

***GO LEFT,
HUNGARIANS!***
(Waste is a Shame)

Prepared as a Topic of Discussion by the Sustainable Development Work-Group operating within the Hungarian Socialist Party's (MSZP's) Parliamentarian Group: Tibor Szanyi (MSZP)

Public!

Last version prior to publication – 06 January, 2009

Prepared on basis of PES (EU) documents, Policy Network (UK), Glocus (IT), the MSZP Committee, MSZP Budapest Regional Association, statements made during deliberations of the MSZP's Europe-Political Group, the [democratic network], opinions of FÉT (Young Intellectuals' Group), the MSZP Social-Democratic Core-Values Committee's "Homeland and Advancement" material, and with the consideration of the personal opinions of numerous invited politicians and professionals.

FOREWORD

At the beginning of man's consciousness only communal paths existed. Once we became capable of producing excesses beyond our basic existence, individual opportunities opened up before us. Today, we have collided with the finiteness of our natural conditions. Hence, we must again turn to communal devices.

We must discuss the future primarily with our young. We must place the key to the future in their hands. Grasping the moment is a common issue for us all. It appears that the train of the advanced world has been derailed. The majority of our efforts today are aimed at putting it back on the tracks of old. Meanwhile, an increasing number of us know that we should be laying down new tracks.

This Topic of Discussion, which we could also call an Experiment of Thought, dispenses with comprehensive criticism of current systems, but rather attempts to offer a new left-wing value-system. We trust in the prospect of discussion, even if politics appears to have lost its credibility. We are searching for a new communal outlook on life.

The time of fate-changing decisions has arrived. Following the three ideologies of bourgeois consciousness (liberty, equality and fraternity), social-democracy has created its own three: (liberty, righteousness and solidarity). Today, we can see the ineffectiveness of the ideologies and institutions to date. The new left-wing outlook on life (liberty, sustainability and community) wants to admit to the mistakes of the past, and confront politicians with the indissoluble challenges of the future.

The alternative to sufferance of the future is building the future. The thoughts put forward in this document aim primarily to inspire. Our goal is to call and compel the younger generation into co-operation and discussion. We are searching for solutions.

I. Continuous Crisis, or a Sustainable Society

By 2008, the magnitude of the financial and economic crisis had surpassed all the damage that we have caused with anything else before. This is measurable in many thousand of billions of euros and dollars. Not only virtual, but real fortunes, too, have crumbled. The consequences bring sweeping changes. One spirit slips away from the world, and a new spirit asks for a place. Individual roads are impassable. Only the community is capable of action. This changeover goes hand in hand with horrific destruction. First, we must clear away the ruins of the decaying, crumbling old structure.

By the turn of the century, market free-capitalism had exhausted our natural resources. Our consumption today would require a globe one-and-a-half times larger than the current one. Then what do survive off? The credit, which we took on for the whole world; which does not exist. The bubble has burst.

The failure of free-market capitalism is dragging liberal social-democracy with it. We will survive, but it's going to be hellishly difficult. We already know the only requirement of anything we rebuild: sustainability. As a first step, let's acknowledge that the rhythm of today's democracy places short-term decisions in the forefront. The creation of a new communal democracy, which looks ahead into the long-term and accepts responsibility for our natural environment, is a far greater challenge than anything before. But looking left; we can do it!

Let's look at the road to date: 1868 - General Workers' Association (Mihály Táncsics). 1994 - Democratically elected left wing government (Gyula Horn). We started off from both places. It is difficult, however, to find a paramount fact or date of the self-identity of the Hungarian left -whereas the left wing itself makes up an extremely rich and colourful group. Many-many names and events highlight the past and present that comprises the left wing in Hungary. The future, however, is open.

II. Let's Open Up! To Europe and the World!

For us Hungarians, Hungary may be a temple or shrine, but for others it is free terrain. Our culture and economy are formed or created by the outside world. Our society is ours. Apart from its few elevated moments, Hungarian history is a history of exploitation. In modern history it was mainly the left wing that represented a glimmering hope: the burning ember, the bright flame (and unfortunately the occasional destructive fire, too) that kept alive people's hopes of happiness and the experience of community. The left wing associated itself with the people, liberty, work, solidarity, progress, creativity, and a search for a new path. Without straying from our roots, we must now also provide an answer to the new challenges of the future! The left wing wants new balances and wide-ranging security for today and tomorrow.

Our future outlook is the community: and man is the main constituent of our communities. Man was born of this earth, and, in the future, must draw a clear line between his abilities and opportunities. Today we are completely capable of annihilating, destroying and bleeding our earth dry. However, our desire for sustainable life forces us within the confines of our possibilities. The creation of the necessary boundaries provides a beautiful task for the left wing - and for everyone.

Work and income. Progress and homeland. Creation and joy. Searching for a path and success. Balance and future. Liberation and tolerance. Security and righteousness. These concept-pairs guide our compass. Our aim is to pass on our achievements to the next generation with a good heart. Everyone should take stock of themselves: are they leaving behind something for their descendants that they, too, would be proud to accept?

We must change the emphasis from growth to development. We will not remain wanting as a result, however our consumption will definitely decrease. Or it may even transform completely. The supremacy of individual consumption will be replaced by communal consumption. The basis of human existence lies in public good and municipal services: from habitation, through ingestion, to the preservation of one's health - as do the elevated levels of human existence: study, art and sciences. The left wing future outlook aims for the quality improvement of all of these.

Work, however, is the token of human existence. It is not only an uplifting value, but also a basic human right! The constitutional acknowledgement of this fact is no longer sufficient. The left wing should make it prevail, and assign it all-preceding importance! Investment in people should be the most important task of government! Private communities should also be able to boldly exist with wide-ranging economic-management rights, whether they be foundations, co-operatives, families, or simple associations - especially in the area of natural resources management (water, foodstuffs, energy). The highest recognition should be awarded to communal leaders. However, they must also be burdened with the strictest responsibility - including the possibility of being called to account by the community.

III. Subservient Market – Controlling Society

In capitalism, production and service jobs were created by companies; organizational and public-service jobs were created by governments. Market-controlled self-organization proved to be an illusion. Uninhibited competition destroyed communal structures. This led to the decline of villages, as well as the loosening and decaying of the bonds of communal togetherness. Culture has for the most part become a terrain of individual successes. Participation in community forums has been demeaned to a privilege.

The left wing wishes to create an open and transparent democracy. Namely, it will establish institutions for wide-ranging expression of opinions. It will place decision-making where influence on the part of the individual can still truly be realized. The deceptiveness of mass democracies is a thing of the past. The future lies in the co-operation of local democracies - but this needs to be organized! We must ensure participation, vested interest, and responsibility. People must not only be spoken to, they must also be listened to. This is one of the most important principles of the new democracy!

Poorly regulated free-competition resulted in wide-spread corruption, especially in the area of public procurement. The elimination of secret power-hubs is our continuous duty. Over past decades we have seen many attempts at this in Europe and America. However, governments, the alliances of the people, have in the most part found themselves on the losing side. Today we are at a point where even the strongest governments cannot effectively tackle the international cartels: primarily the energy companies. To date, laws were written by the monopolies; and law-makers were merely puppets. This can be seen in the north and the west; however, in the east (in China for example), and in the south (in South America, South Africa and Australia) new hopes have arisen.

The left wing needs to digress from the road that gives permanent right-of-way to capital and markets. It should elevate people with work, and treat natural resources as moderately developable communal treasures. It should define logical boundaries for capital and competition, and ensure that these restrictions increase the security of society. Capital should be allowed to operate, but not only with the virtually unrestricted aim of profit! Strict, transparent and controlled regulation is required. We can no longer believe the theories, whereby public funds allocated to the economic elite will filter down to where they originated from: the workers. We're chasing rainbows if we believe that the public good starts with making the wealthy wealthier! We should create motivated and controlled markets with greater governmental participation and responsibility. Government should rise up to the role of guarantor!

We must break with situations where business is conducted between unequal partners. We can no longer treat grievously unequal contracts between banks, brokers, public service providers, professional companies and everyday people as a basic human right! We need an intermediary institution, as a kind of referee, to guarantee honesty, righteousness and lawfulness. We already have controlling bodies and protective institutions, however their operation is in large part subjected to the will of the big and powerful. We will change this, because nothing can overwrite the common will and interest of society. We will counterbalance the vulnerability of the individual with the capabilities of the community. To achieve this, Europe (the EU) must change too, in that its basic freedoms today put individual rights ahead of community rights.

We need justice. The administration of justice will prevail if we simplify our legal system. Established laws are the property of society and not a privilege of the "in the know". We should also establish community inspection of the work of judges (i.e. board guarantees, quality assurance). They should be responsible for their verdicts. This could make justice complete.

IV. Diminishing Nature – Inventive People

For centuries, capitalists appropriated and depleted our natural resources, virtually pulling the ground out from under society's feet. Communal ownership of agricultural lands must be favoured in an organized manner, i.e. by establishing pre-emptive purchase rights for governments. Luckily, underground natural resources, our waters and air are protected today, however this must be stepped up. It would be wise to also take into account the fact that the community doesn't have the right to squander these resources either.

We will give new substance to public assets and public service. Those that produce more from less must be rewarded. Individuals must not command unrestricted quantities of public assets, but must be permitted to be engines of services!

The majority of our resources that are easily extracted from the material world have, in effect, been depleted. Man's ingenuity is providing a new direction - innovation is our means. Nature's load-bearing capabilities are our restriction. Materials and energy are scarcities.

We also have cosmic natural resources that are not subjected to conditions on our earth. They are the moon and the sun. Apart from the Earth's inner thermal energy, the sun fosters virtually all other energy forms: it creates hydrocarbons and biomass, and regulates winds and water movement. The moon creates the tides.

Man has already experimented with imitating the sun: via the splitting of the atom, creating quite a danger for himself. But let's look for new roads for human ingenuity, and as soon as we find them, let's leave the old ones behind! Today, the vast majority of humankind heats and cools at the expense of nature - i.e. they waste - while there are so many other forms of heat compensation. We must build the future on more direct utilization of solar energy and the earth's inner thermal energy.

Hungary has two things to be ashamed of: one, its eternal complaining, the other, its mindless wastefulness. Here we are in the Carpathian Basin, a virtual Garden of Eden, with our legendary Hungarian ingenuity. The Earth bubbles beneath us, and meanwhile we import masses of environment-destroying hydrocarbons from thousand and thousand of kilometres away at extremely great cost. The profit that others outside this country make from us Hungarians is almost 100,000 forints annually. If we are happy to so gallantly pay for others' profit, then we shouldn't grudge about spending only a portion of that amount on the assertion of our own capabilities!

Man's ingenuity and inventiveness are resources whose limits of development are as yet unknown. Let this be our breaking-forth point. Those who lead the way in science and innovation should be rewarded with the attention and recognition of society. Their results should be engraved into our consciousness and way of thinking. Education and the propagation of knowledge in every field should be the basis of our lifestyle.

The most obvious prospect for the depletion of the material world is embodied in the portability of goods; i.e. in transportation. The movement of goods requires the greatest amount of energy. We are happy to have things from the other side of the world in our homes; however we do not take into account the damage we cause with that. Businessmen base their transportation decisions on effectiveness and their own profits, but societies are regularly informed of the resulting disadvantages far too late. Let's reconsider the logic of global trading, even if we are forced to break with certain dogmas.

It's not a problem if we think differently about the solutions. Hungary's strength, and Europe's too, lies in the culture of different ways of thinking. Problems always arose if we didn't succeed in integrating these differences into a common resolution. Misfortune and tragedy always arose if one way of thinking attacked the other. The common responsibility of differences in ways of thinking is that they should lead to decisions whose consequences have been thoroughly thought through. It would be wise to have a constitution that would prescribe the government to map out the will of voters (i.e. in the proportions represented in parliament); namely, that instead of majority/minority decisions, it would encourage increasingly wide-ranging coalitions.

Let's develop a sustainable, i.e. a "green" constitution! If we manage to do that, then we will have reconsidered our communal financial structures, especially our taxation systems, which today principally attempt to create a balance at the end of our work/living processes.

Let's place the taxes of the new world order on a preventative base. Let's mark our desired aims in a way that we may be able to account with them at the beginning of human action. That's the essence of "green taxation": income and assets taxes based on end points of the process should be replaced with taxes related to the use of natural resources defining the starting point. Taxes related to work should be placed in the middle.

Innovation stands at the centre of the new holy trinity of the concepts of "human capital, innovation and energy". In this lies the most important future communal commitment. Those who innovatively contribute to making our lives more effective have already contributed half their rates and taxes in doing so. This will be recognized in the accounting.

Innovation is question of human fate. We're no longer speaking about competition, but rather about our existence. The majority of people don't want to compete on the basis of "winner take all"; they want to live. First, second and subsequent places are equally of value. This is the most important lesson of the 2008 turn of fate.

V. Political Oratory – Meaningful Dialogue

The Hungarian left wing's (and everyone else's) greatest responsibility lies in its ability to communicate the essence of international developments to Hungarian society. Is it capable of swinging the country's every citizen into motion, i.e. work? From the crèche to the homes of the elderly, men and women alike. Does it allow the creative energy of the disabled to be lost or wasted? Is it willing to interpret idleness as a freedom (or at best, an ability)? According to a Flemish proverb, "Laziness is the devil's pillow", and, to be sure, the devil rests a great deal in the Carpathian Basin. Let's put an end to this!

Two sides are necessary for dialogue. On one side stand our elected representatives, on the other, organizations representing the various interests of society. This is how we can create a balance in general and specific issues. We reject endeavours aimed at political dominance. Giving people a voice is the most effective tool in this. The preservation of the concept of the republic means a multitude of divergent institutions. Every institution is an individual piece of the building of security.

We will renegotiate the relationship of the individual and the community so that everyone can be individually accountable. Let's honour those who cause the least burden! Let's state in our value judgement that waste is shameful! Let's end uniform conditions and associated normative accounting. The situation of a blind man in a dense city is different to that of someone living alone on a homestead. We will break with the centuries old attitude towards minorities, because everyone in their own life-situation is a minority with respect to the majority that surrounds them. We want to provide rights for individual accountability, so that everyone may be able to show what they are capable of on their own, and where they need assistance from society. Communal solidarity consists of many factors, but above all: all-encompassing mutuality. Let's create a system of social indexing, which, when needed, is capable of exposing an individual's true personal environment, and also assessing their ability to help the community.

The left wing should pronounce a program of coexistence for the differing groups of society. Let's do away with the assimilation policies of the past. Today's minorities will forever remain downtrodden if we convey majority verdicts towards them. Let's create strictly observed agreements of values, rights and responsibilities. Make real groupings on an equal legal basis obligatory, because individuals only wanting minority rights cannot be the holders of group rights. An equal society is not only a mosaic of equal individuals, but also of equal groups.

VI. Hungary – Spring Winds Diffuse Water

Hungary knows only too well that, regardless of what it thinks, it cannot act alone in today's free world. Its scope of movement - like everyone else's - is highly restricted. But it can show examples, encourage others, and build alliances. In autumn of 2008, without the solidarity of Europe and the developed world, Hungary's economy certainly would have collapsed, dragging others with it too. Looking ahead, our own responsibility is huge: in our own interest, we must amass significant financial and intellectual reserves in the years to come. Failing that, we cannot depend on outside assistance. This process will last for at least a decade.

Let's become a part of the transformation of globalization. Let's join forces with Europe in the development of international solidarity: a new dimension of globalization! Let's turn globalization into integration by replacing the free-reigning devastation of the financial world with institutions of governmental co-operation. The left wing should be the voice of the people in this: the representative of people's rights, and the organizer of human issues!

We should turn markets into subservient tools, ensuring reasonable access to all. We must help people gain closer access to goods, respectable income, and public services. This crisis is not a natural phenomenon; it's a consequence of human fallibility. It can be attributed to the neo-liberal right wing (and often the liberal social-democrats who co-operate with them), historically too. Instead of conforming to the markets, the left wing supports reasonable incomes, and offers a conscious formation of the future.

Let's face up to today's dangers: uncertain employment, the possibility of losing one's home, increased tensions in society, children's adversity and hunger. We must remove control from the hands of the financial elite! Our resources should be turned towards the expansion of communal services. The market can no longer decide the fate of the people. We must make this a pre-emptive right of the community! Hungary should join the ranks of that international team, which makes up a new financial world order, and we should devote all our energy to the common goal! Instead of the mirage of a "hurtling" market economy, we should be building a sustainable economy and equilibrium society! We must think in more humble, but more stable perspectives!

We should invite all the citizens of our country, especially the young, to join the values of the left wing. Equality, democracy, human dignity (especially for women), solidarity, liberty, tolerance, justice and righteousness - our every step should aim to satisfy these fundamental principles! These are the reforms to which we call the people.

Let's release the brakes of society that prevent dialogue. Over the past decade, we've seen how the Hungarian political elite would blast every attempt at change, including progress. In the future, let's show how we can make our lives harmonious. With due commitment, together, we'll achieve this too.

We believe that respecting nature is our guarantee of security. We know for certain that we have been living beyond our means; however, our capabilities have not yet been fully discovered. Today, we still produce one unit of Hungarian goods with twice as much energy as other European economies. We compensate for this shortcoming with lower wages, so that we may remain competitive. If we focus on energy efficiency and productive development, then everyone will have normal jobs and employment, and a reasonable standard of living. That's if we work smarter. And we should not devour our results completely. Let's split them up: devote a part of them to the bettering of society, and leave some in reserve.

The reserves should belong to us, and not to irresponsible bankers. Let the reserves provide a base for the small-credit necessary for normal human existence. The reserves should provide security in cases where catastrophe hits low income earners. Reserves are in no way there for the financing of shady, gigantic development schemes. Let's draw a credit-ceiling, beyond which even private companies will have to ask for communal permission. And, last but not least, our reserves should also serve as a guarantee for our intellectual development!

Let's put an end to the world of overpaid managers and underpaid workers, in which workers suffer the consequences of all irresponsible mistakes made by the profit-mongers! The international crisis was caused by human failure and fallibility; hence we know that someone is responsible! We cannot continue lumbering governments and society with the losses of risky investments, while keeping profits in the financial world. Let's devise a method whereby the personal fortunes of brokers and bankers can be used to partly compensate the masses of everyday people that have lost everything. This requires international cooperation.

But what good is distribution of wealth if we do not eliminate the causes. Strict and transparent financial regulation is a priority issue. Transparency should start with the unification of banking, insurance and public works accounts and bills. We should draw up clear borders between financial and essential public services, and lotteries and calculating schemes disguised as services. We should make a clear differentiation between paper or electronic National Bank funds, and the services of commercial (entrepreneuring) banks.

Financial manipulations disguised as banking services primarily serve to hide their obvious aim of exploiting our human and natural resources. Reality is there behind the abstract concepts. Income frequently appears as the result of individual profit; however, in essence, it often derives from communal disservice. Let's rip away this virtual veil and take a close look at who's doing what! And we will see that global warming is being caused not only by industry and transportation, by also by the agricultural sector. We cannot ignore a single contradiction! The protection of our environment, and the inspection of its use, is the largest task facing the left wing.

Let's be bold and righteous! It is intolerable that we, the people, are being forced to carry the financial base of our own existence, under our own noses, into the vaults of free-capitalism.

The restarting of the stalled engine of the international economy is not someone else's task. We Hungarians also have to do our share. We desire well-thought-through, environment-respecting development. Let's put it like this: Smart and Green! Growth, however, cannot be an aim in itself, above all else. But development can! New quality, even at a more humble level! The most important thing is income from work, for everyone! We will initiate reforms to guarantee the security of homes derived from work, financial savings, and pensions. We should provide all possible advantages to efficient branches of industry, primarily in the interest of reducing our energy and transportation bills. By curbing waste, tens of thousands of jobs can be created, primarily in the area of reusable energy.

On the dawn of modern Hungarian consciousness, the nation wanted credit and a multitude of cultured people. Similar balances are required today, too. What are material and natural resources worth if we do not handle them wisely? Very little. It would be conceiting if it is only our parliamentarians that we renew every 4-5 years. We must renew ourselves, too. There is no knowledge today that must not be refreshed. Left wing politics should continue to remain knowledge-oriented, and should not only propagate life-long learning. It should require regular further improvement and the formation of intellectual reserves for every citizen.

There is also a great need for reserves, so that we will have something to invest in people, in people's abilities: science, research, development, training, education, and the dissemination of knowledge. Instead of an increased standard of living, in reality, we can "only" promise better quality of life. Quality - because it is not a product of nature - forms in human consciousness, and then becomes reality. One of the most important institutions of the history of Europe was that it devoted one tenth of all produced wealth to the spiritual and intellectual advancement of its people. The modern version of this tradition would mean investing an equal proportion of our national income in our own development. This would require a decrease in our consumption, however it would multiply its quality several fold.

Up to half of a company's corporate tax should be deductible through innovation. Half of our communal incomes should be placed in reserve, and one fifth of that reserve should be reinvested into developing human capital. That should be the basis of our plan. This would not disturb the financial balance of our national budget, but would drastically change its structure and spirit. It would highlight, in general terms, the forward-looking role of human culture, which is necessary to conquer the crisis. European culture begins with us looking into one another's eyes when we greet each other. It continues with us patiently exchanging ideas. And it finishes with us acknowledging, with a smile, that we have succeeded in coming to an agreement.

Like all other nations, we Hungarians also have something to account for, not only with the world, but each other as well. Every year, we must take stock, and ask whether we have done everything possible in each other's interest. We should prepare annual National Reports, which will slowly shed light on the true past and the desired future. Most likely, the most appropriate body for this would be the National Sustainability and Development Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. It would report on the Hungarian nation, whose cohesive strength lies in its language and spirit, detailing the enacted past and the present.

Ours is a collective responsibility... And the future obliges us!