

Neoliberalism, again

It appears in The May Day Manifesto (1967 & '68) as “modernisation”, or “new capitalism”.

It appears again in Towards 2000 (1983), as the mysterious and rather threatening “Plan X”.

Since the late 1970s, successive governments have told us that There Is No Alternative.

We are now more used to calling it by its proper name - Neoliberalism.

“It’s a myth that the state is passive in neoliberalism; in reality the neoliberal system cannot exist without constant, active intervention by the state to promote marketisation, privatisation, and the interests of finance. It typically deregulates finance, forces governments to outsource services and allows public healthcare, education and transport to become shoddy, driving people to private services. A government that was serious about postcapitalism would give a clear signal: there will be no proactive extension of market forces. Simply for attempting this, the relatively conventional leftists of Syriza in Greece were overtly sabotaged. The ECB staged a run on the Greek banks and, as the price for stopping it, demanded more privatisation, more outsourcing, more degradation of public services.”

“Imagine if, on induction day for new employees, McDonald’s had to give you a one-hour course in trade unionism. Imagine if Walmart, instead of advising people to claim in-work benefits to reduce the wage bill, advised them on how to increase their wages What could induce corporations to do any of this? Answer: law and regulation. If we legally empowered the workforces of global corporations with strong employment rights, their owners would be forced to promote high-wage, high-growth, high-technology economic models, instead of the opposite. The low-wage, low-skill and low-quality corporations that have flourished since the 1990s exist only because the space for them was ruthlessly carved out by the state. All we need to do is to throw that process into reverse gear.”

“If true public provision of water, energy, housing, transport, health-care, telecoms infrastructure and education was introduced into a neoliberal economy, it would feel like a revolution. Privatising these sectors over the past thirty years was the means by which the neoliberals pumped profitability back into the private sector; in countries stripped of productive industries, such service monopolies constitute the core of the private sector and, with the banks, the backbone of the stock market.

And providing these services at cost price, socially, would be a strategic act of redistribution, vastly more effective than raising real wages.”

(All of the above quotes are from Paul Mason’s *PostCapitalism*, 2015)

Do we yet have the language required to prove that there is, indeed, an alternative?