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Making it Work : an Outline of the Three Critiques

The Workers Party

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'MAKING IT WORK' - An outline of the three Critiques

1. COLM BREATHNEACH

Document is a detailed critique of the present; is practical, realistic and could be implemented; challenges right-wing assumptions; is more sophisticated than previous documents; contains better and more balanced analysis of MNCs;

BUT: lacks a broad framework or statement of long-term objectives; is somewhat 'technocratic'; issues like the environment, low pay, women's employment and worker participation are either omitted or tagged on as afterthoughts; the dangers of bureaucracy are recognised but not addressed; internationalisation and the power of the MNCs are recognised - but how do we tackle them?

2. GER O'QUIGLEY

Document is 'mercifully free of utopianism'; is practical and starts from now; is not a blueprint for socialism, doesn't pretend to be and should not be criticised for not being so.

BUT: Is manufacturing industry still the main source of wealth?

Will the state be capable of 'picking winners'?

Is the 'Scandinavian model' of any real relevance to us?

Are the proposals on planning and implementation somewhat 'corporatist'?

To what extent are we free to pursue different paths - how much do past choices constrain future possibilities?

3. ROSHEEN CALLENDER

Suggests additions/alterations to the document in four areas:

(i) Context - needs Introduction which will set the paper in the context of a socialist party seeking short-term changes to bring us closer to long-term goals; should discuss issues of full employment, paid employment, redistribution of work and income, and why industrial development is needed at all; should recognise apparant contradiction between 'picking winners' to compete internationally and also developing all enterprise to be efficient, socially responsible and environmentally sane; and call for new ways of measuring 'successful' enterprise.

(ii) Causes - first half of document, on causes of our industrial under-development, could be tightened up, with minor changes of emphasis (e.g. less on ideology, more on practical obstacles to growth).

(iii) Way forward - second half of document may need some re-examination; Manufacturing no longer the main source of direct employment? 'Vertical integration' not necessarily the only route to international success? Post-Telesis thinking on 'clusters', regional specialisation, economies of scope rather than scale, smaller production units, decentralisation of some MNCs, needs more attention (and should be mentioned, even if not fully accepted).

(iv) Gaps - relevance of, and need for, tax and social welfare reform; role of service industries and type of employment they provide; impact of EC Single Market; potential of co-operatives, voluntary organisations, small firms and local employment initiatives.

N.B. THE ABOVE DOES NOT DO JUSTICE TO THE PAPERS (especially 1 and 2) BUT IS MERELY INTENDED TO ASSIST THE WORKSHOPS. FULL PAPERS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.
