

finesse and negotiating skills of those union leaders who have to manage the movement's relationship with the party. In short, we need Machiavellian – to use his term – trade union leaders. But I wouldn't want to rely on their negotiating skills and finesse any more than I would want to rely on the negotiating skills of the ANC and SACP negotiators in the current political process.

The mass line needs to come up much more strongly. Unless we have a mobilised mass counterweight to the negative tendencies that are within all of our traditions, we won't get to socialism. ♦

Final comments

Winton Higgins I will take up some of these points very briefly. I certainly agree with Enoch that we should be looking at other forms of socialism. The comments this afternoon have impressed upon me the need to advocate a much more fine-grained view of the kinds of socialist endeavours and experiments there have been.

But I'm not very impressed with the claims about globalisation. They seem to me to be a moral excuse to roll over and die. We shouldn't write off the nation state, particularly, and ironically, a nation state as robust as the South African one has shown itself to be – able to assert itself against the moral disapprobation of the rest of the world. One shouldn't too quickly abandon national sovereignty, particularly when it can take the form of national economic development projects. The economic terrain on which class struggle occurs is still very much a national terrain, with national conditions of struggle.

There was a bit of an accusation that I am advocating some sort of a foreign model. Let me make it quite clear that the only model that is going to work in South Africa is the South African model. The model of socialism or the model of transition to socialism ought to be very much fine tuned to the socio-economic problems of this society and to the unique opportunities of this society. It has struck me very forcibly how open-ended the political questions are in South Africa. You have opportunities that are difficult to find in Australia and other societies.

I did have problems with Dave's definition about harnessing the capitalists to the interests of capital. Fundamentally, I believe the economy that produces full employment in South Africa will not be a capitalist economy. Capitalism is incapable of delivering full employment, which is precisely why the demand for full employment is a socialist demand. It cannot be met within the logic of capitalism and capitalism therefore will have to be transcended on the way to full employment.

It is part of the Swedish labour movement's political methodology to make demands it knows capitalist forms of calculation, capitalist institutions, cannot meet. The other point of making these demands is, as Jeremy has said, because it matters, it matters morally today, that

POINT FROM THE FLOOR**Langa Zita:**

The consciousness in Cde Higgins' paper is, to some degree, a trade union consciousness. One should also consider the possibility that on the basis of understanding how a society works, people could be committed to realising political power, to attempt to transform such a society.

One sees throughout the paper the contestation of capitalist logic *within* capital's parameters. One does not see an attempt to negate capitalist logic by other means such as encouraging various forms of public ownership, encouraging a different logic of productive accumulation. Related to this question would then be the question of transcendence: *how do you move from this historical epoch to another one?* One fails to see an answer. Is it a question that the whole process will be incremental and therefore we will see at whatever time, that now we have reached socialism? Or is it a process that through consciousness we could impel in a particular direction?

Cde Lewis said he would discourage state involvement in manufacturing. I think it is not given that entrepreneurship should be the sole preserve of capitalists. I would like to make a case for our consciously looking at the role of state ownership and the various forms, creative forms, that it could take. When capitalism was evolving within the embryo of feudalism, it was not yet acceptable, it was an uncomfortable process. I think there will be such discomfort as well as we move from capitalism to socialism, and it might be the case therefore that we have various forms of state involvement and various forms of ownership in the economy.

people have jobs and housing, and so forth. So, the socio-economic ambitions that socialists should be announcing are the ones that capitalism, within its own logic, cannot possibly meet. I have no doubt that full employment and a comprehensive welfare state is well beyond the logic of South African capitalism.

From some of the comments in discussion today there seems to be a caricature of this social democratic style of politics that I am advocating. It has nothing to do with evolutionism. There is a great difference between gradualism and evolutionism. Evolutionism is the hypothesis that the transition from capitalism to socialism is an automatic process. It is not automatic. It really does depend upon purposive political intervention.

Certainly, there has to be some kind of a critical mass. But I would rather argue in terms of the erosion of capital as a social relation, the erosion of a system of domination and subordination which has to be achieved by capital, and which can be destroyed by socialism in quite concrete settings, institutions and organisations.

I am not convinced about the idea of rupture. I think rupture is something that historians see with hindsight. A comparison is the transition from feudalism to capitalism. There was no rupture. If you take the transition in England, for example, no particular point represented the rupture where feudalism ceased to exist and capitalism began. I suspect that most major transitions are of this kind.

Jeremy's comment about the silence in social democracy about struggles against colonialism set me back a bit. I am not sure I have the answer. In Australia, we have a long and sorry history of trying to make nationalism into a vehicle of radical social change and it has fallen, time and again, flat on its face. Not being in South Africa, I don't think I am going to have the impertinence to even make a guess about that.

But I don't think nationalism has a good track record anywhere in the world as a vehicle for radical social transformation. I am also reminded of Benedict Anderson's argument that nationalism is itself an invention of the late eighteenth century and a form of modernity that creates imagined communities. It is the role of socialism to create genuine communities, to resurrect genuine communities, and I am not sure the nation can go much beyond being this sort of imagined community. I am much more persuaded by the idea of the new social movements also being

legitimate heirs to the French Revolution and the democratic revolution that it ushered in.

It seems to me there are a lot more imaginative ways of achieving collective ownership than nationalisation — ones that don't cost anything, because you are inviting problems by nationalising without compensation. On the other hand, the people who own these things don't deserve any compensation. So the way to do it seems to be to progressively marginalise them in the capital market through some mechanism like wage earner funds, where private capitalists more or less underwrite their own expropriation. It seems quite a humane way to do it.

I probably have over-emphasised the role of the unions. Unions are so important, in my understanding of the South African situation, because they are the most programmatically coherent, part of a present or future socialist alliance. But the hegemonic force is going to be a coalition-style one, not one in which there is one monolithic interest at the very centre.

Finally, I am not impressed with blueprints. What is wrong with the idea that we clearly define a goal and then rationally work our way

COUNTERPOINT

Winton Higgins:

Wigforss was trying to encourage people to contest the economic rationality of capitalism at a grass roots level. This meant workers in any enterprise should be critical of what management was doing. The method adopted in the industrial democracy campaigns in the '70s and '80s in Sweden was that rank and file groups have standing autonomous corporate plans. They kept up with technological developments in the industry; whenever management comes with an initiative for technological innovation or job reorganisation, a rank and file group has an alternative way of dealing with whatever the problem is. I think this is absolutely vital, that organised labour right down at the grass roots level, as well as union leadership, has its own agenda for managing enterprise, for managing regions, for managing industries, for managing the economy.

Langa raised the problem that all this contestation of economic rationality goes on within the parameters of

capital. I guess I am trying to disturb that assumption. If we do see capital as a social relation, then where organised labour is seizing the initiative in developing industries, in developing the enterprise, then that social relation is becoming diluted, it's being displaced. An enterprise in which organised labour is the leading force in reorganisation, in technological modernisation, this is no longer essentially a capitalist enterprise.

The wage earner funds scheme in Sweden was a beautiful case of how to effectively gain control of capital allocation without it costing the state or the union movement anything. That kind of reform, which actually goes directly to capital as a social relation, does very much burst the integuments of that social relation, to go back to Marx's language. It's that social relation that we have to get at, it's the issue of control. Is it going to be organised labour that controls the enterprise, or is it going to remain those who exercise proprietorial rights?

towards it, is that it isn't how life works. We all, in our personal lives, know that we've set a goal and the way things panned out was completely different. I can't think of one goal I have achieved in the form in which I originally conceptualised it, and I don't think that works for movements or political parties either. The analogy is more like a painting – an artist takes a blank sheet of canvas and really hasn't the faintest idea what is going to be there at the end of the day. The artist knows certain things that she or he wants to express on the canvas, certain colours, forms and ideas; but what the final product is going to look like is not knowable until the process of emergence, the process of creation has taken its course.

Pallo Jordan

We can in fact speak of national liberation as the potentially hegemonic project at this moment in South Africa. I say 'potentially' because I have very grave misgivings, not about the national liberation project, but about its prospects.

Seeing national liberation as a hegemonic project makes it possible to draw in forces, social and political forces, that are not immediately black, oppressed and disenfranchised. But the motor of that process is the black and disenfranchised. There is nothing racialistic about that, it is an empirical fact.

When we talk about opening up the decision-making processes in relation to control of private and government resources, the agency for doing that has not been the privileged but the disadvantaged, and they can actually be racially identified.

Dave Lewis

Jeremy is absolutely right that competitiveness is not the objective of industrial policy – the meeting of social needs is the objective of social policy. But it is a cheap shot in the sense that lack of competitiveness is such a major constraint in meeting social needs. If you don't confront head on the question of South African manufacturing's lack of competitiveness, in other words, its lack of ability to produce affordable basic commodities or to produce for export such that you can realise economies in your domestic industries, or that you can earn the foreign exchange necessary to meet social needs, then social needs are not met.

So, yes, social needs are the objective, but competitiveness is the binding constraint. It's important to keep the question of competitiveness on the agenda because it refers immediately to productivity. It is very important that workers and unions are able to reclaim for themselves the notion of what is valuable for them in increased productivity. It's a concept that seems, quite understandably, to belong to the bosses. I think it has to be reclaimed, because it is an essential aspect of meeting social needs.

We need to think about a whole series of sacred cows in the trade union movement. Do we consider sitting on the boards of private corporations and indeed of public corporations? And, when we get there, what do we do with it? Do we think about taking shares in ownership?

Enoch Godongwana

I did not intend to argue against engagement at all. However, we must not engage on a terrain which is not defined by us. When you engage, there is an ideology that guides you. If you come in without being guided by a particular perspective, you are likely to be swallowed into a different agenda.

We have not experienced the sort of social democracy propagated by Winton today. But social democracy as an ideology and as a movement has never had as its objective the dislodging of capitalism. That has been its weakness. The majority of what have been called social democratic regimes have collapsed in the context of globalisation.

I am a bit uncomfortable with the question of competitiveness, which is also linked to globalisation. As an economic term it may be useful. I am not an economist, but I do know that, once you start coming up with competitiveness, it has political implications for us. For ordinary workers it means job reductions and retrenchment. Secondly, when you talk about competitiveness, it does not look at the needs of the people, as Jeremy was saying. It looks outside there — how do I compete in a market, a market which is not controlled by you but by someone else? I wonder whether the workers do have control over the market?

Jeremy Cronin

I don't go along with Benedict Anderson, the notion that nations are just imagined communities. In national liberation movements, the project is about defining what the community is, that third element of socialist values that Winton mentioned. The ANC's historic project is to define the South African community in a particular way against an alternative, but now very weak and crisis-ridden project.

Winton said, in the development of capitalism out of feudalism in Britain, there was no rupture. I would contest that. There are dramatic moments of rupture. Certainly in France, there's a very dramatic moment of rupture which Pallo points to. I think there are often partial ruptures. You cannot say that capitalism didn't exist before July 14 and after July 14 it did. We've got to begin to make socialism just like they began to make capitalism, in the integuments of the earlier social formations.

Socialism is not a blueprint. It is also not an event. It's about the socialisation and democratisation of power. As socialists, we must be in the forefront of every struggle for the democratisation and socialisation of power. I think we won't go far wrong if that's what we're doing.

Winton Higgins

I want to correct something that Enoch said about social democracy not having an explicit anti-capitalist perspective. Most social democratic parties continue to explicitly talk about the transcendence of capitalism and talk explicitly about the socialist project. The terrific contrast between social democracy and the kind of Anglo-Saxon labourism that we are burdened with in Australia and other countries is precisely that social democracy had, and the social democracy I am talking about still very much has, an explicit socialist programme, which gives it its coherence and its mobilising power. ☆