

Preface

This thesis aims to take up the challenge posed by liberalism and pluralism to traditional statist, party-centered and collectivist ideas of socialism. My central aim is to explore the possibility of a more pluralist socialism but one in which pluralism and diversity are integrated into a framework of co-operation and sociability. My thesis goes further than the now obvious and widely accepted case for a more liberal and pluralist socialism, proposing theoretical and practical steps forward through which such an idea can become a reality. I reject a reversion from one dogma - state socialism - to another - neo-liberalism - and attempt to go beyond existing revisionist alternatives proposed on the left - individualist socialism, market socialism and citizenship socialism - while drawing on the substantive advances they make. I argue in favour of an associational democracy in which the main features are on one hand a pluralist, decentralist and participatory civil society and on the other a co-operative, collaborative and corporatist state. Let me briefly introduce some of the arguments I aim to make in the chapters that follow.

1) Beyond Lip-Service. I wish to improve on the lip-service that is usually paid to the need for a more pluralist and liberal socialism and give such an abstract commitment institutional teeth and the concepts and concrete measures needed to achieve it. Few deny the need for a more liberal or pluralist socialism. Such a need is now obvious and accepted by most. But giving support to such an idea is one thing. Turning it into reality is another. The real test is when we have to give institutional force to the abstract prescription of a liberal and pluralist socialism and often socialism has remained effectively unreconstructed in the hands of its pluralist advocates. I wish go beyond a theoretical statement about the need for a more pluralist socialism to make suggestions about the conceptual, political and institutional means through which it might be achieved.

2) Beyond Neo-Liberalism. However I do not think the answer to statism and standardised collectivism is to reject a commitment to the public good in favour of the private instrumentalism favoured by neo-liberals. Another solution to the statist and collectivist way in which the public good has been imposed uniformly from above is

to democratise it rather than drop it out of hand. For three main reasons a more liberal and pluralist approach needs to be thought through within a continually collectivist and co-operative context - 1) because co-operation and collectivism are desirable in themselves; 2) because they do not, contrary to conventional wisdom, contradict liberalism and pluralism, but, in fact, provide necessary conditions for their survival; and 3) because collectivism and cooperation enhance political democracy and economic efficiency. Critics of the idea of 'democratic collectivism', Alec Nove (1985) and David Miller (1989) for example, have argued that it is no more than a slogan. I agree that too often this is the case and I hope to take this slogan and show how it can be turned into reality.

3) Why socialism? Socialist values of mutuality, solidarity, equality and co-operation, are central to this task because without a social regard for the rights of others and for the public consequences of individual actions, pluralism and liberalism open up the way for a society based on competitive instrumentalism and greed in which liberal freedoms and diversity will suffer. My interest in socialism comes not out of a prior ideological commitment, but from the way in which contemporary problems cry out for socialist ideas and solutions. Socialism offers the social values and concepts through which pluralism and liberalism can be rethought and revived. Furthermore the anarchy, dog-eat-dog individualism and conflict celebrated by competitive and individualist perspectives invite alternative co-operative and collaborative structures which can restore peace, control and social compassion to the organisation of human life. Traditional socialist values are important in their own right but they also provide a vital groundrock for the healthy survival of pluralism and liberalism. In this respect, it is interesting to see that while socialists, the Italian political theorist Norberto Bobbio (1987; 1988; 1989; 1990) for example, are finally looking at liberalism and pluralism seriously as more than just bourgeois apologias, so the convergence is also working the other way and liberals and pluralists, Linblom (1977) and Dahl (1985) for instance, are beginning to come over to the strength of many socialist insights.

4) Consistency on Co-operation. I intend to take co-operation seriously and not treat it just as a slogan to be bandied about at a purely symbolic level. Too many socialists espouse the cause of cooperation, but denounce economic co-operation between the state and private business or political pacts between left parties and other parties or interests in society as class collaboration or a betrayal of the

principles of socialism. I don't wish to treat co-operation as a slogan to be ignored. I see it as a principle to be consistently explored to its full political logic. I will show that, far from being necessarily a recipe for conservatism and the dilution of principle, co-operation can provide the political conditions for a more radical as well as a more democratic, responsive, and constructive approach better than an exclusive or adversary economic or political strategy can.

5) Methodological Pluralism. In combining pluralism and co-operation, the traditional dichotomy between liberalism and pluralism on one hand and socialism on the other is shown to be redundant. I do not think it is possible to go beyond the tension between these different strands of thought. They represent enduring and irresolvable principles and dilemmas of social and political thinking which have run through the history of thought from classical Athens to the present day. But what is possible is the management of a compromise between them whereby the best of all worlds can be achieved without the worst. Along the way a number of other old dichotomies also have to go. Economies do not, cannot and should not function according to only either planning or markets. A combination of the two organised within a delicately negotiated balance is required. Representative democracy is not a system which is necessarily exclusive of participatory democracy, nor vice-versa. The two can co-exist and be combined. Reformism and revolution are not mutually exclusive because revolutionary ends can be achieved through gradualist reformist means. In short my pluralism is not only political but also methodological. Throughout this thesis I will favour an eclectic and mixed methodological approach over dogmatic and dichotomous modes of political thinking.

6) Transnationalism and Eastern Europe. None of these questions can be dealt with at an exclusively national level. The economic, social and political world is now so global and interdependent that questions of democracy, pluralism and co-operation have implications for transnational relations as much as for relations at the level of the nation-state. Work in this area has sometimes been limited by falling short of an exploration of such themes on a transnational dimension and I aim to correct this balance. Similarly many analyses have been out-dated by the collapse of state socialism in Central and Eastern Europe and by subsequent changes in the European and international climate. They cannot make sense of dilemmas of democracy, statism, collectivism and pluralism as they now look in the light of day after these dramatic developments. Again, a central concern here will be to

incorporate the lessons of these most recent experiences into my analysis of the democratic rethinking of socialism.

7) Practical Politics. While this thesis makes some ambitious normative suggestions about new associationalist structures of pluralist co-operation that could be established in the economy and polity it is utopian only in its objectives and not in its methods. It concentrates on feasible reforms which can be pursued through existing democratic channels yet working towards transformatory ends. This thesis is revolutionary in the ends it aspires to, yet pragmatic in its approach to the means by which they can be achieved. Furthermore I do not abandon practical politics and concrete proposals for an academic focus on theory and thinkers. My concern is with democratic and socialist thinking, whether it is done by philosophers or politicians. Roy Hattersley, for instance, plays as important a part in this thesis as John Rawls, and Mrs Thatcher gets more mentions than Friedrich von Hayek. My central pre-occupation in looking at developments in political thinking is with their implications for, and links to, developments in practical politics. In looking at new ideas of democracy and socialism I am not satisfied with their metaphysical or aesthetic appeal alone but want to see ways in which they are practically and concretely consequential or feasible.

8) Associational Democracy. My central concern, then, is with combining the two objectives of pluralism and co-operation in economic, social and political structures and with providing the concepts and institutional means through which such a combination can be realised. My thesis is that such a combination is best secured through a more 'associationalist' approach to democracy which can avoid the worst features of both statism and the free market, while salvaging their commitment-- to the public good and liberty respectively. In doing so it draws on, yet goes beyond, the existing revisionist proposals of individualist, market and citizenship socialists to advocate a new associationalism in democratic and socialist thinking.

There are two main features to the associationalist approach - the first is the association or interest group and the second is associative relations. The key to associationalism is the combining of a role for the diversity and independence of associations in civil society on one hand with their combination into inclusive democratic structures of co-operation and mutual regard in the economy, civil society and the state on the other. What this thesis envisages, in short, is a pluralist

civil society and corporatist democracy. Like other current democratic, pluralist and associational theorists I propose a role for a pluralist, participatory and decentralist associational civil society. But, I also propose something generally given less credence - a corporatist state. A corporatist state is necessary for two reasons 1) it can build structures of co-operation into the pluralism of an associational economy, civil society and polity; 2) it retains a role for a strong but democratic state over swapping the state for minimalist laissez-faire.

The basic structure of the thesis is threefold. Firstly, in chapters 1-3 I will look at the economic, social and political bases for a rethinking of socialism. Second, in chapters 4 and 5 I will look at new forms of socialist thinking, in particular at associationalist thought. Third, in chapters 6-9 I will attempt to show how associationalism as a theory can be put into practice in the economy, civil society, the polity and political action.

In chapters one, two and three I will look at the pluralist and liberal economic, social and political changes which have forced socialists to rethink their traditional prejudices. In chapter one I will look at the theory and politics of neo-liberalism. I will attempt to assess the intrinsic philosophical merits, or lack of them, of neoliberalism and weigh up the extent to which in one country - Britain - individualistic ideological and social changes in the neoliberal mould have been wrought to which the left must adapt. In chapter two I will attempt to assess the extent or desirability of pluralistic post-fordist changes in the economy and beyond. And in chapter three I will examine the collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe. In all of these three chapters I will attempt to draw out the lessons and implications of new right thinking, post-fordism and post-communism for the left.

In chapter four I will look at the way in which revisionist socialists have reacted to these changes, looking at three main strands in recent socialist thought - individualist socialism, market socialism and citizenship or democratic socialism - going on in chapter five to develop my own preferred alternative - associationalist democratic socialism.

In chapters six, seven and eight I will attempt to work out what forms associational democracy could take in the economy, civil society and politics. In chapter six I will look at the role of associational democracy in the economy and in chapters seven and eight at associational democracy in civil society and the polity. In chapter seven I will

examine the place of associationalism in a more democratic civil society and nation-state, and in chapter eight at what role associational arrangements might play in the changing supra-national and international political order.

Finally in chapter nine I will look at the transitional politics through which associational change might be achieved and at how the idea of associationalism can helpfully inform on thinking about the politics of agency and transition.