



the round table

Key issues for European Socialists and Social Democrats

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Wim's Wisdom

Extracts from Dutch Premier Wim Kok's address to the Amsterdam Round Table:

'We want the Union to become one of the most competitive and dynamic know-how economies in the world'.

'The budget discipline required by European economic and monetary union was to put it bluntly considered to be the axe ready to cut the roots of the social system'.

'Investment patterns are showing a shift from production capacity and capital to people and knowledge.'

'Activating social policy in a competitive knowledge economy requires that education become a permanent and integrated part of our labour system.'

'The ease with which we speak of Europe and work in Europe has not been translated into a full mutual acknowledgment of certificates, diplomas and qualifications.'

A GLOBAL CONTEXT FOR WELFARE

Discussions on 'Globalisation and the Future of Welfare' will conclude this year's Round Table programme in Stockholm on 2 December.

The programme began in London in March with discussions hosted by the British Labour Party and PES Vice-President Robin Cook on the future of social democracy.

Subsequent Round Tables dealt with EU enlargement (Prague), the Growth of Populism (Bern), the EU and Youth (Paris), Rights and Values (Vienna), Media and Democracy (Milan) and the Modern Economy and Modern Welfare State (Amsterdam).

Talks on additional themes are planned for next year.

Swedish Social Democratic delegation leader in the European Parliament Jan Andersson will open the Stockholm Round Table at 10h30 on Saturday 2 December in the Skandiasalen room of



Amster-dome: Schroeder addresses the Dutch Round Table in a converted Lutheran church

Sweden's Parliament at 1 Mynttorget, the Riksdagen.

Deputy Prime Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallén will be a keynote speaker in the

opening session on 'EU enlargement and the future of welfare'. Other speakers will include Professor Micheal Ellman of Amster-

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Laying the Table for 2001

Decisions on three Round Tables planned for the first quarter of 2001 are to be taken in the next few weeks. The venues are likely to be Spain, Greece and Belgium.

The Round Table discussions are part of the preparations for the Congress of the Party of European Socialists, to be held in Berlin next May.

Squaring Virtuous Circles - And Triangles

Talks at the Stockholm Round Table will develop the strategic social policy thinking of European Socialists and Social Democrats in preparing for the presentation of a draft European Social Policy Agenda at next month's Nice Summit.

At its Milan Congress in 1999, the PES called for improved co-ordination between economic guidelines and employment guidelines at EU level. The aim was to modernise the European social model, combining flexibility and security, responsibility and solidarity in a virtuous circle to promote progress and development for all.

Since then, EU Social Affairs Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou has taken the geometric image forward, speaking of the European social model as an equilateral triangle whose sides are macro-economic policy, employment policy and social policy.

The Lisbon Summit in March gave the EU a new strategic goal - 'to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'.

EP Socialist Group leader Enrique Baron told the Amsterdam Round Table:



Quality is the buzzword, says Baron, pictured above at the Paris Round Table

'Now, the buzz word is quality: higher-quality work, higher-quality living conditions, qualitatively improved growth, better quality in the workings of our social model through fair, effective, common reforms.

'The need and demand from citizens for a vision of the future direction and purpose of the EU could not be greater. We have to give our vision a new life.'

Mr Baron added: 'We need enormous investment in human resources in order to give everybody a real opportunity.' He welcomed the fact that education, training and life-long learning are considered to be fundamental Rights in the Charter adopted in Biarritz, and are an integral and inseparable component of a modern, active Welfare State.

'Essays for An Open Europe'

Contributors to the Round Table programme have cooperated in the publication of a new pamphlet entitled 'Essays for an Open Europe'.

The European Federation of Journalists, which took part in the Milan discussions on Media and Democracy, has published a pamphlet written by the Editor of Statewatch Tony Bunyan, who contributed to the Bern Round Table on Populism, along with Deirdre Curtin of Utrecht University and EFJ General Secretary EFJ Aidan White.

The publication of the 'Essays' comes amidst discussions between member states over how much openness there is to be in the EU. Campaigners fear that a proposed new code of access will result in new rights for EU institutions but not for citizens.

The pamphlet aims to widen the debate and to encourage civil society to make its voice heard. The reproduction of the Essays is positively encouraged.

The Essays

Access to documents "could fuel public discussion"

By Tony Bunyan, Editor Statewatch

Authoritarian temptation seduces EU decision-makers

By Deirdre Curtin, Professor of the Law of International Organisations, University of Utrecht

How Journalists Have Spiked NATO's Secrecy Guns

By Aidan White, General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists

'Essays for an Open Europe' is available on the Statewatch website: <http://www.statewatch.org/secret/essays2.htm>

A Global Context for Welfare

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dam University, Renate Langewiesche of the European Trade Union Institute and Austrian Euro MP Harald Ettl.

A press conference will be given at 14h00 after which journalists are invited to join participants at a buffet lunch.

Ursula Berge, head of the radical thinktank Agora, will lead the final discussion on 'Globalisation and the future of welfare'.

Speakers in the debate will include the distinguished Swedish social scientist Joakim Palme, son of murdered Swedish premier Olaf Palme, Greek defence minister Akis Tsohatzopoulos who is a PES vice-president and Euro MP Anne Van Lancker of Belgium.

The meeting concludes at 17h30.

'Enormous tasks for The future'

German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder defined 'four enormous tasks for the future' when he addressed the Amsterdam Round Table.

The EU needed to create a framework for sustainable growth for welfare and employment; it had to make the journey from being an industrial society to one of individual knowledge and service; policy needed to take account of changes in the employment market and reduce labour costs; and the welfare state needed to be renewed in order to take account of demographic changes and individual earning patterns.

Mr Schroeder said equal opportunities policies

must be promoted for economic reasons - not just for the traditional reasons of securing fairness and justice.

'A developed society in the future cannot afford not to make use of all the possible skills it has,' he said.

Immigration, too, was an economic need. Once this was made clear in Germany, he said, the debate changed and became more relaxed.

A reformed social security system would stabilise employers' contributions in order to safeguard their international competitiveness and create a personal capital investment system. Europe should have a social security system that is 'as safe as possible for the older generation and as cheap as possible for the younger generation.'

Describing the modernisation of Germany, Mr Schroeder told participants that the 100 billion

deutschmarks transferred every year for the last ten years from West to East would continue to be made for at least another decade.

But Germany would have a balanced budget, with zero public sector borrowing needs, in 2006.

bullets from Amsterdam

'For every human political year there are four Internet years. Budget systems are simply not adapted to the new economy.'

Anna Ekstroem, deputy industry minister of Sweden.



Schroeder points the way ahead

Meanwhile, during his term of office unemployment would be cut by one million bringing it below 3.5 million - and 60,000 training places would be made available every year.

Pledges for The People

Dutch Premier Wim Kok called on EU governments to 'broaden the seamless approach' to helping job seekers by giving commitments on training and education to those who were long-term unemployed or remote from the labour market.

A second priority, he said, was to tackle 'the disproportionate low participation in the labour market and in society of minorities and immigrants in the European Union'. The issue was 'a permanent concern and so it requires a permanent strategy.'

EU incentives were needed to make work worthwhile. 'We have to modernise and strengthen our social systems in order to pursue an activating policy, taking away obstacles, doing some-



Exactly: Dutch premier Wim Kok knows what's needed

thing about poverty, giving people incentives, encouraging people to accept remunerated work.'

A fourth priority for Mr Kok was to have the European labour market

working well and flexibly. 'This is becoming ever more urgent now that we can no longer pursue a monetary policy at national level. It is important that in the next few years the obstacles, the bottlenecks, regarding the free movement of employees, of workers and students be taken away in the European Union.' Issues to be addressed included the need for recognition of skills acquired elsewhere in the EU.

Mr Kok added: 'Work and education are an important part of the social agenda but we should also pay attention to health care, ageing and pensions. Social democrats in Europe will have to make enormous efforts in this respect.'

Wim's Web Whammy

PEOPLE POWER

Web sites run by Dutch Premier Wim Kok and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder took a ribbing from Dutch Labour's parliamentary leader Ad Melkert at the Amsterdam Round Table - because they do not allow e-communication between citizens and the two leaders.

Said Mr Melkert: 'Modern government should mean interactive contact with society, with people.'

He said both Web sites gave details of the leaders' activities and views - 'such as the strong statement by Gerhard Schroeder condemning right-extremist movements and expressions in Germany that are of great concern to all of us.'

But he added: 'What we also see is that both Web sites regrettably are not very friendly for those fellow Europeans who would like to exchange a simple e-mail with their leaders.'

The criticism echoed remarks at the Milan Round Table on Media and Democracy by British academic Dina Iordanova who called for greater emphasis on interactivity with citizens in the design of political Web sites.



Free rides ruled out: mindset on the welfare society must change, says Melkert

A sound economy and social fairness will determine the success or failure of a citizen's Europe, says Labour leader in the Dutch Parliament Ad Melkert.

He set out three policy aims at the Amsterdam Round Table - a breakthrough in increasing people's mobility in Europe; a new approach to social security; and promotion of inclusion.

'We are talking here about the crucial test for social democracy to impose itself influentially in the kind of Union that we want to emerge,' said Mr Melkert.

Radical measures had been taken or were still high on the agenda for social democrats who were now 'taking responsibility for consolidating and strengthening the economic basis for an innovative and optimistic Europe.'

He added: 'The old welfare state is history - even when arrangements and institutions created in the years after 1945 continue to exist. State systems that increase dependence of people on welfare belong to the past, not to the future.'

Noting 'enormous progress' in bringing about a change of mindset on welfare, Mr Melkert said: 'Social democrats have ceased to identify themselves primarily with the state. It is

the citizen's interest that comes first.'

Mr Melkert called for increased resources that flow from higher economic growth to be reinvested in innovating processes in society. 'Innovation should mean much more than just the improvement of production processes. Here we are talking about equally - or maybe even more - important things like qualification levels, communication skills, stress-management, childcare at work as well as at home, housing quality, health, and environment. In brief, conditioning productivity and quality of life.'

Mr Melkert blamed

tax and social security systems for

low levels of

mobility in Europe.

'Europe will not even manage to feel the slipstream of the US technological development and economic dynamics if student, teacher and labour mobility are not raised to a substantially higher level.'

On social security, Europe should focus on 'supplementary and pension arrangements that make people free'. Said Mr Melkert: 'Whenever they feel sure about their entitlements to quality of health care and sufficiency of income at pension age, people will be motivated in their career and in their contribution to society at large.'

How to obtain a regular copy of 'The Round Table'

'The Round Table' is a newsletter published jointly by the Party of European Socialists and the Parliamentary Group of the Party of European Socialists in the European Parliament.

The newsletter will provide advance information about upcoming discussions and summarise the key points of those that have taken place.

To obtain a regular copy of 'The Round Table' please fax Brussels +322-2849026 or e-mail the editor Tony Robinson - TRobinson@europarl.eu.int

'The old nation states can no longer do what is necessary to encourage, promote, protect and keep the balance between economic performance and social justice. The European Union has to play a role.'

Klaus Haensch, German member of the EP Socialist Group