

Preface

Thirty-five years ago the TUC published its *Interim Report on Industrial Democracy*. It marked the post-war high watermark of the UK labour movement, recognising both the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the 'sit-in' and the 'work-in', and calling for industrial democracy. The TUC proposed:

“worker-representatives should constitute 50 per cent of the Supervisory Boards [the supreme authority of the company], they should be appointed through trade union machinery”

Until 1995, Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution stated its avowed (though rarely realised) aim:

“To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry . . . upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service”

Today, the labour movement is not fighting for the commanding heights of the economy – but is fighting rearguard actions against continuous attacks on public services by 30 years of neo-liberal governments, and as multinationals target jobs, pay, pensions and terms and conditions ever more ruthlessly in their pursuit of profit.

Whether it's social ownership, common ownership or public ownership – we need to define what is, make the case for why it's important, and then work out how we get there.

In this LEAP pamphlet a range of contributors look at different aspects of creating a culture for social ownership in the 21st century – including why it's necessary and how it might happen in the telecommunications and rail industries.

This pamphlet is the start of a debate and of a campaign to put the question of ownership back on the industrial and political agenda. As the UK faces recession and as job losses and business failures continue to rise, this question could not be more timely.

Continue the debate online at: <http://leap-lrc.blogspot.com/>

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