor Mary Kaldor

### **Mary Kaldor**

Welcome everybody, I think we can start now, although there are still a few people coming in. It's lovely to see so many people and the whole meeting has quite a nice old feeling about it, especially since on the way here I was bombarded by students to ask me if I would speak at the Occupation on Thursday.

### **Tony Giddens**

So was I.

### **Mary Kaldor**

So – well, perhaps even better – As you know this meeting is to launch Mike Newman's book on Ralph Miliband and to remember him. I actually only met him twice and the first occasion was when I was a student at Oxford and I was Editor of the student magazine, *Isis*, and for my last issue I decided to have a special issue on socialism. As we were Bevanites we decided to take the whole editorial team to Ebbw Vale. Unfortunately, I didn't get permission from my college who rang up my mother and said, "Did you know your daughter did not sleep in her bed last night?" My mother, who was a life long socialist and my adviser on the project, said "Of course, not. She was in Ebbw Vale." This didn't mollify Somerville who did what was called "gating" me, that's to say I was sent down for a week and since my sister was at LSE I came here for the week and I interviewed Ralph Miliband for the special issue *Isis* on socialism and he was very kind and very nice and it was a very productive week.

So, now I'd like to turn to Mike just to tell you a little bit about today's event.

### **Michael Newman**

Thanks, Mary. Well my role is really just to say a few words about Ralph Miliband and something about tonight's event. I have to keep my remarks very short about Miliband and this reminded me of the last time I had to speak about him in a very few words. This was one of the most bizarre events of writing the book. I'd been in North America interviewing people about Miliband. I had been in Canada for a couple of days and arrived at Boston Airport and I was greeted by an immigration official who said – I won't try and do an American accent - but he said "Good morning, sir." So, I said "Good morning" and he said "Are you here on vacation or is it business?" So I said, "Not exactly either. I'm here because I'm doing interviews for a book I'm writing." And he said, "Oh really, sir? What's the book about?" So I said it was about a person and he said "And who was this person?" And at this point I started getting cagey and replied, "he was a political thinker", and he said "Oh really, sir? What sort of political thinker?" So I said, "Well, his name was Ralph Miliband and he was a political thinker." And he said "Well, I did 'poly-sci' at Syracuse University and I've never heard of your Mr Miliband. What sort of political thinker was he?" So I said, "Well he was a socialist." And he said "A SOCIALIST!?" And I said "Yeah" and he said "And is that an

interesting or important doctrine anyone should want to know about?" And I said "Yeah, I think it's very important." And he looked at me as if I was completely mad, but let me in, realising I was also harmless. Anyway, I was thinking about him and thinking it's a pity he's not here to see that there are a few people interested in *my* Mr Miliband and even more interested in socialism.

So just a few words about Miliband. He arrived in Britain a refugee from Nazi occupied Belgium, as a 16 year old. I think that this has relevance because although he wrote more about Britain than any other country, in a sense he was always writing about it as, to some extent, an outsider. When he wrote about the Labour Party, which of course he did in one of the most influential critiques of the Party there has ever been, *Parliamentary Socialism*, it was very clearly not someone who had been moulded by Durham miners' galas but someone who had already started off as some kind of continental Marxist, although he was only 16 when he arrived in Britain.

On the other hand, if we try to look at what sort of thinker he was, his Marxism - if it was Marxism - was of a very independent kind. He always called himself an independent Marxist and if other Marxists said that his work wasn't really Marxist this did not bother him too much because he always saw it as a framework of analysis rather than a bible.

If you try to say what sort of a thinker or socialist he was, there are a lot of paradoxes. He was someone who always argued that you needed a political party to bring about fundamental change, but he was never happy in a party; he was in the Labour Party for a while but left in the mid '60s and was really never in a party again. If you think about him in terms of most traditions he doesn't fit very easily: it's much easier to say what he was not than what he was. He was clearly not a Social Democrat because he regarded social democracy as a timid version of reformism, which was fundamentally not going to change anything. He certainly was not a communist either: he was a critic of communism both in its established forms and in political parties in the west. Nor was he ever a Trotskyite or Maoist for he always believed the socialism had to be combined with democracy and he didn't believe that those forms were ever going to have great relevance to liberal democracies, however inadequate he saw liberal democracy as being. But nor was he a real proponent of movements and spontaneity - what became associated with May '68. It was not that he was against it, but he never thought it was adequate or something that was really going to bring about fundamental change.

That makes him sound as if he was a sceptic who was more critical than he was positive but I think that would be false as well: he was somebody who actually was constantly trying to learn from experience, apply his own form of thought to contemporary reality and to project the importance of some kind of socialist democracy, and I think he did that with great courage all the way through his life.

That really brings me on to tonight's event. His very final book, which was published just after he died in 1994, was called *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*. It was a book that he wrote after the collapse of the Soviet Union and those kinds of regimes. It was also actually a book that he wrote after it appeared that the left was in decline and social democracy was becoming more right wing. It was an incredibly honest book, I think, which really tried to do what he'd done all of his adult life, which was to apply his thought to the present and think about lessons from the past and how socialism in a democratic form could be built in the future. It was a book which should have provoked a debate, but it didn't really provoke a debate at the time and it was for that reason when thinking about this event that it seemed that

to have a debate on the title of his last book, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*, would be the most appropriate thing to do to commemorate him. I'm very, very grateful for the really distinguished panel who are going to debate it.

I just have a couple of words to say about this event. I want to thank, very much, David Held and the other members of the Miliband Committee for putting on this event; also Salomé van Jaarsveld and Alan Revel for organising so much of it. I want to end with one more controversial point, perhaps a case of fools rushing in.... I want to say how glad I am that it's at LSE and I think it should be at LSE but I also have one final remark about that.

Miliband was really formed to a great extent by LSE. He was a 16 year old, as I said, when he came to Britain. He came to LSE when he was 17, and it really transformed him over time from a refugee into a major international theorist. He had thought that he would stay at LSE for the rest of his life. But in the mid '60s, when he was a senior lecturer, he was totally alienated by the reaction of the LSE authorities of the time to the handling of the student protests of '68 and eventually he left LSE very disillusioned and upset by it. I think that was a great shame and I think it particularly appropriate that this event actually is at LSE in this theatre and perhaps it's some kind of posthumous reconciliation.

Anyway, thank you.

### **Mary Kaldor**

Well, thank you very much, Mike and certainly what I'd like to say, if you like in defence of LSE, is that for me coming here it was wonderful to see that the idea of being a public intellectual, which Harold Laski and Ralph Miliband had pioneered, is something that is still very much valued at LSE, when it's much less valued at other universities.

So, let me now turn to our panel of speakers on this exciting issue and we're going to start with Leo Panitch, who's the Editor of *Socialist Register* and the Professor in Comparative Political Economy at York University.

### **Leo Panitch**

Thank you, Mary.

Let me first of all congratulate Mike Newman on having written a really very, very, fine biography of Ralph; he deserves enormous credit for producing such a very fine book; and let me say that I'm very pleased to be here and to see so many people here. I must say back in '68 when I would have been sitting up at the back there, the people who are trying to get into the room would have not have been nearly as polite to the ushers as they're being tonight. I would have been listening to Richard Kuper [who just walked in] back in 1968, who would have been down here, spurring us to revolution.

To turn to the theme we've been given to address, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*, let me first of all question the premise. I don't believe we live in a sceptical age. Of course, it's sceptical, disillusioned, cynical about socialism but in other respects it's the furthest thing from a sceptical age. We live in an age of naïve credibility about markets, failing to see that markets represent social relations that are full of power. We live in an age that shows we live in an age of remarkable naivety about the stock market, about it's ability to keep on bubbling; we live in an age of remarkable credulity with regard to tax cuts and supply side economics; and we live in an age of naïve credulity in a number of isolated models, which we are told work

well and we should emulate and especially the people of the South are told work well, and they should emulate: South Korea, or, unbelievably today, Argentina. We live in an age when we are told that we now "know" the solution to poverty in the South and when the "cure" is named as foreign direct investment! Or, for those of us of a more social democratic persuasion, who are more sceptical of markets, we live in an age when we think we can square the circle, when there's no bother at all about squaring market efficiency with social justice, when hard choices don't have to be made because you can have both. We live in an age when we think the new economy has done away with capitalist crises. We live in an age when we think that through shareholder values we can get to class harmony. We live in an age when we think that the Swedish or the German models are not being undone by financial capital. And we live in an age of remarkable credulity regarding the nature of American intervention for human rights purposes.

All of this is the flipside of scepticism about socialism. If you give up on that you don't become clear-sighted, you take on other illusions. So, then what does it mean to think of oneself as a socialist in this kind of age which is full of illusions about capitalism? It first of all means - and it has always meant this - serious socialist analysis and thought. It first of all means using socialist concepts and ideas to pierce the veil of illusions, to see through the emptiness of surface appearances, to venture out into the dark to banish illusions.

When Ralph Miliband wrote *The State and Capitalist Society* he was consciously or unconsciously writing a response to Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, and Crosland's *Future of Socialism* if you go back and read it today (it was written in 1956) had three central premises: 1) that the working class or the labour movement had become a power in the land whose power would never be reversed; 2) that the state, which before the war had been a handmaiden of business, was now independent of business; and 3) that financial capital was no longer the dominant fraction of the business class. Each of those premises, of course, look ludicrous today but Ralph outstanding book, *The State and Capitalist Society*, disproved them almost 35 years ago. In doing that he was using socialist analysis in the sense of which I'm speaking.

But at the same time that type of socialist analysis, of sceptical socialist thought, needs to be applied to socialism as practised itself and that's something that Ralph always did and always taught. He was sceptical of the worth of Marxist analysis as it had been handed down to him and dedicated himself to developing it in its weakest areas and that's what *Marxist and Politics* was about, the best book - in my view - he ever wrote.

I remember visiting him in his rooms across the road when he came back from the Soviet Union on one trip, I'm not sure if it was 1969 or '70, and he said to me: 'Do you know why they don't have any cafes in the Soviet Union'? I mumbled something about central planning and he said "No, that's not it all. Cafes are where revolutions are hatched." So many of us, having grown disappointed with Soviet communism or Chinese communism, naively then got on the bandwagon of Cuba or Nicaragua or what have you. Ralph never did, never. That's not to say that he didn't wish them well, wasn't inspired by struggles of the kind that led to successes there, but he always undertook a sober analysis of the limits of those practices and of those regimes.

The best essay he ever wrote, in my view, was his essay criticising the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.

What, in a positive sense, does it mean to be socialist today, in an age without the movements - certainly in Europe and North America, the working class socialist movements - that used to exist and have now, whether as social democracy or communist movements, run their course, at least in the form they emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Without those movements socialism is largely about a vision about how to recreate movement of the socialist kind. It's about the process of education and the development of popular capacities to analyse the world in such a way as to pierce illusions and to envisage a socialist practice.

Until those movements are built again all the policy prescriptions, all the more or less radical reforms we will advance, will not go very far. Does that mean we don't have influence? I don't think so. Mike has, among the photographs in the biography, a remarkable photograph that shows Ralph Miliband's influence in a remarkable way. It is a photograph of a prison protest at the East Michigan State Prison in 1981. You see a bank of bars, of prison doors, and one arm is sticking out of one them and in the hand of that arm is *The State and Capitalist Society*.

Those movements will be built: the victory of the Workers' Party this weekend in Brazil, a party that didn't exist 20 years ago, that explicitly emerged as a post-communist and post-Social Democratic socialist party, is evidence that the illusions that we have had about capitalism will not be sustained forever, least of all in the South.

That said, I'm very proud to say that in this current volume of the *Socialist Register* (which I now co-edit with Colin Leys and which Ralph Miliband founded with John Saville in 1964) there is an essay by a Brazilian entitled 'The Porto Alegre Thermidor?' which is partly about the development of the tendencies that Michels so long ago described as those of oligarchy, inside the Workers' Party of Brazil. Ralph would have wanted exactly such an article to be published at this time, not because it means that that promise of the PT is closed off, but because it shows we must be sober about how much we have to accomplish within our own struggles to improve our capacities, let alone in terms of coping with the markets.

### **Mary Kaldor**

Thanks. Now our next speaker is Hilary Wainwright who's probably known to us all and she's Editor of *Red Pepper*.

### **Hilary Wainwright**

Thanks, Mary and friends and comrades I'm really pleased to be here, really honoured, because Ralph meant a lot to me. He was both sort a guide and a goad and a friend and a comrade. He once told me that I had to take myself more seriously, took me out on a walk after a dinner and said, "Look, you know, you've got to take yourself more seriously." So, if this talk is a bit serious and long then blame Ralph. But, just to say, echoing Leo's points about the victory of the PT and Lula, it was a very strange and exciting experience preparing for this talk because I was rereading *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* and at the same time hearing all the news about Lula and I was reading the last chapter and I was thinking, "God, how can I scan this and email it to my friends in the PT?" Because it's a remarkable chapter, it's almost like a guide for a socialist government, a government that's won electoral office but faces the formidable opposition of the financial markets, the financial institutions, and many parts of the state. So, I just wanted to read very quickly, just to give a sense of the way in which Ralph combined this sort of pragmatism in tactics, but a resolute determined principled sense of moving always in a socialist direction. He says: "On the one hand the government, the socialist government, would want very early on to introduce some of the

measures to which it has been committed and which would be viewed adversely by the business community at home and abroad. On the other hand the government would also want as much cooperation from business as it is possible to obtain. This means that the government would continue for a certain period of time to operate in the concepts of an economy in which capitalist enterprise played a major role. It also means among other things allowing firms an adequate rate of profit, indeed helping them to achieve it." And then he says "A socialist government will have to make very clear that if there was to be any kind of partnership with business and the government it would be the government that would be the senior partner. The President will wear posh suits and on no account will he shave off his beard."

But the most important and innovative part of that chapter, which in a sense did not pre-empt but anticipated what I think is important about the PT, was a paragraph which talks about the importance of alliances with the people, not simply as voters but as citizens organising to assert democracy over their daily lives; not simply within the organisational wings of the party but with independent democratic organisations in the community and the workplace, and he puts it like this: "In Marxist thought, dual power has always been taken to mean an adversary relation between a revolutionary movement operating in a revolutionary situation and the bourgeois government under challenge from that movement. It is, however, possible to think of dual power in different terms, as a partnership between a socialist government on the one hand and a variety of grass roots agencies on the other. In no way would activists be mere servants of the government, on the contrary they would have an organised life of their own." And for me, in a way, this is the crunch or this is the idea I want to develop as being really the crunch of socialism for a sceptical age, but I think also from the point of view of idealists and people wanting transformation. It's a creatively angry age. It's an age in which people aren't joining political parties, whether socialist parties or other parties, but they are inventing new kinds of collective action to assert democratic control where governments have in effect given up or acquiesce to the pressures of big business, whether global or local. It's based on a recognition that parliamentary democracy is necessary but not sufficient. It sees a deeper participatory form of democracy being rooted in the organisations people are already creating, so not based on some sort of elaborate blueprint but based on what people are already doing, the ways in which people are already filling the gap, the democratic deficit left by parliamentary democracy. It entails the idea that the party can't control those democratic forces and that the party doesn't have a monopoly of the process of social transformation and that in a way is what I think is the distinctive feature of the Workers' Party and its importance for us. I don't want to romanticise it - I think this article in *Socialist Register* is very important and it's sort of critical and 'stand back a bit' - but I think the important thing about the Workers' Party is the first thing it said when it got into elected office. I talked to one of its mayors, and he said "When we get into office we share power with the movements from whence we came" and that's what they did in Porto Alegre and other cities: they opened up the budgetary process to a process of popular negotiation, which I'll maybe say a bit more about later.

I think that's why, although the PT is going to face huge problems, it's going to be, I think, stronger than populist nationalist parties or purely parliamentary parties. I think it points to a very different political methodology, a very different approach to the state, to power, to agency and party, from the mainstream social democratic parties. It's interesting that when Peter Mandelson went over to Brazil he just couldn't recognise it, I mean he was just using his rather myopic set of categories. He said Lula is backward, not consistent with the Third Way, therefore nothing to do with him. And Lula isn't consistent with the Third Way - doesn't

fit into those old categories which are what in my view govern much of the ideological framework of New Labour.

Now, what I wanted to really talk about is: what's the importance of this participatory approach? Rather than just say it's wonderful, it's great, what's the importance of this participatory approach that, you know, the PT exemplifies best but many of us, many of you, are carrying out in your day to day politics. I want to say something about its importance by just giving one interpretation of the past and then exploring some of the positive implications for socialists today where it does provide the basis of a re-thought kind of socialism.

Firstly, thinking about the past, the question I want to ask is why is it that parties rooted in mass working class organisations, like let's take the ANC and the British Labour Party, why parties like that rooted in really strong, powerful, big working class movements and organisations, why in the end they've let big business get away with so much, so that in South Africa you now have the privatisation of water and electricity so that the government cannot deliver on the basic commitments it made; and you have a situation in Britain where, okay there's increased public spending which is great, but where does a lot of that public spending go? Over 50% of public revenue now ends up in private purses, in the companies that are making private profit. So you have a situation where parties elected to control big private interests have ended up acquiescing in almost being controlled by them. Now, there are obviously lots of objective factors explaining this in terms of, particularly in the last 10 years, the growth of financial powers and the feeling that you can only be elected if you acquiesce in the pressures of the financial market. But I think that one's got to recognise that this process has been going on for a long time. I want to quote Bevan, talking about Bevanites, I wrote my thesis on Bevan, so I'm a bit of Bevanite myself, I want just to quote a remark he made after his first year in government in '45. He said "In practice it is impossible for the modern state to maintain an independent control over the decisions of big business; when the state extends its control over big business big business moves in to control the state".

Now, Bevan, you know, was no cynic. He entered parliament after seeing the limits of industrial syndicalism, he wrote a book, *In Place of Fear*, in which he said, "Parliament is a sword at the heart of private property" and I want to first ask what gets blamed for the blunting of that sword. The traditional explanation, you know, has sometimes been applied to Bevan himself and is to do with the kind of pressures of parliament, the sort of flattery and bribery - all those pressures which sap the will of even the most militant socialist. But I want to argue that those in a way focus too much on the individual and I want to really ask what it is about the nature of the relationship between the leadership and the membership in social democratic parties, the way in which the leadership, the politicians can see their role and can see the role of the party and the role of the state that means that that mass organisation behind that leadership never becomes a real source of counter power, of resistance, of challenge, of bargaining power even with big business, with the big corporations; and my argument is really that in a sense it's the conception of the state and of the party as an agency of change that underlies social democracy that explains this and the understandings of knowledge that go with this: an understanding of the state as acting almost above society, not in the moral sense but in the sense of being outside society, of the state being like an engineer acting on society as the raw material to change. I mean people talk about the social engineering state and I think that was in a way an accurate conception that was behind a lot of the thinking of social democracy on the centre as well as the left and that behind that is a particular understanding of knowledge, which was positivistic knowledge that was the commonsense understanding of knowledge. In terms of politics it meant an understanding of society or the

understanding of the knowledge of society as being laws, scientific knowledge, codified knowledge, knowledge which almost by definition could only be in the hands of the experts, could be centralised in research departments, in the sort of expertise of the leadership, of the state apparatus. But it had serious political consequences, it created effectively a division of labour between the leadership and the masses, which Michels described but doesn't explain it in that way because he sees it as an inevitable law, rather than partly based on this particular understanding of social scientific knowledge. I mean it sees in a way the politicians and the state experts as the knowing agents of change and the mass membership as the supporters of change.

So, there's no sense of the mass of members, the mass of trade union activists, the people that pay their dues or whatever, of being the active agents of change; they pass resolutions, they have opinions, but the idea that they are knowing agents of change is precluded. Beatrice Webb once summed it up in a quote that's probably familiar to you. She said "The average man or woman can describe the problem but cannot prescribe the solution". That's up to her, people like the Fabians. But the other serious consequence is that in practice, of course, in government, government does depend on a huge amount of practical knowledge and can't be run simply on the basis of social scientific laws. But, in the absence of a conscious recognition of the importance of practical knowledge and a searching after the forms of practical knowledge for transformation, in the end governments end up relying on the practical knowledge of those that are managing the status quo.

So the experience of Tony Benn, here, had a big impact on me. He came in with a radical industrial policy that would really challenge the major corporations that were causing unemployment and devastation in the North East and Liverpool and so on. He came into the department of industry and found, of course, that all his civil servants, all their day to day contact, all their practical knowledge and industry was with management. It wasn't corrupt, it was just the way government was and that was just the way it had been, that's in a way one of the things that Bevan was implicitly describing. Of course they knew about trade union leaders and they could contact trade union leaders, but the idea of ministers actually talking to shop stewards, the people who had the inside knowledge was ruled out. I first met Tony when he was talking in the Working Men's (unfortunately men's), Clubs in the North East, talking to shop stewards, not just patting them on the back or winning their support as voters or recruiting them as members but encouraging them to draw up their ideas about how their industry could be transformed, how shipbuilding, how aerospace components could be transformed and in the end of course he was crushed for that very reason, or in the end forced to resign and moved on. In a way, I think, for that very reason, what he was doing was more of a threat than endless paper documents calling for the nationalisation of the top 100 companies, it was that relationship that he was building up with workers as knowing agents of change; and I think in a way one has in that experience a kind of glimpse of what could be possible, of the kind of relationship that could make real transformations possible. I mean it's happening now.

I think the Third Way has given up on the social engineering state, but in my opinion it's given up on social transformation as well. So, you have this very uncomfortable situation often reading a lot of New Labour documents and finding a lot of language of the new left such as empowerment and decentralisation. But the processes that they're empowering are not the knowing agents at the base of society, the equivalent of the shop stewards that Tony Benn was working with, or the communities that we're familiar with now, it is an enabling of decentralisation that favours the forces of the market which ends in the big corporations.



Now, it's contradictory because I'll give it to New Labour, there are things they're doing that are about giving back up to local communities. I've been looking into New Deals for communities which say community-led initiatives must be the way in which regeneration is done, but because that's going alongside this acquiescence and support for the effective privatisation of so many local services and other services, you get a situation where, for instance, in their community-led process, local communities reforming council housing, vote for it and want it, only to find that government policy has meant there's no money for council housing; housing has been shoved off to housing associations that are in the end subject to the pressures of the financial market.

The point of all this is to say that changing the notions of social transformation, or getting away from the monopoly of the state and the party over that process and actually creating a relationship which is supporting the forms of transformation that people themselves are beginning to organise, I think does make socialism. It answers the sceptic, it provides a viable strategy. At one point Ralph quoted Machiavelli, saying, "It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, more doubtful of success nor more dangerous to handle than to initiate a new order of things for the reformer..." and then he gives various reasons including the enemies of reformer who profit by the old order; and then he ends up saying "The other factor [making it so difficult] is the incredulity of the people who do not truly believe in anything until they have had actual experience of it". I think this notion of seeing social transformation as coming through the relationship between a democratic socialist state and popular movements is part of the discussion. Once one sees social transformation as coming from those movements, one can see – and I think that is why the PT has been so successful – one can see why it is that people support socialist change in a country like Brazil because they've actually had some experience, whether it's through the landless movement or the participatory budget, the way the PT is organised has been to give support to the forms of transformation that people are bringing out in their own lives.

Thanks.

### **Mary Kaldor**

Thanks, Hilary. I can't forget sitting in a public sauna with Hilary wanting to discuss participation and democracy and all the other women - it was a women's only sauna - looking at us with amazement. But anyway thank you very much for an exciting argument; and now we have LSE's own director and author of the *Third Way*, Tony Giddens

### **Tony Giddens**

Let me say first of all, I'm someone who sits before you in a posh suit, I hope it looks posh because I paid a lot of money, but it goes with the job I'm afraid of being LSE director. Since I spend so much time asking the business people who Hilary just talked about for money to support this institution let me say first of all how pleased I was to be invited to be on this panel and again congratulate Mike on having written a really excellent and absorbing book, which I take is not a biography of an individual but an account of an age, an account of a whole post-war age.

Unlike most other people on this panel, I can't say that I was a close friend of Ralph Miliband but his life intercepted with mine and in ways which I didn't fully realise because the book recounts how when he was at Cambridge Ilya Neustadt was his main protector. Neustadt was also my main protector when I was a junior lecturer at Leicester and I hadn't realised previously there was that thread of continuity. Neustadt gave Ralph some good advice, he

said "Breathe deeply and let a great calmness descend on you." I'm not sure if he ever took that advice. I'm also one of the co-owners of *Polity Press* and we were very pleased to be able to publish *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* and I was one of the editors who worked directly on the manuscript and of course it was a tragedy that Ralph died before the book was actually published.

More latterly, just to complete the circle, I was very happy to play a part in helping establish the Miliband Programme, which is helping to stage this event and which has staged a large number of really great events at the LSE over the last little while.

I feel I should just say a bit to flesh out what Mike said about Ralph's relationship to the LSE. I think it is true that the LSE shaped Ralph because, after all he got his first degree, he did his PhD here and he had a very close relationship with Harold Laski, albeit one in which he became critical of Laski. But I'd like to think, like Mike does, that - although Ralph said, and I noted this down after the 1960s events, "It is difficult to convey the loathing I feel for the place" ( I sometimes feel like that! I shouldn't say that publicly, obviously) and he wouldn't come back even 25 years later – he was shaped by the LSE because he never found another home after and became much more of a wanderer after that date.

Unlike, I think, most of my colleagues on the platform I tend to think Ralph's most enduring contributions will come from, or exist in his more sociological rather than his political writing, so I was someone who was weaned on the Miliband-Poulantzas debate and that debate still has an impact I think on anyone who's involved in sociology or political science and I think it's *The State and Capitalist Society* which for me will remain the core work of Ralph's career.

*Socialism for a Sceptical Age*, well, I mean I'm much more sceptical, even though I did work on the manuscript and tried to, you know, give suggestions back about it. I'm much more sceptical of the arguments of that book than I think probably anybody else on this panel is today; and, you know, the theme is that Marx's old mole is still burrowing but I honestly don't think this is the case.

Now, Hilary made a few remarks about the Third Way which I'm very used to, sitting on platforms at the LSE, and I think I can say with some certainty that I'm the only person on this platform who has some sympathy with New Labour but I would like to say why, why I do; and why I think that although New Labour obviously is a political programme, the ideas that underlie New Labour as I would formulate them anyway, are a much more appropriate response to 1989 and after than the main arguments of *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* are.

Since there's not much time let me just make two points about this. It is conventionally argued that New Labour has no ideological framework, that it has no driving thrust, but I would say almost completely the opposite. At least I would say from my own involvements with New Labour, I take it there is a robust intellectual programme which lies behind the transformations that New Labour has tried to put into practice in government and that programme rests upon an appraisal of, not just the consequences of 1989 which saw the end of the idea that you can substitute a centrally organised economy for a competitive market economy, but also of the changes which brought that realisation about. The changes we have to cope with for anyone who stands left of centre today are really fundamental. Globalisation is not just an imaginary concept, it is real, the world is much more interdependent than it used to be, not just through the role of markets but through the advance of communications and

many other factors. An allusion was made to the knowledge economy as though this was a sort of an invention, but it is not. A generation ago 42% of the population of this country worked in blue collar manufacturing, now only 16% of the population do and the average for the European Union is only about 18%. Now, of course you can make all sorts of arguments about people doing rather crumbly jobs in service stations and all of that but two thirds of the jobs created by the knowledge economy are skilled jobs, they're not unskilled jobs. Eighty percent of the population now have to get their living not through the manufacture of material goods. That's a tremendous transformation in the class structure of our societies.

There's a rise, I think, of a new form of individualism - it's not the same as selfishness, simply the capability and the desire to make our own lives. I don't think that can be reconciled with at least some forms of traditional collectivism. We also have to deal with the structural problems of the welfare state which don't come just from declining revenue. They come from changes such as demographic changes which have also transformed the population. There is a new agenda there. You can parrot phrases about continuity but you must deal, I think, with those changes and find an agenda which allows one to use them positively rather than simply react in an entrenched negative way.

Second, it's often said New Labour succumbs to the power of markets. Well I don't stand here just to knee jerk defend New Labour, but that isn't how I would see what, if you want call it the Third Way or the New Social Democracy stands for. On the contrary it stands for renewed and robust defence of the public sphere, the key importance of public goods and public institutions in our lives, except that it argues that public goods and public institutions are not the same as the dominance of the state. The state often can be the enemy of public goods, whether it serves entrenched interests, whether it's corrupt, whether it's bureaucratic, many other reasons why this is so. There are many other ways of delivering goods, some of those involve not for profit organisations and so forth, other than the traditional state; and state control of industry by and large was not a great success and anyone who, again, in a sort of simple way criticises privatisation must remember that there is a difficult boundary between what industries can be effectively privatised and semi or monopoly industry which are much more difficult to privatise. But if you don't do that you still have to deal with well known difficulties which state control of industrial enterprise generate.

These things having been said, this is why my view of the world will be almost totally different from that which Ralph Miliband sketched out in *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*. As an economic theory of the management of capitalism which is where socialism essentially began I think that form of socialism is dead. What are not dead are the ideals that inspired it and we have to look for different policies for realising those ideals and do so in a practical way by getting policies which allow left of centre governments to get into power and to actually do things when they are in power. I would remind you the Labour Party has only been in power in this country for a handful of years over the past century.

In closing, let me emphasis that I feel the spirit of Ralph Miliband is still alive and very important to us for three main reasons: 1) we still need a critical engagement with capitalism, we still need to assert the necessity of active government and the continued role of the state, albeit a transformed state, I think in managing the problems which an unfettered capitalist economy gives rise to and some of those problems are so obvious in the contemporary world at the moment. Second, what I call a power of utopia I think you can't do without utopian thinking, but what one needs is what I would call utopian realism, you need an element of utopia, you need an idea of what a good society could be but it should be linked to realistic

policies. Anyone who simply promotes utopia without realism, as Marx of course said, is liable to have reactionary rather than progressive implications for the world. Thirdly, what I call the necessity of radicalism, but for me radicalism I think means something different, I would again imagine, from most of my colleagues here on the panel because I don't identify radicalism with simply persisting with the weight of the old left. I regard it as being unafraid to change those ways, being unafraid to experiment with different policies and different ideals, to serve the values of socialism, being unafraid to look at quite different ways of delivering on those values from the past.

So, I'm not in favour of waiting for the socialist millennium and I would just to conclude by mentioning an old Yiddish joke in which a man is sent to the city gates to wait for the millennium and he says "A big job but at least the work is steady."

### **Mary Kaldor**

Thanks. A very robust defence; and now, finally, I'd like to introduce Tony Benn who needs no introduction and I'm happy to say that he's now linked to the LSE.

### **Tony Benn**

Well, can I just say this about Mike Newman's book: it is a loving, sensitive, scholarly and important book about a loving, sensitive, scholarly and important person. That's what I feel about the book.

The references to Ralph's great friendship with his family and his sons remind me that he said to me before he died, "Tony, sometimes my children say to me 'Dad, if everything you recommended were done, would it work?'" and I said "Well, mine say the same to me." So, he said, "What a relief." And I thought that was very nice.

But I want to look slightly differently at the search for socialism. During the war they used to say "Dig for victory". Now, however deep you dug you didn't find victory you found a potato which allowed you to live long enough to see a victory and this idea that you're searching for socialism is slightly strange. I was brought up on the Bible, my mother was a Bible scholar and I was told that the Bible was the story of the conflict between the kings who had power and the prophets who preached righteousness, and was taught to believe in the prophets and not the kings and it's got me into an enormous amount of trouble ever since. But I look at Marx as the last of the Old Testament prophets, a wise old Jew who sat in the British Museum and studied capitalism. Now frankly you could have written just as analytical a book about capitalism without objecting to it. You could have said, 'here's a system, it's marvellous', you could have called it the Second Way, I don't know, but actually, the whole book is illuminated by passion against the injustice.

I think Ralph was an Old Testament prophet and the reason I say this is not to get involved in theological questions which are extremely difficult, but to try and interpret Marx in a different way. You see, for me, what I've got from my commitment to socialism is a moral basis, not only from that, a historical perspective which is now wiped out in modern politics. Nothing happened before 1994 as you know in New Labour, it didn't exist, they were all taxing and spending and all of that, so, no historical perspective. When I thought of Cripps, Healey and Snowden doing nothing but taxing and spending it gets slightly confusing. A historical perspective, tools of analysis, they are absolutely invaluable and some organisational advice as to how you could do it; and what I loved about the book, I had a very different background from Ralph but we're about the same age - I was born in a secure home,

but I lived politically through that period, I remember the Spanish Civil War, I wrote an essay on it, which my teacher said was disgusting. I went out in 1935 and I saw the Fascists marching in London led by Oswald Mosely whom I'd first met in 1928 as a Labour MP, which I haven't forgotten, and it frightened me; and so the thing about this book and Ralph was he analysed my old experience in a way that was so much more perceptive than my own analysis and therefore he illuminated my childhood retrospectively; and I think of socialism as a route map and not a destination.

Since Socialist ideas came into the public domain, we have had some experience of socialism. The Russian revolution was exceptional, it was born in war without a bourgeois democratic base, ended up – well before it got very far – with a war of intervention which they don't teach you in the national curriculum. They never tell you that we went into Russia to try to destroy the revolution, or about what is laughingly called appeasement which is wholly untrue. There was no appeasement of Hitler, they were supportive of Hitler, western governments supported Hitler and if you read the captured German Foreign Office document you'll find Halifax went to Berchtesgaden and said "Herr Chancellor I'd like to congratulate you on behalf of the British government for destroying communism in Germany and acting as a bulwark against communism in the Soviet Union." So, the Cold War really began with the storming of the Winter Palace and ended with the fall of the Berlin wall and it was a dominant factor in the thinking of the Western governments; and of course, the result that came out was something totally undemocratic which of course Ralph was to explain in those terms.

The experience of social democracy is rather different. It began with the trade unions, without Tolpuddle you'd never have had the Chartists and you'd never had the suffragettes and you'd never had the Welfare State because people who were enfranchised used the vote to buy the services they couldn't afford personally and it was under democratic control, it was what they needed and the vote became a currency. The currency of the poor was the vote and they used it to buy what they needed. When you take the years I was in parliament from 1950, the Cold War was used to frighten people off socialism. I remember Nye's [Bevan] resignation speech when we were told we had to rearm and so on and so on. He said the Russians don't intend to attack us, they haven't the power to attack us and if we go for it, it'll end up with a witch hunt and he was absolutely right. They presented socialism as a military threat; and then of course the market was presented, as a liberator and in America they regard the freedom of the market as the equivalent of democracy. Now, that communism has gone, you see what's happening is this, people see global capitalism and they don't like it very much. They may not have wanted to go the Stalinist route - nor did I - but when we see the impact of globalisation particularly what is now known as armed globalisation, that's the war against Iraq, where you send an army into safeguard your interests in oil, they don't like it. I don't know whether you call it social democracy any more, I don't want to use the word Third Way in a pejorative sense because I may have got it wrong. The system in Britain is more authoritarian and centralised than ever it was, only the state is now in support of capital instead of supporting Labour. Today I came back from Belfast, and I was photographed as I got on and off the plane. Now, if we'd heard about that in Moscow that would have been the final proof that communism was a police state. But here they can bug your emails, open your letters, detain foreigners without trial. Mrs Thatcher strengthened the state and I think we have strengthened the state since the election and it's very undemocratic. The great principle of the Chartists was that you elect the people who governed you and you get rid of them if you didn't like them. It was a very simple principle, the whole basis of the constituency that you

represent. You go there, everyone there employs you, you can say what you like and they can get rid of you and therefore you have to listen to them.

But now we have the World Trade Organisation, the IMF which has destroyed so many Third World countries by forcing them to privatise, to get rid of debt; the stability pact which even Prodi, says is stupid because it controls an elected Chancellor of the Exchequer and state power. We were told recently at the Labour conference, that the purpose of the government was to take state power away and give it to localities. But when the fire-fighters' strike, the local authorities wanted to give 14% but the state came in and said, "No, you can't". It isn't logical, it doesn't follow its own protestations. Look at what's happened to Cabinet. I believe the Cabinet meets for half an hour every week, but in January 1968 there were eight full day meetings of the Cabinet. It was a brilliant committee to sit on, I often lost but when you lost you lost because of some formidable minds, and sometimes I won. They call parliament back two days after the Queen Mother died but they couldn't manage it with a war. It just isn't rooted in the democratic spirit.

I think power is back where it's always been - with money. I think the most powerful faith in the world is not Judaism, Christianity, Islam - it's the people who worship money. Take a look at the business news: every hour you're told what's happened to the FTSE whatever that may be and the Dow Jones! Well, what the hell can you do about it, I can't write to my MP and say I'm never voting for you because the FTSE's fallen. Why don't they publish figures about unemployment, homelessness, asbestosis, people who have died unnecessarily? Because those are the statistics that would allow you to press for change. It is a religion and of course the media is the modern church. Henry VIII nationalised the Church of England because he wanted a priest in every pulpit every Sunday saying God wants you to do what the king wants you to do. Now, the Tories nationalised the BBC, they wanted a pundit on every channel saying there's no alternative, but the media are now the whippers up of war and also whippers up against a lot social progress and of course technology gives great power.

This is why I go back to the socialism that's inspired me, you have to do it yourself, that's what Marx was saying. Don't wait for a kind leader to pat you on the head and give you what you want. You have to organise and that's the one thing that the Labour government wasn't very keen on. I used to get a fax every day from the leadership when I was a Member of Parliament, it used to come out of my fax machine, "Tony Benn welcomes", I wondered what I'd welcomed and everything was the message, nothing from underneath up; and so, I think you just have to work away at it and out of muddles can come good things. I dare say even the Chartists were a bit of a muddle, wouldn't be surprised if the Suffragettes weren't a bit of muddle. But out of it came pressure no government could resist and that is what I believe Ralph encouraged; I believe that there is a more receptive audience who are arguing about democracy and internationalism and human rights and justice than there's been almost in my life time, comparable to 1945 when I was a young guy campaigning. There's an audience waiting, saying "We want these things dealt with. When's it going to be done?" People say to me "What are you doing about it?" I say "I'm waiting for the election of a Labour government." This is a loyal promise to make, which I can honestly make. Now the Labour Party was never a socialist party but it always had socialists in it, just as there's some Christians in the churches and I think what we want is more socialists in the Labour party and if we do that I think we can give hope; because hope is the fuel of progress and fear is a prison into which you put yourself. Ralph gave us hope and arguments based on integrity and the study of his own experience.

Thank you very much.

**Mary Kaldor**

Well, I think judging by the audience that's here and by the students I bumped into on the way here we are in for another muddle which I strongly look forward to.

We've gone on much too long, but it was worth it because it was such a wonderful panel and all the speeches were so interesting. We've got to finish at 8pm, so my suggestion is that we have ten minutes for people to raise questions and comments. Please make it short to give people time and then we'll do a round up of the panel, just before 8pm.

**Question 1**

Could each panel member please mention the most successful socialist state in the 20<sup>th</sup> century according to her or his opinion? Thank you very much.

**Question 2**

I was privileged enough to take a course by Ralph Miliband many years ago at the European University in Canada and Ralph was always preoccupied with the agent of social change, the agency of revolution or radical change. He reinterpreted the class structure of society in a way that would fit into this scheme of change. I wondered if the panel members have any thoughts about what could be the agent of change in this day and age.

**Question 3**

I wanted to ask the panel members what they felt Miliband's response might have been to the current impending military situation and also, given the fact that the Chair has alluded to student activity about the war that's likely to happen in the LSE, what their opinions are and whether they feel that scepticism is being contributed to by the fact that people feel they have to take direct action when they are not being listened to by the current government on the issue of this war.

**Question 4**

I wonder if the panel could comment on the strength of individualists values in Western society today, which are enshrined in neo-liberal economics especially. I wondered how the panel could discuss how can a more complex conception of freedom within socialism take hold and maybe usurp this current status quo.

**Question 5**

I want to ask Professor Panitch two questions. Firstly, in your opinion, what was the most distinctive characteristic in socialism, which is superior than capitalism? Secondly, how do you compare the communist regime in China to your idealistic socialism?

**Question 6**

I wonder if the panel could briefly comment on two, it seems to me, major issues in relation to the question of social improvement and movements of social justice which have only been very briefly touched on hitherto. The first is taxation - its importance and how to get it? The second is the media - how to deal with them?

**Question 7**

I was just interested in the panel's view of the fall of the citizen and the rise of the consumer in terms of affecting change on issues such as GM foods. Initially Labour were for GM and

then, as a result of organised protest through NGOs and so on it changed. So, consumer or citizen?

### **Question 8**

My question is hopefully quite simple. Is there a contradiction between focusing on equality or ownership?

### **Mary Kaldor**

Okay, well we've got an enormous list of questions and I think I'll go backwards. I'll start with Tony Benn and end with Leo Panitch.

### **Tony Benn**

Yes, the most socialist project was the National Health Service. Don't look for it somewhere else. We were bankrupt, we hadn't two pennies to rub together, but it was absolutely free, no prescription charges, no charge for teeth and spectacles. It was the most socialist and the most popular thing we ever did. So, don't look for other countries - it's what we've done there.

Popular pressure will bring it about. Even though they may not take much notice of the Labour Conference, the spin doctors look at the opinion polls and we may have to get to the leadership through the opinion poll which is a slow way, but I think that is what will happen.

On war, I would not like to have on my conscience that within a few days a war would make widows in Baghdad and children orphans in Iraq in pursuit of oil. I put it as simply as that; and I think that the LSE students have done a tremendous job in trying to help people to get it across, because for me that's a terrible thing to do. It's a scale of decision making that takes it out of any other criticism I might have.

On taxation, I think a much larger element of redistributive taxation is essential and people would accept it. You don't want a state controlled media, but the media problem is they don't report what people are saying at the bottom, that is the problem. I was with Jack Jones last year and there were 2000 pensioners in Blackpool and after all there are 11 million of us. I said to Jack, "This huge rally will not be reported unless you take this brick and throw it through McDonalds and if you do there will be a Bishop on Newsnight talking about the rising tide of violence among old people." Of course, he didn't throw the brick and it wasn't discussed. And then you know in ten years time the BBC will get an award at Cannes for a programme, 'How We Got it Wrong in Iraq'. Why can't they help us now?

I'm a little doubtful about consumerism because once you think of yourself as consumers, if you haven't got any money you can't be a consumer and customers have the same effect. To be a customer you have to have money and so they found a word that eliminates the poor; so we're citizens, we're patients, we're travellers, we're voters. I would not like to be judged by what I consume. I don't know whether others would, but I would have a very harsh judgement on me if you knew what I ate and the state of my laundry and other things. That's my answer.

### **Anthony Giddens**

Well, I'll just comment on a few of these interesting questions. First of all, I think, you know, these are serious questions and so I'll try and give serious answers to them.



I think there's a big and clear distinction between being a consumer and being a citizen and the two are not the same. To be a citizen is not the same as to have the rights to roam the aisles of a supermarket. Citizen is defined in the public sphere and it's really important to see that that is something quite different from consumer rights. I think consumer rights are much more important than Tony Benn acknowledges, however, because they give you all sorts of chances to influence your own destiny and this appeals also to poorer people, I think, as well as to richer ones; so I wouldn't be so dismissive of that.

Nor would I of the media because I think the media have a double role in our lives because I think if you look at the extension of democracy across the world, which is one of the things that is characteristic of the current age - the spread of democratic governments across the world, albeit quite often insecure - I think you have to say the opening out of public space by the media, proliferation of media, communications on a global scale, has played a part in that. The media do give us in principle the chance of publicly debating crucial issues in our lives. On the other hand, as we all know, the media relentlessly close down those very spaces they open up by a kind of relentless trivialisation of the news, personalisation of the news, endless stories about Ulrika and so forth. All these things surely need to be contested by us, I think. I don't see it as an impossible task because I think there are ways of producing a much more responsible media than we have in this country. I don't see why it's compatible with democracy that you have large chunks of the media owned by two people who are not British citizens and who are trying to stop us getting into the Euro. I don't think these things are compatible with democratised media institutions and they should be contested.

On the military situation, Iraq I mean, like many people here I feel strongly about this. I feel we live in a world which is a globalised world and in that world multilateralism is the only approach to it. I'm quite disturbed by the actions of the current American administration and I'm strongly against any kind of unilateral American involvement in Iraq and strongly in favour of getting the weapons inspectors back there with the clearest possible mandate and I feel all of us should support that policy.

The agents of social change: you know, my view of that will be quite different from Ralph Miliband because I wouldn't look for the traditional agents of social change but I would say lots of changes happen in the world, they happen because of the impact of social movements.

I don't think you want to call it a muddle because, it's okay to have muddle, you know, when everyone's thinking about ideas, but you don't want your phone system to be a muddle, you don't want your railway system to be a muddle, you want things to be organised and function effectively.

The main agents of social change, or some of the main ones, are still social movements, I think and most of the core aspects of changes that have happened in our lives, for example, affecting gender relations, the rise of the feminist movement, ecological thinking, rise of the Green movement, consumer movements also have a part to play I think; a range of social movements which essentially, to me, force things on the agenda, that's what they do. Social movements force things on the agenda but you don't want to be governed by them. They're unelected themselves and therefore there is no substitute for good old fashioned democracy and the way in which you run an effective society, locally, nationally, or globally in my opinion.

**Hilary Wainwright**

Well, on the citizen consumer thing, I think the point you were making is about the way in which consumers are becoming organised, like over GM foods, like over sweated labour in Nike and other companies, and I think in a way what that shows is that the citizen will out. I mean in a way, what those consumers are doing are organising and using their consumer power and in a way playing on the vulnerability of the companies because of the importance of the brand. These consumers have a power, not so much because of their individual purchasing power, but because of the chance of publicity that they can create which does weaken the company's position in the market. I mean you saw it with McDonalds, the fact that they took that incredibly expensive libel action against two people producing very scruffy leaflets, shows the potential bargaining power, but it's consumers organising because of the lack of democratic control over those companies. So, it's consumers getting organised and acting as citizens. It's good to hear Tony talk very supportively about social movements actually setting the agenda in a way the ecological movement has set and consumers, ethical environmental consumers, have set the agenda on GM food. What the government does is not following that agenda: in the end the government has sided with the GM corporations and that's what I mean by this point about enabling and empowering. The Left that I'm defending and I think Ralph was arguing for in that last chapter, when he talked about the alliance between government and therefore effectively party and grass roots movements, was not the old Left; he was questioning the old Left, his conception of the state wasn't a monopoly view of the state as an agency for social change and he was beginning to talk of, and certainly I'm arguing for, forms of social transformation which are not monopolised by the state. The key thing is to have forms of transformation that are democratic. If you empower the corporations, which is I feel what New Labour is ultimately doing (although it has done a lot of good things, supporting community and social movements) it means that when communities want a swimming pool, they can't have it because the local government is so starved of money it's had to accept a takeover bid by Circo, so there's no possibility of a swimming pool responding to that movement.

On the point about what kind of state, I suppose I agree with Tony about the NHS but I'll also point to examples of this new kind of relationship that actually are mainly in localities because that's where it's been possible for social movements to establish a different relationship with the state. So, in Bologna there were really important developments there where the women's movement got the backing of the state for a new way of organising nurseries, not private control but public control, democratic control but run through users and workers, backed by public funding. The GLC that wasn't an old Left state, but Norman Tebbit said that this was modern socialism and they must kill it, which he did aided considerably by Neil Kinnock and members of the Front Bench of the Labour Party. So as with the Porto Alegre, you need that relationship between the state, which is necessary for redistribution, for dealing with the media, you need the break up of those monopolies, you need the regulation of those monopolies, then that'll allow a whole lot of grass roots bottom up processes to flourish.

### **Leo Panitch**

I think they were an excellent set of questions because they posed the questions that I think the Third Way **consistently** evades.

I must say that the notion that Ralph had, or that the Labour left that Tony represented, had an image of the nationalised industries that was merely positive rather than critical, isn't credible. I mean one simply has to go back to what they wrote and what they said about those nationalised industries, **about** how undemocratic they were, who got on the boards and how

they got there, and about the alienation that workers working in them felt, just like the alienation that women dependent on welfare felt from the agencies that gave them welfare although they needed it. Those were the themes.

As for who are the agents of change, Ralph wasn't someone who in any sense put the old industrial proletariat at the centre. The labour movement was at the centre for him but not a labour movement that was cast in steel workers and miners alone. Any one of his sociological contributions is about the growing size of the service sector and the state sector and the significant differences among workers. What remains the case, however - and this relates to this question on equality and ownership - is that the people who go work for these corporations, no matter how highly educated they are as technicians, go into a hierarchical, disciplined organisation, one in which there is not a smidgen of democracy, not a smidgen of it! To get a job, no matter how highly educated you are, no matter how much of a "knowledge worker" you are, you give away your right to have any say in what is produced, how it's produced, under what conditions it's produced and increasingly how many hours you work. And if that is evaded, to speak of equality and even equality of opportunity, when most people work in these fundamentally undemocratic places, is, to me, not serious.

And the same applies to consumers. Consumers obviously don't have a great deal of control - except in the supply and demand sense, that's where there is some minimal control - over what they actually consume. But the great problem is in our consumer society. How can we think of ourselves as egalitarian so long as we, in the North, go on to consume as much as we do? We can't conceivably do that; and if it is said that even if we redistributed what we have, far more than we do, that would not solve the problem of poverty in the South, that is not enough of a reason not to do it.

Stafford Cripps went to the TUC in 1948 to make an appeal for wage controls. I sat in the LSE library and I read his speech. The argument that he made was that even if we took all of the wealth away from the wealthy and distributed it to the rest of the population it wouldn't increase most Britons' incomes all that much; and he was right, but that wasn't a reason not to do it. In fact it would have changed the very spirit of post-war Britain had more of that been done - while some of it was done by that Government, much more should have been done. But in response to his appeal for wage restraint, and this gets to the point about pressure from below, a woman cleaner from the Transport and General Workers' Union, who worked at Whitehall, went to the mike and said: "Stafford Cripps may be able to live on radish tops and orange juice but he can't expect the British working class to do the same." You don't hear much of that at Labour Party conferences any more, once the parliament of the labour movement.

I don't think that I agree with Tony Benn that the NHS represented the pinnacle of socialism; it wasn't democratic enough and I don't think we've seen an example of socialism that has been democratic enough. I think one has to say that one of the reasons for that does have to do with the kinds of pressures that have existed on a country like Cuba and that have made it quite undemocratic, more than the inclination of its leaders might have been, although heaven knows they weren't pure democrats. As for China, the communist capitalist elite of China are turning themselves into a bourgeoisie in a very venal way - what more can one say?

What is the fundamental characteristic in socialism that is superior to capitalism? I think it is a conception that the full development of human beings ought to come - and possibly can come - through cooperation, rather than through competition.

**Mary Kaldor**

Well, thanks everybody, that was a wonderful debate and we'll see you soon.