

The Socialist Economic Alternatives II *(Why Nationalisation Failed!)*

When I was a boy, I went to school in the centre of Manchester there and back by train. It was both cheap and efficient and along with other “socialised services” like the local authority bus and tram services in my city, I could get anywhere I wanted to go very easily. And, of course, by then, the Labour government had nationalised all the Railway Companies, along with the Coal Industry and many other cornerstones of the U.K. Economy.

It was to be, according to Social Democracy to be a new Golden Age. Everything could be integrated for service to the whole community of our country, and without the profit motive could be directed for maximal and total **service** with great efficiency saving and the best possible combined use.

So, when I got off my train at London Road Station (Now **Piccadilly**) I was surrounded by this nationalised industry, and I could not but notice how this organisation handled freight.

Beneath the high-level station were extensive freight facilities, where tricycle tractors were attached to trailored loads from the trains, and constantly poured forth to deliver by road to the prescribed recipients. The goods came off the trains onto the roads in an integrated system. Why would that excellent system fail, and be replaced by multiple private companies all intent only on maximising their own individual profits?



Surely such an alternative would present no conceivable contest? Yet that integrated system did disappear and was replaced by the melee of the scramble for profit. The question surely has to be , “Why?”

About the same time I attended every home match at Manchester United, and 53,000 spectators were efficiently transported to the Old Trafford Ground by a massive fleet of special Corporation buses. Special routes from all parts of the Greater Manchester conurbation did the job swiftly and efficiently, and at the end of the match reversed the process and got everyone home again. How could that system, with individual Double-deck busses carrying over 70 passengers each, be worse than thousands of cars – inefficiently transporting small numbers (sometimes one-to-a-car) to the ground, with consequent vastly extra cost and inevitable time-wasting traffic jams, not to mention the necessity of vast acreages of space for car parking, and then producing a repeat when all are trying to get home again.

Of course, it couldn’t compete, but somehow it did, and the local authority bus services bit the dust, to be replaced by private enterprises – again existing only to make and to maximise profit!



Now, the question is posed, “How could socially orientated organisations lose in competition with profit-motivated private enterprise? Surely, integrated schemes with service motives would always win?”

Well, the answer peddled by all opponents of such organisations was that without the profit motive unimaginative directors led these dedicated organisations astray, so that they just couldn’t compete with the vigour implicit in profit motivated directors of private enterprise alternatives.

But, is that the truth?

What is certain is that the majority of media were opposed to all ”socialist organisation”, and would soon alight on each and every failure as inevitable and reprehensible. And perhaps even more important in a democracy, there is always a chance of opponents to such systems being elected to office, and doing everything they could to undermining such institutions.

NOTE: The current situation in the U.K. where a Tory government is using the world recession to do everything in its power to dismantle the National Health Service, and wherever possible replace more and more sections of it with Private, paid-for Health Organisations. As with the de-Nationalisation of the other statewide concerns, such as Mining and Railways, these could not be left as Services when they could be profitable concerns if in their greedy hands.

In addition, there was NO climbable route in such socialist organisations, whether commercial or political, for ambitious people to commit themselves to gain both in status and in personal wealth. For they would rarely be lauded for what they achieved, and would be dependant upon the consensus as a matter of principle, and the consensus is usually very conservative.

Ambitious and imaginative people in capitalist enterprises “get on” by winning things, not only for themselves, but also for their usually highly influential bosses, backers and colleagues.

NOTE: Interestingly, even as a teacher and lecturer in education, my own career was littered with situations where I started as the “Blue-eyed Boy”, when others (usually my bosses) benefited from my contributions, but inevitably morphed into an “Enemy of the People “ phase, when it became clear that such was not my intention.

But, in democratic-only systems, the go-getter is likely to be distrusted and not backed.

How can such negative elements be overcome?

Now, the problems may seem insuperable, and all ideal activists may seem to be condemned by the jealousy and lack of vision of the majority, who in the last analysis *always decide*.

And to understand this is currently no part of socialist thought.

There is NO understanding of the natural conservatism of the majority. And this can only be addressed by attempting to study, and thereby understand, the dynamic qualitative changes in Society (as in everything else).

Major changes do NOT happen incrementally by small, but positive steps as almost everyone both hopes and believes.

On the contrary, Stability is never characterised by such an assumed dynamic. It is always defensive of the current status quo, and the only evident challenge to that stability is **never** from the posing of an alternative, but only from its own inherent weaknesses and flaws – those deleterious processes embodied in the **Second Law of Thermodynamics** or “*Rust never sleeps!*”

Indeed, you *cannot* “change the mind” of the majority with promises of something better. You have to be prepared for one inevitable crisis or another and then *act!*

Significant changes, socially, will never be possible incrementally. The only possibility is to know what to do in a revolutionary crisis of a current stability.

(1,006 words)