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Social Democracy and the Rudd Labor Government in Australia

■ As the Rudd Labor Party Government in Australia celebrates two years in office following the Party's many years in opposition, it is in a strong position. However, it needs to more clearly outline its social democratic ambitions in order to break free from the policies of the former right-wing government, from three decades of neo-liberal intellectual dominance and from association with the ineffectual policy approach of British Labour's »Third Way«.

■ This can be done with a greater and more sustained commitment to improve industrial relations in favour of working families, including by further expanding paid parental leave. There also need to be further increases in public investment, including in all forms of education, and policy action to broaden the nation's economic base by rebuilding manufacturing industry. Other priorities should be to better prevent and alleviate the plight of the unemployed, and to tackle the inadequate taxation presently paid by the wealthy.

■ Australia needs now to look beyond the English-speaking world to envisage social democratic job creation programs in community services, and to greatly reduce child poverty. Australia also needs better planning for the major cities, where the population is growing most. Consistent with the wish for a greater role as a medium-sized power in the world, Australia's Labor Government needs to take more actions towards a humanitarian refugee policy. The Australian Labor Party's present position presents a number of lessons for European social democratic parties

DECEMBER 2009