

Scottish **Left** Review

Issue 67 October/November 2011 £2.00



Time for Scotland to spread its wings?

The Independence issue

Scottish Left Review

Issue 67 November/December 2011

Contents

Comment	2
The Zombie Empire	4
Tom Nairn	
Socialism in Democracy	6
Stephen Maxwell	
Only Political Change Will Do	8
Neil Findlay and Tommy Kane	
Independence and the Left	10
Clancy McMahon	
Unbelievable Liteness	12
Isobel Lindsay	
The Emerging Nation of England	14
Michael Gardiner	
Work is Killing Us	16
Andrew Watterson, Tommy Gorman and Jim McCourt	
Do. Not. Assume.	18
Bill Wilson	
Marx and the Nation	20
Andy Anderson	
A New Job	22
Tony Beekman	
Reviews	24
Cambell Christie: 1937-2011	26
Kick Up The Tabloids	27

Cover and illustrations: Nadia Lucchesi

nadia.shemail@gmail.com

Back Cover Cartoon: Frank Boyle

www.boylecartoon.co.uk

Articles for publication: editorial@scottishleftreview.org

Letters and comments: feedback@scottishleftreview.org

Website: www.scottishleftreview.org Tel 0141 424 0042

Scottish Left Review, 741 Shields Road, Pollokshields, Glasgow G41 4PL

Editorial Committee

Moira Craig	Robin McAlpine	Tom Nairn
Gregor Gall	(Editor)	Tommy Sheppard
Bill Kidd	Peter McColl	Elaine Smith
Isobel Lindsay	Henry McCubbin	Bob Thomson
John McAllion	David Miller	(Convener)
	Gordon Morgan	Leanne Wood

Printed by: PrintIt Xpress Ltd, 34 High St., Linlithgow, EH49 7AE

For nearly a dozen years the *Scottish Left Review* has worked hard to remain an 'open space', somewhere that people from the left can come to for debate and discussion irrespective of their own party political position (or lack of one) and where differences of opinion can be shared and not shouted. In many ways it has been remarkably easy – we have found the Scottish left, on most issues, to be much more united in its views than many believe. On the big themes which have dominated the decade (the abuse of corporate power, the financial corruption of politics, the attacks on civil liberties, inequality, war and peace) there has been a fairly strong agreement on both analysis and action required. But there have been two exceptions. One was the acrimony around the breakup of the SSP and almost anything to do with the Sheridan trial. But the other, the most enduring difficulty we have found in striking editorial balance, has been the issue of independence. So in the spirit of seeking to maintain that 'open space' we have been cautious on the constitutional issue.

But for what are the most obvious of reasons, we – and the Scottish left – cannot be too cautious any more. There needs to be a real debate about Scotland's constitutional future and it needs to be embedded in the wider question of Scotland's political future. Until now the debate has been unduly skewed towards the usual corporate-induced questions. So we have heard whether big business likes independence or doesn't like independence. We have heard whether economists believe an independent Scotland to be a good neoliberal bet (can we balance our budgets and keep tax down like a good pupil). We have been invited to the Tartan Tea Party – would an independent Scotland result in financial gain for you and your family as if the sole role of the nation is to stuff your purse. But these are the three gangs responsible for our current economic woes – the big business lobby, the neoliberal bean-counters and those who measure success solely in individualist terms. Scotland contains within it the multitude of humanities of the 21st century nation and the rich tapestry of everything from our arts and culture to our enduring poverty. This multitude deserves more than a shouting match within the tiny minority which sit atop.

The argument simply can't be seen

Perhaps only a couple of years away from an independence referendum, what will the left do? And what should it do?

as cut-and-dried. Right now we can look at the UK and see opposing evidence. Just as the Tory-LibDem Government proposes to reduce workers' defence from unfair dismissal even further, so the trade unions are balloting for what on November 30 could be the biggest day of strike action in Britain since the General Strike. On the one hand we see that government of the rich, by the rich, for the rich is transforming Britain into a Latin American 'hire them in the morning, fire them at night' casualised economy. On the other we see the prospect for a mass-movement of working people collectively showing that there are forces within the UK with the potential to bring change if they can work together effectively and with focus. Would an independent Scotland be any less inclined to offer policies sympathetic to business interests? Or would a mass-movement of workers in Scotland have more chance of influencing an independent government in Edinburgh than they current UK-wide movement has of altering the mind of Whitehall? These are real questions to debate.

And so this issue has two goals. One is to try and redefine the debate in new terms, asking not what would be the fate of corporation tax in the 'two possible Scotlands' but what vision would each offer for a better nation for its people. And the other was to seek to ask the question 'but what is the relationship between the left and the constitution anyway?'. We shall begin here with the latter.

As many of you reading this will know, we put a poll round our regular readers. We emailed 500 people asking them to vote for or against independence (only one vote per email address) to which half responded - almost exactly 250 of you. The result was that 74 per cent of you would vote for independence and 26 per cent of you would vote against. At a three-to-one majority, it would certainly seem that the readership of the *Scottish Left Review* sees more opportunity than threat in constitutional change, but still there is a significant minority which sees more threat than opportunity.

As another attempt to make some sort of judgement on where lies the left on the independence question we asked a young Glasgow activist who himself was undecided but slightly sceptical about independence to investigate the views of a range of people and organisations. Organisations were approached to see if

they had agreed a position, individuals (from both sides of the debate and none) were asked what they thought was happening. The outcome of this is (unsurprisingly) not exactly conclusive but nevertheless offers some clear indications. If the question is 'does the left support independence' there is more hesitancy. The left-of-centre political parties (with the exception of Labour) support independence but the issue may not be at the top of every party member's

How Would You Vote in an Independence Referendum?

Yes 74%



No 26%



agenda. The campaigning sector may not always have instinctively supported independence but a high degree of disillusionment with London-based politics makes it hard to find people wedded to political union and has moved many doubters (especially around anti-war and civil liberties issues) towards a pro-independence stance. And the trade unions appear to find themselves caught between ties and relationships instinctively unionist, a membership base many believe to be increasingly hostile to Westminster policy and the prospect of a potentially long period of anti-worker Tory rule in Britain.

It is when the question is reversed that the picture becomes perhaps a bit more telling. If you ask the question 'but who on the left will come out and campaign for a No vote' the outcome appears less ambiguous. The view was expressed more than once that even among (for example) Labour-supporting trade union activists the enthusiasm to come out fighting to save the union we have is lacking. This is of course not a finding anyone should consider

conclusive – there will be leading figures on (or identified with) the left who will be vocal advocates for a No vote. But generally, it looks like a 'No' campaign will be fighting from the centre and from the right.

And so we come to our other focus – how do we get the debate on the constitution out of the realm of the neoliberal, corporatist and individualist agenda and towards a positive, people-focussed agenda on greater equality, greater (real) democracy and values other than financial ones? In this issue we have positive cases for and against by Neil Findlay and Tommy Kane and Stephen Maxwell. Both make a valiant case – let's have more of this and less party-political sniping. But in encouraging this perhaps it might be possible to propose some sort of 'ground rules' to encourage a more positive debate.

But before a discussion of ground rules, a brief mention of the battle under way. The following might be a contentious point, but it is worth considering whose campaign has begun and where it has reached. Contrary to the comment we see in the (usually) London-based media, the UK is not 'sleepwalking' into independence. That would suggest that supporters of the union have been lax in taking the argument against independence into the public domain. In fact, this is one part of their argument – that somehow the constitutional agenda is being driven without proper public debate. In reality, it is the independence supporters who have been slow to start a campaign – the 'No' campaign has been underway fairly relentlessly since 1999 (Divorce being an expensive business and all that). In fact, the No campaign is in full flight – there is no day when a blast-from-the-past like Michael Forsyth or a small-squeak-from-nowhere like Danny Alexander can't be found in the paper, never knowingly under-hyped on the similarities between supporters of independence and crypto-fascists. In fact, at the end of 2011 there is little sign of a Yes campaign, or at least not much more than by-the-numbers press releases from SNP politicians. So if the following sound a bit more

Numbers prove nothing. Despite everything we have learned since the banks fell apart in 2007, some people still believe that numbers prove things. In part this is because people misunderstand the difference between mathematics (a

pure science) and statistics (a sequence of assumptions built on a guess balanced on a number). Of such things is neoliberalism built – don't think, count. And since we live in a logical system in which a neoliberal economist can 'revise' growth projections three times in a month and still have the temerity to refer to them as 'projections', we need to recognise that numbers are only echos of something that has happened in the past. This does not mean that numbers are irrelevant (while they prove nothing, they can suggest certain things as being more likely than other things), but it means that the onus is on us and not on a calculator.

Fear will not do. We have heard enough about how 'the other side' would lead us to a sort of desolate wasteland if we let them. This is just not good enough. Right now the Western economies are staring into the eyes of just such a wasteland and what we need is an alternative. Britain is not 'OK', and Scotland won't just be 'OK' if it tries to be a Little Britain. Fear of Britain is not in

itself a reason for Scotland any more than a fear of Scotland is a reason for Britain. We need a much bigger story than that.

'How' is as important as 'could'.

It is to be hoped that an independence debate can be filled with 'coulds' – an independent Scotland could..., a reformed UK could... - but these must be balanced with 'hows'. It is insufficient to say that Scotland 'could' greatly reform its economy without discussing 'how' that might be done. And it is important to add to the idea that the UK 'could' be a powerful force for good some sense of 'how' that could be possible. All the best utopias exist in the tension between what they could be like and how they became that thing. We deserve – in our arguments at least – the best of utopias.

Stop treating Scotland as an

exception. Both sides have a habit of placing expectations on Scotland based on expediency rather than the interests of the nation. Nationalists have the habit of seeing in Scotland a pre-existing successful nation requiring

only freedom to make it exist. This expectation of success is more than any small country should have to stand. But the unionists expect even more – they expect Scotland not simply to justify its existence as an independent country but also justify everything it will do, ever, as an independent country. The flood of 'questions' demanded of Nationalists by the Scotland Office relate not only to independence but to what a future Scottish state would do, like John Wayne expecting a promise that we 'won't do anything stupid'. It is insulting to expect Scotland to answer questions that the UK wouldn't. Scotland should answer to the expectations and standards of any other country – no more, no less.

Quit the 'what's a nation anyway' nonsense. Both sides are guilty of this. There are 193 member states of the United Nations. Only Scotland appears to be an exception to this rule. It is a very simple designation – it means to have sovereign control over a territory. A nation may choose to cede some of

The Zombie Empire

On the last page of his book *Empire: What Ruling the World Did To The British* (Penguin Books 2011), Jeremy Paxman claims Great Britain suffers from "a vanishing sense of national purpose", and "the most corrosive part of this amnesia is a sense that because the nation is not what it was, it can never be anything again". What it was is of course the title: 'Empire'. Paxman's essay follows an earlier attempt to analyse *The English* (Michael Joseph 1998, Penguin Books 1999), and accompanies Kwasi Kwarteng's *Ghosts of Empire: Britain's Legacies in the Modern World* (Bloomsbury 2011). There is a stronger current of inquiry here, still ongoing and certain to mount from imperialism into ambiguity, developing certain theses originally posited by Ernest Gellner in *Nations and Nationalism* (Blackwell 1983, new edition 2004) and Liah Greenfeld's *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Harvard, new edition 1993). More roads open up all the time, and for Great Britain this terrain has become a realm of mingled nostalgia and unsettling research. The empire may have gone politically, but it has bequeathed a formidable psycho-social inheritance

focusing naturally upon the question of Englishness. English identity was for so long over-extended by the needs of empire that it is bound to experience problems of contraction: it may have set the wider machinery of nationalism going (as Gellner and Greenfeld both argue) but this meant it would never itself become a standard-issue nation-state.

Kwarteng's ghosts are also zombies and vampires, a recognisable theme of the moment. As I was reading Paxman, the *Scotsman* book pages carried a piece entitled 'Reading in the Dark' on Saturday October 29 (Viv French): "Skeletons, zombies. Vampires, ghosts and ghouls...look along the shelves in any bookshop, and you could be forgiven for thinking it's Hallowe'en all year round". For some reason the Undead are not only with us, the cemetery gates are creaking louder than usual and publishers are right over there, digging hard into the small hours. Empire just won't let us go. Zombies refuse to blend into the supposedly brighter universe of Globality: they make their presence felt, perhaps more strongly than ever for example in Colson Whitehead's new

novel *Zone One*.

For anyone returning to Britain after a long period overseas, one striking feature of everyday life has become the increased prominence of the all-British flag, or 'Union Jack'. Once special and 'official', linked to state or public occasions, the image has become inescapable. Every store offers Union Jack cushions, crockery, T-shirts, towels and under-pants: the red-white-and-blue has turned into an obtrusive pattern of daily life as if the population needs to be nagged constantly by a patriotic dimension they might otherwise ignore, or forget. In *The English* Paxman wrote about his subjects "rediscovering the past that was buried when 'Britain' was created", and inventing a new future, with a nationalism "less likely to be based on flags and anthems". However, this can hardly avoid a more intimate and English emphasis: the 'little England' sidelined by ruling the world. For centuries a sustained outward thrust made this seem parochial, an outmoded past eclipsed by ever-expanding boundaries in effect, a premature and one-sided globalization.

Yet one cannot return to that past either. The attainment of actual globality

that control to another body (the EU or the UN for example), to sign up to various clubs which require certain rules to be followed (NATO or the IMF) or to form soft and hard alliances which limit its scope for doing as it pleases. But it remains sovereign and can choose not to join these clubs. This silly smokescreen is wasting everyone's time. If there are questions about whether Scotland could really be 'independent' then the same applies to the UK or the US. If being a member of the EU precludes Scotland being 'properly' independent then neither is France or Germany. If we never hear this wishy-washy dinner-party provocation again it will be too soon.

Nationalism is not fascism.

This really only applies to one side, but it has to stop. You do not have to be a supporter of the SNP to feel deep discomfort at the barrage of loose talk linking Salmond to Mussolini or Mugabe. Suddenly winning a majority in a democratic election is 'dangerous' or leads to a 'one-party state', despite being

the British norm. And if civil servants follow the policies of one government they are 'neutral' but if they follow policies of another they are 'politicised'. This narrative is repugnant and is an insult to anyone who voted in the 2011 election – not just those that voted SNP.

'He said/she said' gets us nowhere.

In the vacuous world of 'Come Voting' the opinions of 'celebrities' carry a weight out of all proportion to reason. The CBI told us that if Scotland voted for devolution no company would invest here. Any businessman who said they 'might' leave Scotland if there was a yes-yes vote was reported like a prophet. The fact that there is scant evidence that any of this happened doesn't seem to have stopped anyone. The conflation between self-serving business leaders and the actual economy (people buying and selling things) is complete – despite all the evidence to the contrary. There is nothing wrong with endorsements, especially where they argue a case. But anyone who instructs us on the

consequences of our choices – either way – must be treated like a politicians and must be interrogated with the same degree of rigour. If the businessman in question opts to speak for 'the economy' then he must be made to answer for the failures of that economy and not simply be allowed to throw mud. For either side.

If the left could argue its different cases on these bases we might end up with a vision for Scotland, either in the UK our out on its own. But infinitely more importantly, it might end up with a vision which speaks to the people of Scotland and is not simply herded down the same old neoliberal road, the one that grants those who brought our economy to its knees a privileged voice in deciding our future. Nationalist or unionist we all need independence – from the same old story with its same old superstitions and its tired old heroes and villains. One way or the other it is time to begin on the first page of a new story. And the *Scottish Left Review* will do what it can to help that story be told. ■

Tom Nairn takes on Jeremy Paxman's analysis of the state of British identity in the post-empire era and finds a nationalism that no longer seems to know if it is alive or dead.

at the end of the Cold War has altered all the parameters. Isn't this why the actual 'empire' of the post-1989 globe makes the previously sacred appear ordinary, even quaint and piquant? The Anglo-British may not know what will replace the anthems of expansion, but find themselves amused by reminders of the latter: a daily nostalgia and reminiscence of past days. Sitting on a Union-Jack cushion would once have been disrespectful; now it's just fun, a playful disregard of something that has lost serious charisma. And at the same time, the non-English periphery of the archipelago is reasserting itself. After southern Ireland in the inter-war period, Wales and Scotland are pushing seriously for separate political identities, which can't help being non-English as well as anti-British.

Quite understandably, English opinion tends to confuse the two things. What world-pretension 'did to the British' in Paxman's sub-title was bestow a blessing on the confusion: 'Anglo-British' became chronic, a mindset now very difficult to question and dislodge. He wants to get beyond it, but in *The English* didn't get beyond banal lists of supposed traits: the new

or post-nationalism is supposed to move beyond flags and anthems and become "modest, individualistic, ironic, solipsistic, concerned as much with cities and regions as with counties and countries" (pp.265-6). The story behind this is England's transformation by empire: priority in the nation-state process led to a unique mutation of civil society, including a structural emphasis upon 'class'. Successful imperialism required an extensive elite, built up by an educational system distinct from (though allied to) the state the 'public' school and 'Oxbridge' hierarchy. Hence the 'illogical' salience of social class in the land of the industrial revolution.

This led in turn to the over-theorization of social class. A stratification actually generated by empire was confused with one due to capitalist development itself, and then given philosophical shape by Marxism and other ideologies. Such was Anglo-Britain's principal 'legacy in the modern world' in Kwarteng's sense, now also described by Paxman. The greater part of *Empire* is taken up with how the legacy was acquired, through plunder, slaughter and theft, much of it 'made by

Scots'. At the heart of the inheritance is an instinctive conspiracy to resist the return of England: that is, 'little England' as simply one nation amongst others: Greenfeld's 'First Born' reduced at last to identikit nationality.

This is also where Scotland most directly affects the dilemma: 'Zone Two', as one might say, now clearly moving towards its own standard-issue nationhood. The latter can hardly avoid being the lever for 1707's other part or at least, in the first instance, for 'England and Wales', the curious composite entity embodying the earlier 'incorporation' of the country beyond Offa's Dyke. But few would now expect that alloy to persist. The disappearance retraced in *Empire* is also its disintegration not surprisingly, a pathology needing forensic investigation and assistance. In Great Britain, serious social analysts have now all donned white coats and learned about stethoscopes and gloves. I can conclude only provisionally, and with a motto: 'on with the work' (and pay no attention to the groaning soothsayers up there in the viewing gallery). ■

Tom Nairn is a world-renowned academic and author of the seminal *Breakup of Britain*

Socialism in Democracy

The left-wing case for Scotland's independence starts with democracy. For 27 of the first 65 post-war years (1945 to 2010) Scotland was governed from Westminster by Governments which it had rejected at the polls. In the 2010 General Election the two parties that formed the coalition Government gained only 36 per cent of the Scottish vote against a combined SNP and Labour vote of 63 per cent. If the coalition survives to the end of its five year term Scotland will have been governed from Westminster by parties it rejected for thirty two of seventy post War years. That will mean that for almost half the post War period the tax, welfare, industrial, energy and labour market policies applied in Scotland will have been decided by Governments Scottish voters did not vote for. How can a country expect to flourish if it is ruled for long periods by Governments it does not want?.

When those Governments are ideologically hostile to the politics of the 'rejectionist' country they rule the malign effects will be magnified. That has been the case with the Westminster Governments rejected by Scottish voters since Alex Douglas-Home's 1964 Government, the Governments of Heath, Thatcher, Major and Cameron. From Heath on, these Governments have been progressively more hostile to Scotland's social democracy. The growing divergence between Scottish and English voting patterns has cost Scotland twenty one years of social democratic government it could ill afford to lose with another four lost years in prospect under the existing coalition.

Mrs Thatcher's Governments exacted a particularly high price. Scottish manufacturing employment declined by 30 per cent while poverty and unemployment rates doubled. Adding to the injury Mrs Thatcher enjoyed a massive £160bn (2008 prices) inflow of oil revenues principally from Scotland's North Sea territory to spend on her failed experiments with monetarism and selling Council houses at grossly discounted prices.

But the cuts in public expenditure on which the coalition Government is now embarked exceed anything which Mrs Thatcher aimed for let alone

achieved. Contrary to the pro-market commentators intent on using the failure of the West's banking system to persuade Scots voters that their welfare state is no longer affordable, Scotland does not have a disproportionately large public sector by the standards of the most advanced democracies particularly when North Sea oil production is counted as part of Scotland's national output as it should be. Yet the Independent Budget Report on Scotland's budgetary prospects from 2011 estimated that between 2011 and 2026 £42bn would be stripped from Scotland's spending budget. It failed to note



that on conservative projections of oil production and price levels Scotland could send twice that sum in oil revenues to the UK Treasury in the same period.

That does not mean that an independent Scotland in control of the revenues could escape all the effects of the world's worst financial crisis since the 1930s - "or possibly ever" in Mervyn King's opinion - but it does signal that it would have more opportunities to pursue social democratic policies than are likely to be available as part of the United Kingdom.

It is not that the rest of the United Kingdom does not have the financial resources to pursue progressive policies on its own account. Scotland's North Sea revenues make a net contribution when balanced against higher Scottish per capita expenditure of less than one per cent to the UK's total public revenues. The UK or 'rest of UK' could easily absorb the loss of the £7-8bn of Scottish North Sea revenues it stands to draw annually over the next two decades under the status quo if it chose to diversify its revenue sources and reassess its political priorities. About £70bn a year is lost to the UK Treasury by tax avoidance or evasion while under the UK tax system capital wealth, so much of which is concentrated in London and the south-east, goes virtually tax free. And then there is the enticing possibility of raising revenue from some form of Tobin Tax on financial transactions.

If these options are excluded by the veto power of the City of London there are more accessible options. The Iraq War cost about £9bn. The UK's nuclear deterrent costs over £1bn a year, with a further £1bn in preparatory costs for the Trident replacement now added each year. From the 2015 decision 'Gateway' for the Trident replacement further sums from the estimated £25bn cost of the replacement will be added. These all contribute to the UK's status as the world's fourth largest spender on defence at 2.5 per cent of GDP, second only to the United States among NATO members.

GERS 2009-10 identifies Scotland's contribution to the UK defence budget at £3.2bn. If an independent Scotland spent the same 1.5 per cent of its GDP that Norway spends as a non-nuclear member of NATO its annual defence budget would be around £1.8bn releasing £1.4bn for promoting alternatives to the UK defence jobs that would be lost to Scotland and for spending on maintaining and improving public services. More radical defence strategies would save even more.

But the security case for independence offers another benefit. If Scotland insists on the removal of the UK's nuclear submarines from Faslane that could be the catalyst for the abolition of the UK's abandonment of

We asked a supporter of independence to outline a positive, left case for that position (using almost exactly the same wording as asked of the union supporter). Stephen Maxwell responds.

its nuclear deterrent. The financial costs to the UK of providing an alternative to the base facilities on the Clyde would run to several billion pounds. Even

more problematic would be the willingness of voters in areas identified as possible sites on the coast of England, or even Wales or Northern Ireland, to accept in their locality an operational nuclear base for four missile-carrying submarines and probably up to ten other nuclear powered submarines. It is more likely that an English public

increasingly sceptical towards the case for the Trident replacement would finally call a halt to the UK's nuclear obsession.

Meanwhile the mooted alternatives to independence such as full fiscal autonomy or independence-lite would, among other disadvantages, deny Scotland the substantial economic dividend to be won by going non-nuclear which depending on the defence policy followed by an independent Scotland could be up to £1bn a year. Scotland's options for alternative economic development and for social reforms would be more limited as a result.

Defenders of the Union will look for salvation from two possible sources. First they will hope for a revival of the Labour Party's electoral fortunes in England to reconcile Scottish social democrats to the continuation of the Union. But the prospects for this are uncertain at best. It is not just that the Labour Party has a hard route back to power in the face of the loss of public trust in its economic competence, its near wipe out in southern England and changes in constituency boundaries. The more fundamental problem is the public's confusion over what a Labour Party which under Blair opened the door to many of the market reforms of the welfare state which the coalition Government is now developing actually

stands for any more. Even if Miliband and his colleagues are able to develop a coherent vision capable of dispelling that uncertainty Scottish voters may choose to stay with the more familiar versions of social democracy on offer on their home turf.

The current pleas by senior Scottish Labour figures, most recently Douglas Alexander, for Labour to regain the leadership of a Scottish agenda for change suggests that few of its Scottish activists are content to rely on the possibility of

a UK-wide revival of Labour's fortunes. But defining that Scottish agenda in ways consistent with the stability of the union is no easy task. How far is Labour willing to champion more radical versions of devolution than the Calman inspired Scotland Bill currently before Parliament? Will they support the devolution of corporation tax, of energy policy and oil taxation, of the welfare budget? Once started on this road unionists might be excused for feeling that they are out of control on Tam Dalyell's slippery slope.

While delivering government consistently in accord with the social democratic preferences of Scottish voters provides the foundation of the left wing case for independence it offers no guarantees of a long future of progressive reforms under independence. The current limited form of devolution does not provide a serious test of Scottish social democracy's capacity to generate serious changes to the distribution of power and wealth, least of all in the midst of financial crisis. The devolved Parliament has legislated some significant reforms of which the introduction of STV for local government and the Climate Change Act are probably the most significant and Holyrood governments have championed some progressive policies such as free social

care and the defence of an integrated health service. But no Scottish political party is offering the Scottish public a developed and comprehensive programme of social democratic reform. And since the credit crunch in 2007 the most conspicuous feature of Scottish public life has been the absence of any ideological response to the seismic changes in Scotland's economic and political environment, to which the apparent consensus to ignore the implications of the final disappearance of a Scottish banking system stands as inglorious testament.

So Scottish left-wingers will have to continue to be patient. Independence is unlikely to spark an instant Scottish Spring of radical reform. But it can be expected to increase the level of activity and urgency in those state and civil institutions which sustain public debate and prepare the way for change. It will sharpen the sense of Scots' sense of responsibility for their own future. It will help them to counter the neo-liberal influence of Anglo-America with the practical progressivism of the Nordic countries. It should raise the expectations Scots have of their Governments. By raising the stakes for Scottish decision-taking it should stimulate Scottish civil society - its voluntary organisations and think tanks, its unions and Churches - to become more active in developing and promoting their various claims. It will necessarily generate debate around what sort of constitution Scotland should have, how power should be distributed between central government and parliament, local government, communities and the general public. It will encourage people to question how well Scotland is served by its institutional legacy from the UK, from its media and banks to its welfare state and Monarchy. Not least, by setting Scots the everyday challenge of running their own society independence may induce them to discard some of their more tiresome cultural tics such as agonising over whether they suffer a Crisis of Confidence condemning them to stick for ever in their same auld groove. ■

Stephen Maxwell is Treasurer of the Scottish Independence Convention and was director of SNP's campaign for a yes vote in the 1979 referendum.

Only Political Change Will Do

The superlatives have just about ceased; suffice to say the Scottish election result was unprecedented. The election of a majority nationalist Scottish Government brings the potential for constitutional change almost unimaginable a generation ago. Any change however should be driven for the right reasons, with the correct analysis and with it a substantive and evidenced policy base outlining the benefits of any flavour of proposed constitutional change. Likewise any difficulties and deficiencies that might arise from an independence needs to be discussed, as does the all the other options: 'devo max' 'independence light' etc. This article sets out to contribute to the constitutional debate in a way which raises and revisits some fundamental questions that appear to be forgotten in the current climate.

The *SLR* asked for a contribution defending the Union from a Labour left perspective. However, the supposition of that question requires a certain challenge. Home rule/devolution was pressed largely by the Labour and Trade Union movement. The path to the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament was not the sole domain of nationalists. And for all the faults of New Labour (many could be chronicled but that is not the purpose here) it is worth remembering it was the Blair Government who delivered home rule. Meanwhile the SNP initially carped from the side-lines and jumped on when, seemingly, it was politically opportune for them to do so (this is being repeated with their attitude to Calman)

So which political institution; UK or Holyrood is best placed to make life better for working people? For socialists and the left in the Labour and Trade Union movement this has to mean an engagement with a consideration of which government is best able to provide the impetus towards a more socially just and progressive society based on equality and fairness. Looking at which political

arrangements can help create a society and promote a Scotland, and yes an England, Wales and Northern Ireland, that is independent of poverty, of homelessness, free from privatisation, cuts and the worst excesses of capitalism. There is no fear or concern here from any political model which would achieve these goals.

What represents the best governmental arrangement to achieve those objectives has vexed greater authorities than the authors here. But, truth be told, the question of what institution is best placed to provide progress is a bit of a red herring. Political institutions by themselves don't achieve fundamental societal change; it is

people and political movements which do that. Parliaments only or at least should only, pass legislation which is based around the wants and needs of the people. If there is to be change, it has to happen through changes to our political thinking and subsequent policy decisions.

Nonetheless, we will consider the question in a way that examines political practicalities as well as the current political philosophy underpinning the present debate: it is vital that the policy positions and the core ethos of the SNP are examined. Namely, what type of independent Scotland do they have in mind? However, this article will be measured; we will therefore also explore the current position of the Labour Party in relation to constitutional change.

An examination of the current political drivers takes us back to basics. Any politics based on national identity requires caution. Few would dispute that nationalism of any kind has the potential to be dangerous. Furthermore, we contend that to base your politics, and any answers to profound political questions, on the basis of nationhood alone is highly questionable. Conversely, we are not frightened of constitutional change, if there is a yes vote for independence or any of the other options then it should be accepted as the will of the Scottish People. Despite the gloom and low morale of the vast majority

of people in Scotland caused by the current onslaught on their jobs, public services and living standards, the SNP Government at Holyrood proclaim the Scots are beholden by a 'renewed sense of optimism'; equating their victory with this apparent collective renewal. Such mistaken analysis ignores the concerns of the Scottish People and betrays an inability to understand and relate to the anxieties of workers, benefit claimants, the poor and the unemployed. It also exposes the lack of any class analysis of what it's like to be an ordinary Scot today.

Independence is promoted on the basis we are 'aw' Scots together. But, we 'aw' know that's not true. Brian Souter, Sir Angus Grossart, George Mathieson, Crawford Beveridge and Sir Tom Hunter have nothing in common with the Scottish people facing an onslaught on their jobs and living standards. Working people in Scotland have more in common with other working people in England, Wales and Ireland and everywhere else than they do with rich industrialists and tax avoiders like Jim McColl, even if they were born 'jist doon' the road.

However, concerns about the independence the SNP has in mind goes beyond their mistaken belief that that they can bridge the class divide. They appear to have taken sides already. Look at their wish to take control of, and then cut, corporation tax. When the First Minister visited the treasury shortly after the May election, did he call upon Osborne to tackle tax avoidance and tax evasion, to re-double efforts to collect all uncollected taxes and create a system of progressive taxation? Did he call for a financial transactions tax on the banks? Thus, protecting public services and negating the need for any type of the austerity programme. No, instead the First Minister called for cuts to corporation tax, which will suck hundreds of millions out of the economy and benefit the very people who got us into the financial mess in the first place.

A fundamental flaw is the SNP advocacy of Scottish independence within the EU. Perhaps this policy, amongst all the others, highlights the inherent contradiction of SNP policy on independence. How can you have full independence whilst staying within

We asked a supporter of the union to outline a positive, left case for that position (using almost exactly the same wording as asked of the independence supporter). Neil Findlay and Tommy Kane respond.



a supra-national institution that writes or directs so much of our legislation? And, which has neo-liberalism at its core promoting the interests of big business over public services.

We should also remember political democracy is not the same as economic democracy. Remember Scotland's economy is beholden to multi-nationals: is the SNP proposing a Scotland that seeks to develop, nationalised, co-operative, community-owned ventures with locally elected boards? Or, will we simply see a bunch of British right wing bankers and economists replaced with a new group of tartan clad right wing bankers and economists? As Richard Leonard noted in the *SLR* earlier this year, "political democracy without economic democracy is ultimately hollow and unsustainable".

We can see why some people would be attracted to an independent state. Some of the policies of successive UK governments since 1979 have undoubtedly run counter to popular opinion in Scotland. However, it was mass UK political mobilisation, led by the British Trade Union movement that led to the great social, political and economic gains of the 20th century. The critical mass that can be gained from being part of a British Labour and Trade Union movement provides greater strength than a Scottish equivalent. And, with that strength there is far greater potential for social, political and economic change. We would do well to remember how the British Labour and Trade Union movement has contributed to our collective well-being and not simply focus on the negative sides of the British state, which after all works

against the interests of working people in England as much as in Scotland.

The Scottish Parliament has been a rich addition to our democratic processes. But all parties are now agreed on the need for further constitutional change. The Scotland Bill is going through Parliament; but one could legitimately ask whether the Scotland Bill goes far enough. There are of course other constitutional options; which others, including the Labour Party would do well to consider. Recent contributions to the debate by Malcolm Chisholm and Henry McLeish are welcome. Devo-max or independent light should be examined enthusiastically in a way which explores the potential for meeting the criteria outlined at the beginning: i.e. would a Devo Max system go some way towards abolishing poverty in Scotland? Could we introduce a progressive taxation system in Scotland that sees wealth spread and a Scotland that is fair and just? Could we ensure devo Max protects our welfare system and tackles tax avoidance and evasion? Would devo max allow the retention of universal policies such as free prescriptions, higher education and bus travel for elderly whilst taxing the higher earners at the other end to pay for these policies. Would this help create a Scotland that is fairer, but which allows us to retain our links with our brothers and sisters elsewhere in the UK?

Currently this is not a position being openly supported by the Labour Party in Scotland. On this, like in other areas, Labour needs to re-position itself. The world has changed and so has Scotland. Labour has to change with it. As Richard Leonard said recently

Labour needs a vision of the kind of

society we want to build, an up to date, relevant, compelling case for socialist transformation, rooted in peoples, everyday experience.... That means that Labour needs to rediscover its purpose and its soul and so win the battle for hearts as well as minds. To do that it must become less of an electoral machine and more of a political movement (*SLR*, Issue 65)

The conditions are now right for change. There is a once in a generation opportunity to advocate a different way, indeed a Better Way as espoused by the STUC and their affiliates. This would represent a move away from the failings of the excesses of capitalism. British people are now suffering from that failure in a way which has made them question the central political and economic orthodoxy on which the UK has recently been built. And for those who question that assertion, we suggest that people know it's failed because they are experiencing its failures everyday of their lives.

The implications of all proposed constitutional change require a thorough examination by all political parties and indeed all Scots. The present level of debate is simply not good enough. Progressives on the left also need to re-examine where they stand; both in terms of the constitution and where we are at more broadly; politically and, ideologically. If we do that we can again create the political movements and mobilisations which can lead to progress at all levels of society and government. Without that political lead things will remain as they are, whatever the constitutional arrangements, and it will not matter to the Scottish people who are cutting their services and their jobs; remember a cut is a cut no matter how local the butcher .

In conclusion – whilst the SNP bask in the triumphalism of their historic victory we need to get down to the real substantive debate around the future of the country where all facts and connotations are laid forth to the people. The role of the Labour and Trade Union movement has to be in evaluating and recommending just what arrangement is most appropriate for ordinary people. Nothing else will do. ■

Neil Findlay is Labour MSP for the Lothians. Tommy Kane is his parliamentary researcher.

Independence and the Left

A recent Guardian editorial (23/10/11) acclaimed that the United Kingdom was ‘sleepwalking’ towards a break up of the union. However, anyone who witnessed Alex Salmond’s keynote speech to the SNP party faithful in Inverness on October 22 would be forgiven for characterising this process in an entirely different manner. The mood was positively awake and for good reason – the SNP’s massive victory at this year’s May election allowed Salmond to state plausibly that independence has never been closer. The SNP and the repeated mantra of “the common weal” - representing what one SNP MSP called the “entrenched egalitarian spirit in Scotland”. The SNP has largely (but not completely) positioned itself inside the Scottish left. But what of the other parts of the Scottish left? Is independence a divisive or a uniting issue? Most people believe it is divisive, but what is the evidence for this?

I was approached by the *Scottish Left Review* as someone who could be seen to be reasonably neutral. I am a young socialist and do not have a strong personal position on independence (and in fact am possibly instinctively a little more opposed than in favour). I had a list of individuals and organisations on the Scottish left on both sides of the independence debate – and a number where the position is unclear. My task was to contact as many as possible (off the record) to try and gauge where the ‘constitutional splits’ on the left lie. Included were the political parties, the campaigning organisations and the trade unions. I will look at each in turn and try to draw some conclusions.

First the political parties. The remarkable success of the SSP and the opportunity it spawned in light of Labour’s grand metamorphosis was a point of celebration for many on the Scottish left. Thus, the SSP’s subsequent break-up and division into two separate political parties – the SSP and Solidarity – contributed to the ever-familiar problem of a fragmented left. Whilst there have been and shall continue to be divisions within these two parties – the issue of Scottish independence and the forthcoming referendum has managed to unite two previously clashing factions on common ground as part

of the Independence First collective. However, whilst independence is one of their core policies there exist subsections within them that are less committed to this aim. The SWP and CWI, which form platforms within Solidarity, have supported independence in the past but have yet to discuss their position at a national level for the forthcoming referendum. Whilst the issue of independence may not normally top their agenda, the general feeling from within the group is that in a referendum context they would be inclined to vote in favour. It would appear that the impact of successive British governments – from social policy to imperial ventures abroad - has caused a scepticism towards the Union to emerge throughout portions of the left which is strong enough to sway them on an issue to which they would have otherwise been indifferent.

The Scottish Greens have officially supported independence since 2005 – a position they state is “grounded in local decision-making and decentralism, not nationalistic fervour or identity politics”. Thus, despite a difference in the ideological underpinnings - supporters of the Scottish Greens or perhaps more generally those who adhere to the central tenets of much green theory and follow E. F Schumacher’s maxim that ‘small is beautiful’ can be expected to be fully behind Scottish independence in a referendum.

Some of the Greens’ guiding principles on the environment, peace and non-violence are an important factor throughout the left. Although, since many of the related campaigns have members or affiliated organisations who have varying positions it is difficult to foresee them taking straightforward and clear-cut positions on the constitutional issue. However, if we consider the current political reality – some speculation can be made. All of the parties who support the union also support the UK Trident Programme, which apart from a brief break from tradition from the Lib Dems (who opposed Trident’s renewal, itself a very conditional position) has been a constant for a considerable time. Meanwhile, all of the parties who support independence (SNP, SSP, Greens & Solidarity) are opposed to nuclear weapons. The centrality of the nuclear

issue in the peace movement’s aims led a senior figure in the SCND to state that “the prospect of independence looks like the only serious opportunity in the coming years of ending the UK’s nuclear role”. Since any independent Scottish government could immediately disarm Trident by rejecting the presence of nuclear warheads in Scottish territory and as a result, Trident would be unable to operate anywhere else in the UK for decades as significant logistical and financial requirements for its relocation would arise.

For this reason, Scotland’s For Peace and CND have already been discussing how they can use a referendum campaign to promote anti-nuclear and disarmament issues. The only foreseeable counter that those opposed to independence could offer is the possibility of affecting greater change through achieving nuclear disarmament at the UK level. However, given the record of the past thirty years it is difficult to imagine the being given credence by many of those in the movement.

Moreover, the perceived warfare role of the British state may influence many activists; but, again, it is difficult to envisage this becoming an established position. Since such organisations have at their heart a practice of forming a ‘united front’ and for them, attempting to formulate any particular stance on the constitutional issue may be akin to ‘seeking out dissent’ as one senior member of the Scottish Stop the War Coalition put it. Of course, the SNP’s stance on the UK’s invasion of Afghanistan and the more recent intervention in Libya has drawn the ire of much of the anti-war movement and there is nothing to dictate that an independent Scotland would see all of their positions adopted, independence for many however, may offer a better opportunity to pursue them, separated from a polity which they consider to be inextricably linked with war.

When we consider the trade unions and the constitutional issue a very complex picture emerges. With a UK government in power responsible for what TUC chief Brendan Barber branded a “savage and opportunistic attack on public services” which “goes

Clancy McMahon explores the generally-accepted view that the left is split on the subject of independence. While he finds clear differences of opinion, the left may not be quite as divided as many assume.

far further than even the dark days of Thatcher” - the outlook for trade unions at a UK level is bleak. The sheer scale of the austerity measures implemented by the Coalition Government has been met with widespread condemnation throughout the trade union movement in Britain, expounding the already massively unpopular programmes of privatisation and cutbacks in public services in recent years. Furthermore, the forecast anti-trade union legislation as part of a UK-wide process of financialisation and the gradual displacement of public sector workers by voluntary workers (to which Labour opposition has been timid at best) will deal a serious blow to public sector trade unions in Scotland.

Clearly, there are a multitude of factors which influence the ability or indeed desire of trade unions to take a position on Scotland's constitutional future. Trade union membership and affiliations have become increasingly diversified (throughout the UK and abroad) which makes dealing with strictly Scottish affairs problematic. Moreover, historically, there has been a symbiotic relationship in the 'labour and trade union movement' between the economic component (the trade unions) and the political component (the Labour Party). This remains evident today, as a majority of the unions still support or are affiliated with the Labour Party and provide it the bulk of its funding. Within Scotland, the CWU, GMB, Unison and Unite all support the unionist line. Given that the SNP took almost half a share of the vote in the last Scottish Election, can such a position remain tenable? We can rightfully assume that union membership will represent a considerable percentage of the electorate and that trade union members' will be reflected in the results. Regardless of official union position, in the case of a referendum it is foreseeable that many Scottish union members (and public sector workers in particular) increasingly angry at Westminster policy would break with union policy.

For example, the recent revelation that 45 per cent of Scottish Unison members cast an SNP vote in that election raises serious questions about the direction and formulation of policy within such organisations, at least sufficiently enough extent for the union

leadership to reconsider positions which may be entirely out of step with their membership. The Scottish FBU tackled this directly; first by polling its members on the referendum bill and now with support for independence in their membership as high as 70 per cent have declared themselves to be in favour of independence.

It would appear that despite the successes of the SNP and the increasing support for independence, the constitutional issue at hand is largely yet to be addressed by the trade union movement. This is unsurprising - the opposition to it has yet to fully materialise. The current state of the Scottish Labour Party and the levels of support in Scotland for the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats at Holyrood and Westminster make it difficult to see how the unions will support a No campaign without alienating their membership. Also, trade union leadership may find themselves in a particularly difficult situation: their deep-rooted links and vested-interests with the Labour Party may make the prospect of switching to the Yes campaign seem too steep a hill to climb. At the same time, if they follow the status quo on the constitutional issue and back the No campaign they risk alienating themselves from the Scottish government, a significant section of their current membership and importantly, their future membership. After all, the evidence from the Scottish Opinion Survey shows that support for independence rises sharply the further down the age spectrum you go. The same is true for occupational group.

So what conclusions can be drawn from all of this? It is perhaps easiest to make a clear judgement with the political parties. Of all the parties in Scotland which would describe themselves as 'left' only the Labour Party has a policy line which opposes independence. It may well be that there is varying enthusiasm for the policy but certainly none of these parties (or as far as can be guessed, not many of their members) would be involved in a No campaign.

Of course, the 'campaigning sector' is much more diverse and harder to judge. There is a fairly strong level of support in the peace movement, driven in no small part by illegal wars and

Trident renewal. There is evidence that the green and environmental movement are sympathetic to government which is distributed closer to individuals and where there is not much support for what Westminster has done (and not done). The social justice organisations are currently very suspicious of Westminster, although perhaps not a lot more can be said than that.

The difficulty comes when we look at the unions. They are wrapped up in political legacies and relationships which often make it hard to support independence (affiliation to the Labour Party, being part of a UK-wide organisation). Now, this is not meant to mean that all the trade unions really want to support independence but are blocked - there are plenty people within the trade union movement who do not support independence. But the view which seems to be supported (or at least recognised) by those on both sides of the debate is that the view of trade union members shows signs of moving in favour of independence, partly because of the nature and profile of trade union membership. While it is certainly difficult to know what will happen, there seems to be a growing view that an aggressive anti-independence stance from the unions might not sit well with large numbers of their own members. The best guess of many is that unions will tend towards a 'devolution-max' stance, but it is far from clear how many would come out to support a No campaign.

In Scotland the constitutional debate has at times seemed to take place at a level high above most Scots - between Salmond and Cameron, the Scottish Government and the Scotland Office, the SNP and the Labour Party. To know more about the politics of independence we need to look closer to the ground. That is what this article has tried to do. It's conclusions may not be in any way absolute but there is one general trend that can be seen - it is harder to find someone on the left who will speak out against independence than to find someone to speak in favour. ■

Clancy McMahon is a postgraduate student of Political Communication at Glasgow University and an local activist

Incredible Liteness

Gradualism versus ‘independence; nothing less’ was one of the big fault lines in the SNP from the seventies till the nineties just as support for or against devolution divided Labour and Tory. With the devolution case overwhelmingly won and now well-rooted in Scottish society, what are the current range of positions on Scotland’s constitutional future?

One option which should be dismissed whenever mentioned is federalism which some Scottish Liberal Democrats still claim is their policy but about which their colleagues in the south have had no interest for many years. Federalism requires an English parliament or parliaments and a new UK constitution and this is on no-one’s agenda. So Scottish Lib Dems should not be allowed to get away with fantasy.

Apparent new constitutional options have crept into the debate in the past year – ‘independence lite’ and ‘devo-max’, often used inter-changeably. What is it and why has it appeared? There appear to be two different meanings and two different reasons for promoting this. Throw into the picture the suggestion that there might be three options in the forthcoming referendum and the water becomes more muddled.

One interpretation of ‘lite’ is the ‘we’re nearly there’ approach. It might more accurately be classed as devo-max. The suggestion is that if we add Calman and assume that there will be some other powers acquired over the years, Scotland would have most of the powers it would ever need so why go to the trouble of pushing for technical independence and a referendum when any additional powers gained from this would only be marginal? Some go further and argue that the essential requirement for independence-lite is full fiscal autonomy – taking responsibility for all taxation raised in Scotland and paying Westminster for the services they would still deliver. What these positions have in common is the assumption that foreign policy, defence, international representation, international aid, migration and citizenship, do not matter to Scotland and that it is desirable to leave the international position of the British state as it is (there are, of course, many who consider that the international position

of the British state is exactly what needs to be dismantled).

The other interpretation of independence-lite comes from a different angle. It assumes that a claim would still be made for the constitutional status of independence but that in advance there should be statements of intent that RUK (rest of the UK) would continue with responsibility for defence, diplomacy, citizenship, joint agreement on social security, etc so that the message is that there would be an agreement on limited change.

Why this interest in independence-lite? The attraction seems to come from different directions. On the one hand, there are those hostile to full independence who are seeking to ensure that if there is any chance of a referendum Yes vote, the outcome will be substantially qualified in advance. But there are also those who are supportive of independence (indeed we don’t know how many might be in the SNP leadership) but fear that a less radical shift in power must be presented to have a chance of winning a referendum. The risk is that they could misjudge this by appearing to be so much on the defensive that they undermine their case and it could be counterproductive by eliminating some of the important reasons for going for a separate state.

In the long battle for the present Scottish Parliament, it was comparatively easy to communicate the case for Scotland controlling its own education, health, housing, planning, justice, policing, etc. The public understands what these are and they had a ready identification with the argument that Scotland should shape these services according to our own values. So in addition to the patriotic identity factor, there were strong and clear arguments for powers with which people could identify. What are the powers that are capable of giving a similar sense of purpose in voting Yes in the coming referendum? Fiscal autonomy is unlikely to do it even if the language is made more accessible.

There are no great expectations that personal taxation is likely to change much and suggestions of a lower personal or corporation tax regime are deeply divisive among many of the potential independence supporters who would prefer high quality public services and benefits. What will be the gut factors that can drive political action? Some of the very ones that independence-lite would seek to off-load have a strong moral dimension, arouse passion and have some easily understood practical dimensions that can be communicated positively.

In effect, what could be the positive driving factors in any campaign? The Scottish electorate may decide that the status-quo is high risk with the prospect of a long spell of Tory government and a relentless attack on the welfare state. But on the whole it is easier to create anxiety about change rather than anxiety about the status-quo. So those drive factors need to have the strength to counter-balance risk. They need to generate a feeling of doing good and doing well. Being too ‘lite’ may not be able to sustain a big enough story.

The drive factors that are there for the telling are the vision of Scotland in control of all its resources, of Scotland being known for its contribution to international peace and disarmament not for making wars, of Scotland being an

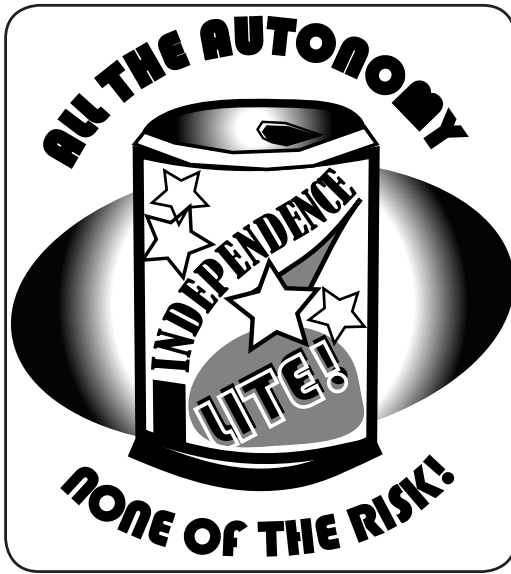
They need to generate a feeling of doing good and doing well. Being too ‘lite’ may not be able to sustain a big enough story.

environmental leader, of Scotland taking its place in international institutions, of Scotland making a strong social democratic statement for

economic and social fairness at home and abroad. These are big vision things that can justify the claims for big powers.

The experience of the permanent warfare state that is the United Kingdom is a strong theme. There has been majority opposition to these wars, some of it strongly held. Similarly there has been majority opposition in Scotland to British nuclear weapons, especially with the Clyde having all of the UK’s nuclear warheads. While this might not be at the top of the political priorities for most of the public, for an active

Isobel Lindsay looks at the possibility that a middle way option on the constitution could be presented – but argues that it simply leaves power and momentum in the wrong hands



minority these are vote-changing issues and ones in which Scotland has the potential to make an internationally important contribution. By requiring the removal of all nuclear warheads from Scottish waters and land, there would be an instant disarming of Trident since it would take years of work and billions of pounds to recreate the necessary operational infrastructure in England, even if an acceptable site was found. In 1976, a period in which concern about Scottish independence was at a high level, the Ministry of Defence produced a report on its implications which stated: 'A suitable alternative location in England for the Clyde Submarine Base might not exist'. This was before the arrival of Trident when infrastructure requirements were much lower. The opposition attack on removing nuclear weapons focuses on job losses but there are only a modest number of civilian jobs at Faslane/Coulport directly related to Trident – most are on other naval work that could be phased out over time. Independence could quickly achieve what campaigners throughout the UK have been working for over 50 years and contribute to an international disarmament breakthrough.

The right to international representation is both a 'pride' factor and a practical one. While UN membership would offer Scotland status and the opportunity to develop a moral profile which many individuals and organisations would welcome, there are other types of representation which have an economic significance like the EU

and the WTO. Our current position of having to plead for representation on fishing issues highlights this. International aid, citizenship, asylum and migration are other issues with moral and economic dimensions about which there are strong feelings and on which voters would welcome the right to reach decisions appropriate for Scottish conditions and values.

Apart from the oil campaign of the 1970s which only focused on one element, Scottish resource have never been the core of an integrated campaign but new issues are emerging in Scottish waters with renewables. Put all the physical resource issues together – some currently under Holyrood, some Westminster, some EU - and there is the basis of a big vision that needs full-spectrum powers unlikely to be conceded by any version of devo-max.

The significance of the devo-max or independence-lite models will depend on whether they are included as referendum options. A multi-choice referendum presents several problems. One is that when you give people the choice of no change, some change or major change, there is an advantage for the 'middling' option simply because it is seen as lower risk so it could be the decisive factor in ensuring that the vote for independence will not succeed. Also unless a devo-max option is supported by a major Westminster party, the chances of implementation are very limited. If no-one has ownership of it and the independence option fails, there will be no great pressure on a new Westminster Government to act. They can make a few concessions and then stand their ground and under those circumstances, the Scottish Government would have few weapons to challenge this.

The way in which the question is asked is important. If there are three choices, there are two conventional ways of getting a clear decision. One is to use a transferable vote to ensure that there will be a clear victor. On the assumption that the no-change option will be the least popular, these votes would be redistributed and it would be surprising if they did not go to the devo-max option. Another method is a two stage question - 'Do you want change?', if yes 'which of the proposals

for change do you support?'. This is likely to produce more voter errors since you have to discount any who vote no to the first question but go on to fill in the second but it would certainly be more helpful to the independence option than the transferable vote although it might be considered less fair to the other side. There could be another form of ballot that asks a cumulative question – 'Do you favour a Scottish Parliament with full economic powers yes/no' and then 'Do you also favour a Scottish Parliament which is fully independent yes/no'. This would be the most favourable of the formats for independence and would enable a Yes/Yes campaign but it still leaves the voter with a soft option. The advantage is that a referendum would result in an outcome that would at least give a negotiating basis for greater powers but, if independence did not get support, it would leave the Scottish Government with a weak hand and Westminster would feel they need not rush to make major concessions.

While the multi-choice referendum has real risks of undermining the pro-independence vote, it does have another advantage apart from providing a fall-back consolation prize. It will create problems for pro-UK parties. They are likely to be divided on any proposals for a substantial increase in powers, both among parties and within parties. Yet if they don't put their own definition on any option for increased powers, they will appear to be ignoring Scottish opinion. If, however, their definition is the lowest common denominator (the right to oil revenues will be a litmus test for fiscal powers), they will go into a referendum campaign almost naked.

For those supporting independence, pushing a lite version and/or backing a multi-option referendum might superficially look safer but it is a high risk strategy, certainly a close-call. If the devo-max option turns out to be a political orphan with no Westminster party backing a credible version, the balance of arguments tips in favour of a single choice question. ■

Isobel Lindsay was Convener of the Campaign for a Scottish Parliament, Executive Member of the Constitutional Convention

The Emerging Nation of England

The 6 May 2011 election – the serious one in Scotland, not the pretendy AV one managed by the British state – has led to serious gnashing of teeth in the larger part of this island. This moment of historical crisis has threatened the constitutional settlement which has kept both main state-capitalist parties in place, and brought home the reality that nothing has

been gained from the apparent boom years. The key term, the nation housing 85 per cent of the United Kingdom's population, has been increasingly revealed as eclipsed by a history running from eighteenth-century empire to twenty-first century centre of 'empty' finance. But what happened to England – not

Anglo-Britain, not the England still imagined to have a foreign office, but England as a lived place? Is it to be left, as state media often strongly implied during the early phase of devolution, to a kind of 'nationalist extremism' identified, illogically, with the British National Party and the English Defence League? But the urgency of the negotiated, post-British environment means that this ideology-pressed confusion has had its day. Like any other emerging nation, England now has to take on the hard work of creating and articulating values to allow it to take its place in an international environment.

This moment can be placed in a line with at least three English attempts to pull away from British Empire. Firstly, after World War One there was a contestation between nostalgic attempts to reclaim the state-national values of the Pax Britannica, and an anti-enclosures exploration of England as place which also often skirted some of the restless energy of modernism. The second, in many ways related, moment, saw a rise in critical social realism and anti-establishment critique after the waning of British consensus in the mid-1950s, triggered by Suez and Hungary, and represented in the universities and *Left Review* and *New Left Review*, where the

nation was often seen as a whole way of life, and the myth of social mobility was debunked as less common but more visible (a critique somewhat in the tone of *SLR* Issue 66 editorial's critique of the Blair era). Thirdly, a identification of a democratic deficit was identified *throughout* the United Kingdom from the turn of the 1980s when, despite much

Like any other emerging nation, England now has to take on the hard work of creating and articulating values to allow it to take its place in an international environment

concentration on a paradigm shift to neoliberalism, the state retained its old shape but became stronger and less interested in local, personally meaningful relationships – galvanising a state-sceptical left joined along lines of constitutionalism, resistance to non-productive economics, and direct action, typified by anti-nuclear activism and a 'DIY culture'.

If this escalation led to an irresistible demand for devolution – which the Labour Party still often believed could be controlled by regionalism or 'joined-up government', it also ushered in an age when England would ultimately be forced to redefine itself. Initial overtures took the form of an unconvincing 'defence' of unreflective Anglo-British values (Scruton, Paxman, Heffer, Peter Hitchens, Redwood), setting the tone for what I have called, because of its reliance on the idea of a 'silent' or 'secret' people, 'neo-secrecy': the claim that England is being put-upon (by immigrants, by the EU, by Scottish benefit junkies), while suggesting no steps towards English self-determination – and so leaving a background British nationalism intact. The 'soft' British nationalism working through everyday practices and cultures (in Michael Billig's terms a 'banal nationalism') is nevertheless unusually ideologically strong since it is not accountable to any national form or any constitutional participation. Since the turn of the millennium England has been marked by a neo-secrecy which took on the scale of the kind of grievance industry it often itself decried in multiculturalism,

while acting within the wider safety zone of a surveillance state.

In fact, it takes a journey quite far towards the Powellite right to get any serious purchase on English institutionality, as Tom Nairn long since realised. The rank and file of the *Daily Telegraph* will not touch this kind of English self-determination: what will be found in its comments columns is, to this day, a neo-secrecy which seems to have much to say about English ways, but which supports banal British nationalism not only by refusing to suggest English institutionality, but more seriously even ways in which England might become a participant in any future negotiation of post-British sovereignty. The implication is that England will simply wait for Scots to show their grievances by leaving the UK (an illogical construction, of course, since Scotland is not separate) – and this stance itself constitutes a form of grievance, leaving England with only the most reactive characteristics on the British union. At the other end of the unionist pantomime *The Guardian* has consistently made sure that 'nationalism' has been demonised as extremism – the BNP, the EDL, and so on – even as an increasingly extreme British nationalism was itself being built up.

The question of why English and banal-British nationalism can have been so casually equated for so long has attracted various explanations, including Ian Baucom's description of England's displacement in empire, Michael Keating's account of the managerial rehashings of regionalism since the 1970s, and Ben Wellings's identification of a blurry response to an apparent invasion by the EU (and the spectre of invasion into Britain has been part of the state's cohesive makeup from the French Revolution to the War on Terror). In any case, because the journalistic portrayals of Anglo-Britishness have been so reactive, since May 2011 unionist commentators and think tanks have had a torrid time with the spectre of a separate England – Blue Labour was a particularly noxious example of where this led, trying to claim that Burkean conservatism was somehow socialist, and making no attempt to distinguish between lived Englishness and the British state. The desperation which

Michael Gardiner looks at how England as a nation is being influenced and changed by the wider political and constitutional debates in the UK – and finds it populated by people who don't live there...

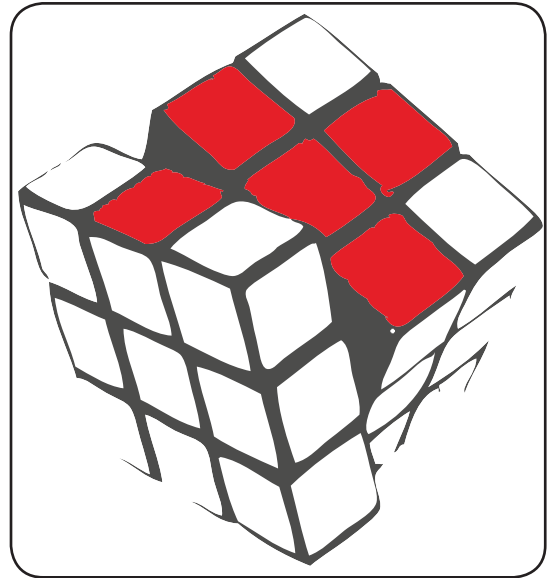
arose was sometimes of the *Guardian* emotionally-wounded type, ably dealt with by Gerry Hassan and others, and some was more overtly party-political bent which believed that the Labour Party would be finished after secession – without any serious evidence, since all measurements are by definition British, and the suppression of the possibilities of the national are its very *raison d'état*. Whether the Labour Party *should* be finished after the 2000s is another question, but the connection between a self-determining England would be made up of low-Tory Eurosceptics is not proven. Indeed both main British parties, which have long occupied right-authoritarian stances, realise that national Englishness is one of the most terrifying prospects for the British political classes, and this sense of terror helps explain why national England gets so little serious consideration in the mainstream media.

From both sides, either the centre-right neo-secrecists or the bluey-purple Labourites, a quietism is in effect a solidly Burkean-conservative admission that Englishness cannot be proactive, local, egalitarian, and that it will revert to a received form which is beholden to heritage and a particularly ahistorical understanding of 'tradition' – and moreover that this process will take place with reference to the body which has caused the eclipse of England. But a self-determining England would almost definitely be faced with a new set of voting and participatory choices – the current Parliamentary system is tailored to union, and is not in fact 'a thousand years old' – and it is quite possible that England will seize a chance for a more participatory democracy (and, as I have argued elsewhere, the 2000 GLA elections were a serious marker of this). What is essential is to allow England to participate in negotiations over sovereignty during the terminal phase of devolution. This is not to argue that England should force itself on the world as a great power (no such neo-imperial action will work), nor even that there should be an English nation-state. But there does need to be a moment where England passes through the national as an articulation of action and away from its displaced imperial image – and this can seriously be described as a postcolonial moment, freeing the empire's

last and most embroiled territory.

The cosy moment of crypto-unionist quietism I have described as neo-secrecy was always likely to be shattered, but its destruction has been accelerated by the financial crisis which began in 2007-08 which shows that the UK could not go on indefinitely on an 'empty' economy run for the short-term benefits of the political classes, then by minority and majority victories of the SNP in 2011 which ruined the regional-managerial dream of joined-up government, and then by the English riots of summer 2011, which showed the pressures of disenfranchisement forced up against over-consumption. The SNP may have been unjustifiably smug in pointing to a sense of social democracy which suggested that it could never happen here – but the fact remains that England is the only one of the UK's members which has no national participation in the political, and so has another level of alienation built in. English national movements should pull away from neo-secrecy towards not just stating the taboo of the 'English national' – still something that takes a bit of daring in the mainstream media – but putting some action behind it.

An England which is local but cohered by shared, post-British values based on lived experience, should have nothing to do with the politics of grievance encouraged by the unionist media. The problem is not that England has been put-upon or attacked, or betrayed by Scots (and there is an odd logic to the way the Barnett Formula or block grants are almost always bemoaned by British unionists). England needs ground-up alternatives to the reproduced and displaced cultural image of itself which delivered power in empire. To an extent the reinvention of England will be forced by concrete constitutional issues surrounding the Scottish independence referendum and the uncontrollable results of devolution (which will not go away, even if a referendum returns a negative result). Also though, the financial crisis should be seen as representing the final failure of the export of British empire,



revealing an empty global neocolonial economy with nothing to back it, whose indebtedness has been forced inwards to consume its own working-class (a process sometimes known as 'endocolonisation'). This situation may look dark because the Anglo-British constitution, based on precedent and so untouchable by any person or organisation in present tense, and liable to manipulation as it was under Blairism, obscures the possibilities for action. Nevertheless pressed by the real challenges to the constitution forced by both the Scottish Government and the way the decimation of the British economy is falling disproportionately on the already disadvantaged, this moment represents the first opportunity in centuries for England to assert a set of values which opposes the vested interests of the imperial British political class. And while August's riots represent a poor articulation of this disenfranchisement, nor will England's emergence be articulated by the voices of the banal-British-nationalist journalistic right. These commentators may seem to like England so much that they will protect it from all invaders, but they don't like the place so much that they have the courage to go there. ■

Michael Gardiner works in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick; publications include The Cultural Roots of British Devolution, Modern Scottish Culture, and The Constitution of English Literature

Work is Killing Us

Around 20 per cent of the UK's biggest killers, including heart disease, cancer and chronic respiratory disease, are caused by work, suggesting annual work-related disease deaths exceed 50,000 with working wounded totalling several million (Hazards No 92). The UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the body responsible for enforcing and advising on UK law – health and safety being a matter reserved to Parliament. It seriously under-estimates workplace injuries and diseases but notes 147 UK workers were killed at work in the year up to June 2011. In 2009/10 121,430 other injuries to employees were reported whilst 233,000 reportable injuries occurred, 28.5 million days were lost overall, 23.4 million due to work-related ill health and 5.1 million due to workplace injury (HSE Annual Statistics Report for 2009/10 and Labour Force Survey results). In 2011 a swathe of official inquiries looked at the subject. These have included Parliament's Scottish Affairs Committee, the Scottish Parliament's Scotland Bill Committee and a Department of Work and Pensions inquiry.

The figures are shocking and yet the UK Government is busy cutting funding for health and safety at work. Such cuts hit hardest the most deprived and vulnerable groups in our society and raise questions about equity and social justice as precarious work, insecure work and hazardous work grow around us. Sub-contracted and agency workers often simply vanish in official statistics. The UK faces attacks not only on workplace health and safety standards but also on the inter-connected areas of employment security, absence management, sickness payments and industrial injury and disease payments. They all play into declining public health.

Capital gives away precious little that it does not have to. UK occupational health and safety history is based on great struggles usually by trade unions, often because of pressure from their lay members, and aided by enlightened politicians to get through any 'state' protection. This was so on child labour in the 18th Century through factory, office and railway acts to the 1974 Health and Safety at Work etc Act. The 1974 Act still relied on weak tripartism, however, and

emerged from Lord Robens' advocacy of self-regulation. Robens' Vickers and NCB history seeped through his proposals. It took trade union pressure to obtain the 1977 regulations on safety representatives that gave the Act real bite. The 1970s were halcyon days for health and safety, with an active staff and an energetic group of occupational health specialists, when compared with the decades that followed.

At times of course, self-interest also played a part. When large capital recognised that poor working conditions could damage production and profit through killing and injuring or making ill its skilled workers – unskilled workers were expendable – then it was less hostile to health and safety laws. Similarly, when large capital recognised that it could hit smaller competitors by imposing health and safety regulations that these weaker competitors could not meet, then such regulation was not opposed. The EU in the 1980s also resolved conflicts between its aims of freeing markets and protecting citizens in positive ways by bringing in workplace health and safety directives that went way beyond what Thatcher's governments would have countenanced. Yet the 1980s saw the emergence of the neo-liberal counter-offensive in Europe led by Dutch and British MEPs who argued for major cuts in health and safety regulation.

The offensive against health and safety at work has gathered momentum and explains both Blair and Brown's espousal of deregulation and related strategies running the gamut of what has euphemistically been called better regulation, softer regulation and smarter regulation. Blair and co constantly cut the budgets of bodies like HSE. David Cameron's administration has simply continued those policies now bringing in a huge 35 per cent cut in HSE's budget between 2010 and 2014. It appears that reactive inspections will now dominate HSE strategy, with planned cuts of a third in future pro-active inspections. A whole range of industries and employment settings look likely to be re-categorised as low risk too.

HSE is a strangely masochistic body and fails to champion workplace health and safety. Successive government tell it that cuts will come: HSE acquiesces

quietly and leaves itself open to more and more cuts. However, it is politicians, governments and some employer bodies, driven by ideology and lacking in sound evidence, that explain the real crisis in workplace health and safety not HSE pusillanimity. HSE for example did show in the 1980s and 1990s that 'good health and safety' was good business and that each year the UK lost the equivalent of a year's economic growth through injuries and illnesses at work. The message has been received and understood by some large industries and companies that understand they get beneficial information and advice from HSE. Small and medium sized employers too, research shows, also like the information, advice and support they get from HSE inspectors. Some industry bodies have made the point that occupational health and safety controls should be protected and not removed in their evidence to a recent Department of Work and Pensions inquiry into health and safety laws.

Now there are increasingly strident attacks against health and safety by a string of government ministers who bizarrely have even suggested that the recent riots were linked to an over powerful 'health and safety culture' in the UK. Evidence shows the opposite is happening. Each year hundreds of thousands of workers are injured in UK factories and hundreds are killed whilst hundreds of thousands of employees are made ill by their work and tens of thousands die each year from occupationally-caused and occupationally-related illnesses. Such figures far outweigh the mortality statistics for road traffic crashes and murders combined yet the state, despite some cuts, still funds police bodies far more generously than the HSE. And we live in a country where cruelty to animals may often result in a prison sentence but employers responsible for multiple deaths of workers will walk free. Much is made of the UK's health and safety record but the facts belie the rhetoric. In a recent respected publication, the Maplecroft index on health and safety and working conditions, the UK came 20th out of 30 OECD countries listed.

Despite recent research from the USA that shows regulations work and that voluntary and self-regulated health

Andrew Watterson, Tommy Gorman and Jim McCourt look at the current political and ideological assault on health and safety at work and call for a fight-back against deregulation

and safety schemes do not, the UK government carries on its ideological way. Chris Grayling, the UK employment minister, still refuses to meet the body that speaks for the many workers killed at work, Families Against Corporate Killing (FACK), yet in the last four months has met 10 industry bodies, several of whom advocate the cutting red tape agenda with precious little if any evidence to support their case. FACK in contrast is a national campaigning network to stop workers and others being killed in preventable incidents and supporting bereaved families through sources of legal and emotional help. For example, they represented relatives of Graham Meldrum who was killed at work on 12 July 2005. He was working as an agency driver for TNT delivering to Allied Bakeries in Glasgow and paltry fines of £33,500 resulted for those companies: a worker's life still comes very cheap in Scotland.

'Risk aversion' in the UK has also been identified by politicians as a problem. Yet the UK health and safety figures do not show anything of the sort. They indicate we need more not less risk aversion to cut the toll. There is also much baying about the 'compensation culture'; yet in workplaces the injuries and diseases are too real and far too few employees get any compensation at all - financial or emotional - for the damage done to them and their communities. As we write in October 2011, there has also been a dramatic increase in workplace fatalities between 2009/10 and 2010/11.

The position in Scotland, controlled by Westminster, is not only no better than England and Wales but in several respects it is worse. We have in the past seen major disasters, such as Piper Alpha in 1988 which killed 168 people and ICL/Stockline in 2004 which killed nine workers and injured dozens more. Serious failings in Scottish HSE governance emerged after the 2004 explosion linked to failures to protect non-union employees by ineffectual enforcement of regulations (www.theinquiry.org). Now we have an enormous epidemic

of occupational disease due to asbestos and other substances in some of the most vulnerable, deprived and de-industrialised parts of the country. HSE figures not only under-estimate injuries and diseases, they also take no proper account of a hostile economic environment where employees are fearful for their jobs, bad employers have greater and greater freedom from government agencies to not report injuries and diseases, changes in reporting systems like RIDDOR will lead to a further reduction of reported injuries and diseases, and many employees have to adopt

presenteeism (going to work when ill) because of fears for job security.

The HSE itself admits Scotland has a higher fatality and major injury rate than the rest of the UK but simply explains

this away on the basis of more hazardous industries existing here. That appears to be astonishingly complacent and seems to indicate the rates are inevitable. In countries like Australia, highly hazardous industries such as mining have seen such rates decline when there has been an expansion of the industry. HSE Scotland all too often emerged as an apologist for failures to protect workers effectively. This is unlike the current situation in the USA where OSHA leaders reflect a commitment to raising health and safety standards. HSE recommended 43 cases for prosecution in Scotland in 2009-10, compared to 75 in 2007-08 and 84 in 2008-09.³ (NAO 2011:8). There are clearly serious questions to be raised about to what extent the UK health and safety regulatory system protects and addresses the needs of Scottish workers. For the reasons outlined above, it appears to have failed and perhaps should be more directly accountable to the Scottish government for its work.

Health and safety at work has historically only been protected by pressure on employers and government from employees, from trade unions and from civil society. Trade union activity through safety representatives provides the best protection but trade unions have

been weakened and many employees are not in unions. What is therefore now needed in Scotland is a multi-layered approach. The Scottish government has a unique opportunity to demonstrate, as it has done on the NHS and social care, a different and more humane approach on workplace health and safety and support for those damaged by work than occurs in England. What Scotland needs is:

- Action to prevent further HSE cuts
- Greater accountability of HSE to Scottish civil society in terms of actions, resourcing and staff perhaps through a dedicated Scottish Occupational Health and Safety Agency
- The effective linkage of occupational health to public health with greater activity on prevention and in primary care. Data on injuries and diseases should be collated from the acute and primary care sectors and GPs should work with trade unions and community groups to identify problems along the lines of SOHAS in Sheffield
- The establishment of a Scottish worker health and safety centre to advise employees, unionised or not, about prevention and detection of disease and injury and support for victims. This could be created by re-aligning funds from health promotion initiatives that should be spent on preventing workplace hazards.
- Linking good health and safety records with economic and other benefits from the Scottish ministries responsible for health, business and the environment and promotion of initiatives such as toxics use reduction so successfully pioneered in the USA

Further information on debates about occupational health and safety hazards and policies can be found in *Hazards* magazine (www.hazards.org), the Institute of Employment Rights (www.ier.org.uk) and FACK (www.fack.org.uk). ■

Andrew Watterson, Tommy Gorman and Jim McCourt are members of the Occupational and Environmental Health Research Group at the University of Stirling

Much is made of the UK's health and safety record but the UK came 20th out of 30 OECD countries listed

Do. Not. Assume.

The EU Prüm Treaty is on its way to implementation. I can sense the excitement mounting. Ah ah the Prüm Treaty you cry! At last, at long last, as the tears of joy roll gently down your cheeks. Of course there may be the odd one or two individuals who are not quite certain what the Prüm Treaty is (not an unreasonable position to find oneself in). The Prüm Treaty will create a super-network on European DNA databases, allowing the police of EU nations to trawl through millions of DNA records.

During the last session of the Scottish Parliament there was quite a bit of enthusiasm among a few Labour MSPs for increasing the number of individuals whose data was held on the police DNA database. It appeared to be their view that the larger the DNA database the more effective it was. Thus one might conclude that the Prüm Treaty will bring joy to their hearts. It is fair to say that a larger database allows a greater probability of making a match. However, the flip side of that coin is the greater probability of a false positive (incorrectly identifying an individual as a match). Consider the statistics. A match of one in ten thousand means that there is a one in ten thousand chance that the match is a false positive, the match has occurred by chance. So if you check the DNA of ten people a match of one in ten thousand appears pretty good. However, if the database contains ten thousand data points you would reasonably expect at least one false positive (we are dealing in probabilities so you have to allow for random error). If the database contains two million data points you can expect quite a few false matches. The number of loci (positions within the DNA) sampled significantly

influences the risk of a false match.

There is considerable debate over how many loci should be sampled; it varies between 10 and 15. Both the number, and critically the actual location of the loci used, varies between EU states. When comparing across states the sample may be reduced to only six loci (a number which no state considers reliable). The new treaty not only increases the risk of a false match by considerably expanding the data volume, but also because it may result in an unacceptably low number of loci being compared. However, false positives are not the only reason why an individual may be incorrectly identified. DNA material is extremely tricky to handle and inadvertent contamination is relatively easy (when the data is collected, during testing, even in the manufacturing of laboratory equipment).

Peter Hamkin was a barman in Mersyside when, in 2003, he was accused and arrested of murdering a woman in Italy the year before. The Italian police had requested that the English police search their DNA database and were informed that he was a perfect match. After 20 days a second DNA test concluded that the 'perfect match' was somewhat less than perfect and that he could be ruled out (he was released without being charged).

There is a not unnatural concern among various groups (scientists, civil libertarians etc) that there will soon be

a lot more Peter Hamkins. It could be argued that that does not matter; he was released, no great harm done. However, while the police are incorrectly

DNA is fallible. This is why Scots law likes corroborating evidence, and why DNA matches and fingerprints should not, of themselves, be proof of guilt.

focussing on an innocent individual then the guilty have more time to go to ground. There is also the impact on that individual; mud sticks - especially for particularly nefarious crimes. Corrupt police might decide that this suspect will do (especially if

they are under serious pressure to solve the case). There is finally the alarming possibility of DNA material being manufactured in order to provide the appearance of guilt (Frumkin, D. et al (2010) Forensic Science International: Genetics, 4(2), 95-103).

The mud sticks scenario is likely to be exacerbated by a common statistical misunderstanding. How often have you heard/read a news report stating that the DNA match is one in a million and then going on to suggest that due to the high probability of a match that the individual must be guilty? The problem with this type of report is that it conflates two probabilities; the probability of the DNA match being a false positive, and the probability of the individual's guilt. Think of it this way. The probability of a DNA match has been established at one in a million. However, the individual can clearly establish that not only was he on a different continent at the time of the crime, but that he was speaking to a packed hall of several hundred people. Given all the information one would be



Despite what we see on CSI, DNA is not a foolproof tool for catching criminals and is open to abuse. So why, asks Bill Wilson, is there so little debate about a Europe-wide database?

obliged to conclude that the probability of guilt is not one in a million (in fact it would be zero). This is why Scots law likes corroborating evidence, and why DNA matches and fingerprints should not, of themselves, be proof of guilt. (As a small aside the actual science underpinning fingerprint evidence is very poor indeed.)

How many cases have actually been solved by the DNA database, as against the suspect being identified through tradition means and the DNA being used as corroborating evidence? There are relatively few cases where the database has actually caught a suspect. The first DNA database trawl was in the UK in 2007, and the Leicestershire police did identify the individual. However, the guilty party was caught not because he was on the database, but because he was overhead trying to convince somebody else to provide a sample. For most crimes which have been 'solved' by DNA evidence the suspect has been identified by standard police methods and then DNA has been used to corroborate guilt. A Home Affairs Committee report in 2010 concluded "It is currently impossible to say with certainty how many crimes are detected, let alone how many result in convictions, due at least in part to the matching of crime scene DNA to a personal profile already on the database, but it appears that it may be as little as 0.3%" (Home Affairs Committee - Eighth Report The National DNA Database).

There are of course a range of civil liberties issues connected to DNA databases. In brief some of the issues are:

- Erroneous conviction may result from an over-reliance on DNA databases. Mistakes happen, partial samples, wrongly labelled samples, contaminated samples, false positive identifications etc.
- Fingerprints tell us nothing about an individual's disabilities, potential health problems, parentage. DNA provides extensive private information on an individual. When such information is held there is always a risk that it will be abused. Today it may be the case that only 'junk' DNA is held, but DNA carrying information would be far more 'useful', and pressure is likely to grow to hold more informative datasets.
- Will an individual who refuses to

provide a sample be identified? Perfectly innocent individuals might find themselves vilified for a quite reasonable refusal to provide a sample, "if he has nothing to hide he has nothing to fear".

- Will individuals from particular groups be more likely to find themselves targeted for inclusion within the database?
- Phenotypic profiling can be used to identify racial or other characteristics. Let us imagine that the DNA from a crime scene is identified as being of a male from the Middle East; now imagine you are one of only six Arabs living on the local housing scheme.
- Related to the above is the possibility that the crime sample reveals that the suspect suffers from a particular genetic abnormality. Will the police be able to check hospital records for those being treated for this abnormality? The end result may be the inadvertent publication of an individual's most private details.
- The number of innocent people on database tends to constantly expand as more and more individuals are added: DNA dragnets, examining familial lines, innocent individuals who 'look like a suspect' (perhaps over six foot and black).
- Being identified by a DNA 'trawl' twenty years after the event may make it very difficult for the suspect to prove their innocence. As a DNA trawl can identify anybody on the database, without any prior suspicion, it is inevitable that some innocent individuals will be so identified (Peter Hamkins). How would you prove that you were not on such and such a housing estate on 19 March 1999?
- 'Offline' (not legally constituted) databases can be built. As the collection of DNA expands the

temptation to maintain unofficial databases increases. Nobody likes to throw data away. The temptation to hang on to data that should be discarded is likely to increase as time allows us to become accustomed to DNA records being kept. To date offline databases have been discovered in both Louisiana and New York (Simoncelli & Krinsky S. (2007) A New Era of DNA Collections: At What Cost to Civil Liberties? American Constitution Society for Law and Policy)

- The state may at some future time allow a wider use of the database. The end result being a) an increase in the likelihood of the data leaking, b) the inclusion of an individual in a study/project/commercial enterprise regardless of their willingness to participate.


I am not arguing that we should not keep DNA records, that DNA 'fingerprinting' cannot provide a significant tool in the battle against crime. However, DNA databases are not a miraculous solution to all unsolved crimes, neither are they built and extended without considerable risk to personal civil liberties. As with most risks to civil liberties this one is easily ignored, until you are identified. ■

■ *Bill Wilson is a former SNP MSP*

BOYLING POINT 2

more political cartoons by Frank Boyle
foreword by Robert McNeil

as featured in
Edinburgh
Evening News



... sharp and funny.' Ken Loach

£8.99. Available in bookshops
or directly from
www.argyllpublishing.com

Marx and the Nation

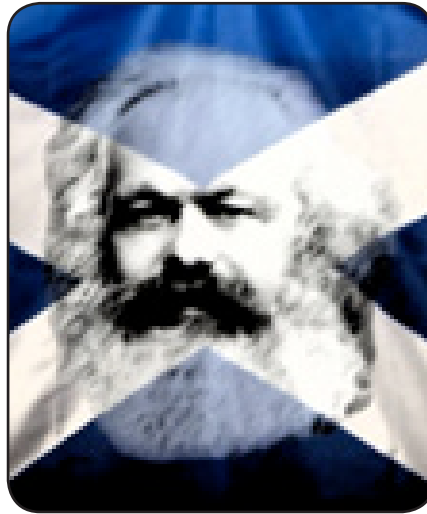
Many people in Scotland, as indeed throughout the capitalist world, have been observing the most incredible seismic changes in the economic system during which all the 'rules' and 'values' have been ignored and a new great threat confronts them and their children and grandchildren.

Most people do not spend too much of their time thinking about politics or economics; all they want and expect from the political/economic system is that they are allowed to get on with the important matter of making a living and seeing their family develop and flourish. People like me, and most of us who support the SLR, are not 'normal'. We spend too much time considering political and economic theories to be normal, and we need sometimes to stand back and see how political ideas are taken up by the people as they confront changes in society imposed on them and how they react.

The capitalist society which we have lived in all our lives has appeared to meet the requirements of most normal people in Scotland as in many other places. People on the whole have had a 'good' standard of living. Good of course is a relative term which relates to their experience of their parents situation. They have seen gradual improvement in living standards since the war, and have come to expect that this will continue into the future for their children. The free market system they know can be very harsh on them at times but it is considered 'fair'; as it has appeared to treat everyone the same, without distinction.

Since 2008 however with the financial crisis everything has changed, the stability of the system is seen to be much more fragile than it appeared. The free market is no longer equitable, big banks which got into huge debts are not to suffer the consequences, as the market demands, but managed to get money from the Government which we have now got to pay for. They are also being told that they can't afford to have what they expected for their future, and that it will be even worse for their children.

Now at this stage a change starts to take place with normal people; they start to give more attention to what has caused this difficulty (what Marx described as class consciousness) and



to look with more attention on what politicians and economists have to say when confronted by this economic maze and what are they finding? Confronted by the seemingly intractable economic problems neo-classical economists are at a loss to explain the situation and resort to uttering irrational clichés which suggest that the 'market' is responsible for irrational decisions or demands. This is no better than people suggesting we should make sacrifices to an incomprehensible all powerful god who must be appeased if he is to show us favour.

Adam Smith's powerful book written in 1776, after having studied early capitalist development in Glasgow, first identified the significance of the 'free market' as an idea and his influence into what we now call economics is of the highest order even to this day. After Smith's death the so called "classical" economists gave extended powers to his free market concept and postulated that such a market would always tend to equilibrium at the maximum use of resources, a sort of self-regulating system which left to its own devices would 'correct itself'. (Smith himself never made such claims.)

Karl Marx found Adam Smith's work extremely interesting and he based much of this economic theory on it. While Marx incorporated Smith's view of the important features of the market in his work Marx had two significant things to say about the market:

(a) He rejected the 'classical economic' assertion about the self regulation of the market and indeed

demonstrated that it was unstable and cyclical.

(b) He pointed out that the definition of capital (rent in Smith's original work) as an element of production requiring a return per unit, was flawed and would result in a falling rate of return on capital over time, which in his view would destroy capitalism from within.

Marx's observations about the cyclical nature of the market is now widely understood because of the work of John Maynard Keynes who addressed this and wrote in a language much easier to understand than Marx had done and indeed wrote at a time when normal people were seeking answers to the economic crisis of their day. Keynesian economists recognise the way out of a cyclical downturn in a free market (to 'grow your way out') is the stupid idea of allowing the market to self-regulate its way out is nonsense. However Keynesian economists do not offer a long term solution to the present situation, and can't explain the high level of debt world wide and the high inflation with recession.

I believe that Marx's second point is very relevant here: in an investment, production and distribution system based on capital as an element of production then a 'return per unit' of capital has to be found for the system to go forward. However as economies develop the 'capital' composition of each unit of production relative to the 'labour' composition is high and is constantly increasing. Which means that the more advanced an economy is the more capital each worker will need per unit of production. Therefore the more 'debt' he/she will accrue in order to produce. Such a system leads to the creation of a small gang of super-super rich and a population in debt to them. Does it sound familiar?

This problem is not explained by neo-classical nor Keynesian economists, and can't be resolved while we continue to evaluate capital as an element of production requiring a return per unit. However it is quite simple to resolve if we reclassify capital as "consolidated labour" a concept Smith was working on, and Marx completed. If we do that then we can pay the full value for the capital

It is fashionable for people to say ‘Marx was right’ without fully understanding why. Andy Anderson argues that if we follow through the logic it is the nation – and for us Scotland – which has the ability to reform the system.

required without inhibiting production or incurring un-payable debts. It has social consequences of course in that the increasing flow of capital (surplus value) to the super rich will dry up but while unacceptable to a greedy few this is not a problem for the economy, or the contrary it is a solution.

If we ask people to look at what happened in the Second World War is it clear that the wholesale destruction of capital (without compensation) did not inhibit production, nor were debts allowed to restrict investment – yet the country came out of the war much much more productive than when they went in and inflation was contained. The difficult question is, can we today in a small country like Scotland withstand the huge consequences of the collapse of the multinational capitalist empire which our country has been a founding member of, without dire consequences for the Scottish people. Well that is a question we are going to have to face and which we can't avoid so it would now be prudent to give it careful attention.

Faced with this approaching economic hurricane many will be tempted to look for protection within some bigger entity such as the British State. I take the very opposite view; I will argue that the big ship ‘UK Enterprise’ is seriously damaged and holed below the water line and that it will be one of the first casualties in the coming storm. So our wisest course of action would be to cut all the ropes and move out a short distance from her so that we are not dragged down in her wake.

The hurricane which is building is centred in the financial sector of the economy and it is from this sector that it will once again strike. The UK economy has a relatively weak manufacturing sector, and a weak raw materials base while having a huge financial services sector. The UK economy will be hit early and hard, if the capitalist financial system collapses. I very much agree with much of the main points being made by Jim and Margaret Cuthbert in their article in *SLR* Issue 66 and I quote them: “...to redress the problems an essential role has to be played by the nation state”. The “problems” which they are addressing, while described in a different context, are not significantly different

from what we should expect as a result of Marx's analysis of capitalism's long term instability. I also agree with their assessment that in terms of the nation state required to protect the people from the worst effects of the economic hurricane and to rebuild on a new model of economy then Scotland as a nation state is well suited for this task.

The answer to our present economic problems does not lie in hiding in a multi-national super state. Indeed as the capitalist system falls apart small states with good social structures and controlling ‘real’ natural resources will be in a better position to adjust to the situation than big states with much of their ‘wealth’ held by big financial

institutions which will disappear like “snow off a dyke”. For those of us on the left in Scotland, if we recognise that a powerful economic storm is about to hit us, whatever its

cause, then we have a duty to look for and identify the safest way forward for our families and our nation.

In this regard we are perhaps fortunate; the Scottish Government in Edinburgh has just been given a strong mandate from the people and has a united majority Government which is keen to get full economic powers, and to follow a Keynesian strategy and to defend the public sector, and follow a more egalitarian type of development. This Scottish Government, and this economic strategy will come under massive and sustained attack from the conservative (small c) and the unionist elements in British politics supported of course by multi-national capitalists.

The great Labour Party, which was once the hope for the future of many Scots, is now in open warfare and disintegrating before our very eyes, but the current leadership in Scotland, and any foreseeable leadership, will undoubtedly take a strong unionist

stand and attack the SNP Government and its policies in its eagerness to be seen in the right light by the right-wing UK leadership of this much corrupted party. But in the political situation we find ourselves political parties are not the most important thing. It is policies which are most important. The Labour left should fight for the dying heart of the Labour Party and attempt to salvage it from the corruption which encircles it even if that does split the party in two. For a new reinvigorated Scottish Labour party which was prepared to support the SNP Government's position and if necessary criticise it from the left would be a breath of fresh air in Scottish politics and a good service for Scotland's

democratic and economic future. This would ensure that we had a strong left supported Scottish Government in a strong position to face the disruption and confusion which the

collapse of capitalism will undoubtedly bring to Europe and America and much of the world.

This should enable us in Scotland to emerge from this disruption with a strong message for Europe and the rest of the world and an economy which has many of the features which we could recognise as the beginnings of a democratic socialist state. If as socialists we want to play a wide international role and do not want to be restricted within a narrow nationalist classification we need have no fear because if we do emerge from a collapsed capitalist world with our feet firmly on the ground and our economy moving forward strongly again we will get the opportunity to play a full international role without doubt. ■

Andy Anderson is an ex-coal miner, ex-Ruskin and New College Oxford student, ex Nupe official and author of “The Skye Bridge Story” dealing with the community campaign which defeated the first PFI in the UK.

A New Job

Thomas was trying to read the politics page of *The Herald* as he sat on the electric bus but he couldn't concentrate for thinking of the new job he was starting today. He had put on a brave, broad smile and had given a wave as he left the door of his old workplace yesterday. He had felt sick as he was forced to leave the best job he had ever had, but the law was the law and he had been determined to leave with a show of good grace. He would do his National Service just like everyone else had to for one year every five years and he would



put his best efforts into his new posting. Now he felt a mixture of relief and excitement at leaving all the old pressures behind and doing something totally different.

Thomas put down his *Herald* and peered out of the window as Monklands Hospital, his new workplace, came into view. Behind the hospital, he could admire again the spires of Monklands University, home of the world-renowned School of Peace Studies, where he had once worked as a lecturer.

Thomas glanced at his *Herald*. There was a really interesting-looking article on the history of the development of the World Co-operative Economic System from the Great Crash of 2020 to the present debates about whether the system was really only a temporary emergency measure, as it was still classified officially in international

treaties, or a permanent shift in the economy that was seen to be working, as most discerning commentators thought. He would have a good read at that article after his shift.

Thomas folded his *Herald* carefully and got up in readiness to get off at the hospital stop.

"Good luck in the new job, Tam," said Ben the driver as Thomas was about to get off. "Ye did a great job for us a' in yer aul job."

"Thanks, I appreciate that, Ben," Thomas replied. "An ye'll hae noticed A used a few o the ideas ye sent me when A was in the job. Thanks for sendin me them."

"Nae bother," Ben said, "An don't forget tae click yersel oot."

"Okay, see ye later," said Thomas. He reached towards the standard green and red buttons of the public transport recording system. Public transport was free but passengers pressed the green button on embarking and the red button on disembarking so that data on passenger journeys could be recorded and used for future planning. Thomas pressed the red button and waited for the satisfying click sound. He got off the bus and enjoyed a short walk through the landscaped garden area on the approach to the hospital. Thomas took a

deep breath of fresh air and entered the hospital through the glass sliding doors.

Only yesterday, Thomas had watched as the heavy wooden door of his old workplace opened for him on his last day in the job. Even on the last day, pressing issues had cropped up that had to be dealt with. He did, though, enjoy his last major appointment, a video conference interview he had agreed to do with Monklands Secondary School at the request of his nephew, Jack.

"Thank you for agreein tae dae yer last interview o yer time in post wi our school," said Jack. "Now first of a', can ye tell us why ye're leavin yer post when ye're generally reckoned to be on top o yer job an the public approve o whit ye're daein?"

"Well, as ye know," Thomas began, "by law, every adult has tae dae a year's National Service for wan year every five

years an it was simply ma time tae dae National Service wance again."

"Couldn't ye have gotten an exemption, given the important job ye're daein?" Jack probed.

"No," Thomas declared. "It is very important that the law is the same for everybody an there can be nae exceptions, even for me. A've known ma date for startin National Service for some time an we've prepared for it. Besides, naebody is indispensable; ma deputy is excellent an she'll dae a great job as ma replacement."

Jack handed the mike to Theresa for the next question.

"Why," asked Theresa, "is National Service necessary?"

"It's a' part o our fair system," Thomas replied. "Ye can hardly believe it noo but, in the olden days, people used tae be divided between rich and poor. Rich people got a very good education an they were assumed to be the best people an they got good, interestin an well-paid jobs. Poor people lived in run-down areas an didnae get a good education. They got the jobs the rich people didnae want that were hard work an low-paid. Or, even worse, sometimes they had no job at a' an very little tae live on. Now, under the World Co-operative Economic System, everbody gets a great education an we find that everybody has great talents that we want to make use o in society. Certain jobs that need tae be done for our basic necessities, a' adults dae a share o them by workin in them durin their periodic years o National Service. This also refreshes people as they get tae dae somethin different an they get compensatory benefits when daein their service, such as extra air travel rations. A cannae wait masel tae use ma rations for a wee jaunt tae Bologna."

Theresa passed the mike to Pat.

"Wasn't the World Co-operative Economic System caused by the Great Crash o 2020?"

"Ye could say that," Thomas replied, "but A prefer tae say that it was how people reacted tae the crash that created the new system. People across the world united an built a new system oot o the ashes o the crash."

In the crash o 2020, the world bankin system collapsed. There had already been a crash in 2008 followed

In a short story, Tony Beekman imagines a future in which the response to the financial crash is not simply ever-more redistribution from the poor to the rich, but a radical change in society...

by years o austerity so when the banks collapsed again, the governments o the world simply didnae hae the money tae bail them oot. The entire world economy collapsed. The vast majority o the population were thrown oot o work, rich people's shares were worthless an they had naeb'dy tae work for them.

Then something extraordinary happened. Demonstrations took place a' ower the world but people also discussed over the Internet how tae get ower the crisis. Historians ca' this the Grey Matter Revolution. People realised that a' the infrastructure an technology o the economy was still there. Emergency plans were made an implemented tae put the infrastructure an the technology tae collective use for the benefit o everybody, by-passing the aul order o rich an poor. Historians ca' this the rise o socialism by default. A suppose that system continues tae this day."

Pat passed the mike tae Andrea.

"Where dae ye stand," Andrea asked, "on the issue o whether socialism by default is still a temporary measure or the new reality we have tae accept?"

"An excellent question," Thomas replied. "Many people aroon the world at the time o the crash were already part o the socialist movement an it was easy for them tae propose an adapt tae collectivist solutions. Others were wedded tae the free market but reluctantly accepted the new system as a temporary measure. Even the US very reluctantly accepted the new system as an emergency measure. Because o that, the new system is still officially temporary under international treaties. But A believe that the reality is that the new system is here tae stay. People now hae a proper stake in society an they won't want tae gie that up. A'm wi those who fully embrace the new system."

And so Thomas had stood on the doorstep of Number 10 for the last time as Prime Minister of the United Federation of Republics of Great Britain. He walked to the end of the street and boarded the electric bus to the Federal Presidential Palace to tender his resignation.

Thomas was greeted at the hospital by his new supervisor, Eileen.

"Welcome tae Monklands Hospital, Tam," she said, "we are a' delighted that ye're daein yer National Service here wi us as wan o oor Cleanin Officers."

"Thank you," Thomas replied, "it's a pleasure tae be here an A hope A can make masel useful."

"A'm sure ye will," said Eileen. "Of course, cleanin is no just aboot a mop an a bucket – although there is that – but also aboot prevention o germ spread an the use o the latest technology. Ye'll get full trainin, mind."

"Aye, A'm especially lookin forward tae the session on usin nanobots in the room sterilisation process," said Thomas.

"Okay," Eileen instructed, "let me show ye tae the Cleanin Centre."

"Lead on!" said Thomas.

The former Prime Minister donned his overalls and got to work. ■

Tony Beekman is a former North Lanarkshire councillor who has an academic background in social science and philosophy and currently works as a community worker



Say NO to ConDem cuts
For all public transport in public hands
For offshore safety
For trade-union rights

Bob Crow, General Secretary

Alex Gordon, President

Reviews

A ROSE LOUPT OOT - POETRY AND SONG CELEBRATING THE UCS WORK-IN SMOKESTACK BOOKS, ISBN 978- 0956417503, £8.95.

*Oor faithers fought this fight before -
Maclean, McShane fought fairly -
And we will fight them once again
Wi' Jimmy Reid and Airlie*
(extract from *Wi' Jimmy Reid and Airlie* by
Matt McGinn)

This book is as described a celebration of the UCS work-in through a collection of 40 poems and songs, some contemporaneous others specially commissioned for the book. The book launch at Clydebank College, on the site of the former John Brown's, was attended by around 100 including many participants in the work-in and we were entertained to a selection of the songs and poems performed by 12 of the writers including George McEwan and Arthur Johnstone.

*With your hammering, your caulking,
Your gouging and your burning,
Snow in your face and tired inside,
The conditions are bad, apprentice young
fellow,
But please hang around and fight from
inside.*
Please hang around and fight from inside.
(final chorus from *The Great Iron ship* by
Danny Kyle)

The book has several short introductions from Ann Henderson, Jimmie Macgregor and Jimmy Cloughley. These outline the timetable and political background to the work-in and some lessons for current struggles. The collator David Betteridge outlines the steps taken to produce the book in time for the 40th anniversary of the work-in and explains the book's title is taken from MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man looks at the Thistle* in a passage about the 1926 General Strike. Ewan McVicor then gives background to the songs and songwriters, including Jim McLean, Tony McCarthy at the time and later Iain Ingram, Leo Coyle and Geordie McIntyre.

*The big ships are gone, the boatyards stand
idle,*

*And they must leave Glasgow, no more may
they bide.
Their torches are dimmed and their
hammers are silent.
And the cranes stand still, mourners at the
death of the Clyde.*
(chorus from *The Death of the Clyde* by
Tony McCarthy)

Several common songs included are anonymous.

*The Hell wi' Ridley, Heath and Davies,
The Hell wi' Ridley, Heath and Davies,
They say it is too late tae save us
But we'll show them they're not on.*
(chorus of *U.C.S. - anonymous*)

David Betteridge introduces the poems and poets including Freddy Anderson, Bill Sutherland, Jim Aitkin, Edwin Morgan, Tessa Ransford amongst many others.

*Their emblem was the banner red,
they were no craven crew;
like Clyde has served you with its streams,
they lived and fought for you.
Their tribe still live throughout the years,
nor change with Time nor Tide!
For Liberty come sing with me
this ballad of the Clyde.*
(last verse from *Ballad of the Clyde* by
Freddie Anderson)

Some poems were specially commissioned for the book.

*I saw shipbuilding dying,
Till men began to fight
To stop the closing of the yards,
Showing solidarity is might.
People came together
With their passion and their pride.
I felt at one with them
And proud to be the Clyde.*
(verse from *I See the Salmon Flow* by Peter
Scrimgeour)

The book is illustrated with photos and cartoons from the time. Further reading is courtesy of John Foster. Finally Smokestack Books only publishes radical song and poetry and can be visited at www.smokestack-books.co.uk where the book can be purchased.

*Jimmy Reid and Airlie,
Barr, Gilmour, and the rest,
They aa went doon tae London Toon*

*The government tae face.
They telt them we were workin in,
That we were gaun tae stay.
When the government relented,
UCS had won the day.*
(verse from *Doon through the Years* by
Arthur Johnstone)

Gordon Morgan

DOWNFALL: THE TOMMY SHERIDAN STORY ALAN MCCOMBES, BIRLINN, ISBN 978-1841587592, £9.99

This is a book full of surprises. I had no idea, for example, that the Scottish Socialist Party was once the most successful socialist party in Europe or that Tommy Sheridan was once Scotland's most celebrated and best-recognised politician. Perhaps both are true – how do you judge such things? But the author's gift for pub-talk hyperbole did make this reader wonder. It cannot actually be true (obviously) that Alan McCombes and his colleagues wrote enough press releases in Sheridan's name "to fill the archives of the British Library"; a filing cabinet would surely do the job. But when in the same paragraph McCombes also claims that he wrote more words under Sheridan's name than either of them ever did under their own names, are we also meant to take the boast in the same spirit as the British Library comparison?

I don't think so. McCombes' contention, more or less, is that Sheridan was an empty vessel – a handsome head – waiting to be filled with ideas and strategies. "In the drab and dusty world of party politics," McCombes writes, "Tommy stood out like the aurora borealis. He had the matinee idol looks of a Hollywood star, the vocal power of a Christian fundamentalist preacher and the persuasive techniques of a door-to-door salesman." In a politician, these are considerable qualities and skills and they have built many successful careers – Ronald Reagan's to name one. The problem (if it was a problem) with Sheridan was his lack of what Denis Healey called hinterland. He had few interests outside football and, as we now know, certain kinds of sexual exhibitionism. He read very little, with

“zero interest”, according to McCombes, in literature, art, science or philosophy. Political writing didn't attract him other than an occasional stab at Tony Benn or John Pilger, and neither did the day-to-day management of the SSP. McCombes ghost-wrote many of Sheridan's columns for the *Daily Record*, the *Sunday Herald* and the *Scottish Mirror* and “virtually every word” of their co-authored book, *Imagine*.

McCombes says he resented none of this help. He and his SSP colleagues knew that Sheridan was the party's star performer. They depended on him to get the message across, and he depended on them for the message. But he also thinks they created a monstrous conceit in their leader (or ‘convenor’ as he was titled). “We went too far. With the best of intentions – and with Tommy's enthusiastic acquiescence, it has to be said – we created an unhealthy and imbalanced relationship between the individual and the movement.” The same might be said of Tony Blair; and there was in Sheridan the same kind of self-belief – the belief that people would share his own estimate of his sheer goodness (‘I'm a regular kind of guy’) – that led the one to invade Iraq and the other to sue the *News of the World*. In this, Sheridan may not have been mistaken. He made an impassioned closing speech along Blairite ‘who-me?’ lines (“I am either a complete and utter idiot or I am someone who loves his wife

deeply and would not betray her trust”). The jury found in his favour – like the jury in Jeffrey Archer's libel case they took a simple-minded either/or view of sexual behaviour, ignoring the dictum of an Alan Bennett character that “King Sex is a wayward monarch” – and he was awarded £200,000. Unfortunately, like Blair with Iraq but with more personally damaging consequences, his case was founded on lies.

Given all that has happened since Sheridan was convicted of perjury, the temptation is to wonder about the safeness of that second verdict too. Was he a victim, as he often insisted, of the evil Murdoch empire that has turned out to be rather more evil than he knew, routinely paying policemen and hacking into mobile phones? McCombes wrote before the recent disclosures, when the *News of the World* was still alive and malignant, so the question isn't raised in his book. On the available evidence, however, the answer would seem to be not, or not where it matters. Sheridan was his own victim. The minutes of an SSP conclave showed him admitting to visits to Cupids nightclub for ‘swingers’ in Manchester. Sheridan argued that the minutes were a fiction concocted by his embittered rivals. They weren't. ‘Swinging’ is a sexual preference or hobby and not a crime. Sheridan and his friends in the party, who at that point still included McCombes, could probably have found ways of limiting the political damage: a

‘lapse’ confessed, an apology offered. By suing, Sheridan chose the route of the lie direct. You might say he was destroyed by his own hypocrisy.

Of course, this version of events carries a caveat. Many of Sheridan's supporters, including his ever-devoted mother, see McCombes as their leader's political assassin. *Et tu, Alan* indeed, because the two met long ago at the start of the campaign against the poll tax and were close friends as well as political colleagues for two decades, with McCombes enrolled as one of three best men at Sheridan's marriage. But McCombes (it should also be remembered) went to jail for refusing to give the court the controversial minutes that recorded Sheridan's admissions – hardly the mark of an out-and-out traitor – and inside the party his concerns about the leader's behaviour were widely shared. Despite the slack hyperbole and the clichés (every truth complete with its scintilla), I found his account largely persuasive.

It tells a sad and often grubby story, located in bars and hotel bedrooms. The media, whether they were for or against Sheridan, hostile or gullible, do not emerge well. If I were a sober and serious resident of a poor housing scheme, investing my hopes in socialism as Sheridan once did, I would feel utterly betrayed. ■

Ian Jack

Campbell Christie: 1937 - 2011

Campbell Christie began to make his mark in the trade union movement when, as a newly appointed full time official in the early 1970s, he became the main figure of the left in the Society of Civil and Public Servants. By the late 1970s, Christie was Depute General Secretary of his union when a new mood of militancy over pay had swept the public sector unions. He came to prominence in 1979 in the first national civil service strike action during a dispute that lasted eleven weeks and ended with the highest pay increases ever achieved in

the civil service.

This was followed in 1981 with a twenty-week dispute, involving selective strike action by all the civil service unions. This time the outcome was not as successful but Christie was seen as the key strategist and soon became well-known outside civil service circles. It was not long before he was tipped for a number of key positions in national unions. But Christie was keen to succeed the highly respected Jimmy Milne at the STUC who was due for retirement in 1986. Many of his friends tried to

persuade him to stay in London and could not understand why he saw the STUC role as more important than some of those on offer.

He took over the STUC at a time when union membership had already started to slump as Thatcher's economic policies began to decimate Scotland's manufacturing base. Campaigns against factory closures dominated his period in office but Christie always looked for fresh ways of campaigning, such as the 1993 Scottish People's March For Jobs.

The Government sought to

marginalise the trade unions but Christie managed to build broad alliances and relationships with political and civic leaders to enhance the role and influence of the STUC. He recognised that the STUC needed a much higher media profile and closer contact with the leaders of business and commerce. By following this strategy, Christie managed to place the STUC at the heart of every major issue that was taking place in Scotland.

But some issues were embarrassing for the STUC. A bitter wrangle broke out in 1988 between the Transport and General Workers and the Amalgamated Engineering Union after the latter signed a single union agreement with Ford. The company abandoned plans to build a factory in Dundee that would have employed thousands of workers, but the row did not lead to the expected split in the STUC. Although the Engineering Union was supported by the media, they were blamed by the rest of the unions for provoking the issue and were left isolated. But the image of the trade union movement was tarnished by the events and Christie needed all his public relations skills to rescue the situation.

On the General Council he lost some arguments but was powerful enough to shrug off the opposition. He proposed to invite Alex Salmond to address the annual Congress in 1986 but received only a few votes. In 1990 he was forced to turn down the offer of a position on the board of Distillers Co after pressure from affiliates. A leading figure during the anti-poll tax campaign, he was accused by some General Council members of being too close to the non-payment position, and questioned about allegedly tearing up his tax demand notice. A split on the General Council took place over the issue of proportional representation for the Scottish Parliament. At first they refused to back Christie's support for the principle, but a month later he had won them round.

If Christie had been asked to identify the most important issue during his time as General Secretary, it would probably be the establishment of the Scottish Parliament..... ■

Pat Kelly

I first met Campbell shortly after he had come to the STUC. My late

husband, Tom McAlpine who was SNP industrial spokesman, and I had asked for a meeting to discuss relations between the unions and the SNP. Campbell gave us a very warm welcome and emphasised that the STUC should reach out to all trade unionists in Scotland and not be confined to narrow party boundaries. He made it clear that his door was open to non-Labour politicians and campaigning groups. He was an intuitive Gramscian; he had both an intellectual understanding of the importance of building coalitions for change and the personal qualities to achieve this. While firmly on the left in his values, he was non-doctrinaire and always open to new



ideas.

The year following Campbell's return to Scotland saw an initiative that was to result in probably his most important and lasting contribution. After the third Tory victory in the 1987 election, the Campaign for a Scottish Parliament decided the time was right to try for a Constitutional Convention. They set up the Claim of Right committee to prepare proposals chaired by Sir Robert Grieve. Campbell and the STUC were strong supporters. John Hendry, the veteran STUC assistant secretary and Pat Kelly, a close Campbell ally, were on the committee and when the report was published, the STUC gave its full backing and did what they could to get Labour Party participation which was still very much in doubt. Throughout the Convention process, Campbell used his negotiating skills and trade union influence to get the most radical scheme possible. He was not the

most popular person among sections of the Parliamentary Labour Party, something of which he was well aware, but he had a strong institutional position and wide respect beyond the core trade union movement so he could not easily be marginalised. He, together with Bill Spiers, played a key role in persuading the unions to back a proportional voting system and it was these votes that were crucial in changing Labour policy. He was a feminist and was a strong supporter of attempts to get gender equality in representation written into the constitutional scheme and while this was not successful (largely because of the opposition of the Liberal Democrats),

it did have a strong influence on internal Labour Party arrangements.

Campbell and his deputy Bill Spiers made the STUC the central hub for a wide variety of radical causes – peace movement, anti-racism, anti-poverty, feminism – all clustered round the STUC. It helped to give Scotland a more integrated 'progressive' consensus.

Campbell always had a vision for the broad social partnership model of governance. He supported the Scottish Civic Forum during the 1990s and became its Convener. After Holyrood was established, it was difficult for him to get STUC support for the Forum and the same was true of another strong Forum supporter, Martin Sime of SCVO. There was concern in both organisations that if the politicians

took the Civic Forum seriously, it would undermine their role. While he put considerable effort into the project, neither the social partners nor the politicians did take it seriously and withdrew funding as soon as they felt they could. Campbell typically regretted this view and believed there needed to be a new vision of governance for Scotland which would strengthen, not marginalise the civic dimension.

One of the qualities that made him so effective was that he was genuinely radical while always conveying the impression of being reasonable, amiable and calm. I never heard him raise his voice or give outward signs of losing his temper no matter how trying the circumstances. He was the right man for the time but there was so much he could still have contributed. ■

Isobel Lindsay

Kick Up The Tabloids

SALMOND HUNGER STRIKE MARATHON

We live in significant times for Scotland right now. Whatever the result of the referendum, whenever that referendum may take place, the next few years will be seen in years to come as being a pivotal point in our nation's history.

Finally the Government have launched their "Road Map to Independence". Very inspiring, very impressive but a bit behind the times. This is 2011, for Christ's sake, nobody uses a road map in this day and age. Get with the project, Eck. Let's see your SatNav to Freedom

At this autumn's SNP conference in Inverness. MSP Humza Yousaf spoke proudly of his grandfather's fight for Indian independence, and compared it to his own part in Scotland's march towards freedom. What he failed to mention was the role that Ghandi's hunger strike had played in bringing down the British Raj. You can hardly see Alex Salmond going on a hunger strike. And, if he did, how long would it last? It could drag on for years.

Then Alex himself proudly proclaimed to the same conference that "The eyes of the World are on Scotland". I think this may well be true. I have no doubt that in Libya, as the country celebrated its own liberation from 40 years of tyrannical dictatorship, people were having conversations along the following lines: "Forget queuing up for two hours to see Ghadaffi lying in a fridge, I'm going home to watch BBC News 24. I want to find out what's happening at the SNP conference, and after that I'm going to catch up on River City on iPlayer. By the way, did you hear that Ayr United knocked St Mirren out of the League Cup last night?"

While independence is likely to be achieved harmoniously, there are several vexed questions which could yet lead to bitter cross-border disputes. For example, there is the whole issue of Berwick-upon-Tweed and in which country it finds itself in the event of a split in the Union.

This is perhaps the most contentious of issues and one with no obvious solution. After all, who wants Berwick-upon-Tweed?

The Scottish Government has reassured us that, post-independence, we will still be able to watch X-Factor. I was in favour of independence up until they said that but I'm suddenly going off the idea. And, let's face it, X-Factor needs Scotland a lot more than Scotland needs X-Factor.

The big question, however, is about questions. What question or questions the Referendum will ask. In order to please everybody, and in keeping with Scottish electoral tradition, it will not pose as simple a question as "Do you want Scotland to be independent from the UK? Please answer Yes or No". In this country we like to keep our voting systems as complicated as possible. So expect the Referendum to take the form of an extremely complex multiple choice menu. Like the Driving Theory Test but with fewer obvious answers. Here's a sample of how the Referendum could be worded.

"Please place the following options for Scotland's future in order of preference. Alternatively, you may answer Yes to as many questions as possible, if that's what you prefer:

- A: Full independence from the UK.
- B: Independence from the UK while retaining membership of the EU.
- C: Independent from both EU and UK but still part of NATO.
- D: Independent from the United Kingdom, but still with the Queen of the United Kingdom as our Head of State.
- E: Independence Lite
- F: Devolution Max
- G: 99 percent fat-free, low-salt reduced-sugar Independence Max
- H: Remaining within the UK with same powers for Scottish Parliament
- I: Scrapping Scottish Parliament
- J: Scrapping Scottish Parliament,

Edinburgh Trams and new Forth Road Bridge

K: Remaining within the UK but with no Scottish players in Team GB for football at 2012 Olympics.

L: End London Rule

M: Independent from the UK, but with Rangers and Celtic playing in the English Premier League.

N: I'm a bit unsure. I'm really quite patriotic, but I don't like the idea of Border posts, and needing a passport to visit my cousins in Leeds. Also, will we still be able to watch Eastenders on the telly?

O: Let's keep things the way they are.

P: Let's keep things the way they are but without the Smoking Ban.

Q: Bloody Hell! You're not still going on about the Smoking Ban, are you? It was five years ago, deal with it.

R: The only reason I'm going on about the Smoking Ban is that it has ruined the licensed trade in Scotland. That plus the recession, and cheap deals on booze in supermarkets

S: Independent from the UK, but with St Andrews leased back to England.

T: Independent from the UK, but with the area around Buckfast Abbey declared as sovereign Scottish territory.

U: Remaining part of the UK but with Scottish people not supporting any England team in any sport apart from, bizarrely, cricket.

V: Independent from the UK, but with Andrew Neill remaining in England..

W: None of the above.

X: Don't know.

Y: Havnae got a fuckin' clue, pal.

Z: Freedom! ■

Vladimir McTavish will be appearing, with Keir McAllister, Susan Morrison and guests, in the topical comedy show Breaking The News at The Edinburgh Stand on Tuesday 20th September and Tuesday 15th November at 8.30 pm. www.thestand.co.uk

Boyle

Royal Infirmary

THEY'RE NEVER GOING TO GET RID OF THAT STAIN.



SCOTLAND HAS TAKEN THE LEAD IN TRANSFERRING FREIGHT TO RAIL

ASLEF WILL DEFEND THE INDUSTRY AND ITS JOBS THROUGH THE RECESSION

CLEANER TRANSPORT FOR A BRIGHTER COUNTRY



Keith Norman
General Secretary

Alan Donnelly
President

Kevin Lindsay
Scottish Officer

ASLEF the train drivers union - www.aslef.org.uk

Scottish Left Review

The Scottish Left Review is a non-profit making publication. Please subscribe or make a donation by going to www.scottishleftreview.org where you can pay by credit card or by filling in your details in the form below and returning to Scottish Left Review, 741 Shields Road, Pollokshields, Glasgow G41 4PL

Name

Address

Tel:

E-mail:

Subscription/Donation

167

Date:

Subscriptions: £15 (waged), £12 (unwaged), £15 (local organisations), £30 (national organisations).

Donations will be gratefully recieved. Cheques should be crossed and made payable to: Left Review Scotland Ltd.