

- Talented individuals will be driven out of the country. **(Social democracy works worse than neo-liberalism.)**
- The very rich benefit society by paying lots of money in taxes and by investing in businesses which provide thousands of jobs. **(Neo-liberalism is more efficient than social democracy.)**

Competition or collaboration?

3. This house would bring the railways into public ownership

Social democrats support the proposition; **neo-liberals** support the opposition.

A **social democrat** argues:

- Competition may work well in some sectors, but not in the railways. There is not sufficient capacity for competing offers. For example, there is only one track from London to Edinburgh, so there can only be one company running that line. **(Collaboration is better than competition.)**
- Governments are more incentivised and able to take the long term view, investing in maintaining and updating tracks and stations; businesses are only interested in short term profit. **(The state protects our interests better than individuals.)**
- Removing the need for profit and introducing subsidies could bring down fare prices, to everyone's benefit. Cheaper fares would also incentivise people to use public transport more, to the benefit of the environment. **(The state has the right to intervene in society.)**
- Having an efficient, cheap, reliable railway service to carry goods and people around is good for the economy, so it is worth having the government invest in it. **(Government intervention makes the economy work better.)**

A **neo-liberal** argues:

- Without competition, the people running the railways will become lazy and complacent. **(Competition is a good thing.)**
- Competition will motivate companies to provide the best service and lowest prices. **(Competition works.)**

- Higher public investment in the railways will mean higher taxes, which will discourage businesses and individuals from working harder. **(Taxes should be as low as possible.)**
- Being able to travel is a benefit, and people should expect to pay for it. **(People should take responsibility for their own choices.)**

Here are some more motions which could easily break on neoliberal vs social democratic lines:

- **This house would privatise the NHS.**
- **This house would introduce a flat tax (see the next chapter for an explanation of what a flat tax is).**
- **This house would cut benefits.**

Knowing about neo-liberalism and social democracy is also very useful when following current affairs (as all debaters should). Often there are arguments about economic measures. Both sides present their proposals as being simply common sense. Seeing what economic assumptions (and ultimately what value systems) people are using helps you to evaluate their arguments better.

Let's give the last word on neo-liberalism and social democracy to two characters in a very well known play: *An Inspector Calls* by J.B. Priestley. You may have studied, or be studying, this play; it is very often taught in UK schools. In many ways it's a debate between neo-liberal and social democratic ideas. Mr Birling, a wealthy industrialist, represents neo-liberal ideas when he says:

... a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own ...

while the Inspector, whose job it is to reveal uncomfortable truths about the Birling family, puts the social democratic case when he says:

We are members of one body. We are responsible for one another.

Priestley was firmly on the side of social democracy, and makes sure that the Inspector wins the debate in the play. But you have to make your own mind up.

Both sides present their proposals as being simply common sense