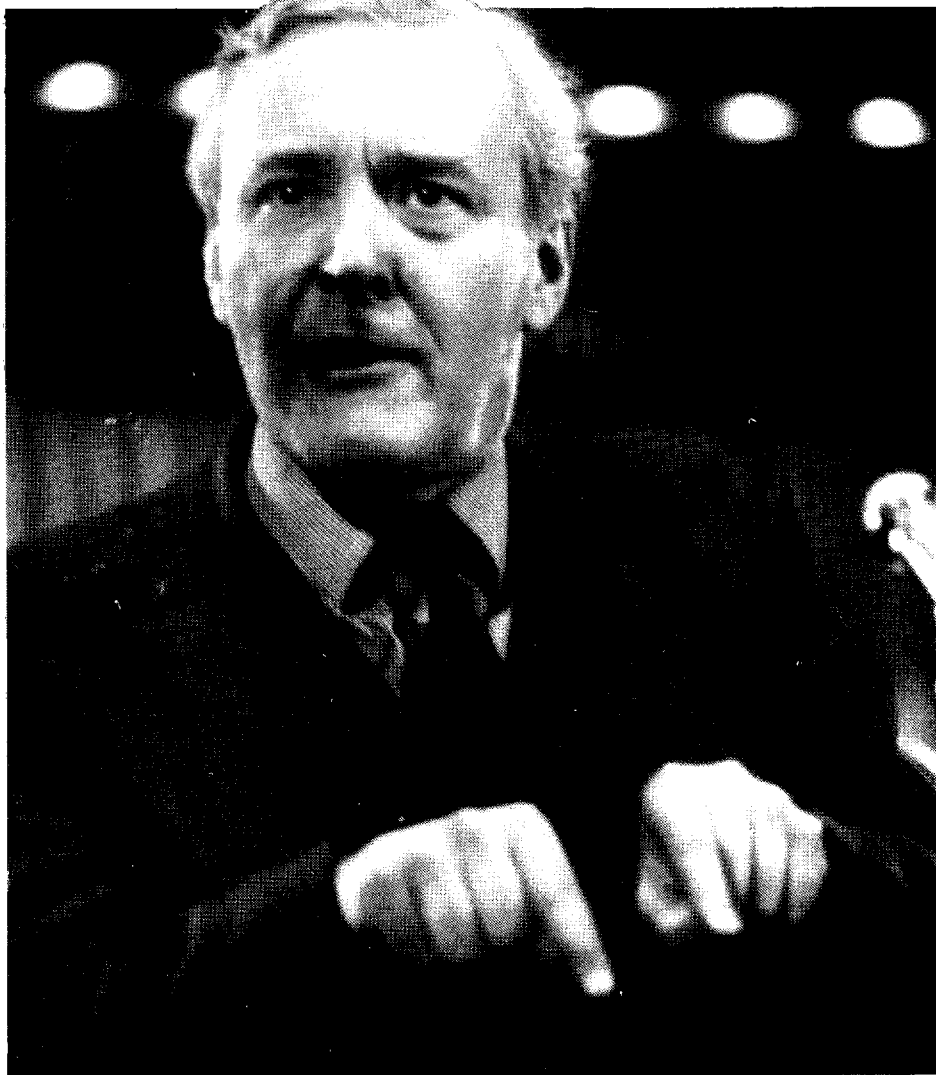


# Benn's socialist manifesto

Tony Benn has submitted this draft socialist manifesto to the Labour Party National Executive Committee. On 24-25 October these and other ideas will be discussed at a broad Socialist Conference, convened in Benn's Chesterfield constituency by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, the Socialist Society and the Conference of Socialist Economists.



*At the 1987 Conference it must be our aim to lay the foundation for a Labour victory at the next General Election, and to begin the development of objectives for the Party that will form the basis of our appeal to the electorate, to be followed by detailed policies for presentation to later conferences, upon which our next manifesto will be based.*

*But the problem that confronts us is a deeper one than can be solved by specific commitments, however good in themselves.*

*For we are up against a coherent set of ideas and values, which run counter to everything in which we believe, but which have been so consistently advocated by the present government, that they have become accepted very widely and now constitute something of a consensus.*

*Unless we challenge these ideas and values, and the institutions which now reflect them and administer them we could remain on the margins of politics for a long time to come.*

*Any future manifesto must take account of the many changes which have occurred in our society over the years including radical changes in technology, the emergence of a new and different pattern of work, and of need, and international developments which may offer better prospects for peace.*

*All these factors will need to be studied most carefully, but none of them really alter the underlying faith which brought the labour movement into existence, and many of them actually underline the relevance of what we have always deeply believed.*

*There is a real risk that if we are seen to be abandoning our faith in the search for*

*media approval we could come to be seen as a purely opportunistic party that is prepared to say anything to get into office and is ready to sacrifice good policies when the opinion polls swing against us — which could destroy our basic credibility and also fatally damage our electoral chances.*

*If we are to avoid these dangers the Labour Party should try to make clear — now — the essential aims and objectives which unite it, and publish these at once for discussion in the movement and more generally, well ahead of our new policy statements or our next manifesto.*

*I attach a draft of possible Aims and Objectives of the Labour Party and recommend that it be discussed, if necessary amended, and published by the NEC at this year's conference for the consideration of the Party and then adopted, in its final form, in 1988.*

**TONY BENN**

**The Labour Party is a democratic,**

**socialist and internationalist party, with a membership made up of men and women, young and old, who are widely representative of all aspects of life; closely linked to the trade unions, and other affiliated organisations, in pursuit of the historic role of Labour as a non-doctrinaire party of class struggle.**

**We work for the election of Labour candidates, in all local and national elections, on the basis of the political programmes put before the electors.**

**We believe that the party has a duty to defend working people and their families, and to campaign actively for policies that will help them.**

**This statement of our aims and objectives has been prepared to provide a focus for political discussion and education within the party; to allow those who join the party to understand the policies for which we stand; and to be the basis of our long-term political work.**

# LABOUR PARTY

## WE BELIEVE:

### — That there should be certain rights which must be won and maintained:

\*The right to life, free from fear, oppression, ignorance, preventable ill-health or poverty.

\*The right to useful and satisfying work, balanced with leisure, to meet the needs of society.

\*The right of everyone to receive an income sufficient to maintain a decent standard of living.

\*The right to a good home for all in which to live, bring up children and care for all dependents.

\*The right to receive the best possible medical care, free, and at the moment of need.

\*The right of access, throughout life, to the full range of human knowledge, through education at school, in college and afterwards.

\*The right to mass media which provide accurate news, free from bias or distortion, and a diversity of views.

\*The right to enjoy dignity, and a full life, in retirement in suitable accommodation, free from financial anxieties, with proper medical, and other facilities, including personal care, necessary to make that possible.

\*The right to expect that any government in power will work for peace and justice, and will not provoke international conflict or hostility or divert resources from essential purposes to build up the weapons of mass destruction.

\*The right to equality of treatment under just laws, free from all discrimination based upon class, sex, race, life-style or beliefs.

\*The right of free speech and assembly, the entrenchment of civil liberties and human rights and the right to organise voluntary associations and free trade unions for the purpose of protecting and improving the prospects for those who belong to them, and in particular, the right to withdraw labour as a means of securing justice.

\*The right of elected local and national authorities to provide those jobs and services needed by the community.

### — in democracy

We are deeply committed to the democratic process in the political, economic, social and administrative spheres, and believe that no person should have power over others unless they are accountable to, and removable by, those over whom they exercise that power or by elected representatives of the people.

### — in socialism

We are socialists because we believe that these rights cannot be fully realised in any society under capitalism, which, as in Britain now, has entrenched by law, the power of Capital over Labour, and subordinated human values to the demand for profit, at the expense of social justice and peace.

### in internationalism

We are an internationalist party believ-

ing that all people, everywhere are entitled to demand the same rights.

### in the rights of self-determination

We believe that the people of every nation have the right to govern themselves and to be free from any form of colonial or imperial domination.

### — in solidarity

We believe that we have a moral responsibility to defend all those who are attacked for protecting their own democratically gained rights, and with this in mind we are establishing workplace branches so that each can help others more effectively.

### — that conscience must be above the law.

We assert the right of all people to follow their own conscientious beliefs even if it involves them in breaking the law; and that while there may be a legal obligation to obey the law there is no moral obligation to obey unjust laws; but we also know that those who break the law on moral grounds may face punishment for their beliefs, and the final verdict on their actions will rest with the public and with history.

### — in the rights of all to their beliefs

We believe that socialist ideas which have been evolved in this country and abroad over the centuries have given us a rich inheritance; but we do not believe that truth can be captured in any one creed to which all must subscribe under threat of expulsion or exclusion; and we respect the rights of all members of the party to hold their own views, and to organise within the party to promote them, being convinced that diversity of opinion adds strength to our cause.

### — in progress through collective action.

We believe, in the light of our own experience, that the only secure basis for social progress must lie in collective action; and that those who have the privilege of representing us, at all levels, must remain accountable for what they say and do, and that no-one can demand blind obedience from us in the name of loyalty or unity.

### — that we are servants of the community.

We see the Labour Party, and all its representatives, as servants of all those who live and work in Britain.

## THE POLICIES WE WANT:

### — for Britain

\*The return to full employment and the adoption of the means necessary for that purpose by, among other things, the common ownership, under democratic control and management, of the commanding heights of the economy, including the banks and finance houses, the land and all the companies which dominate our industrial system, and the development of

new forms of social ownership.

\*A shorter working week and earlier retirement.

\*The establishment, as of right, of a comprehensive welfare system which will safeguard the living standards of our people.

\*The elimination of all discrimination and injustice.

\*The introduction of a system of taxation which will radically reduce the present gross inequalities of wealth and income.

\*The provision of good housing, health and education for all, by absorbing those private facilities that might be necessary to achieve a fully comprehensive system giving real choice to all.

The introduction of a major programme for the democratic reform of the apparatus of the state including the abolition of the House of Lords; the ending of all patronage in making major public appointments; the democratisation of the magistracy, and lay supervision of the judiciary by the introduction of assessors from all walks of life into the High Court; and the democratic control of the police by elected local authorities.

\*The ending of all nuclear weapons and bases in Britain; and the phasing out of civil nuclear power in favour of coal, conservation and alternative benign sources of energy.

\*The provision of cheap and safe public transport for the use of the public, to protect us from the chaos that would follow from leaving key decisions to unrestricted competition.

\*The protection of the environment so that this, and future generations may enjoy it, free from pollution and exploitation for profit.

\*The proper provision for a leisure and multi-cultural society.

\*The protection of the animal kingdom so that this, and future generations, may enjoy the natural wild life of Britain.

\*The upholding and enforcement of existing legislation relating to animal abuse, and efforts to secure the introduction of further legislation making all blood-sports illegal.

### — IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

\*The adoption by Britain of a non-aligned foreign policy, committed to the United Nations but free of all military alliances, so that this country, with others, could help ease international tensions, reduce arms expenditure and assist the development of the Third World.

\*The development of closer economic, industrial, social and political links between working people here and in other countries, free from the control of the Treaty of Rome or NATO.

## AN APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE

We appeal to all those who share these aims, to work with us to help to realise them, and we invite all those who would like to do so, to join as individual members so as to assist, in a practical way, to make this possible.