

Socialist Democratic Forms I

(Do we Simply Put Capitalist Democracy in Socialist Hands?)

Now, apart from commercial and political motives being crucial in the failure of the Co-operative Movement, that was due not only to moral guidelines, which put such organisations at a decided disadvantage compared with their amoral capitalist opponents. There was also a timidity and conservative mentality too in those who led such institutions, and decided upon its plans and purposes.

In a capitalist world there was no broad spectrum of sympathetic sources for the recruitment of available managers, and, as with all seemingly “socialist ventures”, they are soon dominated by incoming employees from the middle classes, who will always be looking upwards with **ambition**, rather than looking downwards with *service* in mind.

NOTE: It is interesting to see how different this process has been in the nationalised railways of India, where a de-classed but able extended group of Anglo-Indians with no real place among the indigenous population or with the British administrators, did in fact dedicate themselves to service in the Railways and did, and still do, a magnificent job.

And the Middle Class interlopers into the socialist organisations within Capitalism in the advanced countries, carrying with them their contextual and conceptual baggage, redirected these organisations towards conformity with the current economic system rather than being any sort of precursor for a new economic order.

The Co-operative Wholesale Society, and its individual Retail Stores, just like the Labour Party, had been set up by the Trades Unions and Socialist Groups, but they soon lost a great deal of their radical ideology, and looked to the Working Class as relatively captive customers rather than co-members of the same Class. They slowly became determined by the society they fought to survive in, and perhaps make “fairer”.

As Trotsky said about Stalinism, “You can’t build Socialism in One Country”, and to extend the idea to what we are considering here, “You certainly can never build towards Socialism via a commercial organisation inside a capitalist economy”. For your straightforward capitalist opponents will always be cheaper by super exploitation of both the majority of their sources, and their own employees, while, at the same time, they will seduce the unwary of your customers with “schemes of great promise”, which they will “adjust”, or even *withdraw* as soon as it has had the requisite effect. Many times you find yourself holding now useless “tokens” or “stamps” or even abstract “points” or “air miles” when they are suddenly discontinued for example.

Both the political organisations of the Working Class and its economic inventions such as the Co-operative Movement could never win in direct competition with capitalist enterprises, for the latter, without a qualm, and indeed with some pride, will undercut the principled standpoint of the Co-ops by obtaining their products from the cheapest possible sources, or reducing their own staff numbers, whatever the consequences for those affected.

So, none of these organisations as developed by the Working Class within Capitalism could ever become those that could lead the Class in a revolutionary situation, as they would be imbued with the belief that the only possible transitions towards their projected ideals would have to be peaceful, and would win, even on the enemies own terms, merely by efficiency and standards. Not a chance in hell!

And, in addition they would never be the commercial organisations to serve the Working Class even in a socialism- building period after a successful Revolution.

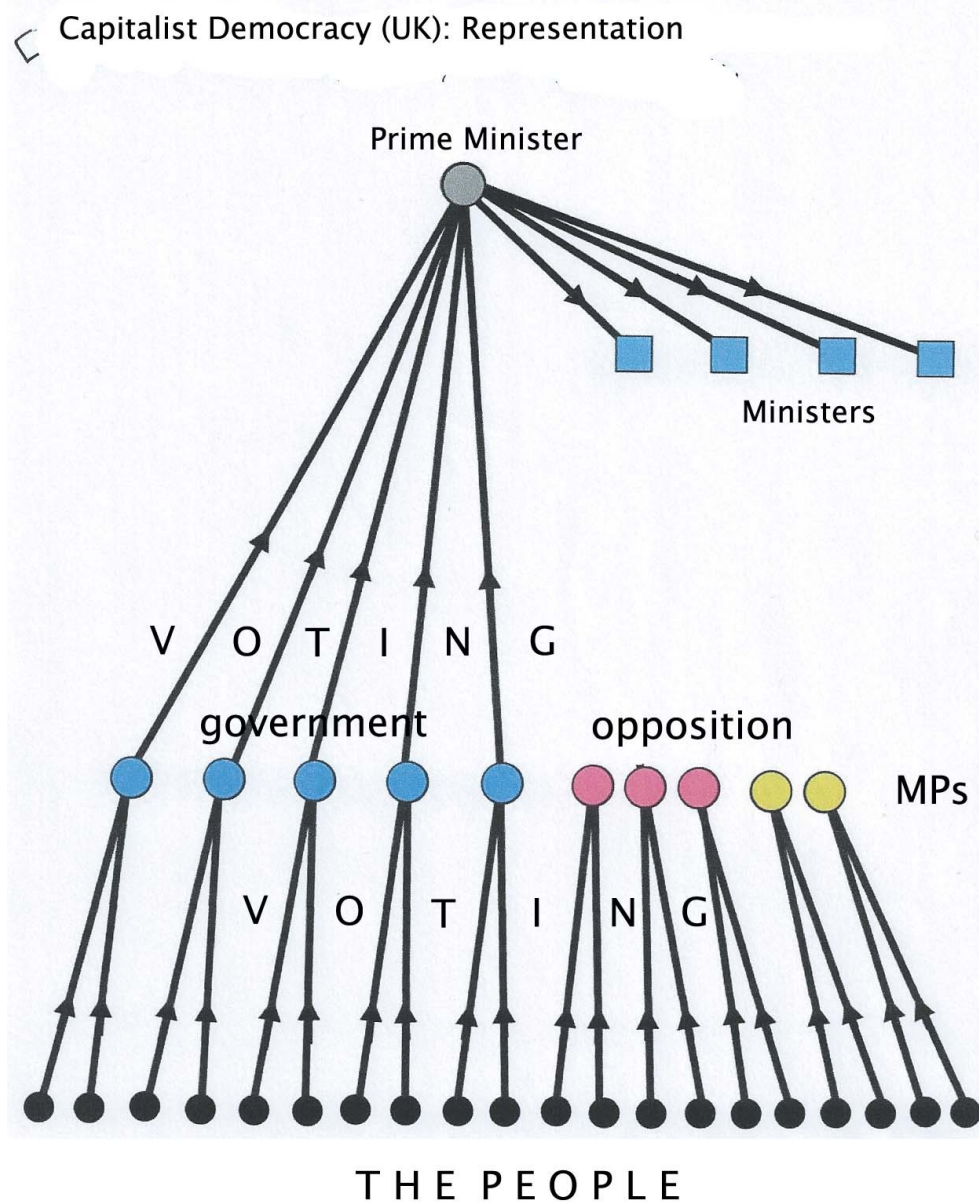
Now, this being the case, it is clear that Democracy, as developed within Capitalism and all political organisations from the same context would have to be replaced by something with a very different

philosophy, with people who didn't run away from the inevitable tumults that could precipitate revolutionary situations, but instead embrace them, and have both transitional policies and a standpoint that could effectively contribute to their escalation and ultimate success.

The usual "transitional demands" took Democracy, for example, and tried to liberate it with new limitations and conditions to rein-in elected representatives.

But, before we look at the usual set of reforms required to *socialise* Democracy, it is imperative that we have look, with the clearest possible vision, and Democracy as it is instituted in advanced Capitalist countries, and to allow no beliefs or myths to cloud our analysis. We must look, not at Democracy as some sort of ideal, but at Democracy within Capitalism, where it certainly exists.

Below is a simplified diagram of the representative forms of Democracy in the United Kingdom at the present time.

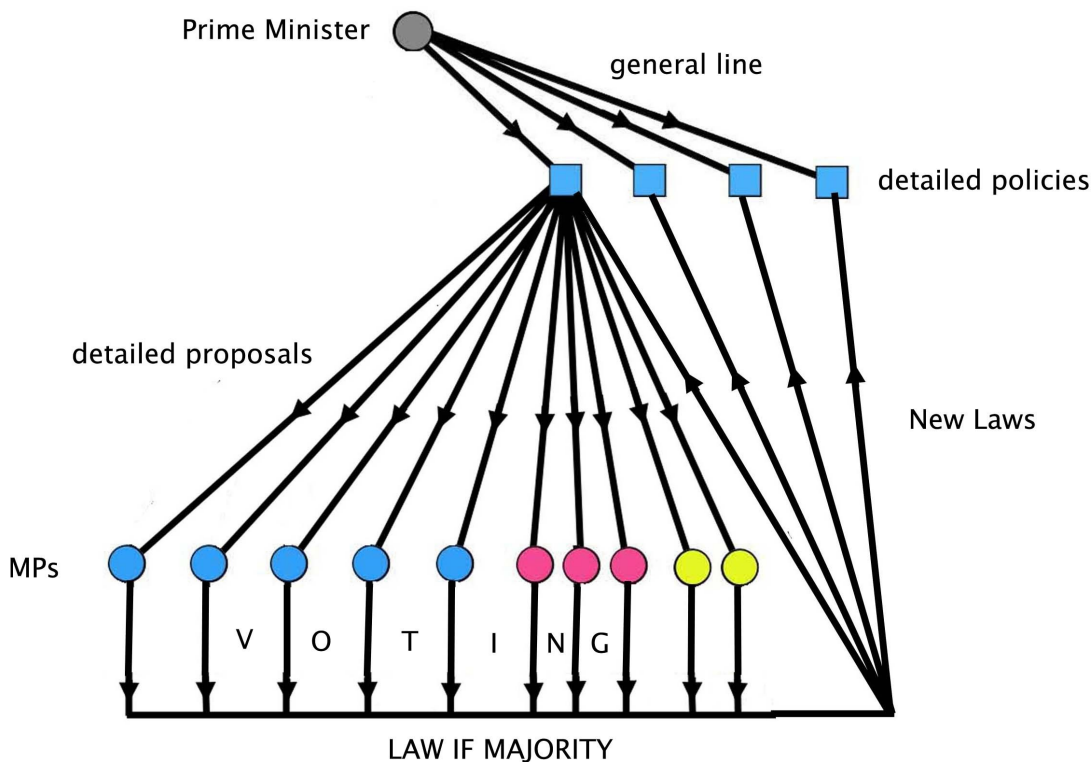


But even this does not tell us sufficient. In the 1930s well respected academics, writers and even philosophers, like Sidney and Beatrice Webb and Bertrand Russell, were very favourably impressed when shown a formal representation of the Soviet System in Russia, and that image in no way reflected the personal hegemony of Josef Stalin.

Some have to look, not only at a great deal more, but associate every formal picture with a meaningful narrative.

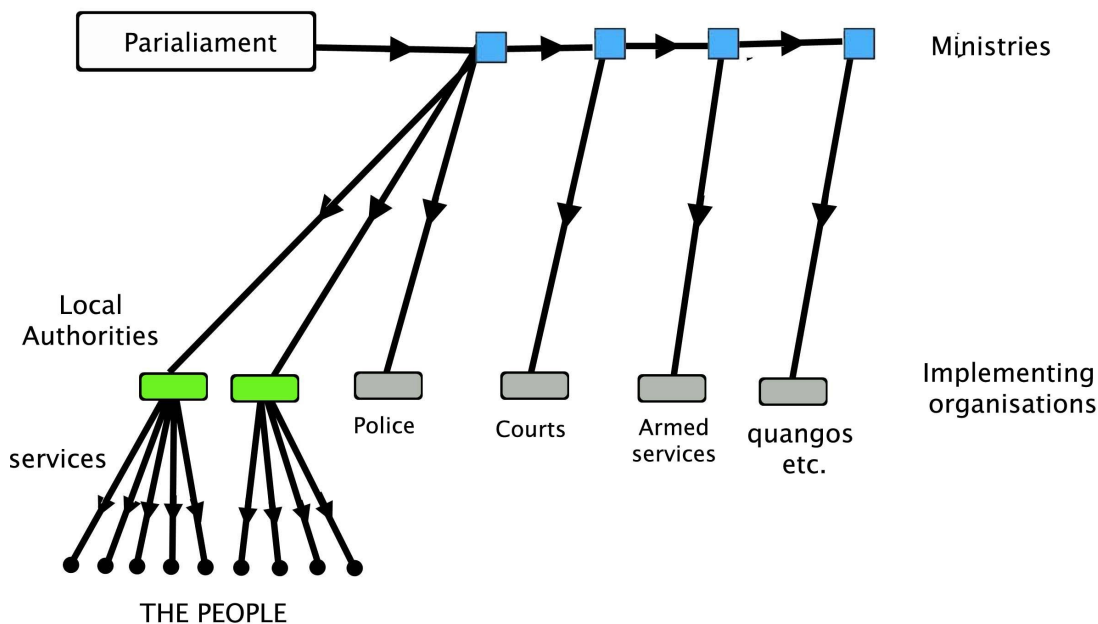
The next diagram display (again very simply) at Policy-Making for new laws and their Implementation across the country.

Capitalist Democracy (UK): Policy Making



And finally, the next diagram is about Implementation.

Capitalist Democracy (UK): Implementation



Clearly, these first efforts must be developed, and real alternatives considered.

But NOT, it is hoped, the sort of suggestions that we hear the most about. For they merely modify a tailor-made form of Democracy ideal for Capitalism, and guaranteed to present absolutely NO threat to that system. For they presuppose that the transformation to Socialism would be achieved VIA that Democracy, and after that election a committed Socialist Government, would adjust Democracy to its final ideal form.

The situations in the Arab Spring of 2011 revealed transparently the limitations of their ambition for Democracy as defined in Western Capitalist countries as a template for their revolution. For as such they are the “war-cries” only of an as yet un-enfranchised Middle Class, who directly compare their circumstances with the political position of their Class in those Western Capitalist Democracies.

They therefore called primarily for the removal of militarist dictators, and their replacement by democratic rule on that western model. The nationalist phase of the capitalist revolution and the rule of their Class had not yet been completed, and the major drivers of the second phase revolutions were certainly that same Class. But as in all such revolutions, that Class is nowhere near a majority of the overall population, and they therefore **need** the Working Class on their side. So, though they wave the very same flags, they certainly cannot have the same objectives.

The democratic socialists call therefore for:-

1. **Instant Recall:** the ability to recall their representative and replace him or her with someone closer to their overall consensus position
2. **Mandating of Policies:** the endowing of such representatives with a list of positions that they must vote for in the higher body in which they are to represent their constituency.
3. **Disqualification:** immediate disqualification from voting as a representative on order of a constituency vote.
4. **Continuous Local Democracy:** with regular local assemblies for policy decisions. With debates where contention was evident, and decisions which would modify the mandate of their upwards delegates.
5. **No Top-Down Policy Making:** The relative independence of leaderships, whether of Cabinet, Prime Minister or Presidential form would NOT be allowed

Now, all these and many more – particularly when it came to control of the military, would never be enough, and also the alternatives necessary instead of these *after a revolution*, cannot possibly be known NOW!

Indeed, the Democracy of a Workers’ State would be very different, and in the short term, if surrounded by hostile capitalist powers, would have to be quite repressive to maintain the integrity of the New State. The inevitable problems were encapsulated by revolutionaries with the term “Dictatorship of the Proletariat”, which meant that hegemony would have to be in the sole hands of the chosen representatives of the Working Class in a transitional period, as no other could be trusted with such a vital task.

But, certainly the appropriate forms would emerge during the revolutionary tumult itself, and there would be constant changing of forms at all levels, including contradictory and overlapping constituencies. But, knowing exactly what a certain organisation was, would indicate who exactly was saying what. The system would be extremely flexible and would go into all sorts of contrasting and competing directions, but this very nature would in the end, indicate which forms represented your views, and only them would be trusted.

So, this paper is no comprehensive catalogue of appropriate forms and demands.

A study of the 1905 revolution in Russia, its considerably-delayed continuance after that major defeat, in the February 1917 event, and then followed by the most amazing tumults of change over 8 months, must be made to reveal the remarkable trajectory of forms, which involved new thinking at every turn, so that by October 1917 they were ready to act!

(1,487 words)