

**LLYFR DU CYMRU FYDD**  
The Black Book of the New Wales

For a better Wales

Llywelyn ap Gwilym, Cardiff, January 2020

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# Foreword

This pamphlet is written in the spirit of utopian thinking: its purpose is to question *what is*, and to envision *what could be*. Some of the ideas presented are a radical departure from the status quo, while others are becoming part of orthodox leftist thinking. Similarly, some have precedents in current or once-existing organisations and institutions, while others have only been trialed, or indeed have not yet existed. While the details of how we can get from *here* to *there* are important, in fact are essential if we are ever to reach that destination, the primary concern initially is in articulating what *there* could look like.

As Rhuanedd Richards describes the late AM Steffan Lewis' approach: "his thinking was that we needed to overcome despair or apathy by introducing new ideas and a clear vision."<sup>1</sup> This pamphlet is my attempt to do exactly that.

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<sup>1</sup> Rhuanedd Richards, Son of Gwent (p72)

# TRUISMS

“An absence is how we become surer  
of what we want” - R. S. Thomas<sup>2</sup>

In the New Wales everyone will have equal access to the material, social and cultural means necessary to live a flourishing life; future generations will have at least the same access as the present generation.

In the New Wales everyone will have an equal right to the means necessary to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives.

In the New Wales people will cooperate with each other because of a genuine commitment to the wellbeing of others, and the sense that it is the right thing to do.

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<sup>2</sup> R. S. Thomas, Identity, Environment, Deity (p178)

# Introduction

“Only a crisis - actual or perceived - produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable.” - Milton Friedman<sup>3</sup>

“It is much more difficult to formulate unifying demands around positive alternatives than around dismantling existing oppressive arrangements.” - Erik Olin Wright<sup>4</sup>

A New Wales is needed: the current situation is not tenable. Wales is a rich country, whose people are living in poverty. Despite being part of the fifth largest economy in the world, a quarter of our people do. In some areas the proportion of children living in poverty is one in every two. Wales' productivity, as measured by GVA per capita, is less than three quarters of the UK average, while the City of London's productivity is 24 times that of our poorest region, the Isle of Anglesey<sup>5</sup>. Wales is a net energy exporter, but communities live in fuel poverty. Our life expectancy is falling. The suicide rate is increasing, particularly amongst young people. The UK is failing Wales, and Wales is failing its citizens.

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<sup>3</sup> Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (p*x*)

<sup>4</sup> Erik Olin Wright, *How to Be an Anticapitalist in the 21st Century* (pp65-66)

<sup>5</sup> ONS, *Regional economic activity by gross value added (balanced), UK: 1998 to 2017*

However, none of this is inevitable. A New Wales is possible. A New Wales which is prosperous, which is kind, which is fair and which is sustainable.

Change is coming: it is inevitable. Brexit is bringing about a constitutional crisis by accelerating the break-up of the United Kingdom: Scotland is marching towards independence, and the calls for a border poll which will see the reunification of Ireland grow louder by the day. Very soon we in Wales will be faced with the stark choice: to be subsumed into a Greater England, an England which is turning in on itself, or to “claim our place as an equal amongst the nations of Europe and the rest of the world”<sup>6</sup>. But if independence, then what?

This pamphlet seeks to answer that question, by setting out a positive alternative vision for a new post-crisis Wales. The goal is to describe the type of country that Wales could be. This vision of a better Wales is needed so that when Wales wins its independence, and the shock of the UK’s demise hits, we can avoid the mistake of replicating the imbalances, inequalities and unfairness of the UK, albeit on a smaller scale. This vision of a better Wales is needed so that when Wales wins its independence it becomes truly independent.

“Real independence is a time of new and active creation: people sure enough of themselves to discard their baggage, knowing the past as past, as a shaping history, but with a new confident sense of the present

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<sup>6</sup> Adam Price, speech at AUOBCymru March for Independence, May 2019, Cardiff

and the future, where the decisive meanings and values are made.” - Raymond Williams<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Raymond Williams, Who Speaks for Wales? Nation, Culture, Identity (p9)

# The normative values of the Welsh revolution<sup>8</sup>

“All the successful revolutions of the past have been particularistic revolutions of minority classes seeking to assert their specific interests over those of society as a whole.” - Murray Bookchin<sup>9</sup>

“The generalised revolution can produce an organically unified, many-sided community.” - Murray Bookchin<sup>10</sup>

The Welsh revolution will be a generalised revolution - complete and totalistic. It will not be for the the minority classes, it will not be by the majority, rather it will be by and for the totality. The outcome of revolution will be that everyone has the material, social and cultural means to live a happy, meaningful and fulfilling life - a flourishing life. Fairness will be a necessary consequence of the participative nature of the revolution. As a result, people will cooperate with each other, instead of competing, out of a deep-seated sense that it is the right thing to do. These are the three normative values on which the New Wales will be built: fairness; democracy; and community<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Throughout this pamphlet the phrase “revolution” will be used in its broader, sociological meaning as the change in the structure and nature of society

<sup>9</sup> Murray Bookchin, Post-Scarcity Anarchism (p2)

<sup>10</sup> Murray Bookchin, Post-Scarcity Anarchism (p2)

<sup>11</sup> Throughout this pamphlet “community” will be used to mean any social unit within which people feel solidarity and



## **Fairness**

Wales has a long history of standing up for the twin values of equality and fairness. Rebecca and her Daughters rioted at the perceived unfairness of toll gates and higher taxes, Merthyr rose due to the unfairness of wage reductions and redundancies at the ironworks, while Aneurin Bevan founded the NHS to give everybody equal access to healthcare. Equality and fairness are in our history and are in our DNA.

But what exactly is equality and what is fairness? Equality is not about ensuring equal outcomes or equal opportunity, but is instead about ensuring equal access to all of the means necessary to live a happy, meaningful and fulfilling life. Fairness is broadly about ensuring that nobody is treated differently or less favourably due to sex, race, disability or any other morally irrelevant attribute. It is about everyone, no matter who they are or where they are from, having equal access to these means. Consequently, equality and fairness must also be considered across generations.

As discussed in the introduction to this pamphlet, Wales is currently a very unfair society. The more relevant question is not how is Wales unfair, but why is Wales unfair?

Successive UK governments have focused investment and opportunity, and consequently wealth and influence, on the south-east of England, to the detriment of the peripheral regions and nations of the UK, and, through the destruction of the environment, to the detriment of future generations. Ideologically, the UK is one of the most neoliberal of all

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obligations to each other. Though often the case, a “community” need not be geographically rooted

capitalist<sup>12</sup> societies, and so given the inherent tension between those who own capital and those who do not, and the imbalance in power between labour and capital, it is unsurprising that great inequality exists: the rich are rich, in

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<sup>12</sup> The terms “capitalism”, “socialism” and “statism” are used to describe three alternative forms of economic structure - three forms of “organizing the power relations through which economic resources are allocated, controlled, and used.” (p120)

“Capitalism is an economic structure within which the means of production are privately owned and the allocation of resources for different social purposes is accomplished through the exercise of economic power. Investments and the control of production are the result of the exercise of economic power by owners of capital.” (p120)

“Statism is an economic structure within which the means of production are owned by the state and the allocation and use of resources for different social purposes is accomplished through the exercise of state power. State officials control the investment process and production through some sort of state-administrative mechanism.” (p120)

“Socialism is an economic structure within which the means of production are socially owned and the allocation and use of resources for different social purposes is accomplished through the exercise of what can be termed ‘social power’...power routed in the capacity to mobilise people for cooperative, voluntary collective actions of various sorts in civil society.” (p121)

Using these definitions it is clear that no real existing economy has been or is purely capitalist, statist or socialist. Instead each economy is a hybrid of all three variables. “The use of the simple, unmodified expression ‘capitalism’...is thus shorthand for something like ‘a hybrid economic structure within which capitalism is the predominant way of organising economic activity.’” (p125) For a more detailed description see chapter 5 of *Envisioning Real Utopias* by Erik Olin Wright

part, because the poor are poor. Trickle-down economics was supposed to pull those at the bottom of society up, but has singularly failed: according to the UK Government's very own social mobility commission, inequality is now "entrenched from birth to work", with social mobility stagnating at virtually all life stages<sup>13</sup>. We see this inequality on a UK-level between nations and regions, but also on a more local level within nations and regions.

In Wales, after twenty years of devolution, and despite the unbroken domination of the nominally left-leaning Labour Party at the polls, what limited powers the Senedd has have been used to recreate that inequality here. Gross inequality is evident both geographically, and through the structure of society. A focus on Cardiff to the detriment of the rest of the country has led, for example, to an exodus of youth from *y Fro Gymraeg* due to lack of investment and consequently a lack of opportunities. A focus on foreign direct investment has brought precarious, low-skilled and low-paid jobs to the the post-industrial areas of southern Wales at great public cost. The current approach has failed.

Why does this inequality matter? As Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett discuss extensively in their book *The Spirit Level*, above low levels of GDP, levels much lower than we have in Wales, a more unequal society leads to worse health and social outcomes than does a more equal society, regardless of the average level of prosperity. The UK, despite being a very prosperous society, is also extremely unequal, leading to worse outcomes for almost everyone. Inequality can therefore be seen to be incredibly unfair.

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<sup>13</sup> UK Government, Social Mobility Commission

The New Wales will be fair and equal because all citizens will have equal access to the material, social and cultural means to live a flourishing life, no matter where they live, what language they speak, their sex or sexual orientation, their ethnicity, appearance or (dis)ability. Future generations will have at least the same access to these means to live a flourishing life as the present generation.

Fairness directly drives the other two normative values of democracy and community. In a fair society there will not be the type of exploitation that is the hallmark of capitalist societies. While “the quality of social relations deteriorate in less equal societies”<sup>14</sup> and “sociability as measured by the strength of community life...declines”<sup>15</sup>, without the need to win at others’ expense we will see the opposite effect: a sense of cooperation, solidarity and community will strengthen and embed. And in a fair society people will have “autonomy in the sense of meaningful control over one’s own life”<sup>16</sup> - one of the social means of living a flourishing life. The true existence of this autonomy directly leads to the type of participative democracy discussed next.

## **Democracy**

On the 4th November 1839 10,000 Chartists marched on Newport with six demands, among them the right to vote for every man over the age of twenty-one. The beginnings of a representative democracy, but not a true democracy.

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (p51)

<sup>15</sup> Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (p199)

<sup>16</sup> Erik Olin Wright, *How to Be an Anticapitalist in the 21st Century* (pp12-13)

So why can't Wales be considered democratic? Wales is nominally a representative democracy, inasmuch as it elects representatives who sit in the UK's Houses of Commons, the democratic half of the UK's bicameral legislature. However, in its current situation Wales only elects 40 MPs out of a total of 650, and so gets whichever government the (English) majority votes for. For example, Wales has never voted for a Conservative government yet had to put up with the ravages of Thatcherism and the absurdities of Cameron, May and Johnson. Indeed, as the drowning of Tryweryn starkly showed, even when the elected representatives from Wales were almost unanimous in their opposition, the wants and desires of the English majority won through, and a valley was drowned, and a community was destroyed, and the indigenous culture died a little.

But what of devolution? Daniel Evans advances the argument that devolution "was not designed to revitalise democracy in Wales...It was not designed to lead to further powers."<sup>17</sup> In a textbook example of Gramscian Passive Revolution, devolution was designed to maintain the status quo.

More fundamentally, and equally importantly, everybody's vote is not equally as important. The particularly archaic system of First Past the Post in Westminster renders a significant proportion of the electorate's votes meaningless in terms of outcome, leaving a significant proportion of the electorate voiceless. But more fundamentally still, a representative democracy is only an approximation at true democracy, especially in a capitalist society, as it is open to corruption and vested interests. Elected representatives can and are influenced by the interests of a narrow capital-owning

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<sup>17</sup> Daniel Evans, Devolution's passive revolution, IWA

elite, leading to the creation of a self-serving political elite, who further their backers' interests in order to further their own. This is a situation, as in the UK, which is exacerbated when broad swathes of the media are owned by this tiny elite, who purposefully keep the electorate un- or mis-informed.

The antidote is true, participative, democracy. "A democratic society...requires that people should be able to meaningfully participate in all decisions that significantly affect their lives...This does not imply that all people actually do participate equally in collective decisions, but simply that there are no unequal social impediments to their participation."<sup>18</sup> A truly democratic society is one in which people make, or are party to making, decisions about the things which affect them. If a decision affects only one person, then they themselves should be able to make that decision without interference. If a decision affects other people as well, then they should all be parties to the decision, or agree to let others make decisions on their behalf. Clearly, for people to be able to exercise their democratic right in an informed way "politics needs independent media...Freedom of information is not only a right to the individual. It also involves a societal dimension."<sup>19</sup>

Thus, in the New Wales everyone will have an equal right to the means necessary to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives. There will be a stripping away of the political and economic power of the centralised state. Power will be devolved to the lowest practicable level. People will be directly involved in this type of self-government.

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<sup>18</sup> Erik Olin Wright, How to Be an Anticapitalist in the 21st Century (p16)

<sup>19</sup> Abdullah Öcalan, War and Peace in Kurdistan (p36)

Democracy directly drives the other two normative values of fairness and community. People having a meaningful say on the decisions which affect them is inherently fair, and a group of people cooperating to make joint decisions which collectively affect the group is the basis of community. As stated by Abdullah Öcalan, “democratic politics, by giving different sections and identities within society the opportunity to express themselves and become political forces, reforms political society at the same time. Politics becomes a part of social life once again.”<sup>20</sup> We discuss community next.

### **Community**

Wales is made up of a multitude of communities and affinity groups, based on language, geography and a whole host of other factors. These communities have been forged through shared histories, and are shaped by lived experience and collective hopes. While oftentimes distinctions can be used to try to separate us and to put us into conflict - north versus south, or those born in Wales versus those born abroad, for example - Wales as an entity shares much common culture, a collective past, and a shared future. As our football team so eloquently puts it, “together, stronger”.

In ordinary times the value of community can become quite thin, both in respect of strangers in distant places, but also regarding people closer to home. This is a direct effect of the forces of economic self-interest and privatised consumerism. The driving motivation of capitalism is economic self-interest, pitting individuals in competition with others to generate winners and losers - an attitude which necessarily erodes community solidarity. Capitalism also promotes a culture of privatised consumerism, where not only does life satisfaction

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<sup>20</sup> Abdullah Öcalan, Democratic Confederalism (p24)

depend on ever-increasing personal consumption, but where collective consumption is seen as a reduction in personal consumption.

In extraordinary times the value of community can show its dark side, where rigid boundaries are defined between insiders and outsiders, and the values of insiders are held in contrast to, and to the exclusion of, those of outsiders. While these tensions are evident in Wales' history, for example the race riots in Cardiff in 1919, what is also evident is the welcoming of migrants, from English and Irish migrants into the south Wales coalfield in the 19th century, to Syrian refugees today. Our strength is in our diversity: together we are stronger.

Why is a healthy sense of community important? Murray Bookchin described the “banalization and impoverishment of experience in...[an] impersonal mass society.”<sup>21</sup> But the importance of community goes deeper than mere impoverishment of experience, though no doubt this is one important effect. Capitalism's pitting of winners against losers in an environment of fear and insecurity has led to the promotion of the individual's interests over community solidarity and support. In turn, given that humans are social creatures, this has led to a broad mental health crisis, as described by Oliver James in *The Selfish Capitalist*, and specifically to an epidemic of loneliness. A significant proportion of young Britons feel lonely often or very often<sup>22</sup> while nearly half of over 65s consider the television or their pet as their main source of company<sup>23</sup>. When considering that

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<sup>21</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (p6)

<sup>22</sup> BBC Radio 4 and Wellcome, *The Loneliness Experiment*

<sup>23</sup> Age UK Loneliness Evidence Review, July 2015 (p2)



the influence of social relationships on the risk of death are comparable to risk factors such as smoking and drinking, and are more significant than factors such as inactivity and obesity<sup>24</sup>, this is a grave and indeed sad situation. Community matters.

And so, in the New Wales people will cooperate with each other because of a genuine commitment to the wellbeing of others - Bell Hook's conception of love or Kropotkin's mutual aid - and the sense that it is the right thing to do. The New Wales, in Saunders Lewis' words, will be a true community of communities.

"Community and equality are mutually reinforcing, not mutually incompatible."<sup>25</sup> But community not only reinforces the normative value of fairness, but directly drives the other value of democracy:

"It is easier to accept that all people within some social space should have equal access to the necessary conditions to live a flourishing life when you also feel a strong concern and moral obligation for their well-being...The value of democracy is more likely to be thoroughly realised within political units in which there is a fairly strong sense of community." - Erik Olin Wright<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Timothy B. Smith, J. Bradley Layton, Social Relationships and Mortality Risk, A Meta-analytic Review

<sup>25</sup> Robert Putnam, Bowling Alone (p358)

<sup>26</sup> Erik Olin Wright, How to Be an Anticapitalist in the 21st Century (p19)

# Socio-political and economic organisation in the New Wales

“Social institutions can be designed in ways that eliminate forms of oppression that thwart human aspirations towards living fulfilling and meaningful lives. The central task of emancipatory politics is to create such institutions.” - Erik Olin Wright<sup>27</sup>

The normative values provide the foundations of the New Wales. Underpinning these foundations is a radical rethinking of the model of socio-political and economic organisation. As Calvin Jones points out, “the economic structure of post-industrial South Wales is wholly unlike that of still-industrial North East Wales...Anyone who works often in North West Wales knows it is economically (and to some extent socio-culturally) another country. Powys is... Powys.”<sup>28</sup> How do we therefore organise - socially, politically and economically - in a New Wales in order to ensure that the needs of each of these disparate communities is met?

In the democratic-egalitarian society of the New Wales gone will be the *laissez faire* market-knows-best approach of the UK Conservatives, and gone will be the centralising, statist approach of UK Labour. In their place will be a true bottom-up participatory democracy, with social, political and economic power stripped from the centre and devolved to the lowest practicable level, “bringing control back to the community

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<sup>27</sup> Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (p6)

<sup>28</sup> Calvin Jones, *The Building of Successful Devolution*, IWA

through shared ownership and local democracy”<sup>29</sup>, because “decisions are best made by those who are directly affected by them.”<sup>30</sup>

### **Socio-political organisation**

What does “devolution to the lowest practicable level” actually mean? What would such a society look like? Central to the functioning of the New Wales will be a socio-political structure which draws heavily on Abdullah Öcalan’s expression of a democratic-egalitarian society: democratic confederalism. Democratic confederalism says that “the people are to be directly involved in the institutionalization, governance and supervision of their own economic, social and political formations.”<sup>31</sup> Therefore the development of grassroots democratic structures, based around communities and affinity groups, will be of paramount importance.

In practice local decisions will be made locally, at neighbourhood and community-level. All citizens will be welcome to, and indeed encouraged to, participate in communal councils, but participation will not be mandatory. Communal councils will send delegates to confederal councils, when decisions require coordination between communities. A national council, or general assembly, will be reserved for decisions only able to be made at the national-level, relating to matters such as defence or foreign affairs.

Abdullah Öcalan summarises the approach best in his pamphlet, Democratic Confederalism: “[it] is based on

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<sup>29</sup> Leanne Wood, The change we need (p11)

<sup>30</sup> Leanne Wood, The change we need (p3)

<sup>31</sup> Abdullah Öcalan, War and Peace in Kurdistan (p34)

grassroots participation. Its decision-making processes lie with communities. Higher levels only serve the coordination and implementation of the will of the communities that send their delegates to the general assemblies.”<sup>32</sup> Only this radical kind of socio-political organisation can ensure that the New Wales will be a true, functioning community of communities.

### **Economic organisation**

“Socialism is an economic structure within which the allocation and use of resources for different purposes occurs through the exercise of social power...fundamentally, this means that socialism is equivalent to economic democracy.”<sup>33</sup> We can therefore see that economic organisation cannot be split from socio-political organisation. Thus, in the New Wales, many economic resources will also be organised and controlled at the lowest practicable level. In practice this is likely to take the form of a cooperative market economy, with a diverse mixture of community-based cooperatives, state-owned enterprises where nation-wide monopolies exist, and democratised capitalist firms, in addition to expanded non-market economic organisation. As Erik Olin Wright makes clear, it is “possible for an economic structure to consist of units characterized by social ownership as well as private ownership and state ownership.”<sup>34</sup>

### ***Cooperatives and community-owned organisations***

#### ***Cooperatives***

Cooperatives are “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their economic, social, and cultural

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<sup>32</sup> Abdullah Öcalan, *Democratic Confederalism* (p30)

<sup>33</sup> Erik Olin Wright, *How to Be an Anticapitalist in the 21st Century* (p69)

<sup>34</sup> Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning New Utopias* (p116)

needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.”<sup>35</sup> They can take many forms including consumer cooperatives, producer cooperatives and housing cooperatives, amongst others. They frequently have social as well as economic goals and, even today, play an important part in the global economy.

One of the best known and most successful cooperatives is the Mondragon Corporation, based in the Basque Country. Originally set up in 1956, the group now has over 80,000 worker-owners at 264 businesses and cooperatives, covering finance, retail, industry and knowledge sectors, and has annual revenues of over €12bn. Mondragon is not a utopian model as it must still operate within the capitalist system, however it employs measures such as wage regulation, limiting the amount a general manager is paid in relation to a worker-owner on minimum wage, in order to curb the excesses of traditional capitalist enterprises. The result is that Mondragon cooperatives are more profitable than other Spanish companies, and have the highest labour productivity in the country. “The most important lesson [for Wales] from Mondragon’s success is that it was founded in one of the poorest and most economically depressed parts of Spain, but has been a significant factor in the Basque Country now being one of the richest parts of the state.”<sup>36</sup>

### *Mutual organisations*

Mutual societies are based on the principle of mutuality, but unlike cooperatives members do not usually contribute capital via direct investment. The most well-understood examples are probably building societies in the UK and Australia, set up to

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<sup>35</sup> International Cooperative Alliance

<sup>36</sup> Leanne Wood, *The Change We Need* (p16)

provide home mortgages to members. Borrowers and depositors are society members, setting policy and appointing directors on a one-member, one-vote basis.

### *Community-owned organisations*

In the New Wales the state's responsibility for providing specific goods and services - the material means required to live a flourishing life, discussed in the next section of this pamphlet - will involve the active participation of local communities and organisations in state-social partnerships. Community-owned and run organisations will almost certainly involve the provision of caregiving services, including healthcare, childcare and elder care, education, a range of public utilities, and public amenities for community events.

Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog is one such organisation. Twelve social enterprises, employing over 150 people, in Blaenau Ffestiniog have come together under the banner of a community company, whose aims are to promote the environmental, economic, social and cultural development of the area. Cwmni Bro, as it is known, does this by supporting co-operation between the constituent social enterprises, nurturing new social enterprises and working with small business enterprises anchored in the community. It estimates that for every pound received as a grant or loan, 98 pence is spent locally, mainly on wages, and 53% of wages are retained locally.

Cooperatives and community-owned organisations enhance economic democracy for two main reasons: they are variously governed by democratic principles; and, because cooperatives tend to be geographically rooted, the capital invested in much less mobile than in public or private companies, and thus less likely to move elsewhere to avoid

regulation or to exploit cheaper labour conditions. The backbone of the economy in the New Wales will be cooperatives and community-owned companies.

### ***State-owned enterprises***

In a number of arenas natural monopolies exist where it makes sense for economic activities to be coordinated at the national-level, rather than more granularly. Examples would be railways<sup>37</sup> or broadband infrastructure. These state-owned enterprises are only special examples of community-owned enterprises: they are still owned by and run for the benefit of the community, but given the scale of operations the community in this case is the nation. A repeat of public ownership models characterized by a bloated, centralised bureaucracy with minimal accountability to the general public should thus be avoided.

### ***The democratisation of private firms***

If the New Wales is going to take its place as a full member of the international community, it cannot (and should not) shut itself off economically from international markets. However, private firms who want to do business in Wales will have to accept a degree of democratisation. Firms already accept a degree of constraints, such as minimum wage laws or health and safety regulations, on their private property rights - these would be extended and deepened in the New Wales in order to advance the values of equality, democracy and solidarity. Such requirements could, for example, include enhanced employee share-ownership, or having a bicameral board of directors, one elected by shareholders in the conventional

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<sup>37</sup> Public transport in Tallinn, Estonia, is free to use and is profitable (Maeve Shearlaw, The Tallinn Experiment, The Guardian)

manner, and the other elected by workers on a one-person-one-vote basis.

Firms should not look on these requirements as constraints, but instead as opportunities to improve their businesses. Indeed “there have now been a number of large and well-controlled studies...which demonstrate the economic benefits of the combination of employee share-ownership and participation...substantial performance benefits only come when employee share-ownership schemes are accompanied by more participatory management methods.”<sup>38</sup>

### ***Non-market economic organisation***

In addition to the community-owned and run organisations discussed above, other forms of non-market economic organisation will play an important role in the New Wales. “Libraries...constitute a mechanism of distribution that embodies the egalitarian ideal of giving everyone equal access to the resources needed for a flourishing life.”<sup>39</sup> They also encourage other beneficial behaviours, such as designing sustainable products which last, and repair instead of replacement.

A Library of Things already exists in Cardiff. *Benthyg*, which is run by Rumney Forum, a resident led community organisation, and whose motto is “borrow don’t buy”, has items available to borrow from gardening to DIY, and from IT to maternity-related products. In the New Wales there will be an expansion of these nonmarket, community-led library-like ways of giving people access to many resources.

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<sup>38</sup> Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (p256)

<sup>39</sup> Erik Olin Wright, *How to Be an Anticapitalist in the 21st Century* (p87)



### ***Local procurement - the Preston model***

In the New Wales “every attempt will be made by the community to satisfy its requirements locally - to use the region’s energy resources, minerals, timber, soil, water, animals and plants as rationally and humanistically as possible and without violating ecological principles.”<sup>40</sup> A limited but very successful version of this ambition has been operating in Preston, England, since 2012. Locally-focused procurement at anchor institutions, such as the council, university and colleges, has been used to drive demand for locally sourced goods and services, growing and expanding local business and cooperatives, and improving community health and wellbeing<sup>41</sup>. In the New Wales this ambition will be taken further and will be embedded in all communities the length and breadth of the country, as decisions will be made in and by the community, necessarily supporting the economic structures below.

### ***Taxation***

#### ***Taxing wealth***

As stated in the introduction to this pamphlet Wales is a rich country, whose people are living in poverty. But, despite an income inequality between Wales and the UK as a whole, the average wealth in Wales is about the same as the average wealth in the rest of the UK<sup>42</sup>. Much of this wealth is unproductive, though, sitting in land and property which could be better used. Therefore a radical overhaul of the tax system should be implemented, focusing on taxes on wealth which shift the burden onto the richest in society, rather than income

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<sup>40</sup> Murray Bookchin, Post-Scarcity Anarchism (p68)

<sup>41</sup> Centre for Local Economic Strategies, How we built community wealth in Preston

<sup>42</sup> The Resolution Foundation, The Generation of Wealth

taxes, or consumption taxes which disproportionately impact the poorest. As Thomas Piketty painstakingly details in his book “Capital”, the huge increase in wealth-inequality seen since the second world war is due to the compound rate of growth applied to untaxed or insufficiently taxed wealth. Wealth begets wealth. By shifting the burden to the richest in society, by taxing wealth rather than income, we can reverse this rise in inequality, and thus contribute to the building of a fairer society, with all of the positive externalities that this brings.

#### *Devolution of collection*

While coordination and harmonisation of taxation between communities, or more likely economic areas, is possible and even likely, the collection and administration of taxes should be devolved to the economic areas themselves. Such a system occurs in the Basque Country today, where the provincial councils of Bizkaia, Álava/Araba and Gipuzkoa - the three Basque historical territories - collect and determine the taxes paid by their citizens. Funds would then be kept closer to where they are needed and spent, allowing for innovations such as participatory budgeting, with only a proportion being passed up to a confederal or national-level.

#### ***Alternative measures to GDP***

As argued throughout this pamphlet, we need a revolution in the way that we think about Wales, and about what we want from the New Wales. Capitalism in general, and neo-liberalism in particular, is above all obsessed with economic growth, as measured by GDP. But for what purpose do we want an ever-expanding economy? So that consumers, who are increasingly unhappy working longer and longer hours in jobs that they dislike, can afford to buy things that

they don't even need? Too often policies are geared towards growing GDP without sufficient regard to the quality of growth achieved. If we want the New Wales to be a fair, democratic and collaborative country, where everyone has the means to live a flourishing life, we would be better served by focusing our attention on measures that actually indicate whether Wales' citizens are living a flourishing life: above very low levels of GDP, increases in GDP per capita do not lead to significant increases in life satisfaction. We would be better served by jettisoning GDP as a measurement of how well the country and her citizens are doing, and instead focusing on measures of wellbeing, such as those developed by the OECD and adopted by New Zealand. Only then can we be sure that the New Wales is a country worth living in.

# The environment

“We cannot solve the crisis without treating it as a crisis. And if solutions within the system are so impossible to find, then maybe we should change the system itself.” - Greta Thunberg

Put simply, capitalism is killing the planet. The pursuit of economic growth above all else, and the privatisation of profits coupled with the socialisation of losses, in this case the harms from environmental pollution, has led to the climate emergency. And while the world's youth take to the streets to protest, the world's governments and the world's companies do too little to tackle this crisis. There is growing consensus that we are reaching the point of no return, where the damage done will be so large as to be uncontrollable and irreversible, but those in power delay.

Climate change is not an issue which can be addressed by individuals, or on a local or a national level: it requires trans-national cooperation and coordinated effort. But in the same way that individuals should continue to make choices which consider the environmental impact in their everyday lives, even if these behaviours will not avert the crisis by themselves, nations should likewise do all they can to tackle climate change unilaterally, to reverse habitat loss and to protect biodiversity.

A New Wales, one which is built on the three normative values above, will necessarily have a smaller impact on the environment by being a more equal society: more unequal countries have higher ecological footprints, produce more

waste and consume more water than those which are more equal. Further, the New Wales has a much higher likelihood of enacting policies which cause little or no impact on the environment than a Wales tethered to a neoliberal UK. The New Wales would focus on more important issues than continual economic growth, it would ensure that its electricity supply was entirely renewable, and that its food system was local and sustainable.

In fact, by definition, the New Wales would have to be environmentally sustainable because one of the normative values of the New Wales is that future generations will have at least the same access to the means to live a flourishing life as the present generation.

# The building blocks of the New Wales

*“Liberté, égalité, fraternité.”* - Maximilien Robespierre

The foundations of a New Wales are the three normative values of fairness, democracy and community. But what of the policy choices and decisions that can be built on these foundations in order to deliver a better, more equitable society? We now turn to a non-exhaustive discussion of the building blocks of a new society.

## **Material means**

In the New Wales everyone will have equal access to the material means necessary to live a flourishing life. What constitutes the material means will vary over time and place, and may also vary from person to person, but broadly covers a range of basic products and services which mean that people are kept warm, sheltered, fed, well-educated and in good health. In a market or mixed economy it implies that people have adequate income to purchase some or many of these things.

## ***Unconditional basic income (UBI)***

With UBI, an income sufficient to live above the poverty line would be paid to every citizen of Wales, of every age, without any conditions attached. Other forms of income support would be eliminated, except those connected to special needs, which would greatly reduce the administrative burden of managing a complex system of social security requiring the universal assessment of needs. As it would be a universal

payment, made to each and every citizen, it would also eliminate any social stigma attached to “claiming benefits”. An unconditional basic income set in this way would logically lead to an elimination of poverty, and would also reduce both economic and social inequality.

UBI would fundamentally shatter the link between meeting a person’s basic needs and the wage that that person earns. By providing such as strong safety net, UBI would shield citizens from the likely ravages of automation, would eliminate the risk associated with trying new ventures, and could similarly help support the cooperative market economy. It would allow people to engage in initiatives outside of the currently defined market economy, for example those activities such as caregiving which society does not value in an economic sense, and would allow people to pursue their creative interests outside of the traditional workplace, contributing to a flourishing life and vibrant society.

### ***Food***

Wales currently exports most of the food that it produces, and reimports all that it needs, at great environmental cost. Indeed, food and food-related activities such as intensive and factory farming, storage and transportation all have a large ecological impact, to say nothing of ethics. The Wales Food Manifesto has a different vision for the food system in Wales, one where “everyone can enjoy food that is tasty and nutritious, produced in a way that is in balance with the natural world, so that future generations will also be able to eat well...a food system which provides meaningful

employment, produces healthy food, acknowledges cultural traditions and trades equitably with the rest of the world”<sup>43</sup>.

This vision describes a food system for Wales and of Wales, rooted in community, and primarily (though not exclusively) producing to meet that community’s needs. Such a system would have numerous benefits, from minimising waste to promoting cooperative and community farms, and from ensuring animal welfare to educating our children about the role of nutritious food in leading a flourishing life. The biggest benefit of such a food system, though, is that it would be able to react to local demand to ensure that no citizens of a New Wales went hungry.

### ***Shelter***

The existence of rampant homelessness in a constituent part of the world’s fifth richest economy is shameful and should be a national embarrassment. The right to adequate housing and shelter will be recognised as exactly that, an indelible right for every citizen in the New Wales.

### ***Education***

Building the New Wales starts in our schools: “empowerment through education.”<sup>44</sup> The primary purpose of education will not be “the socialisation of young people for the successful adoption of a pre-defined work role”<sup>45</sup>, but will be tasked more broadly with helping develop them to be rounded, happy, fully participating citizens. Children and young adults will be taught how democracy functions, as an understanding of democracy is vital to being able to take part in it. In addition to the arts and the sciences, they will be taught politics and citizenship,

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<sup>43</sup> Wales Food Manifesto

<sup>44</sup> Leanne Wood, *The Change We Need* (p28)

<sup>45</sup> David Frayne, *The Refusal of Work* (p15)



about equality and fairness, relationship building and respect. And they will be taught all of this through the medium of Welsh, as all schools in the New Wales will be free Welsh medium schools: these are the only schools which truly develop bilingualism.

Education goes beyond that provided at school and university. Lifelong learning should be available to all those who want it, going far beyond the retraining and upskilling of workers in order for them to respond to a changing jobs market. In the New Wales lifelong learning will of course encompass hard skills, but will go further to allow people of all ages to develop their interests in and abilities for the arts, crafts, politics, citizenship and more.

### ***Health and social care***

“In rich countries, there is no relationship between the amount of health spending per person and life expectancy. But there is plenty of evidence which shows that more egalitarian societies tend to be healthier.”<sup>46</sup> By the very nature of society in the New Wales - fair and free, where citizens are not in constant competition with others - levels of health and wellbeing, in particular mental wellbeing, should improve. The provision of joined-up health and social care, free at the point of use, will be a right for every citizen, and will go much further than the current National Health Service. It will focus on preventative measures, on reducing the instances of illness, by promoting both physically and mentally healthy lifestyles. It will also encompass a comprehensive community-based social care service, meeting the needs of the elderly, those with mental or physical disabilities, and those with substance misuse issues, amongst other services

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<sup>46</sup> Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (p81)

to support both children and adults. It will make use of many other policy areas, such as education, the food system and the provision of recreation, to ensure a joined up approach to wellbeing throughout a person's life and into old age.

### ***Recreation***

One of the great injustices of more than a decade of austerity is the reduction in free-to-use recreation facilities. Youth clubs have shut, libraries have shut, council-run facilities have been cut back and public space has been sold off to private concerns. Funding for the arts has been slashed and several plans have been floated, by councils desperate for funds, to charge people to access public parks. Given the positive externalities that these examples produce - benefits to the broader community over and above the benefits to the individual consuming the services themselves - these short-sighted policies have been disastrous. They have contributed to the declining levels of physical and mental health of individuals, and the decreasing level of community spirit seen since the financial crisis.

The New Wales would see a reversing of the privatisation of shared public spaces and an expansion of community-owned and run leisure facilities. Communities will be encouraged and empowered to provide those services that best meet the needs and demands of the communities themselves, delivering on every citizen's right to leisure, recreation and cultural activities.

### ***Energy***

Already half of Wales' energy production is met from renewable sources. But, as argued by Professor Emeritus Keith Barnham in his book *The Burning Answer*, all of Wales' current energy demands could be met by a combination of

renewable sources, as a mix of offshore wind, roof-top solar, and bioelectricity making use of the waste from our food system. There is no need for nuclear generation. These types of energy generation could be small-scale, decentralised, community-led and democratically owned.

Wales is currently the fifth largest energy exporter in the world, after Canada, Germany, Paraguay and France, yet the citizens of Wales see none of the benefit, as production is owned by private companies. In the New Wales we could expand our renewable energy generation capacity by, for example, taking advantage of our rich tidal generating potential, to continue to export energy to our neighbours. However, as these schemes would also all be community owned and run, the benefits would accrue to the communities of Wales.

### ***Communication***

Given the historically extractive nature of the Welsh economy, and the fact that Wales is on the periphery of the contemporary London-centric UK economy, communications infrastructure in Wales is significantly worse than that needed in a modern nation, with ongoing underinvestment. The main road linking the north and south of the country is a single-lane A-road for much of its length, while to get from the south of the country to the north by rail requires travelling through England.

Surface transportation is one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. By radically rethinking the way citizens and goods are transported around the country, not only can we create a fairer system where everyone has an equal ability to travel as they need and want, but we could

dramatically reduce the impact that such movement is having on the environment. Centrally-funded, community-run electric bus services could link into a broader, integrated, green transportation network including rail and active travel options such as cycling, providing nationwide free public transport for all, as we are already beginning to see in countries such as Estonia. This would allow citizens to abandon their cars, to reclaim the towns and cities, and to help green the grey of our roads and carparks.

Modern communications goes beyond transportation. Access to fast, reliable broadband is a must, giving individuals access to a world of information, extending political rights by allowing people to more easily hold authorities accountable, facilitating flexible working, and giving businesses better access to their suppliers and customers. In a New Wales digital infrastructure could be extended country-wide, and free access to broadband for all could be prioritised, for example through public WiFi, libraries and community centres, to help link our communities with each other, and with the wider world, to share ideas, our language and our culture.

Free, accurate and unbiased information, provided by an independent media, is a prerequisite for a functioning democracy. The current grip of a London-centric right wing media can be broken by building on the network of *Papurau Bro* and new media such as Nation.Cymru and Senedd Home, and taking inspiration from new newspapers such as The National in Scotland, to deliver relevant and impartial news services to the citizens of a New Wales, so that they can make informed decisions about the issues that affect them.

## **Social means**

In the New Wales everyone will have equal access to the social means necessary to live a flourishing life. The social means will almost certainly vary from person to person, but covers the meaningful activities that a person performs, including but not limited to work, the social connections that they have, as well as the recognition that they receive.

### ***Meaningful, fulfilling activities***

Paid work is central not only to the functioning of capitalist societies but to their culture: we make numerous judgements and assumptions about a person and their status from their occupation; the workplace provides much of the social connection that people experience; and work is seen as a medium for personal growth and fulfilment. Paid work is also central to the politics of capitalist societies: while GDP growth might be the goal, job creation is the means (ignoring the quality of employment). The Labour Welsh Government is more guilty than most on this count.

The boundary between work-life and home-life is becoming more and more blurred. As workers are increasingly asked to be flexible, “agile” and autonomous (within predefined limits, of course), they are expected to always be on call and always be ready to answer emails, all badged up as “flexible working” and sold to workers as a benefit. But given the precarious nature of life under capitalism, workers accept these terms, as work is central to income distribution: it is the main way we gain access to the means to lead a flourishing life, even if we are too tired and stressed - recovering from work - to lead such a life.

This leads to a broad set of questions, articulated by David Frayne in his book *The Refusal of Work*: “What is so great about work that sees society constantly trying to create more

of it? Why, at the pinnacle of society's productive development, is there still thought to be a need for everybody to work for most of the time? What is work for, and what else could we be doing in the future, were we no longer cornered into spending most of our time working?"<sup>47</sup> The questions are particularly pertinent in a post-scarcity society such as Wales

<sup>48</sup>.

We have already discussed how in the New Wales UBI will break the link between work and (basic) income. Work will still be available, and workers will still be needed, but the power dynamic between capital and labour will be broken: toil will have been abolished. People will thus be free to perform meaningful, fulfilling activities, including work, as they see fit.

### ***Intimacy/ social connection***

Humans are inherently social creatures, but a byproduct of a capitalist, work-centred society is an increasing lack of social connection, and rising loneliness and alienation. In the New Wales intimacy and social connection will be promoted in two significant ways: firstly by breaking the link between work and wage, thus allowing people the time and energy to build and maintain meaningful relationships; and secondly due to the

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<sup>47</sup> David Frayne, *The Refusal of Work* (p13)

<sup>48</sup> The term "post-scarcity" is used to denote the theoretical economic situation in which most goods can be produced in great abundance, so that they become available to all very cheaply or even freely. Post-scarcity does not mean that scarcity has been eliminated for all goods and services, but that theoretically all people could easily have their basic survival needs met. In practice this does not occur due to, among other reasons, mis-allocation of capital and resources, as well as rent-seeking behaviour

social organisation of participatory democracy, rooted in communities and affinity groups (discussed later).

### ***Social recognition***

Recognition, “the social practices through which people communicate mutual respect and validate their standing as moral equals within a society”<sup>49</sup>, is not only important for a person’s sense of wellbeing, but can be critical for human flourishing. This is because misrecognition, and social stigma connected to any salient attribute of a person, for example class, language or sexuality, “impedes human flourishing even apart from the way those may also obstruct access to the material means to flourish.”<sup>50</sup>

In the New Wales citizens will not be judged principally on their capacity to generate economic value, but more broadly on the various contributions made to their affinity groups, their communities, and to society. Citizens will recognise that each and every citizen is an equally valued member of the New Wales, each with a contribution to make.

### **Cultural means**

In the New Wales everyone will have equal access to the cultural means necessary to live a flourishing life. The cultural means broadly encompasses having an understanding of Wales and its history and language, an empathy towards the range of diverse cultures present in the country, and an understanding of how the interplay between the two is the basis for a modern, vibrant nation. We must also place our culture in the wider British, European and global contexts.

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<sup>49</sup> Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (p16)

<sup>50</sup> Erik Olin Wright, *How to Be an Anticapitalist in the 21st Century* (p13)

## ***Bilingualism***

As former Wales footballer and football manager Chris Coleman said, the Welsh language “is part of who we are...this is our national language. Not everyone can speak it, but it’s part of our culture.”<sup>51</sup> The New Wales will be a truly bilingual nation. Citizens will be able to live every aspect of their whole lives through Welsh or English. Welsh medium education is the only way to develop fully bilingual citizens, ones who are equally able and comfortable in both languages, and so as discussed above every school will be a free Welsh medium school.

## ***History***

Malcolm X said that “only a fool would let his enemy teach his children.” Mary Angelou phrased it in slightly softer terms, but echoed the same sentiment, when she said “if you don’t know where you’ve come from, you don’t know where you’re going.” As bilingual citizens of a New Wales we will be taught our history, from the prehistoric men and women mining copper on the Great Orme to the Welsh princes and the Saxon invasion, from being at the heart of the industrial revolution to the complicitness in Empire and the race riots of 1919, and from the founding of the NHS and the radicalism of the 1960s through to devolution. We will know our history not so that we can boast or brag of our superiority, but so that we can leave behind our perceived inferiority. An understanding of our shared history will give us a better understanding of who we are, will cement feelings of community and nationhood, and will allow us to look forward with confidence when building and continually renewing the New Wales.

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<sup>51</sup> Golwg360, “Y Gymraeg yn rhan o bwy ydyn ni” meddai Chris Coleman



### ***Cultural diversity***

As confident, modern Welsh men and Women we will understand how successive series of in-migration over centuries have shaped Wales and its communities for the better. We will continue to welcome and embrace new arrivals with different cultures and histories looking to make Wales their home, so that the phrase “everyone is welcome in the New Wales” carries true meaning, and is not just a group of hollow words.

### ***Pacifism***

The New Wales will be opposed to war, militarism and violence of any form. It will not spend a disproportionate amount of its wealth on the military. It will not embark on colonial wars in far away countries, consigning millions of men, women and children to poverty, hopelessness or worse. It will not give over huge tracts of its land, much of it forcibly requisitioned from its rightful guardians, to training men, women and children in the ways of mechanised warfare. It will not compromise on its ethics and morals by training foreign militaries to bomb their own citizens. It will not have an independent nuclear deterrent.

The New Wales will have an appropriately-sized self-defence force which, under normal, peaceful conditions, will be tasked with international peacekeeping, crisis response and humanitarian efforts. The self-defence force will also be an important partner in domestic crisis response, for example responding to flooding caused by climate change, as well as leading on efforts to improve the natural environment, for example reforestation and planting indigenous woodland.

# Conclusion

“If the revolution does not start from below, if it does not enlarge the ‘base’ of society until it becomes the society itself, then it is a mere *coup d’état*. If it does not provide a society in which each individual controls his daily life, instead of daily life controlling each individual, then it is a counterrevolution. Social liberation can only occur if it is simultaneously self-liberation - if the ‘mass’ movement is a self-activity that involves the highest degree of individuation and self-awakening.” - Murray Bookchin<sup>52</sup>

For what purpose am I proposing revolution? If it is to recreate the inequalities and iniquities of the British state on a Welsh-scale, then it is not worth making. The basis for revolution is to dissolve hierarchy, class rule and coercion; it is to build a New Wales as a true participative democracy, built around a sense of fairness and community, where citizens can lead happy, fulfilling lives.

The revolution that I am proposing is a self-fulfilling virtuous circle which will constantly reinforce itself. The focus on fairness, on giving each and every citizen equal access to the means required to live a flourishing life, will by definition lead to a more equal society. And Wales is a rich enough country that a more equal society will lead not only to a better sense of community, and consequently increased intimacy and enhanced social connection, but to better outcomes with regards to health and mental illness, educational

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<sup>52</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (p173)

performance, social mobility and so on - the material, social and cultural means to live a flourishing life. That is, a fairer society.

If this New Wales is to be built, then the citizens of the present Wales must not only demand it, but must build it. As Erik Olin Wright states: "if this is to be our future, it will be brought about by people acting collectively to bring it about."<sup>53</sup>

"There can be no separation of the revolutionary process from the revolutionary goal. A society whose fundamental aim is self-administration in all facets of life can be achieved only by self-activity...Freedom cannot be 'delivered' to the individual as the 'end-product' of a 'revolution'; the assembly and community cannot be legislated or decreed into existence...Assembly and community must arise within the revolutionary process; indeed, the revolutionary process must be the formation of assembly and community, and also the destruction of power, property, hierarchy and exploitation." - Murray Bookchin<sup>54</sup>

We must not wait for revolution, we must create it, by beginning to think independently, and to act independently, and to grow independently in the cracks that are currently appearing in the British-capitalist system. In short, we must begin the founding of the New Wales now.

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<sup>53</sup> Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (p370)

<sup>54</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (pp11-12)

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