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ABSTRACT

An Ideology in Transition : The Political Thought of the Social Democratic Party

by

Michael Laing

The thesis of this dissertation is that the political thought of the Social Democratic Party can be most adequately understood by an analysis of the relationship between liberty and equality within that political thought. By examining this relationship it may also be possible to indicate in which of the three major ideological traditions SDP political thought can be placed.

The first chapter describes the history and ethos of social democracy focusing upon the disputes in the Labour Party between 1956 and 1981. The second, third and fourth chapters deal with the writings of Roy Jenkins, David Owen and Shirley Williams. Their writings are evaluated by the importance they place on liberty over equality or vice versa. The work looks at issues such as the ownership of wealth. The fifth chapter reviews the publications of the Tawney Society. The same method is employed to assess these writings as used on the three SDP leaders.

The conclusion suggests that the SDP has many traditions in its political thought. It has been influenced by events within the Labour Party. However, the dominant tradition would appear to be liberal and not socialist.

An Ideology in Transition : the Political Thought of the Social Democratic Party

by

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submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts

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Department of Politics

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DECLARATION

No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree in the University of Durham or any other university.

PREFACE

This dissertation deals with the political thought of the Social Democratic Party. As the party was founded on 26th March, 1981 the subject is relatively new in the field of political thought. This presents some difficulties. The material available and its content was prone to be overtaken by political events such as the merger between the Social Democratic and Liberal parties. There is no major academic work available to which students can refer. There has not been time for attitudes about the Social Democratic Party to settle into particular groupings. The books and articles on the subject are widely scattered and have not been drawn together or organised in a comprehensive way.

The most important sources are the writings of the Social Democratic Party's leadership. Of the members of the 'Gang of Four', Roy Jenkins, David Owen and Shirley Williams each published a number of books and articles that influenced the political thought of the party. William Rodgers did not. He was important within the party because of his organisational and campaigning abilities. Therefore it is not necessary to examine his very few publications in a work concerned with political thought.

The publications of the Tawney Society deserve attention because they attempted to develop the political thought of the party, offered alternative views and explored areas often ignored by the party's leadership. They also placed the party's political thought in a wider context than the political battle for power.

In the execution of this dissertation I am indebted to Mr. Henry Tudor for his supervision and guidance. I would also like to thank Professor Alan Milne and Dr. Ian Adams for the refinements that they suggested. Responsibility for any failings is solely mine.

INTRODUCTION

The thesis of this dissertation is that the political thought of the Social Democratic Party can be most adequately understood by an analysis of the relationship between liberty and equality within that political thought. By examining this relationship it may also be possible to indicate in which of the three major ideological traditions SDP political thought can be placed.

In the first chapter I describe the history and ethos of social democracy, from Croslands' 1956 book "The Future of Socialism" which influenced SDP principles to the formation of the SDP in 1981.

The second, third and fourth chapters look at the writings of Roy Jenkins, David Owen and Shirley Williams. In these chapters liberty and equality play a major role. The SDP leaders' writings are evaluated by the importance they place on liberty over equality or vice versa on key issues such as the ownership of wealth, choice in education, defence and social services.

Other contributors to the ideology of the SDP are surveyed in the fifth chapter. I pay careful attention to the publications of the Tawney Society, which tried to be the SDP equivalent of the Fabian Society. I employ the same method to consider these writings as used on the three SDP leaders. Again liberty and equality are all important values.

Probably the authors whose ideas I have looked at would not be entirely at ease with how they have been categorised. My analysis has been concerned with the author's views on liberty and equality. These values are not clearly defined, they are concepts in dispute, and my classifications are subject to that understanding. It is also important to emphasise that my concern in the following chapters is to depict a group position by drawing examples from different writers.

My conclusion questions the validity of the claim that the SDP is an egalitarian or socialist party. The evidence presented in this dissertation supports the conclusion that political thought of the SDP is more correctly liberal.

CHAPTER 1

The History of the S.D.P.'s Political Thought

"In order to open up the ideology of a party to a more satisfactory analysis it is necessary to distinguish between two elements in that ideology: its doctrine and its ethos" ¹.

The doctrines of a party are, according to Drucker, those ideas manifest as policies that are accepted by a considerable group of people as an accurate assessment of political reality. Any doctrine or part of a doctrine is open to challenge and may be changed if experience shows this to be prudent. Doctrines contain a body of thought about the nature of man, about how society should be ordered, and which moral values should be enshrined in law. The doctrines of the Labour Party have been derived from many diverse sources, from Marx, the Fabians, Tawney, Beveridge and Crosland. However all of these sources share common doctrinal ground. For example, they all insist that men are fundamentally equal and that a society which does not treat them as equal is unjust. There is furthermore some agreement on policies to achieve equality such as progressive taxation, medical care free at the point of use, and state intervention in the economy. But there is not a single, universally accepted definition of equality.

The diversity of opinions held by the membership of a political party leads Drucker to suggest that the doctrines of a party cannot be distilled into a set of key concepts that are essentially static. This corresponds closely with Greenleaf's view that:

"We must accept the fact of diversity and contrast, the recognition that an ideology is not a single thing at all but a range of ideas and reactions". ²

Greenleaf also argues that political doctrines may best be regarded as manifestation of the tensions between opposing tendencies within parties interpreting values in different ways.

Drucker's second element in a party's ideology is its ethos, which springs from the experience of party members. The ethos that exerts most influence on doctrine is the ethos of the dominant group within the party. The Labour Party's ethos incorporates sets of values which spring from the experience of the British working class. These values effect personal relationships within the Party, with other parties, with society as a whole and with the international political community. The ethos of a party is its group identity.

An ethos is distinguished from a doctrine because doctrines can be agreed to by new members of a group as a result of sharing common values with existing members. The new member's understanding of the group ethos, however sympathetic, cannot have the same meaning to him that it has to those for whom it arises naturally from experience.

Commentators on Labour's ideology have focused their attention on doctrine. There are a number of advantages in examining doctrine rather than ethos. Firstly, evidence of specific doctrines can be identified in manifestos, policy statements, conference resolutions and speeches. This evidence is regularly produced and it is possible to trace influences on party doctrine over time. Doctrines can also be found in the Fabians, the Tribune Group and others. There are few such sources for ethos. It is difficult to define the values that spring from the experience of a class of millions of people. Drucker accepts this and points to four features of Labour's ideology that cannot be accounted for by an evaluation of the Party as a purely policy-making, doctrinally based machine. These features are loyalty to the Party Leader, loyalty to the Labour "movement" by those who serve it as MPs or trad union leaders, a Smilesian attitude to Party finances and the belief in the sacrosanct nature of the Party's constitution.

Disputes within political parties are as often about ethos as about doctrine. In any analysis of disputes within the Labour Party it is important to bear in mind Drucker's description of the nature of Labour's ideology. The disputes in the Labour Party following its defeat in the 1959 General Election concerned two areas of doctrine and two of ethos. The two areas of doctrine were public ownership and nuclear weapons, the two of ethos were the leadership of Hugh Gaitskell and the relationship between Party members and MPs.

The effect of these disputes greatly influenced the future leaders of the SDP. Three of them, Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers were all leading members of the Revisionist Section of the Party. It is not overstating the case to suggest that during the disputes, the ethos of the SDP was developed. The three leaders formed their attitudes towards the Left of the Party, towards other MPs, and towards the Party's Constitution. They also established campaign groups, mobilised supporters and raised finances. In effect the experiences they shared formed a bond of sentiment between them. It is interesting to note that David Owen played no significant role in the Labour Party at this time. The ethos of the Revisionists, developed during the disputes of the 1960's was an important factor in the formation of the SDP after Labour's defeat in the 1979 General Election, when the same four issues of public ownership, nuclear weapons, the leadership and democracy in the party caused a split between the Left and the Revisionists.

In 1959 the Revisionists believed that Labour's commitment to public ownership had alienated an electorate that had benefited from the existing mixed economic system. The welfare state had largely eradicated deprivation. The task for the Labour Party was now to give the people an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the mixed economy.

Clause IV of the Labour Party Constitution states that the aim of the Party is:

"To secure for the workers, by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service".

Drucker identifies three interpretations of Clause IV which had been taken up by the Labour Party in 1959.

The farthest left interpretation considers socialism to be about nationalisation. Therefore a Labour Government should takeover the means of production on behalf of the nation in order to achieve equality of income. At the time of the Clause IV debate no body of MPs supported this interpretation.

The second position was derived from the work of Herbert Morrison and was known as "consolidationalism". This interpretation advocated careful protection of the industries nationalised by Atlee's Government and further takeovers of private concerns that held a monopoly position in the market. Bevan and his supporters held this opinion.

The third interpretation held that socialism was not about ownership of the means of production, but about equality of opportunity. Men are perceived as citizens and consumers not workers. To achieve equality, society should guarantee its citizens protection against Beveridge's five giant evils of squalor, want, disease, idleness and ignorance. Having given this protection the state could then leave its citizens free to lead their own lives. Governments can control the economy using keynesian economic techniques without taking industry into the

ownership of the state. This position was known as Revisionism. "The Future of Socialism" ³ by Anthony Crosland published in 1956 was the most important Revisionist work, and was quickly adopted by Gaitskell and his supporters as the most satisfactory interpretation of the true meaning of socialism. Crosland wrote:

"Traditionally, or at least since Marx, socialist thought has been dominated by the economic problems posed by capitalism; poverty, mass unemployment, squalor, instability and even the collapse of the whole system. These were problems of the most severe and urgent character, and it was correct to argue that major economic changes must precede the execution of socialist policy in other fields. But it is gradually ceasing to be correct today. Capitalism has been reformed almost out of recognition. Despite occasional minor recessions and balance of payments crises, full employment and at least a tolerable degree of stability are likely to be maintained." ⁴

Crosland also believed that:

".... whatever the modes of economic production, economic power will in fact belong to the owners of political power. And these today are certainly not the pristine class of capitalists." ⁵

Crosland's assessment of society had important implications for Party doctrine. He had rejected the idea that socialism was a goal to be achieved through a gradual transformation of society by nationalisation and increasing public ownership. The existing institutions, such as trade unions, could achieve a doctrinal concensus with the state, and employers, to produce a higher level of

social responsibility in the private sector. Social reform should consist of the adaptation of a pluralistic society to the full realisation of equality and individual liberty within the mixed economy. The Revisionists, therefore, accepted self interest as a feature of the mixed economy, and the existing market morality. The Revisionist position raised a major political problem, and two philosophical problems for the Labour Party.

The political problem was one of partisanship. Traditionally the Party had always held that public ownership of the means of production was indispensable to the achievement of a socialist society. The moderate alliance that had supported the revisionists consisted of older trade unionists and right wing Labour M.Ps. Although they accepted the mixed economy and revisionism in their political practice they objected to the removal of Clause IV for two reasons. Firstly, they had joined the Party when socialism and public ownership were closely identified with each other and it offended their ethos to see Clause IV attacked. Secondly, they saw the Revisionist attack on Clause IV as tactically dangerous in their fight against the Bevanites. Howell has suggested that to many Party members:

".... revisionist proposals seemed indistinguishable from the more progressive brands of liberalism". 6

The first philosophical problem concerned the position that the Revisionists had taken on the subject of economic wants, arguing that because of the decline in relative deprivation the existing economic order was acceptable. This was considered to be a break with traditional Labour doctrine and unacceptable in a socialist philosophy. If the experience of the British had been one of general satisfaction with the existing economic order the Revisionists could see no reason why that order should be changed. To them the Bevanites' puritanical defence of Clause IV was symbolic of a belief in an outdated concept of public ownership. This attitude is connected to the "middle" as Drucker calls it in Revisionist thinking about means, ends and equality.

"Equality has been the strongest ethical inspiration of virtually every socialist doctrine and still remains the most characteristic thought today". 7

For Tawney equality was quite fundamental as:

".... the necessary corollary of the Christian conception of man." 8

The socialists argue that equality is necessary for social unity, social efficiency, social justice and individual self realisation. Inequality leads to inefficiency because the free market system responds to demand not needs leading to a misdirection of productive effort. It also leads to wasted ability if, as Crosland writes:

".... social mobility is low as it must be in a stratified society the people cannot easily move up from the lower or middle reaches to the top, then the ruling elite become hereditary and self-perpetuating; and whatever one may concede to inherited or family advantages, this must involve a waste of talent." 9

Social inequalities offend against ideas of social justice because they lead to a denial of natural rights and men's claim to basic human rights. Citizens have, according to Crosland, a right to the position in the social scale to which their natural talents entitle them. Inequality is unjust because it gives some groups power over others without consent or accountability.

A society is civilised, argued Tawney, if it uses its material resources to provide for the dignity of the individuals who compose it. Equality, for the socialist, is more than the equality of opportunity proposed by the Revisionists. Indeed, it is over the issue of equality of opportunity that the Revisionists depart from the mainstream of socialist thought.

Tawney claimed that equality of opportunity:

".... depends not merely on the absence of disabilities, but on the presence of abilities In proportion, as the capacities of some are sterilised or stunted by their social environment, while those of others are favoured or pampered by it, equality of opportunity becomes a graceful but attenuated figment." 10

If equality of opportunity is to be effective it must be accompanied by other equalising measures. Equality is not only about social mobility and the creation of a meritocracy: it is about equality of regard, of dignity, of culture and rights. The equality of income position, and the equality of opportunity position both place too much emphasis on economic aspects of equality, claimed Tawney. Crosland brushed aside the question of how much equality is desirable beyond equality of opportunity. He believed that this was not a question that practicing politicians were required to answer. He believed that:

".... a definite limit exists to the degree of equality which is desirable." 11

The Revisionists viewed equality of opportunity as an end in itself rather than a means to the ultimate end of a socialist society.

Crosland's theory of equality gives little regard to the question of freedom. Socialists hold that freedom rests on equality. Tawney believed that freedom is the power that a person has to control the condition of their own life. Freedom in the economic sphere means that workers should have a voice in their working conditions. Freedom is the product of positive Government action not Government inaction. Tawney wrote:

"The increase in the freedom of ordinary men and women during the last two generations has taken place, not in spite of the action of governments but because of it The mother of liberty has, in fact, been law." 12

It can be argued that when measured against Tawney's concept of equality the revisionist concept of equality is incomplete.

The opponents of Revisionism in 1959, the Bevanites, fought against attempts to change Clause IV, the Party's commitment to equality and public ownership, because they saw Clause IV as an end in itself, not a means to an end. However, their position on equality was as flawed as Crosland's. The Bevanite group had emerged from the policy disputes and controversies over electoral tactics during Attlee's administration. The Bevanites did not propose any fundamental revisions to Clause IV or the Party's policies following the 1959 General Election. Rather their dispute with the Revisionists was over the emphasis placed on Labour's commitment to public ownership as idealised doctrine expressed in Clause IV, and the acceptance by the Revisionists of existing economic arrangements. Drucker contends that:

"The Bevanites clung to Clause IV partly because it was a totem at the heart of their mythology. For their party they were willing to make Clause IV an end in itself because it was what "their" people (the majority of the constituency parties for instance) wanted." 13

The Bevanites also disputed the Revisionist idea of the role of the Labour Party within the parliamentary system. The Revisionists saw the party as a contender for office, adjusting its policy to majority preferences within the broad Revisionist philosophy. The Bevanites saw the Party as an opposition preserving its radical socialist nature. Richard Crossman expressed this opinion when he wrote:

".... the prime function of the Labour Party is to provide an ideology for nonconformist critics of the Establishment, and a political instrument for interests and social groups which are denied justice under the "status Quo"." 14

Following the 1959 General Election defeat the Party held a post-mortem conference. At this conference Gaitskell presented to the delegates the Revisionist case. Labour's commitment to Clause IV had alienated the voters. He told the conference that:

".... our object must be to broaden our base, to be in touch always with ordinary people, and avoid becoming small cliques of isolated doctrine ridden fanatics, out of touch with the main stream of social life in our time." 15

Gaitskell then suggested the amendment of Clause IV, the symbol of the Party's commitment to public ownership. Bevan responded:

"Our main case is and must remain that in modern complex society it is impossible to get rational order by leaving things to private economic adventure. Therefore I am a socialist. I believe in public ownership." 16

Michael Foot a leading Bevanite claimed that it was not Labour's principles that should be changed but the values of an immoral society.

"In order to win an election, we have to change the mood of the people in this country, to open their eyes to what an evil and disgraceful and rotten society it is." 17

The conference made no decision on Clause IV, and asked Gaitskell to submit an alternative to the NEC for discussion in early 1960. Before Gaitskell could do this Bevan restated his position in "Tribune":

".... there are certain principles that have held good and are likely to hold good so long as British society is based in the main^{ON} institutions of private ownership if the Labour Party was to abandon its main thesis of public ownership it would not differ in any important respect from the Tory Party. The only conflict would be about nuances, about semi-tones and half-limits.... The controversy (in the Labour Party) is between those who want the mainsprings of economic power transferred to the community and those who believe that private enterprise should still remain supreme but that its worst characteristics should be moderated by liberal ideas of justice and equality." 18

By March 1960 Gaitskell had come to the view that as a matter of Party tactics his supporters, such as Roy Jenkins, would be satisfied if Clause IV were combined with a statement of revisionist principles, and he produced such a statement entitled the "Amplification of Arms". Gaitskell had made a series of speeches in early 1960 in Nottingham, to the Ruskin Fellowship and the Cambridge Union advocating the retention of the nationalisation of steel in Labour's manifesto. "Tribune" reported these speeches under the headline "Mr. Gaitskell

changes his tune!" "The Times" interpreted the speeches as "Mr. Gaitskell calls for more public ownership." The Left looked upon the speeches as acts of conciliation. Anthony Greenwood a member of the Bevanite group wrote in response to Gaitskell's speeches:

"If it will be able to make for peace in the Party most of us would be able to add anything within reason to the constitution." 19

The NEC met on March 13th 1960 to consider the "Amplification of Aims". A powerful alliance of Bevanites, trade unionists who were sentimentally attached to Clause IV, and Labour MPs who wished to avoid splitting the Party opposed Gaitskell. The "Aims" were accepted by the NEC as only a valuable expression of the doctrine of the Party and not as a replacement for Clause IV. A compromise had been achieved, and both sides claimed victory.

In the NEC meeting of March 13th the trade unions supported Gaitskell. However at union conferences every affiliated body except USDAW and the NUGMW rejected the amended Clause IV statement. As the trade union block votes controlled the Labour conference, Gaitskell's statement was condemned. In one swift move the unions had defeated the NEC. The constitution remained exactly as it had been since 1918.

The unions opposed Gaitskell for three reasons. First, the right wing of the unions were emotionally attached to Clause IV. George Brown expressed this view in a speech in his constituency.

"Let us accept, on the one hand, that the present constitution adopted long ago has a place in our hearts that makes it quite impossible to delete or rewrite it." 20

The second reason was that the unions had moved left. An indication of this is the election of the "Bevanite" Frank Cousins to the leadership of the TGWU. The NEC could not rely on the unions for "loyalist" support as they had done in the 1950s.

The third reason was that Gaitskell had, through the NEC, proposed a revision of attitude and policy. In the 1950s the unions had always taken the initiative on policy and in this way wielded power by controlling policy. The Gaitskell statement was a direct challenge to this power.

As a result of the Clause IV controversy Gaitskell's position as Leader was weakened. The Revisionists, having been defeated by the unions, questioned the organisation of the Party and its voting structure. In particular, they adopted the policy of "one member one vote". For the Left public ownership assumed a new importance and closer links were forged with the unions. However, Left and Right had barely taken in the consequences of the Clause IV debate when the Party was thrown into controversy at the 1960 Conference over unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The debate over nuclear disarmament had gathered pace since 1955 when the Churchill Government had decided to develop an independent British nuclear deterrent. The Labour Right had accepted this decision as a way of giving Britain a choice. Gaitskell said:

"The real case for our having our own nuclear weapons is fear of excessive dependence on the United States." 21

The Revisionists also believed that a Britain without a nuclear deterrent of her own would be an ineffective voice in the World. Bevan agreed with this at the 1957 Labour Conference.

"But if you carry this resolution (a unilateral resolution)
you will send a British Foreign Secretary naked into the
conference chamber." 22

In July 1959 a joint NEC-TUC statement, "The Next Step" advocated a non-nuclear club of nations multi-laterally disarmed with the exception of the USSR and the USA. This statement supported by Gaitskell faced strong opposition from the Left. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament had been winning many recruits within the Party and these were joined by pacifists and those, who, after the Clause IV debate, wished to change the Party Leadership, to oppose "The Next Step". "Tribune" on behalf of the Left, pointed out that unless every nation accepted disarmament "The Next Step" should be strongly opposed. "Tribune" saw "The Next Step" as an attempt to stop the growing unilateral movement in the Party, led by Frank Cousins of the TGWU.

"Everyone knows the real reasons The success of Aldermaston
plus the known views of Frank Cousins and the imminence of the three
trade union conferences taking place this week." 23

The Left had particular strength because it could marshal the union block vote. When, in April 1960 the Conservative Government cancelled Britain's independent nuclear deterrent "Blue Streak" the Left saw an opportunity to raise Labour's defence policy as an issue at the September TUC meeting, and the October Party Conference at Scarborough.

At the TUC meeting "The Next Step" was approved, but so was a unilateralist TGWU statement because of an effort at compromise by W.J. Carron of the AEU. In Scarborough, Gaitskell, deprived of the support of Bevan who had died, fought fiercely for a multi-lateralist defense policy. In his opening speech to the conference he announced:

"There are some of us, Mr. Chairman, who will fight and fight and fight again to save the Party we love to bring back sanity and honesty and dignity." 24

Despite opposition from the NEC, the TUC and the PLP, the Conference approved Frank Cousins' motion on behalf of the TGWU calling for a "complete rejection of defence policy based on the threat of the use of strategic or tactical nuclear weapons" and an AEU motion in favour of the "unilateral renunciation of the testing, manufacture, stock piling and basing of all nuclear weapons in Great Britain". The motions were passed by a margin of 1% of the votes at the conference.

Gaitskell said, after unilateralism became Party policy:

"It is not the end of the problem because Labour MPs will have to consider what they do in the House of Commons. What do you expect of them? You know how they voted in June - overwhelmingly for the policy statement To change their minds overnight to go back on pledges they gave to people who elected them in their constituencies." 25

No mechanism existed whereby Conference could impose its decisions on MPs and over the next twelve months the debate on unilateralism lost much of its importance, being eclipsed by the dispute over Labour MPs' relations with Conference and a challenge to Gaitskell's leadership by Harold Wilson.

Gaitskell's leadership was questioned by Wilson not because the two disagreed over defence policy, but because Wilson believed that Gaitskell would split the Party. Wilson's challenge was easily dismissed by Gaitskell, but the leadership campaigns highlighted how vulnerable the Revisionists were in the constituencies. As a result of this, and the unilateralist debate, the Revisionists established the "Campaign for Democratic Socialism" (CDS).

The CDS brought together, in an effective campaigning group, the chief Revisionists in the Labour Party. Its leading members included Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams, Bill Rodgers (as CDS General Secretary) and Dick Taverne. The group was committed to revoking the unilateralist defence policy, and supporting Gaitskell's leadership. "Tribune" dubbed CDS "a squalid little conspiracy" aimed at establishing a Labour elite. CDS policies were thoroughly Revisionist. On public ownership (Clause IV) it believed:

"Public, co-operative and private enterprise all have a part to play in the economy. We regard the public ownership of particular industries as a useful technique to be justified on its merits." 26

On Labour MPs relationship with the Party Conference:

"The only real question at issue is the basic constitutional one over the long established right of the PLP not to accept dictation from Conference Mr. Gaitskell's opponents, in making their attacks narrowly personal, are trying to ignore the right of the PLP to do this." 27

The CDS maintained a continuous campaign against unilateralism, and in the spring of 1961 USDAW and the AEU overturned unilateralist policies at their Conferences. In September 1961 TUC Conference endorsed Gaitskell's multilateral "Policy for Peace", and at the Labour Party Conference in 1961 unilateralism was defeated. The importance of the CDS in these defeats was highlighted by the press.

"There is no doubt that at a national level the CDS has played a decisive role swinging opinions in the unions and local parties. It has obviously had impressive results." 28

Others wrote that Gaitskell had been saved by "The sheer hard grind of his supporters particularly the CDS." 29

The CDS was the first organised Revisionist group in the Labour Party, and it became the model for many other such groups. It drew together the Revisionists, and directly challenged the Left. From its ranks came three of the leaders of the SDP.

The two issues that I have discussed in some detail are important in understanding why the SDP was formed. The Clause IV debate established Revisionism as party policy and gave the Revisionists the upper hand. The unilateralist debate established a Revisionist campaign group to tackle the Left. However the two issues assumed an even greater importance twenty years later when once again Labour debated Clause IV and unilateralism. Throughout 1981 the four future leaders of the SDP made constant reference to 1961. Again in 1981 the issue of the relations between the PLP and Conference was debated, challenges were made to Revisionists in key party positions and there was speculation concerning a split in the Party.

However, the differences between the events of 1961 and 1981 are as important as the similarities. In 1981 the NEC and the Revisionists were at odds. The unions, the power barons of the Party and Conference would not support the Revisionists in 1981 as they did in 1961. In 1961 the Revisionists selected the issue and fought for a straight victory within the Party. However, in 1981 the Revisionists knew that a defeat within the Party could give them the political freedom to begin a new existence separate from Labour.

The positions of power that emerged after 1961 dictated relationships between the Left and Right for the following twenty years, and led, eventually, to a Revisionist party separate from Labour.

After 1961 the Revisionists, led by Gaitskell, controlled Party policy, and this did not lead to any major arguments within Labour. In effect the Left was demoralised, and it was dividing into two groups, the old Left of the Bevanites and the "New Left".

The Hungarian Revolt of 1956 caused a crisis within the British Communist Party, as its members questioned the Stalinist orthodoxy. Trade union leaders, such as Frank Chapple, rejected Marxism altogether and joined Labour. However the British intervention in Suez in November 1956 led many others to believe that imperialism and capitalism still characterised the British state and a Marxist critique of society was still valid. Bevanism was not seen as an alternative and Bevan's support for multi-lateralism and Gaitskell repelled many disaffected Communists. One group of Marxist intellectuals led by E.P. Thompson and John Saville therefore sought a "New Left" position, rejecting both Bevanism and Communism. Their aim was to devise a socialist political response to new cultural and social influences in an affluent society. In 1957 they founded the periodical the "New Reasoner" which combined in 1960 with the "Universities and Left Review" to form the "New Left Review", directed by an editorial board which included Thompson, Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams.

The "New Left" rejected the sterile ideology of Stalinism and called for a libertarian socialism akin to English working-class radicalism. Influenced by socialist humanism they stressed the Marxist concept of alienation and turned their anger against the Establishment. They believed that their views would steer the Labour Left away from the narrow questions of nationalisation and into an enlightening debate which would rekindle the moral and intellectual fire within the Party. They wished, in short, to bring together the Eastern and Western European socialist traditions in order to extract principles which would criticise affluent capitalism more effectively than Stalinism or Bevanism.

Working in the era of the "Angry Young Men" the New Left entered into an assault on the supposed materialism of British society. They began their attack from a moralistic position in "Out of Apathy" ³⁰ published in 1960. They explained that they were appalled at vulgar commercialism, but did not argue against it on grounds of economic weakness or inefficiency. They compared the new affluence with the poverty of the education and health services. By making capitalism and affluence the solution to the nation's economic problems the Establishment had allowed the selfishness of the market economy to show through. Labour was being exploited more than ever, so that the increasing amounts of surplus value that the workers produced financed the new affluence of the few. The creation of a socialist co-operative commonwealth, based on libertarian radicalism was more necessary than ever before. Britain had a democratic form of Government, but not a democratic way of life. The freedom of the citizen as a consumer, as explained by Crosland, was an illusion, and a deceitful form of equality. The citizen's need for security of employment, and the provision of health education and protection could not be evaluated using yardsticks of competitiveness and the market economy. The citizen as a consumer was in fact manipulated by cartels of multi-national companies beyond democratic control. This led to private affluence and public squalor. Stuart Hall believed that they were not unrelated.

".... they are central to the system itself; they are structural faults and weaknesses which have survived the managerial and corporate "revolution" in capitalism, and come out of the other side, unresolved." ³¹

The problems of the working-class had been reduced to personal problems. Ambition, greed and snobbery had replaced co-operation, altruism and equality. Democracy had been bought off and manipulated to legitimise the establishment. An

alliance of businessmen and politicians controlled a bureaucratic state.

"Butskellism" had smothered the dissatisfaction which had driven the Labour Movement by fostering demand management and consensus politics. For Thompson:

"The most challenging issue is reduced to a nice choice of expediences. At the heart of a disintegrating imperial system, with weapons on annihilation passed over the earth, the Natopolitan walks carefully down well known streets, putting his faith in his securities in the bank." 32

"Natopolitan" was Thompson's name for the businessman politician who, he believed, benefited most from consensus politics. Thompson's own desire to investigate the British radical tradition, and the need of the New Left to present a socialist alternative, led him to publish in 1963 "The Making of the English Working Class" 33, in which popular democratic movements and their history were used to point to the faults of the static and sterile affluent society.

The new social and cultural influences which had encouraged the break-up of the British Communist Party also inspired the New Left. Cinema, television and popular music allowed the previously restricted Stalinists to explore, as New Leftists, the culture of the affluent society. They turned their attention to subversive cultures which challenged existing social values. In his books "Culture and Society" 34 (1958), and "The Long Revolution" 35 (1961) Raymond Williams explained the cultural domination of the working class by the British elite. In these books Williams departed from the old Marxist distinction between economic structure and cultural superstructure. Culture could not be arbitrarily reduced to economics because this led to the cultural Stalinism that had plagued the Soviet Union. He argued that:

".... a Marxist theory of culture will recognise diversity and complexity, will take account of continuity within change, will allow for chance but, with these reservations, will take the facts of the economic structure and the consequent social relations as the guiding string on which a culture is to be understood." 36

He believed that this would be a more satisfactory approach than the imposition of a strict socio-economic code of conduct onto a cultural and intellectual life.

Williams sought to show that the cultural relationship between the elite and the educated bourgeois was different from that between the elite and the masses. The elite despised the masses, "the swinish multitude" as Burke described them. The masses were easily fooled and almost tribally primitive. Indeed the educated bourgeois, particularly the advertisers and journalists expressed the elite's contempt for the masses which became an important part of popular culture in an age of mass media. Williams contended that:

"If our purpose is art, education, the giving of information or opinion, our interpretation will be in terms of the rational and interested being. If, on the other hand, our purpose is manipulation - the persuasion of a large number of people to act, feel, think, know, in certain ways - the convenient formula will be that of the masses." 37

The popular forms of communication and education were established by the elite for the masses. Consequently they showed the existing order as moral and natural, and promulgated the ideas of the elite. The masses were forced to believe that they were inferior, that the class system was normal and therefore the best way

to organise society and distribute wealth. The masses could react by riot or by strike to assert their class dignity and solidarity. However, this was, Williams believed dangerous for democracy. The masses could also be apathetic, and inert, as Williams said the British masses had been since the General Strike of 1926. This was also dangerous for democracy. By refusing to take an active role in politics and government, the British masses had allowed elite to mock and manipulate democracy. The idea of "everyone in their place" in the organic society of Britain had undermined the solidarity of the masses by dividing them into groups each with its own position. Thus the distinction between blue and white collar workers, between artisans, craftsmen and labourers. This division of the masses seriously damaged their understanding of, and interest in, co-operation and socialism.

Culture and communication could only be democratic when the dominance of the elite over them was ended. The press and television should not glorify individual success and capitalism, but give to the masses the dignity and respect which they deserved. The popular culture should not be a series of proclamations handed down by the elite which unreservedly praised the class system and the elite's values. If culture was democratised the creativity of ordinary men and women would be unleashed.

The work of Thompson and Williams inspired the New Left in its early years. However in its search for a different philosophy which was socialist, democratic and free thinking the New Left was an intellectual movement with no political influence. It was disorganised and without a concrete political aim. It needed an organisation, and a cause, and it found them in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

CND was formed in 1958 by a mixed group of Bevanites, radicals and religions. It had a wide appeal in the Labour Party. The mass demonstrations of CND members answered the New Left call for an active, politically aware and

democratic working-class. and provided a forum for the New Left to promote its opinions. As a result of activity in CND New Left clubs were established throughout the country. When CND turned Labour from multi-lateralism to unilateralism the New Left hailed it as a great victory.

In its early days CND did not call for Britain to withdraw from NATO. However the later demands of both CND and the New Left for Britain to break with NATO had serious implications for their relationship with the Labour Party. Labour was fully committed to NATO. A Labour Government led Britain into NATO in 1947. Gaitskell and the Revisionists had fought for multi-lateralism and NATO. However the relationship between CND and Labour was very ambiguous. On the one hand many Labour members were active in CND. On the other CND's Executive did not wish to be associated with any political party. Canon Collins, a CND leader, had written that:

".... the balance of those in the spearhead of CND was not political as such certainly the bulk of the Executive were left of Toryism - but it was based on moral principles uncompromisingly." 38

This division between morality and party politics was not, as Ian Mikardo pointed out, practical. The only way to achieve unilateral disarmament was through political action in the Labour Party. In the mind of New Leftists Gaitskell's Labour Party was allied to the Establishment, obsessed with amending but not abolishing capitalism and achieving electoral success. Gaitskell's refusal in 1960 to accept the democratic decision of Conference on unilateralism indicated to the New Left that the Revisionists could not, or would not represent the masses. Gaitskell's repeated calls from 1959 onward for Labour to shed its working class image only strengthened the New Left's conviction that Labour was not an adequate instrument of social change. Hall expressed that general feeling:

"Has the Labour movement come through the fire and brimstone of the last fifty years to lie down and die before the glossy magazines? Has Labour no sense of the capacities, the potential of a society - more various, more skilled, more literate, less confined, less beaten down and frustrated." 39

Labour had sold out to the very groups it was meant to attack. However the New Left could not alienate itself from a party which commanded the electoral support of the working class. Labour was a creative achievement of the workers, to establish a co-operative society to benefit the workers, and found institutions on the principle of equality. As Raymond Williams put it:

".... the choice as it presents itself for Labour is between qualified acceptance in a subordinate capacity or the renewal of an apparently hopeless challenge. The practical benefits of the former have to be balanced against the profound loss of inspiration in the loss of the latter." 40

The perceived effectiveness of Labour as an instrument for the achievement of socialism determined its relationship with the New Left. After CND's 1960 victory the New Left Review supported a policy of fighting within the Labour Movement and Party.

"Scarborough both generalised and politicised the issue of nuclear weapons and either the members of CND who are in touch at any point with the organised political life of the Labour Movement put the case for unilateralism there, or it will go by default." 41

The New Left committed itself, after an internal struggle, to fight on two fronts, inside and outside the Labour Party, to win the unilateralist case. It was Ralph Miliband in "Parliamentary Socialism" ⁴² (1961) who argued that Labour's commitment to parliamentary democracy prevented it from becoming a truly socialist party. Turning Labour's and the Revisionist's claim that the Party was non-ideological against itself Miliband argued that:

".... of political parties claiming socialism to be their aim, the Labour Party has always been one of the most dogmatic - not about socialism but about the parliamentary system. Empirical and flexible about all else, its leaders have always made devotion to that system their fixed point of reference and the conditioning factor of their political behaviour." ⁴³

Labour could not mobilise the working class in direct action because of its commitment to parliamentary democracy. It could only be a manager of capitalism as in 1945 to 1951. Without working class agitation Labour would be absorbed into the existing system. For Miliband Labour motivated the masses to participate in the search for greater profits. Labour was, by its very nature, not socialist but labourist. Revisionism was a variety of labourism which:

".... for most of its existence has been primarily engaged in political brokerage between labour and the established order. This is a function which is of crucial importance to modern capitalism." ⁴⁴

Miliband did leave open the possibility that Labour might become the party of the masses by becoming more socialist, more class conscious. If so then Labour could survive an initial electoral defeat, provide an effective socialist opposition, which would enlist the support and devotion of its members and the masses and as a grand finale win real power for social change. Labour should not

accept eternal capitalism as natural, as the Revisionists seemed to do. Labour should recognise that the masses would always be a junior partner to capital in such as society. However Miliband could not prove that Labour's weakness was fundamental. Geoffrey Foote commented that Miliband:

".... had not made a fundamental attack on Labour as a party, as he recognised that its conservative past did not preclude any radical change on its part." 45

The New Left made a distinct contribution to British socialism. As a political movement its fortunes were tied up with CND. When the unilateralist cause declined after Easter 1963 so did the activities of the New Left clubs. The detente between the Soviet Union and the USA had a damaging effect. The Labour Party rallied around Harold Wilson and, desperate to end thirteen years of Tory rule, declined to debate the divisive issue of unilateralism. Thompson, Hall and Williams lost their positions of power in CND. The "New Left Review" appointed Perry Anderson as editor, and the approach of the New Left became less libertarian and more rigidly marxist. There was vicious in-fighting, followed by division and disorganisation. In the "Socialist Register" 46 of 1965, edited by Miliband, the two groups abused each other, Thompson described Anderson as:

"A veritable Dr. Beeching of the socialist intelligensia. All the uneconomic branchlines and socio-cultural sidings of the New Left which were in any case, carrying less traffic, were abruptly closed down." 47

In 1967 Thompson, Hall and Williams published "The May Day Manifesto" 48 which protested against the Wilson Government and suggested more radical policies. It was poorly received, and its authors retreated to socialist academia. Thompson

was to gain prominence again in a later rise of CND. When Perry Anderson became editor of the New Left Review, with his concern for the relationship between structure and superstructure, or the revolutionary seizure of power and Marxist dogma the death knell was sounded for the radical, free thinking Thompson. In its place the New Left adopted the Marxism of *Althusser*.

The New Left has been criticised on three main grounds.

First the New Left was a middle-class radical movement which over intellectualised socialism. In doing so they created a mystique around socialism which did not motivate but confused the working class. Frank Parkin, in a history of CND wrote that these middle class radicals were:

".... more typically concerned with issues of a moral or humanitarian nature, as for example, anti-apartheid, the campaign against capital punishment and so on. These goals are intrinsically different from those pursued by working class movements in that they offer particular benefits to those who support them The main pay off for such activity is in the emotional satisfaction derived from expressing personal values in action." 49

The New Left, claimed Foote ⁵⁰, have often followed intellectual fashion for its own sake, flirted with Marxist language whilst rejecting basic Marxist principles, such as replacing Marx's idea of surplus value and modifying the prophesised crisis of capitalism as a result of falling profit. The absence of a theory of crisis or revolution has been as influential on New Left theory as its stress on culture and radical sociology, and this forms the basis of the second criticism. The Communists, and New Leftists such as Perry Anderson, argued that Thompson's ideas, and those of his supporters were merely modifications of

capitalism as they had no theory of revolution. The elite would not give up power faced by a neatly argued radical case, or a group of angry intellectuals. Non-violent direct action might have caused the elite to modify its approach to welfare for the masses but only by seizing power would the masses achieve power. As the Revisionists had adapted the Labour Party and labourism to be good managers of capitalism, so Thompson et al had adapted pluralism and liberalism to corrupt them.

Thirdly the Revisionists argued that, although the New Left claimed to be libertarian and free thinking, its policies would require the deprivation of some groups of their liberty and the coercion of others by an interfering bureaucracy. Liberty involves choice, economic moral and political, and the New Left had no strategy in the eventuality of the masses choosing to be greedy grasping and individualistic rather than opting for co-operation and community.

Nevertheless the New Left presented a strong ideological challenge to the Revisionists and the Bevanites. The principles of the New Left inspired many other groups in the Labour Party such as the Bevanites and the feminist movement. However the New Left had very little support amongst Labour's MPs in the 1960's, and failed to take political power from the Revisionists.

The power positions of the New Left and the Revisionists did not change when, after the sudden death of Gaitskell in January 1963, Harold Wilson was elected as Party Leader. Wilson's primary task was to reunite the Party and to develop a plausible manifesto to present at a General Election by integrating Revisionist ideas with those of the Bevanites. Wilson and his economic adviser Thomas Balogh believed that the slow growth rate of the British economy in the early 1960's, combined with low rates of investment and a worsening balance of payments increased the need for state intervention. They held that Britain had a stagnant economy because it had stagnant social institutions. The Revisionist promise of

higher spending on social welfare had always been dependent on a high and sustainable economic growth rate. The Keynesian economic techniques used by the Conservative Government of the day and favoured by the Revisionists seemed unable to revive the economy. The Revisionist idea of moderate state intervention in the economy and limited social reform without state intervention appeared to Wilson to be irrelevant. However, Wilson needed to work with the Revisionists to reunite the Party and bring an end to the debates about ownership, nuclear weapons and the organisation of the Party, at least until Labour had won a General Election. Wilson was not concerned with ideas but with winning a General Election. He was not a Revisionist. In fact he did not have close links with any faction within the Party. He shared some of the Revisionist's opinions about the state of the nation but he felt that only corporate socialism and intervention could revitalise Britain. He proposed an essentially pragmatic solution to Britain's problems.

Wilson shared the Revisionist idea that the Establishment was the cause of Britain's stagnation. He stated:

"We are living in the jet age but we are governed by an Edwardian establishment mentality." 51

The way to end the rule of the Establishment was to create a meritocratic class of technocrats who would stimulate a scientific revolution and breathe new life into the economy and actively intervene in its development. Influenced by Balogh, Wilson held that an economy that was centrally planned could control prices, incomes and profit by technical management and by co-ordinated decision making. This was not consistent with the Revisionist principles that Government should influence, but not directly plan or control the economy. However Wilson was able to avoid disputes over policy by focusing the attention of the Party on the need to win a General Election. In October 1964 the Labour Party was elected to govern.

The relationship between the Party leaders and the Revisionists during the 1964 - 1970 Labour Government was an uneasy one. Wilson led the administration in a presidential style. He had the support of the trade unions and the majority of Labour MPs. Although the Revisionists held some important positions within the Government the Prime Minister and the Cabinet could not be called Revisionist. Wilson had, indeed, incorporated some Revisionist thinking into the Party's manifesto and into Government policy. Yet he maintained a pragmatic non-doctrinaire approach. He was prepared to change his policies to suit the times. He was as ready to adopt Revisionism as any other set of principles if they would bring about economic growth and convince the electorate to keep the Labour Party in office. Evidence of this can be found in the Government's economic policy.

The Government was bedevilled by a balance of payments crisis from its beginning. This forced Wilson to abandon his policy of centralised planning and impose a variety of fiscal policies which ultimately deprived the Government's supporters, the working class. The planned incomes policy failed in 1966. Sterling was devalued in 1967. The Government thrashed around trying to find a way of controlling a rise in unemployment to half a million in 1967 and trade union unrest. In 1969 the Government tried by legislation to curb those very trade unions who had given the 1964 Manifesto their support. In the face of such economic crises the Government's main objective became the short term management of the economy rather than a scientific revolution and the creation of meritocratic class of technocrats.

The Revisionists played a minor role in the Government's economic decision making until the appointment of Roy Jenkins as Chancellor in 1967. He was able to achieve a surplus in the balance of payments in 1969 by restraining demand. The failure of Wilson's corporate planned socialist economic policy also led to the frustration of the Revisionist's hopes for limited social reform. Such social

reform needed finance, and the economy was in no fit state to fund increased spending on any public utility. However, as Home Secretary from 1965 to 1967 Jenkins was able to implement a liberalisation of the laws regarding abortion, homosexuality and censorship. The divorce laws were reformed in 1969. Comprehensive education and wage related social security contributions and benefits were introduced. The Revisionists encouraged these progressive reforms, but were dismayed by reductions in social public expenditure. The Government had not radically changed the distribution of wealth or social privilege. Although the ethos surrounding the Government's proposed social reforms was a Revisionist one, the implementation of the reforms depended upon the success of an economy organised along corporate socialist lines. Labour's economic policy was a failure, and for that reason its social policy also failed.

Wilson had been able to hold the Labour Party together throughout the term of the Government. The factions within the Party were so preoccupied with the Herculean tasks of office that they had no time or inclination to involve themselves in divisive conflict. However, in 1970 the Party fought the General Election on a mixed set of Revisionist and Corporatist principles, and lost. As Howell remarks, the Labour Government of 1964-70 had presided over the decline of social democracy into:

"Mere rhetoric, wordly pragmatism and an open worship of the most traditional symbols of British society." 52

By 1970 the Revisionists were in serious trouble. Their influence in the Party had declined. Traditional Labour supporters gave their approval to Wilson and the corporatists. More radical Labour supporters looked towards the emerging groups on the Left and to Benn. The Revisionists were in decline for three reasons. Firstly their principles and policies were seen as outdated and were challenged by the Left. Secondly they had isolated themselves from the trade union power base

over Britain's entry into the E.E.C. Thirdly the character of the Labour Party in the constituencies, where the Revisionists had never been strong, was moving towards the Left.

Crosland attempted to rejuvenate Revisionism and come to terms with the failure of the Labour Government in a Fabian Tract "A Social Democratic Britain" ⁵³ (1971) and "Socialism Now" ⁵⁴ (1974). He argued that socialism was still about equality and welfare as ends, but the means employed should be re-appraised. He saw the Britain of the 1970's as still divided by class and industrial dispute.

"The labour issue still continues to divide our society, and class relations in industry are characterised by a mutual distrust often amounting to open warfare." ⁵⁵

He maintained that capitalism could be controlled. Nationalisation should only be used as a measure of last resort. Multi-national companies were not a threat but were to be welcomed as they increased investment in Britain. Crosland wrote:

"I see no reason to alter the Revisionist thesis that government can generally impose its will (provided it has one) on the private corporation." ⁵⁶

He contended that Revisionism had been spoiled by the policies of corporatism advocated by Wilson. These policies had drawn Revisionists away from their fundamental principles, and into a more Right wing position. The Revisionist vision had become blurred. What was required was a return to fundamental principles, a move leftward.

Crosland suggested:

"A move to the left is needed, not in the traditional sense of a move towards old fashioned Clause IV Marxism in the sense of a sharper deliniation of fundamental objectives, a greater clarity about egalitarian priorities and a stronger determination to achieve them." 57

Crosland, and Jenkins who used similar arguments in "What Matters Now" 58 (1972) did not link the failure of the Labour Party to the inability of the state to employ Keynesian demand management with any effect on inflation. John Gyford and Stephen Haseler called on the Revisionists in the Fabian pamphlet "Social Democracy : Beyond Revisionism" 59 (1971) adopt on a more populist and participatory strategy. The followers of Gyford and Haseler called themselves Social Democrats to differentiate themselves from the Revisionists. They advocated a more grass roots approach to politics and the reduction of inequality. Their principles were adopted by Dick Taverne who resigned his seat as a Labour MP and successfully fought a bye-election as a Democratic Labour candidate as a protest against left-wing activity. Taverne claimed:

".... our guiding principle should be "small is beautiful", that variety provides for independence, and that independence provides for greater security and freedom." 60

As the Revisionists were coming to terms with their role in the Labour Government they also entered into a dispute about Britain's membership of the E.E.C. In 1959 Jenkins and his supporters established the Labour Common Market Committee. This group entered into a close friendship with the leaders of the German SPD and both sides regularly met at Konigswinter. This allowed the Labour delegation to compare the SPD's pro-EEC position with the increasingly anti-EEC opinions of their own Party. The Labour Common Market Committee in the 1970's acted in the same way

as the Campaign for Democratic Socialism had behaved in the 1960's. Both were a front for the Revisionists to establish a supporting organisation for their disputes within the Party. To a certain extent it acted as a party within a party. In October 1971 sixty-nine Labour MPs organised by the Labour Common Market Committee voted against a three line whip on the principle of EEC entry. On the 16th April 1972 after the Shadow Cabinet first rejected then accepted Tony Benn's proposal that a Labour Government would hold a referendum about EEC membership Jenkins, Owen and their colleagues resigned their Party Offices.

The Revisionists began to organise for a campaign inside and outside the Party in favour of entry into the EEC. The importance of the issue declined until the national referendum in 1975. However the stance taken by the Revisionists alienated them from the Labour leadership and the trade unions. The Revisionists had depended upon the support of the trade unions to counterbalance their weakness in the constituencies. The EEC issue not only separated the Revisionists from the trade unions but also from those sections of the Labour Movement who were sympathetic to them but anti-EEC. This problem was compounded by the changes in the Labour Party membership. The Labour Party was being taken over by the middle class.

Throughout the 1940's and 1950's the Labour Party in the constituencies had been run by working class trade union activists. In 1945 39% of Labour MPs were from the working class. However, by October 1974 the constituencies had become dependent upon the work of teachers, local authority employees and the like, and only 4% of Labour MPs were from the working class. Aided by their generally greater articulateness and organisational abilities the middle class took control of the constituencies. Their ethos was very different from the working class. Many were graduates, familiar with the tactics of the protest movements of the 1960's. They were disappointed by the performance of the Labour Government and its perceived

abandonment of socialism. They attempted to re-introduce socialism by applying pressure on their local MPs, pressing Conference motions critical of Labour policy, and by gaining positions of authority at local and national level. The fraternalist approach inherited from the trade unions was damaged. Labour MPs, previously considered semi-divine, were looked on as the semi-satanic upholders of capitalism. After 1966 Conference often passed resolutions critical of Party policy, an event almost unimaginable before 1959. All of this seriously weakened and demoralised the Revisionists, and was a major reason why the SDP was formed.

Whilst the Revisionists contemplated their principles and their role in the 1964-1970 Labour Government, the Left began to marshal their diverse range of opinions into a more coherent programme of economic and social policies. The ideas of the New Left were absorbed by some of the Bevanites who had no desire to join an intellectually pure but enclosed order of socialists. They wanted the power to transform society in a radical way. The failure of the 1964-1970 Labour Government convinced Michael Foot that the Revisionism of Jenkins and Crosland could not liberate the working class from capitalism. These former Bevanites entered into a coalition with the members of the New Left within the Labour Movement. They conducted their political activities through the Institute for Workers Control (IWC) and its journal "The Voice of the Unions". As it had the support of the leaders of the Engineers Union and the Transport Workers Union the IWC group could not be dismissed by the Revisionists as a minority interest advocating eccentric ideas.

The leaders of the IWC were Ken Coates and Tony Topham. Coates argued against both the limited nationalisation of Revisionism and the idea of public corporations advocated by Labour since the 1930's. Both of these types of public ownership had become capitalist syndicates, managed by a bureaucratic oligarchy which was subservient to the private sector and continued to exploit the

workforce. As a reaction to this Coates and the IWC advocated traditional syndicalism. In spite of consumer capitalism and affluence the economic relationship between owner and workers was still one of exploiter and exploited. To achieve a humane and dignified series of economic relationships workers must control their industry. He claimed:

"Workers control brings back into the working class all that tremendous weight of self esteem, of self recognition, of self respect, which has been stripped away by years of bureaucratic intrigues and manoeuvres in political institutions. A man who wants workers control is a man who's aware of his fundamental humanity men who are convinced that they are not merely "hands", that they're not merely "cogs" but they have human dignities and rights." 61

To Coates workers' control constrained the power of employers to act against the interests of the workers. Having been involved in the control of their industry the workers would realise how unnecessary capitalist owners were and demand the full control of their industry and the end of capitalism. The "social audit" of the costs and benefits of firms, including an analysis of the distribution of profit, would further educate the workers in the need for them to exercise economic power and control. This control was to be organised in small units avoiding corporatism. Workers control was an alternative to workers participation in corporate industry which was seen as an exercise in class collaboration, and legitimised the capitalist distribution of wealth. Ernie Roberts of the IWC, an Engineering Union official who later became a Labour MP argued:

"The reason for the existence of the Labour Movement is to bring about a redistribution of wealth in the interests of those who create it. When we think of planning our economy, this again depends upon real ownership and control of the economy." 62

The cause of the IWC within the Labour Movement was aided by the consolidation of union rank and file organisation around the shop steward. The decentralisation of power in the unions gave a grass roots impetus to the IWC that the New Left had lacked. In 1967 Hugh Scanlon, a defender of the power of shop stewards, and an influential member of the IWC was elected President of the Engineering Union. The attack on corporate socialism had reached the trade unions. Scanlon believed that:

"the leadership of the trade union movement is now almost part of the establishment - more important still is a recognised part of the establishment. That wasn't as apparent in the thirties and during the war. It's more a phenomenon of full employment and employers utilising the trade union leadership rather than the heavy stick of unemployment." 63

The shop stewards movement would link leaders with the militant rank and file and cause them to reject the corporate system.

In reality the shop stewards acted as an unco-ordinated and unpredictable group without reference to any long term end or principle. Worsening industrial relations, unofficial strikes and closed shops could not be accepted by the Revisionists or by the more traditional trade union leaders who saw their positions of power being threatened. Workers control might well remove capitalist owners from influential roles, but it would also damage those Keynesian mechanisms

manipulating demand and supply on a macro economic basis as favoured by the Revisionists. Although the IWC and the Revisionists both disliked corporatism the IWC favoured an extension of state ownership broken down into worker controlled small units.

The Revisionist belief in the effective management of capitalism in favour of the workers was attacked by Michael Barratt Brown. Barratt Brown argued that the 1964-1970 Labour Government had pursued corporatist policies in a society torn by class conflict. Following David Ricardo he argued that profit and wages were directly linked. Higher wages reduced profits and vice versa. The pressure applied to private companies to grow and increase tax revenues to finance Revisionist social reforms would not in the capitalist system reduce profit. Private companies would have to satisfy the demands of their shareholders for increased dividends, the inevitable consequence of which was holding wages at a static level. This in turn increased the demand for social services to be financed from taxes and economic growth. Thus corporatism had built into it the protection of profit. When the economy overheated the fiscal policy adopted after 1967 fell most heavily on restraint of wages. The Revisionist idea that Governments could control the economy by influence without a further extension of public ownership was a nonsense because of the growth of multi-national companies. These companies could hold such an important position in an economy that their actions could cause serious economic decline which no Government would risk by attempting to reduce profits and increase wages. Secondly multi-national companies could transfer resources between nations or between different parts of their organisation at such a rate as to make it impossible for any Government to use its supposed influence effectively. He wrote:

"The rivalry today is not so much between capitalist states, in which finance capital is integrated with the state machine, as between transitional companies." 64

Barratt Brown argued for the end to the "Butskellist" consensus in the face of such a concentration of economic power. Rather than bringing about a partnership between labour and capital consensus politics had allowed the capitalists to fool the workers into an unfair agreement. In this agreement the workers had legitimised an unfair distribution of wealth. They had unconsciously strengthened the selfish and inequalitarian parts of capitalism by abandoning radical socialism and the politics of conflict. For Barratt Brown, only a return to fundamental socialist principles could restore the Labour Party as a force for progressive change within British society. He claimed:

"Socialism is not about equality, as Crosland insisted, nor even about liberty, important as reforms in these directions may be; it is about the eradication of class, about social control and production for use, instead of profit, for socially formulated needs in place of privately managed markets." 65

The Labour Party would, he thought, be propelled towards a radical programme by the pressure applied by the growing demand for workers control. By harnessing the power embodied in the workers control movement which was organised into small units Labour could act against the multi-national companies. It could also act against supra-national organisations which were the power bases of the multi-national companies, particularly the Common Market.

Barratt Brown saw the Labour Party not only as a socialist organisation but also as a standard bearer behind which the nation could gather to defeat the multi-national corporations. He did not advocate conflict within the nation. Capitalism he contended had changed since the time of Marx. The capitalists of Marx's time had worked on a small scale compared to the multi-nationals. He claimed:

"The division emerging in the ruling class in the 1970's is between giants of industry and finance with international connections and pygmies in the national market." 66

Barratt Brown's colleagues in the IWC accepted his analysis of society, and his principles. For their tactics and strategy the IWC turned to Ken Coates. As the representative of radical socialism Coates felt that the IWC should not destroy its chances of gaining power and influence in a Labour Government by being hostile to the Party as the New Left was, or by acting as a small "ginger" group. If the IWC deserted Labour it deserted the natural Party of the working class. The workers would then have no alternative but to support a Revisionist Party. Coates wrote:

"Whatever else British socialists may be doing, whatever experiments they may feel meet to conduct, either in community action or trade union agitation, the one thing they should not do is to turn their backs on the official Labour Movement it would be time enough to talk about defeat if the battle were over assuming our victories left us time, but it is quite, quite wrong to concern ourselves with it now, as the battle lines are just beginning to form." 67

A period of strikes and demonstrations against the Heath Government boosted the morale of the IWC and increased its influence in the Labour Party. The Upper Clyde Shipbuilders Dispute in 1971 demonstrated, in the opinion of the IWC, that workers could run their industry without capitalist managers. Determined working class opposition to the Industrial Relations Act 1972 as shown by workers victories in the January 1972 Miners Strike, and the proposed General Strike in July 1972 gave further credibility to the views of the IWC. This series of strikes led Eric Heffer to conclude in "The Class Struggle in Parliament" (1973) 68 that the Labour Party was a working class movement because of its trade union base. If the trade unions

defended the working class the Labour Party would do the same and adopt policies that were radical and socialist. The Labour leadership wished to avoid a split with the trade unions. The two parties came to an arrangement whereby a Labour Government would promise to introduce measures that would redistribute income in exchange for union support. This agreement known as the "Social Contract" was formally expressed in "Labour's Programme 1973" ⁶⁹ which was adopted by the Party Conference in October of the same year. The same document was used as the basis for Labour's manifesto during the General Election of February 1974. "The Labour Programme 1973" was based largely on the work of Stuart Holland.

Holland developed the thought of Barratt Brown. He had studied European, particularly Italian, methods of public enterprise and by applying this research to Britain had derived some interesting conclusions. He believed that the multi-nationals had made Keynesian demand management useless by their exercise of monopolistic power. The activities of the multi-nationals put into question the Revisionist thesis that capitalism could be managed and class conflict eradicated by a gradual redistribution of wealth. Monetary measures against multi-nationals were useless as the companies could raise finance on the international markets. Fiscal policy became a nonsense because tax concessions had to be given to keep or attract the multi-nationals.

The private sector had failed to resist the multi-nationals. It had failed the people of Britain. The public sector was passive, dependant on growth. The Government had concentrated on social services and infra-structure that benefited the multi-nationals. The Government had ignored the nationalisation of the profitable sectors of the economy and had taken on board ailing industries. The private sector had not grown quickly enough to sustain investment or full employment, to be competitive in the international markets. The Labour Government of 1964-70 had been unsuccessful because the National Plan had attempted to support

capitalism and the existing class relations rather than redistributing wealth.

Holland suggested that:

".... having failed to grasp that social redistribution depended upon socialist transformation it was forced to cut back on the very social expenditure supposed to alleviate injustice and inequality." 70

Holland argued that Governments must use the power of leading companies by extending public ownership or by using a state agency to divert private investment into socially acceptable industry. The state agency was to be similar to the Italian Industrial Reconstitution Institute (IRI).

"A British IRI type state holding company could place an instrument of unprecedented flexibility and effectiveness at the disposition of the Government." 71

Holland advocated a form of state capitalism which changed the mix of the economy but did not abolish the private sector. He dismissed objections by some members of the Left to these proposals thus;

".... to ignore the techniques of state capitalism because they are state capitalist is not only to allow the devil some of the best tunes but also is to risk siren seduction of some sections of the working class, who would readily change job insecurity for job security, whatever the prevailing mode of production." 72

Therefore it was state intervention not corporalist state ownership in which Holland placed his faith. Workers would still be expected to control their industries rather than the state. He wrote:

"The question of social control is crucial. Without a socialisation of control, with new forms of industrial and economic democracy, and new negotiation of changed ends for the use of resources, the institutions of state ownership and planning would tend to mean corporatism or state capitalism rather than a transition to socialist planning and socialised development." 73

Holland's theories were aimed at restoring the British economy and national sovereignty. Like Barratt Brown, Holland envisaged a Labour Government leading the nation away from the multi-nationals. They both placed the interests of the nation above those of class. However for them the working class were the nation as the class of British capitalists had been destroyed by the multi-nationals.

Labour won the February 1974 General Election with a more Left wing manifesto than that used in 1970. The minority administration led by Wilson had a more radical ethos than the 1964 Government. Although Revisionists held important positions, notably Jenkins as Home Secretary, the followers of the IWC and Holland, such as Benn, also occupied influential ministries.

The Labour Government of 1974-79 was not a happy affair for the Revisionists. Noel Tracey comments:

"If the 1964-70 Labour Government represents the failure of social democracy to cope with economic difficulties, the 1974-79 Government was in terms of social democracy a total disaster." 74

In October 1974 another General Election gave Labour a small working majority. The Government had proposed a series of radical reforms in social services and equality but the effects of the 1973 oil crisis forced the

administration to abandon its socialist approach and revert to a monetarism. Chancellor Denis Healey used deflation and fiscal policy to control the economy. The Revisionists swallowed their Keynesian pride and endorsed Healey's methods. Their newspaper "Socialist Commentary" stated:

"It seems clear to us in 1975, the level of employment will be almost entirely beyond the control of the British Government." 75

The newspaper expressed similar views a year later.

"During 1976 there is a priority for British economic policy to bring down the rate of inflation. There is a second priority the improvement of productivity a third reducing unemployment, which can be tackled only when we have beaten inflation." 76

To the Left it appeared that the Revisionists had accepted the analysis of the economy presented by the newly elected Conservative Leader Mrs. Thatcher. Motivated by the legitimate desire to place individuals of like mind into Parliament the Left began to challenge the policies of sitting Revisionist MPs in the constituencies. In late 1974 Eddie Milne MP for Blyth was ousted. Eddie Griffiths MP for Sheffield Brightside, Frank Tomney in Hammersmith, Richard Crawshaw in Toxteth and Edward Lyons in Bradford, all leading Revisionists, were in trouble with their constituency parties over the economy, defence and the EEC. The activities of the Left were not restricted to baiting the Revisionists. In Newham North-East Reg Prentice a working class moderate anti-EEC member was asked to retire by his constituency party.

The Revisionist's alarm at the activities of the Left were increased by difficulties at the constituency level. They believed that Wilson would not curb these activities for the fear of splitting the Party. The NEC commissioned Reg

Underhill, the national agent, to prepare a report on "Entryist Activities" particularly those of the Militant tendency. The report was presented to the NEC in November 1975. Much to the disgust of the Revisionists its recommendations were not acted upon, nor was it published.

Outside Parliament a group of Revisionist and social democratic sympathisers formed the Social Democratic Alliance (SDA). The SDA, launched in June 1975, attempted to provide support to those Labour Party members who felt that the Party was:

".... being driven from its historic course by an intolerant dogmatism alien to its socialist tradition and democratic system." 77

The SDA led by Stephen Haseler and supported by Jenkins aimed at:

"creating a democratic socialist society and works within the British system of Parliamentary democracy." 78

The SDA was not a popular group in the Labour Party. It instigated a witch-hunt against the Left by employing a combination of vitriolic personal attacks in the press and attempts to undermine the position of the Labour leaders and the NEC. It caused many moderate non-Revisionist MPs to distrust Jenkins and his supporters. The Revisionists had mobilised its forces through the Manifesto Group and the Campaign for Labour Victory (CLV). These groups gave the younger followers of the Revisionists such as David Marquand, John Mackintosh and Brian Magee the opportunity to voice their opinions and assume positions of responsibility. These groups were used by the Revisionists during the European Referendum campaign of 1975.

As would be expected the Revisionists played a leading part in the Britain in Europe Group. They formed links with Edward Heath, Jeremy Thorpe and other members of the very political parties of the centre and right whom they were meant to oppose. It was members of the Labour Party, particularly Michael Foot, Tony Benn and Peter Shore with whom they disagreed and whom they publicly criticised. The Referendum campaign caused Jenkins, at least, to question the value of the two party system. To him the divisions caused by two party politics seemed artificial after the shared experiences of the 1975 Referendum. The campaign highlighted the differences between Labour MPs. It opened the way for Labour to approach the Liberals to form an electoral alliance in Parliament. The effect of the 1975 Referendum was similar to Peel's Repeal of the Corn Law for all of the parties involved. As Peel split the Tory Party and that split led to the formation of the Liberal Party so the issue of Europe split Labour and gathered together the eventual leaders of the SDP and the Liberal Party. To this campaign the Alliance that contested the 1987 Election and the Social and Liberal Democratic Party can trace its origin. The campaign also caused a row within the family of the Labour Party which came to a head at the 1976 Party Conference.

At the Party Conference of 1976 the Revisionists were humiliated. They were not alone. The Conference shouted down Wilson and Healey. It passed motions to nationalise the major banks. It gave its support to the Labour Programme 1976 which advocated a return to Clause IV socialism and did not mention NATO. James Callaghan took over the Labour leadership in March 1976 following Wilson's surprising resignation. In the election for the leadership, and the premiership, Jenkins' and Crosland's combined votes did not total those of Michael Foot the principal champion of the Left. The disappointing performance of Jenkins and Crosland indicated the weakness of the Revisionist position. They had identified themselves too closely with the EEC and alienated too many MPs of both moderate and Left wing persuasion to mount a successful challenge. It was against this background of political weakness and defeat that John Mackintosh reassessed Revisionism.

Mackintosh had enjoyed a successful academic career at Edinburgh before entering Parliament. Although he was a Revisionist supporter he was fiercely independent, critical of the Labour leadership and by 1976 convinced that the Revisionist policies of the 1950's and 1960's were irrelevant. In effect Mackintosh developed an idea Crosland had expressed in 1974. Crosland wrote:

"I was too complacent about growth. I did not anticipate that successive Governments would use deflation as almost their only means of regulating the economy." 79

Mackintosh echoed Crosland when he claimed:

"I had not thought about or appreciated how far the views of what is now called the social democratic section which was then dominant in the Labour Party depended on the kind of growth we had claimed was possible once the Tories were out of office." 80

He rejected the Wilsonian Theory that a series of accidents had diverted the Revisionist policy of long term economic revival. He traced the causes of Britain's economic decline to the rise of corporatism. The political system had adapted itself to corporatism. Power was centred in the Cabinet. This challenged the legitimacy of Parliament as did corporate bodies such as the TUC and CBI.

"The denial of legitimacy is a clear consequence of two concepts. First that passage by the House of Commons is not of itself an adequate indication of the consent of the community, and second, that the prior consultation with recognised groups has become an essential part of the legitimising process." 81

Mackintosh realised that the changes in the social and economic establishment advocated by Crosland could not bring about changes in the social attitudes of the people. The British people felt powerless faced with organised labour and big business which challenged the power of Parliament and undermined democracy. The people had become uninterested in politics. They saw that, whichever party ruled in consensus politics, the will of the corporatist groups would prevail. The two party system that confined individual MPs strengthened the corporate state. Mackintosh adopted a very dangerous position for a Labour MP. He considered that organised labour, that is the trade unions, acted against the interest of the people. He claimed that the only way in which the corporate state could be dismantled was by individual MPs acting against the two party system without fear of de-selection by their constituency parties. Mackintosh was formulating an anti-labourist theory of Revisionism at the time of his death. Crosland had died in February 1977. At the end he insisted on calling himself "a democratic socialist". He described a social democrat as "somebody about to join the Tory Party".⁸² In the same month Roy Jenkins, disillusioned with British politics left Westminster for the Presidency of the EEC. The Revisionists were demoralised, in disarray and leaderless at exactly the same time when they needed courage, organisation and leadership.

Callaghan's Government staggered from crisis to crisis. The "Social Contract" formed by Wilson with the trade unions came to an end. The Government survived with the support of the Liberals. The Lib-Lab Pact reinforced the Revisionist belief that the two party system was an artificial barrier in British politics. They found that the Labour Party was not the only purveyor of socialistic policies. The co-operation achieved between Labour and the Liberals had a minor impact on the leaders of the SDP during the formation of that Party. However the experiences of the Lib-Lab Pact were influential in the Alliance later formed between the SDP and the Liberal Party. In April 1979, racked by industrial disputes

during the 1978-79 "Winter of Discontent" and Party in-fighting, and tormented by an effective Opposition, Labour was defeated in Parliament. Callaghan called a General Election for early May and Labour was heavily defeated.

On the activities of the Revisionists during the 1970's Haseler commented:

"The central plot in Labour's story in the 1970's is not one of some great left wing triumph of will, ideology or tactics. The Labour Left are certainly the victors, but they were handed the victory by the Labour Right." 83

He also recognised that Revisionism was a set of principles whose time had passed.

"The social democrats consensus of post war optimism was fast becoming past history. It was breaking asunder." 84

Indeed the Revisionists did hand victory to the Left. They were identified with a discredited economic policy. They were judged to have caused divisions within the Government during the 1975 Referendum campaign. In Labour's post election Shadow Cabinet Owen, Rodgers and Healey had positions but Peter Jenkins observed:

"For the time being the social democrats in the Labour Party are generals without a strategy, an elite without a cause. Their programme is in tatters, but they continue to preside." 85

Whilst the social democrats had no strategy and a stagnant philosophy the Left were preparing for power. They had adapted the work of Barratt Brown and Holland to suit the circumstances after 1979. The most important variations on the

themes of Barratt Brown and Holland came from two Cambridge economists, Wynne Godley and Francis Cripps, Geoff Hodgson previously a Trotskyist, and Tony Benn.

Godley and Cripps worked into Holland's analysis the Keynesian principle of demand management to control production and employment. They argued that the lack of external controls over imports and investment had countered the effects of demand management. The nation's international trade problems had made Keynesian attempts to stabilise prices and achieve full employment useless. They advocated import controls, reflation and an expansion of demand. The increased prosperity caused by these policies would be confined within Britain by import controls and would therefore stimulate British jobs. This ran against the EEC policy of free trade between the European states. However the work of Godley and Cripps became the foundation for the Left's Alternative Economic Strategy (AES).

Hodgson accepted Godley and Cripps' prescriptions for the economy but he was more concerned with the role of Parliament within the corporate state. In "Socialism and Parliamentary Democracy" (1979) ⁸⁶ Hodgson outlined his belief that Parliament in the corporate state could not exercise power and would be merely a "rubber stamp" for decisions made by the Cabinet. He shared this belief with Mackintosh. He did not advise, as Mackintosh did, a more active role for individual MPs. Hodgson wanted to see organised labour acting in an extra-Parliamentary way to force a Labour Cabinet to seize power from the capitalists. When this had been achieved local economic committees, subservient to Parliament would control their own industries. Hodgson's local economic committees resembled the soviets of workers control suggested by Lenin in "State and Revolution". However Parliament for Hodgson would be supreme. It would also act as a national forum.

"Parliament would act as a counter-balance, an expression of the general interest in counter-position to the particular will of the soviet. It would be the main arena for bringing the various aspirations of the workers, for the forging of a common hegemonic policy." 87

The role of Parliament and sovereignty were the main subjects of the work of Tony Benn. He had been successively Industry Minister and Energy Minister in the 1974-79 Government. That Government was a bitter disappointment to Benn. He rejected the Government's economic policy of co-operation with capitalism:

".... the more I saw of this process (i.e. state-coaxing of the private sector) the more I became convinced (a) that it would not work (b) that it was corporatist and (c) that it was anti-trade union and undemocratic." 88

Benn placed himself in the tradition of English radicalism which called for the establishment of a society based on human brotherhood, equality and liberty. He rejected Marxism but described himself as:

".... a Christian whose political commitment owes much more to the teaching of Jesus without the mysteries with which they are presented - than to the writings of Marx, whose analysis seems to lack an understanding of the deeper needs of humanity." 89

From this position Benn claimed that the corporate state and the Establishment had bypassed Parliament and undermined its legitimacy. Furthermore, the EEC had robbed the British Parliament of the exclusive right to levy taxation and govern independently. The nation's sovereignty, previously invested in the Crown acting through Parliament legitimised by the votes of the people, had been transferred to the multi-national companies and political organisations. The media,

controlled by the multi-nationals extended the "cultural hegemony" of corporation and aimed at discrediting the Labour Left. The people were fed false information by the media and refused access to vital facts by an over protective state security force. Worse still, the Establishment had turned Britain into a colony of the USA, the IMF and the EEC. The absence of a written constitution allowed the forces of the Establishment to act in an undemocratic way. Britain needed a new constitutional settlement based on a written constitution. Benn thus argued for freedom of information, an accountable Civil Service, abolition of the House of Lords, a constitutional premiership answerable to the House of Commons and an extension of local democracy.

Benn favoured the mixed economy and rejected total democracy. He endeavoured to restrict the activities of capitalism rather than abolish it. He opposed corporate forms of nationalisation and expected future extensions of public ownership to complement transfers of power to the workers. He claimed:

"We have waited too long for the transformation of the public corporation we should be talking about the transfer of power within industry and we should not accept existing forms of nationalisation as a form for the future. We have had enough experience now to know that nationalisation plus Lord Robens does not add up to socialism." 90

During his period of office as Industry Secretary in the 1974-79 Government Benn attempted to extend workers control and consumer representation. He favoured workers co-operatives and industrial democracy. He regarded the Labour Party as the heirs of the English radical tradition born at the time of Magna Carta, and continued through the centuries by people committed to democracy and free thought. There was a romantic element in Benn's work matched only by his careful and

selective use of history to justify his arguments. Yet this romance did not restrict Benn's activities in practical politics.

Following Labour's defeat in 1979 the Left assembled their forces in a co-ordinated campaigning group. This group has been called the Bennite Left. It consisted of Bevanites, members of the New Left, members of the IWC and followers of Benn. This broad alliance, motivated by a synthesis of the ideas of its constituent parts, presented a strong challenge to the Revisionists.

The scene was set for the final act in the drama of the future SDP leaders in the Labour Party. The Revisionists were a spent force. Their policies and principles discredited by two failed Governments. They had little support in the constituencies or in the trade unions. The Bennite Left presented dynamic policies and radical principles. They had support in the constituencies and in the trade unions. They were poised to use these sharpened weapons to kill off the Revisionists.

In May 1979 the Revisionist camp contained two schools of thought about their future in the Labour Party. The "Gang of Three", David Owen, Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers believed they could rescue the Labour Party from within. They thought that Callaghan would purge the more extreme Left such as Militant Tendency from the Party. They hoped that once this purge had been completed the Party would return to what it had been in the halcyon days of Gaitskell. The performance of Callaghan at the October 1979 Conference and his failure to challenge the Left in the NEC shattered the Revisionist's hopes. In November 1979 Rodgers, speaking in Abertillery, gave Labour one year to save itself, one year to return to Revisionism.

The other school of thought, led by Roy Jenkins, favoured the formation of a new centre party. The question the Jenkinsites faced was when would be the

best time to launch such a party? In July 1979 David Marquand, a leading Jenkinsite, published an article in "Encounter" entitled "Inquest on a Movement". It was an eloquent funeral oration on the traditional Labour Party as he perceived it. In November 1979 Jenkins delivered the Dimpleby Lecture "Home Thoughts from Abroad" suggesting a reformation of the radical centre to challenge the Left. The activities of the Jenkinsites effectively undermined the position of the "Gang of Three". The Jenkinsites sought to influence sitting Labour MPs to act against the Left. Many MPs therefore identified the Jenkinsites with the "Gang of Three", and this brought into question the loyalty of the "Gang of Three" to the Party.

The Bennite Left now focused their attention not on theory and policy, but on power. To gain this power they were to attempt successfully to change the Party's organisation. As after the 1931 election defeat, the trade unions moved to take control of the Party. In doing so they entered into a coalition with the Bennite Left. At the 1980 October Conference, an internal enquiry was instituted to consider the method of electing Labour's Leader, the control of policy and manifestos, and the re-selection of sitting MPs. These moves, seen as a challenge to the PLP, favoured the Bennite Left who were weak in Parliament but active and vociferous in the constituencies.

The question of the "independence" of Labour MPs and Councillors became a key issue in the events which led to the founding of the SDP.

In August 1980 Owen, Williams and Rodgers wrote an open letter to the Party published in "The Guardian". It stated:

"MPs are chosen by their constituents to exercise their consciences and judgement. MPs or Councillors who are nothing but mandated Party delegates, cannot be representatives of their constituents in the true sense." 91

Clause V of the Party's constitution placed policy effectively in the hands of the PLP and the "Gang of Three" wished to support this position. However the NEC at the time supported the Bennite Left. The Revisionists declared:

If the NEC remains committed to pursuing its present course then support for a centre party will strengthen if the Labour Party abandons its democratic and internationalist principles the argument may grow for a new democratic socialist party." 92

At the 1980 October Conference all of the Revisionists' fears became realities. Conference supported the AES, reselection of sitting MPs, withdrawal from the EEC, and unilateral nuclear disarmament. It placed an obligation on the PLP to stand by any policies made by Conference which now controlled the Manifesto. Immediately after the Conference Callaghan resigned to be succeeded by veteran Left winger Michael Foot.

The election of Foot and the adoption of Bennite policies, were the immediate causes of the split between the Party and the Revisionists. However the underlying cause was the debate, or rather pitched battle over Party organisation.

In January 1981 at a Special Conference to re-structure the Party, an electoral college to elect a leader was established giving the unions 40% of the votes, the PLP 30% and the constituencies 30%. The Revisionists, now joined by Jenkins, who returned from Europe in late 1980 had favoured a policy of "one party member one vote", as they had done in 1956 and 1961. As a direct result the "Gang of Four" formed the Council for Social Democracy. In February 1981 Williams resigned from the NEC confirming that organisational issues caused her departure.

"The party that is now emerging is not the democratic socialist party I joined, but a party intent on controlling those of its members who are elected to public office by the people of Britain." 93

On the 26th March 1981, after some weeks of agonising, the "Gang of Four" launched their new Social Democratic Party.

The events of 1980-81 had only been the final act of a sequence stretching back to 1961. The Social Democrats had seen their dream of a Revisionist plural civilised society destroyed, ironically, by the leadership of their own party in 1964-70. They had witnessed their opponents develop into an effective political organisation, a suspected "party within a party", that was able to erode their elitist position and eventually take control of the Party that they had led for two decades. Social Democratic opinions were ignored, their policies rejected and their right to belong to the Party questioned. In such circumstances there was no alternative but to leave the Labour Party.

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CHAPTER 2

ROY JENKINS

Roy Jenkins was born in Pontypool on 11th November 1920, the son of Arthur Jenkins, a trades union official. By the standards of South Wales in the 1920's Jenkins enjoyed a secure home life, in a house that was the focus of local Labour Party activities. In 1935 Arthur Jenkins was elected Labour MP for Pontypool and his son was brought up very firmly in the Labour tradition of civic responsibility and peaceful progress.

In 1938 Jenkins went up to Balliol College, having left Hoerschan County School with academic distinction. At Balliol he read Philosophy, Politics and Economics. For the first and second years, however, he devoted much of his time to the University Labour Club. He applied himself more conscientiously to academic work in his final year, and was awarded a first class degree.

It has been said "Life is one Balliol man after another": the famous joke is, amongst the Revisionist leaders of the Labour Party, only a mild exaggeration. Increasingly in Labour from 1945 onwards Oxford men, and often dons, such as Gaitskell, Wilson and Crosland led the Party. During his time at Balliol Jenkins forged strong friendships with these people, friendships which carried over into political life. For the rest of his life Jenkins has carried the impress of Balliol, typified by Asquith -aloof superiority and an inability to suffer fools. These characteristics left Jenkins open to criticism in a predominantly working-class party.

After leaving Balliol in 1941 Jenkins served in Military Intelligence until 1945. On being demobilised he began to search for a seat in Parliament. Whilst searching for a constituency that would adopt him Jenkins took the first steps on a

career as a biographer. In 1948 he published a biography of Attlee,¹ and since then has focused upon the early Twentieth Century, particularly the Liberal Government of 1906. In "Asquith" (1964)² Jenkins expresses his sympathy for a radical liberal philosophy and this is further evidenced by "Mr. Balfour's Poodle" (1954)³ and "Sir Charles Dilke" (1958)⁴.

A by-election in Central Southwark in 1948 put Jenkins into Parliament and when that constituency disappeared in boundary changes he served as MP for Birmingham Stechford. During his political career Jenkins has been successively, Minister for Aviation (1964), Home Secretary (1964-67), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1967-70) and Home Secretary again (1974-77). In 1977 Jenkins resigned from Parliament and became President of the EEC Commission. In 1981 he returned from Europe to found with Williams, Owen and Rodgers the SDP, becoming its first leader in 1982, having won the Hillhead by-election.

Jenkins' past record has been summarised to give an indication of the atmosphere in which his principles were formed. Jenkins was a man used to power, able to wield immense decision-making capabilities, and it is with constant reference to what could be achieved in "present day" circumstances that he wrote, not in an abstract utopian way. To his supporters Jenkins was a very able politician, hardworking and imaginative. To his critics he was a lazy bon viveur, who used the Labour Party as a vehicle for his own ambitions and who rejected his "Labourist" roots to found a middle class party. However, although his actions may be open to criticism, it is not my intention to discuss them. My task is to analyse Jenkins' principles, and I will from time to time draw attention to his actions only to illustrate a principle.

Jenkins' first statement of his principles in book form was "Fair Shares for the Rich"⁵ published in 1950 by Tribune. Jenkins had been writing for Tribune for

three years, mainly cautious articles on economic and financial matters. "Fair Shares for the Rich" advocated taxing the rich on a scale which would effectively abolish large private fortunes. This, radical as it may seem now, was linked by Jenkins on a practical level to the financial measures of Lloyd George's 1909 "People's Budget". "Fair Shares for the Rich" is an important statement of the position of the Revisionist wing of the Labour Party that was emerging in the 1950's. The central question for the Revisionists was ownership, and Jenkins addressed ownership and nationalisation in "Fair Shares for the Rich" thus:

"The coal industry railways gas and electricity were all brought under public control because it was thought necessary to take a particular industry and to run it as a unified whole. These nationalisation measures were essentially planning measures Further nationalisation will be more concerned with equality than with planning, and this means that we can leave the monolithic public corporation behind us, and look for more intimate forms of ownership and control. It will not matter if only sections of industries are publicly owned, so that they have to meet competition from the sections remaining in private hands for the widest possible diffusion of control and responsibility is the essential aim of democratic socialism." ⁶

Parallels with Crosland's "Future of Socialism" (1956) can be found in "Fair Shares for the Rich". First, both writers see nationalisation as a method of effective redistribution of power and wealth; both reject a planned nationalised economy, and their idea of "equality" or, more accurately described, their idea of "equity" does not look merely to a levelling of per capita income. The relationship between Jenkins and Crosland was a very complex one but a very important one. The two shared similar educational backgrounds and a similar ethos.

They held the same loyalty to Gaitskell and the Campaign for Democratic Socialism. Their personal relationship was often stormy, and not unrelated to mutual jealousy. Of the two, Crosland was the intellectual in the speculative sense, being drawn to ideas for their own sake, whilst Jenkins was the politician, subtle, able to gauge the strength of feeling in the Party or to tell which way the political tide was turning. As a result Crosland's ideas in "The Future of Socialism" inspired the CDS, but it was Jenkins who organised the supporters and to some extent bullied them into action. In their early beliefs both placed the scope and form of future nationalisation as the central, symbolic issue. They both rejected nationalisation of whole industries on the Morrisonian model of huge public corporations and held that the public sector should be advanced piecemeal within the framework of a mixed economy. From the pre-war works of Evan Durban, Dalton and Douglas Jay, Jenkins and Crosland made the critical departure from the traditional socialist assumption that what mattered was ownership, an assumption which equated socialism with nationalisation. Crosland demonstrated instead that in a modern managerial economy, ownership had become irrelevant. Jenkins had already stated in "Fair Shares for the Rich" that ownership had been replaced by equality as the reason for any more nationalisation. Crosland reiterated this belief in equality and meritocracy. Jenkins expanded the Croslandite belief in meritocracy by adding a large dose of individualism in his later writings. In 1974 Jenkins wrote of Gaitskell's philosophy that it contained: "A strong strand of unselfish hedonism He wanted to make people happier." ⁷

The same hedonistic note runs through "The Future of Socialism" where Crosland would like the Labour Party:

"to place a greater emphasis on private life, on freedom and dissent, on beauty, culture and leisure and even frivolity." ⁸

Jenkins' philosophy too contained this strand of hedonism, and it is in marked contrast to the puritanical socialism of Cripps and Tony Benn. Jenkins sometimes consciously echoed Crosland in his writings and both used their friendship to thrash out the meaning of practical socialism. However, despite their early friendship and agreement over the meaning of socialism, equality and ownership they divided in the 1970's over Europe and, after the failure of Revisionism, over equality. In 1975 Crosland published "Socialism Now" in which he rejected Revisionism in favour of a more state based economy. This caused a serious breach between Crosland and Jenkins which was never really healed. Jenkins still favoured the Revisionist ideals of equality and meritocracy and a society in which "socialism" was achieved without state control.

"Fair Shares for the Rich" was endorsed by Gaitskell as a blueprint for the society he wanted to create. Jenkins, as Gaitskell's industrious apprentice, worked on speeches and importantly wrote with Gaitskell the "Amplification of Aims". A small group, which included Jenkins and Crosland, surrounded Gaitskell and discussed his ideas and policies. In the struggles in the Labour Party during the 1950's Jenkins was an unapologetic Gaitskellite, and a firm supporter of disciplinary measures against the Left. In 1953 he explained his (and the Revisionists) feelings to Crossman:

".... we feel that every speech, every action must now be considered as part of the power fight within the Party. That's why we have Bevanism. Before it began one could have free speech, now one can't afford to. The ^electorate is extremely Conservative minded, and we can never win except with the kind of attitude represented by the right-wing leadership." 9

During Gaitskell's leadership of Labour, Jenkins' position can be in no doubt; he was a committed Revisionist. In his "Pursuit of Progress" ¹⁰, published in 1953, Jenkins amplified the sentiments expressed to Crossman. "The Times Literary Supplement" ¹¹ commented that the book could have been called "The Pursuit of Office" because of the emphasis placed on achieving power. The book took an historical form tracing utopian and realist thought in Labour from 1900. The author strongly identified with the realist school. The chapters dealing with domestic and economic policy repeated what was said in "Fair Shares for the Rich", and an in essay entitled "Equality" in "New Fabian Essays", 1952. ¹² Jenkins' commitment to the mixed economy was unchanged.

"It is quite impossible to advocate both the abolition of great inequalities of wealth, and the acceptance of a one-quarter public sector, and a three quarter private sector arrangement. A mixed economy there will undoubtedly be, certainly for many decades, and perhaps permanently, but it will need to be mixed in a very different proportion to this." ¹³

On foreign policy Jenkins directly confronted utopian and Left wing views. For Jenkins one of the 1945 Labour Government's greatest achievements was Britain's clear alignment with NATO and the USA. In 1953 the Bevanites believed a "socialist" foreign policy would commit Britain to a neutral position between the two super-powers. In Jenkins' opinion:

"Neutrality is essentially a conservative policy, a policy of defeat, of announcing we have nothing to say to which the world will listen." ¹⁴

Having rejected neutralism, Jenkins argued that Britain should play a role commensurate with her real power. Labour should reject neutralism and pacifism and accept a firm and positive foreign policy even if this meant a split. Further endorsing "realism" Jenkins wrote:

"The first duty of a party of the left is to be radical in the context of the moment, to offer the prospect of continuing advance and to preserve the loyalty of those whose optimistic humanism makes them its natural supporters." 15

In his work before 1953, especially "The Pursuit of Progress", Jenkins referred to his principles as "humanism" but just as often as "socialism", "progressive" or "reforming". For Jenkins the essential ideological divide was temperamental not doctrinal. The Conservatives were fatalist and pessimistic, the liberal socialists were optimistic and sure of the improvement of society. Jenkins' principles at this time can be adequately described as non-doctrinaire socialism.

From 1953-59 Jenkins strengthened his working relationship with Gaitskell so that J.P.W. Mallileu observed of Jenkins:

".... he is reputed to be so close a confidant of Mr. Hugh Gaitskell that only the keenest observer can detect where Jenkins' mouth ends, and Gaitskell's ear begins." 16

So close was Jenkins to Gaitskell that for the 1959 General Election he was asked to write "The Labour Case" ¹⁷ by Penguin. (Lord Hailsham and Roger Fulford put the Conservative and Liberal cases.) In "The Labour Case" Jenkins reiterated the views expressed in his previous writings. He advocated a capital gains tax,

and the retention of the public school system (an issue in the early days of the SDP). The emphasis in "The Labour Case" was not on the detail of policy, but on the optimistic, unselfish hedonism which characterised Revisionism. In his final chapter entitled "Is Britain Civilised?" Jenkins advocated a free, some would say permissive, society.

"Let us be on the side of those who want people to be free to live their own lives, to make their own mistakes and to decide the code by which they wish to live." 18

Jenkins also expressed his idea of "socialism":

"The principal object of a socialist party should be to enlarge the freedom of everyone to live their own lives fully. This fullness cannot be achieved without a good standard of living and a real equality of opportunity for everyone." 19

"It is a socialist party, and it looks forward to a society in which class barriers will disappear, in which rewards will be equated with service. At the same time it is a practical party. It is quite as much concerned with immediate reforms as with ultimate purposes. Any radical party must specify this, for without a sense of moving towards a goal, the idealism which is essential to the momentum of a left wing party It is difficult to see how the course of politics will develop. The solution of one set of problems invariably uncovers new ones, the nature of which cannot be seen in advance." 20

In these revealing passages is the essence of Jenkins' political philosophy, or lack of it. For Jenkins, socialism should attempt to provide higher standards of living and a civilised society. These aims are to be achieved with practical policies and this meant that no single method, no one blueprint would produce the ideal society. Jenkins avoided anything that could be called doctrinaire. He was, in 1959, a political agnostic believing in salvation by good works not by faith. From 1960-64 Jenkins' anti-doctrinaire stance was a handicap in a "Socialist" Party in turmoil. However to Jenkins the man of government between 1964-77 it became a positive strength. It may be argued that to be non-ideological in a socialist party was inconsistent, and indeed, it is possible that "non-doctrinaire" is not the best description of his writings. It would perhaps be more accurate is to say that pragmatism was more important to him than doctrine. He would have followed many means to achieve the aim of social democracy. In a time when the policy of the Labour Party, and the political environment were constantly changing, to be without doctrine could have been an advantage. However being without a socialist doctrine in a party professing a working class socialist history was a disadvantage.

Jenkins never romanticised his working class background. In fact, he did not consider himself a member of any class. What he was concerned about was that the influence, real or imagined, of the working class ethos might confine Labour's policies within the bounds of nationalisation. He also believed that the tie to the working class would lead Labour to advocate divisive ideals and to lose the growing vote of what sociologists call upwardly mobile groups who were crossing boundaries. In a lecture to the Fabian Society delivered in November 1959 he said:

"It would be a tragedy if the Labour Party, which has been a pioneer of a classless society were not to adapt itself to the break up of some solidarities and class loyalties." 21

Writing in "The Spectator" in the same month, he placed nationalisation very near the bottom of his political aims, and unilateralism was attacked as a "phoney compromise". 22

Throughout the conflicts within the Labour Party Jenkins hoped that "the Party recovers its good sense, its nerve and its will to win". By 1964 the Labour Party had done just as Jenkins wished and won a General Election. However Gaitskell had died in 1963 and Wilson was Leader and Premier. Without Gaitskell the Revisionists looked to Jenkins and Crosland for leadership, but Jenkins did not at first achieve Cabinet rank; he entered office as Minister for Aviation. He was a great success at Aviation, and in December 1965 he was appointed Home Secretary.

At the Home Office Jenkins set about writing legislation to create a "civilised society". His term at the Home Office coincided with Beatlemania, the mini-skirt and "Swinging London", but also with halycon time of national liberty or the onset of national decadence depending on one's point of view. From 1965 Jenkins was constantly in the middle of political controversy. Understandably he did not find time to write much, but his speeches make up for this.

Speaking of his philosophy in running the Home Office Jenkins said:

"We exist as a Party not only to make a more comfortable society for all of its members, but also to make a more civilised, more free and less hidebound society." 23

Speaking about the abortion and homosexuality Bills he added:

"To enlarge the area of choice socially, politically and economically, not just for a few but for the whole community is very much what democratic socialism is about." 24

Jenkins was only Home Secretary until November 1967 when he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. He had been a successful Home Secretary, but he had also been "lucky" in that office. When he went to the Treasury, Labour's economic policy was in difficulties. In particular it was beset with balance of payments problems. Jenkins advocated devaluation, expenditure cuts and pay restraint and was too absorbed in his work as a Minister to do any writing. Therefore it was only in 1972, with "What Matters Now", 25 that Jenkins presents us with any further statement of principles.

"What Matters Now" was written when Labour was in Opposition. Revisionism under Wilson's 1964 Government had failed, or had not fulfilled its promise. Again Jenkins turned to nationalisation and the economy. He advocated a State Holding Company similar to the Italian IRN or ENI. He summed up his view of nationalisation thus:

"I have always believed that public ownership should be judged more by the results it will produce than by abstractions and preconceived views." 26

On this subject Jenkins had not changed his position from the early 1950's. All of the principles and sentiments expressed in "What Matters Now" are consistent with his previous writings, but they look towards the "next Labour Government".

"If the next Labour Government is to launch a more successful attack on poverty and privilege than did the last one it will need the right

principles It will need the conscious and active support of the British people through all the doubts and setbacks which even a successful Government inevitably encounters." 27

The goal set by Jenkins for the next Labour Government was nothing less than "the elimination of poverty as a social problem" 28. To do this Jenkins did not look to class war, but to gentle Revisionist persuasion.

"We have to persuade men and women who are themselves reasonably well off that they have a duty to forgo some of the advantages they would otherwise enjoy for the sake of others who are much poorer than they Our only hope is to appeal to the latent idealism of all men and women of goodwill - irrespective of their income brackets of their class origins of their past political affiliations." 29

Jenkins ended this chapter with a phrase which ten years later was to become a cliché.

"We have to break the mould of custom, selfishness and apathy In place of the politics of envy we must put the politics of compassion, justice the politics of principles." 30

These paragraphs give a clear indication of the SDP's first statements. Jenkins realised that Labour could win and become:

"A broad based, international, radical generous-minded party, aware of its past but more concerned with the future, could quickly seize the imagination of a disillusioned and uninspired British Public." 31

When analysed, the message is clear. Labour can advance towards "social justice" with Revisionist policies, but with Bevanite policies the Party would become class based, narrow minded and out-dated. Jenkins could not remain committed to a Bevanite party.

In "What Matters Now" Jenkins discussed mainly domestic issues, but at the time Britain's EEC membership was Jenkins' main pre-occupation. So fervently did he believe in membership that when the Labour Conference voted against it Jenkins resigned the Deputy Leadership of the Party and all NEC and Front Bench spokesmanships. Despite this, in 1974 when Labour were re-elected, Jenkins became Home Secretary.

Again at the Home Office he repeated his belief in the democratic liberal pluralist system and outlined what he believed it to be:

"It means in a democratic society the law passed by an elected Parliament and applied by impartial courts. You cannot have the rule of law while dismissing with disparagement Parliament, the courts and those who practice in them." 32

This was said in the face of Leftist activities in Clay Cross, industrial disputes at Shrewsbury and rumblings in the Police Federation.

Jenkins delivered a speech at Haverford West in July 1974 to the Pembrokeshire Labour Party in which he suggested that the two party system was weakening. He discussed talk of coalition but added:

"At the same time one should not doubt that there is in Britain a great body of moderate, rather uncommitted opinion, and that unless

substantial sectors of such opinion can feel happy in supporting one or other of the major parties the result will be intolerable strain upon the traditional pattern of politics." 33

Jenkins perceived the nation as being divided between the equally unacceptable ideologies of the extreme Left and Right. The ordinary voters were caught between two parties which ignored moderate opinion. He commented:

"If we are to get through the immense problems of the next few years we need to heal and not to deepen the wounds of the nation. That can, I believe, be done upon the basis of party government, with the coherence of policy and the offering to the nation of effective choice which makes that possible. But it cannot be done upon the basis of ignoring middle opinion and telling everyone who does not agree with you to go to hell." 34

He identified four fundamental questions on which Labour's position should be perfectly clear. The four questions were obedience to the law, the Western Alliance, the mixed economy and inflation. On obedience to the law, and with particular reference to Clay Cross and industrial action Jenkins wrote:

"No-one is entitled to be above the law. If we weaken on that principle, we can say goodbye to democratic socialism, because what is sauce for the goose will be sauce for the gander." 35

He argued that Britain needed to ally itself with the Western Alliance.

"If anyone wants a Britain poised uneasily between the Western Alliance and the Communist block they can, in the immortal words of Mr. Sam Goldwyn, "include me out". " 36

The policy of the Left to restrict free trade and lead Britain in a retreat into a *siege* economy was criticised by Jenkins. He was in favour of the mixed economy:

"I am in favour of a sensible and well argued extension of public ownership But I am also in favour of a healthy, vigorous and profitable private sector." 37

Before the consequences of this speech could be fully appreciated, the European Referendum Campaign intruded. Jenkins led the Pro-Europeans and the campaign allowed the future members of the SDP to think outside the bounds of party rhetoric. It also had the effect of opening the rift between Labour's factions. When Tony Benn claimed that membership would cost 500,000 jobs, Jenkins retorted, "I find it difficult to take Mr. Benn seriously as an economics Minister". (Benn was Secretary of Industry.) A "yes" vote raised a hope that Labour might change its official policy. But the hopes were dashed when Labour refused to change and worse still, Reg Prentice was attacked by Left-wingers in Newham, who aimed at ousting him. Jenkins defended Prentice, and in doing so gave a speech that would not have been out of place in 1981:

"If tolerance is shattered formidable consequences follow. Labour MPs will either have to become creatures of cowardice, concealing their views, or they will have to be men far to the left of those whose votes they seek. Either would make a mockery of Parliamentary democracy. The first would reduce respect for

the House of Commons. It would become an assembly of craven spirits and crooked tongues. The second would quite simply divorce the Labour Party from the people." 38

The trouble at Newham, the failure of the Underhill investigation to expel "entryists" combined with Jenkins' failure to be elected leader after Wilson's 1976 resignation, disheartened the Revisionists, and disillusioned Jenkins. So low was Jenkins' standing in the party that an elderly Yorkshire MP when asked if he would be voting for Roy Jenkins replied, "No lad, we're all Labour here". 39

With these defeats fresh in his mind, Jenkins resigned from Parliament to be appointed President of the EEC Commission in 1977. However, he left with a half-promise that he might be back:

"I never believe in looking too far into the future but I can tell you one thing for certain, I am not going to preclude sitting in the Commons by sitting in the Lords." 40

For twenty-eight years Jenkins had been involved in the internal politics of the Labour Party as a standard bearer of Revisionism. He left derided by many as a "closet Tory", a middle class Ramsay MacDonald, a betrayer of the working class. As was said at the beginning of this chapter, Jenkins felt no close affiliation to any class, but wished only to widen the appeal of the Labour Party, and to give it a Revisionist manifesto. However this attitude was out of place in a Labour Party strongly tied to Miners' Galas, collective democracy and an idea of "socialism" as a constant set of principles embodied in Clause IV. Jenkins resigned from the Labour Party with many regrets; it accepted his resignation with few.

As President of the EEC Jenkins did not lose touch with British politics. He watched the experiment of the Lib-Lab Pact with admiration and on his return from Brussels early in 1979 he knew that his moment of opportunity would come if Labour lost the General Election scheduled for May. When Labour went into opposition, and internal warfare erupted, Jenkins gave a clear indication that he would be prepared to form a new political party in the "Dimpleby Lecture" of November 1979. This lecture is the clearest statement of Jenkins' principles during the break with the Labour Party. The lecture caused a storm at the time and acted as a prompt to the Revisionists still in the Labour Party. What Jenkins made was "an unashamed plea for the strengthening of the political centre"⁴¹ claiming that the rot was setting into the British political system as the two main parties grew in strength. As the two parties became more extreme the electorate was alienated:

"In 1951 83% of the electorate voted and no less than 97% of those voted for one or other of the big parties. In the second 1974 election only 73% of the electorate voted and only 75% of them voted Labour or Conservative. To put it another way, the Labour Party in 1951 polled 40% of the electorate and it just lost. In October 1974 it polled 28% of the electorate and it just won. Even in 1979 with some recovery with the total vote and a substantial victory the Conservative polled only 33% of the electorate."⁴²

The missing voters were, argued Jenkins, disillusioned by the false hopes and promises of the two parties and by the unfairness of the electoral system. What the electorate wanted was good Government not political partisanship and ideology. As Jenkins put it:

"Exaggerated political partisanship, the pretence that everything is the fault of the other side, was no longer convincing to the majority of the electorate whose aspirations pull far more towards the centre than towards the extremes." 43

This being so, the case for PR was, Jenkins believed, "overwhelming".

"The old Labour Party of Attlee and Gaitskell was a coalition of the Liberal, Social Democrats and trade unionists. Helmut Schmidt and Willy Brandt have governed the FDR with a coalition of Social Democrats and Liberals for the past decade." 44

"The test is whether those within the coalition are closer to each other and to the mood of the nation they seek to govern, than they are to those outside their ranks." 45

For Jenkins, PR brought all political coalitions into the open.

"I would much rather it meant overt and compatible coalitions than that it locked incompatible people and philosophies into a loveless bickering and debilitating marriage even if consecrated in a common tabernacle." 46

Jenkins continued:

"The great disadvantage of our present electoral system is that it freezes the pattern of politics and holds together the incompatible, because everyone assumes that if a party fails it will be electorally slaughtered. I believe the electorate can tell a "hawk from a

handsaw" and that if a new grouping with cohesion and relevant policies, it might be more attracted by this new reality than by old labels which had become increasingly irrelevant." 47

This was interpreted as a call to the Revisionists who:

"should not slog through an unending war of attrition but to break out and mount a battle of movement on new and higher ground." 48

By changing the political system and ending the see-saw of irrelevant dogma dictating policy a coalition, or new centre:

"gives a return for enterprise and to spread the benefit throughout society in a way that avoids the disfigurements of poverty, gives full priority to public education and health services and encourages co-operation and not conflict in industry and throughout society." 49

Without mentioning a new party Jenkins concluded:

"I believe that such a development could bring into political commitment the energies of many people who are at present alienated from the business of Government by the sterility and formalism of the political game. I am sure this would improve our politics. I think the results might help us to improve our national performance. But of that I cannot be certain. I am against too much dogmatism here. We have had more than enough of it. but at least we could escape from the pessimism of Yeats' "Second Coming" where:

The best lack conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity and "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold." 50

Jenkins' lecture caused a storm of critical reaction. To many, Jenkins' thesis was banal and hackneyed. Talk of coalitions and PR had been circulating for many years. The lecture was condemned by the Left and the Right. However, Neil Kinnock in a surprising response, conceded that Jenkins' view had: "... The appeal of reason and the authority of demonstrated commitment." 51 Paul Foot claimed:

"A call to battle from Jenkins might have been useful, even well received. Instead he drops a hint that if the system is changed and always assuming he hasn't been offered a better job in the meantime - then he might consider accepting the leadership." 52

Jo Grimmond took a similar view:

"If Mr. Jenkins agrees to let him come down into the battle. Let him shove with the rest of us. All too many social democrats have gone off into banking, consultancy, TV etc. It is Mr. Steel who has been in the scrum. Will they join him? The opportunity is indeed great but time is short." 53

Encouraged by the response to his Dimpleby Lecture, Jenkins delivered a follow-up to the Parliamentary Press Gallery at the same time the Labour Conference endorsed the "Peace, Jobs, Freedom" policies which were anti-EEC, unilateralist, and against an incomes policy.

At the launch of the SDP Jenkins proclaimed, "We offer not only a new party, but a new approach to politics". We might ask at this point what was new about

Jenkins' principles? Had he, as his critics suggested, become a Conservative, and would he make the SDP the same? Is there any similarity between the Jenkins of 1961 and that of 1981? In the following paragraphs I aim to answer these questions by looking at Jenkins' statements on specific issues beginning with his idea of the nature of the SDP. As he remarked:

"We are a radical party, and must remain one. But our radicalism does not spring from the need to seek a particular segment of votes. We are radical because the country is in desperate need of change." 54

Again Jenkins used "radical", not "socialist" as the key word. In this respect he had not changed. Jenkins applied his mind frequently during the first years of the SDP to the economy.

"Much of the dispute between Keynesianism and Monetarism is rather sterile. What surely matters is the total spending of money - the GDP. What is foolish is to try to move it one way with the right hand of fiscal policy and one way with the left hand of monetary policy. the two ought to pull together."

"In what direction should we turn? We cannot simply afford to go on with sudden lurches of policy We should mount a major programme of public infrastructure investment directly related to the flow into the Exchequer of oil revenue." 55

Again Jenkins advocated a middle path, but he also argued for measures to stimulate the economy by public spending, which placed him firmly outside the monetarist camp.

Speaking of the central aims of his economic belief, Jenkins said:

"We need a three phase operation. First a reversal of the trend of, and a significant reduction in unemployment. Second the rekindling of growth on a steady and substantial basis. Third a restructuring of the economy through measures to strengthen our industrial and exporting base against the day when the flow of North Sea Oil begins to ebb." 56

These three points would, argued Jenkins, reduce unemployment by one million over two years costing £3 billion. However, Jenkins had not so far mentioned the key economist in the Revisionist policies of the 1950's - Keynes. Did Jenkins still believe himself to be a Keynesian? Or was he proposing policies without reference to a particular economist? Jenkins rejected this suggestion in the 1983 Lecture for Keynes' Centenary.

"What is needed now is an injection into Downing Street, the White House and other chancellories of the world some of the rational panache which Keynes showed We may not see his like again but let us at least hope that the world economy is not ruined by his denigrators." 57

Clearly Jenkins had remained "faithful" to Revisionist economics. This faithfulness carried over into other issues of the day such as defence. In a lecture at Chatham House on February 3 1983, as Labour intensified their commitment to unilateralism, Jenkins made his position clear.

"First I believe that nuclear weapons do deter, and that there is at least a strong possibility that without them we would not have had peace on the central front for the past thirty eight years it is clear to me that western unilateralism would make matters worse not better." 58

Speaking to the Council for Social Democracy on 15 January 1984:

".... the only route to safety is multilateralism. The other (unilateralism) is not merely unwise or hazardous. It is meaningless. It does not deal with the problem. The worst dangers arise from a break up of NATO, which might well encourage Russian foolishness." 59

The same principles expressed in 1961 are restated in 1984: a belief in multilateralism, nuclear deterrence and NATO. Jenkins concluded this speech with a call to internationalism:

"We are as opposed to the weak isolationism of the Left as we are to the jingo isolationism of the Right. We believe that we can only safeguard Britain, by safeguarding the world." 60

Defence aside, the other issue which in 1984 was dividing the Labour Party was Britain's membership of the EEC. Jenkins was a committed European, as we have seen, and his position had not changed.

".... in my view the case for Britain coming out of the EEC remains preposterous both from a trade and inward investment point of view, and from the fact that deliberately to introduce a major element of instability at the present dangerous time in the world would be an act of frivolity." 61

However, Jenkins was not totally uncritical of the EEC. He advocated a move away from economic policies to place emphasis on the political future of the community and Western Europe. These views were again expressed in the "New Democrat" magazine of January 1985.

"If we are to be confident of our future up until and beyond the year 2000 we must get our head out of the groceries and regain the vision, nerve and perspective of those who more than thirty years ago were responsible for the European Community's creation." 62

Jenkins' principles on Europe had, as is obvious, remained constant. However in the area of constitutional reform his position had changed from the pre-1979 era.

In September 1983 Jenkins addressed the Council for Social Democracy at Salford on the subject of "Fair Votes":

"The case against the present electoral system is powerful and obvious. It produces a House of Commons which is unrepresentative of opinion in the country. We can and must mount a major constitutional debate, comparable to the great reforming campaigns of the nineteenth century. It is for a great cause It is for fairness and the better Government of this country." 63

Jenkins had benefited from the traditional voting system as an MP and Minister, so why now in the 1980's had he become a convert to PR? His supporters claimed that he had been in favour of PR whilst still a Labour Minister in 1975 and before. They cited as evidence of this the proposal he put before cabinet for a Speakers Conference to consider PR. This did not meet with the Cabinet's approval

".... the hard core of the Jenkinsite coalitionists beaver-
ing away until they have finally destroyed the Labour Party's
power to govern singlehandedly." 64

Having rejected the idea of a Speaker's Conference and PR, according to Castle
the Cabinet sent "Roy away with a flea in his coalition ear". 65

In 1976 the "National Committee for Electoral Reform" was set up, and its
founder members included John Mackintosh and David Marquand, two of Jenkins' most
trusted advisors. Jenkins himself did not join but gave tacit support. In 1983,
drawing upon his experience of Europe, and maybe also reflecting upon the task that
faced the SDP of joining together widespread, unconcentrated votes he reaffirmed
the position on PR which he had expressed in the "Dimpleby Lecture".

"Do we really believe that we have been more effectively and
coherently governed over the past two decades than have the
Germans?

Do we really believe that the last Labour Government was not a
coalition, in fact if not in name, and a pretty incompatible
one at that? I served in it for half its life, and you could not
convince me of anything else." 66

The value of PR was that all coalitions were open, not Parliamentary Party
factions competing against one another. The electorate would at least know that
it was either voting for a coalition or not voting for one. It can be argued, that
Jenkins supported PR well before the SDP was even thought of, and there is evidence
to support the view that in his principles on voting he had been consistent.

The companion to PR was decentralisation and the two policies are complementary. Jenkins admittedly did support decentralisation before the formation of the SDP, especially when the Devolution Bill was before the Commons and earlier:

"On what principles should a decentralised system of government be based? I described the broad objectives of what is now our policy in March 1976 in a speech in Inverclyde." ⁶⁷

Jenkins argued for decentralisation not only of Scotland and Wales but of the English regions. Britain would become similar to the FDR in its political and constitutional structure, the exception being that the House of Lords would remain to scrutinise UK legislation ensuring it did not encroach on the region's powers. This speech became the basis of the SDP's policies on decentralisation.

The principles Jenkins held in 1981 and those he held in 1961 were very similar. In essence he did not change his views to any marked degree. He is best grouped as a liberal, a thorough Revisionist. He had taken on board the politics of Gaitskell and Crosland.

However, if as I have suggested Jenkins has been consistent in his view, could he claim to offer the electorate a new politics to "break the mould"? Some critics such as Ken Coates in "The Social Democrat" ⁶⁸ have seen Jenkins as crying "Forward to yesterday". Many others have levelled the charge of opportunism at Jenkins, and even more have claimed that he had been responsible for founding a junior Tory Party. Jenkins replied to these critics on 11th July 1984 at the first "Tawney Society Lecture":

"I echo Keynes' 1925 cri-de-coeur I do not wish to live under a Conservative Government for the next twenty years.

There have been some ludicrous suggestions in the past few months that the SDP is on the way to becoming a sort of junior Tory Party. "Not while I'm alive it ain't" as Ernest Bevin said." 69

This does, I believe, give a clear indication of Jenkins' opposition to the conservatism and emphasises the link, of which Jenkins is proud, between his principles as a member of the SDP and his principles as a leading Revisionist member of Gaitskell's Labour Party. Jenkins could argue, with some validity that the SDP was the heir to Gaitskell's Revisionist tradition.

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CHAPTER 3

David Owen

David Owen, the Leader of the Social Democratic Party, has been an MP for Plymouth since 1966. He was born in Plymouth in 1938, the son of a successful General Practitioner who had no particular political interest, but expressed liberal sympathies. Owen, unlike Roy Jenkins, had no family history of political activity and no association with the Labour Party. He was educated at Bradfield College, Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge and St. Thomas' Hospital, London, where he qualified as a Doctor of Medicine in 1962. He was appointed Psychiatric Registrar at St. Thomas' in 1964, and until his election to Parliament in 1966 enjoyed a very successful medical career.

When he entered Parliament Owen, unlike Jenkins, Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers, had not been involved in the Revisionist campaigns to change Clause IV or in the nuclear weapons debates of 1961. He had never worked for Gaitskell, or been associated with Crosslandite groups such as the Campaign for Democratic Socialism, and this has influenced his writings. He rarely mentions the events of Gaitskell's leadership to give legitimacy to his membership of Labour as Jenkins does. Nor does he use Crossland's ideas to make a point or support an argument. He does not "romanticise" the Labour right or their battles with the Left as Williams occasionally does. Instead, he presents a set of principles derived from many sources outside the Labour right, sometimes even from outside the conventional scope of British politics. He makes many references to medicine and was influenced by the rise of Thatcherism in such a way that his critics have often accused him of taking the SDP too near to monetarist economic and New Right social policies.

As a politician in the Labour Party Owen gained a reputation as a "loner". He was never active in any particular pressure group, but he was a fierce opponent of the Left. From his first years as an MP Owen expressed a particular interest in Defence and Health policies, and in these areas he has frequently disagreed with the Left.

Owen's ministerial career began in 1968 as Under-Secretary for the Navy. In 1974 he was appointed Minister of State in the Department of Health. In 1976 he was moved to the Foreign Office and after Crosland's death in 1977 became Foreign Secretary. After Labour's defeat in 1979 Owen became Shadow Energy Spokesman but resigned this position in 1980. In 1981 he co-founded the SDP, being elected its Leader in 1983.

To his admirers Owen is a tough and imaginative radical. Seen from an alternative point of view he was promoted to high office too early, and was an unsuccessful Foreign Secretary. To save his failing political career he helped create the SDP and abandoned the Labour Party. Admittedly Owen is very ambitious, and of the "Gang of Four" he is the most forceful. His writing style reflects this. It is clear and precise, and his books published after the formation of the SDP have given him a reputation as a radical political thinker.

His first piece of political writing was a pamphlet called "Change Gear" (1967) ¹ published in association with John Mackintosh and David Marquand. It was a critique of the Labour Government's economic policy. It argued that the government had no strategic approach to the country's economic problems. The pamphlet was a reaction to deflationary methods adopted by the government following the economic crisis of July 1966 and the devaluation of the pound in 1967. To the reader the pamphlet gives little indication of Owen's principles. It is concerned with a political event of 1967 and was not intended to be a carefully thought out



explanation of Owen's political beliefs. However the fact the Owen had written the pamphlet with John Mackintosh and David Marquand and that it had been published by Socialist Commentary indicates his position in the Labour Party at that time.

Owen's second political publication "The Politics of Defence" (1972) ² is concerned with decision making and accountability in government, particularly in the Ministry of Defence.

The Politics of Defence placed Owen firmly on the "right" of the Labour Party. In it he dealt with defence policy-making, nuclear weapons, and the accountability of the "military establishment". However, as is found in many of his writings, Owen approached these subjects from no particular ideological position. He did not claim that disarmament would open up Europe to a "Soviet threat", nor did he claim unilateral or European disarmament would end the "Soviet threat". In effect Owen rejected policy made from an "ideological" starting point.

"Right-wing politicians too frequently exaggerate the military threat; while for left-wing politicians it is easy to focus attention not on the actualities of the arms race but on the so-called measures of disarmament Politicians have been guilty of distracting attention from unpleasant facts and of making extravagant claims for what have been only partial measures of arms control." ³

The ideological approach is, he suggests, not only to be found amongst politicians in defence policy-making. The "military establishment" has its own ideology, its own ethos, which it uses to great effect:

"The insidious process of military indoctrination, a heady mixture of pomp and secrecy to which most politicians involved in defence are susceptible tend to blunt one's normal sensitivity. One can easily become part of the very military machine that one is supposed to control." 4

From this, we can suppose that Owen takes the Liberal view of ideology. That is to say, ideology blurs reality, it stops the individual from acting in a rational way. Ideology is, for Owen, the root of prejudice. This manifests itself in defence policy decision-making by excessive use of secrecy, which Owen believes is an example of the military establishment protecting its sacred documents, rituals and more importantly failures. This raises the issue which was, and still is, at the centre of present SDP policies on "open government". It also played a major part in the Labour Party's divisions after the 1979 election. Owen gave democratic control of defence a very high priority.

"A nation's control of its own defence forces is seen throughout the world as a hallmark of a true democracy. Yet it is striking how little effective parliamentary machinery exists for controlling or scrutinising the defence forces of most democratic countries." 5

"The extent of the commitment, whether the existing treaty or pledge, or the actual troop levels involved is far too often disguised from the general public under the overall cloak of national security." 6

To counter the secrecy of decision-making and, Owen believed, to improve the quality of the decision reached, issues should be open to discussion:

"Informed discussion would also do something to ensure that politicians understand the implications of their decisions." 7

In the administrative process a political structure controlling budgets and military policy would be needed to ensure that long-term strategy was made democratically.

In advocating informed discussion and parliamentary control Owen seemed to be seeking a consensus on defence decision-making. In the age of "Butskellism" some critics called the Revisionists "consensus politicians". That same phrase appeared frequently at the SDP's launch and during its early history. Owen in 1972 was advocating consensus decision-making.

In the final section of his book Owen turns his thoughts to issues that were important in 1961 and have maintained their importance - nuclear weapons and Britain's membership of NATO.

Owen approached Britain's nuclear policies thus:

"Nuclear war is conceivable The plain facts are that it would not make sense to rely on all out conventional defence." 8

On the basis of this belief, simply expressed, Owen placed Britain's nuclear capacity in a NATO framework.

"NATO's strategy of deterrence has always been firmly based on the credible threat of nuclear escalation and no one in NATO envisages a long drawn out war in Europe like the Second World War." 9

Owen justified the existence of NATO's nuclear weapons in economic terms. He believed that the USA, and particularly the isolationist elements within that country, expected Europe to share more of the costs of NATO. However, the European nations, who were no longer super-powers, had not the economic capability to raise, equip and train large armies. Therefore faced with the possibility of US withdrawal of her conventional armies from NATO and bearing in mind that the size of the conventional forces of the Warsaw Pact outnumbered European troops 3 to 1 Europe had no alternative except nuclear weapons.

In "The Politics of Defence" then, Owen indicates he is a "democrat" (in the sense that he favours open government), a multi-lateralist and supporter of NATO. A very noticeable feature of the book is that it gives a "labourist" point of view without direct reference to the Labour Party. Owen does not mention the nuclear debates of 1961, or the Revisionist support of NATO, nor is he concerned with a "socialist" defence or foreign policy. Owen is not advocating the beliefs of a group, of a party or of a particular philosophy but he is putting forward his own individual beliefs about defence.

Shortly after the publication of "The Politics of Defence" Owen forfeited the luxury of being a "loner" in the Labour Party and for the first time in his career, associated himself with the Social Democrats. The Labour Manifesto of 1970 had been in favour of Britain joining the EEC.

However after the election Labour's policy changed to being opposed to British membership. In October 1971 sixty-nine Labour MPs led by Jenkins and including Owen voted against the Party and with the Conservative Government. In April 1972 Owen resigned his spokespersonship on defence over Britain's entry into the EEC. From this point onward Owen was associated more or less with the Social Democrats. However he was not admitted to the inner sanctum of the Social Democrats' decision-

making group. During this time Owen worked consistently for the pro-Marketeters and he did form a close working relationship with David Marquand, an associate of Jenkins and Bill Rodgers.

Owen's resignation over Europe and his joining the Social Democrats did not seriously damage his status in the party and in 1974 after Labour's General Election victory he was appointed Minister of State at the Department of Health. During his time as the Minister of Health Owen published in 1976 "In Sickness and in Health" ¹⁰, a collection of articles and speeches concerning the National Health Service. Unlike in "The Politics of Defence", Owen here dealt with an organisation considered to be the greatest monument to the Labour Party. He examined issues that are fundamental to socialist thinking, and to the Labour Party's philosophy and history. Indirectly Owen looked at inequality in British society, and at the role of the state in its capacity as the guardian of the ill and vulnerable. Owen acknowledged that the NHS was not established only to provide a comprehensive service, but:

".... embraces within its structure and practice a broad philosophy of contemporary society in Britain. Bevan wrote of the foundation of the NHS that "society becomes more wholesome, more serene and spiritually healthier if it knows that its citizens have at the back of their consciousness the knowledge that not only themselves but also their fellows have access when ill, to the best that medical skill can provide." ¹¹

Owen fully endorsed the sentiments expressed by Bevan's work "In Place of Fear" (1952) ¹² which gave the NHS a set of principles to work by. However Owen was not a Bevanite, and in 1976 he amended Bevan by placing greater emphasis on the role of the individual in the NHS and Social Services.

"The individual's responsibility and society's responsibility cover sickness and health. We need to foster the attitudes of care and concern on which any health care system is based. We have grown resistant to discussing the values of society. We can talk too much about money values about the values of the market place and not enough about altruism, about being a good neighbour, about family life, and about the virtues of the strong and healthy shouldering the burdens of the weak and sick." 13

Obviously Owen placed himself on the left of British politics but he placed great emphasis on the individual's responsibilities and "altruism". In this, he differed from the mainstream of Labour Party opinion. The 1974 Manifesto, for instance, put responsibility for the sick on the state not mentioning "altruism". Owen also steered a course between the Labour Party, and the market forces approach of the newly elected leader of the Conservatives in 1976, Mrs. Thatcher. Although altruism was not a new concept in the philosophy of the British Labour movement, Owen combined it with the responsibility of the individual in such a way that it becomes a value that he believed was stifled by the state. Owen's views on the role of the state, and the rights and responsibilities in health care are well illustrated in the controversial area of private health care. He began by saying why he disapproved of private medicine but also why its abolition by legislation is also unacceptable.

"The philosophy of a democratic society is one which allows for minority views, tastes and practices. It is a philosophy which believes in balancing the freedom of the individual against the freedom of the many There is, in effect, a predisposition to find in favour of individual freedom It has been a clear and openly stated policy of the 1974 Labour Government that private

medicine does not deserve the support of the state. This is not the same as believing it is desirable to express such a policy in the form of legislation designed to ban private medicine." 14

Owen therefore sided with the individual against the state. He did not advocate the return of the NHS to the private sector. However, he recognised that whilst a private health service existed it would be a source of conflict within the medical profession.

"Those doctors who wish to preserve the status quo for private practice must recognise that its preservation is merely a formula for continued conflict: it will ensure that the issue of private practice remains a running festering sore within the health service." 15

Owen wished to allow the private health service to continue because he felt that its abolition infringed individual liberty. He contended that individuals also had duties towards the NHS. Those who had the most resources at their disposal had the greatest responsibility to support the NHS. The private medical service and those who used it had a moral responsibility to contribute towards the NHS. They could not be forced to make extra payments as this would be an infringement of their liberty. However, individuals should contribute towards the running costs of the NHS inspired by altruistic values.

"We all need to concern ourselves more with the place of altruism in society. This is not a subject we can leave to the theologian. The altruistic impulse is the most valuable asset that any nation possesses." 16

He felt that the centralised state could not organise the NHS in a manner which was sensitive to local needs. The policy-makers were seen to be removed from those hospitals that their decisions affected. Throughout "The Politics of Health" Owen suggested although never fully developed the concept of a devolved NHS.

"Central or local government should not become the sole source of finance; not even the dominant source There are dangers of developing a modern society whose values are solely conditioned by the market place where "What is the price?" and "What is something worth?" predominate. We should not be afraid to champion the true values of a society: love, altruism and concern for our neighbours. These alone will provide the essential cohesion and serenity we all seek." 17

In promoting altruism Owen challenged the role of the state in the health services as envisaged by the Revisionists. The state, it seems, was there to provide a safety net, and it had no responsibility to eradicate poverty and holistic causes of ill health. No mention was made of the effects of Beveridge's Five Great Evils on health. In short Owen can be accused of looking only at a very narrow area of health politics and trying to apply the universal cure-all of altruism. He does not make provision for a situation where nobody wishes to give, for the inequalities which may arise between rich and poor areas, between hospitals and between provisions for "media-worthy diseases" and common but unnoticed illnesses. Owen in an effort to combine individual freedom and compassion in a philosophy for Social Services had sacrificed socialism for a muddled naive belief in altruism which does not take into account the failure of people to be altruistic.

Owen's next major work, published in 1978, was "Human Rights" ¹⁸ a book of speeches and articles written when he was Foreign Secretary. It traced the history of human rights and the violation of human rights in Britain and abroad. The book also outlined those values by which Owen believed a society should live and by which it should regulate its members, and is therefore a very valuable guide to Owen's principles. In the first chapter he defended pragmatic ways of making value judgements. He implied that moral absolutes are restrictive to those engaged in the practice of politics.

"I do not believe that the public man can ignore morality and ethics Once you say that however you become a victim for those people to whom consistency is itself an absolute value, to whom any deviation from principle is seen as weakness." ¹⁹

He contended that no single explanation of human nature or set of principles could be universally applied and considered to be absolutely true.

".... human nature and its values, though profound and even sacred to the individual are so personal so unique that there are not nor can there be, absolute values." ²⁰

This does reflect a certain strain in Roy Jenkins' thought. However, Owen did not associate his principles with Asquithian liberalism but with democratic socialism.

"The British tradition of Democratic Socialism, both drawing on and promoting the value of altruism, is the one with which I identify and from which I derive inspiration. British Socialism has never been dogmatic or prescriptive. Its strength has lain in its practical,

non-doctrinal attack on poverty and inequality, and in the variety of political traditions from which it has evolved There have always been contradictions between the various strands which make up British Socialism - between participations and paternalism, between collectivist and libertarian instincts and between statism and the anarchic tradition of decentralised power." 21

This is surely Owen explaining, with passion, his membership of the Labour Party, and saying how that membership is consistent with his views. His opposition to statism and his belief in decentralisation, which is an important part of SDP policy are explained thus:

"While there always were bureaucrats and statisticians among British socialists, British socialism as such has never been committed to these attitudes. Community co-operation, participation, workers democracy, decentralised decision-making, the virtue of the small unit these have always been valued in British socialism, yet until recently they seem to have been less influential and the socialist philosophy and appeal correspondingly weakened." 22

In contrast with his previous work, Owen here gave a clear opinion of his values and their place in the socialist tradition. In classing himself with a decentralising group of socialists aiming to achieve socialism without the state, Owen is in conflict with the Corporatist, nationalising Labour Governments. But he may also have been trying to disassociate his view of the individual from that of the New Right. He put his values in the socialist tradition, and he also gave his view of the rise of the New Right.

"The New Right is succeeding in discrediting the ideals of socialism by pointing to the failure of bureaucratic or statist policies Many aspects of the New Right's philosophy which socialists appear to favour in this country the criticism for example of large schools under the slogan "Big means bad" is not merely fashionable rightist dogma but fair criticism." 23

Owen, having roundly criticised "statist socialism" and given some credibility of the New Right critique of the modern state, gave an explanation of the values he believed were central to a socialist state and again he focused upon altruism.

"The essential value of socialism is altruism. The eradication of inequalities and the striving for a more egalitarian society are aims inspired by that value. The dilemma comes with the word equality, easy to espouse, yet impossible to fulfil

The concept of equality has been devalued by its inobtainability and by its imperfect implementation Perhaps "equity" is the most accurate word to describe the actuality rather than the objective of equality. That conflict is inevitable, the response to it is not. We can either be inspired to reduce inequalities and to enlarge individual freedom or inequalities remain, liberty is restricted and the basis of socialism is eroded." 24

We may, then, take it that "equity" rather than "equality", is the second component of Owen's principles in 1978. The third is democracy, and it is democracy and democratic procedure that in Owen's view separate "socialists" from the British Labour Party. Democracy is not only confined to the ballot box but is participation in decision-making as advocated by the Guild Socialists. "Socialism is participation, responsibility and democracy." 25

To achieve democratic participation the electorate must have information, and with the rights of democracies go duties. During the division between the Social Democrats and the Labour Party in 1979-81, Owen was, by his own admission, obsessed with the concept of democracy in the party and with the campaign for "one member, one vote". This was the cause of his resignation from the Party and provided his main charge against the Left, that they were undemocratic. His opposition to statism finds parallels in Crosland's work and with "Labourist" thinkers such as Tawney. However he does not share the trade union based "Labourist" ethos. This has led his critics to claim that he is inconsistent and that during and after the formation of the SDP he fundamentally changed his views. To examine this accusation I will now look at Owen's principles during and after the formation of the SDP.

The story of Owen's joining the SDP begins in October 1979, and it is the story of Owen being humiliated publicly and privately. It must be remembered that Owen, a man needing power and influence, wanting to be at the centre of decision-making, was in 1979 the Opposition Spokesman on Energy. Six months before he had been Foreign Secretary, and thirteen years before he had been a neurologist with a promising career before him. During his time in Parliament he had made enemies but alongside his conceit, arrogance and ambition he was clever and capable. Now in October 1979 Owen had been humiliated at a Labour Party ward meeting in Hornsey by "Marxists" bandying catch-phrases. Owen had decided then to fight to save the Labour Party. However in Shadow Cabinet meetings his views were ignored. Callaghan, his patron, was (as he saw it) selling out to the "militants". In May 1980 at Labour's Special Wembley Conference Owen was booed and hissed and drowned out when making a pro-nuclear, multi-lateralist speech. The Party was abandoning social democracy, accepting unilateralism, putting the election of officials into the hands of a "militant" Electoral college, and disregarding its former Foreign Secretary. In this atmosphere Owen decided first to fight for the Party. Then he

realised it was a lost cause and he finally decided to leave. However as recently as 1981 Owen still called himself a socialist:

"What is needed is a socialist philosophy, outside the restricted confines of the present polarised political debate, which asserts the radical democratic traditions of decentralised socialism." 26

At the same time Owen wrote:

"One thing I can promise you, I will not become a Liberal, or join a rootless Centre Party that means abandoning my socialist convictions." 27

Shortly before joining the SDP Owen published his major work "Face the Future" 28 in which he advocated the "social market economy", thus providing ammunition for those who believed that he held Tory views. Surprisingly in the first edition of "Face the Future" published in January 1981 the word socialism is used very frequently. However, in the paperback edition published in November 1981 a chapter first entitled "The Values of Socialism" became "Social Democratic Values". In the second edition "democratic politicians" is used in preference to "democratic socialists". This had been cited by some as an example of opportunism. For others it confirmed Owen as a Tory. In a speech at York University Leon Brittan in 1983 claimed Owen was part of the new Tory consensus. The Financial Times said admiringly that Owen had become:

"One of the first prominent British politicians to endorse the social market economy." 29

The Financial Times also described his philosophy as "Thatcherism with a human face". It is easy to brand Owen as a "Tory", but what sort of "Tory" is he?

"His commitment to decentralisation at a time when Thatcher is strengthening the centralised state would make him a Tory wet. However, many of his other attitudes his hostility to trade unions, his enthusiasm for market forces and privatisation, place him well to the right of the wets." 30

By analysing the principles Owen expresses in "Face the Future" I hope to shed some light on the validity of these accusations and on any changes in Owen's ideology. Let us start with the brief description he gives of what the SDP is about:

"In essence the Social Democrats will draw on the traditional Labour Party commitment to social justice and social conscience Social Democrats will draw on the traditional Conservative commitment to the merit of private enterprise and a market economy. They will not shrink from acknowledging that in the main people will work harder if they can ensure a better standard of living themselves There will be an open acceptance of the need for profits Social Democrats must ensure that the mix (in the economy) will become a partnership." 31

"Face the Future" draws upon all of the traditions mentioned, and Owen, with the honesty that few politicians can afford, admitted the virtues of the opposition. He set out the task for the SDP as:

"Nothing less than to revive the fortunes of our country, to allow the resourcefulness, the boldness to re-emerge to halt the drift and to face the future with resolution." 32

The same optimism, even aggression, of Crosland in 1956 and the Revisionists comes through in Owen's book. He gave an interpretation of his values in the wake of Thatcherism. He called for a political philosophy outside the confines of Britain's political tradition and began to build one by looking closely at the ideals of "Liberty,-Equality,-Fraternity".

"For more than a century political thought has been dominated by the interaction between liberty and equality but surprisingly little attention has been given to the other element of this historic triad, fraternity, representing the sense of fellowship This neglect of fraternity especially by socialist thinkers has meant that the espousal of equality has lacked an unifying force to bridge the gaps and contradictions between equality and liberty." 33

This led Owen on to discuss the concept of equality, a key concept in judging ideology as Socialist, Liberal or Conservative. Predictably, he combined equality and altruism:

"For all socialists Whatever exact position they may occupy in the political spectrum of the left there is common ground in the need to redress poverty and reduce inequality." 34

However he did not champion equality in its Croslandite meritocratic sense, or in its mechanical redistributive sense. Owen championed equality as an ideal based on altruism. For Social Democrats, striving for equality is not founded on satisfying envy or bourgeois guilt, but it is altruism in action. Owen quoted Titmuss in his description of altruism:

"No money values can be attached to the presence or absence of a spirit of altruism in society. Altruism is giving to a stranger it may touch every aspect of life and affect the whole fabric of value. Its role in satisfying the biological need to help is another unmeasurable element." 35

The arguments of the Right against equality, that inequalities are the product of functional stratification and that equality is a sure path to ruining the economy are all dismissed by Owen as assuming that men will maximise their rewards and ignore altruism and public service. Yet the one argument of the Right that equality can only be achieved at the cost of democracy and choice is not so quickly dismissed. To some extent Owen accepted this argument and suggested a way to achieve the "maximum" level of equality.

"Democratic politicians are rightly unwilling to put at risk or to dismantle Western liberties and democracy in order to remove inequalities. Gradual persuasion in a democracy is the only way of bringing about greater equality without degenerating into the kind of undemocratic and restrictive society that is spawned by authoritarian state control." 36

This statement, and others concerning "equality" made in "Face the Future" are very similar to those made in "Human Rights" and because of this it has been said that Owen had been consistent in his beliefs. There can be little doubt that "equality" understood as "equity" is a central value in Owen's thought, however he also believed that policies to achieve greater "equity" must be legitimised by democratic consent. This illustrates the importance Owen attaches to democracy, the second value he discussed in "Face the Future".

"Democracy" has been given many different meanings and has been much used and abused. It has taken on an all-embracing quality so that it has been used to give legitimacy to regimes as diverse as the Soviet Union under Lenin and Germany under Hitler. Owen realised this and attempted to give a critique of democracy that looked at its costs and its advantages, whilst still strongly advocating pluralistic liberal democracy. He was very much aware of the need to develop a form of Social Democracy which would suit what he considered to be British values and Britain's institutions. He cited as the main influences on his thoughts about democracy G.D.H. Cole and Isaiah Berlin. He tried to combine Cole's advocacy of social justice and decentralised Government with Berlin's belief in pluralism, freedom, and the individual's right to self direction. He believed that:

"Such a philosophical attitude if linked to a political approach that is unequivocally democratic and socialist, radical and bold could appeal to those who identify with the past values of the British Labour Party but who now see its political counterpart in the Social Democracy successfully practised by many other socialist governments in Western Europe." 37

In Owen's view to "democratise" society was to release individual citizens from the centralising influence of the modern state and to encourage participation, decentralisation and altruism. To do this the role of the state must change.

"The state has however, now not so much outlived its usefulness but has itself become an impediment to further change towards the development of a participatory democracy, wider ownership, co-operation and community. The state has a continuing role, modern society cannot do away with the state." 38

Here the influence of the New Right philosophers can be found. Owen was asking to "roll back the frontiers of the state". He did not want to dismantle the state totally, but just as the Conservatives believe that they were extending democracy by increasing the opportunities to own property and shares, so Owen believed he was extending democracy by allowing individuals to participate in, and shoulder some of the responsibilities of, the state. He did not ask who participated, or why they participate, and it might be pointed out that, as happened in the Labour Party, those who are the most vociferous, and exert the greatest influence on policy do not always represent the majority. However Owen had an answer to those charges. He saw an extension of democracy coming through devolution and an extension of elections to cover water authority boards and Quangos.

"A true democracy will mean a progressive shift from Westminster out to the regions, to the country and town halls, to communities. To introduce radical reforms it will be necessary to harness the frustrations and return the confidence of a public which feels little enthusiasm for participation since they do not believe their participations will have any influence on decision-making." 39

From the opening chapters of "Face the Future" we can with some certainty say which ideologies Owen did not subscribe to in 1981. He is not a Conservative. His belief in "equity" and social action by the state excluded him from the ranks of the New Right. Nor can he be called a traditional Conservative because he believed that a rational economic and social plan could be imposed on society, which Conservatives such as Oakeshott believe is irrational and organic. At the other end of the political spectrum his belief in a liberal, pluralist democracy, his version of "equity" and his rejection of centralisation makes his principles incompatible with the form of socialism advocated by the Labour Party. Having eliminated two of the three "classical" ideologies we are left with liberalism.

Evidence to support my view of Owen as a liberal can be found in his ideas of equity, open government, the role of the individual, and the decentralisation of power. He believed in a pluralist society. He cited Isaiah Berlin as a notable influence on his ideas. And, as we shall see, Rawls, who he also named as a philosophical influence, believed individual liberty is a priority in deciding social justice.

The Labour Party's philosophy has two main sources. The first is Marxism, inherited from the Independent Labour Party and the Social Democratic Federation. The second is based on Liberal ideas held by the Fabians, and also by Beveridge, a Liberal MP. Owen would argue that he held views consistent with the "Liberal" elements of Labour's philosophy. Owen's vindication of his membership of Labour has been discussed earlier in this chapter.

So far we have only looked at Owen's principles developed as a philosophical exercise. Now I propose to look at these principles in action as policies. The greater part of "Face the Future" is devoted to policies and the practice of politics.

Britain's economic failures since 1945 gave Owen sufficient material to illustrate his economic policies. He particularly criticised "Revisionism" for failing to recognise the conflicts between private and public sectors. He wished to see a "mixed economy" which was flexible enough to react swiftly to market changes, in other words an economy which is not restricted by a bureaucratic public sector. To Owen the strengths of the mixed economy:

".... come from a sensitive understanding of the extent to which an amalgamation of public and private sector attitudes and policies is tolerable and a readiness to sense the point at which amalgamation

destroys the dynamics of the system itself: when curbing profits really does limit investment, or when squeezing prices reaches the point when it does limit expansion or when a movement towards average wages and job security impares innovation and risk taking and contributes to low productivity and inefficiency." 40

The greatest attraction of the mixed economy is its flexibility. The essence of the Social Democratic and Owen's economic programme was that no one policy can or should be pursued in isolation. So for Owen to try, for instance, to control the money supply without regard to growth or employment would be disastrous. The economic relationships in society are so complex that only the mixed economy can respond quickly enough to change and, importantly, can maintain consensus. The mixed economy is a pragmatic and changing economy, and according to Owen, it is the only economy that would redistribute income and maintain the peace between the classes. The type of mix is not about percentages but will be determined by prevailing economic conditions. So if a major nationally important industry in private hands was near to collapse the Government should give it support as Mr. Heath did with Rolls Royce. Similarly if an industry in the public sector would operate more successfully in the private sector, for example British Telecom, it should be sold off.

The economy, being run along these flexible, pragmatic lines would not embody the Revisionist ideal of the Government controlling the economy by macro-policy to achieve greater equality. The Government should attempt to improve the quality of life of the poorest by giving a higher priority to the welfare services but in the low-growth economy of the 1980's increasing wages from public spending merely creates inflation and eventually worsens poverty. The method Owen would use to redistribute wealth is to introduce a "truly progressive" system of taxation. His policy would be to effectively increase the income of the poorest by reducing the

amount of tax they pay. This would also act as a spur to their desire to earn more money because they, and not the Treasury would benefit from their labour. The Treasury, would however be able to pay for its welfare programmes by the increases in tax levied upon the wealthy and well off members of society. This policy contradicted the Revisionist belief in Government stimulated economic growth. Owen noted that:

"... the emphasis of the Revisionists on economic growth was not accompanied by a sufficient awareness of the degradation of values that would accompany growth and it was wrong to imply that more growth could satisfy all the needs of our society." 41

Tax concessions would act as a stimulant to enterprise and would to some extent redistribute income. A more effective way to secure more "equity" in the economy according to Owen would be to give workers a share in profits as a condition of employment, and by extending industrial democracy to involve individual workers in a wide range of issues. Workers would be obliged to sit on boards of management of public and private organisations. Worker participation in decision-making would be increased. He argued for an extension of equality and democracy throughout British industry. In Parliamentary Government, the next area of his concern, "equity and democracy" again greatly influence his politics.

"Knowledge is power" claimed Owen, and Civil Servants have more information than anyone else in the British system. He did not believe that Civil Servants formed conspiracies to end radical programmes. However he believed that more democratic control by Parliamentary Select Committees would make the Civil Service less bureaucratic and would allow it to administer more effectively without political interference. He advocated a Freedom of Information Act, and the strengthening of the Select Committees.

His most radical policy was related to electoral reform. He suggested that the "first past the post" system be abandoned in favour of a system of proportional representation similar to that of West Germany. His basic argument was that PR would be more democratic but it should be combined with a host of other reforms including the founding of Regional Assemblies, replacing the House of Lords with a Second Chamber akin to the US Senate with restrictive powers exercising a delaying veto over the House of Commons.

"Face the Future" greatly influenced the newly formed SDP in its policy and principles. It is a book of the left, written by a politician of the left. Owen was "obsessed" by "equality and democracy" and also the role of the individual, which led him to advocate decentralisation as a cure for Britain's governmental problems, and an altruism combined with a "democratic" social policy to cure Britain's social ills. He rejected bureaucratic socialism, advocating instead "socialism without the state". So taking the evidence in "Face the Future" we can with some confidence reject the interpretations offered earlier by Wheen and Leon Brittan. Owen is not part of the new Tory consensus, nor are his principles "Thatcherism with a human face". In short he was in 1981 a politician of the European social democratic type and a decentralising socialist of a type rarely seen in British politics.

In 1983 David Owen succeeded Roy Jenkins as Leader of the SDP, and in 1984 he published a collection of speeches and articles written during his first year as Leader. The book's title was "A Future that Will Work"⁴². When the book was compiled the Thatcherite influence was very strong in British politics, and the ideology of its supporters, focused upon the free market economy, was the "conventional wisdom" in the governing party. I intend to compare the views in "A Future that Will Work" with those expressed in "Face the Future" remembering the influence of what we can call Thatcherism and Owen's belief in "equity and

"A Future that Will Work" tackled the problems of advocating a mixed economy and incomes policy at a time when those policies had been discredited, their weakness exposed, and increased emphasis placed on the market. Owen began by rejecting the old Revisionist idea of a mixed economy.

"Socialist revisionists in Britain advocate the mixed economy but refuse to face the political difficulties of admitting that there are necessarily differences between the two sectors." 43

Owen suggested instead of the mixed economy the "social market approach". This development in his thought on the mixed economy was not just an exercise in finding a phrase which suited the times to describe his economic policy. The "social market approach" is not a plagiarised latter-day *laissez-faire* policy of non-intervention combined with support for the welfare state. The "social market approach" rests on a number of philosophical assumptions. The first is that the public and private sectors have different objectives and meet different needs. Secondly he held that decentralisation of decision-making is vital to the success of the approach. Thirdly, he argued that an incomes policy is the best way for Government to influence the economy in a pragmatic way, and finally, that the distribution of profit in the economy should both reward the industrious and help the worst off members of society. He developed the context of the approach thus:

"The social market approach to the economy does not advocate retaining the status quo. It does not accept the current levels of unemployment nor does it tolerate present inequalities. The message is necessarily complex." 44

Owen combines decentralisation and the social market in this way:

"A movement towards decentralisation must be by its very nature an endorsement of the market mechanism. Decentralisation challenges the centralisation of industrial and economic power that is the legacy of decades of central direction: it also makes one analyse what exactly is meant by the mixed economy." 45

Decentralisation was combined with extended industrial democracy, profit sharing and worker ownership. Having said that, Owen then rather paradoxically advocated a centrally controlled incomes policy. Having claimed that the Revisionists attempted to combine incompatible objectives in the mixed economy, was not Owen doing the same thing by advocating decentralised decision-making and an imposed centralised incomes policy? He attempted to validate his beliefs this way:

"The social market advocates openly some form of incomes policy but it recognises that the dilemma is how to pursue a more expansionary policy designed to reduce unemployment without triggering inflation. It recognises that in the private sector market realism on wage bargaining cannot be guaranteed at a time of expansion." 46

Is this not one of the very same reasons why the Revisionists advocated an incomes policy, and why large centralised union organisations became so important in a Government run policy? Owen answers this by claiming that industrial democracy and decentralisation would make trade unions more realistic and more involved with winning orders. Decentralisation would be helped if co-determination and works council legislation similar to that of West Germany, and stricter controls on monopolies and trusts were introduced.

His advocacy of realism in wage bargaining and in the market have not dimmed Owen's concern for the less well off in society.

".... we cannot reverse our relative economic decline by arguing whether competitiveness should take second place to compassion or compassion second place to competitiveness. We need them both." 47

This raises the problem central to Owen's economic philosophy and the "social market approach".

"How can we eliminate poverty and promote greater equality without stifling enterprise or imposing bureaucracy from the centre? How can we build up the innovating strength of a competitive economy while ensuring a fair distribution of rewards? We need new definitions of social justice and equality we are still dogged by old ideas of social class." 48

Did Owen move the equity game goal posts to suit his own philosophy? As far as this book suggests, not really, because he still advocated altruism and a theory of social justice not based solely on material measurements. To aid our understanding of Owen's principles we shall briefly examine Rawl's ideas of justice. His idea of equity in the social market draws upon Rawls' "Theory of Justice". 49

In 1971 John Rawls published "A Theory of Justice" in which he argued for, among other things, a liberal approach to the redistribution of resources. It immediately commanded critical attention. Rawls attempted to construct a system and a workable moral conception to oppose utilitarianism. The theory is exceedingly complex, and I intend only to give a sketch of some of the main ideas to illustrate Owen's conception of social justice. Rawls believed men have an intuitive notion of justice which is also fundamental because each person possesses inviolability. The original state of society is one of equality where no individual member is

aware of his social status, history or race. Under this veil of ignorance rational man would adopt the following principles. First, each person has an equal right to liberty. Second, inequalities should be to everyone's advantage and attached to positions open to all. Thus no increased economic advantages should require the sacrifice of any measure of liberty. These unchangeable liberties are political liberty, free speech, free thought and conscience, the rule of law against arbitrary arrest and the right to hold property. The important point is that all men must have equal liberty. However in such a theory of justice and liberty how can inequalities be to everyone's advantage?

Rawls answered this question by saying that if the veil of ignorance was lifted and men saw themselves as they really are, it would be clear that the undeserved inequalities of birth or natural endowment would need to be redressed. Justice therefore has a priority over efficiency and welfare. Social primary goods:

".... are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured." 50

Owen embraced Rawls' principles in as much as he gave liberty the first priority. No material advance is worth the sacrifice of liberty. He rejected the idea of a trade-off between liberty and equality as a sterile argument. He did not abandon the idea of equality. He believed in the "good" of redistribution but he placed greater emphasis on the protection of liberty than on the achievement of equality. The "social market economy" seemed to him to embody Rawls' principles. The redistribution of goods can be achieved, Owen argued, only by persuading the electorate and not by the imposition of a bureaucratic state.

".... it is certainly the case that the majority of people in Britain could only be persuaded to support redistributive policies if they felt that the position of the poor was to be demonstrably improved in absolute not just in relative terms." 51

This would introduce a measure of realism into British society. It would encourage the better off in society to help the worse off. The poor members of society would also be encouraged to participate in the social market by a system of tax credits that would reward their enterprise, and on which their benefit payments would be calculated. This system would in effect reduce the benefits given to the wealthy, such as Family Income Supplement or certain housing supplements, and diminish the tax burden on the low-paid. The final chapter of "A Future that Will Work" entitled "Enough of Conservatism with a Big and Small "C" gave a radical criticism of Conservatism and placed him firmly on the left. He made it clear that all of his policies, especially the "social market approach" rely on a great change of attitude away from the underlying conservatism in both British major parties, and Government. He used the phrase "The Establishment" to describe the ruling elite of Civil Servants, Union leaders and politicians who have restricted Britain. To counter the conservatism of "The Establishment",

"The fundamental change needed is simply stated: Britain has got to become more commercial, more competitive and more aware of the disciplines and opportunities in the world market in which we compete for our standard of living." 52

A move towards increasing competitiveness combined with more open government helped by decentralisation, a Freedom of Information Act, more time for the Opposition in Parliament, a stronger Committee system and, of course, PR. These are measures that Owen advocated in "Face the Future". His task was still the same as when the SDP was formed, to "break the mould of British politics". The task was not easy because:

"We are still bitterly divided by class. Opinion is still divided between the north and south of the country. We still harbour within our country too many prejudices, whether they are prejudices related to race, sex or status." 53

"A Future that Will Work" reiterates the philosophy of "Face the Future" but is important because of the development of "the social market approach" to replace the idea of the corporatist mixed economy. In "A United Kingdom", a collection of speeches and articles written between 1984 and 1986 ⁵⁴, Owen looked at the disunity mentioned in the final passage in "A Future that Will Work". Much of the book repeats, at length, what was said in "Face the Future", the major difference being that "A United Kingdom" developed the place of PR in his philosophy. He believed that:

"Proportional Representation can provide the key to building a new consensus. As a constitutional mechanism it ensures majority government, generally through coalition government." 55

PR would be the cornerstone of a constitutional system that would create a consensus and regenerate British politics, taking it away from what Owen described as "partial and increasingly ideological" remedies.

"Proportional Representation can create new attitudes and put new hearts into our democracy; its implementation could remake the bonds that should unite us as one country." 56

The system of PR would not, however, cure all of Britain's ills; it needed to be combined with other measures and a non-dogmatic philosophy.

"It is the nature of the social democratic approach to be suspicious of dogmas and creeds In spite of our advocacy of proportional representation we do not try to depict the system as a single talisman that will alone quickly transform our future Changes of attitudes can only derive from a new constitutional settlement not from the institutional juggling that we saw in the 1960s and 1970s." 57

The "new constitutional settlement" Owen wanted to see was derived from his previously expressed belief in democracy and decentralisation. He advocated, in a revised form, the devolution of power so favoured by the Revisionists in the 1974 Labour Government.

"It is also important that the UK should start the process of devolution with the early establishment of a legislative parliament in Scotland and should make progress towards devolved government in Northern Ireland, Wales and the English regions." 58

For the approach of proportional representation to work, a pre-condition would be a change in attitudes and for politicians to place their trust in the people. To trust the people is to respect their choices, and if their choice is a hung parliament and coalitional Government all the better.

"Slowly but perceptibly the British people are sensing that the coalitions of our European community partners are successful These coalitions are not unstable nor are they weak. On the contrary, they are among the most stable democratic Governments in the democratic modern world. Nor is it an accident that so many of these countries are among the most successful economically, the most successful in combatting the effects of the recession." 59

The strength of the coalitions lies in opening negotiations, breaking down party loyalties and reducing the domination of ideology. This approach rejects the usual pattern of British two party majority Governments, and Owen therefore with some justification claimed that his policies were a "new" development in the main political debate. The new constitutional settlement and the new attitudes, Owen hoped, would unite and regenerate the nation and would bring into British politics policies more often found in Europe and with them a rejection of past philosophies.

"We need to stop thinking politically in terms of class, left or right.

We have to trust the people, in the belief that they will understand that this reform (of the constitution) will unlock the energies, talents and essential decency of all those who want to see a United Kingdom." 60

Ken Coates in "The Social Democrats" 61 claimed that in his writings Owen was trying on all sorts of other peoples' clothes.

"He has tried on Tony Benn's commitment against corporatism, that of the IWC and others to workers control and industrial democracy, odd socks from various ecologists and conservationists, and a big covering cape of decentralisation." 62

Coates suggested that because Owen had derived his principles from different sources his overall approach was inconsistent and fragmented. Owen had also completely misunderstood the nature of the Labour Party according to Coates. Owen had criticised corporatism and centralisation presuming that they had been created by the Left in the Labour Party. In fact the corporate state was the child of the Revisionists and their supporters. Coates particularly identified Jenkins as being responsible for the corporate state which developed during the Labour Governments of 1964 and 1974. For Coates the Left were the true champions of decentralisation.

Tony Benn, for example, had fought against the Civil Service to bring about decentralisation by introducing workers' control and workers' co-operatives. Coates called Owen's decentralisation the watchword of a hollow programme.

Furthermore, Coates highlighted the differences between Owen and Jenkins over the meaning of equality. Owen had argued for programmes to bring about some measure of equity. Coates believed,

"Fond though he is of the appellations, no one could describe bon
vivuer, merchant banker and European Commissioner Jenkins as fraternal,
leave alone egalitarian." 63

The only basis for unity between Owen and Jenkins was a shared belief in moderation. However Coates argued that Owen did not have a record of moderation on the issue of equity. Owen advocated policies to achieve a more equitable society which are much more radical than those suggested by Jenkins.

From his first book "The Politics of Defence" (1972) to his latest publication "A United Kingdom" (1986) Owen's basic philosophical beliefs in equality and democracy had changed in one important aspect. He now believed that liberty and freedom should not be eroded to any degree to achieve equity. This change echoed the work of Rawls and to a lesser extent Berlin. Owen still wanted equity and he still believed in a more equitable and just society. However he rejected any centralising or bureaucratic move to achieve equity. The "social market economy" is the mechanism he believed would provide the greater material equity which would put an end to poverty.

This belief in liberty, tempered by social concern leads me to view Owen not as an altruistic conservative, or as a socialist with an exaggerated desire for a free society, but as a liberal.

Chapter 3 - David Owen

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Chapter 4

Shirley Williams

Shirley Williams was born in 1930, the daughter of Sir George Catlin the academic and Vera Brittain the writer. Her parents actively encouraged her to take an interest in politics, and throughout her very comfortable childhood, which was partly spent in the USA she was in frequent contact with leading Fabians and socialists. In 1948-51 she read Politics and Economics at Somerville College, Oxford. During her time at Oxford she was active in the University Labour Club, where she met many of her future Labour Party colleagues, including Bill Rodgers, and came into contact with an earlier generation of Oxford Labour activists such as Roy Jenkins and Tony Crosland.

From 1960-64 she was the General Secretary of the Fabian Society and after unsuccessfully contesting two seats in 1954 and 1959 she was elected to the House of Commons in 1964 as the Labour member for Hitchin. She was immediately appointed PPS to the Minister of Health and then moved to the Ministry of Labour as Parliamentary Secretary from 1966-70. Between 1970-74 she held various Opposition spokesmanships until Harold Wilson placed her in the Cabinet as Secretary of State at the DES. In this position she is remembered as the Minister who enforced the comprehensive system, and caused the closure of many Grammar Schools. From 1976-79 she was Paymaster General and from 1970-81 she was a member of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee. After a dramatic and emotional resignation from the Labour Party in 1981 she co-founded the SDP. She holds general fellowships at academic institutions, being particularly connected with Nuffield College, Oxford.

Bradley, comparing her with the other members of the "Gang of Four", says:

"She is the most conservative in her thinking and the most rooted in traditional Labour philosophy. She remains firmly committed to the ideas of Beveridge and Keynes and is sceptical about proportional representation and decentralisation." 1

Let us consider this description.

Williams' main interests lie in the areas of employment policy, education, new technology, and social services. Although she is a skilled writer and a very experienced Minister her work has been criticised for lacking gravitas, and for being over emotional. Jenkins and Owen could, it seems, step back from their commitments to the Labour Party to form their philosophies dispassionately. For Williams this was impossible. Involved in the activity of politics, the bickering of Labour Party Committees, jostling for the patronage of the party leader and campaigning for causes, she could not divorce herself from everyday political events. Her writings are therefore not as consistent in their thought as Jenkins', or as perceptive as those of Owen.

In early 1963 as General Secretary of the Fabian Society, and whilst British negotiations to join the EEC were under way, Williams wrote in the "Political Quarterly" about the consequences of Britain joining the EEC. The article dealt mainly with issues which now, over twenty years later, are irrelevant. However she did compare British and European socialism. This is important because of the unifying effect the cause of Britain joining Europe had on the leadership of the SDP. She wrote:

"If Britain joins the community, the socialist group will have mixed feelings about its new Labour allies. Clearly on a host of social matters the Labour Party will find it easy to work for the same

objectives as the Continental socialists. But equally obviously there are going to be some angry confrontations between the European Socialist group with its well established harmony of purpose towards European integration, and a British Labour Party which is suspicious, reluctant to abandon potential control over foreign policy and had little respect for Continental Socialism outside of Scandinavia." 2

Clearly Williams, and certain sections of the Labour Party were at odds over the value of European socialism. When in 1979 Labour took an anti-European policy and, as Williams would claim, turned its back on internationalism, was it not also rejecting those socialist ideals formed by Revisionists in Germany and by Crossland in Britain? Williams in 1963 expressed her agreement with the European socialists when commenting on their manifesto.

"This document is no blazing manifesto. It is both sensible and possible; it is "revisionist" in tone. Public ownership is fitted into the picture as one way of restraining "dominant economic positions", attained by monopolies or oligopolies. Common planning, a commitment to full employment, and a larger share for wage-earners are all demanded The socialists propose a far reaching federal structure which alone would make their policies feasible." 3

It would seem that at the beginning of her political career she believed strongly in the idea of a united Europe, and opposed those forces in the Labour Party which opposed Revisionism and had voted against Gaitskell over defence in 1961. Her writings before 1963 are few and now irrelevant, but her actions, particularly her organisation of the Fabian Society to support Gaitskell, put her firmly into the Revisionist camp. She held the usual Revisionist belief in the mixed economy. In a review of the 1955 General Election for "The Spectator" she mentioned another SDP ideal, class de-alignment, also a Revisionist principle,

"The class structure of British society still plays a significant part in its politics. Where that structure remains largely intact, as in most rural areas, the swing to Labour was small. The deferential vote counted. but in the urban and particularly the fast growing constituencies its importance is decreasing. The traditional loyalties too are disappearing. Another decade or so may spell the end of class politics in Britain." 4

Williams was not only predicting the breakdown of class barriers. Writing in "New Society" in 1972 she gave her opinion of what would happen in Britain in the following decade. She placed great emphasis on the poor economic performance of the nation. To cure Britain's economic ills she believed:

"Stop-go policies, frequently repeated, destroy the credibility of any policy intended to inspire confidence So a solution needs to be not just economic but political, even psychological. It would lie, as much in institutional change as in fiscal or financial measures." 5

The opinions she held in her early career foreshadow many SDP policies, and further evidence of this can be found in the articles she wrote for the Revisionist magazine "Socialist Commentary". This monthly publication was the discussion forum of the Revisionists. It had a chequered history, some members of the left claiming it was funded by the CIA, and it ceased publication in 1977. It is however one of the best sources of Revisionist thought in the 1970s. Shirley Williams was asked to address the 1973 Conference meeting of "Socialist Commentary" subscribers and she turned her attention to the weakening of party loyalties in the electorate, and in particular the increasing support for the Liberal Party.

"Let me start by saying that we are faced with a major confidence crisis on the part of the electors. They are not going to the Liberals because that strange coalition of dissidents offers some remarkable positive appeal. They are not going to the Liberals because they are necessarily attracted by the increasing populist policies they are beginning to peddle But the movement of voters both Conservative and Labour to the Liberals is a comment on us rather than on Liberal programmes. And it is undoubtedly a comment on the credibility of the last few Governments." 6

Although I doubt that the same phrases would be used by her now about the Liberals, the analysis of electoral behaviour that she advanced closely corresponds to that given by the SDP supporters in 1981. That is, the mass of electors lost their confidence in politicians who promised great things and delivered few. Worse still those politicians promised benefits which would be delivered through policies founded on class bias, division, electoral voting patterns and ideology, regardless of what was possible, given Britain's economic position. Hence the electorate became disillusioned and the ground was prepared for the SDP.

Williams applied this analysis very effectively to what she saw as the problems of the Labour Party. These were firstly a conference which made decisions that no Government could possibly follow, secondly the dissatisfaction of the electorate with the Party (especially with conference decisions) and thirdly a refusal by Labour to view the world other than in terms of "gas and water socialism", nationalisation and domestic policy. In 1980, as we shall see, Williams was using the same analysis to justify joining the SDP. However in 1973 the Labour Party could, in her view, still be saved by adopting different attitudes and policies.

"The Liberals have played a very strong line about community politics and we are showing signs of moving in the same direction. In some ways that's healthy. For example, what one might call petty imperialism in local government is not a good thing We should be more aware of the desire, the anxiety of people not to be overridden and not to be subjected to bureaucratic decisions." 7

Williams then moved on to a central feature of socialism, Labour's policies of public ownership.

"In that policy document we are committed to a very major extension of public ownership. I have no quarrel myself with that principle, for what has emerged in the last few years is the almost total breakdown in some fields of private enterprise trying to operate on its own." 8

However she went on to say that nationalisation should be made to work, to be not only Morrisonian but to manufacture demanded goods.

"Perhaps we can attract some high minded young men and women out of private industry to run our future nationalised industries It is possible and has been done in Germany, but only by a process of exhaustive training by trade unions of their most promising members." 9

She concluded the article by calling for Labour to:

".... pick out of our programme not just a manifesto that is capable of being achieved but one which has been measured against the requirements of that harsh outside world." 10

Obviously she is no utopian socialist but this article does not address the fundamental differences between the Revisionists and the Left over public ownership. She wanted a "realistic" manifesto but did not define her idea of "realism" or describe the probable restraints on a party in Government. At a meeting of the Stevenage CLP she again tried to tackle the problem of public ownership.

"The extension of public ownership is an important Labour Party principle. Provided the line between the private and the public sector is clearly drawn, so that both know where they stand there is no reason for public ownership to be feared." 11

"I suspect some of the genuine concern about public ownership stems from the fear of a major extension of unrestricted state power. I would not wish to see that For I believe we need not a concentration of power in our society, but its greater dispersal. Public ownership can make that possible; publicly owned companies, they can be run as co-operatives in which many share power; they can be the pioneers of the policies of industrial democracy." 12

This goes some way toward clarifying her position on public ownership. It is worth noting that she differed slightly from Jenkins' rejection of extending public ownership as a method of furthering democracy and equality.

It is the issue of equality that Williams next considers.

"Greater equality is central to Labour's philosophy; it is a principle embedded in our social services, above all in health." 13

Williams believed in democracy and the diffusion of power as rights, which also in her opinion happened to be an efficient way to govern. In 1974 these principles could still inspire optimism.

"Here in Britain, we have a great and testing opportunity to show that democracy, equality and social justice can be combined to strengthen our own country in the difficult times through which the whole world is passing." 14

Three years later, as a leading cabinet minister, and having experienced the difficulties of Government, Shirley Williams explained the principles and policies Labour should advocate in the next General Election, which was held in spring of 1979. A change can be noticed in her writings on equality. She now combined it with a measure of individual liberty. This may be a reaction to the changed, more Conservative philosophy or to the Revisionist debates which moved towards a more decentralised power structure with more direct involvement of the electorate.

"In my view, the crucial area for fresh thinking among socialists is the need for the decentralisation of power What matters for the quality of human life is to combine the highest possible denominations of individual liberty, social provision of such services as health, education, care of the aged and the standard of living." 15

If the diffusion of power was an aim for Williams, what criteria should be used to decide who has power? Is that power accountable? And how does power restrict individual liberty? She does not adequately answer these questions. She says where power is not:

"The diffusion of power is often seen purely as an economic question where capitalist free enterprise is at one end of the scale, whilst a central state control of the economy is at the other extreme. This is a 19th century concept, and in my view over simplified." 16

But she failed to say who in Britain held power. She did suggest some areas where democracy could be extended. Firstly in worker participation, secondly in allowing council tenants to participate in running their estates, and thirdly in extending parental influence in school management. These are hardly likely to set vested interests or town hall appar^atchiks quaking in their shoes. As so often in Williams' philosophy, she approached the central issues of social democracy with purpose, but on the way she is diverted by everyday political issues. As a result of this, and of the responsibilities of office only minor writings were published until 1981. Her work at this time consisted mainly of newspaper articles or published speeches. Therefore during the very traumatic years of the split from the Labour Party her reactions to events within Labour are the best guide to her views. The recurring theme in her beliefs at this time is one of change and instability. However her writings from the General Election of 1979 to the formation of the SDP are worth analysis for two reasons. Firstly, they illustrate the vulnerability of her beliefs and their shallowness, and secondly, they provide evidence to explain why she joined the SDP and what she hoped the SDP would be. These writings act as indicators to the beliefs she held while a member of SDP.

In the General Election of 1979 Shirley Williams was not re-elected to Parliament. This, however, did not mean that she withdrew from politics. One year later when the Left was beginning to take control, Williams dismissed the idea of forming a social democratic party as:

".... all nonsense and I am not interested in a third party. I do not believe it has a future." 17

Even when the Wembley Special Conference in October accepted "Peace, Jobs and Freedom" as policy, Williams responded by proclaiming again Gaitskell's war cry to "fight and fight and fight again to save the party". It was clear then that she did not seriously believe in leaving the Labour Party. The Party had moved away from her principles and it was in the process of re-appraising the achievements of the Government in which she has been a leading member. Her main and most strongly held convictions had been ridiculed and rejected. The party was now anti-EEC, unilateralist and strongly committed to a greater amount of public ownership than she could tolerate.

Throughout the Winter of 1980 and into 1981 Williams fought against those whom she considered to be "the fascists of the left". In August of 1980 she had published with others an open letter in the "Guardian". It was largely her own work, and she tried to combine her belief in the hopelessness of a centre party and the growing belief that a breakaway from Labour might come;

"If the NEC remains committed to pursuing its present course, and if consequently, fears multiply among the people, then support for a Centre Party will strengthen as disaffected voters move away from Labour. We have already said that we will not support a Centre Party for it would lack roots and a coherent philosophy. But if the Labour Party abandons its democratic and internationalist principles the argument may grow for a new democratic socialist party to establish itself as a party of conscience and reform committed to those principles." 18

In November 1980 she told her CLP at Stevenage that she could not stand as a Labour candidate again saying:

"There is no other party in Britain today that I would contemplate joining Britain needs a party of liberty, equality, comradeship, commonsense and internationalism." 19

Slowly under pressure from other social democrats she was beginning to accept the view that she could not stay in the Labour Party. On February 10th 1981, amid scenes of emotional distress and recrimination, Williams resigned from the Labour Party claiming:

"The party I loved and worked for over so many years no longer exists it is not the democratic socialist party I joined." 20

Williams' political position in March 1981, when the SDP was formed, was extremely confused, and confusing. Her belief in the Labour Party as a force for "good" had been shattered. She was in a political no-man's land. The views she held were "outdated", based upon the political situation five years before. She was yet to come to terms with two important facts. Firstly she had failed to evaluate the impact of the New Right on the British public. Whereas Owen had moved some way to encompass the liberterian viewpoint Williams was unable to believe the British could be so, as she saw it, "right wing". Secondly, she hoped the SDP would be a social democratic version of Labour. It was not to be. Most of its members were middle-class liberals and not at all the benevolent pro-working class Fabians Williams had hoped. At the time of her resignation from the Labour Party she had been described as,

".... a somewhat indecisive woman, of middling intellectual attainments and mistaken views." 21

This is a harsh judgement but not derived solely from malice. Her views at that time were confused. However once removed from the daily political world with time to reflect and think, Williams drew the strands of her principles together and in summer 1981 published the book which is her political testament - "Politics is for People" 22. This book looks at the European Social Democratic achievement since 1945, asks how it failed, and suggests new Social Democratic policies to deal with the present problems.

The breakdown of the Social Democratic achievement was not, for Williams, the crisis of an inherently weak capitalist system or of an interventionist state smothering private enterprise. The crisis was a crisis of industrialism. A new approach, "a quantum jump" was needed in politics to come to terms with this crisis. To form a new analysis one must understand the nature and achievement of welfare democracy.

"The post-war goals of social democracy were economic growth, full employment, the abolition of poverty and equality of opportunity." 23

These goals were largely achieved using the lessons of Keynes, and thirty years of peace, prosperity and employment ensued. However, the economic House of Keynes, built on at least $3\frac{1}{2}\%$ growth per year, and viewed by Williams as the supreme economic achievement, had been destroyed by narrow minded pessimists who refused to co-operate with each other and acted to undermine GATT and the IMF to exploit the Third World. In short, national greed, illustrated by the OPEC crisis of 1973, ruined the economic achievement.

The political achievement of social democracy had been the protection and extension of democracy:

".... the social democratic and liberal consensus had a greater respect for democracy than any other political philosophy that preceeded it or any that has come after it." 24

Democracy above all other things separated social democracy from other socialist traditions, especially Marxism.

"The commitment to persuasion is of the essence of social democracy and distinguishes it from other heirs to the socialist tradition." 25

The effect of this commitment had

".... modified socialist doctrine because that socialist doctrine has had to be acceptable to the electorate. It has created the politics of gradualism, and it has also meant that socialism can only advance intermittently and will sometimes suffer setbacks." 26

At this point Williams introduced her guru, Tawney. She subscribed to his opinion that:

".... socialism in England can be achieved by the use of methods proper to democracy. It is certain that it cannot be achieved by any other. Nor even if it could should the supreme goods of civil and political liberty, in whose absence no socialist worthy of the name can breathe, be part of that price." 27

Individual liberty is therefore indispensable to socialism.

Williams, like Owen, also believed that fraternity, the third element in the revolutionary trinity, was equally indispensable. She again turned to Tawney to support her belief that socialism is about fellowship. Tawney saw the central question of socialism as:

".... not merely whether the state owns and controls the means of production it is also who owns and controls the state." 28

Williams applied this Tawney based philosophy, also dependent upon the Christian ideal of brotherhood and equality before God, to explain the success of the post-war Social Democrats. The effect of democracy and holding power had changed Social Democracy, which:

".... has evolved towards a more flexible and pragmatic philosophy. Thus in 1959 the SDP at its famous Bad Godesberg Conference recognised the rights of private ownership as well as the significance of public ownership." 29

Williams argued that any philosophy which put ideology before pragmatism and people undermined Social Democracy.

Here we have a more substantial version of Williams' principles. Democracy was the key to her belief in socialism. She looked at post-war welfare socialism as being responsible for the creation of a society which was stable, efficient and caring. But if this was so, why did the achievement fail to weather the storms of the 1970s when much of Europe was controlled by Social Democrats?

Williams attempted to answer this question by claiming that the Social Democratic governments had been the victims of their own success. They had made poverty and insecurity a half forgotten experience of the pre-war years. The electorate, two generations removed from the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s, therefore saw Social Democracy as tired and irrelevant. Worse still, socialists promoted the state as their instrument.

"Socialists need to recognise the force of the antipathy that now exists towards big government the feeling that government already has too large an influence over people's individual lives It is a powerful desire to run oneself and one's own show, not to be bothered with forms and regulations, not to be treated however rationally as a unit rather than a person." 30

The way for Social Democrats to rid themselves of the corporatist state yet maintain a socialist and democratic philosophy was decentralisation.

"Only by greater participation and decentralisation whenever it is compatible with social justice can we begin to resolve this conflict." 31

Social democracy accordingly failed to Williams because its supporters lost faith in themselves. The electorate, when faced with depression after 30 years of Social Democratic prosperity, rid themselves of the hitherto accepted conventional wisdom.

The challengers of the Social Democrats, the "romantic greens", the new right and the statist socialists are all rejected by Williams. As for the New Right and monetarism she believed that they were the negation of democratic politics:

".... societies dominated by free market capitalism are not conducive to human freedom or to democratic political systems. Men and women without access to decent working conditions, education, housing and health do not fully share in their society. They are not accorded the human dignity that is intrinsic to the democratic process." 32

Controlling the money supply was a simplistic solution because the social partnerships between employers, unions and governments can change the rate of inflation virtually regardless of the velocity of money. In the real world markets are imperfect and not likely to fit the monetarist pattern. The New Right and the New Left statisticians had, according to Williams, a curious affinity:

"This affinity is based on their common belief that the economic system should subject the human being to its own requirements, to economic laws. I believe, to the contrary, that at a certain level of sufficiency the economic system and economic laws should be subject to the requirements of the whole human being, not only to his economic needs." 33

Having constructed a theory to explain the decline of Social Democracy, and having rejected the alternatives offered as undemocratic, Williams asked,

"Where does Social Democracy go from here? Can it surmount its own sudden decline in confidence Can it put forward policies and theories that are based on the total human being, not just economic man, but economic, political and for that matter, cultural and spiritual man?" 34

The remaining part of "Politics is for People" suggested the new principles Social Democracy needed to accept, and the policies it needed to promote in order to recapture the confidence of the electorate. She fully realised that the Revisionist ideas of the 1960s, which depended upon 4% growth, were useless. Money was, as she said, "tight" in 1981,

"The industrial counties have been wildly profligate in the booming post-war decades Now as Anthony Crosland said in 1977, the party is over Conservative Governments are now offering the strong medicine of unemployment and bankruptcy The real need, however, is for a sober understanding of how the world has changed and an economic policy of modest self sustaining growth than can accommodate to it." 35

It is not only the economy that needed a radical reform but also Britain's Parliamentary system. To remove power, or rather excessive power, from the executive and restore power to the House of Commons she suggested that the power of select committees should be increased. In the past:

".... Select Committees have proved to be energetic, controversial and determined. They have laid about them vigorously, insisting on calling witnesses, demanding information, protesting when papers have been withheld and criticising government departments in outspoken terms." 36

In short Select Committees had led to more open government. They had made corporate bodies more accountable. Still the Select Committees had restricted access to certain Government papers and their work would be helped by a Freedom of Information Act.

"It is high time that Parliament put a freedom of information act on the statute book, limiting classification of documents to matters of state security." 37

Open government is only viable when decision-making was devolved, and participation increased:

"The real key to wider participation, however, lies in the devolution of decision making from the centre, both by government and also by the social partners." 38

It is interesting to note that although she entered into great detail to describe voter dissatisfaction in the 1960s and 1970s she did not advocate proportional representation. It can be seen in Jenkins' and Owen's ideology and in SDP policy that PR was an important, if not the most important, principle. Yet Williams made no mention of PR.

The other important feature of SDP policy is its pro-EEC stance. Williams fully shared this faith in the EEC.

"The damage to Britain caused by withdrawal from the European Community would be so extensive as practically to rule it out of practical politics. Quite apart from the damage to British trade there would be a virtual cessation of international investment in Britain, which has been the main beneficiary of American investment in the European community since our original entry in 1973." 39

She hoped that the EEC would develop a common stance on foreign policy and develop the original intentions of the Treaty of Rome. Unilateral nuclear disarmament is dismissed, but the possibility of peace and dialogue could be realised through the political institutions of the community.

"Unilateral nuclear disarmament cannot be a substitute for creating effective political institutions to control arms and to prevent war. It is in building up and strengthening such institutions that the community could be crucial, as it could be crucial for a new deal for the developing world." 40

British involvement in NATO, and the "special relationship" between the USA and Britain did not merit a mention. Neither did the possible reaction of the super-powers to a European political force as envisaged by Williams. The idea of Europe is not just a misty-eyed belief in the ideal of European unity. She effectively argued for reform of the Common Agricultural policy, for changes in the EEC budget. The Community could act to implement the recommendations of the "Brandt" and "North-South" reports. Having attempted to reform the political institutions governing the economic climate she moved on to suggest a philosophy for industrial re-generation.

The "New Technologies" are seen by Williams as being the key to economic recovery. She did not display the Luddite tendency of rejecting new methods of production because they were not labour intensive.

"The achievement of full employment will not at first be made easier by the advent of the new technologies. They will create jobs, most of them in the information sector but they will destroy others, especially routine office work and repetitive manufacturing jobs." 41

Her objective in introducing new technologies was to accept the inevitable whilst still easing the pain of those who would lose their jobs. She felt that the technology itself was "morally neutral". It was the challenges which the introduction of that technology created and the resulting problems which called for moral decisions.

"It is rather a challenge to those who are responsible for managing industry and the unions to find more acceptable and humane ways of working." 42

The Croslandite objective of full employment was rejected as unattainable in its original sense. Patterns of work and leisure would change, and instrumental in this was an adequate training scheme for potential workers. This training could be based on apprenticeships, adult re-training and increasing financial support to those in further and higher education.

"These three elements of a national training programme could help transform Britain's economic prospects. It would take time But even in the intervening years the atmosphere among young people and unemployed people would be transformed. It deserves a high priority."

These schemes should be combined with a reduction in the duration of working lives, increased government help to support employers in creating jobs, and a change in the attitudes of trade unions.

Participation by unionists was a way to reduce opposition to new technology. In spirit she broadly supported in spirit legislation to remove legal immunity from unions. But she mixed this with more industrial democracy and participation of workers in management. Unions however were regarded as useful and responsible partners in incomes policies and the social contract.

The involvement of individuals was the priority in Williams' philosophy for social services. Privatisation was dismissed as being not social democratic. However, the welfare state had become centralised, undemocratic and impersonal. The way to reverse this trend was by client participation.

"The social services lend themselves to participation, not just by the workers but by the community as well. Given that professional interests and the public interest in the social services may diverge, it is important that workers and clients are both represented on participatory bodies." 44

Volunteers in the welfare services could be given greater priority. However when Owen discussed volunteers in the Health Service he underpinned their efforts with the philosophy of altruism. Williams disappointingly did not. A great deal of hard fact verifying her conclusions was given but she offered no reason why her policy was good as well as being efficient.

In the concluding chapter of "Politics is for People" Williams reiterated the policies she had outlined in detail in the previous chapters. At the beginning of the book she promised a "new" approach, a more up to date, dynamic form of Social Democracy. However, Ken Coates in his book "The Social Democrats" 45 believed that Williams offered nothing new, only the polished bones of a failed Revisionist policy. In a sense this was true. No new concept of equality was explained, no

development of fraternity or altruism, and no acceptance of the influence of the New Right on Social Democracy. Coates saw Williams as dabbling in every liberal tendency from Tawney, E.F. Schumacher and the ecologists to the Brandt commissioners. However no consistent set of policies or principles emerged from so many diverse sources.

The influence of "Politics is for People" on the principles of the SDP was limited. It did not have the same effect as Owen's "Face the Future" which very effectively pulled together the threads of social democracy after formation of the SDP. Williams ignored the changing concept of equality, did not fully discuss public ownership and did not mention proportional representation. The usual criticism levelled at her is that her principles would form a good Mark II Labour Party. Her policies were shared only by William Rodgers from the "Gang of Four". She believed that Owen was right wing and Jenkins a pragmatic careerist. Finally, her beliefs as expressed in "Politics is for People" were muddled and showed an attachment to the policies of Gaitskell's Labour Party.

In 1985 Williams published a book which dealt mainly with the problems of unemployment and technology. Most of the policies expressed in this book, "A Job to Live", ⁴⁶ had already been expressed in "Politics is for People". The book was divided into two parts. The first section dealt with job creation and education. The second section asked if government could use the new technology to open society to greater participation. The basic assumption of the book is that work is an essential element in human life and happiness. This assumption is one which Williams shares with E.F. Schumacher, whom she quotes as saying:

".... the entire experience of mankind demonstrates clearly that useful work, adequately rewarded in some combination of material and non-material things, is a central need of human beings, even a basic yearning of the human spirit." ⁴⁷

However, the New Right influence was more marked in "A Job to Live" and the desire of the individual to be free of the state is given more attention.

"The desire to recover individuality also manifests itself in a growing rejection of mass production. As people get used to a higher standard of living they want to be able to express personal choices in their own lives, not to be driven into uniformity." 48

She believed, and fully realised that what she labelled "a paradigm shift" had occurred in the political economy in favour of the New Right. She tempered this with a dose of decentralisation.

"Central governments fail to learn the lesson that they can destroy initiative and innovation by their own heavy-handedness. In Britain central government has become highly interventionist It is a policy of central control that flies in the face of the new trends in advanced economies." 49

Ownership was left undiscussed, except for this brief statement.

"The best models, I believe, will be those in which ownership itself is directly shared, leading to a common commitment to the firm's success." 50

Is this an acceptance of the New Right ideal of a property and share owning democracy? We are not told because the debate about ownership is not developed. In addition the role of the publicly owned industries in using the new technology for training or providing employment is largely ignored. She has been criticised for

looking at Britain's problems with the preconceptions and the prejudices of the 1970s. An example of this is her view of public industries not as profit-making but as mechanisms of social support for the less fortunate members of society. The remainder of "A Job to Live" repeated the policies to be found in "Politics is for People".

Williams' beliefs were derived from the traditions of the Revisionists under Gaitskell. Unlike Jenkins or Owen she did not develop her thought beyond the concepts held by the Revisionists and which were worked into the "corporatist" system. It may, however, be asked if her enthusiasm for decentralisation and devolution of power was compatible with a "corporatist" position? Considering the evidence provided in her writings I believe that there is a fundamental inconsistency in her policies concerning the corporatist-decentralisation issue. Williams' economic and social policies required the intervention of a strong central organisation. Her policies to reduce unemployment, to standardise education, to promote new technology could not be implemented by regional governments alone. At the very least national government would finance and give direction to such policies. The form of wage control promoted by Williams would need the force of national government behind it. Even then, as with the social contract of the 1970s, local disputes, local economic differences would upset the set formula of wage control. If Williams wished to devolve only services such as housing, social services and education then she was not suggesting a radical reform but was merely tinkering with the present system of administration. She suggested that only three tiers of administration should suffice, local, regional and national. The institution of this system would effectively scupper her policies on wage control, unemployment, education and new technology which could only be implemented by an active centralised government. Williams could not reconcile her belief in devolution with the need for centralised government to carry out her policies. This was an important flaw in her political position.

If we consider Williams' record as a minister, the incompatibility of her policies with her belief in decentralisation becomes evident. As the Secretary of State for Prices, and as Secretary of State for Education Williams was an important member of an administration that increased the role of central government. She was responsible for a policy which for the first time in a Britain not at war tried effectively to control and set prices by a method other than cash subsidy. She was responsible for the introduction of a system of comprehensive education and increased the influence of Whitehall in the activities of local education authorities. At the same time she strongly advocated devolution for Wales and Scotland. This could be considered as inconsistency. In 1985 she believed in a system of devolution of power incompatible with her centralising policies. She gave no explanation of how or why since 1979 she has become an enthusiastic believer in decentralisation.

Overall her writings do not display the same depth or intellectual vigour as those of Owen or Jenkins. She has not made the required "quantum leap" she asks for at the beginning of "Politics is for People" to come to terms with Britain's declining industrial economy and the effect of the New Right. The claim made by Ian Bradley at the beginning of this chapter would appear to be quite correct. Shirley Williams was the most conservative thinker in the SDP leadership, in that she held on to the ideas of Gaitskell's Labour Party.

Chapter 4 Shirley Williams

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CHAPTER 5
The Tawney Society

In order to present a comprehensive study of the political principles of the SDP it is not enough to examine the beliefs of the leadership only. Therefore in this chapter it is my intention to consider the policy-making procedures of the SDP and the policies presented to the electorate at the 1987 General Election. It is also necessary to examine the principles of influential members of the SDP who were outside the leadership.

Three times every year around six hundred members of the SDP met as the "Council for Social Democracy" to debate, argue, and decide policy. Once every year the SDP conference met and performed a similar function, but the members of the two conference groups were not necessarily the same people. In both cases members of the conferences were elected by meetings of ordinary SDP subscribers. Each policy motion the conferences produced was presented to the National (Executive) Committee, which consisted of members elected in a national postal ballot, a President elected in the same way, and the SDP Parliamentary Leader and some MPs. It was at this level that real power lay and at which policy was decided. The conferences were by comparison talking shops. They may have presented motions to the National group but they did not have to be accepted and could have been vetoed. The National (Executive) Committee was dominated by David Owen. Although some voices of dissent were raised and Owen was criticised for moving the SDP to the right, his authority was rarely challenged. It will, therefore, come as no surprise to see that much of the policy was closely related to Owen's thought. The principles, beliefs and policies of the SDP were presented to the electorate during the 1987 General Election in a slim volume entitled, "The Time Has Come" ¹ At that time the SDP was engaged in an electoral coalition with the Liberal Party known as the "Alliance". The book is ascribed jointly to David Owen and David Steel who was then leader of the Liberal Party.

Both the leaders believed that it was necessary to outline their Parties' fundamental principles. It is interesting to note that one addresses liberty, the other equality.

"The Liberal Party exists to build a Liberal Society in which every citizen shall possess liberty, property and security, and none shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity. Its chief care is for the rights and opportunities of the individual, and in all spheres it sets freedom first." 2

The SDP exists

"to create an open classless and more equal society which rejects prejudice based on sex, race, colour or religion." 3

However, in "The Time Has Come" it was denied that the SDP had an ideology.

"The SDP has ideals rather than ideology. It has therefore been able to draw the best of several political traditions." 4

Of course no party wishes to be described as ideological because that implies intolerance, prejudice and a subjective view of society. There is, however, a very fine line, if any at all, between ideals and ideology. It is a debate over words and their social meanings, and to avoid confusions I will call the SDP's ideals their principles. A summary of SDP objectives is provided.

"Social democrats want to redistribute political, social and economic power in order that the potential of all people to lead fulfilling lives and to make a positive contribution to society is realised." 5

It could be subscribed to by any person within the leftist spectrum. Substitute "Democratic Socialists" for "Social Democrats" and I presume the Labour Party leadership would find no objections to endorsing the statement. But however noble the sentiments expressed may be, they do not necessarily reflect the policy of a party. In fact the 1977 Soviet Constitution reads as a model of liberal, democratic tolerance, but Soviet policy, in spite of "glasnost" suggests otherwise. We should ask if Alliance policies matched their principles.

To redistribute political power, and to increase the freedom of the citizen the Alliance proposed to reform Government on four principles:

"Firstly, that government should be by and for all citizens. Secondly, that decisions should be made as close as possible to the people affected and with their active involvement. Thirdly, that the rights of individuals and minorities must be properly protected, and the laws must be seen to be fair to all citizens. Fourthly, that the survival of a free democracy depends on the rule of law." ⁶

The first objective would be achieved by the introduction of proportional representation, a favourite Owenite cause. The Alliance felt that a large group of voters and significant shades of opinions were never heard, and that a mandate to govern could be achieved without the consent of the majority of electors.

"The SDP and the Liberal Party have come to the same conclusion. We have considered the various systems in use throughout the world and favour a system of community proportional representation which is broadly similar to that in operation in the Republic of Ireland The great advantage of this system is that it enable voters to choose between candidates as well as parties." ⁷

Multi-member constituencies could be formed, and the effect on government would be considerable. Coalitions would be the norm and it had, according to SDP thinking:

".... ensured majority governments following stable and consensual policies throughout Western Europe since the Second World War." 8

The "two party system" would end, and the Prime Ministerial prerogative of choosing a politically acceptable dissolution date would be removed by the introduction of fixed term Parliaments. The standing committees of the House of Commons would be given wider powers to control the Executive, and more debating time would be provided for Private Members Bills. The oppositional and conflictual nature of the Commons would be altered by a "thorough overhaul" of the archaic procedures and outdated timetabling of legislation.

It was not only the Commons that was to be reformed.

"It is unacceptable that there should still be a legislative role for peers merely by virtue of heredity. We need a reformed Second Chamber which includes a regional dimension. We would match these reforms of the Westminster Parliament with a programme of devolution and decentralisation - taking power from the centre and bringing a whole range of services under democratic regional control." 9

National parliaments would be given to Wales and Scotland, and the English regions would gain regional assemblies funded by a local income tax as would be the one tier of local government below them. This may in effect have abolished County Councils.

To ensure more open government the Alliance intended to repeal Section 2 of the 1911 Official Secrets Act and replace it with a Freedom of Information Act giving citizens rights of access and rights of protection. The Security Services would be ruled by a Committee of Privy Councillors, and public servants would work to a charter of rights and responsibilities free from political pressure.

All of the above mentioned policies are common to the writings of the three SDP leaders and to most SDP members and organisations. A complementary measure would be the introduction of a "Bill of Rights" sometimes called a "Bill of Human Rights" but closely following the European Convention on Human Rights. A human rights Commission would be established to monitor the enactment of any laws and existing Commissions of Equal Opportunity and Race Relations would be abolished. Women would be given more support to develop their potential and 50% of seats on public bodies would be filled by women within a decade if the Alliance had taken power. Greater consultation with disabled people, and with racial minorities, supported by stronger laws to forbid discrimination, would have been given a high priority.

The Alliance also tried to steal some Conservative thunder by advocating more support for the rule of law. Although it did not advocate the "law and order", "short sharp shock" type of Conservative view, it did condemn attempts to undermine the police force. Decentralisation of police services was again the key to success. The involvement of the community in a police complaints procedure and in police authorities would have increased the accountability of, and trust in, the police force. To oversee this procedure a Ministry of Justice was to be established.

"The Alliance Parties propose nothing less than a new constitutional settlement. We believe fundamental political reform is the key to the creation of a more just society." 10

Nowhere in the section of the book concerned with the reform of the constitution does the word "equality" appear, nor do variations of the word. It is surprising that greater emphasis is not placed on "equality" considering the aim of the SDP constitution to create a more equal society, and also considering the philosophies of the SDP leadership, especially Williams, which focused upon types of "equality". However, the economic policies of the SDP which we will examine next reflected more strongly the aims of the SDP Constitution.

Those economic policies rejected the laissez faire approach to running Britain's industry.

"If the modern economy is to work effectively, government must inevitably play an active role. The role of the state in enabling change can be crucial both in what it does, and does not do. Laissez faire is not adequate to assure competition in the market place, let alone to meet our other objectives." 11

The state must act to stop monopoly firms or trades unions from dictating the condition of the market and must also ensure fair competition. A feature of this control carried out by the state is the redistribution of rewards from inherited wealth and excessive monopoly profit to help eliminate poverty. The revenue raised from such taxation would help pay for social or welfare services.

"Social Democrats and Liberals believe that the state should provide high-quality health care and education services, but should not have a monopoly of those services. We value the significant contribution which the voluntary organisations and churches make in these spheres." 12

This appreciation of the voluntary services is an echo of Owen's praise of "altruism". The Alliance's principles of ownership, a key issue, are summed up in the phrase "The Partnership Economy". The partnership should exist between employer and employee and capital and labour. In the past,

"The ideological battle between employers and trade unions has bred a mutual suspicion, lack of frankness, and too often outright bloody mindedness." 13

Partnership was to be created by employee participation, employee share ownership, and profit sharing. The trade unions would have their part to play as a force for positive change. The anti-union approach of the Conservatives is rejected, but the accountability of unions to members by legislation to ensure democracy was supported. The object of wider share ownership in "The Partnership Economy" was to break down the concentration of wealth in Britain. The Alliance did not feel that the partnership needed to regenerate the economy would be gained by polite requests. It proposed legislation to ensure, and enforce, employee participation democracy.

Partnership, it is understood, would not redistribute income to combat poverty. Reform of the tax and social security systems would have been used to achieve that aim.

"The Alliance believes that the objectives which the social security and tax systems must meet are to attack poverty, to ensure equal treatment and to promote enterprise." 14

Benefits would be related to needs in one payment in an integrated tax/benefit system administered through PAYE. This scheme has often been called tax crediting and would remove taxation from the lower paid and ensure a basic income. This is certainly a move towards "greater equality" but is not advertised as such. It is a fundamental change in the way that the government distributes benefit, the responsibility of claiming being moved from the recipient to the administration. It was intended that revenues be taken from the better off members of society, the rich, and redistributed to the poor. However, according to the Alliance, the only effective way to close the gap between rich and poor was to regenerate the economy. The priority in the regeneration of the economy was the reduction of unemployment.

"Unemployment is neither acceptable nor inevitable. Our priorities for action are young unemployed people and those unemployed for over a year. Unemployment entails a human and social cost, but also an economic one." 15

To achieve a reduction in unemployment the Alliance would have created jobs through increased public spending on job schemes, through an incomes strategy, and through controlling the monetary system by joining the EMS. However incentives would have been offered to small businesses and job creating employers, and there would have been penalties for those employers who gave excessive pay rises. These penalties were termed an "inflation tax".

The basic principles of Alliance policy concerning the economy were broadly shared by their political rivals the Labour Party in 1987. However when the Labour Party proclaimed its policies it did so with emphasis on "equality" and common ownership. The Alliance seemed determined not to give any emphasis to "equality". This may have been an electoral tactic to attract Conservative support. But it was just as likely to be a result of the writings of Jenkins and Owen in which equality was interpreted from the standpoint of equity, or justice or fairness. The policies of the Alliance in 1987 were never labelled as being socialist. Indeed, Jenkins and Owen called themselves non-socialist radicals. However, Williams did call herself socialist, and the SDP has historical connections with socialist thinkers such as Tawney and Keynes.

In the introduction of this study the question is asked "What is the nature of the SDP' principles?" On the key issue of "equality and ownership" SDP policy in 1987 could not be described as socialist. If this is the case we may now ask which principles have replaced "equality and common ownership"?

"Altruism", the ideal beloved by David Owen, was surprisingly not mentioned often and did not underpin the Alliance ideas of social reform, nor did Williams' breed of Tawneyism. Owen believed that the Alliance's principles were those which the Conservatives and the Labour Party felt were mutually exclusive at that time.

".... enterprise and welfare, a market economy and social justice, economic development and environmental integrity, equality for women and support for the family, British achievement and international co-operation." 16

This is good prose for fighting elections but it gives no help to anyone looking for key issues and principles to explain SDP principles. The most convincing explanation of those principles which replaced "equality and common ownership" is that there are no definite replacements. The philosophy behind SDP policy in 1987 is best described as "social liberalism".

"A philosophy of social liberalism, first apparent in the later Gladstone administrations and articulated towards the end of the century by Liberal thinkers like Hobhouse and T.H. Green, often working with like-minded Fabians, came to flower in the great Liberal Government of 1906, which laid the foundations of the welfare state." 17

Such a philosophy of "social liberalism" is close to Jenkins' principles. Jenkins favoured a "non-ideological" radical approach. He drew his inspiration from the Fabians and also importantly showed a great admiration for the 1906 Asquith Liberal Government. His attitude was pragmatic, flexible and a mix of Fabian and Asquithian preconceptions about society. It might be thought that SDP policy reflected Jenkins' principles precisely because it was in an alliance with the party of Asquith and Beveridge. The SDP policy, formed with the Liberals, did not however vary in any significant way from what may be called unadulterated SDP Conference decided policy. In short the Liberals' influence was not great. The principles in Alliance policy were, like Jenkins' principles, pragmatic, cautious and reformist, not so much in the tradition of Crosland and Gaitskell as in that of Asquith and Keynes.

SDP "official" policy was formed with one eye fixed on elections and obviously it was influenced by the changing political climate. However, a group within the SDP called the "Tawney Society" did not need to take such great notice of elections

and everyday politics. The Tawney Society was to the SDP what the Fabian Society is to the Labour Party. It was formed mainly by intellectuals or academics but its influence was very considerable, and the documents it produced on SDP principles were taken seriously by the Party's leadership. The cautious and long term nature of the pamphlets that the Tawney Society issued make them a valuable pointer to the way SDP principles may have developed. The most useful "Tawney Society" pamphlet was written by Stephen Mennell of Exeter University and SDP candidate for Exeter in 1983. It was entitled, "On Social Democratic Ideology" ¹⁸ Mennell seeks to trace the roots of SDP ideology in

".... the original moral and social concerns of the socialist and radical traditions." ¹⁹

Mennell set the scene of his work by outlining the inherently confused nature of the ideological melee, and also rejected Jenkins fear of being seen as ideological. Mennell has no shame in using "ideology" to mean what

".... in more everyday language is often called "philosophy" or "principles"." ²⁰

The value of ideology should, believed Mennell, be very high in a party such as the SDP which could appear as all things to all men and lose its sense of direction. He tackled first in his analysis the fundamental liberal principle that in any contest between the rights of the individual and those of the state, individual rights are paramount.

".... to say that one is against the principle of freedom of choice is like coming out in favour of sin one of the commonest issues in politics is the case of the Conflict between individual choice and

social welfare. Democratic decisions are very often a matter of weighing collective and individual interests against each other." 21

He resolved this conflict thus:

"Social Democracy is a collectivist rather than an individualistic tradition. What that means is that social democrats do not see individuals as the separate "atoms" of society: the "freedom of the individual" is a philosophic myth, because there are always many interdependent individuals whose interdependence in society always to a greater or lesser extent limits the "freedom" of each of them." 22

An interesting contradiction indeed to the apparent championing of the individual by Owen, and to Alliance policy. Decisions should be made not with reference to individual freedom but to cost benefit analysis based on the Pigovian view of the distinction between private and social net costs. Mennell felt:

"Such a view is inevitable once one moved away from the (classical) liberal notions of society standing over as something apart from its component atoms, separate "individuals" each independently exercising a monad-like judgement unaffected by others." 23

The aim of social democrats should be to control the social forces generated in an interdependent society. The control must however be democratic. It must not be translated as state control, which is a distortion of early socialist thinking.

"The state must obviously retain a major role in economic management; its leading part in the establishment of an effective forum for the development of a measure of consensus on wages, prices and economic prospects is unavoidable. But social democrats are convinced decentralisers of power and control." 24

Power must not be seen as being concentrated solely in the hands of a class or an economic group, as Mennell alleged the Labour Party did. To create, or encourage the growth of interdependent collectivism,

".... the ethic required will not be a new individualism diluted by altruism. It will be a new Collectivist ethic, identifying with a collectivity broader than a single economic class or even a single nation, and accepting collective responsibility for rectifying misfortunes which beset countless people through no individual fault of their own, not necessarily through the intentions of any other individuals." 25

Mennell fired a well aimed shot across the bows of thinkers such as Owen. However he concurred with the Owenite view that the SDP was better served tracing its roots to continental social democracy than the species of social democracy developed by the Liberal Party after they abandoned individualism. David Marquand, however, criticises this view, which ignores British Fabianism. Marquand writes to Mennell:

"I don't think you have got the intellectual ancestry of British Social Democracy right. You imply that it is part of continental social democracy. Continental social democracy is essentially revisionist, in the sense that it was born out of

a reaction against classical Marxism British social democracy is the child not only of a very sui generis British tradition of democratic socialism, but also of an equally sui generis tradition of "social liberalism" which has no real continental equivalent." 26

Mennell politely dismissed Marquand's argument as "academic". Mennell argued that "social liberalism" can be applied to many political parties. Only those parties such as the German SDP who retained collectivism over individualism are truly social democrats. As, in Mennell's view, the SDP did place collectivism over individualism it could claim to be social democratic in the continental socialist tradition. If this was so, the philosophy of Owen has a contradiction within itself. If Owen is an individualist he cannot, according to Mennell, draw from the continental tradition. Roy Jenkins, on the other hand, could claim ancestry for his principles in both traditions of "social liberalism" and "continental social democracy" because he retains a more collectivist view.

Marquand explained his theory in more detail in his pamphlet "Russet-Coated Captains: The Challenge of Social Democracy". 27 He believed that social democracy in Britain had a number of definite strands of opinion. The first discussed is Fabian Socialism:

"Central to the Fabian tradition was an unswerving commitment to democracy, to gradualism, and therefore to persuasion. Socialism, the early Fabians insisted again and again, was implied by democracy." 28

This reflected the SDP's commitment to the politics of persuasion, and their view that without democracy socialism was only a modified form of authoritarian rule. However the Revisionists of the 1950s rejected the Fabian idea of socialised

means of production as outdated. Armed with theories of Keynesian economics they believed that the pattern of ownership could stay the same but that by progressive taxation, high social expenditure and Government intervention social injustice could be eradicated.

The second strand in Social Democracy, according to Marquand, was Asquithian Liberalism. This philosophy is committed to:

".... personal freedom, individual initiative and self realisation. But they stood the nineteenth century liberal interpretation of freedom on its head. Where the classical liberals saw the state as enemy, the New Liberals saw it as a potential ally The state had therefore to be called in to redress the balance of the market: to protect the weak against the depredations of the strong, and to give them the opportunity of self realisation which lay at the heart of the whole liberal ethic." 29

These Liberals wished, as L.T. Hobhouse put it,

"to restore the social conception of property to its right place." 30

The state could create an environment in which citizens could realise their own aims; it could not tell them what those aims were.

These two strands, Marquand suggested, had been drawn together to form an ideology which was:

"equally committed to the values of personal freedom and social equality. They know of course, that in the real world these

values cannot always be reconciled that in short, they have to be traded off against each other." 31

A more important element in Marquand's view of Social Democracy is his belief in the Social Democratic commitment to the open society, to:

"democratic methods, to free enquiry, to rational debate, to incremental change and above all to experimental methods in politics." 32

The idea of the open society was borrowed from Sir Karl Popper, and it holds as a fundamental truth the stupidity of doctrine and dogma and the value of tolerance. It also attached great importance to the influence of the unintended consequences in politics. All political judgements must be tentative and provisional. Open societies diffuse power and this suited the SDP belief in decentralised power. Doctrines, or rather philosophies, should compete in elections for the electorate to accept them or reject them. Popper's idea of the open society rejected utopianism. Pragmatism does have a role in the SDP policy, and in the writings of Jenkins and Owen in particular. Marquand also cited pragmatism as a reason why social democrats believed in the mixed economy.

"Social Democrats are committed to the mixed economy partly for pragmatic reasons. Despite its faults the mixed economy is overwhelmingly the most successful which mankind has ever known They are committed to it because it is in the mixed economy that their commitments to liberty, equality and the Open Society can best be realised in practice." 33

The Social Democratic idea of the mixed economy, suggested by Marquand was much discussed in the Tawney Society; and Alex de Mont examined one particular part of that economy, the "social market" much favoured by David Owen, and published his findings in a Tawney pamphlet called "A Theory of the Social Market". 34

De Mont believed that the social market can save social democracy from the Left who claimed that social democracy has delayed the emergence of a socialist society by combining capitalism with social justice. The New Right claimed that the mixed economy bred paternalism and state bureaucracy. De Mont believed that the social market eliminated paternalism. De Mont also accepted the serious problems of "old style social democracy" and attempted to re-work the ideals of the mixed economy into a theory which would offer a solution to Britain's economic problems. If de Mont's theory is dependent on the idea of "the market" in a monetarist British economy, how did his theory differ from that of the monetarists?

"Firstly Social Democrats favour political intervention as a device for correcting market failures, either to make provision for public goods or to remedy perceived differences between private and social costs. Secondly Social Democrats assume that the liberal commitment to negative freedom, is a one-sided and limited view which fails to do justice to the moral ideals which it is held to embody." 35

This implies that social democrats give preference to the social rights of the individual over the operation of the market. The state, within a liberal democracy therefore pursues specific social objectives to correct market failures.

"It is the pursuit of these objectives constrained by considerations of liberal freedoms which determines the character of the balance between the public and private sectors in the mixed economy." 36

The social market society rebels against the bureaucracy of the corporate social democracy of the 1970s. The reconstructed version for the 1980s:

".... encompasses the themes of democratisation of power in industry, the development of deregulation and competition policies to break open a number of public and private monopolies, the decentralisation of government at all levels, the enhancement of social rather than economic equality the expansion of wider patterns of ownership." 37

The state would maintain a "safety net" of welfare services but also increase individual initiatives. This is a tall order for any philosophy to turn its attention to. Reconstructed social democracy, which de Mont argued could combine freedom and social justice, aspired to fulfil the aims listed above. The theory also took in the liberal principles of pluralism, tolerance and consensus. At the heart of social democracy and the social market theory,

".... is an implicit assumption about the existence of a community which is capable of harmonising, transforming and redefining particular economic interests in a manner which can claim the social allegiance of members of the community." 38

Essentially de Mont argued for the social market against the Right, and focused upon the benefits to the economy from both social justice and wealth producing markets. Which people benefit from the social justice, and how much is put into that fund is discussed in a Tawney pamphlet, "Unveiling the Right" 39. This is the work of "The John Rawls Creative Study Group" and is edited by Kevin Carey. The Group addressed the above questions by trying to apply Rawls' principles of justice and equality. A just Government should, according to the Rawls Group, divide its activity into four branches. The first is to keep prices

stable and control markets. The second is to maintain reasonably full employment. The third is to transfer resources to ensure a social welfare safety net. The fourth is to distribute taxation and property rights to ensure justice. However as Rawls' first principle is liberty:

".... individuals must be permitted to buy goods in the free market in such amounts that they do not thereby reduce the liberties of others." 40

It is not clear if this applies to health or education. If these goods are provided in the free market the familiar anomaly of classes of service arise.

The Group attempted to merge Rawls' principles with a social market approach. They ran up against the problem which all SDP writers must eventually confront. How can the values of liberty and equality be combined into a philosophy which is logically consistent? This question runs through all SDP writings. The Rawls Study Group handled it very well. They introduced into Rawls' theories of justice the concept of the social market economy much favoured by David Owen. This approach contended that the best way to generate wealth was to allow entrepreneurs freedom in the market place. The theory allowed for choice, self interest and self advancement. It also accepted that different individuals would be able to buy for themselves different levels of service. However there must also be an equal opportunity for every individual to create wealth. The state would fund institutions that would support the disadvantaged and provide a safety net by setting a minimum standard of living. The Group claimed,

"A social market approach involves the promotion of a free market system. In it, the basic institutions would guarantee a free enterprise economy. The state would deliberately try to create

conditions for economic growth, on the principle that this would best meet the needs of the disadvantaged It would encourage the genuine freedom of enterprise rather than the cosy cushioning of large scale semi-monopolies The increased profits from such deregulation of business to effect redistribution in favour of the least advantaged." 41

This view sees "justice as fairness" and the pamphlet believed that on the basis of "a social market economy":

".... a society constructed according to Rawls' principles begins to look uncannily like the society to which SDP policies would lead." 42

The work of the pamphlet would, despite its title, move the principles of the SDP away from socialism and into liberalism. Other pamphlets especially Marquand's have already pushed SDP principles towards liberalism. And this shift of emphasis towards liberal views had changed their conception of equality.

"It can be hardly emphasised strongly enough that the subject matter of SDP Social policy is the inexorable reduction of inequality and not the pursuit of equality." 43

The abstract ideal of equality has been superceded by the ideal of liberty. The authors of "Unveiling the Right" went as far as to say that the pursuit of equality poses an unacceptable threat to the enjoyment of liberty. Mark Goyder interpreted this promotion of liberty over equality in the following way:

"Social Democracy commits us to the greatest degree of equality that is consistent with human independence and self reliance." 44

It would seem that Goyder and the other Tawney writers wanted the best of both worlds. They failed to recognise the argument that distribution to the poor requires some administrative mechanism. They seemed to favour a system without control and possibly even dependent on charitable gifts. They interpreted liberty as freedom without mentioning the responsibilities of that freedom. They also failed to give any credence to the argument that to enable a person to be involved in society by welfare benefits also increases that person's liberty. Giving such liberty is a positive benefit of the welfare state. If the Tawney Society writers intended only to encourage egalitarian policies when convenient, did they become nothing more than Tory Democrats? Policies to encourage liberty had a well worked out philosophy to support them, but equality has become merely a welcome by-product. The Tawney writers should have asked themselves if they had relegated the SDP Constitutional idea "to create and defend an open, classless and more equal society" into the same position as Labour Party's Clause IV? The answers to these questions were not given. Apologists for the Tawney writers could say that I have over exaggerated their relegation of equality, and that the two values of liberty and equality are complementary and that the welfare state concept of equality is a very narrow materialistic one. It is nonsense, they could say, to claim welfare would be in the hands of the private sector as the state would provide a social minimum, a safety net. The Constitutional statement is, like Clause IV, open to interpretation. The advantage of pursuing a flexible and pragmatic policy to achieve greater equality is that such a policy can respond to changing economic conditions. It is therefore more likely to succeed than a rigid plan. Goyder described the moral code which should support any decisions made pragmatically. For that moral code he turned to Victorian values. However they are not the same values that present-day Conservatives believe in. Goyder turned to William Morris for moral guidance:

"What I mean by socialism is a condition of society in which there should be neither rich nor poor, neither master nor master's man in which all men would be living in equality of condition the realisation at least of the meaning of the word commonwealth." 45

However Morris' concept of a "commonwealth" was too abstract to form a cornerstone of Goyder's moral code. He added to it R.H. Tawney's version of redistribution as:

".... The pooling of surplus resources by means of taxation and the use of the funds thus obtained to make accessible to all, irrespective of their income or occupation and social position, the conditions of civilisation which, in the absence of such measures can only be enjoyed by the rich." 46

Again very commendable sentiments but too abstract. Much of Goyder's work is in the same generalising style. He did not provide a suitable moral code, or even explain fully the concept of "Two Dimensional Social Democracy". A more substantial explanation is given by Dorothy Emmet in "The Moral Roots of Social Democracy" 47

Professor Emmet believed that the essential condition for the existence of a "moral democracy" is the existence of an attitude of generosity of spirit. This is similar to Owen's view of altruism. This "generosity of spirit" ensures welfare institutions will give each adult person due recognition. If citizens protested that some people received better treatment from the state, and if in practice a class of lesser citizens is perceived to grow, inequality arises.

Emmet subscribed to Tawney's view of democracy as a philosophical value rather than a numerical notion. However in one respect she disagreed with Williams about Tawney. Williams believed that Tawney was:

".... to political thought what Vaughan Williams was to music:
pastoral, gentle, humane." 48

Emmet comments:

"Those of us who listened to Tawney will hardly recognise the master of moral invective in a distinguished style under this description." 49

Equality is not a concept which occurs to ease existence, to act as a soporific to lull a disgruntled class into a sense of security as Williams suggested. For Emmet equality was the:

".... insistence that everyone should have sufficient means of living as a full member of the community." 50

For an equitable state to be realised the "moral democracy" must control vested power and interests. It was to do this using three forces .

The first force is "custom" which influences individual and state moral decisions mainly through education, religion and public opinion. Elements in many "customs" give credence to egalitarian principles, and can ease the introduction of measures weakening the power of vested interests. Customs also engender a community feeling and encourage altruism. Emmet also noted that they can work, and often do work, to encourage policies of social stabilisation or reaction.

Secondly she advocated the use of moral principles.

"Moral principles can be taken as defining not only how people are expected to behave, but how they ought to behave." 51

Principles should be applied with consistency, without fear or favour. This is the concept of "justice as fairness". This is the concept of "justice as fairness". Emmet realised that "fairness" was not an easy concept to deal with.

"It is not always easy to say what is fair, since what would be fair in one set of circumstances could be unfair in another." 52

We return again to the relative nature of equality, and the pragmatism which underlies most SDP conceptions of it. Emmet felt that it is unfair to exploit others, to take advantage of them. All very laudable sentiments, but not a great deal of help informing a more precise SDP concept of equality.

Thirdly the "spirit of generosity" would provide the good will and the political art needed to implement egalitarian policies. It would be the:

".... deeply personal side of morality which cannot be prescribed in any set of principles however rational." 53

This concept has been expressed according to Emmet, throughout history as "grace", "benevolence" or "good will".

"Love has too many connotations. "Charity" and "philanthropy" sound patronising (whereas the old Latin word, caritas, and the Greek, "philanthropia" love of mankind come near to what we want)." 54

Yet "caritas", claimed Emmet, could not replace the morality taken for granted in customs, nor could it replace the need for rules governing the administration of welfare. However, any state which distributed welfare without "caritas" would be guilty of inhuman actions. This implied a criticism of the corporate state, which puts pressures on officials to administer welfare impersonally. If welfare was distributed according to a decentralised, locally decided set of policies Emmet felt that the inhuman aspect of welfare could be eliminated. Private provision of welfare by individuals although important could not cover the needs of those "afflicted or distressed in mind, body or estate" as the Book of Common Prayer puts it. Emmet astutely recognised the fact that decentralisation of the administration of welfare could make decision-making more personal but could also prejudice the ability of the administrator to act without fear or favour. At all times, administration should be carried out with generosity of spirit.

Emmet rejected the assumption that the primary motivation of individuals was to increase their income. Not all motivations, she thought, are financial and capable of being stimulated by tax incentives. She theorised that the main motivation for individuals is a sort of "altruism". The aim of social democracy should be the creation of a society to fulfill the altruistic spirit of individuals, and the cost would be a reduction in the real income of some and the removal of power from others. Emmet believed:

"We are at a parting of the ways: we can get an increasingly divided society and a spread of the callousness that in the end breeds tyranny. Or can we get a deepening of the generosity of spirit that breeds civic friendship." 55

The work of the members of the Tawney Society compares interestingly with SDP policy. Some strains of Tawney Society work have influenced policy, particularly the work of Alex de Mont in economic policy. However no element of Tawney Society work is inconsistent with official policy. The evidence in this chapter leads me to believe that the SDP, like the Labour Party has many diverse philosophical traditions, drawn into one set of principles. The argument between Mennell and Marquand settles nothing. The fact is that the SDP has many traditions in its "philosophy".

Chapter 5 - The Tawney Society

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CONCLUSION

The thesis of this dissertation, as expressed in the Introduction, is that the political thought of the Social Democratic Party can be most adequately understood by an analysis of the relationship between liberty and equality within that political thought. An examination of this relationship was expected to indicate in which of the three major ideological traditions SDP political thought can be placed.

The description of the disputes in the Labour Party which involved the future leaders of the SDP determined the SDP's ethos. The future SDP leaders were Revisionists, supporters of Hugh Gaitskell. They drew their inspiration from the work of Anthony Crosland. They identified with the liberal elements within the Labour Party. They fought against those Labour Party members, M.P.'s and trade unionists who they believed were essentially Marxists. They were prepared to lead the Labour Party away from nationalisation, ideas of economic equality and the directly interventionist state. They favoured Government playing a strategic role in the economy and meritocracy. They were multi-lateralists, supporters of N.A.T.O. and pro-Europeans. Their shared experiences had convinced them that, in their opinion, the Left in the Labour Party were their enemies. They were prepared to depart from the traditional practices and policies held by the Labour Party. The ethos of the future SDP leaders was as much liberal as socialist.

The writings of the SDP leaders indicated that they shared liberal principles such as tolerance, pluralism and democracy. Time and again they placed the rights of the individual before the state and equality. Roy Jenkins, an admirer of the Asquith and committed Gaitskellite rejected nationalism and economic equality. He favoured the individual, Europe, N.A.T.O. and a pluralistic society. David Owen was influenced by the idea of the social market economy, individual enterprise and a belief in equity. Shirley Williams, emotionally attached to the Labour Party but promoting liberal ideas of education, the economy and employment.

The Tawney Society which acted as an SDP equivalent of the Fabian Society produced pamphlets which promoted liberal ideas of the economy and society. Their concept of two dimensional social democracy put greater influence on individual liberty over equality.

The evidence examined in this dissertation suggests that the political thought of the Social Democratic Party can be most appropriately placed in the liberal ideological tradition. Of course it should be recognised that the study of political thought is not an exact science. As the material examined has been published within the recent past there is still scope for further research into the subject. It should also be noted that political events such as the electoral alliance between the SDP and the Liberal Party and the eventual merger between those two parties into the Liberal Democrats lends support to the suggestion in this thesis that the political thought of the Social Democratic Party is essentially liberal.

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