

THE METHODOLOGY OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Formal social democratic organisations were largely a creature of the late nineteenth century. They evolved in response to the economic inefficiencies and social inequalities that the burgeoning industrial capitalism and the sharpening class consciousness and conflict of the period generated. The growth of collectivist institutions, such as the expansion of trade unionism and the public provision of utilities and services served as both cause and effect of that creation.

Social democracy is generally self-characterised as the selection of equality, liberty, and solidarity (or cohesion) as primary political ends, to be pursued through the agency of democratic elective institutions with the accompanying adoption of appropriate public policies. That presupposition of elective democracy requires social democrats to pay regard to popular opinion, but, at the same time, to guide and align it towards those first order ends, albeit, according to the particular characteristics of the time and that of the host society: outcomes measured against those first order political ends are paramount, not preset principles or models of social-economic organisation, whether these are collectivist or free market in character.

Social democracy is hence essentially a pragmatic and flexible political methodology in process and tactical terms. But this does not mean that social democrats are not ideologically-driven in the sense of being value-led: the desired end-states of equality, liberty, and cohesion provide an ideological framework for social democratic process and tactics to operate within.

The pragmatic and practical element of social democratic political agency or methodology provides scope and elbow room for public policy purposes to be pursued and progressed that are achievable and sustainable at particular times; yet the other side of that same social democratic coin is that its ends are abstractly defined rather than concrete, open to elastic definitional interpretation, and are thus imprecise. This has left social democrats open to the charge that they over-rely too much on moral rhetoric: more sermon than science.

Few people, even social democrats, would accept that pure equality of outcome is either feasible or desirable; while the linkage or inter-relationship between equality of outcome and equality of opportunity, or, put another way, the direction of causation between the two, is complex and contestable, rather than clear. And the definition of a desirable state of equality in relation to both its access and outcome dimension is inherently relative and contingent to circumstances that are particular to polity and time.

It is for these and other reasons that the broader concept of social justice has been generally developed and applied as a proxy for equality, certainly in the British political environment, in order to provide some sort of objective and more scientific benchmark to assess whether actual inequalities are justifiable or not. In that light, at an analytical philosophical level, John Rawls in the early seventies, published his seminal and all-encompassing 'Theory of Justice'.

He assumed an abstract imaginary state (*the original position*), where rational, mutually disinterested individuals neither knew their actual place in society, nor their income and wealth holdings from it, nor their abilities and natural assets (*the veil of ignorance*). Rawls went on to deduce that in such an original position individuals would contract a distribution of 'primary social goods' encompassing income, wealth, and status that were consistent with their personal self-respect and actualisation. A representative member of the group worst off in the resulting contracted distribution would not be any less well placed than would be the case if any other alternative distributional arrangements had been agreed and contracted (*the difference principle*).

Rawls concluded that such a distribution would be just: inequalities occurring within such a just distribution would be justifiable insofar that they maximised the position of the representative person of the worst-off group. He emphasised the clear blue water that he had constructed between the tenets of his theory and that of utilitarianism, the creed of the Victorian liberals and J.S. Mill in particular, which was predicated on the principle that the organisational arrangements of society should be so constructed that that the utility or happiness of the greatest number of its members should be maximised: not the representative member of any 'worst off' group.

Notwithstanding general admiration for the comprehensive character of Rawl's ground-breaking formulation, it has attracted criticism from a range of angles. Most fundamentally, the highly abstract nature of his assumptions and methodology that, by definition and necessity, are divorced from the actual socio-economic complexities of actual societies, and the construction of individual and group identities with the related moulding of societal and individual preferences within them; in addition, what might have occurred in contrast to what actually has occurred in human society will always be a matter of speculation and conjecture.

In short, the Rawlsian formulation of the 'original position' is a theoretical construct involving imagination. But social democrats must engage with the here and now in the real world, not an abstractly constructed 'original position': the 'we are where we are', as much as where we ought to be, or conceivably could be. Accumulated historical and political experiences act as deadweights on the both collective and individual consciousness, limiting, in the short term, at least, the boundaries of feasible political action. Nor, by no means is it absolutely clear that individuals would choose to maximise the position of the worst off in accordance with the difference principle: they might possibly prefer a range of other positions, including a reasonable chance to be comfortable, a slight chance of being rich, even at the expense of the worst off, if opportunities were equal to achieve those states, for example.

David Miller in his contribution to the 2005 ippr update of its 1994 Commission on Social Justice, in that light argued that the multiple sources of the distribution of social 'goods' and 'bads' in 21st Century Britain, namely, income and wealth holdings and entitlements, educational opportunity, access to health, exposure to crime, access to networks of support and advancement,

just to cite a few of the most important, but all of which need to be fairly distributed, tends to make any quest for an all-encompassing principle of justice an exercise in futility, at least for politically practical goal-oriented social democrats¹.

He instead defined social justice in terms of four more concrete principles, as follows:

- equal citizenship;
- a social minimum of resources sufficient to allow all citizens to meet essential needs and to live a secure and dignified life in today's society;
- equality of opportunity, especially in terms of access to educational opportunities and jobs;
- that a fair distribution, although it may be unequal, should reflect relevant factors, such as personal choice, motivation, effort, and other personal deserts.

That formulation recognises that the achievement of social justice is multi-dimensional and complex, and needs to address the diverse drivers of inequality and injustice that exist in actual societies. In today's jargon, it is metric-based.

Nevertheless, it still leaves much to judgment and interpretation: the specification of the 'social minimum' with regard to quantum (what is essential in society at a particular time) remains inherently relative; and, is what is 'fair' in terms of not only personal desert, but also with respect to an overall macro 'fair' distribution. Miller's and other similar formulations thus remain a normative benchmark only.

These problems are intrinsic to social democratic political methodology linked as they are to its pragmatic but focused principle-led outlook, and are unavoidable. It is simply not possible for politicians to quantify to a *precise* degree the extent and quantum of incentives that need to be offered in order to ensure that individuals make contributions that improve the position of people generally in society, including the worst-off; nor for them to apply a slide-rule in order to determine the 'right' trade-off between x inequality and the necessary and resulting benefit to y, where y is taken to represent the worst-off, in order to determine whether x is justifiable or not.

It is also difficult for democratically elected politicians to rule out inequalities that benefit the majority, but not the worst-off, as they are defined and identified at any particular point in time, given the nature of elective politics itself. People will also leave and join the worst off group that by definition will always exist, unless perfect equality actually did prevail.

The extent that a commitment to 'equal opportunity' is usable as a practical benchmark for the measurement of policy initiatives is also problematic. For

¹ 'What is Social Justice' in *Social Justice, Building a Fairer Britain*, edited by Nick Pearce and Will Paxton, ippr, 2005.

example, given that the socio-economic parental composition of pupil intake is the primary determinant of school performance, at least in terms of examination results, should the freedom of parents to choose their offspring's school be limited in order to equalise intake composition? Whether extending parental choice will extend or constrain equality of opportunity for disadvantaged metropolitan children is, again, a matter of judgment rather than measurable determination.

Miller in his formulation of social justice posited that David Beckham deserves(d) a high salary for the effective exercise of his footballing skills (itself an unknown combination of a 'lucky' personal genetic endowment and their subsequent development through training, application, and match-experience) but 'not the premium he can command(ed) just by virtue of his comparative ranking, as a sportsman, and a celebrity'. Yet the question of the quantum of salary that would be 'fair' remains open, particularly as a significant proportion of star footballer top salaries reflect their actual or potential value to their clubs in terms of them helping to securing results that provide access to competitions with the maximum sponsorship, television coverage rights, so maximising scope for club merchandising of kit, etc. It is also not clear how his distinction could be made tangible in public policy terms, unless, say, proceeds from sponsorship, advertising and similar activities were taxed at a higher rate than employment income².

An alternative question may be to query the social regulation of the football industry, with its matches now staggered across the weekend and weekday evenings in order to fit the schedules of the pay-as-you view broadcasting channels: games between the top contenders in the premiership attract the most income, while the achievement of that position has increasingly become a function of the financial ability of clubs to purchase the best players, or attract the richest benefactor – a self-sustaining process, an example of market failure being the real source of the problem, more than one of distributional social justice, perhaps. Similar considerations apply to other entertainers who can best 'get bums on seats' whether in person or across the nation's TV lounges.

And the same principle of the economic 'rent' that 'star' performers potentially command is applicable more generally to market determined or influenced remunerative distributions: banker's salaries and bonuses to take one pressing example. Some City figures assert that in order to secure and attract the best banking talent to the part-nationalised institutions, so to provide the best prospect for those institutions to maximise returns to the taxpayer, such 'talents' should be paid salaries and bonus packages that cover the 'rent' in effect 'owed' to them by dint of their superior skill that in context of frenetic trading activity can make a difference in outcome quantified in millions for their employers. Otherwise they will simply go to an institution that does. That

² Tailored policy responses, such as that, and reforming the regulation of financial institutions, slitting investment and retail banking and requiring different ownership structures for both, may be more effective than capping salaries, which could be distortionary in some cases and be difficult to enforce effectively.

and similar positions go to the heart of distributional fairness can be criticised from a number of opposing social democratic standpoints.

First, the debacle of a deep worldwide recession caused by a financial systemic failure related to incentives that encouraged short-term profit maximisation linked to high risk trading activity rather than long-term stable and sustainable growth, provides a strong evidential backdrop that excessive rewards at the top skew economic activities towards areas that are short term and speculative rather than sustainable and long-term, and, moreover, sow the seeds of their own destruction by fuelling booms that invariably ultimately turn into bust.

The application of scarce intellectual resources to design complex derivative securities, involving the cutting and dicing of sub-prime mortgages in order to diffuse risk across different financial institutions, while providing more scope to the originating institutions to maximise sub-prime lending and borrowing was inherently flawed from a social democratic perspective. Encouraging low income and marginal purchasers to over-borrow relative to their resources and risk profile to become owner-occupiers, not only exposed them as individuals and families to financial ruin in the event of economic recession or personal misfortune or a change in circumstances, but actually was a prime cause of the actualisation of such contingencies. Easy and excessive mortgage credit availability, of which sub-prime mortgages was a symptom, stoked an unsustainable house price boom; once that began to implode, made the financial derivatives that helped to make the boom happen become instead a toxic liability that then made many financial institutions, previously thought to be rock-solid, insolvent. That, in turn, was an outcome that, due to the interdependencies of the western financial system, would have destroyed that system and thrown the world economy into the depression if government intervention to shore the banking system up had not occurred.

As the Head of the Financial Services Authority pointed out in August 2009, much investment banking activity has no economic utility. Socially much of it simply leads to both greater inequality and insecurity. In the final reckoning, encouraging or even allowing a pattern of economic activity built upon speculation and short-term returns linked to massive remuneration packages, leads to a more volatile, and ultimately smaller cake for all, split into more unequal segments. Social democrats should be concerned with the structure and characteristics of the economy and the pattern of distributions that it generates, not just the redistribution or regulation of market distributions, post event.

Skewed distributions at the top tend to distort incentives both at the macro level, in terms of the distribution of resources to particular ends, such as high risk banking, in preference, to say, manufacturing, and, at the micro individual level, in terms of what people actually do or prioritise in their jobs: bonuses related to short-term share price movements, for example, can provide perverse incentives to key executives to maximise short-term earnings

upgrades (or massage company accounts and result reporting to flatter such upgrades) at the direct expense of long-term returns³.

Second, income distributions don't tend to be market determined in practice. Beneficiaries of higher incomes at the top, often earning 'telephone number' packages, tend to be organisational 'insiders' who award themselves these massively higher salaries and bonuses; in reality, these packages are unrelated to their actual performance; indeed disproportionately unequal salary and bonus structures may even constitute a barrier to entry to new blood and simply denote the vested interest of a relatively closed circle within private companies, thus contributing to the recent decline in social mobility and opportunity ladders that recent research has highlighted, including the 2009 Milburn report.

When the chips invariably come in and the belt-tightening begins at the corporate level, company workforces pay the bill through redundancies and reduced working conditions. Rover was a rather inconvenient example of such an unravelling, a bit close to the May 2005 election for comfort for the New Labour spin doctors. The example of the Phoenix Four may have been coruscated in 2009 by Lord Mandelson in his capacity of Business Secretary, but linking their greed to economic failure and social unfairness then is a classic example of bolting the stable door after the horse has bolted: a defining feature of New Labour was its belief that market distributions should not be altered by government.

Back in July 2005 again, the BBC Governor-General announced that the bonuses of the tip Corporation executives would be capped to 10 per cent of salary; they were previously escalating to approach private sector levels despite the position of such executives as well-paid public servants within a creative industry, and had almost become almost a custom or 'entitlement', even though apparently more than 250 BBC executives were reported to be earning six figure salaries at the time. A social democrat will ask whether these bonuses are justifiable in terms of their economic utility or impact on social society. If they were not paid, would that deter a putative young Greg Dyke, or, at an entertainer level, Bruce Forsyth, say⁴?

Quite the contrary; disproportionate public 'compensation' packages that mimic private sector practice simply encourage a gravy train merry-go-round

³ This was precisely what happened in the banking sector; another sector example, is telecoms, where executives borrowed heavily to fund acquisitions knowing that the commonly applied earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (ebita) measure stripped out interest costs attributable to such acquisitions; many such acquisitions have turned out to depress earnings subsequently, reflecting the incentive provided by bonus structures towards short term reward of particular business strategies and to downgrade the risks that accompany them.

⁴ With respect to Bruce Forsyth, apparently not: in an interview on BB2 Newsnight, 11th September 2009, he advised that - like all other star entertainers -he had always been paid too much, even from the days of his fronting of the 'Sunday Night at the London Palladium' in the sixties, but not 'when he started'; however, when asked whether on the same basis that he felt the BBC Director General was paid too much, he replied that such managers should be paid 'what they are worth': surely the same principle applies, as is argued in this paper.

between a relatively closed pool of over-rated television executives. In the same vein, was it really not possible to have found a competent head of Transport for London without paying American-level 'compensation' and then severance payments for the likes of the elderly and uninspiring Bob Kiley?

Third, skewed distributions of incomes at the top, even more invidiously, tend to undermine the achievement of social democratic ends by distorting income expectations further down the income scale towards the median point. Such a tendency can be seen in the public sector, as chief executives and senior executives colonise higher proportions of available resources in the form of salaries, on the ground that this simply reflects the self-defined and largely illusory 'market forces' set by the private sector. Redundancies in low-waged staff often follow when the budgets they are responsible for over-run and become unsustainable, calling for the need for 'economies'.

The lower third of the income distribution possess less market or political power to affect their distributional share. They tend to stay there, regardless. Hence burgeoning inequalities linked to market incomes set by short-term 'beat your neighbour incentives', rent premiums, unchecked by broader considerations of social value or utility, will invariably tend to perpetuate the relative disadvantage of households reliant on low and moderate incomes. In effect, such distributions in effect exclude both those at the bottom and top from participation and sharing fully societal institutions, as opting out of state schools and hospitals become an option for more, while the entry cost of things like going to football matches, school uniforms, and housing, rise and crowd out access to the poor. Most fundamentally, as pioneer social democrats, such as Richard Tawney, back in the inter-war years pointed out, excessive inequalities degrade not only wider society but the individuals who benefit from them in that value is put on monetary reward itself and not on personal contribution to society. The bond of mutual reciprocity of obligation between individual and society is lost.

Unregulated market distributions of income can be demonstrated as both economically inefficient and socially unjust, therefore. Take, the US model, for example, based as it is on a neo-liberalism philosophy and ideology underpinning the operation of markets organised and patterned for the benefit of the powerful, empirically resulting in a gigantic skewing of resources towards the most privileged, and away from those at the bottom and middle of the income distribution. For example, between 1979 and 2001, average net incomes enjoyed by the top one per cent in the US income distribution doubled to more than \$700,000, while they only rose 17 per cent for those in the middle of the distribution, and only 9 per cent for those at the bottom. Similar results were reported with respect to the UK income distribution during the same period, which coincided with the implementation of Reaganite-Thatcherite public policy frameworks.

Such distributional end-states are unjust in the social democratic sense in that they cannot be justified, either as a differential return on effort and performance, or in terms of utility to the common good, or be shrugged-off as a product of the luck and good chance of individuals, whether that luck is

mixed or not with them making best of opportunities available to them. Instead neo-liberalism tends to entrench such inequalities within class and racial groups.

The ability of vested interests, such as private health companies, to finance lobbying exercises to inhibit the plans of the Obama administration to expand access to affordable health care in order to protect profits secured by quasi-monopoly market positions linked to imbalances in information between consumer and producer and other market failures, such as cherry picking of desired patients and treatment options, provides a current case in point in 2009.

Further evidence includes the rising proportion of students at 250 of the most selective US colleges hailing from rich families while the income gap between those with and without college degrees has widened. The recent Milburn report similarly highlighted in the UK context that over recent decades the opportunities for young people to enter professions or classes of higher status than their father did has declined, so reversing the earlier post war trend towards greater equality.

Take the New Labour proposal to allow residential property to be included within a self-invested personal pension wrapper (SIPP's) and to allow investors to obtain relief at their top marginal rate; that was on the table until it was withdrawn in the 2005 Pre-budget report. Its introduction would have added a further fillip to house prices to the net benefit of well-off investors at the expense of entry purchasers, and boosted the unsustainable house price boom further. Such policy measures would be killed-off at birth if a social democratic political methodology was being applied within the HM Treasury.

The problem is that it is easier, of course, to define, particularly retrospectively, as what is not social democratic, rather than what is. Yet judgment on fair income distributions, and more importantly the development of practical public policy measures to encourage a fair and socially cohesive distribution can and should be evidence-based, and sensitive to actual socio-economic realities and contingencies. Practical politicians can filter historical experience, reason, evidence, and guide collective choice within particular societies at particular times, in order to progress public policies that are capable of altering and patterning defined outcomes, at least in broad and incremental terms, yet also in ways that are cumulatively significant. For instance they can allocate and enforce rights and develop and enact measures that tend to compress the range and intensity of unequal income distributions in a way that protects the position of the less powerful in particular (the minimum wage is a measure that springs to mind), or which spreads opportunities for citizens to improve their market position (improved access to higher education); while also balancing these interventions with the imperative to minimise encroachments on the liberties and holdings of individuals and their associated freedom of action; these should be justified, in the same way that distributive inequalities need to be.

Indeed it is a strength of social democracy, not a weakness, that it recognises the shifting complexities of the real world and the need to balance trade-offs between competing objectives that cannot be abstracted to fit a neat all-embracing theory or political stance. In our present imperfect world, securing a broad balance between public interventions designed to secure the 'good society' and individual freedoms where these states may conflict is a more trustworthy lodestar than some philosophical or ideological holy grail.

Beyond, a certain point market-patterned income and wealth inequalities become socially-determined and self-perpetuating: a barrier to, rather a ladder of, opportunity; not a spur to effort and achievement at the individual level for the collective good, even when considered in the Adam Smith 'invisible hand' sense.

Economic efficiency requires that market distributions reflect actual performance, scarcity, and value, not previously acquired interest or power. Policies and programmes in design and intention, therefore, will sometimes need to re-pattern material socio-economic outcomes that are not justifiable in terms of their contribution to the collective good society.

The relationship between Governments and Markets is distinct and individual to each polity, although category similarities can be discerned between say, Japanese, Scandinavian, US neo-liberal, and European social market models. If public policies conflict with the workings of a country's economic system, economic efficiency will be undermined to the extent that rich and poor will both tend to be losers. But public policy in each particular country can and should aim to influence the working of economic agents to meet its particular social justice requirements. It is not sensible on efficiency grounds even, for the UK to import wholesale features of either the US or the Scandinavian models due to our distinctive and particular history, social system, and institutional relationships. Yet New Labour veered towards this direction in its importation of US neo-liberal practice.

That is why social democrats not only regard the trend of the last quarter century towards inequality within the UK as it has mirrored the US trend as inimical to the future achievement of social justice, but believe also that it is a legitimate and key end of public policy is to alter or reverse that trend in terms of both market processes and redistribution of market incomes, so that economic efficiency and social justice go in hand in hand each other, mutually supporting the other.

They also believe in the active promotion of societal value framework conducive to the exercise of political choices that are consistent with the attainment of social justice, (instead of the tactical manipulation of contingent public opinion as expressed by polling, focus groups etc). In short, a function of social democracy is to guide as well as follow public opinion, for example, in relation to the sustainable alignment of taxation revenues with the expenditure requirements of a socially just society. In a nutshell, economic efficiency and social justice should not only be firmly bolted together, but need

to be married to an overarching and coherent political strategy. *Social democratic public policy development is thus both value- and evidence-driven.*

This still, of course, leaves open the definition as to what is socially just or fair, and the difficulties involved in coming to scientifically-based conclusions. As was earlier noted precision is essentially an exercise in futility, as fairness is a normative consideration, not amenable to precise resolution. Yet, Milburn's report provides, perhaps, a clear pointer to a workable definition of social democratic fairness in today's UK political context. The fact that opportunities for social mobility in UK, and English society, in particular, over past decades have constricted rather than grown, indicates that outcomes have become inimical to both the achievement of equality of opportunity, and thus social democratic ends.

Consequently, a core benchmark to assess both existing economic and social arrangements and future public policy options against a social democratic normative value-base yardstick is whether that they actually expand opportunities by means of providing pathways to prosperity and opportunity, including jobs, and social goods, such as quality health, education, and housing. Making work pay by income maintenance reforms that reduce existing marginal rates of income withdrawal on the low paid that greatly exceed the marginal rates faced by the high paid, is one such clear example of the application of such an approach. The definition would provide a value-base to guide and underpin policy, not a positivist scientific or philosophical principle.

A great advantage of such a flexible but principled benchmark is that it can be applied across party political boundaries insofar that it overlaps 'left' and 'right' positions in relation to redistribution, individual responsibility, and public service reform. It is quite possible for socialist social and conservative social democrats to develop considerable common ground, and, often, across particular issues, greater affinities of political and social purpose with each other, compared to those within their own particular political parties that are wedded to free market, illiberal, or collectivist solutions as first order principles. .

And, as the sister paper to this one, *Housing A Social democratic Opportunity*, pointed out wider electoral recognition of the regressive distributional implications of the forward abolition of the 10 per cent tax rate made in the 2007 Budget showed how it can be ultimately politically counter productive *in both electoral and policy outcome terms* not to connect values, policy, and presentation together. Trumpeting headline direct tax rate reductions while clawing money back elsewhere without reference to defined economic and social ends, to the ultimate cost of individuals and households that New Labour 'strategists' deemed to be electorally less significant than others, led to visible and tangible voter cynicism, disillusionment, and confusion: it also put Gordon Brown's new government into an early electoral tailspin.

An evidence-based 2007 budget, for way of counter-example, that raised the basic tax threshold in order to reduce the tax burden for the low income

workers and pensioners facing the highest marginal tax rates, and which concurrently raised taxes on the wealthy in order to help the sums balance would have helped to clearly define Gordon Brown's social democratic values and intentions, and provided a template for the future long-term strategic advance of post-New Labour social democratic politics. Linked to a future strategy to progressively take the working poor out of tax net, connected to a narrative focused on combining fairness and economic efficiency, such a budget would have laid down a recognisable social democratic tramline for sustainable and progressive change. It would also have provided a political banner for Gordon Brown to march under in order to engage with the electorate while creating some political blue water between him and David Cameron, whose Conservatives now seem to be adopting New Labour political methodology in terms of focusing on capturing tactical attention, rather than advancing principled, strategic and sustainable social democratic advance within the conservative tradition and support base.

The phasing out of taxation reliefs that disproportionately benefit the higher paid at the expense of low and middle income groups provides another clear policy topic for social democrats to coalesce around and progress.

The Future of Social Housing (go to housing page to access article), demonstrates that preventing the chilling prospect that the children of social housing tenants progressively become even more disadvantaged than each previous generation as the divide between them and the rest of society widens requires not only adjustments to housing policy to end tenure apartheid, but also much wider reform across the social policy spectrum in order to make work pay for all household types and to counteract the disadvantage experienced by tenants and their children, whether that is related to their market power and/or personal attributes, or various combinations of both.

In turn, that requires, at the left pole of the spectrum, the old model of social housing collectivist provision and entitlement to be radically reformed, and, other hand, at the right pole presupposes changes to the income maintenance system that will inherently tend to reduce inequality; that is a move to market rents, as advocated by emerging Conservative-linked pressure groups, will not help to make work pay, that is without extending tax and benefit thresholds to the relative advantage of those in low and moderately paid employment.

A compelling social democratic political narrative that can be electorally defended is therefore needed to propel things forward along those lines where commentators and politicians play their part; the former by not fudging issues; the latter by selecting and promoting reforms that while are supportable by their particular constituencies, also contribute to, and progress the long-term strategic change that is needed to achieve equality outcomes in terms of both opportunity and resources.

So, although the application social democratic methodology can provide no cut and dried answers or panaceas to progressive public policy challenges, it does provide the surest base to forge a new progressive politics for those with shared values; one characterised by the development of societal arrangements and public policies geared to the interlocking ends of economic efficiency and social fairness and cohesion.

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