

Pamphlet published by the British Labour Party (1977)

Caption: In 1977, the British Labour Party publishes a pamphlet outlining its manifesto for the first elections to the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage.

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Direct elections to the European Parliament

What the Labour Party should say

The European Community exists. We are members of it. We will remain members of it. Our task as democratic socialists, and as members of the Labour Party, is to ensure that it becomes a politically responsible institution reflecting our positive socialist hopes and ambitions.

Here we set out the objectives we believe Labour candidates should work for in the first direct elections to the European Parliament. They reflect in a British context the views of the Confederation of European Socialist Parties of which the Labour Party is a member.

Our task as democratic socialists, part of the most cohesive and largest single political group in the European Community, is to ensure that the first directly elected Parliament will lay the foundations for an extension of socialist ideas and policies throughout Europe.

The role of the European Parliament will be to supplement the work of national parliaments in the development of European policies. It will ensure that the decision-making processes of the European Community reflect the aspirations of all the European peoples and in particular enable the regions of Europe to make a more significant contribution to those questions which affect their vital interests.

We believe that Labour candidates should campaign for a positive and just economic policy which will ensure the full development of every European citizen and lead, in the next decade, with the help of Community policies, to a real improvement in the standard and quality of life.

The European Parliament

Politically, the European Parliament is becoming the 'grand forum of the Community' where representatives of all political parties in the Community meet, and the Socialist Group acts as an increasingly coherent progressive force.

Under the Treaties the Parliament's powers are limited and they can only be extended by the agreement of all nine national parliaments. The transfer of any new powers to the Community does not prevent the achievement of socialist objectives at national level.

The Parliament is consulted when the Commission has prepared a draft proposal for a Community law and its opinion may be incorporated in the draft before the final decision is made by the Council of Ministers. With the Council, the Parliament is the budgetary authority for the Community although its power over agricultural spending is limited. It has consistently pressed for and — within the limits of its powers — increased expenditure on social aid, regional development, overseas aid, environmental and consumer protection.

The direct election of the European Parliament will not only bring the practical advantage of enabling the Members to devote greater time to European affairs, it will also introduce direct democratic participation in policy-making at European level and greater supervision over both the Council and Commission.

There are other ways in which the Parliament could become more effective. It should have more power to decide the make-up of the Community budget and it should have joint legislative power with the Council.

The Council of Ministers

From now the Council should be obliged to consider the initiatives and opinions of the Parliament; to report to the Parliament on its view within a specific period; and explain publicly if — and why — it has failed to take the recommended action.

To improve public awareness of the Community and democratic participation the Council, *when acting as a*

legislature, should meet in open session and reach most of its decisions by majority vote as laid down in the Treaties. Member countries should only use their veto powers in exceptional circumstances.

The aim should be to establish a joint decision-making process between the Council and the Parliament on the Budget and legislation.

The Commission

The 13 members of the European Commission should be appointed with the advice and consent of the European Parliament.

The Commission should be given greater executive power under the overall supervision of the Parliament to act more effectively within the framework of a jointly established Community policy.

The Court of Justice

The jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice should be extended to provide more effective protection to the Community's citizens, notably with regard to economic and social rights.

Economic and social policies

Full employment

We must create new conditions for full employment. This means using Community and other financial help to the full in restructuring national industries, retraining workers and providing jobs for young people. Some programmes are already in hand. They need to be extended.

Socialist Members of the European Parliament must press for better coordination of national economic policies and seek to achieve closer consultation between governments and Community financial institutions.

They must encourage Community financial help in developing new private and public undertakings and in assisting small and medium-sized firms, particularly those in industry and the craft trades. Better opportunities for health care, in education and the welfare services, should help to provide more jobs.

Governments must be persuaded to ensure that capital is available through Community institutions for both private investment as well as joint development projects between the private and public sectors and, where necessary, for the promotion of direct industrial investment by public institutions.

The key to full employment and economic progress lies in growth and innovation and the development of Community structures which will extend the diverse forms of public sector enterprise which exist in Europe.

Better working conditions

Community measures must seek to ensure harmonisation of standards in the working environment, particularly in health and safety matters.

The Community's Social Action Programme needs to be extended and greater support given to its environmental action programme. In planning new industrial development the environment must be protected. Socialists should support the principle that the 'pollutor pays' and that the cost of preventing or making good damage caused to the environment should be borne by those directly responsible.

The Economic and Social Committee, comprising representatives of unions, employers and others, has a vital role to play in the decision-making processes in relation to economic, social and employment policies. Its present role should be strengthened.

The move towards statutory worker participation in the management of companies originated on the Continent and is now an accepted part of working life in several countries. Britain is in the middle of her own debate about the best guiding principles. Participation opportunities should be extended to all member countries. The European Parliament and other Community institutions should be used to promote this trend to greater industrial democracy. The

The consumer, prices and agriculture

The Common Agricultural Policy must be reformed in the interests of the consumer as well as the producer. The wasteful policies which lead to butter, milk and other surpluses must be ended. Farm prices must be related directly to efficiency to keep down shop prices. Small producers unable to reach the necessary level of efficiency should be supported by income subsidies.

The Community should adjust its priorities to spend more on improving the organisation of farming. Consumers should be more strongly represented on a variety of Community institutions in addition to their presence on the Economic and Social Committee.

Regional and Social Funds

An effective and far-reaching Community regional policy is vital for the future development of Europe. As a first objective the Regional and Social Funds should be increased from their current low levels and brought into better balance with expenditure on agriculture.

The Social Fund already plays a useful role in providing re-training in many Community fields; more than three million workers have been helped. Community co-operation is also necessary in the fight against poverty and homelessness. The small amounts of Community money presently available must be substantially increased.

Improved educational opportunities

The Community can make an important contribution in the field of further education which will be of increasing significance with greater mobility of employment.

Socialists must establish at a European level the right to educational leave for all workers to follow courses in further education and cultural interests and a greater number of international exchanges.

Multinational companies

The European Parliament will have an important role to play in re-invigorating Commission policies for dealing with monopolies, in curbing the power of multinationals and monitoring their activities. These things can best be done by Community institutions because they too are 'multinational'.

But the Community will also need to co-operate with national Governments. The Parliament will need to influence the Council of Ministers to make sure that multinationals no longer evade their environmental responsibilities by shifting risky operations to countries with weak laws.

Stopping tax evasion

Socialists in the European Parliament, with the help of national parliaments, should press for greater controls to prevent cross-frontier tax evasion both by companies and individuals.

The European Parliament will also have an important role to play in dealing with monopolies and in curbing the power of the multinationals. The Community will need to co-operate with national governments to improve the supervision and control of multinationals.

Europe in the world

Socialists in the European Parliament must work to ensure that the Community in its external policies has as its most important aim the narrowing of the gulf between the rich and poor countries of the world.

As the biggest trading area, responsible for 40% of world trade, the Community should use its position to influence the trading policies of other countries, such as the USA and Japan, in developing fair policies that take into account the needs of the poorer countries as well as the richer.

The Community and the developing countries

The Community has already set a high standard in its relations with developing countries under the Lomé Convention. This covers 52 developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. In addition to allowing preferential entry for basic commodities into the Community from these countries, the Convention provides a special scheme to stabilise the export earnings of the African, Caribbean and Pacific states — a matter of special interest to the poorest developing countries. The Community also has special trading agreements with many other developing countries and was the first of the big trading blocs to introduce a generous system of general trading preferences in line with United Nations resolutions.

The system, however, still has its limitations. Socialists must press for a better annual assessment of how the Lomé Convention is actually working. It must be prepared to extend its benefits to countries now excluded such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Although better than other big industrialised countries, the Community has failed to reach the UN target of 0.7% of Gross National Product allocated in terms of aid to developing countries. The Council of Ministers has promised to achieve this target by 1980, but it will be the task of Socialists to ensure that this commitment is honoured.

In addition we believe that the Community must make two further commitments to the developing countries:

- * To accept the UNCTAD IV proposals to help maintain export earnings, especially of the poorest countries, by extending the principles already incorporated in the Lomé Convention to countries not eligible to accede to the Convention;
- * To ensure that developing countries receive a fair share, under UN auspices, of the exploitation of the resources of the seabed.

Enlargement

Membership of the Community should be open to any European country that is a genuine parliamentary democracy — and only as long as it remains so, whether that country is one of the original members or a newcomer. Socialists in the Parliament should support the membership of Portugal, Spain and Greece, while at the same time ensuring that enlargement is used to strengthen, not weaken, the Community. The opportunity should be taken to persuade Spain to relax her attitude towards Gibraltar.

Co-ordinating foreign policies

In matters of general foreign policy which are the concern of individual member countries and not of the Community as such, Socialists in the Parliament should encourage the habit of discussion and co-ordination of foreign policy between the member countries. **The aim should be to ensure that the Community acts as a force for the preservation of peace in Europe and in the World.**