**6. The Era of New Labour, 1977-2007**

**Practice essay question with sources**

With reference to the sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to a historian studying the modernisation of Clause IV of the Labour Party’s constitution.

**Source A**

*Source: Tony Blair.* ***A Journey: My Political Life.*** *London: Hutchinson; 2011.p. 75-76*

Clause IV was hallowed text repeated on every occasion by those on the left who wanted no truck with compromise or the fact that modern thinking had left its words intellectually redundant and politically calamitous. Among other things, it called for ‘the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange’. When drafted in 1917 by Sidney Webb… the words had actually been an attempt to avoid more Bolshevik language from the further left. Most of all, of course, it reflected prevailing international progressive thought that saw the abolition of private capital as something devoutly to be desired. What was mainstream leftist thinking in the early twentieth century had become hopelessly unreal, even surreal, in the late-twentieth-century world in which, since 1989, even Russia had embraced the market.

**Source B**

*Source: Tony Benn.* ***Free at Last! Diaries 1991-2001.*** *London: Arrow Books; 2003. P. 298*

Blair is going round the country arguing for his new Clause 4, and he came out with a new draft about fairness and opportunity and binding people together, and so on. It was quite incredible. Absolute Liberal, SDP, Tory-wet stuff. When the left advocates constitutional change, it is divisive and an arid constitutional struggle. When Blair does it, it’s marvellous, it’s essential; anyone who disagrees with it follows the old hard-left shibboleths …[Among Benn’s local party committee in Chesterfield] [t]her were one or two wobblers, but the overwhelming majority were furious with what Blair had done and felt we should confirm Clause 4 …Walworth Road is apparently going to send a pack and a ballot form; we’re not going to be guided by that, we’ll put our own question and that question is: ‘Do you want to keep Clause 4 and possibly add other things, as may be decided at Conference?’.

**Source C**

*Source: Alastair Campbell.* ***The Blair Years.*** *London: Hutchinson; 2007. P. 11*

By now, he [Blair] had also let me know, and sworn me to secrecy, that he was minded to have a review of the constitution and scrap Clause 4. I had never felt any great ideological attachment to Clause 4 one way or the other. If it made people happy, fine, but it didn’t actually set out what the party was about today. It wasn’t the politics or the ideology that appealed. It was the boldness. People had talked about it for years. Here was a new leader telling me that he was thinking about doing it in his first conference speech as leader. Bold … He knew that in terms of the political substance, it didn’t actually mean that much. But as a symbol, as a vehicle to communicate change, and his determination to modernise the party, it was brilliant,