

## UNSETTLED WILLS

Scotland's constitutional future



Alex Salmond, John McAllion, Tommy Sheridan

David McLennan on the culture of prudence

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# comment

Jimmy Reid

In any democratic nation, sovereignty resides with the people. The people might cede sovereign powers to a government, for a strictly limited period of time, but the relationship is clear; when it comes to sovereign power, the people are masters and governments are servants of the people. I know it has been hard to distinguish this relationship in the arrogance of British governments, particularly since Thatcher. If sovereignty doesn't reside with the people then you have tyranny. In this context national self-determination expressed through the will of the people is the fundamental right of all nations, big or small. But obviously smaller nations often encounter greater problems in the exercise of this right. It has always amazed me that some on the Scottish Left can easily understand the right of self-determination for all other nations in the world, except their own. Such exceptionality shows a vulgar contempt for the Scottish people.

No constitutional arrangement or settled will of the Scottish nation can ever be permanent. The actual experience of a constitutional settlement will lead us, on the basis of that experience, to re-thinks or updates. It couldn't be otherwise. In addition, new generations might think differently about these matters and they will have their say. I state the obvious to emphasise that the settled will of the Scottish people was for constitutional proposals that were then on the table. They will have a sell-by date. John Smith was too wise to think that any such arrangement could be permanent. This is already manifest in the strained relations between Holyrood and Westminster. There would be difficulties even if there were the most sensitive politicians in Westminster. Sensitive is hardly a word that can apply to the likes of Alastair Campbell and Helen Liddle. Tension was inevitable between the two parliaments. Creative tensions can be good things. Much historical progress has come from the resolution of such tensions. To start a debate on this important matter, SLR commissioned Tom Nairn, one of Scotland's constitutional experts and a doughty man of the Left, to start the ball rolling. This he did splendidly in the last issue. The magazine then asked three of Scotland's most outstanding politicians of the Left to respond.

The Scottish Socialist Party is the only party in Scotland that proudly stands for socialism. Tommy Sheridan knows that socialism isn't on the agenda at the General Election: But the promotion of socialist ideas is vital if we are to take the Left forward beyond the election. Tommy

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sees national independence and the fight for socialism as an integrated whole. He is thus following in the footsteps of the great John MacLean.

Alec Salmond explains that the constitutional question cannot be severed from economic and social issues. He is right. I know of no successful struggle for national independence that didn't have an economic dimension. He is proud to proclaim that the SNP is programmatically a Social Democratic Party. This, of course, puts his party considerably to the Left of New Labour. Alec agrees with Tom on some aspects but disagrees with him on others. I believe the differences are very bridgeable. But, anyway, cut and thrust are necessary parts of any meaningful debate on the left, as long as the jousting doesn't lead to bloodletting. And there is no chance of that with these two pacifist gentlemen.

John McAllion is an outstanding Labour MSP. He is also a socialist theoretician of considerable merit. I happen to think that the British Labour Movement was always seriously lacking in theory. This led to a hand to mouth political existence where the movement responded to but seldom led events. Comrades would boast "I'm a practical man and have no time for theory." This meant he struggled on through the years fighting only on immediate issues. His lack of theory meant he was incapable of lifting his head above the immediate struggle so as to try and get a glimpse of where he and his mates were going; that is if they were going anywhere. John

understands the link between immediate struggles and longer-term aspirations. He proceeds in this essay to bring his political acumen to bear on the complexities of the constitutional debate; much to our enlightenment.

There are other essays in this issue that must be studied. They deal in general with the powers still reserved in London. Tony Southall, leader of the Scottish CND argues most cogently about a major contradiction. Defence, if you can call it that, is in the keep of Westminster. There are clear indications that Scots do not want Trident bases in their midst. Westminster plonks them in our midst. Why not place them on the Thames where the political welcome for Trident is clearly more manifest than up here? Scotland's Parliament could actually make such a recommendation or at least tell Westminster to get these missiles out of Scotland. Chequers would be not a bad location.

Stephen Maxwell argues an outstanding case on how we should approach the whole question of social policies with the advent of a Scottish Parliament but this is dogged and difficult while the purse strings are still in London. Rozanne Foyer of the STUC rightly lays about the lot of us for failing to push ahead with a full programme of gender equality. Some will wince at some of her criticisms but she is right. And David McLennan makes a passionate case for the role the arts must play in achieving social inclusion. Oh, and enjoy Samuel Peeps Diary. Adieu! ■

# the scottish end of the telescope

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Alex Salmond

There is much to agree with in Tom Nairn's recent article 'Constituting Scotland', as one would expect from a man with his track record. For many in my generation his "Break up of Britain" was a seminal work which has influenced opinion and thinking in the British state over the last quarter century.

Not surprisingly then there are many insights in the article which throw light on the current situation and the way ahead. But if I have a criticism it is that Tom tends

to look at the current situation from the British end of the telescope rather than the Scottish end.

Tom opens by stating that 'we in Scotland have to do it our own way'. Yes, of course. But, instead of using this as his base principle, Nairn proceeds to argue that Scotland's progress is in fact determined elsewhere, by the 'disintegration' of the British State. He compounds this by operating to a Westminster timescale when he writes: "In 2005 or (at the latest) 2009-10, there will be the

problem of different parties and governments in power at Holyrood and Westminster.”

I am not suggesting that Scotland and Scots operate in a vacuum or that we shall be isolated from what’s happening in the UK or, indeed, Europe. But I do maintain that it will be Scotland and the Scottish people who will determine our future. And that decision is as likely to take place in 2003 when we vote in Scottish Parliamentary elections. And of course, any decision on independence for our country will be decided in a referendum on the issue where the people will decide.

We in Scotland do indeed have to do it our own way, and that simple democratic imperative must be central to all our thinking on Scotland’s future.

Nairn’s second set of problems stems from his failure to grasp the ‘I’ word. Independence for Scotland is the logical and democratic outcome of Nairn’s analysis but he seems unwilling, like some of our other commentators, to come to terms with this simple fact.

Tom writes that “any new political formation must be constitutionally oriented; and not just at defending the (Scottish) Parliament but also at constructing a more durable and internationally presentable basis for Scottish government. It is important to notice this is not the same as independence”. According to Tom, independence is ‘out of date’, but he then proceeds to confuse us by stating that Scotland must remain ‘intact and, of course, independent, or at least much more independent than the Scotland Act permitted us to be’.

Is this some quasi, semi or neo independence that Tom has in mind? Whatever it is, it certainly isn’t clear. Grasp the nettle, Tom. It is independence you mean, so let’s stop beating about the bush. By the way, the distinction between fundamentalists and gradualists on independence is now completely redundant.

One further point of disagreement with the Nairn view. Far from being ‘inactive’ and ‘failing to get its act together’, the Scottish Parliament has grown up very quickly over the past 18 months. It is now very certainly the focus of the nation and has already started in earnest to address the contradictions of devolution.

Indeed one of the features of Scottish political life has been the speed of change over the past eighteen months.

The change in the SNP has been widely recognised but less commented on have been the changes in the Unionist parties.

Henry McLeish and the ‘Scottish Government’ saga was symptomatic of a Scottish Labour Party caught between the dynamic of the Scottish Parliament and the demands of its London masters. Not surprisingly London won, but the more London pulls at the leash, the more it will rankle with ordinary Labour members. The fact that it even became an issue shows which way the wind is blowing.

Even the Tories in Scotland are trying to break away from their London masters. There is now some clear blue water between Tories north and south of the border, although they remain third to an out-of-date union and William Hague’s skinhead politics.

The Liberal Democrats too have changed, and changed in a way that must certainly worry grass roots Liberals. Charles Kennedy now seems prepared to accept at Westminster the client status for his party that has been pioneered by Jim Wallace in Scotland.

But enough of this carping. The central themes of Nairn’s analysis are correct. Tom quotes with approval American anthropologist Jonathan Hearn who argues that ‘although ethnic Scottishness is largely contrived, the effort to transcend it and to make [or claim] a political and constitutional nation has been the underlying identity of the Scots. The only way we have been able to do this is by becoming a civic nation. And what that means is constructing ourselves by choice, as an egalitarian (in today’s terms a social democratic) society’. He then goes on to argue that this process over the centuries has ‘referred back, sometimes half-consciously, to an

event in the later middle ages; not the military victory of Bannockburn but the claim made in its wake, the Declaration of Arbroath (1320)’.

This is an analysis which fits happily with the SNP and our goal of independence. It highlights the fact that the central thrust of Scottish nationalism is civic, left of centre, but - above all - democratic.

The process over the years has been argue for more democracy for Scotland.

The establishment of the Scottish Parliament is an important stage in that process, but does not represent full democracy for Scotland. That will only come when

## **The central thrust of Scottish nationalism is civic, left of centre, but - above all - democratic**

we have the full democratic powers here in Scotland that Independence represents.

The central contradiction of devolution is that it represents only a partial democracy for Scotland. That has been readily highlighted in the Parliament over the past 18 months as we have dealt with issues such as tuition fees and care for the elderly. On these issues a clear majority has existed in the Parliament to abolish tuition fees and to provide full care for the elderly. On both these issues London has tried to subvert the Parliament and the will of the Scottish people. On the first occasion it succeeded – and on the second the outcome remains to be seen.

This contradiction between the democratic will of the Scottish Parliament and the anti-democratic veto of London is endemic in the devolution settlement. The people of Scotland will increasingly see their will, their choices, being subverted by London politicians who believe they still remain in control.

As the Scottish Parliament proceeds this sharp contradiction will become readily more apparent. It will

present the people with a simple and stark democratic choice. Do we want full democracy or not? I have little doubt that the answer will be yes, and that the question will be put sooner rather than later.

It is also likely that the democratic contradictions inherent in devolution will be amplified in the Labour Party. As Nairn points out “Labourism has allied itself fatally and finally with the failing structures of the United Kingdom”. What this means in the Scottish context is that the Labour Party in Scotland, just as the Tories before them, will increasingly come to be seen as anti-Scottish. If you are compliant in subverting the democratic will of the people then rejection will follow shortly.

That is the position of the Labour Party in Scotland. Henry McLeish is on London’s leash and puppet administrations tend to have a short shelf-life. Scotland is on a democratic journey. We should be clear that the destination of that journey is independence. This is an inspiring time for Scotland and for this generation. We now have the opportunity to build a fully democratic and just nation of which we can be proud. ■

# unlimiting scotland

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John McAllion

The late John Smith famously described devolution as the “settled will of the Scottish people”. At that time, he meant by “devolution” a devolved Scottish Parliament operating within the United Kingdom and subsidiary to the Westminster Parliament. But is it really fair to describe support for that precise constitutional formula as the “settled will” of anything like the whole Scottish nation either then or now? I think not.

It is important to remember the political context in which John Smith uttered these famous words. He spoke in the aftermath of the mother-of-all doomsday scenarios in which a UK Tory government, again without a Scottish mandate, had been elected to run Scotland for the fourth time in a row. Moreover, that Major government, like its three predecessors, had steadfastly set its face against any prospect of a separate Scottish Parliament of any kind.

So that if there was a “settled will” at that time, it was surely to end this constitutional logjam and with it nearly 300 years of direct rule from London by setting up a Scottish Parliament. Just what kind of parliament Scotland had settled upon is a much more open question and one that has been perceptively addressed by Tom Nairn in his article “Constituting Scotland”.

Ideological warriors for the Union (Gordon Brown and Douglas Alexander in their pamphlet “New Scotland New Britain”) argue that what Scotland really wanted was its own parliament still inside the union and subsidiary to what Tom Nairn describes as the “Brit-Nation”. Their pamphlet inveighs against the consequences for Scotland of wanting anything more: “the break-up of Britain”, “better off together”, “worse off apart”, “separately under the SNP”, and so on. Their approach would seem to be to solidly soundbite Scotland into the Union.

In doing so, they paint a picture of a Scotland cut off from its economic lifeline of the English market, a Scotland where Scots have become foreigners in their own country (the United Kingdom), and a Scotland that is turning its back on centuries of shared suffering and success. Their main thrust is all too clear: how can any Scot who wants the best for Scotland even contemplate a future without the security blanket of the United Kingdom? All good scaremongering stuff, but hardly a closely argued case for the constitutional future of Scotland in the century to come.

Meanwhile, at the other extreme of the constitutional spectrum, fundamentalist nationalists agitate for what Tom Nairn describes as the "freedom-or-bust single idea" of independence. A Scotland "free in '93" or 2003 or... fill in the appropriate date to take account of sharp doses of reality. Just as unionists cannot conceive a Scottish future without Britain, fundamentalist nationalists cannot imagine a future Scotland in any way still a part of Britain. For them Scotland will never be free until the last unionist is strangled with the last copy of the venerable Treaty of Union.

Tom Nairn is right to dismiss both of these extremes as having been overtaken by the sheer pace of events in modern Scotland. It's certainly true that the "settled will of the Scottish people" was a brilliant formula for galvanising the majority in Scotland to annihilate Tory obscurantism in the '97 election. However, it is equally true that it settled little about the future constitutional options for Scotland. Rather it intensified the debate around these options by opening up all kinds of possible futures for a new Scotland.

That debate must now move on by examining what the nature of that new Scotland might be. For myself, I do not want a Scotland that is forever defined by or limited to the terms of the Scotland Act 1998. Devolution was never a line drawn in the sand. Even Donald Dewar accepted that it was a process to be worked through rather than an event in itself. I agree.

The fact that Scotland had no constitutional status on its own for so long under the unreformed union is no argument for it having to accept an inferior constitutional status within that now partially reformed union. That does not mean that I accept automatically the proposition that the Scottish Parliament is a "starting gate" for "getting out of Britain", as Tom argues. I do, however,

acknowledge that the Scotland of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must step out of the shadow of being subject to the sovereignty of the "dream state" of Britain.

## **I do not want a Scotland that is forever defined by or limited to the terms of the Scotland Act 1998**

Therein lies the real problem for Labour in this increasingly important political terrain. If Labour chooses to defend the status quo and to present any proposal for change as independence by stealth or a nationalist plot for the break up of Britain, then they will increasingly find themselves on the side of Westminster and against Holyrood. They will thereby risk walking into

the same political cul-de-sac Scottish Tories found themselves in of being perceived as anti-Scottish and dancing to London's tune. As Scotland's Tories have now discovered to their cost, that is not a good political space for any Scottish party to occupy.

The recent row over whether we have a Scottish Executive or Scottish Government at Holyrood illustrates the dangers here for Labour. While Scottish Labour MPs at Westminster lined up to rage against Scotland's "white heather club" on the mound, and called for Tony Blair to slap down the Scottish upstart Henry McLeish, none of them seemed to grasp that they were rubbishing Scotland's elected First Minister and Parliament just months before they face the Scottish people in a general election. Did they really think that was good politics?

The creation of a Scottish Parliament and Government is one of Labour's biggest achievements and should be a source of pride for every member of the party in Scotland. Why put at risk the political credit for that achievement by their intemperate outbursts against our only uniquely Scottish democratic institution? Can they not see that the SNP are desperately trying to present themselves as "Scotland's Party" and will fight the forthcoming general election under the slogan "We stand for Scotland"?

In attacking the institution of the Scottish Parliament, they are doing exactly what the SNP want them to do. Every time Labour asserts the sovereignty of Westminster over Holyrood; every time it refuses to countenance any new powers for Holyrood; and every time it dismisses Scotland's desire for democratic control over its own affairs as putting a Scottish state before social justice, it seems to say we will not stand up for Scotland. That is precisely what the SNP want. Giving them what they want is not what Labour in Scotland should be about.

Devolution was never about saving the United Kingdom. It was always about giving Scotland the democratic voice it demanded. That voice alone can set limits to how far those demands can or should go. Labour MPs acknowledged as much when we lined up behind John Smith to sign the Claim of Right for Scotland. We cannot now retreat behind Britain's skirts by claiming that Holyrood's powers are a matter for Westminster and Westminster alone.

In the modern world, sovereignty is shared between different levels of government from European to local and guided by the principle of subsidiarity. Decisions should be taken as close to the people as possible. How deciding what Holyrood can or cannot do in London fits in with such modern thinking beats me. If Labour is serious about modernising government, then high on its agenda must be a willingness to surrender Westminster's claim to sovereignty and to negotiate a new Treaty of Union between Westminster and Holyrood.

Nor should this be presented as putting the constitutional cart before the bread and butter horse of social and economic concerns. A Scottish Parliament dependent

for the bulk of its funding on Westminster largesse and fearful of using its limited and regressive tax varying powers is not in a strong position to address that social and economic agenda. This may not seem obvious in the current climate of big increases in public spending, but that climate cannot last forever. As time passes and the Barnett squeeze begins to bite, the weakness of Holyrood's financial powers will become more rather than less obvious.

Labour needs to face up to that problem now rather than later. This will be a big leap for many in the party to make, but make it they must. We need to look to the interests of the Scottish Labour Party and to the position it could find itself facing in five to 10 years time. That position has to be one we can defend against the attack that a devolved parliament dependent on Westminster funding cannot rise to the challenges then facing Scotland. Unless there is change it will be incredibly difficult for us to do so. In the past we have acknowledged the autonomy and independence of the Scottish party in areas devolved to Scotland. Now we must accept that the Scottish party must be free to develop its thinking beyond those devolved boundaries. ■

# an independent vision

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Tommy Sheridan

The Scottish Socialist Party endeavours to promote a clear Socialist and radical programme for the transformation of Scotland. Our fundamental priority is the tackling of poverty and inequality. Our basic premise is the fact that Scotland is blessed with enormous wealth and resources, both natural and human.

Constitutional questions are not however peripheral to the crusade for Socialism in Scotland. On the contrary it is a central democratic objective and demand of the SSP that we deliver an independent Socialist Scotland. For us independence is not an end in and of itself but merely a means to delivering the radical redistribution of wealth and power which will be required to raise the standard and quality of life for every man, woman and child within our country.

Our vision of an independent Socialist Scotland is neither narrow or nationalistic. We wish to create the social and economic conditions within Scotland that will allow Socialist ideas to become our most popular and potent export to the rest of the world. Given Scotland's highly developed infrastructure, economy and abundance of natural resources we could undoubtedly survive as a small Socialist oasis in a hostile world for a period of time. However, we would face strangulation if that small period of time was not used to build physical and economic support throughout the world. That Socialism is international is also a basic principle of our Party.

Although we would certainly be willing to involve ourselves in broad democratic campaigns alongside progressive nationalist organisations, our programme principles and

values are distinctly Socialist. The British road to Socialism versus the Scottish road to Socialism argument is stale and unhelpful. Scotland is certainly part of the UK for the moment but Britain is part of Europe and Europe is part of the World. Our task as Socialists is to build the necessary support and crucially the organisation which can inspire the majority of Scottish citizens to campaign for and vote for an independent Socialist Scotland.

The break up of the United Kingdom would undoubtedly present opportunities for Socialists in Wales, England and indeed throughout the World as it would represent a major blow to one of imperialism's most consistent protagonists. It is not enough however to argue simply for independence; it is vital that the argument for independence is integrally linked to the vision which such a break up of the United Kingdom could deliver. The problem with the SNP in our opinion is its inability to inspire a sufficient of the Scottish population around the demand of independence in and of itself. Undoubtedly economic and social conditions could deteriorate to an extent that such a demand in and of itself could command majority support. But in the current context we would argue that the reasons why such a change should be fought for have to be clearly explained and presented beforehand.

In practical terms the SNP recently supported an increase of £3 per week in a single person's pension and £5 per week in a couples' pension on the basis of their independence programme. Such minimalist and modest demands are simply not good enough. Even Gordon Brown after four years of barefaced neglect and betrayal of our pensioners has been able to offer higher increases in the basic state pension. Similarly in relation to the minimum wage, the working week and crucially ownership and control of our economy, the vision of an independent Socialist Scotland does have the potential to mobilise the majority of our citizens.

If an independent Scotland retains privatised inefficient rail and bus services why fight for the change? If an independent Scotland maintains the acutely undemocratic pattern of ownership and control of the electricity resources, the gas supplies, our oil reserves, our banks and other major industrial concerns then what will the difference be? The fact is that in a democratic

independent Scotland there would be a natural majority for the return of the railways, our gas and our electricity supplies at least to public and democratic ownership and control. Nuclear weapons could be expelled from the Clyde and decommissioning of these illegal and inhumane weapons could become a reality. But unless we promote these ideas to the forefront of our campaign for an independent Scotland then the fear remains that the free market parties will continue to engage in the politics of fear and darkness to desperately retain the United Kingdom.

Our role has to be the raising of sights and aspirations. We have to promote our Socialist vision with passion, sincerity and practical explanation. Our independent Socialist Scotland will be bound by a written constitution

or bill of rights which guarantees our citizens a high standard and quality of life. We are however deluding the people of this country if we fail to explain that a fundamental improvement in the standard and quality of our citizens lives can not be delivered without a wholesale redistribution of wealth and power involving public ownership and democratic Socialist planning.

The 2003 and 2007 elections scheduled for the Scottish Parliament will be hugely significant. In May, for the first time in Scottish political history, there will be a Socialist challenge to the Labour Party in every seat in Scotland. That provides the base for an even more formidable challenge in 2003. The combination of disillusionment with new Labour and greater awareness of the Scottish Socialist Party's democratic programme for change will lead to a different configuration of seats in Holyrood in 2003 and by 2007 a referendum on independence will definitely be on the agenda. We should not refuse to support such a referendum on the basis that citizens are not allowed the opportunity to vote for an independent Socialist Scotland but we would involve ourselves in such a referendum on the basis of open and honest explanation of our intentions.

These are indeed interesting times which present great opportunities for Socialist Scotland, but important challenges as well. ■

## **The break up of the United Kingdom would undoubtedly present opportunities for Socialists in Wales, England and indeed throughout the World**

# feeling the benefit

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Stephen Maxwell

The case for the creation of the Scottish Parliament was argued primarily in constitutional terms. But it was supported by a strong, if diffuse, ambition for social improvement in Scotland. While the political and media elites may assess the worth of the Parliament by the transparency and accessibility of its processes, the wider public is likely to judge it by the impact it has on Scotland's social and economic health.

Yet the planners of Scottish devolution created a Parliament which lacked essential instruments of social and economic reform, namely power over social security and over taxation, with the exception of the power to vary the standard rate of income tax by 3p in the pound.

The justifications for denying social security and tax powers to the Scottish Parliament were mixed. The simplest case was that the powers would represent too onerous a burden of responsibility for a new Parliament. Rather let the Parliament evolve to the stage of seeking new powers than threaten its credibility by overloading it at the outset. An economic case argued that devolving social security could distort the United Kingdom labour market by creating different levels of welfare payments north and south of the Border. And there was a practical case based on the difficulty of devising a funding formula capable of meeting an uncapped, rights based, spending demand without conceding full fiscal autonomy.

Such plausible reservations complemented contemporary scepticism about the effectiveness of income transfers through social security payments as a tool of social reform, a scepticism reflected in Blair's 'Third Way' rhetoric. Payments at the level necessary to eliminate poverty created a 'moral hazard' for the recipients in the form of a disincentive to take up paid employment. The solution to Scotland's social problems was more likely to be found in a combination of improved and better targeted public services and labour market measures.

But the political expediency of the division of powers between Scotland and Westminster remained clear. Variations in benefit levels between states in the United States have proved consistent with a

highly flexible and mobile labour market. At a different level of welfare, the relatively free Nordic labour market contains significant differences in benefit levels. In any case, even without legislative devolution, the social wage in Scotland differed from the social wage in England, as illustrated by different levels of per capita expenditure and provision in many public services. The devolved Parliament is able to increase the difference as illustrated by its response to the Sutherland report on care of the elderly.

It is inconsistent too, for a Government which champions the virtues of competition between national tax and social insurance systems within the European Union to be dogmatically opposed to any competition between the countries of the UK.

Even if social security policy had to be excluded from the Scottish Parliament's competences in the cause of limiting the Scottish Parliament's powers, the administration of the social security system could have been devolved to Scotland. At the least, Scottish supervision could have helped humanise the system and develop a Scottish platform for good practice.

In practice, the Government moved quickly to reinforce its combination of public service targeting and labour market measures by tax and benefit measures in the form of the Working Families Tax Credit, and later by the Children's Tax Credit and selective benefit increases.

The Scotland Act is unambiguous that social security is a function reserved to Westminster. This clearly precludes any attempt by the Scottish Parliament to alter the levels or terms of benefits available under Westminster social security legislation. It is not so clear that it precludes the Scottish Parliament legislating to provide cash support out of its own resources, in the form say of a Christmas bonus for particular low income groups, or supplements to cold weather payments. Where income poverty is identified as a main factor in social exclusion, the Parliament should be ready

to test the limits of its powers if necessary to the point of judicial determination.

**Where income poverty is identified as a main factor in social exclusion, the Parliament should be ready to test the limits of its powers if necessary to the point of judicial determination**

One area in which the Parliament has competence is local government structure and finance. It would be open to the Parliament to legislate to increase the revenue raising powers of local authorities, thereby releasing more of its Treasury block grant for national anti-poverty programmes. The social impact of such a change could be reinforced by requiring local authorities to introduce a scheme of progressive local income tax. As long as the revenue was exclusively the property of the local taxing authorities such a scheme would presumably be safe from legal challenge under the reservation of taxing powers to Westminster and Parliament would continue to enjoy the power to allocate its block grant income as it wished.

The Scottish Executive's proposal to give local authorities a power of general competence also opens up new possibilities for Scottish action on income poverty. The Executive's consultation paper proposes that the general competence would cover the promotion of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the whole population, or any part of the population, of a local authority area, and includes the power to give financial assistance to any person. While the general competence proposed does not extend to the power to raise money, local authorities possess a power under existing legislation to levy a 1p in the pound tax. Using its local government powers the Scottish Parliament could raise that ceiling, say to 3p and require local authorities to spend all, or a part, of the income on the revenue relief of income poverty amongst defined groups of the population.

Even in the absence of structural changes, the Scottish Parliament has the opportunity to exert influence on UK social strategy. A Scottish commitment to implement Sutherland would create a precedent around which English and Welsh lobbies would rally. The Treasury would find it hard to explain why England could not afford to implement Sutherland when Scotland could. While a Scottish lead would certainly anger Gordon Brown, his

scope for penalising Scotland would be limited by the political dynamics within Scotland.

Another significant opportunity for Scotland to influence the terms of the social policy debate at United Kingdom

level is signalled in the Scottish Executive's first Annual Social Justice report. The report contains an article by an academic member of the Scottish Social Inclusion Network's Evaluation Action Team arguing for a Scottish "poverty threshold" measure. A combination of focus group discussions and survey techniques would be used to establish 'democratic consensus' about the household goods and activities deemed necessary for living in Scotland.

Useful as a direct aid to understanding the multiple dimensions of poverty, this standard of relative poverty in Scotland would also be available as a yardstick against which to measure the adequacy of current welfare payments. The Social Justice Minister, Jackie Baillie has agreed to further work to determine the feasibility of developing and maintaining such a Scottish standard. While this concept has been applied to the United Kingdom by academics south of the Border, most recently in 1999, it has never before won Government endorsement. A successful Scottish pilot could have a major impact.

The Social Inclusion Committee of the Scottish Parliament has an opportunity – and a duty – to engage critically not just with the Scottish Executive's own social justice strategy but with the United Kingdom policy framework within which it operates. A social strategy which sets a twenty year horizon for the elimination of child poverty – well beyond the expectations

of political life of the current generation of Labour leaders – is in desperate need of an injection of moral urgency. If the Scottish Parliament tamely accepts that many of the current generation of Scottish children growing up in poverty – around 40 per cent of the total – will be raising their own children in poverty, then it will destroy the hopes placed in it. As it begins to get its second wind, the Scottish Parliament must set itself the biggest challenge facing Scotland today.

**The Scotland Act clearly precludes any attempt by the Scottish Parliament to alter the levels or terms of benefits. It is not so clear that it precludes the Scottish Parliament legislating to provide cash support out of its own resources in the form say of a Christmas bonus for particular low income groups.**

# too proud of small victories?

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Rozanne Foyer

When I heard the announcement that my MP Maria Fyfe was standing down, it started me thinking about the changes that have been achieved for women within the labour movement over the past few years. Part of me was proudly reflecting on how far we've come and the great progress we've made in recent years and I felt full of gratitude for all of the women like Maria who struggled long and hard and led the way for so many others who now hold public office. But I must admit that another part of me felt somehow ashamed and slightly alarmed. Alarmed that perhaps we've taken our foot off the gas in our quest for gender equality, alarmed that we've been too proud of our recent small victories and are somehow being placated by the men around us, while our ideas are not being fully embraced; and ultimately alarmed that yet another seasoned, strong, left wing woman is being lost to us without any guarantees of there being a suitable replacement waiting in the wings.

At the 1997 General Election Scotland returned 12 women MPs out of 72. In the coming General Election there are likely to be, at most, eight women going from Scotland to Westminster. It could be fewer since several are in closely-contested marginals. There are likely to be no SNP, Liberal Democrat or Conservative women MPs. If women's representation can so quickly go into reverse, what are the prospects for the next Scottish Parliament and for local government?

When Maria Fife was elected to Westminster 14 years ago, she became the only woman MP in Scotland at that time, and she joined an institution where well over 90 per cent of her colleagues were men. It was a time when the very idea of women only shortlists or mechanisms for securing 50=50 gender balance were thought of as ridiculous and when only those women without pressing family commitments, those willing to walk and talk like the men, were seen as suitable for public office. But Maria was not willing to walk and talk like the men all the time. She knew her stuff and could put forward the progressive, socialist line with the best of them, but she also walked with the women, using her office to highlight their problems and promote their solutions. Something no other MP in Scotland was doing for women at the time.

About six years ago when I was a young shop steward, only really starting to develop my political awareness, I can remember going to a seminar about women and politics run by the STUC Women's Committee. The women at this meeting were talking about the double democratic deficit facing socialist women in Scotland, and the campaign

for a Scottish Parliament. They talked about how this parliament would be different from Westminster. How it would have family friendly working hours; a crèche; a more committee based, consensual, cross party approach to creating legislation; and most exciting of all, how it would have women making up half its representatives, so that the issues affecting women in Scotland could be fully addressed and not sidelined. I felt intoxicated by the enthusiasm, drive and imagination shown by these women.

Over the past five years I have witnessed and supported, in every way I could, the long, hard and exciting struggle to get where we are today and I am happy to say that many of the things I first heard about that day are now a reality. We now have a Scottish Parliament, which works to far more family friendly hours than Westminster, and when the building is finished it will have a crèche. Although 50=50 has not been achieved yet, there are almost 40 per cent women who sit in our Parliament, and in my opinion they have already shown that they are represented in high enough numbers to make a significant impact on the type of issues that are discussed, the way that the parliament does business, and also the legislation produced. Nobody can argue that lasting progress has not been made here.

But have we come far enough? Can we now get back to discussing, what is known by some men on the left, as the real bread and butter political issues, like the loss of jobs in the heavy manufacturing sector or the old class barriers and divisions? We may well now have the highest ever number of women representatives at both UK and Scottish Parliament levels. We may well have government, political parties and trade unions that like to make all the right noises about being inclusive and backing an equalities agenda. We may also have a handful of prominent and powerful women in government. But in reality, women are still far from fully sharing political power and political parties are still far from implementing the kind of policies that will make a real difference to the position of women in society. Even worse, in public appointments to non departmental public bodies, the number of women represented has fallen in recent years, despite targets set by the government.

Meanwhile all around us, the male backlash against any progress that has been made by women, continues to beat its drum, in a low-key and hypnotic manner, calling us back to our traditional ways. You can see it clearly and daily in the media. You can see it in the right wing hysterical campaigns that attempted to demonise both

Wendy Alexander and Susan Deacon for implementing socially progressive policies to abolish Clause 28 and improve education on sexual health. Also, much more subtle and much more dangerous, if you look closely you can see it in the men who profess to be our allies and support our cause. These men claim to share our own political ideals and call themselves socialists. They are concerned about class inequality, about combating poverty and about redistribution of wealth and power, but they seem to develop a mental block when it comes to gender inequality, or introducing progressive structural measures to redistribute wealth and power from men to women.

The most dangerous of these men are those who hold the power at the moment. They are the ones who are willing to give us a small role to play, just to keep us busy, happy and compliant. Examples of this can be found everywhere, in the Labour Party, the trade union movement and every other left wing organisation you care to examine that is not for women only. The STUC for example is rightly proud of its involvement in and support for 50=50 gender balance in public life and there are high levels of representation for women on the STUC General Council, but if you look at who makes the decisions on the General Council and who really holds the power, it's the Scottish Secretaries of the unions and every one of them is a man. Similarly, in the recent leadership contests within both the SNP and Scottish Labour, all talk was about who would be the right man to fill the shoes of the great man gone before, not once was there even the slightest suggestion that a woman would dare to put herself forward for the role of leader.

Then there are the, far more easy to spot, old fashioned, staunch, socialist men who think that this whole equality

thing has gone too far and it is now men who are being unfairly treated. They are the ones who say that the whole idea of 50=50 was only adopted by the Labour leadership as an excuse to get rid of good left wing men and replace them with inexperienced, ultra loyalist Blair's babes with no particular ideology or, even worse, raving socialist feminists intent on castrating all men and making the party unelectable.

Of course there are a few brave souls out there, men who genuinely support our cause, who can see and appreciate our talents, who understand that, to deny justice and equality to any other group of human beings is to deny justice and equality to yourself. These men really are willing to go against the dominant flow of our culture and help us women break down the social barriers to accessing power and positive changes.

I'm now a few years down the road from where I first was, when my eyes were fully opened to the injustices women in Scotland face, and I now find myself working as a senior official within the STUC and Secretary to the Women's Committee that taught me so much. Last year we re-established the Scottish Women's Co-ordination Group and started to rebuild the campaign for 50=50 gender balance for women at all levels in public life. We are once again reaching out to women across Scotland and re-establishing old links with seasoned campaigners. We have realised that although we now have a Scottish Parliament, our fight for equality is far from won and we still have unfinished business to complete. It won't be achieved in a short time and it won't be easy, but we can look to the achievements of women like Maria Fyfe and know that it is possible to make real changes happen through our self belief, hard work, tenacity and determination.

## the powers to disarm

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Tony Southall

Every public opinion survey in the past 20 years shows a majority in Scotland against it. All the major Scottish churches are opposed. The Scottish Labour Party held to its opposition even after its UK parent switched back to support. The SNP and SSP are firmly against. The STUC reaffirmed its opposition after a thorough debate last year. Most councils are affiliated to

the Organisation of Nuclear Free Local Authorities and a wide range of civic and voluntary organisations have declared against it. Yet four Trident submarines carrying Britain's only remaining nuclear weapons remain based at Faslane on the Clyde. They carry eight times the destructive power of the Polaris weapons they replaced. They cost an estimated one and a half billion pounds

annually. At least one of them is on patrol 24 hours a day ready to wreak destruction on whomever.

The past few years have seen a resurgence of opposition to nuclear weapons both internationally and locally. Many things have encouraged this.

1. In 1996 the International Court of Justice ruled the threatened use of nuclear weapons illegal.
2. In 1999 Sheriff Margaret Gimblett ruled at Greenock in favour of three women protesters who had boarded a submarine and thrown overboard equipment being tested for use on Trident. She referred to the world court judgement. (Her ruling is being tested currently through a reference by the Lord Advocate to the High Court: judgement expected shortly)
3. In May last year the British hunter killer nuclear submarine HMS Tireless limped into Gibraltar having developed a leak in its reactor coolant system. It is still there awaiting repair. In November all 12 hunter killers were taken off patrol to check for similar faults. (Five of these are stationed at Faslane). The same safety inspectors who let these through will also check the reactors on Trident). Nuclear experts estimate a full-scale blow out of a submarine reactor would be on a par with Chernobyl in its effects.
4. Twice in the past three months Trident submarines have hit the seabed in nearby waters: once this involved a sandbank off Skelmorlie. Both times they were taken back to Faslane to check the hulls. After the Kursk disaster such incidents are good cause for alarm.
5. The new American administration seems bent on pursuing the latest version of Star Wars, the National Missile Defence (NMD) system designed to shoot down incoming enemy missiles and make the USA invulnerable. British facilities at Fylingdales and Menwith Hill in the north of England will be an essential part of these preparations to defend America so that it can then strike unhindered against other states. (China and Russia as well as almost all other European countries have condemned this new escalation of the arms race).
6. Over the past couple of months wide publicity has been given to the harmful effects on service personnel and civilians of the use of depleted uranium shells in the Gulf and Kosovo. The Minister of Defence, Geoff Hoon, has been confirmed as the accredited spokesperson for the armed forces and his own civil servants as he continually changes the story. Meanwhile it's been confirmed that they've been tested in the Solway Firth and the South West of

Scotland.

- 7, Plans for the privatisation of Faslane have aroused fears, amongst workers as well as peace protesters, that safety standards will be compromised.

All of these things and numerous others have put the nuclear arms race firmly back on the agenda. For Scottish CND they've meant a modest increase in size and influence. At the time of writing we anticipate a blockade of Faslane on 12 February will be substantially bigger than last year. The broad Scottish opposition to Trident will be back on display. Once again it will be highlighted that defence and foreign policy are reserved powers over which the Scottish parliament has no jurisdiction.

Several years ago we were very excited in Scottish CND by the advent of Holyrood. We know it didn't have any powers to scrap Trident but falsely estimated the new body would reflect opinion and make its opposition clear. Those of us in the Labour Party should have known better! Its candidate selection procedures ensured the exclusion of the left so the body of MSPs didn't reflect grass-roots opinion. With its present composition any resolution that called for scrapping Trident would unfortunately be defeated.

All this doesn't mean however that issues surrounding it can't be raised at Holyrood. Right now its powers over health and safety and the environment provide the basis for a petition on nuclear submarine safety. Hopefully that will reach the floor of Parliament. Similar exercises can be envisaged using its powers over transport (carrying nuclear weapons on our roads), education (peace studies), industry (diversification and alternative employment for defence workers). The Scottish parliament can of course discuss motions on anything it chooses. Hopefully at some stage in the future it'll be possible to do that directly on Trident.

From its beginning there has been a Scottish parliamentary CND with members from Labour, the SNP and the famed three. Its job is to keep an eye open for every opportunity to raise the issue constructively.

But when we take on Trident we should be clear that we're taking on a critical part of the British capitalist state formation and structure. Nuclear weapons were developed from 1946 when a state that had been getting economically weaker and politically less influential since the late 19th-century tried to reassert itself by becoming the world's third nuclear power and develop its own supposedly independent nuclear deterrent. Thus Britain

was able to continue to justify a permanent position on the Security Council and its claims to sit at every table. The British bomb was one of the components in promoting the myth for its own population that Britons still ruled the waves. It took its place alongside the royal family, the supposedly democratic parliament, the legal system and a myriad of institutions that provided the kernel for the kind of flag waving patriotism that's a feature of English culture in particular.

When India and Pakistan were becoming independent and it was clear the rest of the empire would follow suit the British bomb was important to reassert such things. That's why the campaign against Trident, especially when it is so clearly Scottish based, will inevitably be characterised as, at the end of the day, anti-British. That's also why it is such an important part of the reawakening of Scotland. More generally it's why taking on Trident in Britain is a revolutionary act.

Trident also lies at the heart of the special relationship between Britain and the USA. From the beginning British nuclear weapons were totally dependent on the communications facilities provided by America through the Nato alliance. Now Trident has to go there to get its missile systems installed and serviced. The pay-off has been military support by Britain for every substantial foreign intervention with the exception of Vietnam starting in Korea in 1950 and up to Serbia in 1999

Clearly this relationship is subject to continual stresses and changes. Right now obviously the USA will do everything it can to keep on side its stalking horse in Europe. It's also strategically essential to maintain its support for the NMD. Hague has already signalled his support: it will be instructive to see which side Blair chooses. The issue here is simple: does the British government choose to provide facilities designed to protect the USA and enable it to make a first nuclear strike untrammelled?

For socialists it's critical that the party which gets the majority of workers' votes and which still has most trade unions affiliated also leads the government that wields the bomb. But that of course is nothing new. Labour built the British bomb. Since then its governments have kept it. Of course at the grassroots its members have opposed it, and possibly still do. On two occasions disarmament policies have surfaced. In 1960, at the height of the Cold War escalation of the arms race and the first wave in Britain of mass protests against it, a majority led by Frank

Cousins of the Transport and General Workers Union won the vote at Labour conference for scrapping it. But that was ditched the following year. In 1964 the Wilson government came to power. Its manifesto pledged to scrap Britain's independent nuclear weapons. It reduced the order for Polaris submarines from five to four.

In 1978 David Owen as Labour's Foreign Secretary negotiated with the Americans the start of the Trident programme. But the upsurge of the left in the party from 1980 led to unilateral nuclear disarmament becoming policy. Labour even went into two general elections, in 1983 and 1987, with scrapping Trident as part of its programme. On neither occasion did the leadership give this any prominence or campaign on the subject. At the end of the 1980s, when the Soviet bloc was collapsing, and the nonsense about the threat from the East become unbelievable, Kinnock ditched the policy that could so easily have been argued for.

No worries: this made Labour "electable" again. The pay-off came in 1997. The Blair government rapidly showed its reliability in joining the war on Yugoslavia in 1999. It then showed its manifesto commitment to pursuing worldwide nuclear disarmament was so much hot air as it voted against a UN resolution to set up a conference with exactly that aim... Plus ca change...

But in Scotland things could be different. The potential of Holyrood has been outlined above. Predictions are dangerous but no one can say what part Trident may play in the future of relations between London and Edinburgh. Nothing has happened to suggest that the majority of Labour members still less supporters favour Trident. In the 1980s CND had slogans – Jobs not Bombs, Welfare not Warfare – that still apply today. In the trade unions those representing workers from Faslane are the most vociferous in claiming scrapping Trident means wrecking jobs. These arguments need to be countered. At Rosyth workers who serviced warships now maintain London underground trains – skills are transferable with proper retraining. The executive has powers that would enable it to set up a Scottish defence diversification agency right now. Spending the money saved from Trident on health, education, housing etc would produce three times as many jobs.

And the world would be a safer place!

# the culture of prudence

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David McLennan

When the New Labour government announced, with what seemed like indecent enthusiasm, that it would stick with the Tories' public spending plans for its first two years in office, anyone with even the most rudimentary grasp of economics knew that the downward spiral of the public services would accelerate, and all the promises of cutting hospital waiting lists and reversing the decline in educational provision was so much cant. But then if any one characteristic has defined New Labour it is the ever-widening gap between their rhetoric and the public's realities.

This gap between how they tell it and how it is, like the gap between the rich and the poor, widens with their every utterance. Euphemism, platitude, smoke and mirrors with statistics, spin, hype and economy with the truth have all characterised this administration and all failed to disguise what we see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears. Small wonder there is such a profound sense of alienation between the public and their politicians.

All of this, we are told by the Chancellor, has been done in the name of prudence. "Here lies Prudence Brown" will be his political epitaph, and I do not mean lies in the sense of in the grave. Just as it was prudent to cut public spending like the Tories, we were told, so it was prudent to give control of interest rates to the Bank of England.

Now, of course, everything has changed. An election is in the offing. "Prudence Brown" must become Little Miss Bountiful. Ministerial careers, grace and favour residences, government limousines are at stake. Hey presto, open the War Chest. What a very revealing term that is. Every five years the politicians must join battle with the electorate, bombard them with promises, hit them with propaganda and threaten them with frightful reprisals should the generals of the opposition parties emerge triumphant. Will this campaign be marked by candour, honesty, courage and perhaps a scintilla of self-criticism? Or when the smoke clears will we once again see the mirrors, the euphemisms, the platitudes and the hype?

Unlike "Prudence Brown", whose problems were only with her poor bloody infantry, Little Miss Bountiful has far higher-ranking opponents. The Field Marshals at the IMF and their staff officers at the Bank of England are already warning that too much money released from the Treasury, to limit further damage and decline in the public services, could cause inflationary pressure and force up interest rates. Memo from Bountiful to

Prudence: "Thanks, sister. You gave our enemies a really useful weapon there".

Our education and health services, undermanned, under-serviced ocean liners sailing in the wrong direction towards the rocks, are extremely hard to slow down, refit and re-crew at sea and turn around and sail in a safe and prosperous direction. So even if Bountiful showers them with cash, the electorate are unlikely to notice much improvement this side of the next election. This brings us back to Prudence.

Our language helps us to define ourselves, to describe our world, to express our ideals, to give vent to our fears and to formulate our aspirations. It follows that any attempt to expunge words from our vocabulary or to set shackles on the meaning diminishes our ability to explain and understand the human condition and is a violent attack on our culture. When Mrs Thatcher said "There is no such thing as society", she attempted to remove from the lexicon a word which carried with it echoes of the commonweal, community, care for others, institutions to protect the weak, shared experience and a social order which precludes the dominance of the selfish. Insofar as she was successful in peddling that repellent world view, she was thus far responsible in promoting the respectability of greed and avarice and the acceptance by some of the concomitant obscene extremes of wealth and poverty in this country. When Gordon Brown diminishes the concept of prudence to the narrow confines of fiscal rectitude, he is raping the language no less violently. It is like a mammy telling a wean it is a sin to swear and the only sin is to swear.

Is it prudent for one of the richest economies in the world to have adolescent boys and girls huddled in doorways with polystyrene cups for begging bowls? Is it prudent that some sell the Big Issue to pay for a roof over their heads while others have holiday homes in the country? Is it prudent to deny the use of proven efficacious medicines to Aids sufferers in sub-Saharan Africa on the grounds that they cannot afford them? Is it prudent to hound asylum seekers as scroungers when they flee from poverty, war-torn regions, and racial, religious and political persecution? Is it prudent to so restrict our local authorities' finances that the streets of some of our towns and cities resemble more those bankrupt eastern European urban landscapes than the habitats of one of the richest economies in the world?

So what is our best defence against this pillage of our

language and the resulting corruption of our culture? I can only recommend New Labour's own principal policy plank and indeed its battle cry at the last election – education, education, education. Not the molehills of modest literacy and numeracy, not the soft target of class sizes under thirty, not the unambitious scope of the schools' curricula, set only to match their inadequate resources. If the next generation are to address and close the gap between rhetoric and reality and the gap between grotesque wealth and grotesque poverty, they will only be able to do so if they are equipped for the task by the breadth and depth of their education. They have mountains to conquer not molehills. All governments know this. They have acquired such education for themselves. They must judge it prudent not to extend such an education to the whole population. It would make the whole population's sense of alienation intolerable.

Just as the government, whether through malice or folly, judges it prudent to reserve the right to an excellent education to themselves, their children and those who can afford to pay for it, so too does it annexe access to the literature, dance, music, art and drama which should lie at the core of our children's education. But then perhaps it would be considered most impudent to foster an understanding and an appetite for those very things which describe and interpret the human condition and which reduce rhetoric to mere dull words while illuminating reality with passion.

Yes it is a disgrace that so many children in Scotland live in poverty. Yes it is a disgrace that so many emerge from school barely literate. It is also a disgrace that so many have never had a musical instrument teacher, never sat in a theatre, never stood in an art gallery, never heard an orchestra. They start out their young lives, faces etched with deprivation, staring out on the bleak landscapes of their schemes, a bleakness surpassed only by the bleaker landscapes of their minds. It is hard enough to struggle to overturn physical poverty without being handicapped by poverty of the imagination.

The radical transformation of our educational system requires massive public investment and not a cap in hand approach to the private sector for which the next generation will pay even more dearly. This public investment can only be raised through the introduction

of a more progressive and redistributive income tax regime and the Scottish Parliament should make at least a modest start by using its tax-varying powers fully and immediately. Our schools need more teachers,

better resourced teachers and better paid teachers. If social inclusion is to be a real political objective and not an empty political slogan, then the better off must pay to remove the educational barriers which are the primary cause of our disgraceful endemic poverty, and poverty is a more truthful description of the condition in which far too many Scots live than the euphemistic term "social exclusion".

In addition to expanding the numbers of core teachers we need to create and mobilise an army of specialist teachers in music, dance and drama. Quite apart from the intrinsic value of these subjects, participation in them has a beneficial effect on improving young people's performance in all the other areas of the curriculum. Children who dance gain confidence, children who play music do better at maths, children who take part in drama learn to express themselves and to better understand their world.

The task of helping Scotland's next generation of children to fulfil their true potential cannot be left to the formal education sector alone. Properly funded, it will make a huge contribution. But the local authorities, voluntary organisations and our sports and arts organisations have key roles to play. The Scottish Executive's response to this challenge is their Cultural Strategy document. It would have been hard to collate a more mealy-mouthed collection of pious platitudes within its glossy pages. And, of course, nowhere the commitment to spend the necessary funds to turn any of its rhetoric into reality. Some tinkering here, a pilot scheme there, and a suggestion of what might be possible elsewhere. Lip service politics to social inclusion. The strategy is to be seen to care, to be on message, to have an agenda, and who knows, some day...

The Scottish Arts Council, itself a typically myopic middle class quango, has a paltry annual budget of under £30 million per annum. At five times that, it might begin to do a job, but at that level, and with their outlook, the debate will always be whether Scottish Opera needs another couple of million. Of course it does. Scottish Opera, like

**Yes it is a disgrace that so many children in Scotland live in poverty. It is also a disgrace that so many have never sat in a theatre, never stood in an art gallery, never heard an orchestra.**

all our national arts organisations, like all our museums and galleries, like our repertory and touring theatres and like our orchestras and dance companies, have been historically underfunded. They are in the good company of our schools and universities. That's what you get for less than £6 per head of population per annum. What is worse than what we do have being underfunded - and that is bad enough - is what we do not have at all. Not a single dedicated state funded children's theatre in the entire country. Only one revenue-funded Theatre-in-Education Company to cover a country of Scotland's geographic and cultural complexity. No nation-wide scheme of free transport to take school children to galleries, concert halls and theatres. No nation-wide free matinee programmes for them to go to. Arts and sport summer camps aplenty if you can pay, but of state paid nation-wide provision, none.

For a country of its size, Scotland has produced an extraordinary number of artists over a wide range of media. It continues to do so. What is more extraordinary is that it continues to do so while excluding so many of its already small number from the feast. The relationship of

too many of our arts organisations to our rural areas and to our urban schemes is as cold and as distant as Pluto's to the Sun.

In 1941, when Britain's future was in peril, Winston Churchill appealed to President Roosevelt on the radio: "Give us the tools and we will finish the job". A similar challenge should go out now to the Scottish Parliament from our local authorities and our sports and arts organisations. We have the need, the ability and a developing will to deliver. But not the cash to do it.

A prudent society does not squander its young people's abilities. The Culture of Prudence is sustained and grows out of a universally educated population and not from one where many are ensnared in poverty and ignorance. When next Gordon Brown describes his fiscal rectitude as prudent, he might ponder whether its results will be a legacy from which the whole population will benefit, and the Scottish Parliament might ponder whether on education and culture, for which they have the devolved responsibility, they should go their own sweet way.

## web review

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Henry McCubbin

This month's review takes a look at sites useful to readers with an interest in European affairs. This has never been an area well served by the British press. Putting aside the nonsense over straight cucumbers and fishermen wearing hairnets the level of discussion of the major issues frequently resorts to a hasty search for personalities which fulfil the press's own ideas of the prejudices and stereotypes their readers hold of other nationals. It is easy but lazy shorthand they use which does little to enlighten. But when you consider that tabloids have to be written in English at a level no greater than primary seven you then realise the mammoth task confronting the journalists involved. This does not excuse the rabid displays of xenophobia sometimes displayed.

But even the broadsheets can be guilty of downplaying the role of European affairs. The fact that EU affairs appear on the international pages illustrates this. Only

treaty changes should be looked on as "international" the rest of the legislation emanating from the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament has direct effect on our lives. Yes it is as important as Westminster but don't tell the poor dears, devolution has provided enough indigestion already. When will the likes of New Labour modernise and include European policy within debate headings such as Rural Affairs and Worker's Rights? Always assuming that they have this latter heading these days.

The first site to visit for information on policy and current legislation is that of the Commission [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs_en.htm). The page I'm directing you to is the one, which lists the directorates by their function. If you're interested in transport say, then you can go to that directorate's page and find the latest news plus full length policy documents in PDF format.

Transport is interesting for there you will find the "Open Skies" policy that argues that the EU does not need 42 air traffic control centres in fact only six would do and at that provide safer coverage. This begs the questions as to where this policy would leave Prestwick and have we signed up to it. Ask your MEP if you can find one.

Next in line must come the Council of Ministers. You'll find them at <http://ue.eu.int/en/summ.htm>. Here you can find lists of the papers they have discussed at meetings. This is as near openness as you'll get in English because British governments don't believe that the plebs should know what they're saying about them. However as the Dutch and the Swedes insist on being able to publish under their freedom of information laws you can go to the English pages on their governments' web site. The addresses can be found in the Parliament's and the Council's site. It gets better because Globalink offer translation software in most languages and you can download and translate documents in double quick time. You'll find the Nice Treaty at this site.

The Parliament itself is to found at :-[http://www.europarl.eu.int/home/default\\_en.htm?redirected=1](http://www.europarl.eu.int/home/default_en.htm?redirected=1). This may seem an odd address but they have a history

of problems with their server. No doubt their original address will come on line again soon. In this site you can find the agendas for the Parliaments sittings and also, when an electronically recorded vote has been taken, which way each MEP voted. Why did Blair instruct New Labour MEPs to vote against workers being consulted before a takeover of their company and even more pertinent why did they comply? All reports and parliamentary motions are there as well as the verbatim record of the proceedings in the original languages followed a few weeks later in all languages.

I will end with two news sites. The first is that of the spokesman service of the Commission which posts at 12.00 midday each day (EU time) the legislative and political news on its activities. Use this address it will avoid you needing passwords <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh>. This site has an excellent archive and search facility.

Finally a commercial site. The economist has a European Magazine called European Voice. The choice of each edition's stories is available at <http://www.european-voice.com/> ■



I love elections, don't you? Once every few years ordinary people get the long overdue opportunity to do to politicians what the bishop is reputed to have done to the actress. But this is a particularly arduous campaign trail: the massed ranks of Scotland's political journalists have had to spend long, hard months desperately pretending they don't already know who's going to win. Meanwhile William Hague's mental state as polling day approaches is about as nervous as a member of Robin Cook's typing pool. Resignation? Only Peter Mandelson is more familiar with it.

Still, it won't be as cynical an exercise as the American elections. There democracy - or what passes for it - is the plaything of a relative handful of rich and powerful people. In the States policies are decided according to who donated how much to whom. Such a thing could never happen here.

Apart from in the Tory party where it's virtually part of their constitution. They acquired five million quid from a hitherto little known multi-millionaire turf accountant. He's betting the farm on a Hague victory, which is heartening proof that - just occasionally - bookies can be mug punters too. In the past the Tories would have turned up their noses at money made in such a lowly trade as bookmaking. In the good old days they could have expected cash from established, respectable industries like tobacco or the arms trade.

That's not the sort of stuff New Labour would get up to. Not for them a reliance on a single very rich person. No, they have a whole limousine full of very rich people to

bankroll them. Tony Blair claims to have religion but he's obviously been too busy to get round the bit in the bible about rich men, camels and eyes of needles. Or maybe it's a cunning plan to redistribute wealth: robbing the rich to give to the poor old Labour party.

One has to admire the selfless behaviour of these multi-millionaires as they dish out millions at a time. Particularly as they're expecting to receive absolutely nothing at all in return. How altruistic. And as we all know, it's behaviour like that that made them rich in the first place.

Let's face it. This election is going to be dull. We're not even going to have Peter Mandelson to kick about. Some said he got the bag because of all that nonsense about the million quid and the passport application. If only he'd tried to get the money for the Labour party rather than the Dome it would presumably have been OK.

Which is not to say we can't all have fun watching the telly on election night. In fact electoral enjoyment is guaranteed if you play Sammy Peeps's Election Night Bingo! Just watch the TV station of your choice and total up your marks as you spot each of the following events. (Points are awarded according to the scarcity value of the event in question.)

Brian Wilson is grumpy (score 1 point)

Jeremy Paxman is grumpy (1 point)

William Hague predicts big Tory win (2 points)

Helen Liddell predicts SNP bubble will burst (2 points)

Helen Liddell says SNP gains are result of voter satisfaction with Labour (3 points)

BBC promises "best computer results service ever" (5 points)

BBC results computer malfunctions, predicts Plaid Cymru government (10 points)

STV promises to "double election coverage", installs second telephone (5 points)

Channel 5 replaces campaign programming with docusoap entitled "When Candidates Strip" (5 points)

BBC results programme replaces David Dimbleby and Kirsty Wark with Alan Titchmarsh and Carol Smillie. (20 points)

ITN goes live to John Prescott, sound fails. His lips move but no words come out (10 Points)

ITN goes live to John Prescott, sound works. His lips move but no sense comes out (5 points)

ITN goes live to Gordon Brown's wallet, no money comes out (10 points)

Michael Ancram claims Tory defeat is actually humiliation for Labour (5 points)

Michael Ancram keeps job after election (100 points)

Michael Portillo looks smug despite Tory humiliation (25 points)

Brian Wilson blames "biased" media for Labour losses, his receding hairline, lack of friends, global warming (10 points)

Peter Mandelson spotted within 100 miles of Tony Blair (50 points)

Alex Salmond predicts 20 SNP seats in Labour heartland (5 points)

Alex Salmond claims 20 second-placed SNP candidates in Labour heartland seats "will have New Labour on the run next time" (3 points)

Alex Salmond uses Scots word that not even Hugh MacDiarmid would have understood, looks pleased with self (1 point)

As campaigning starts, LibDems start desperate search for leader. Then someone remembers that's what Charlie Kennedy's meant to be doing already (10 points)

Charles Kennedy quits LibDems, starts new career as the round orange guy in the Tango adverts (20 points)

Robin Cook is revealed as the next James Bond (15 points)

Roger Moore sues Robin Cook for stealing his voice, eyebrow technique (20 points)

William Hague concedes victory before polls close (20 points)

William Hague accidentally concedes victory before campaign starts (50 points)

Tony Blair celebrates victory by sacking Gordon Brown (50 points)

Tony Blair celebrates victory by sacking Queen (75 points)

Helen Liddell mentions Robert Maxwell (200 points)

Lowest post-war general election turnout sends bunch of unknown Scots to Westminster. They remain unknown (zero points)

The first person to score 500 points gets to go to bed early. Enjoy!

# scottishleftreview

The Scottish Left Review will be a bi-monthly website magazine that will seek to provide a focal point of thought and discussion for the Scottish Left.

It will be non-party but will aim to provide a forum for those on the Left of all parties and none.

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