

Title: Post-Fordist socialism and the apotheosis of the consumer in British socialist thought

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Abstract

The paper will consider the origins and substance of the political economy of post-Fordist socialism that emerged in Britain and elsewhere in the 1980s and 1990s. It will discuss some of the reasons for its emergence - the demise of Keynesian social democracy, the rise of the New Right and the electoral success of its agenda and the changing social constituency of left-wing parties. It will consider too the appeal of this political economy to elements of the Left intelligentsia and its embrace by periodicals such as *Marxism To-day*. In particular it will discuss the pivotal role which this political economy gave to the consumer in advancing the socialist project: both the reasons for the consumer's apotheosis and the dangers inherent in this process. The paper will examine critically the empirical basis and conceptual coherence of post-Fordist socialism and suggest the traditions of socialist thought in terms of which it can best be understood. It will also use its discussion of post-Fordist socialism to make some observations on the state of democratic socialist political economy in late twentieth century Britain.