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Proposed Outline for Document on Socialist Economic Theories

The Workers Party

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PROPOSED OUTLINE FOR DOCUMENT ON SOCIALIST ECONOMIC THEORIES

Introduction setting out the aim of the document, viz. to provide an overview of the politically highly charged debate about the renewal of socialism where it intersects with economic theories.

The first section begins by asking the key question: is it possible to have a viable and effective socialist economy which at the same time promotes core socialist and democratic values (e.g. equality, extended participation, personal autonomy, cooperation etc)? Socialists can envisage a different type of economy but any search for a different future must begin by looking for signs of its nature and feasibility in the present. Hard choices are inevitable in choosing between strategies and policies that are essentially incompatible.

The next section should attempt to theorize the recent past and present, introducing concepts such as 'mode of information' (Poster), 'complex societies' (Melucci), and 'disorganized capitalism' (Offe). This section will make use of and explain the terminology of regulation theory (RT) and will discuss fordism and post fordism, 'flec spec' and the notion of the 'leading edge'. Also some discussion of globalization, financial markets and institutions.

Major portion on the market by way of a succinct account of the collapse of east European socialism, (these societies had become too complex to plan from the centre without massive levels of waste and dishonesty).

Rebut the triumphalism of the economic liberals. Compare the 'casino capitalism' of the UK and USA with the social market model of Germany, the concertative model of Sweden etc. Illustrate some commendable elements of contemporary capitalisms which might prefigure a better future.

Deal with the (physical and social) limits to growth arguments and the ecological critique more generally.

Reject economic determinism by putting politics in command. Major piece on the state. Using Ireland as an example we should be looking for a complete recasting of state activity so as the state can become a much more developmental type of agency capable of pursuing 'national' goals in an international environment. Draw on Porter, Best et al to illustrate the competition cooperation dynamic.

Conclusion

G. O'Q Jan. 1991