

Contents

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|----|--------------------------------|----|
| Comment | 2 | Cleverer, not bigger | 14 |
| A leap of faith | 3 | Jan Bebbington | |
| Mike Small | | The end of triangulation?..... | 16 |
| A plan for climate change | 6 | Henry McCubbin | |
| Gordon Morgan | | To know your place | 18 |
| The Good Life 2.0 | 10 | Donny O'Rourke | |
| Davie Philip | | Our fourth Afghan war | 20 |
| Creative fixes..... | 12 | Bill Ramsay | |
| Ginny Brink and Fiona Campbell | | Unifying the disaffected | 22 |
| | | Gregor Gall | |

Comment

Text

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Reviews | 24 |
| Web Review | 26 |
| Kick Up The Tabloids..... | 27 |

All illustrations: Nadia Lucchesi
nadal_@hotmail.com

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Articles for publication: editorial@scottishleftreview.org

Letters and comments: feedback@scottishleftreview.org

Website: www.scottishleftreview.org Tel 0141 424 0042

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a leap of faith

Mike Small looks at the relationship between the collapse of our economy, political system and environment and questions the notion that a return to 'normality' is credible or desirable

'The level of future public spending cuts implied in Darling's recent budget – which included the laughably optimistic idea that the economy will grow by 1.25 per cent next year – is greater than the level of cuts implemented by Thatcher. Remember, that's the optimistic version. If we're lucky, it won't be any worse than Thatcherism.'

John Lancaster, London Review of Books

This is an attempt to look briefly about the relationship between three interlocking crisis we are experiencing: a collapse of faith in the Westminster political system, the ongoing financial breakdown and the new realities of climate change. Ulrich Beck describes it as a play in four acts. "Act one: Chernobyl. Act two: the threat of climate change. Act three: 9/11. Now the curtain is rising on Act four: Global Financial Crises. For a backdrop, see yesterday's headlines: IMF slashes world growth forecast; Credit crisis could cost \$1 trillion. **Dramatis personae** are the Hardcore Neoliberals, who in the face of the danger have overnight converted from the market faith to the state faith."

Beck points out with the bitter taste of reality that now they're praying, begging, pleading for the mercy of the state interventions and multi-billion pound handouts of tax payers' money - the sort of thing they condemned for as long as the profits were pouring in. What was once inadmissible is now essential, unavoidable, strictly necessary.

The financial crisis is something that everybody suggests was both unavoidable and unpredictable. And yet, in 2007 big financial corporations posted record profits – more than \$70 billion in Britain alone – along with record complaints about

bad service (The Evening Standard, 16 February 2007). We knew the system wasn't working when millions of people complained about bank charges, when we couldn't afford our mortgages or couldn't get a home or faced the onslaught of stress that comes with the housing system we have arrived at.

Our ecological debt mirrors our economic one. The average British household owes 160 per cent of its annual income. That makes us, individually and collectively, a lot like the cartoon character who has run off the end of a cliff and hasn't realised it yet.

The sickest fact about the 'downturn' was not the equivalent of £10,000 given to the banking bosses from every man woman and child in Britain. It was not the complete lack of control or accountability resulting in this gift-aid. It was not the bizarre spectacle of New Labour – chief architects of our deregulated Ponzi-scheme banking 'system' – at first benefiting at the polls from their response to a situation they created. What we have seen is effectively a banking coup d'état, with the reckless financial elites now funded directly from the ordinary pocket of you and I – with little or no accountability or responsibility in check.

The sickest single fact – was the bailout of the US car industry, a useless, retrograde belching, spewing anti-ecological nightmare of a business. Here, there was more of the same visionless thinking with New Labour's desperate attempts to prop up the UK's failed car industry resulting in the hopeless 'scrap it scheme' (see news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/8108793.stm).

Studies have shown that reconditioning a 10 year old car to make it last another 10 years leads to a 42 per cent decrease

in energy and a 56 per cent increase in jobs, compared with manufacturing a new car. We could actually cut the number of cars being manufactured while still increasing the number of jobs in the industry, even before we took into account the extra jobs building all the extra buses, trains and trams we need. Greener transport is a classic transitional policy we could be pursuing, combining social inclusivity with improved quality of life, reduced pollution costs, and a higher job-creation ratio. Our trains in Scotland remain expensive, overcrowded and under-resourced.

By giving advantage to road transport over rail, the EU lost half a million jobs in railways in the last twenty years of the last century. And as both unions and the Scottish Green Party pointed out as long ago as 1990, the first decade of Margaret Thatcher's aggressively neo-liberal government and its great car economy destroyed 70,000 rail jobs in the UK alone.

While there is much talk of a 'Green New Deal' there is little evidence of it on the ground on the scale that would make it significant enough to be worthy of discussion.

It's becoming traditional (in an instant-nostalgic kind of way) at this point to argue that perhaps the financial crisis will be good for us, because it will cause people to rediscover other sources of value. I suspect this is wishful thinking, or thinking about something which is quite a long way away, because it doesn't consider just how angry people are going to get when they realise the extent of the costs we are going to carry for the next few decades.

At what point will the sceptics doubt over climate change turn to anger? John Lancaster: "I get the strong impression, talking to people, that the penny hasn't fully dropped. As the ultra-bleak condition of our finances becomes more and more apparent people are going to ask increasingly angry questions about how we got into this predicament. The drop in sterling, for instance, means that prices for all sorts of goods will go up just as oil and gas prices have spiked downwards. Combined with job losses – a million people are forecast to lose their jobs this year, taking unemployment back to Thatcherite levels – and tax rises, and inflation, and the increasing realisation that the cost of the financial crisis is going to be paid not over a few years but over a generation, we have a perfect formula for a deep and growing anger."

But where does this anger go? Faced with catastrophic failure of political leadership about climate change, large swathes of the wider public remain unconvinced of the science and uncertain about what to do. This is largely because the message we have been sending out is that the response should be a) domestic, small scale, personal b) some reforms, adjustments and minor alterations to our lives c) oriented around green consumerism.

Faced with the meltdown of Westminster expenses responses have ranged from making voting compulsory, to a withdrawal from the electoral process to, in some cases down south, a reactionary shift to the right and far-right. The Tory blogger Iain Dale commented on BBC Scotland that the problem lay with the fact that MPs had to live on £65,000 a year.

Faced with the collapse of our financial services industry and the stagnation of the housing market, the almost universal response has been a yearning to get things back as they were. Waiting for 'things to return to normal' is the best we can do it seems. But when 'normal' means spiralling house prices,

a rural housing crisis and everyone suffering massive time poverty as we are lashed to mortgages we can't afford, a return to 'normality' isn't credible.

So here's the challenge. Just at the time when we need a massive leap of faith about the political task of our generation (climate change) we are instead faced with a haemorrhaging of faith in the institutions that govern us. This is an opportunity to transform these institutions and in many cases remove them entirely.

Living Within Limits

- Annual income twenty pounds,
- Annual expenditure nineteen nineteen six,
- Result: happiness.
- Annual income twenty pounds,
- Annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six,
- Result: misery.

- Charles Dickens, in David Copperfield (1850)

Times of crisis provoke reaction, kickback, and regression. A classic expression of our ongoing inability to live within any limits – financial, ecological, is the rush for nuclear power.

Desperately incapable of grasping the technologies inherent contradictions and failings, from its fossil fuel source to its waste output, there is no better icon of our incapacity to face the change ahead than nuclear energy – or "green energy", as Germany's Christian Democratic Union general secretary Ronald Pofalla has attempted to re-brand it.

At the G8 meeting in Hokkaido the then US president, George Bush, reiterated his plea for the construction of new nuclear energy plants. Gordon Brown, announced the fast-tracking of eight new reactors and called for "a renaissance of nuclear power" in a "post-oil economy". Scotland's veto on new nuclear power was quickly identified as a major issue by Kenneth Calman in his one man devolution. Recent reports have catalogued the systemic failure of nuclear power facilities in Scotland.

Or take the debate over expanding Heathrow. The UK Government is staring a blank contradiction right in the face. It has promised to cut carbon emissions by 80 per cent, and even buckled under pressure to allow aviation emissions into the calculations. But business leaders say we need a third runway to be able to compete with other European countries.

None of this is new. We have known the inherent advantages of green economics for a long time. It's now a decade since the European Commission worked out that doubling the amount of renewable energy in Europe would create new jobs. Since then we've seen 13,000 jobs created in Denmark in wind energy alone – and that's a country the size of North West England with a population comparable to London's. Similarly it's a decade since researchers assessed that a 10 year programme to cut domestic energy use would create 500,000 person-years of work in the UK; but Tony Blair killed off the highly popular home energy conservation bill and we still want a complete retrofit of 20 million UK homes to 21st-century green energy standards.

Why are we waiting? It was as long ago as 1994 that Labour's own report In Trust for Tomorrow found that 'higher environmental standards' could generate 682,000 jobs, allowing for a carbon

tax and various investments. Other organisations made similar findings: Energy for Sustainable Development Ltd found in 1998 that for an investment of £2.2 billion a year, up to half a million UK jobs could be created by a range of policies calculated to cut CO2 emissions by 30 per cent by 2010. In A Green Scenario for the UK Economy, Cambridge Econometrics argued that applying the 'polluter pays' principle would create 200,000 jobs in the pollution control industry. But all of this was paper talk. None of it has been implemented on the scale required.

And again back in the mid-90s, the Employment Policy Institute calculated that nearly half a million jobs could be created if eco-taxes replaced employers' national insurance contributions. Friends of the Earth went further, and estimated that a serious road fuel escalator applied from 1996 could increase employment by 1.275 million by 2005, if the revenue from the tax was recycled through a decrease in employers' national insurance contributions.

But of course the Tory government didn't do it then, and Labour hasn't since. And now there's even more call for it, but what do we get instead? A VAT cut to increase spending on goods that are mostly produced abroad. More exporting of jobs producing more long-distance goods.

In Scotland the opportunities are clear. Salmond's administration has approved Siadar, one of the largest wave energy projects on the planet; as well as developing and consenting hydro and biomass projects, and the massive Whitelee wind farm in South Lanarkshire. Harnessing all these opportunities has the potential to create more than 16,000 jobs in Scotland over the next decade. All this is good but what we need is a civic movement based on a shift in consciousness about climate change and the reality of the new economics. This would mean more than renewable energy and carbon capture technologies and a seismic shift in our worldview. In short it would mean the end of our growth obsession. Make less, buy less, work less is the essential new paradigm.

Until very recently this would have seemed as improbable as nationalising the banks, or a black US President. But it's the core of the ideas put forward by the Sustainable Development Commissions report 'Prosperity Without Growth':

"In the last quarter of a century, while the global economy has doubled, the increased in resource consumption has degraded an estimated 60 per cent of the world's ecosystems. The benefits of growth have been distributed very unequally, with a fifth of the world's population sharing just 2 per cent of global income. Even in developed countries, huge gaps remain in wealth and well-being between rich and poor." (See www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/redefining-prosperity.html)

From our current political landscape in Scotland it's difficult to see who will support it. The nationalists are still fixed in a growth paradigm with all the talk of 'Celtic Tigers' and the ongoing obsession with North Sea Oil. Labour is still wedded to two contradictory but equally useless pieces of self-mythology. Either they are a backwards looking workerist party wedded to manufacturing or they are a pale shadow of Tory business-class entrepreneurialism mouthing jargon about 'going forward' and spreadsheet socialism. The Green party lacks strategy and the roots to make serious headway, and crucially remain confused and compromised on the constitutional question of the day.

The constitution remains central to our abilities to think beyond our current situation and imagine a Scottish democracy. As John McAllion has written:

"The alternative is to remain ensnared within the carefully contrived limits of a constitution that for more than 300 years has been successfully blocking all threats of radical change in order to preserve the stability of the oldest capitalist state form in the world. Socialists owe no kind of loyalty to that Britain."

Crucially, this approach unites ecological vision with practical social justice. The transition movement needs to become serious and re-establishes itself as the environmental justice movement with its distinct concept of 'resilience' evoked as a practical too for community reconstruction and establishing a post-industrial, post-fossil fuel, post-Britain settlement.

So what would a resilient economy look like? And what could or should renew public faith in meaningful political activity?

Answering the question what are houses, jobs, markets for? The New Internationalist recently summarised that houses have become property, jobs have become a means for increasing inequality and markets have become God. We know that we have to re-present social housing as a success not a mark of failure. Using 'Just Transition' principles we could convert Scotland's military workforce into useful civilian reconstructive roles and radically rethink the over-work and presenteeism that marks most occupation.

The hope must lie with a collapse of the Unionist business parties and the emergence of a new political space in Scotland which takes this challenge seriously. We need to create new participative forms and economically sustainable models around the idea of making less, buying less, and working less. In Scotland we are uniquely placed to benefit from our renewable energy but this must be decentralised and put into public and community ownership. Regionalisation of our food culture, a four-day week and the re-structuring of our building and housing system into ones that uses sustainable practices and resurrects public ownership in new forms could be the basis of this ecological revival. Practices such as straw-bale housing offer win:win solutions, diversification for the agricultural industry and housing that can offer buildings that use only 10 per cent of resources and energy than conventional construction with massive energy efficiency, see www.s-house.at. Other closed-loop systems such as converting food waste products into bio-fuel for local food delivery, compost or heat and energy systems are overbrimming with latent unexplored potential.

The energy and innovation required for this process is unlikely to be able to flourish within the current constitutional or economic structure so our task is to seize and transform these institutions. ■

Mike Small is the founder of the Fife Diet project. He is the Director of the One Planet Food project, and organiser of The Big Tent, Scotland's largest eco-festival. He studied under Murray Bookchin at the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont and teaches Sustainable Development at Turin University. He is a writer, and researcher based in Burntisland, Fife.

a plan for climate change

Gordon Morgan examines the Climate Change Act recently passed by the Scottish Parliament -and wonders why it can't quite give up on coal and gas

Tackling climate change is almost all about government action. As we approach the Copenhagen Climate Conference in November, the need at last for governments to be seen to be tackling climate change has become intense. Both the US and China now officially recognise the need for renewable energy production and have announced major investment programmes. The EU is committed to a major increase in 'green' investment if a global deal is reached. The UK has passed a Climate Act and has set up an independent Committee on Climate Change (UKCCC) to provide scientific advice on targets and assess the effectiveness of its policies.

In Scotland, in the lead up to our own Climate Change Act, approvals of renewable energy proposals, commissioned studies into potential energy, plans and National Conversations on energy policy seem to appear daily. Although across the world almost everyone seems to accept the need for at least an 80 per cent reduction in Greenhouse gases by 2050, virtually no detailed planning has been done beyond 2020. Yet decisions made now on houses, transport, energy grids and energy generation typically result in effects which last at least 50 years. Decisions made now are having an effect on our ability to deal effectively with both the environment and society after 2050. "The (UK) Government's acceptance of the 2020 carbon budgets was a positive first step, but a clear plan of action is now required" (UKCCC chief executive 9 June 2009). Only now are politicians asking the scientific, technical and business communities:

- Can an 80 per cent reduction be done?
- Can it be done on time?
- How much will it cost?

Yet all such replies, which may go to form part of an energy plan are based on vested interests. Other options may be discarded for considerations of cost or for political reasons. Chosen options may come at an unstated technical or political risk.

On 18th June, after the close of committee discussion of the Climate Change Bill, the Scottish Government produced its own Climate Change Delivery Plan. This sets out in some detail how it plans to meet reduction targets to 2020 and an outline of how it intends to meet its 2050 targets. What are the Government's implied policy choices and what are the alternatives? On 24th June the Scottish Climate Change Bill became law. This is an extremely detailed act which imposes obligations on the Government to monitor and report on greenhouse gas emissions, bring forward policies to meet the targets, improve energy efficiency and develop a land use strategy. It is the first such act worldwide to include aviation and shipping in its emissions targets, although the EU will include aviation from 2012, so it is symbolic in the run up to the Copenhagen Climate conference. Insofar as it constrains future governments' policies across all agencies, it will have profound effects - in time. Given the level of monitoring and reports, it is clear that the first Green Deal jobs are in government agencies statistics teams.

Debate in Holyrood focussed on what targets should be set for greenhouse gas emissions reductions: 34 per cent, 40 per

cent or 42 per cent by 2020. The Greens, LibDems and Labour questioned why targets were exactly the same as the UK despite Scotland's much higher potential for wind, wave and tidal energy.

The Government minister baldly stated that, of the 40 per cent of emissions from energy-intensive industries subject to the EU Emissions Trading scheme, "we do not directly have the power to influence the level of those reductions", and more generally "we cannot seek to reduce emissions at a higher rate than the UK rate in reserved areas such as energy generation". In National Conversation consultations, this is parlayed into, and I paraphrase "shouldn't Scotland have the powers currently reserved to Westminster which are inhibiting our action on climate change". As there is a feasible Scottish Government plan to reduce emissions by 42 per cent by 2020 which would come into action if a Global deal is reached, critics were correct to describe this as "we will if you will!" Hardly "world-leading" as Alex claimed.

Nevertheless, unlike Westminster, the Scottish Government has produced a plan which indicates how 2050 targets could be delivered. The main outcomes listed in the plan are removing carbon production from:

- electricity generation by 2020 50 per cent using renewables, by 2030 100 per cent using renewable and carbon capture and storage (CCS)
- heating by 2050, largely by 2030 through energy efficiency and non-gas or low carbon heating
- road transport by 2050, partially by 2030 through electric cars and vans and rail electrification also developing bio-fuels for HGV, aviation and shipping.

Land use strategy should fully account for carbon production e.g. 25 per cent forest cover of Scotland by 2050. Some of the Government's pledges are worth quoting:

- "we will work with the oil and gas sector to maintain its competitiveness"
- "We will support development and implementation of clean fossil fuel technologies in Scotland."
- "we will support the development of sub-sea grids alongside improvements in the onshore grid"
- "we will promote the development, uptake and use of electric and low carbon vehicles"

Between 2006 and 2008, the Scottish Executive published a five volume analysis of Scottish energy consumption from 1990 to 2002 and projected use to 2020. This provides most of the figures used in the delivery plan however, it largely derived figures for energy and CO2 emissions for Scotland using formula based on UK data. A commitment to reduce greenhouse emissions radically by 2020 was not part of its remit.

Energy use is in large part electricity, plus gas for heating and oil for petrol for cars, planes and ships. In 2002 Scotland consumed 165 Terawatt Hours of energy (TWH, a Terawatt is

a million Kilowatts) and produced around 50 million tonnes of CO₂. Gas and coal are substantially imported then consumed. Scotland also uses energy refining oil for export and also exports electricity. Scotland's total energy use including these exports was around 250TWH. This excludes the energy and greenhouse gas missions expended by other countries making the goods, including coal and gas, we import. The Government intends to measure these imported emissions year by year.

The Executive projections to 2020 assume domestic energy consumption will reduce due to insulation and other energy efficiency measures by around 19TWH (32 per cent), but increase in transport. This will give a total energy use in 2020 of around 153TWH. Assuming the country does move to electric cars which can use 60 per cent less fuel than petrol equivalents and achieves further efficiencies particularly in heating between 2020 and 2050 - then energy requirements in Scotland could fall by 30TWH to around 120TWH by 2050. Could Scotland produce enough energy from Renewable sources?

The Government estimates that Scotland could produce 60GW of renewable energy from wind, wave and tidal. Recent studies that show that Scottish offshore wind could generate 40 per cent more energy than previously estimated, so this is a very conservative estimate.

Across the UK, wind farms on average produce 28 per cent of their rated power over a year; early results for wave indicate around 30 per cent; tidal may be somewhat higher. Assuming 28 per cent average, then 60GW generating capacity would produce 147TWH of electricity a year, 20 per cent above the total requirements for domestically consumed power in Scotland in 2050 and three times current electricity consumption. Moreover, this excludes power from bio-fuels, local heat and power schemes, CCS based power. Scotland does not require nuclear power.

At present, Scotland has only 1.4Gw of hydro and 1.4Gw of wind energy generating capacity. In the Government's plan 11Gw

of renewable energy will be installed by 2020 and over 25Gw by 2030. This includes little new hydro power. Thus in 2020 renewable energy is projected to produce 54 per cent of total electricity power requirements, and by 2030 100 per cent of electricity requirements. Why are we not pressing for 60GW by 2030 rather than 25GW? Why do we need Coal or Gas power stations using CCS? Are there alternatives?

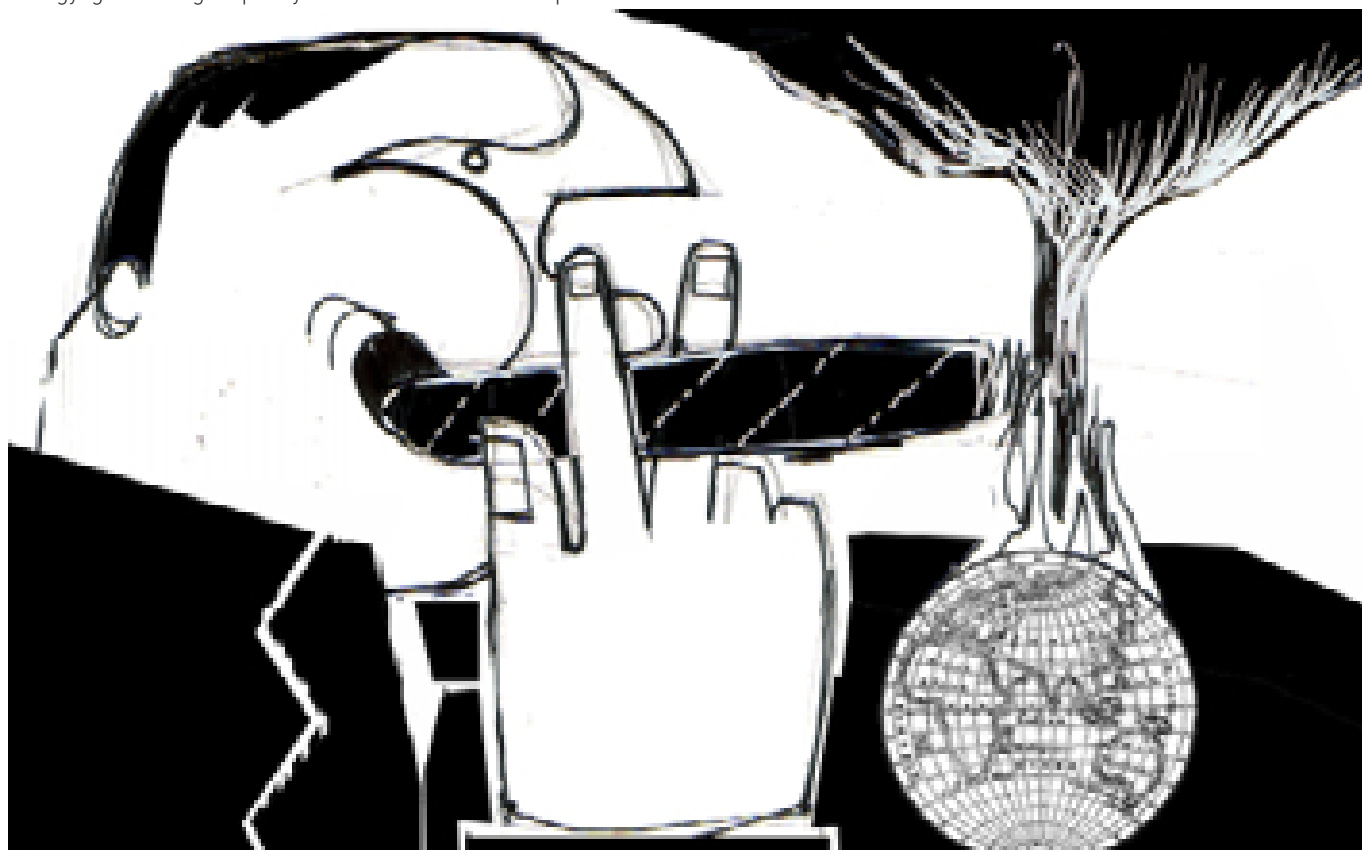
Until recently the National Grid (owned by three privatised energy companies) had insufficient flexibility to take additional renewable energy from Scotland and in effect paid energy generators for excess power which could not be used. Numerous renewable energy schemes with planning permission have not yet proceeded because they could not be connected to the grid under the commercial criteria set by the National Grid. However, the Scottish Government has not helped by allowing upgrades to the main grid in Scotland to be delayed by planning objections. If ever there was a case for using strategic planning powers to shortcut the process it is this.

There is little resilience in the grid; in particular to store power until it is required. Connectors to England from Scotland are in place, however, direct connectors to other countries are not in place and modern switches to allow a more diffuse grid have not yet been tested in the UK. This is a limiting factor on the development of renewable energy.

On 6th May the Institute of Engineering and Technology told Westminster that in the UK unlike the EU and other countries:

"There is no vision document showing a joined-up transmission-distribution-end-user picture" and "today's well-tuned commercial system leads either to just enough capacity or perhaps a fraction less".

In other words the UK commercial energy market is a barrier to swift action on climate change. An independent Scottish Government should renationalise the Grid.



The increase in renewable energy anticipated by 2020 is almost all expected from wind power. At present Scotland has the largest wind farm in Europe at Whitelee near Glasgow and approval has been given for an even larger one - the Clyde farm. Although for republicans it is ironic that offshore energy depends on the Crown Estate licensing developments yet it has issued contracts for around 6.5GW of offshore wind farms. So that is us sorted then? Not exactly!

First of all there is now a world shortage of turbine fabrication. Vesta, the world's largest manufacturer, recently shut down its Scottish assembly plant and there is enormous demand building from the US and China - strategically more important markets than Scotland. At the very least turbines will become more expensive and delivery times will expand. The credit crunch has delayed or cancelled many UK renewable projects. There is a world shortage of barges capable of carrying and installing turbines off-shore and a problem with corrosion due to sea water which, experience to date shows, greatly increases the maintenance cost of offshore turbines.

Ultimately, however, huge amounts of wind electricity can be exploited offshore. Scotland has over a quarter of Europe's wind and offshore wind can produce more stable and powerful electricity output, possibly averaging 40 per cent of the turbines notional capacity.

However, wind has the problem that it doesn't always blow. October 2006 and February 2007 there were 17 days when the output from Britain's 1632 windmills was less than 10 per cent of their capacity. Where will we get the electricity required on such days when there is little wind? In the Government's 2020 scenario, one gas power station, plus pumped hydro stations plus a temporary drop off of electricity exports are required for when the wind does not blow and of course we are still at that time burning coal and have some nuclear reactor energy.

What happens in 2050 if we intend to rely on wind for the bulk of our energy? What about Wave power? Scotland is home to the only company with commercially deployed Wave energy machines, Pelamis. It also has some of the best wave and tidal resources in its waters - is home to the European Marine Energy Centre and in January the Government commissioned a study to assess the best sites for commercial offshore energy extraction.

A significant worry, given delays in contracts due to the credit crunch, is that Pelamis Wave Power, a small company with Scottish Enterprise a shareholder, is taken over by a large foreign energy company and production expertise and patents spanning 20 years are lost to Scotland. Unless early orders are facilitated by the Government, we could find we have to wait in a long queue for turbines. Wave machines in the right place are reckoned to be a less variable electricity resource than wind; however, a lack of wind tends to mean fewer waves. The two energy sources are loosely correlated. Wave Tidal energy is only in development and may be some years from mass deployment, however, its energy output is entirely predictable and uncorrelated to wind and tide. Tidal farms at appropriate points could provide a smooth energy output, although the main tidal sources in the Pentland Firth will ebb and flow at similar times. Proposals for tidal barriers in the Solway show other tidal power options. Tidal power is also a much more predictable energy source than wind and wave and is largely uncorrelated with them in its power outputs.

Both tide and wave must be a major part of Scotland's long term energy mix. This, though, has been said for over 10 years and, due to lack of political will and finance until recently, little action has resulted. Wave, wind and tidal power are variable throughout a day and across longer periods. How then do we balance energy demand and supply so as to avoid blackouts?

The new justification for Coal and Gas CCS power stations is that we need them for when the wind doesn't blow! Cynics may look at the SNP Government's pledge to "work with the oil and gas sector to maintain its competitiveness" as an alternative reason for even considering a new Gas power station at Cockenzie to replace an obsolete coal one. Clearly the world needs CCS proven technologies to clean up the huge number of coal stations in countries where other renewable energies are limited. Scotland is well placed to do research and commercially exploit these technologies, but do we need them for backup? How much backup do we need?

Scotland is expected to produce 50TWH of electricity in 2020 - equivalent to 5.7GW each hour. At peak demand times around 7.5GW may be required. If we move to electric vehicles and away from gas heating more electricity will be required. By 2030 the peak may be 10GW, so if the wind does not blow that day, how can this demand be met? Firstly not all renewable energy will be from wind:

- existing planned hydro and tidal energy could deliver 2GW
- wave and offshore wind, even at a minimal five per cent capacity should deliver 1GW
- two-way electric car battery charging, local backup and smart grid switching could smooth the peaks by 3GW.

This still leaves up to 4GW power demand which may be required for a day or two each month. The Government anticipates meeting this using Coal, Gas and Oil plants using CCS. However, Scottish Gas and Oil production will fall off sharply by 2030 and gas and oil may need to be imported and we already import coal. Even with CCS this is a reliance on fossil fuels and we cannot be certain at this stage that all Greenhouse gases will be captured and stored. Furthermore we will eventually need to store CO2 directly removed from the atmosphere. There are four alternatives:

- Significantly expand tidal energy in the Pentland and Solway Firth and other locations.
- Rely on imported power from Scandinavian hydro schemes via interconnectors as Denmark does currently.
- Certain forms of energy consumption could be confined to days when the wind does blow. Stored heat is an example as well as batteries mentioned above.
- Develop our own pumped hydro schemes.

The most significant of these **not** mentioned in Government plans is pumped hydro. The pumped storage plant at Ben Cruachan can deliver 0.4GW at very short notice to deal with current Scottish power fluctuations. Dinorwig in Wales can deliver 1.8GW to the national grid.

Scotland has many locations where water could be pumped from a lower loch to a higher one for electricity to be produced rapidly when required. An example is to pump water from Loch Sloy to Loch Lomond. It has been estimated that Loch Sloy could store 40GWH of energy, enough for 2GW for 20 hours. Many other



Scottish sites exist, some with existing hydro schemes, which could easily provide enough pumped hydro to meet Scotland's backup needs and could be in place well before 2030 and provide on land construction work. The above shows some of these.

Given this, why exactly do we need gas, coal and oil power stations even with CCS beyond 2030? The delivery plan envisages bio-fuels continuing to be used for HGV, aviation and shipping. It is certainly possible to envisage alternative fuels for HGV and much shipping, but more difficult for aviation. Yet it has been estimated that even if all agricultural land in the UK were turned over to growing bio-fuels, we could only produce 80 per cent of the fuel currently used by us in flying. Realistically, at most 20 per cent could be produced by farming methods. Furthermore, the delivery plan assumes domestic bio-fuels will mainly be used in local heating schemes.

So we face the following choices:

- rely on imported bio-fuels, with severe question marks over sustainability
- invent new non farming methods of mass cultivation of bio-fuels
- Accept a severe curtailment of aircraft use well before 2050.

The delivery plan envisages aircraft use at the same level to 2020 and gives no indication for the future. This is an issue being avoided by the Government.

It has been estimated that, unlike Scotland, the UK and the EU as a whole may need to get 20 per cent of its energy from North African solar power plants. A £1,300B plan for this to be ready

by 2030 has been drawn up. This opens the possibility of the EU being blackmailed over solar energy in the same way as the Ukraine was by Russia over gas, unless, of course, the EU expands to include North Africa.

The Scottish Government "supports the development of sub-sea grids". We should be aware, however, that the UK and particularly Scotland are at the end of the Grid and most liable to be cut off should disruption occur. This makes it particularly important that Scotland is a net exporter of electricity and has secure backup.

Both the Scottish and UK Government rely on the EU emissions trading scheme to deliver their 2020 targets. Yet till now this scheme has failed to work. Between Jan '06 and Dec '07 the price to emit a ton of CO₂ fell from 30Euro to 0.1Euro. On 25th June 2009 it is 13Euro. To achieve the investment required to meet 2020 targets, it is estimated it must be above 100Euro. Either there should be a significant cut in emissions and/or an EU minimum price must be imposed. Failing that the scheme should be scrapped in favour of directly taxing emissions.

The Government's pledge to maintain the competitiveness of the Oil and Gas industry directly combats its goal to combat emissions. The Oil and Gas companies have a vested interest in burning fossil fuels. We should aim for their nationalisation and meanwhile refuse to issue any further exploration permits. The world cannot afford existing known reserves of oil and gas to be burnt, let alone new ones. ■

Gordon Morgan is...

the good life 2.0

Davie Philip introduces The Village, a project that is a model for a sustainable future through building resilient communities

We urgently need to take an evolutionary leap in the way we do things and to design systems from the bottom up in ways that fit this planet's carrying capacity and we need to do this together, as communities. Web 2.0 is the term that has come to signify the new upgraded internet, which is community based, interactive and user-driven. As the current crisis is too overwhelming for individuals to face alone, I want to propose a 'Good Life 2.0' - a response to the challenges of our times based on an upgrade for the 21st century of the ideas of the 1970's self-sufficiency movement and the values of community plus everything we have learned in the thirty years that have passed.

Do you remember The Good Life, the popular 1970s television sit-com based on the notion of getting out of the rat race and being self-sufficient in suburbia. This was launched just after the first oil shock and amid one of the UK's worst economic downturns. It was based on the writings of John Seymour, the father of self-sufficiency. His books give a comprehensive introduction to the 'Good Life', covering everything from growing your own crops, animal husbandry, wine making, bee keeping, building, renewable energy, and much more. John gained considerable experience living a self-sufficient life, first in Suffolk, then Pembrokeshire, and then Ireland where he established the School of Self-Sufficiency in Co. Wexford. He also traveled around the world and wrote and made films exposing the unsustainability of the global industrial food system. Sadly on the 14th of September 2004 John Seymour died aged 90.

Over the last five years of his life I had an opportunity to spend time with John. We campaigned together to stop the planting of genetically engineered sugar beet, which culminated with seven of us in a New Ross court-house. But that's another story.

Surprisingly John once told me that he was actually wrong about self-sufficiency. On a visit to his small-holding in Wexford, John shared with me his conclusion that it would be too difficult to sustain the noble effort of living off-grid and providing for all your own needs on your own land. Self sufficiency wasn't enough. His new thinking was co-sufficiency, self-reliant local communities that could provide the social relationships essential for facing an uncertain future. Seymour predicted that we would need strong connected communities that could work together to meet their needs and make the transition to a post-industrial economy not dependent on fossil fuel.

If Tom and Margo of The Good Life were striving to be self-sufficient now, they would probably have started a community garden or joined their local Transition group and be engaged in the building of food and energy security with their neighbours. That's The Good Life 2.0, a community approach to building local resilience because, as Richard Heinberg writes in his book 'Powerdown', "personal survival depends on community survival".

Making the Transition

The Transition Towns process has been rapidly spreading throughout the world, with thousands of towns now adopting the model. I often say that the Transition process was born in Ireland, a statement that has some truth to it. Rob Hopkins who is recognised as the founder of the Transition movement lived in Ireland for 12 years. In that time he was involved in many sustainability initiatives and developed an eco village project. Rob taught a two year Permaculture course in Kinsale Community College in West Cork. It was here that the seeds for the Transition movement were sown.

In 2004 David Holmgren, Richard Heinberg and a host of others, including Ireland's now Minister for Energy, Eamon Ryan, spent two days in West Cork planning how we would best manage our transition to a low energy future. This event led to the formation of a new group in Kinsale driven by some of the students and local activists. This became known as Kinsale Transition Town which had some initial successes. But it wasn't until Rob and his family relocated from West Cork to Devon that the Transition process really emerged. In the UK Rob furthered the idea of community planning for oil peak at Exeter University and in Totnes he began working with locals on what would become Transition Town Totnes, the Transition model the Transition Network and Transition culture emerged.

In a few short years Transition initiatives, as they are now more commonly known, as cities, islands, and villages as well as towns sign up, has massively grown. Thousands have now adopted the process, and have set out to radically reduce their carbon emissions while at the same time building their ability to thrive in a future that is very uncertain. The Transition process offers pathways, new ways of thinking and a set of tools that could help us respond to the shocks that we inevitably face.

A Common Purpose

As well as initiatives to reduce our fossil fuel use, the Transition model helps communities develop the capability to provide most of its essential needs from a number of local sources so that in the event of a system failure, they will be able to look after themselves. 'Transition' communities are characterised by their positivity and creativity, the process is deliberately designed to be non-threatening and engaging. Its ability to bring all sorts of people and groups together is its strength. Through a loose twelve step process the initiatives set out to build the capacity of the community to develop an Energy Descent Action Plan and this is the process at the core of Transition thinking.

"The concept of energy descent, and of the Transition approach, is a simple one: that the future with less oil could be preferable to the present, but only if sufficient creativity and imagination are applied early enough in the design of this transition." Rob Hopkins, 'The Transition Handbook'

Initiatives include the starting of community gardens and allotments, creating community supported agriculture systems, localising energy production, starting car clubs, rethinking healthcare, and future-proofing their houses and public buildings. Some have even introduced local currencies to keep money circulating in their local area. All of these initiatives build community and offer the potential of an extraordinary transformation in our economic and social systems.

From Vulnerability to Resilience: The New Eco Village

"The great challenge of our time is to build and nurture sustainable communities - communities that are designed in such a way that their ways of life, businesses, economies, physical structures and technologies do not interfere with nature's inherent ability to sustain life..." Fritjof Capra.

For ten years I have been involved with a disparate group of people in a sustainable community project on a 67 acre estate adjacent to the town of Cloughjordan in North Tipperary. We are attempting to build an eco village which we simply call, The Village. This is a unique and innovative project that is striving to create a fresh blueprint for modern sustainable living including 130 homes, renewable energy for heating, land for growing food and trees, an enterprise centre and community buildings. It is a lot more than an eco-housing estate.

The Village merges directly into the heart of Cloughjordan. The town's broad main street has a tree-lined square at its mid-point and an attractive mix of houses and diverse businesses along its length. Around the town is a rolling landscape of rich agricultural land and fine cycling country. A nearby beech wood offers pleasant walks, while Lough Derg and the Shannon are within 12 miles, and the Slieve Bloom and Silvermines mountains are within cycling distance.

There is already a very strong sense of community a year before the first residents will actually move into their new eco homes. Over forty families have moved into rented accommodation or have bought homes in the existing town of Cloughjordan and are establishing themselves in the local community.

A diverse group of people have joined the project. People from all walks of life, young and old, families and single people, are working together to create a beautiful and enriching place to live. With playgrounds, pathways and acres of woodlands and farmland to explore, the Village will be a wonderful place for children. They can enjoy the best of rural life within walking distance of friends, sports facilities and schools. In a survey of the 65 households who have bought sites in The Village, 80% said that a sense of Community' is what attracted them to the project

All the homes being built within the eco village are to high ecological standards, combining energy efficient design with locally sourced natural building materials. There is a wide variety of house styles planned throughout the project, with examples of timber frame, lime-hemp and cob built homes. The sites have good south-facing aspect so that residents can benefit from free passive solar heating. Each home will contain its own rainwater harvesting system and will benefit from heating that runs off hot water supplied by a community heating system.

Homes will be surrounded by an edible landscape of fruit and nut trees, vegetables and herbs. A tree nursery has been established to nurture hundreds of trees for planting along the pathways and in the community gardens that are dispersed throughout the residential area. Larger community and personal allotments have been established to provide more space for growing food. The remaining eco village land is dedicated to farming and woodland. Some of the land is being used by the new Cloughjordan Community Farm scheme established in partnership with the eco village. With cows, sheep, pigs and crop production, the farm will improve the quality and quantity of food available locally, and help reduce the environmental cost of food miles.

Renewable energy will provide 100 per cent of the eco village's heating and hot water needs. Hot water is to be generated at a community energy centre by two woodchip boilers and an array of solar panels, the biggest in Ireland. It will then be piped to individual houses and apartments through an insulated underground pipe.

Cloughjordan train station and a pioneering car-sharing project in the town offer residents the possibility of reducing their energy consumption for transport.

The eco village is committed to creating a vibrant, resilient and sustainable local economy. Already new enterprises have been established including a cosy coffee/book shop and a thriving bike shop on Main Street. Existing shops and businesses are benefiting from new customers who have moved to the area. The eco village includes 15 live/work units that combine apartment living with ground-floor office, retail or therapy space. In addition over half a million euro in funding has been secured for an eco-enterprise centre to provide incubation space for new green business. The infrastructure for high quality cable broadband throughout the eco village is also in place.

The Village will provide an excellent focal point for ecological and sustainable education. It offers a unique opportunity for people to come and learn by immersing themselves in the community. Hands-on courses, workshops and fieldtrips are already popular. Community and enterprise workers have spent time in Cloughjordan and there are plans to run courses for school students. Residential courses are being planned and partnerships with third level colleges such as Tipperary Institute have been established. Cloughjordan is already a Transition Town and plans are progressing to build a state-of-the-art Transition centre that focuses on training for leadership, livelihoods and local resilience.

There is an old African proverb, quoted by Al Gore in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

- www.transitiontowns.org
- www.transitionculture.org
- www.thevillage.ie
- www.cultivate.ie
- transitiontownsireland.ning.com

Davie Philip, a Scot living in Ireland, is Co-ordinator of the Irish Transition Towns Network.

creative fixes

Ginny Brink and Fiona Campbell argue for reviving broken communities with creativity

Any crisis, be it at individual, community or global level, forces an urgent re-think of the way we live. This time is no different. Pressures on the environment and current financial dilemmas are forcing people to search for new solutions. It is a very difficult period to live through, filled with fear, uncertainty and suffering. However, times like this can also bring huge potential and opportunity, promising real and lasting positive change. And the voluntary arts have a huge role to play – in creating and sustaining a new way of living.

One of the biggest changes we have to make is in the area of environmental sustainability and most of us, at least in the developed world, have begun to adopt behaviours that protect and sustain our natural resources. But what we are also starting to realise is that it is not possible to separate our environmental actions from the rest of our lives.

Many advocates of 'sustainable community development' emphasise both quality-of-life issues and the importance of group cohesion and a sense of community. They point to values such as co-operation, sharing, open dialogue and communication, creative freedom and expression, health and wellbeing, equal opportunity and respect for difference, happiness, non-violence, friendship, self-respect, a sense of fulfilment, spiritual connection and a sense of the meaning of life. All these things are at the heart of our flourishing as human beings and as members of society. They are what sustainable life is about. And it just so happens that many of the benefits of participating in the voluntary arts embody these values.

Artists, perhaps more than others in the community, tend to be more open to questioning the **status quo** and to seeking new and more appropriate solutions. Essentially, this is because the arts help us to make sense of life. Exploring what life means to us touches us deeply and enables us to act on and shape our lives. Sharing this process through metaphor (i.e. artwork) contributes to our understanding of both others and ourselves.

This opportunity for self-expression, self-definition and the chance to see the world from another's point of view in turn contributes to individual, social and community growth and cohesion. As Donald Dewar said, 'It is through engagement with culture in its widest sense that people are enabled and communities strengthened.'

On an individual level, the enjoyment and pleasure gained from participating in arts and crafts activities creates an all-round sense of wellbeing and happiness, reduces stress and anxiety and even helps healing in times of ill health. Participation increases self-confidence and self-esteem and so improves people's personal lives and their ability to make social connections – friendship is a vital element of fulfilled and healthy living. All these factors are cited as good indicators of quality of life.

Engaging in social interaction through group arts activity is also important because it increases networking, co-operation and partnerships and enables individuals to gain new skills like team work, negotiation, communication and administration. As a result they become capable of setting up new activities and

groups in the community – all of which contributes to local self-reliance and strengthens community co-operation.

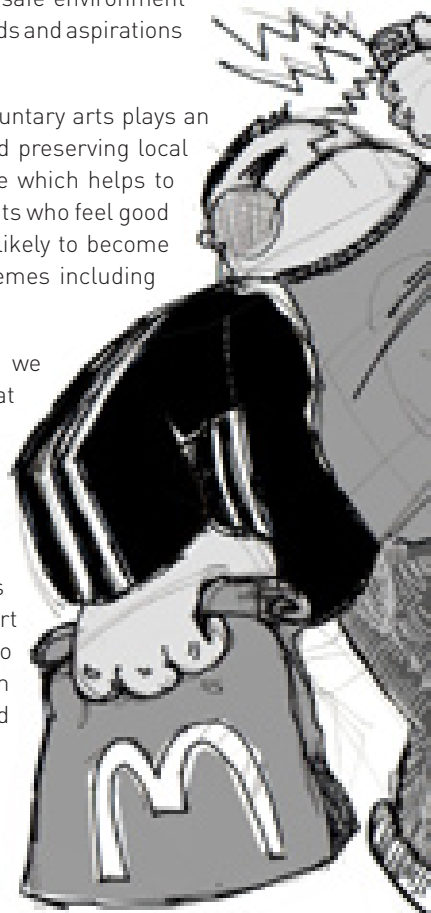
Significantly too, the voluntary arts provide a means for people to share their cultures with others, promoting harmony, understanding, tolerance and co-operation between different communities. And voluntary arts activities can encourage sociability in areas where social connection has been eliminated by poverty, crime and mistrust – local arts groups enable people to become involved in community activities that are affordable, close to home, in a neutral and safe environment and appropriate to the backgrounds and aspirations of the participants.

Similarly, engagement in the voluntary arts plays an important role in celebrating and preserving local cultures, traditions, and heritage which helps to strengthen local identity. Residents who feel good about where they live are more likely to become involved in new community schemes including environmental improvements.

So, what is exciting now, as we search for new direction, is that many of the skills and gifts, artistic and otherwise, that are necessary for the shaping and creating of a new sustainable world are already present in our communities. Our task is to identify, develop and support them and encourage ways to build connections between them that will multiply their power and effectiveness.

However, an essential key to the effectiveness of this process is to recognise that most voluntary artists do not work in isolation. They belong to an art or craft group. It is the **social relationships** that fuel local associations and informal networks, and the skills, talents and solution finding abilities that these citizen's '**associations**' hold, that will come to play a vital role in creating a sustainable future. Associations, less formal and much less dependent upon paid staff than formal institutions, are the very vehicles through which citizens can assemble to solve problems, share common interests and activities and create the glue that binds communities together.

This in turn creates a sense of empowerment and ownership of the development process, which strengthens people's confidence in their own capacities, inspires them to take action and enables them to shape and determine positive, and lasting, change. When this happens, people become confident that they can count on their neighbours and neighbourhood resources for support, and a sense of efficacy based on interdependence and strength develops.



Most communities harbour significant numbers of associations of various kinds, not least artistic and creative. However, the depth and extent of this **associational** life in any community has been vastly underestimated. This is particularly true of socially excluded communities. Informal groups – those that already exist as well as new ones that will emerge – will be indispensable aids in the creation of a sustainable future, and many of them could become full contributors to the development process.

Given the significance of the contribution of artistic activity to sustainable communities, and the role voluntary artists and arts groups could and will play in the big picture of the future of the planet, we must ensure that the voluntary arts are not overlooked by policy makers and funders

Ginny Brink is part of the Voluntary Arts Network.



The voluntary arts and crafts sector is made up of groups that Voluntary Arts Network describes as: 'A free association of individuals for the purpose of making, doing, promoting and presenting the arts and crafts.' Most of these groups are run on a volunteer, 'amateur' or 'for the love of it' basis and cover a wide variety of arts and crafts forms, from brass bands to drama clubs, quilters, festivals, music, weavers, calligraphy and photography.

Many local volunteer-

led cultural clubs and societies are members of national umbrella bodies and function far more efficiently through this affiliation. They are better able to recruit, sustain and support the volunteers who donate their time to make a difference in their neighbourhoods. This was evidenced recently by the findings of a Treasury Review of the Voluntary & Community Sector (www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/CCRVolSec02.pdf). Examples include Feisean nan Gaidheal (the Gaelic Music Youth Tuition Festivals) and the Scottish Glass Society.

By giving up their time and giving contributions, volunteers are quite possibly the largest funders of arts and crafts activity. The Scottish Community Drama Association has gathered evidence that some pantomimes presented by members in rural areas keep their village hall (a vital facility) 'alive' for the rest of the

year. Talking of value – some figures for the voluntary arts and crafts sector in Scotland:

- An estimated two million adult participants (out of a population of five million)
- 9,400 groups
- 18.8 per cent of the voluntary sector (the arts, sports, culture account for 40 per cent - the largest grouping in the Scottish voluntary sector – but attracts the least funding!)
- Research for the Cultural Commission in Scotland found the groups who took part in the survey had around 250,000 members between them; offered over 100 cultural activities per day across Scotland and accounted for three million audience attendances as part of those activities
- An estimated 263,400 cultural volunteers in Scotland
- Who put in an estimated 7,620,000 volunteer hours a year
- Which equates to £40 million if these volunteer were paid for their time (calculated at a very modest rate of pay!)

Volunteer-led initiatives often have more than just fun at their heart and can bring real change to those taking part in them, and their communities. Theatre Nemo in East Kilbride, was set up on a voluntary basis to explore how drama and music can help people with mental health issues. It has evolved into an award-winning organisation, helping many people in prison see a potential new way to live their lives. And volunteers are still an essential part of Theatre Nemo's make up.

The Gorbals Arts Projects and Craigmillar Arts both started because people in those communities asked why they didn't have the same access to arts and crafts activity as others. And then they did something about it – on a volunteer basis. The Feisean movement initially came from a desire to make sure Gaelic was being passed onto the young people in Barra. Nobody waited for the government, or anyone else, to do it.

Volunteering can be an important part of keeping traditions alive and passing them onto others. The Government's recent Scots Language Audit recognised this input when it cited the Traditional Music and Song Association as nurturing Scots culture.

The core audience of Voluntary Arts Scotland's work are key to the success of the cultural life of the Scotland. The amateur sector provides much of the entry and grounding for those who continue on to careers in the arts and crafts, as well as the audience who watches them. As the importance of supporting citizens' right to creative expression continues to grow in Scotland, so too will the role of volunteers and their paid staff in delivering these public services. Ensuring they have adequate funding and good quality, affordable local facilities in which to take part in their artistic endeavours remains crucial.

We are also finding that as people continue to worry about their finances, they are increasingly turning to the arts and crafts that once were spurned. Through this they are not only finding ways to save their pennies, but the companionship and fun that goes along with knitting, dancing, playing etc as part of a group. We would like to see all people have the opportunity to reap those benefits. ■

Fiona Campbell is Executive Officer for Voluntary Arts Scotland. For further information please visit their website www.vascotland.org.uk.

cleverer, not bigger

Jan Bebbington explains how the Prosperity Without Growth? report shows just how damaging a growth-based economy is, but suggests that alternatives can work

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) is the Government's independent advisor on sustainable development (SD), has a UK wide remit and undertakes three main activities: (i) scrutiny (providing an annual judgement as to the extent to which Government is pursuing SD), (ii) capacity building (within Government and its agencies to ensure that policymakers understand the demands of SD) and (iii) advocacy (using SD principles to come to positions on matters of importance). **Prosperity Without Growth?** is an example advocacy and was lead by Professor Tim Jackson who is the SDC Commissioner for economics and Professor of SD at the University of Surrey.

While it may seem inappropriate to be questioning the consequences of a growth based economy while we are in a recession, PWG? has been under development for some time and draws on an extensive array of workshops and detailed research to come to its conclusions. There are two main reasons for investigating how prosperity could be created without growth. The first is linked to the Stern Review. Stern suggested that if we trigger dangerous climate change the world will encounter permanent economic recession and as such Governments will have to find a way to secure the prosperity of their populations without relying on economic growth. The second reason for being interested in the link between growth and prosperity is the ongoing concern about the environmental consequences of growth. When these concerns are raised the 'usual' explanation for why we can continue to pursue growth is that we will decouple environmental impacts from that growth. In this way examining the rationale for growth is put off. PWG?, however, investigates the soundness of relying on decoupling and whether or not we have presently seen decoupling within the world economy.

Before moving to the line of argument proposed in PWG?, it is necessary to make two very important provisos with regard to the publication. First, the desirability of growth and the extent to which growth does drive prosperity differs between the so called 'developed' and 'developing' nations. The conclusions of PWG? do not hold outside of a 'developed' world context. The second proviso is that where an economy is driven by economic growth (as the UK is), de-growth does not lead to SD. For example, there is nothing to celebrate in the current recession in ecological or social terms. People losing their jobs, with the knock on impacts of this for communities across Scotland and the rest of the UK, is not SD. Likewise, rising energy prices may lead to reductions in fossil fuel demand, but if that leads to rising fuel poverty or the poor forgoing heating then once again SD is not achieved.

As a result, PWG? should be read as an invitation to take part in a conversation about the logic and consequences of a growth-focused economy and how, if we wish to pursue more sustainable

forms of development, may that logic have to change. The chart on the next page summarises the line of argument of the publication and the rest of this article will explore elements of the argument in a little more depth.

PWG? starts its exposition by considering the ways in which human society, taken as a whole, is not prosperous and finds three areas where problems exist. First, in rich and poor countries alike, prosperity (as measured by conventional economic means) is highly stratified. That is, past economic growth has not lead to fairness and equity of outcome. Indeed, despite growth in the last few decades the gap between rich and poor nations (and the rich and poor within nations) remains and the desire for a 'strong, healthy and just society' (as per the UK's SD Strategy) is unrealised. At the same time, economic

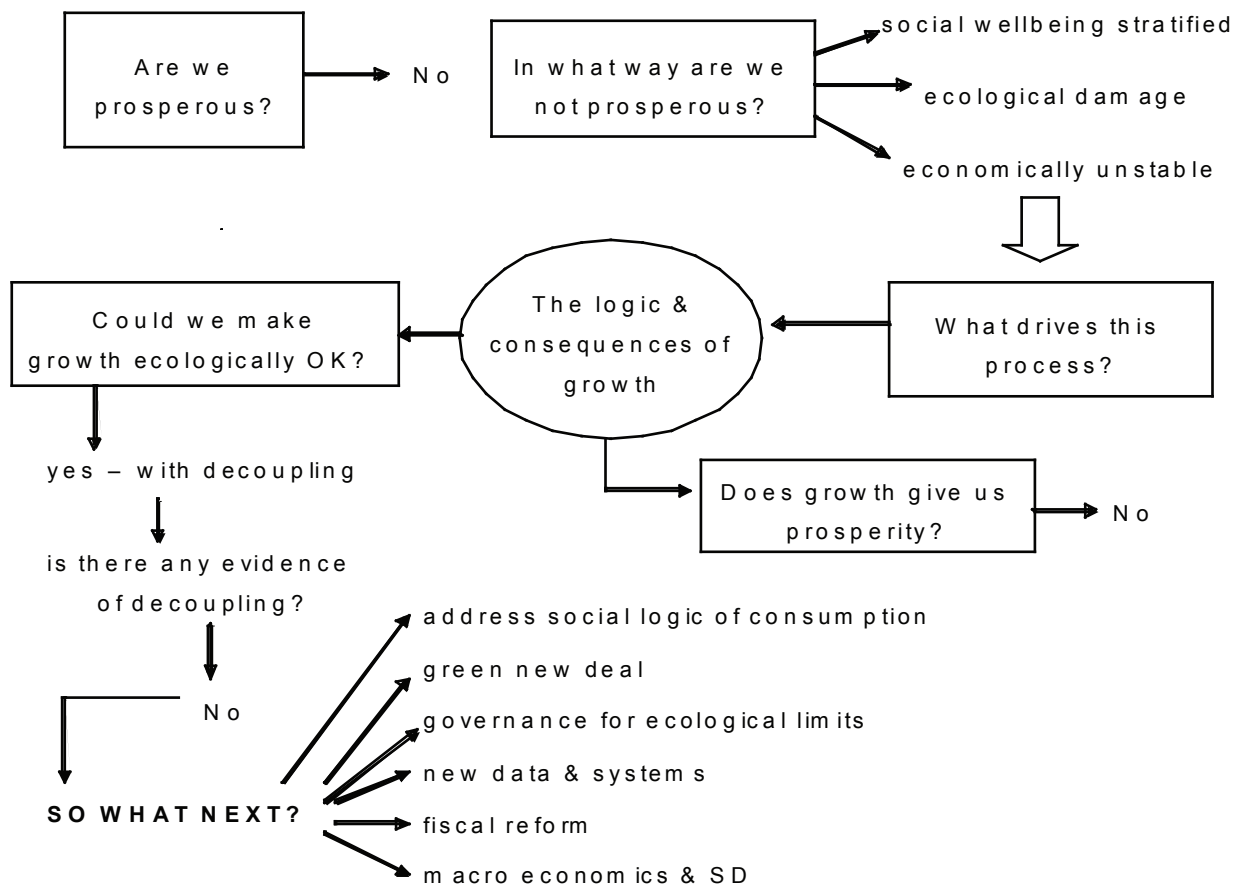
activity has generated wide scale ecological damage both in terms of resource use and pollution impacts. These have combined

If the debt/consumption dynamic is disrupted the economic consequences are severe

to place a huge strain on the ecosystems' ability to serve human needs (if one takes a human focused view – there are also non-human centred arguments for maintaining ecosystem integrity). Finally, as we have seen in recent times, our growth economy is also economically unstable.

PWG? also notes that even for the well off in rich countries prosperity (in terms of happiness) seems to be elusive. The Easterlin paradox illustrates this well: whereby subjective measures of happiness are not correlated to income, once income levels cross a certain threshold. Likewise, countries have very different wellbeing outcomes (for example, life expectancy and reported feelings of happiness) for the same level of income as well as different levels of income having the same wellbeing outcomes. This evidence suggests that wellbeing (and therefore prosperity) is not solely driven by income levels. Indeed, the report suggests that too much income can be dangerous to your health and notes the various afflictions of the affluent (for example, psychological ill health, excess drinking and eating leading to obesity, diabetes and alcohol related harm). PWG? suggests that the root cause of these interlocking sets of problems lies in the structure of our economic system.

The logic of our economic system requires growth for its stability and to achieve stability a particular dynamic must be present. First, in order for firms to remain competitive they must cut costs to increase profits, with the substitution of capital for labour being one route to achieving this. If this happens, however, unemployment will arise and the market for goods and services will shrink as people lack the means to buy things. As a result, there must be both new things to buy (thereby boosting output and keeping employment stable) as well as a good source of credit to enable people to keep on buying more things.



As a result, a growth-based economy requires a social logic that puts consumption at the centre of life with such a society being focused on the consumption of novelty. Likewise, indebtedness is required to keep growth going as well as allowing consumption. As we have seen, if this dynamic is disrupted the economic consequences (swiftly followed by social consequences) are severe.

A constantly growing economy (in terms of material throughput) also has environmental consequences. The usual response to concerns about environmental load is that decoupling of environmental impact from economic throughput will square this particular circle. The report argues that we must be clear about what sort of decoupling we are talking about: relative or absolute. Relative decoupling relates to the environmental impact that arises for each pound (dollar, yen or euro) of activity and on this measure of decoupling the world economy has taken place (but the rate of decoupling declines over time). Absolute decoupling relates to the extent to which absolute levels of environmental impact fall over time. In short, evidence for absolute decoupling is not found. This is not wholly surprising given the dynamics of the economic system. If we need growth to keep the economy stable then efficiency gains from relative decoupling must be relatively large to reduce absolute impact.

What is more, if the logic of a growth economy is combined with a desire to offer prosperity to all people alive today (and all those that will be alive by 2050) the level of absolute decoupling required is quite staggering. Hence both the moral principle of equality as well as that of seeking to be ecologically sustainable (the two core SD principles) are likely to be breached at some time in the future even if we obtain substantial decoupling of the economy. As such, we would argue that PWG? also helps us

to think about what kind of future we might imagine for a world with nine billion human inhabitants.

The above conclusions then beg a number of questions, to which the bulk of PWG? is devoted to. As can be seen from Figure 1, six aspects are considered in the report ranging from ecological tax reform to re-thinking how we create meaning in our life. Space precludes a detailed exposition of these aspects here and each area is substantive in its own right. What was surprising, however, is the relative dearth of literature that attempts to explore some of the aspects being discussed in the report. It seems that we shall be collectively inventing our future if we are seeking prosperity without growth.

Indeed, PWG? is very much a start of a conversation. The SDC does not pretend that it has the answers for how a socially just and ecologically sound economy could be developed. This task is one that has to be tackled by society together. What we are convinced by, however, is that the question of whether or not growth (as conventionally understood) will deliver prosperity MUST be able to be asked. If society denies the possibility of questioning our current economic model then we will most definitely be in trouble: intellectually and practically. ■

Jan Bebbington is Vice-Chair (Scotland) of the Sustainable Development Commission and Professor of Accounting and Sustainable Development at University of St Andrews

The full report can be obtained from the SDC website (HYPERLINK "<http://www.sd-commission.org.uk>" www.sd-commission.org.uk) and you can take part in a conversation about the issues raised here (and in the report) at The Big Tent Festival in Falkland on the 25th and 26th of July.

the death of triangulation?

The decade-long attempt to position left-of-centre parties further into the centre ground has failed, as Henry McCubbin shows in the Euro election results

UK Total MEP Seats

| Party | Votes | MEPs | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | % | +/- % | Total | +/- |
| CON | 27.7 | 1.0 | 26 | 1 |
| UKIP | 16.5 | 0.3 | 13 | 1 |
| LAB | 15.7 | -6.9 | 13 | -5 |
| LD | 13.7 | -1.2 | 11 | 1 |
| GRN | 8.6 | 2.4 | 2 | 0 |
| BNP | 6.2 | 1.3 | 2 | 2 |
| SNP | 2.1 | 0.7 | 2 | 0 |
| PC | 0.8 | -0.1 | 1 | 0 |
| OTH | 8.5 | 2.4 | 0 | 0 |
| SF | - | - | 1 | 0 |
| DUP | - | - | 1 | 0 |

Vote share figures exclude Northern Ireland as it has a separate electoral system to the rest of the UK Includes UCUNF MEP elected in Northern Ireland

The 2009 European elections must surely make Europe's socialist parties realise that triangulation with capitalist forces leads to nothing less than political strangulation. The pathetic state of the British Labour Party is the most telling. The distribution of support is clear from the table below. The party has fallen to third place behind of all things UKIP. Labour's precipitate decline has been on its way from before they hopeless Jack Straw change the voting system in such a way as to concentrate power over candidate selection to the centre. A policy which is the only discernable consistent one in the numerous constitutional tweaks brought in under New Labour.

The cliff-like decline in support only has its comparison with the decline of the economy under Gordon Brown and is shown below in election-on-election series. Labour's contribution to the socialist struggle has been a negative one with its instructions to its MEPs through the despicable privatiser 'Postman' Pat McFadden, to attack workers rights whether so-called posted workers or all workers through their blocking tactics over working time. In fact the only positive contribution they made was to reduce the number of MEPs to send to the European Parliament where you could discover Dutch liberals with a better left voting record than Labour MEPs like Cashman.

What is now clear is that the EPP conservative alliance has reinforced its positioning and will clearly be the dominant group although there total number of MEPs has been reduced and their votes merely stabilised in comparison to 2004. Right-wing leaders in power have

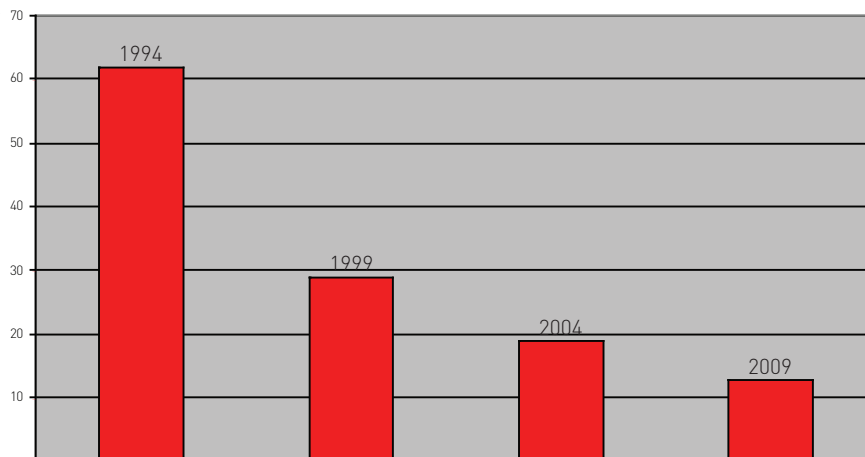
however been confirmed as the first political force like Sarkozy and Tony Blair's friend Berlusconi.

The big losers were undoubtedly the socialists, who not only diminished their delegation, but also keep enlarging the distance between them and the conservatives. Additionally, they lost their positions at the national level in several countries, including the UK where they are the governing party. Liberals roughly kept their parliamentary representation, losing only two MEPs, but approached the socialists in terms of parliamentary balance as the later shed 20 seats, five being formerly UK Labour. The Greens were the only group to raise its representation significantly (41 to 50 seats, just under 25 per cent), while the GUE-NGL (the Left group where the EL members in the EU are represented) diminished its representation from 37 to 34 MEPs, thereby losing any representation from Italy where the left broke into small fractions and won nothing. We need only to look at the left's scattered support in Scotland to see that such behaviour is not nation specific.





























However, beyond the general picture, there were mixed messages from the electorate around Europe. For example in Portugal the Left Bloc (EL member) and the Communist Party had altogether more than 21 per cent of votes (10, 7 per cent both) and Bloc significantly tripled its representation having now three elected MEPs. In Germany, Die Link elected one more MEP and in France, Front de Gauche elected two more. In Cyprus, AKEL (EL observer party) kept its strong position, only a few decimals behind the conservatives with 34 per cent of votes. Elsewhere other smaller progressive and left parties had positive results in Europe. Greece did provide some respite in that the left including PASOK overtook the right. We can safely assume that the social turmoil last winter in Athens where the left sided with the young demonstrators may have contributed to this situation.

In general however, the results for the Left, together with the socialist's results and the fact that the latter are in power in

Labour MEPs



Seats by political group in each Member State

| | EPP | PES | ALDE | UEN | GREENS/ EFA | GUE/ NGL | IND/ DEM | Others | Total |
|--|-----|-----|------|-----|----------------|-------------|-------------|--------|-------|
|  BE | 6 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 22 |
|  BG | 6 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 17 |
|  CZ | 2 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 9 | 22 |
|  DK | 1 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 13 |
|  DE | 42 | 23 | 12 | 0 | 14 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 99 |
|  EE | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
|  IE | 4 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 12 |
|  EL | 8 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 22 |
|  ES | 23 | 21 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 50 |
|  FR | 29 | 14 | 6 | 0 | 14 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 72 |
|  IT | 35 | 0 | 7 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21 | 72 |
|  CY | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
|  LV | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 8 |
|  LT | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 12 |
|  LU | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
|  HU | 15 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 22 |
|  MT | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
|  NL | 5 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 25 |
|  AT | 6 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 17 |
|  PL | 28 | 7 | 0 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 |
|  PT | 10 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 22 |
|  RO | 13 | 11 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 33 |
|  SI | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
|  SK | 6 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 13 |
|  FI | 4 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 13 |
|  SE | 5 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 18 |
|  UK | 0 | 13 | 11 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 13 | 29 | 72 |
|  EU total | 264 | 161 | 80 | 35 | 53 | 32 | 18 | 93 | 736 |

EPP - Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) ; PES - Socialist Group in the European Parliament ; ALDE - Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe ; UEN - Union for Europe of the Nations Group ; GREENS/ EFA - Group of the Greens / European Free Alliance ; GUE/ NGL - Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left ; IND/ DEM - Independence/Democracy Group ; Others - Others

several countries implementing contested policies, such as Portugal and Spain (where the right wing won), is a reminder about the challenges and difficult tasks for the Left to build and publicly deliver an alternative political programme, recognisable as such by the electorate.

The wide electoral empty space presented to the alternative Left and those of progressive social protest, created by the socialist parties and the failure of the dominant neo liberal model of development, remained therefore still unoccupied in these elections by radical thinking from any sort of unified political movement of the European left or in many cases nation state left political field. Overall and even including the results of the Greens (such as in the UK and specially France, where they more than doubled the result), it was mainly the right wing that took over dissatisfaction across the EU. This fact must not be exaggerated since it was also accompanied by a general

stabilisation of voting compared to 2004. More than that, for instance in Portugal, the winning right party had a result not far from its historical lowest level.

On the other hand, the increase of conservative support was also worryingly linked to the right wing extremists in some countries. This is a particular danger for democracy and another challenge to democratic forces willing to constructively protest, attracting votes and building alternatives. The European Left had alerted to this problem already in its electoral platform (see SLR Issue 51 (March / April '09), characterised not only by the general crisis but also by deep dissatisfaction and mistrust in politicians and their lack of ethics, patent in the UK with the scandals of private expenses made with public money. ■

Henry McCubbin is a former Labour MEP

to know your place

In the month when the world comes to Scotland to sample arts from around the world, Donny O'Rourke looks at a book which talks about our art, here

Carl MacDougall once suggested that every Scottish novel could carry the subtitle, 'Myself, When Young'. 'A Sense Of Place' might be another contender. Certainly the lie, and truth, of the land has kept poets and painters busy in study and studio down the years. Artists are pre-occupied over time by what they occupy in space. The causal connection between de-populated bens and glens as habitat and tourist tat is truly a matter of life and death - the snapshot and the musket shot. Of all the large notions operative upon the contested identity, or identities of Scotland, place is as significant as any. Displacement from the Highlands to the various 'new worlds' gave rise to diasporic Scotlands of the imagination; displacement to Glasgow and other industrial towns and cities, made those places, to extents still palpable, Irelands of the mind. To say of someone that we cannot 'place them', is to make a statement about much more than memory. Confronted with the prospect of eviction and being replaced by sheep, the deranged victims of class depredation, quite literally, 'lost the place'. One might suggest that Scots and other subject peoples have too often known their **place**, because they haven't **known** their place.

The 'authors' of this book (I shall explain the inverted commas in a moment), need defer to no one in their knowledge about and understanding of their place. Or places. One was raised in Fife, lives in Edinburgh and taught art in Glasgow, the other, Lanarkshire-born but brought up in England, resides in Ayr and after a lengthy stint lecturing on literature in New Zealand, now works in Glasgow. Both have made important creative and critical contributions to the culture of a place and the place of a culture, they were determined not just to understand but to change, whether in the orthodox Marxist sense or not. That change, carried exhilaratingly forward in these pages, is above all, to the status of, reprioritised pedagogical investment in, research commitment to and research, media, and artistic engagement with, Scotland in, and as, Scotland. A willed, resolute, dissenting decision, maybe, to place an emphasis on emphasising a place. Much and marvellously to its credit, 'Arts of Resistance' is a partial (in every sense) explanation of how, thanks to dissident and oppositional, visual and verbal energies, Scotland came to look and feel the way it does today.

Sandy Moffat, former professor of painting at the Glasgow School of Art and Alan Riach present occupant of the chair in Scottish Literature at Glasgow University, have produced an odd book but a very good one, a comparatively costly hardback moreover, whose value approaches its price, on account of what there is to read and look at, in this opulently produced and discursively engaging, (almost literal), **tour d'horizon**. The slight oddness, and problematic question of, 'authority', derives

from the book's origins in a series of dialogues between painter and poet at The National Gallery Of Scotland, so that we are effectively listening with our eyes to a transcription of what one might term, a 'curated conversation' with the invincibly sensible Linda MacDonald- Lewis, whose idea the project was, playing the part of the sometimes chivvyng, never chiding 'moderator'. And because the speakers interact with each other as much as with the then-listener, now-reader, we are positioned, not always advantageously, somewhere between being audience member and eavesdropper with the insights, and there are many, sometimes listened to, sometimes overheard. What is said is of consistently first rate quality, as talk. But to amble and ramble at book length, even when the conversation is compelling and the conversers companionable as well as expert, is to run a risk and run it valiantly, though those hazards and heroisms are offset by the sumptuous illustrations, worth the cover price in themselves, and by the intrinsic fascination of the subject and the distinction of the duo doing the deliberating, each of whom submitted his remarks to some judicious post confabulatory 'overdubbing'.

It is a remarkable talker whose words warrant being written down. Many a loquacious Oxbridge don, even the most quippingly quotable, had sufficient, and self protective prudence to prevent any would-be amanuensis preserving in print comments that ought not to have outlived the occasion of their utterance. Neither professor/ practitioner, though fluent, indeed eloquent, is an aphoristic communicator. There are no sound-bites at the Colourist cherry; probably a good thing. To get the most out of the expertly informative to-ing and fro-ing recorded here, however, you probably, as the saying goes, had to be there. But if we weren't, as TV, radio and web cams were also not, then this chunkily beguiling volume amounts to compensation well worth claiming. Although it does develop theses, **Arts of Resistance**, is an informative and instructive work rather than

an argumentative text. William Gillies, encountered, atypically unbuttoned, dancing dandyishly in a Glasgow sitting room, is moved ever closer to the centre of our comprehension of twentieth century Scottish painting, where he is joined by William Johnstone. Patrick Geddes is saluted and celebrated. The canon continues uncontested, the usual suspects rounded up and released. Yet this is no bad thing. Moffat and Riach are enthusiasts who'd rather

hymn than hate. Theirs is a book of exultation as opposed to excoriation; and, in a work, broken up into geographical sections, they pan for nuggets everywhere.

Many readers, even some in Dundee, will be glad to know more about that occasionally patronised and neglected city's visual

Much and marvellously to its credit, 'Arts of Resistance' is a partial (in every sense) explanation of how, thanks to dissident and oppositional, visual and verbal energies, Scotland came to look and feel the way it does today

art and literary legacy. To see some much-needed redress in the critical neglect of painter Stewart Carmichael and poet James Young Geddes is a welcome revision lent impetus by this discussion. Neither's oeuvre was familiar to me and the meticulously prepared disquisition on their lives and work, and the expository and ardent advocacy of that work, is typical of the book's enthusiastic and scholarly thoroughness as a whole. Justice also begins to be done to David Forrester Wilson, a predecessor of Sandy Moffat's as a tutor at the Glasgow School of Art and as Moffat demonstrates a major depicter of Island scenes and people. Paid seemly tribute too, is the critic John Tonge, author of, 'The Arts of Scotland', a leading proselytiser for the Scottish Renaissance, friend and ally of the two Roberts, Colquhoun and MacBryde, and the figure with a walking stick, hirpling down the stairs in the top corner of Moffat's iconic group portrait. He, like everyone and every thing else in 'Arts Of Resistance', is spoken of with a winning mixture of lightly-worn but immense erudition and nuanced, never chauvinistically reductive intellectual ardour. These two exceptionally well informed artists and teachers leave the general reader much better informed about the relationship between poetry and painting in this country.

Despite having worked admirably with them both (an interest now declared), I know nothing of the specific personal politics of the authors and nothing in detail is divulged in passing. They lean to the left (though at what angle there is no protractor to tell us) and they believe, to resort to word debased by over use, passionately, that the curricular neglect in Scotland of Scottish art, culture and history, has had debilitating consequences for Scottish art, culture and history. They could perhaps go further in theorising this, even in a book not too snobbish to disdain the better class of coffee table, in terms of invasively inculcated self loathing and internal colonisation. There are some, it is not too churlish to point out, who will feel ambivalent about the part played in this process by the very institution hosting these reflections.

Each protagonist tends to cluster his lucidly learned arguments around a (very persuasive) big idea. For Sandy Moffat, this is the pre-eminence in terms of precedent, practise and principle, proper to German, as opposed to French influences on Scottish art. His influence is to be seen (again, in this instance, literally), on the famous Glasgow painters he famously taught in the late seventies, Ken Currie, Steven Campbell, Peter Howson and Adrian Wiszniewski, expressively expressionist to a man, each relating himself in one way or another to Moffat's friend John Bellany who had assimilated Beckman as previously Fergusson had incorporated Derain. Alan Riach's big idea is the big idea that was, is and ever shall be, Hugh MacDiarmid, whose work the younger poet has brilliantly edited and analysed. It is (slightly) frustrating that whilst fitting weight is given to a consideration of the New Glasgow Boys in relation to place, their literary counterparts, poets Riach's age and younger, are crowded out of the canvass, perhaps, because Alan Riach wishes to avoid any imputation among his peers, of back stabbing or scratching? The connection between, say, the imagistically innovative, seen from above visualisation of Scotland as a circuit board, so characteristic of Robert Crawford's approach to the

lie of the land, and the aerial view landscapes of Carol Rhodes, merits an aside at least perhaps. Similarly, Calum Colvin is, rightly lauded and critiqued but not the poetry of W.N. Herbert who uses verbal effects that provide a counterpoint to Colvin's collagistic interrogations of, if you will, Scotland's myriad mythed opportunities. Douglas Gordon's productions are here but not those of any poet his age. There are visual omissions too. Paul Strand's masterly Highland and island photographic studies duly appear and are assessed but the exhibition which first placed those places, so to speak, by exploring the ideological implications of quasi-genocidal human absence from them, As an Fhearann, (From the Land), a seminal touring exhibition mounted in the late eighties by Stornoway's An Lantairr Gall is passed over. One could go on...

It is more useful however, and surely more gallant, to stick to what **is** in this really rather splendid book. What is very much in, is the poetry of those maestri of the mid century and after, gathered by Sandy Moffat in his masterpiece, 'Poets' Pub'. Moffat was most impressed and inspired by MacCaig. In Riach's book, or his half of it, the mostly unpubbable

Edwin Morgan is the force really to be reckoned with. Vivid renderings of the backgrounds to this generation of makers that came after and drank with, MacDiarmid, are a strong suit, whether the war time desert in which several of them served, or the Orkney, Lewis, Assynt, Edinburgh or Glasgow which nurtured their imaginations. Moffat knew all of these men (sic) and Riach some of them, which lends the conversation anecdotal savour.

'Oh fuck, there's two of them', unamused patrons were alleged to have groaned on seeing Bernie Winters join his equally unfunny brother, Mike, on the stage of the Glasgow 'Empire'. This double act will elicit few groans, for there is indeed, variety here. 'Arts of Resistance' is a lavishly ample poetry anthology and a considerable cultural catalogue raisonnee and would be sufficiently cherishable for those reasons, even it did not teem with tutelary talk. Sandy Moffat and Alan Riach trail in their enticing introduction the story they wish to tell and it is a broadly familiar one. But as a survey of, 'poets, portraits and landscapes of modern Scotland' their elegant dialogic deliberation, in doing exactly what it says on the cover, adds copiously and compellingly to what we know about the relationship between the images produced by poets and painters, in the presentation and re-presentation of a country thinking harder than ever about what it dares to be. We cannot envision without revision and capital has a vested interest in displacement activity of all distracting and enfeebling kinds. This huge hearted, tough minded work of celebration and cerebration is replacement activity of magnificent restorative power. This conversation with end papers is no. 'when o blethers'. Purposive chatters they may be, but Sandy Moffat and Alan Riach are certainly not all talk

Donny O'Rourke, member of Democratic Left Scotland, has had overlapping careers as a poet, television producer, journalist and university teacher: his latest poetry collection, 'Blame Yesterday', is a book of show tune lyrics

Arts of Resistance: Poets, Portraits and Landscapes of Modern Scotland – Alexander Moffat and Alan Riach with Linda MacDonald-Lewis, Luath (£29.99)

our fourth afghan war

Bill Ramsay argues that the Coalition's very presence in Afghanistan is the incubus for terrorism and this is enhanced by the tactics used.

At the 2009 Scottish Trade Union Congress, I moved a motion calling for the withdrawal of UK troops from Afghanistan; the motion was remitted to the General Council. The response of the General Council was in a sense typical of other mainstream centre-left political institutions. Although considerable discussion and debate around the Palestine question and Iraq war has taken place over many years, discussions around this, our fourth Afghan war, has been much more muted.

To discuss Afghanistan is of course, also to discuss Islamic fundamentalism; NATO in its post cold war manifestation; and now, with the new administration in the White House, Pakistan; all uncomfortable topics for many in the political mainstream of whatever party. We therefore find ourselves in a situation where, with the exception of Plaid Cymru, no mainstream political institution is prepared to reflect the desire of the public, confirmed in numerous opinion polls, to disengage from Afghanistan. We need a debate within the mainstream centre-left on the issue of the UK's continued presence in Afghanistan. In particular we have to examine: our involvement in ISAF, (the NATO led International Security and Assistance Force); UK's continued support for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (the Afghan component of the global US Operation Enduring Freedom anti terrorist campaign); and the decision of the Obama administration to shift the focus into Pakistan. Above all we should assess what all of this means for UK and Scottish national security.

The concept of an ethical foreign policy died even before Robin Cook did. It was replaced with the active foreign policy of Blair, a doctrine that has not only survived his political demise but has gone from strength to strength. Constant military interventions are now seen as normal. As the head of the Army, General Dannatt said "Iraq and Afghanistan are not aberrations – they are signposts for the future". If this policy is not the trumpeted position of almost every mainstream party in the UK then it is the de facto position. Given the UK public's consistent lack of support for the deployment, our fourth Afghan war has therefore become the UK's geopolitical elephant in the room. So how did this elephant squeeze through what is often portrayed as the UK's modest pillars of geopolitical ambition?

The world's only superpower went into Afghanistan to get Bin Laden, though only after Al Qaeda's Taliban hosts proffered two fingers in the direction of the USA when the world's only superpower demanded he and his associates be handed over. The result was entirely predictable. Before Kandahar (the Taliban's real powerbase at the time) fell, the Pentagon was issuing instructions for elements of its special forces to be withdrawn from Afghanistan in preparation of the Iraqi land grab. Not only did the Bush administration take the eye off the ball, it walked away from it in an entirely different direction, pursuing an altogether contrary agenda which itself was underpinned by, in the literal sense of the word, an incredible plan of campaign.

Barak Obama made much of this during the election campaign in a way that Clinton, due to her voting record, could not. This

was a factor, though maybe not a decisive one, in his election. However it means that getting Bin Laden is the centrepiece of US policy in the region. As it is generally accepted that Bin Laden and his associates are holed up somewhere along the Pakistan/Afghan border, there is a logic that shifts the US focus to and across that border into Pakistan. That in itself had potentially profound implications for UK national security and was one of the factors that led to the drafting of the motion early this year. The subsequent battles between Pakistani forces, the inevitable refugee crisis and the fact that a million UK citizens have family connections in Pakistan adds a domestic dimension to our fourth Afghan war that was not present in the first three.

I believe that the left have some difficulty in engaging fully on this issue because of an understandable desire to buy into the aspiration, enticingly first dangled by Laura Bush and Cheri Blair, that an intended consequence of the intervention was to bring a modicum of equality into Afghan society generally and Afghan women in particular. NATO's impressive public affairs machine, which is even now limbering up for the NATO parliamentary assembly in Edinburgh in November, has done everything it can to develop this progressive vision. The media are encouraged to hype the development and reconstruction efforts which are marginal and faltering. However the new sharper strategy for Afghanistan of the new American President makes this narrative more difficult if not impossible to sustain. Obama could not have been more plain-spoken when, flanked by Secretary of State Clinton and Defence Secretary Gates he said "We have a clear goal, to disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan and prevent their (Al Qaeda's) return to either country in the future". The US military now refer to the theatre of conflict as AFPAK.

This demanded, and produced, a somersault in stated British priorities. Putting aside for a moment, former defence Secretary John Reid's career-defining "without a shot" comment at the time of our deployment to Helmand Province, he made it clear, as did Prime Minister Blair that we were there to create the space and conditions to allow "reconstruction". However, Britain's most senior serviceman, the Chief of the Defence Staff flatly contradicted this on TV in April and on the same programme the then Defence Secretary John Hutton was at pains to recalibrate British strategy for Afghanistan with that of the new US administration. Hutton said "They (UK personnel) have been shedding their blood for the UK and the UK's security interests" Hutton went on "It's to protect the UK from violent terrorism and extremism".

His remarks about the terrorist threat is not new think by the Ministry of Defence though his suggestion that military action can be used to combat political extremism is almost as bizarre as his earlier comment claiming that our nuclear deterrent had an anti-terrorist utility. However the most significant feature of the new Obama strategy and the dutiful UK recalibration is the expansion of the field of operations into Pakistan, a place that even Cheney and Rumsfeld kept well clear of.

It's true that UK forces are, as far as we are aware, not involved in operations across the Pakistani border but be in no doubt, the UK accepts that Pakistan is now part of the theatre of operations. Hutton again "We know where the principle focus of the campaign against the UK is directed from, Afghanistan and increasingly, Pakistan". So the crucible of the so called "war on terror" has moved into Pakistan and our forces are involved, though for the time being, not directly.

The election of Barak Obama was undoubtedly good news for the world generally though for how long the people of Pakistan and their relatives in the UK agree with that assessment, is a moot point. Closer examination of the new AFGPAK policy throws up some dilemma's for the US. Obama has made it clear that getting Bin Laden and his associates is the goal and that all other considerations are at best secondary. It's no longer about regime change, whatever regime delivers Al Qaeda is the regime that Obama will live with.

A rapprochement with the Taliban is well under way. Terms like good Taliban, bad Taliban, Afghan Taliban and Pakistani Taliban are being increasingly bandied around. Elements of the former Taliban regime, up to ministerial level, have been rehabilitated. We can be sure of is that this dialogue between the US and elements of the regime they toppled will continue. The success or failure of these negotiations will rest upon the same question that led the US to topple the Taliban regime in Kabul in 2002. Whether or not they are prepared to eliminate or hand over, or facilitate the elimination or the handing over Bin Laden and his associates.

In one sense this strategy of fighting the Taliban and talking to the Taliban is not new. British operations in 2006 were in microcosm, a forerunner of such a strategy. High intensity engagements by British troops who suffered significant casualties, sometimes ended in negotiated "withdrawal" by the troops. Face was saved in part by BBC reportage of the process who helpfully suggested that the negotiators were not Taliban but local tribal "elders", hence the UK had not been defeated. The central issue, which is rarely discussed, is the link between UK national security and the UK deployment in Afghanistan. The allegation that an expensive military occupation of Afghanistan contributes to UK national security by reducing the potential for terrorist attack in the UK is always asserted but never fully examined.

Indeed even if the assertion was accepted, the footprint of "coalition forces" even after the US's new increased deployments take place, will still be relatively light in terms of the size of the territory. Obama went to NATO's 60th birthday summit seeking more troops but left almost empty handed. The idea that this new deployment, which is still short of the troops the Soviet's deployed, could close down the country as an incubator for terrorism is simply incredible.

The reality of course is quite the opposite; the coalition's very presence is the incubus for terrorism and this is enhanced by the very tactics that the coalition uses. Airpower in "conventional" war, can greatly enhance the force at troops disposal; however airpower in a guerrilla style war amongst the people, is self

defeating as a high civilian casualty rate recruits for the Taliban. Indeed I would also argue that the use of airpower is in itself an indicator of a lack of support for war amongst the public of the country prosecuting the war.

Airpower makes up for the lack of firepower amongst the troops deployed and also leads to a reduction in the casualties among coalition forces. Ask yourself a very simple question, would the UK, or even the American public countenance a casualty rate, even among full time professional forces, remotely approaching the casualty rate of a world war to prosecute the so called war on terror? Of course not.

There is also the crucial distinction to be made between the Taliban, who, as even many American military analysts are prepared to state publicly, never have had ambitions to intervene out with their own territory and Al Qaeda whose aspirations are much wider. Indeed, it is becoming more widely accepted that Al Qaeda's military potential is a shadow of what it was some years ago, though thanks to a counter-productive military response to it, its political message still has potency. The paradox is that if there is to be a long lasting solution, then these Pashtun tribes whom we bomb day in and day out will be the key stakeholders

in any agreement, the Kabul government's position will be less important.

So what does all of this have to do with the UK's and Scotland's national security interest? I would argue that in one sense it has little to do with our national security as the Taliban present no threat to the UK. On the other hand if we stay,

particularly as the military centre of gravity shifts southwards into Pakistan it will be a key factor for the reasons stated earlier. For national security reasons, we should withdraw our troops now.

At the 2009 STUC Congress, the arguments for remission had to do with the dire consequences for the Afghans generally, and for women and children in particular if UK forces were to withdraw. However, human rights have nothing to do with why we remain in that country.

"Let's be clear" said the Dispatches interviewer "words like supporting reconstruction, supporting democracy, human rights for Afghan women, they are really a smokescreen aren't they?" "They are not a smokescreen" Hutton responded "but you are quite right, they are not the reason we are there. I would not ask British soldiers to fight and die to allow Afghan boys and Girls to go to the same school together".

Our government is not willing to sacrifice troops for reasons of humanity, and the UK public in general sees through the incredible national security argument. Why then does the Scottish Trade Union Congress think the blood price in UK troops is for the moment worth paying? This is crucial as the statement from the General Council made it clear that the STUC no more accepted Hutton's national security argument than I, or the UK public, do. ■

Bill Ramsay, STUC delegate from South Lanarkshire Trades Council

unifying the disaffected

Gregor Gall asks the newly formed New Anti-Capitalist Party what the experience of France might hold for Scotland and we can unify the radicals.

Joaquin Reymond is an activist in the newly formed New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) in France. He visited Scotland in late May 2009 to address SSP European election rallies in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. During his visit he agreed to be interviewed by Gregor Gall for Scottish Left Review on the NPA and what lessons it might hold for the left in Scotland. Joaquin has previously been a leading militant in his union when working in the car and chemical industries in the Mulhouse area. Joaquin joined the project to establish the NPA in 2007 and is one of its founding upon its creation in early 2009, having worked alongside both the left parties, Lutte Ouvriere and the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), since 2005.

Gregor Gall (GG): Can you tell us why the LCR took the momentous decision to initiate the creation of a left party much wider and bigger than itself by dissolving itself in order to establish the NPA?

Joaquin Reymond (JR): The situation in France has seen the collapse of both social democracy (in the form of the Socialist Party) and communism (in the form of the French Communist Party) as big, serious forces that attracted mass working class support. In 2002, the LCR stood its candidate, Olivier [HYPERLINK "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olivier_Besancenot"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olivier_Besancenot) \o "Olivier Besancenot" Besancenot, in the presidential elections and together with the other left candidates (from Lutte Ouvriere and the Workers' Party), the radical left got 10 per cent of the vote overall. This suggested to us – the LCR – that this was a very good sign of what could be done if there was a bigger, united radical left that is independent of the Socialist Party. People were telling us that the radical left should unite to capitalise on the radicalisation and polarisation that has taken place in French society over the last few years. The people in the NPA want to swim in a bigger sea and there is no room or purpose for sectarianism anymore. Rather, there needs to be an alternative where the interests of the movement against Sarkozy, against neo-liberalism and so on are put above the interests of left parties. We want to be against not just the symptoms of the system but the system itself. But what became clear was that the left social democrats, the Trotskyists and the Communist Party as they existed could not provide the kind of organisation that is needed to help support, sustain and grow these movements. What we say in the NPA is that our foundations stones are independence from the Socialist Party and focus on the class struggle. We want to play a major part in developing people's consciousness. We think this is the best way to develop and support the movements for radical change.

GG: What parallels do you see the NPA having with De Linke (the Left Party) in Germany?

JR: Well, there are some in terms of the process of the re-alignment of the radical left but we are a bottom-up creation whereas De Linke has been a top-down formation. It has been formed by the merger of existing forces led by their leaderships and the closest parallel in France to De Linke is Parti Gauche (the Left Party) rather than us because it has been formed by a parliamentarian and its relationship to the Socialist Party is not

clear. It's possible that both Parti Gauche and De Linke want to act or will act as ginger groups to the Socialist Party and SPD.

GG: How has the NPA fared since it was set up? I'm aware that the LCR did a lot of preparation before hand by forming local committees to build for the NPA's creation so it's not as though January 2009 was necessarily the literal starting point of the NPA.

JR: We have grown a little bit since the beginning of the year but we do not measure our success and influence by membership numbers alone. Our key measure is how involved we are in the movements (as well as what happens to the movements) so we see things more in term of how big our periphery of supporters and people that want to work with us in the movements are. Internally, the LCR was quite diverse and the NPA is even more so, so we have an open culture of discussion and debate.

GG: Is the NPA a project for radical left unification?

JR: Yes, but we want the NPA to grow over and above bringing other bits of the left together (particularly the two other far left parties, Lutte Ouvriere and the Workers' Party) and we want the NPA to become the home of those who have become radicalised and questioning and who have never been in any left political party before. But the unification of the radical left will take time because the other two parties are quite dogmatic and sectarian. We hope they will see the sense of coming on board the NPA as the NPA grows and exerts more influence.

The conditions for the left and the NPA are quite volatile and fluid at the moment because the general strike earlier this year did not succeed yet Sarkozy is widely hated so things are quite open at the moment. Things could go either way.

GG: You will be aware that Tommy Sheridan was the public face of the SSP. This had its ups and downs. How do you view Olivier [HYPERLINK "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olivier_Besancenot"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olivier_Besancenot) \o "Olivier Besancenot" Besancenot as the unequivocal public face of the NPA?

JR: Olivier is a young, working postman, rather than an elected politician or a full-time party leader. He is eloquent, articulate and intelligent but we are trying to create a collective leadership and one at different levels. Of course, it is difficult when the media focus on only one person and when that one person is clearly very good at what he does. However, Olivier is only third on the list for the Euro elections in his region and the top of the lists for the other regions in France are headed by other working people like nurses, teachers, car workers and anti-globalisation campaigners. Only around half of these list candidates are former LCR members so we are trying to diversify our leadership.

GG: What is the balance between the NPA's electoral and non-electoral work?

JR: We centre ourselves on the class struggle so elections fit into that, and not the other way round. We use elections to test how we are doing. Sure, it will be good to have a platform of

elected office as a way of spreading our message but we want to make sure our work in the movements comes first. If we are able to gain elected positions, we will use a workers' wage, make these representatives the eyes and ears of workers in the parliament or council, try to make some progressive changes and popularise our message.

GG: Compared to Scotland and Britain, you have much more developed traditions of direct, mass action in France. Do you see this as being critical explaining the emergence of the NPA and what it hopes to become?

JR: Yes, we have a very embedded tradition of direct protest, some of which comes from the historical exclusion of the Communist Party, some from a libertarian current of thought. In the NPA, we want to let people experiment with what works for them and what is best.

GG: Where do the unions fit into the vision of the NPA and what it does?

JR: There is a lot of mistrust of the unions amongst workers. We are for unions of people and are in favour of workers that want their own self-organisation. This means there are big battles to be fought in changing what unions are and have become in France.

Postscript: the 2009 European elections in France. The governing party of President Sarkozy, the Union for a Popular Movement, increased its share of the vote by 11 per cent to give 29 MEPs (four more than before) while the Socialist Party voted decreased by 12 per cent, giving it 14 seats (seventeen less than before). Moreover, the fascist National Front, led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, fell back to 6 per cent (a decrease of 50 per cent) and three MEPs (down by four). In other words, as in many other

European economies, there was a swing to the centre-right, even where these parties were the governing parties. In these circumstances, the results for the radical left are noticeable for the small amounts of progress made (even if they are slightly down on what the polls suggested they would get in the six months before the elections). The Left Front electoral alliance comprised of the new Left Party and the French Communist Party (along with the smaller Convention for a Progressive Alternative and Unitarian Left) gained 6.3 per cent of the vote and four MEPS (up one from before) while the NPA gained 4.8 per cent, putting it just under the five per cent threshold for gaining an MEP. Lutte Ouvrière gained 1.2 per cent of the vote. Arguably, if the NPA had run a joint slate with Lutte Ouvrière then it might have won an MEP. The combined 6.0 per cent vote for both organisations (where the NPA was in the form of its LCR predecessor) was an improvement upon the 2.6 per cent of the vote they gained together as a single slate in the 2004 European elections. It can be suggested that with the dramatic departure for the LCR by forming the NPA, the NPA may have felt it neither necessary nor desirable to stand with together with Lutte Ouvrière in this instance. The issue of the NPA's relationship with the Left Front is more problematic. Clearly, it could represent a bigger radical left if there was some fusion but given the belief on the part of the NPA, this would increase the quantity but not the quality for the NPA believes the Left Party is not steadfast and principled in its opposition to neo-liberalism and the right. In other European countries, the radical left formations like De Linke in Germany, the Left Bloc in Portugal and SYRIZA (the coalition of the radical left) in Greece many small but steady progress on a par or better than that in France. ■

Gregor Gall is professor of industrial relations at the University of Hertfordshire



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reviews

Two MSPs, Bill Wilson and Elaine Smith, bring their different perspectives to a book on the constitutional future of the UK and the question of independence

Breaking Up Britain: Four Nations After a Union, Mark Perryman (Editor). Lawrence & Wishart 2009. ISBN 978-1905007967, 256pp, £17.99

I had some doubts when I was asked to review **Breaking Up Britain**. It appeared to have a pretty interesting list of contributors, and I rather suspect that agreeing to review it would mean having to read the book at a rather faster pace than I desired. Damn, I was right!

This really is an excellent collection. Unusually for a book of this type it has quite a number of English contributors generally writing from the perspective of English nationalism – ‘generally’ in that some have moved to other parts of the Britain and are writing of the independence movements of one of the two normal-sized nations. One fascinating aspect of the English essays is the effort to put together an English nationalism and identity, whilst at the same time looking (in trepidation) over their shoulder at English fascism and imperialism. For a Scottish nationalist this is perhaps the strangest aspect of the attempts to seek an English identity. Only in the UK is the connection consistently made between xenophobia, economic inequality and nationalism. This is not so for the rest of the world. One might consider Gervasio Artigas “recordemos que ellos tienen el principal derecho”

(We must remember that they have the main rights), in defence of indigenous rights; the views of Simón Rodríguez (companion of Bolívar) on equality in education; the present Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela; Gandhi in India, and the reformist nationalist movements in Catalonia and the Basque nation, prior to their being crushed by Franco. Throughout most of the planet the forces of nationalism are inextricably tied to economic reform and social justice. But not in the UK – here there has been a long campaign to link nationalism with racism and socially regressive policies. Understandable of course; it was, after all, nationalists that smashed an empire built on racist arrogance and greed. The attempts by English nationalists to come to terms with this, and build a self-confident, multi-cultural England, make for fascinating reading.

Culture and multiculturalism are themes running strongly throughout the collection of essays. These range from the confidence generated by being secure in one’s culture, and the contrasting damage done when people lack this confidence to build a multi-cultural society, a society in which differences are accepted as merely the rich tapestry of a people, rather than irreparable fault lines which must be fought to the last. It occurred to me, in reading the essays, that Scotland was actually,

at least in one aspect, an excellent example of a multi-cultural society. Scotland possesses two indigenous native languages: Scots and Gaidhlig. For centuries these two cultures were in conflict. However, it is now possible for myself, a speaker of Scots, to venture across the highland line in the reasonable expectation, not only of returning alive, but also of exciting no obvious interest. It has taken some time, but the two cultures now live comfortably side by side. That is not to say we are perfectly multi-cultural. When I was growing up both Scots- and Gaidhlig-speaking pupils were punished for having the temerity to use their native language. Scots-speaking pupils can still be punished in some schools, and there are Scottish politicians who express the view that whilst the language is fit for the playground it is not fit for the classroom. On a wider UK level, Scots, Welsh, Gaidhlig and Erse speakers accept each other’s rights, and, implicitly, multiculturalism. Sadly the Welsh essays suggest, as with Scots, there is still a problem in convincing some sections of the UK community that all languages have equal rights. Now I am not suggesting to contributors such as Salama Yaqoob that the community she writes of should

sit around for a few hundred years waiting for everything to settle down. That clearly is not acceptable. But I would suggest that the history of these languages indicates that multiculturalism is possible.

Some may regard this review as rather indulgent – I appear to have used the opportunity to advance some of my own ideas. Well, probably not an entirely unfair charge, but there is method in my madness. How does one review such a wide-ranging collection of essays? Essays which are

well thought out, and which raise such an interesting set of questions. I decided to put down a few of the thoughts which reading the book generated. Indulgent? Trust me, this review could have been much longer! ■

Bill Wilson MSP

“The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear”. Gramsci

When I went along to May Day in Glasgow, several teenagers in tow to further their political awareness, my intention

was to join in the March, help comrades at Labour's Campaign for Socialism stall get signatures for the People's Charter and listen to some good music. I was a bit surprised with myself, therefore, when I agreed to review a book for the SLR.

It's not that I don't like to read: I love to do so both for pleasure and to further my education and awareness but I have a big queue of titles awaiting my attention. So when **Breaking up Britain: Four Nations after a Union** arrived at my office I was not full of enthusiasm to delve in and start reading and assumed I would have to discipline myself to 'plough' through it. Not so. This is a very readable book, well-written, informative and thought-provoking, and once started I found it hard to put down.

The character of the book is a collection of essays formatted around four themes namely Post-Devolution National Identities; Models of Civic Nationalism; Formations of Exclusion and States of Independence. Editor Mark Perryman contributes the keynote essay, 'A Jigsaw State' and the book's title is a play on Tom Nairn's seminal 1977 book **The Break-up of Britain**. It has been released to coincide with ten years of devolution in Scotland and Wales, recognising too the restoration of powers to Stormont during that period. It's a very well-timed book (indeed I am writing this review in the week the Calman Commission issues its report into Scottish devolution) and it will undoubtedly make a major contribution to the debate in the coming months and years.

The central proposition is that the devolution process has started an irreversible move toward the Break Up outlined by Tom Nairn with another ten years seeing the process concluded. However, not all of the contributors are keen proponents of this essential break-up thesis of the book, preferring to consider the case that change may be somewhat more gradual in character, perhaps resulting in a Federal settlement.

One of the key issues is that of English nationalism; seemingly harder to characterise than its Scottish and Welsh counterparts. Several essays make the point that the 'break-up' under discussion is being led by devolution in Scotland and Wales, and if that ultimately results in independence, England will be left considering its own position as an independent nation. The worry then, as expressed by Mark Perryman, is that in this period of discontinuity, or interregnum as Gramsci puts it, the nasty side of English nationalism will be to the fore with a mix of a populist right and the vile racist nationalism of the BNP. The recent election of two BNP MEPs give us a taste of this although there are a number of complex issues involved in that particular horror story. Perryman believes that an alternative, progressive English identity could emerge as long as action is taken to shape the process.

On a personal basis, I found the essays on Ireland of particular interest. Northern Ireland is, of course, the part of Britain least likely at present to enthusiastically back any move to a break up of the union. Perhaps the most interesting was by Gerry Adams. He is, as you might expect, making the case for a new republic of

Ireland, acknowledging that this can only be properly achieved by persuading unionists of the desirability of a shared, united Ireland where "they would be citizens, not mere subjects" and "They would have rights, not concessions". However, he also provides a damning critique of the current Irish government and

its predecessors. Adams points out that the ordinary people losing their jobs are those who helped build the Celtic Tiger economy and are now being failed by a government giving billions to the banks. He urges that the banking executives and others must be fully investigated and, if they have broken the law, they must be brought before the courts, illustrating his point with the lyrics of Woody Guthrie "Some rob you with a six gun, some with a fountain pen".

Much of Adam's essay could apply to the New Labour project and its rigorous attachment to neo-liberal policies. His obvious frustration with policies and economic strategies that serve private greed rather than public good resonated with my own resentment and disappointment in a decade of a Labour

Government that could have done so much to deliver justice and equality but chose to pursue detrimental policies such as privatisation of public services, erosion of civil liberties and war.

One theme in the book that I would challenge is that of the SNP being left-of-centre. Certainly, there are some progressive policies such as free prescriptions, an end to tuition fees and piloting free school meals, all of which I have long supported. Labour did, however, also introduce progressive policies such as the Scottish Parliament itself, free universal central heating for the elderly and free bus travel for pensioners. The SNP are a party of the centre much the same as New Labour and what this would mean from a socialist perspective for an Independent Scotland is not clear.

Overall, this book provides a new focus for debate on the subject of devolution, independence and the merits of the Union and I would recommend it to anyone interested in the constitutional debate across Britain (although it might have benefited from a contribution by a Labour MSP). The main speculation at present in Scotland revolves around whether a Tory win at the general election would hasten the end of the Union and herald in Independence. There really are more questions than answers, not least around what exactly is national identity and I think that the essence of the book lies in the essay by Kenny and Lodge 'More than one English question' when they say "The future is hard to read". ■

Elaine Smith MSP

Convener of Scottish Labour's Campaign for Socialism

web review

Henry McCubbin

With the Big Tent being the theme of this edition what bigger tent could we have than the internet. In fact the growth of small bands of activists linking briefly and effectively to gain publicity for their common cause could be put down in the main to the internet and the messaging capacity of mobile phones. Yes the Big Tent 2009 (Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th July) is Scotland's largest eco-festival. Pitched next to Falkland Palace it offers what has been called 'one of the most stunning festival locations in the UK'. It also has garnered an impressive list of sponsors.

For further information click on bigtentfestival.co.uk/festival.php. It is good to see support from Word Power Books www.word-power.co.uk a leading quality independent bookshop whose site offers you access to all books in print in the UK with a commitment to promoting literature out with the mainstream thereby making it more accessible and helping to support small presses and new writers.

Also spreading in the big tent will be scotland.wwf.org.uk/ amongst other campaigning organisations. My only reservation is that the comfort that comes from a variety of quangos sponsoring an event can be negated by the ever present threat

of institutional capture. There again the ability of campaigning organisations to split and scatter then reform makes institutional capture more difficult.

Meanwhile lets not forget Honduras www.michelcollon.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2161:whats-behind-the-coup&catid=6:articles&Itemid=11 has a background to the official coverage of yet another coup in South America . ■

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