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**Public
Alternative**
to the
**Privatisation
of Life**

Strategies for decommodification, public ownership & provision, democratic control, climate action, conserving nature & biodiversity and radical public management

SPOKESMAN

Green New Deals

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Dexter Whitfield is Director of the European Services Strategy Unit. This excerpt from his new book, Public Alternative to the Privatisation of Life (Spokesman, £25), highlights economic, social and environmental strategies to achieve the objectives of Green New Deals.

... Different versions of a Green New Deal have been advanced in the UK, US, Germany, South Africa and by the European Union and the United Nations Environment Programme over the last decade. The original Green New Deal UK focused on decarbonisation, a low carbon energy system, realistic fossil fuel prices and financial issues such as de-merging the big banks, tighter control on credit and stopping tax havens and corporate tax evasion (Green New Deal Group, 2009). Hermann (2015) summarised the US Center for American Progress/University of Massachusetts, Green European Foundation, South Korea and South Africa governments plans and the United Nations Environment Programme plans and observed that, with the exception of the UNEP and partly South Africa plans, “... *social equity plays no or only a marginal role*”.

The Ocasio-Cortez/Markey resolution in the US cites the demand for 100% power from clean, renewable and zero-emission sources, smart power grids, removing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, infrastructure upgrading and job creation combined with high-quality union jobs, guaranteed family-sustaining wages, the right to organise and collective bargaining. The resolution also requires high-quality health care, affordable, safe and adequate housing, economic security, clean water, clean air, healthy and affordable food and access to nature (Ocasio-Cortez and Markey, 2019). The urgency to have policies, strategies and financial resources to achieve the objectives of Green New Deals is critically important. A programme of retro-fitting public and private buildings,

the conversion of oil and gas fired heating systems to renewable energy and significant protection works such as seawalls, river estuaries and upland works will be required as sea levels rise and some regions have increased rainfall and thus a higher risk of flooding.

But how will financialisation, marketisation, individualisation and privatisation of public goods and services be eliminated from Green New Deals? Capital already regards this programme as a further opportunity for capital accumulation. It will inevitably mean that the climate targets and related social policies will take even longer to achieve and be less effective in meeting objectives.

The inclusion of a ‘once in a generation’ expansion of social policies and redistribution is critically necessary and important “...to promote justice and equity by stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression of indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth (referred to in this resolution as ‘frontline and vulnerable communities’)” (Ocasio-Cortez and Markey, 2019). However, these policies have been the frontier of exploitation, privatisation and capital accumulation for decades so the political struggle over social policies will be no less than that required to achieve decarbonisation, renewable energy and green infrastructure.

There are other important issues, such as the international dimension. How are other developed and developing countries expected to respond in a similar manner to what are effectively America or Europe first strategies? How do we prevent the acceleration of the commodification and privatisation of nature?

Nation states will be required to re-regulate markets on a scale far greater than the deregulation achieved under neoliberalism. Furthermore, as Seymour (2019) commented, the UK Green New Deal has called for “...capital controls, restrictions on financial mechanisms, the break-up of large banks, and the diminution of the City’s role, the [Ocasio-Cortez & Markey resolution] doesn’t mention any abbreviations of Wall Street’s power or any hint of capital controls” (Ocasio-Cortez and Markey, 2019). The danger is that the Green New Deal becomes, like public-private partnerships in Britain between 1995-2010, ‘the only show in town’ and other important economic strategies are marginalised. It is therefore vital that a broader economic strategy includes:

The application of digitisation and automation in manufacturing industries, services and the public sector with a joint emphasis on high-

value products with export potential and socially useful design and production guided by the sixteen attributes, characteristics and criteria identified by the Lucas workers and technology networks and discussed in Mike Cooley's *Architect or Bee?* (see *Spokesman* 133). It must be designed, planned and implemented to meet specific social and economic needs in health, social care, housing and public transport;

Research and development for product and system development and their application in industry and in health and social care, education and other public services. National programmes in sectors with a systematic cross sector distribution of findings and application. Innovation should focus on socially useful objectives that offer qualitative and operational benefits together with user/employee participation in the design and implementation processes;

Employment plans in all sectors to radically increase security of jobs, trade union rights and collective bargaining on pay and conditions. Skills (re)training will be critical in public and private sectors;

Regulatory review of markets to determine the need to identify new regulations that are needed now or in the near future and whether increased application of existing regulations is required to increase effectiveness and to close loopholes;

Integrated cross sector planning is vital to maximise opportunities, achieve economies of scale and to meet community needs and to align infrastructure and service planning;

Redefine a social and economic strategy for the welfare state to include de-commodifying services and functions;

A strategy for the arts and culture with an integrated local government framework to support the creative arts as powerful engines for attracting investment, raising aspiration, building healthier communities and to improve training, working conditions and equalities;

New public sector equality duty to require the promotion of equality of opportunity between nine equality groups. The duty would require the identification, scope, scale of difference and require mitigation policies. A systematic reduction in inequalities and poverty could be achieved by better planned and integrated public services and infrastructure, with specific objectives and targets to reduce service and employment inequalities ...