



**Thematic contribution
Congress of VILLEURBANNE 12 & 13 December**

Section PS PARIS 17th Daniel Sérus

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Rediscovering the sense of general interest to develop public service!

How to register the public service in the next world?

Seen from today, May 19, 2020, the answer to this question is difficult. We are not out of the crisis period; therefore, we are unable to make a complete diagnosis of its causes, the means used to get out of it and its effects. However, two observations can already be made.

A long-term blindness, first of all. This is obvious when one considers past health policy, the management of mask or test stocks in particular. However, this observation must be considered in a broader way. Liberals are blind to the long term! This is one of their essential characteristics: the profit sought is an immediate profit for the shareholders, medium - long term considerations always being relegated to the background.

In the hospital sector, **a preponderance of annual budget rules over the need for investment**, then. A preponderance accepted in the name of compliance, in the European Union, with the budgetary rules envisaged in the context of the liberalization of national economies. The observation here is irrefutable. In France, the policy pursued in the past by the various governments has resulted in a fracturing of the hospital sector: on the one hand, the private clinic sector, which is guaranteed high profitability by reserving the most standard interventions for them, and on the other, a public hospital sector, under-invested and subject to all constraints, both health-related and budgetary. The function of the ARS (Regional Health Agencies) often boils down to translating into reality the budgetary policy defined each year by the government: reductions in the number of beds and hospital staff, constrained research budgets, etc. This policy has been at the root of the long strikes we have seen recently.

In this hospital sector, and more broadly in the health sector, it is therefore imperative to **free ourselves from the acceptance of this liberal hegemony**, which leads to this blindness to the long term and this annualized budgetary predominance: we must **give full meaning to the development of public service based on the general interest!** This means identifying the health needs of the population, with an assessment of the risks, and the means of satisfying them. This requires **a long-term planning process, investment choices** based on their usefulness.

economic and social development and **appropriate working conditions**, in terms of personnel, salaries, etc., with recourse to the **nationalization of companies**, if necessary to achieve the objectives set. In the pharmaceutical sector, in particular.

As regards the exercise of public service in the industrial and commercial sector, the problem is the same. However, the emancipation from the rules imposed by liberal hegemony is made more complex by the decisions taken at successive European Councils, in Lisbon (March 2000) and Barcelona (March 2002) in particular. The development of public services in the general interest requires, here too, recourse to planning, investment selection procedures and appropriate operating conditions, particularly with regard to fares and prices. Above all, in the energy and transport sectors. With a possible renationalization of EDF and SNCF, now public limited companies, if the need arises.

This **imperative to put the general interest back at the heart of public service** is made all the more necessary by the fact that we are witnessing an **increase in inequalities**. This observation could probably have been made independently of the health crisis we are currently experiencing: a greater number of poor people becoming poorer and a smaller number of rich people becoming richer. With a middle class in ever greater difficulty. Will this crisis amplify the phenomenon? It appears, more and more likely. A strong and well-organized public service, through **recourse to the principle of equality** that it imposes, is a sure way to deal with it effectively.

One last point. We must deal with an **unprecedented climate emergency**. So far, all liberal policies have clearly demonstrated their ineffectiveness in this area. Here, more than anywhere else, there is a need to question this liberal hegemony, blind to the long term and preoccupied, above all, with the search for immediate private profits. Here too, the sense of the general interest must prevail.

As always, if we want to, we can:

Let's rediscover the sense of general interest to develop public service!

Jean-Paul PARMANTIER