

**the state of the fourth estate
is the Scottish media in crisis?**



Contents

Comment	2	The point of Scottish Enterprise?	12
Briefing	5	Danny MacKinnon	
Representing Scotland? Really?.....	6	Independence caged	14
Robert Beveridge		Christine Grahame	
Quality press: oxymoron?	8	Clowns and courtiers	16
Christopher Harvie		Isobel Lindsay	
Look now, pay later	10	Not too late this time	18
Peter Murray		John Ainslie	
		Reviews	20

Comment

Sometimes it is tempting to think that we are subjected to just a little bit too much navel gazing when it comes to the media. The argument runs that because the people who write newspapers are understandably interested in their own industry, they tend to write about the process of journalism more than is really merited. This leads us to read page after page about politics in which what we are actually reading is an analysis of the media coverage of politics. It is, some argue, like a church minister whose every sermon was on the subject of how trying it is to be a church minister.

This argument is both right and wrong at the same time. What is right about it is that the media does indeed get a little bit too obsessed by the process of how real events are 'mediated' and both newspapers and news broadcasting are a little too keen to tell us how the press pack responded to a certain announcement or how the politicians have been trying to manipulate the press pack. This really can be a tedious business – we hear that the media presentation of a policy was badly handled because of a leak and poor co-ordination, and yet it is possible to miss the fact that the policy is going to harm the lives of millions of people. This is of course perverse.

However, the argument is wrong for another reason; the media in the developed world is one of the two main pillars that bear the weight of the society we believe to be around us in contrast with the one that is. (Our ever-more functionalist education system is the other.) There is neither space nor need to go through the arguments in depth as they are exhaustively and persuasively presented elsewhere (most incisively in the work of Noam Chomsky). But it is important to remember that where kings and cardinals used to tell us how to interpret the world around us, it is now largely journalists.

Or rather, it is proprietors, because it is ownership that makes the difference. It is worth working through an example to see how significant this is. It is only a couple of years ago that the phrase 'asylum seeker' was one that carried sympathetic connotations. Where 'immigrant' or 'incomer' or 'foreigner' all had pejorative undertones, both asylum seeker and refugee were terms that indicated persecution and victimisation (usually also innocence in the legal sense). Then the word

'bogus' arrived. For a period of about 18 months it was almost impossible to find the term 'asylum' in the UK media without the word 'bogus' preceding it. It started in the Mail and the Sun, but quickly the other papers followed – not necessarily because they agreed with the line but because this became the accepted terminology. Now of course a paper like the Guardian would always précis any use of the phrase with 'so called' or some other indication of distance. And of course these papers would not always use the term. But if you were to take the number of instances read (the number of times the phrase appeared in a newspaper multiplied by the circulation of the newspaper), the vast majority of read instances of the phrase 'asylum seeker' were explicitly negative, intentionally implying fraud. And public opinion followed; in the last three years the UK has drifted into being an increasingly racist country.

But do the papers make this happen or do they reflect the views of their readers? This can be measured too – among those most likely to feel negative about asylum seekers are Daily Mail readers who have never seen or met an asylum seeker or probably any other recent immigrant. There is clear data on this – there is a much closer link between racism and newspaper readership than between racism and proportion of non-whites in a community. And if anyone doubts this example, ask yourself exactly who was worried about the 'promotion of homosexuality in our schools' before the Daily Record invented it in 1999.

This is why it is wrong to claim that we have too much coverage of the business of media in the media itself; in fact, we have almost no mainstream coverage of the effects of media ownership and bias. Hardly surprising – you probably don't hear much talk about illicit sticky-bun eating at WeightWatchers either. The media tells us who to like and who to hate (always people we have never met), what to believe and what to reject, who to trust and who not, what to buy, watch, eat, wear, listen to, where to go, how to get there, what to do when we're there. Between news, advertising, lifestyle journalism and the comentariat there is almost no part of our lives in which we are not very heavily controlled and guided. It's not just about politics – in fact, the media largely encourages us to stay well away from politics – it is everything. The companies that make the films either own newspapers and television stations or have so much sway through advertising budgets that the film-maker and the 'objective' coverage of it almost merge into one thing. We live in a monarchy of the imagination – the media creates an incredibly powerful world-vision and we have all subscribed to it before we even know it. And it **is** a monarchy –

Web Review 22

Kick Up The Tabloids..... 23

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the really big media players have been owned by the same vested interests for generations.

And worst of all we tolerate this. We talk about 'the freedom of the press' and even the liberal left feels a lump rise in its collective throat. Free nonsense. It's not free to buy, it's not free to be influenced, it's not free to own. In every meaningful way but one we have an entirely unfree press – the only real freedom is for those with massive sums of money to control all the channels through which public debate is disseminated. Which is to say the freedom is for the rich to define giant chunks of what much of the population believes to be reality.

But perhaps the better analogy is not with the monarchy but with the church. Much of the last millennium of European history was typified by power struggles and uncomfortable accommodations between the church and the crown, the latter being the 'legitimate' powers, the former being the philosophical medium through which the 'legitimate' use of power was defined. The monarchies used and bolstered the church where it was useful and tried to limit and suppress the power of the church where it was not. This is of course the situation we see now; New Labour just can't decide whether it loves the Daily Mail and the Sun or whether it really loathes them. The answer is both; Murdoch and the Rothermeres are like 21st century popes, detested yet courted in equal measure. The only thing which is out of the question is to seriously challenge them. This is why the only thing that comes close to a public policy intervention in media law nowadays is further deregulation to enable these popes of the press to subjugate new dominions as more and more titles are bought up and diversity is constrained and weakened.

These perspectives are almost universal in the modern world – you need only look at the 1990s depoliticisation of the US media, the Venezuelan media campaign to subvert the outcomes of Chavez's election, the battles between the former Soviet elites being fought through media ownership right across the former USSR. In Scotland we have our own local problems. There seem to be about three distinct problems that are interlinked. The first is that there is really very little diversity in the Scottish media, either in perspective or in ownership. There has been some sense of relief that the Scotsman is no longer in the hands of hardline neo-conservatives and that the Herald wasn't sold to an equivalent. But it is perhaps a sign of how bad things have got that we are content that Scotland's two most important newspapers are now owned by resolutely un-political big businesses (Newsquest was behind the 'lifestyle revolution' in

the US media which saw serious content minimised in favour of recipes and Johnston Press is a local newspaper company). The Daily Record is a mess, the Sun is Murdoch and the Mail is making in-roads. Sunday Post and Dundee Courier owners DC Thomson have just bought the Press and Journal and now own Scotland's print media from Dundee north. None of these companies are the ones a Scottish Left Review reader ought to want to see in charge of our newspapers and there is simply no radical press in Scotland – apart from the breath of fresh air that is the Sunday Herald.

The second problem is the representation of Scotland. This is a broadcast issue (although it is of course echoed in the press) and is about what kind of programmes get made and where. There are only two images of Scotland – the twee heatheriness of Monarch of the Glen and the grimy repetitiveness of Taggart. Nothing in the current review of the BBC gives hope that this will change. And the third problem is employment. There is still some expansion in some areas of media employment (mainly in the digital media area), but we are seeing real cutbacks in serious journalism. This is a combination of the effects of falling sales and the commercialisation of print media (there is a much greater emphasis on maximising profit). If we don't have a media industry in which young journalists can find the space to develop a career that will enable them to really challenge the political and social culture of Scotland, we might as well just scrap our newspaper subscriptions and give in to the celebrity gossip.

But the media is not the medieval church and it does not have an army with which to defend its privilege, and this is the key issue. The time has come for a very serious rethink about what we have a media for and what we should allow. Politicians have to intervene to say that news is not breakfast cereal and a democratic society needs a proper and effective defence of **freedom of expression** and not of freedom to profiteer from mass circulation newspapers. In Scotland we have the added problem that media policy is not devolved. This must be changed with urgency. But that does not mean we are powerless to act. There is insufficient space here to consider answers in any detail, but here is one suggestion of what the Scottish Parliament might do now. What if the large sums of money which are available for 'social enterprises' were in part used to support a flourishing of smaller scale non-profit publishing? It could create jobs and restore diversity in one move. It is not enough to pay homage to the media barons in public and curse them in private. Something has to be done. ■

briefing: the state of scotland's media

The headlines

- "Holyrood inquiry into media following job losses"
- "Welsh and Scottish politicians challenge Trinity Boss on job cuts"
- "Scotland is losing its voice, and McConnell should be worried"
- "BBC announces widespread job losses and cuts"

The numbers

In 2005, BBC Scotland announced its plans to shed 190 jobs. At the beginning of 2006, 60 staff at Scottish Television and Grampian TV faced redundancy following a reorganisation by SMG. Trinity Mirror also announced their intention for job losses of 43 at the Daily Record and Sunday Mail, as well as 20 jobs at the Scottish Daily Mirror. The Scotsman and Herald have also announced their intention to cut jobs.

Who owns what in Scotland's media

What?	Owned by
The Herald, Sunday Herald, Evening Times, Glasgow	Newsquest plc – subsidiary of Gannett Corporation – America's largest publisher
The Scotsman, Scotland on Sunday, Edinburgh Evening News	Johnston Press Plc – is one of the top four largest publishers in the UK. Interests were mainly in local press until they acquired the Scotsman publications from the Barclay brothers this year.
Scottish TV, Grampian TV, Virgin Radio	Scottish Media Group (SMG) was created by a Canadian media company. Based in Glasgow, SMG has an interest in a number of different broadcast mediums.
Scottish Daily Record, the Sunday Mail, Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror, Scottish Metro	Trinity Mirror Group Plc – one of the largest publishers in the UK.
Dundee Courier, Press and Journal, The Sunday Post, Dundee Evening Telegraph,	DC Thomson – recently acquired the Aberdeen Press and Journal – interests are mainly in regional newspapers
Clyde One and Clyde Two, Radio Forth, Radio Tay, NorthSound Radio, WestSound Radio, Moray Firth Radio and Radio Borders	Scottish Radio Holdings (SRH)

The inquiry

In 2005, the Enterprise and Culture Committee had already taken evidence on the significant job losses at BBC Scotland. The Report concluded that the job losses would result in a significant reduction in quality and in the effectiveness of the BBC to provide regional services.

After the wave of job losses announced in 2006, it was expected that the Parliament would order a similar report and take evidence from a number of sources. However MSPs voted against any inquiry into the some 400 job losses that were to occur. You may be wondering why ever not? Jobs were going, a major Scottish industry was crumbling in front of them, and a key part of a democratic civil society was in danger of becoming useless.

What the politicians say

Alex Neil, chairman of the parliament's Enterprise and Culture committee, said that although it was worried about the losses, the committee had voted not to pursue an inquiry. "We have decided there will be no inquiry at the moment, we have so much on our plate, but we will keep a close eye on it in the future," said Neil.

Jack McConnell who was speaking to the Observer in February 2006 said "Scottish broadcast media would have to improve significantly the way they reports news and current affairs before that [a 'Scottish Six'] could ever be justified".

Bad management

If we delve a little deeper and take a look at why so many jobs are being lost, it is easy to reach a reasonable conclusion. Take for example SMG. They made a number of bad management decisions that meant that the company had to make some 'efficiency' savings. These savings have evidently had to come in the form of staff cuts despite the impact on quality and the level of production. In Scotland, this has serious implications for the type of information that is provided.

Of course bad management is only one aspect of the problem with Scotland's media. Scotland should quite rightly been viewed as a nation in itself, but the newspaper owners increasingly view Scotland as a region of the UK and are determined to run them as such to maximise profitability. In practice this means less international coverage and more relevant local stories.

Why is it all so important?

The needs of Scotland's citizens to have a broadcasting service that provides them with relevant information is utmost to the development of an aware civil society that encourages people to take an interest in current affairs. Whether the First Minister is correct in his assumption that the Scottish media needs to step up its game, what we as a nation need to be asking ourselves is how do we make the creative industries in Scotland better? This is a complicated question that is linked to a number of different factors. However, Scotland must take control of the future of our creative industries and encourage talented young people into the industry that will make the prospect of a dedicated 'Scottish Six' a reality. If we don't, we not only limit the ambition of Scotland's creative industries, but also that of devolution itself. ■

Kirsty Rimmer



Campaigning for the return of rail to the public sector

Campaigning to keep Caledonian MacBrayne's lifeline ferry services in public hands

Let's put the public back in public transport

Bob Crow, General Secretary

Tony Donaghey, President

representing scotland? really?

Robert Beveridge argues that there is a link between the way that Scotland is represented in the broadcast media and the way our Parliament represents Scotland in policy debate.

The recent spate of cutbacks and redundancies in the Scottish media (see briefing on page 4 of this issue) have once again drawn our attention to the question of how and how well Scotland's voices and interests are represented in media, employment and cultural policies. Readers of the SLR will be well aware of the fact that, alongside foreign and defence policy, broadcasting is specifically a matter which is a power and policy reserved to Westminster. This is a clear reflection of an analysis and assumption of where power lies and a (consequent?) reluctance on the part of New Labour to allow the Scottish Parliament and Executive to have more than nominal influence in media policy.

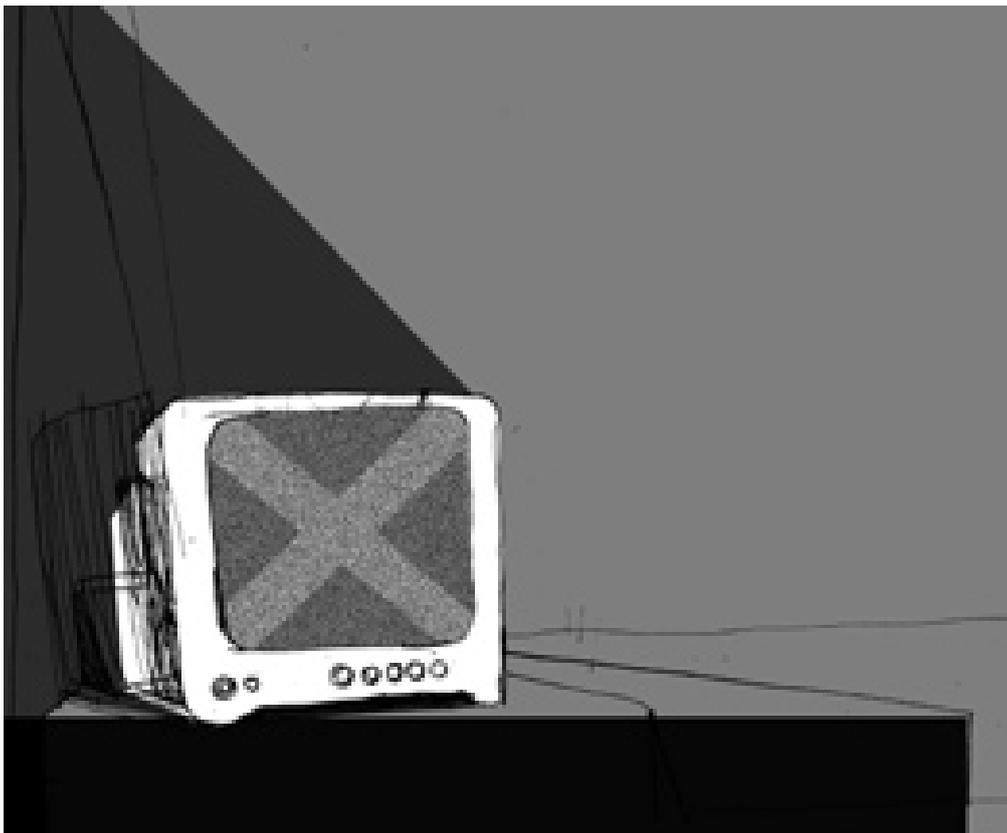
However, and thanks to Alex Neil of the SNP and Holyrood's Enterprise and Culture Committee, the Scottish Parliament held hearings into the state of broadcasting in Scotland - at least as far as it affected and affects employment issues and also cultural and language policy. Naturally, Ken McQuarrie, Controller BBC Scotland and Jeremy Peat, the BBC Governor Scotland appeared and gave oral evidence in line with their written submission. Nonetheless, it is a moot point whether or not they **have** to attend. Formally perhaps not. We might however need to ask m'learned friends what would happen if it ever came to a showdown when a (Conservative) government in London might wish informally to prevent the Scottish Parliament from extending its reach further into media policy. Which is to say that there is a world of a difference between having the powers to require as opposed to merely request!

But for all practical and political purposes, the BBC and indeed OFCOM does make a point of trying to maintain positive relations with the devolved parliament and the sister assemblies such as in Cardiff. Yet globalisation and market forces and the neo-liberal, not to say Thatcherite impulses of Blair and New Labour have led to attempts to diminish even the limited forms of representation for Scotland on decision making bodies in broadcasting and regulation. At one stage during the BBC charter review process, Chairman Michael Grade was clearly persuaded that getting the right mix of business skills and experience amongst the governors was equally and perhaps more important than other criteria for selecting governors and at one stage it looked as though this might be adopted as a desirable model for the board of the new Trust which will monitor the BBC. This would have weakened even the existing limited form of democratic accountability and representation.

Fortunately, and especially so given devolution, it was decided, presumably by or within Department of Culture, Media and Sport, that the Trust could and should have members who combined business and organisational acumen as well as of companies, ensuring the continuation of at least a nominal sense that the nations of the UK are represented. Jeremy Peat for example, former Chief Economist with the Royal Bank of Scotland, will move from the existing position of BBC Governor into a similar position with the new Trust as presumably the trustee for Scotland.

Again, the Scottish Executive is entitled to be (and presumably is and was) consulted by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport when it comes to the appointment of the BBC Governor (Scotland) but there is a world of difference between consultation and perhaps the appointment or ratification of a candidate by an all party committee either in Westminster or even better at Holyrood on the model of confirmation hearings as exist in the legislature of the United States.

Again, readers of SLR will remember that the new(ish) regulator OFCOM does not have nations and regions representation on its main board where in theory the most important decisions are taken although there are such appointments on subsidiary



groupings and there is a statutory requirement for OFCOM to maintain an office in Scotland. Both the BBC and OFCOM have advisory committees for Scotland – the Broadcasting Council for Scotland is to be replaced by an 'Audience Council' and there are also a variety of interests and lobby groups such as PACT - the independent producers association - to argue for investment in the creative industries in Scotland. However, these often use the rhetoric of public interest and equity to emphasise policies and outcomes which are - not coincidentally- favourable to what any objective analysis would deem to be their vested interests.

The problem remains how can we ensure that the public interest and the citizen interest are defined, articulated, heard and secured within the existing and developing structures of media policy and governance? Thanks in part to the internet, such civic society as exists is able to send submissions into the plethora of consultations in the field of media policy - and the Scottish Executive itself has an input into the process of BBC Charter review. In their submission they reiterated the usual complaints about the prevalence of media representations based on heather and hills - or murder in Glasgow - but unless there are closer links between DCMS and Edinburgh than one is aware of, what this really demonstrates is that Scotland and our elected government/executive is only another supplicant supplying a set of arguments alongside the many others from churches, charities, businesses and organised corporate capital rather than being able to promulgate policies in the public and national interest.

Again, SLR raised the issue of the difference between citizen and consumer in the terms of reference of OFCOM. It took a division in the House of Lords - for which much thanks (and how one despairs to have to write and read that sentence) for the moderating of New Labour's authoritarian tendencies and the insistence of the Lords in making OFCOM's first duty to be that 'furthering the interests of citizens'. Lord Currie, the chairman of OFCOM voted against the inclusion of this clause and subsequently, one wonders about the extent to which OFCOM have really met this requirement. In Scotland as in the UK as a whole, the evidence is they have not.

Neither have they succeeded in maintaining and strengthening public service broadcasting - as opposed to maintaining and strengthening the share price of the Scottish Media Group - partly by reducing the fees due for the licence, allowing STV and Grampian to share content and resources more effectively thus paving the way in part for job reductions and assisting in the process of the dilution of the regional character and identity of broadcasting outside the central belt and arguably just outside Glasgow. OFCOM seem to believe that what is good for business is good for consumers and therefore for citizens and that they can pay more attention to deregulating where possible as also required by the Communications Act 2003 rather than through meeting their primary objective. Sometimes it seems as though OFCOM's view of the Act is through the prism of Lord Currie's initial arguments against the citizen clause.

The question is what is to be done and who on earth might have the means and the energy and arguments to take OFCOM to judicial review as they should undoubtedly should be taken so that the citizen and public interest and indeed the future of public service broadcasting might best be secured. Even then, one wonders if, rather like then infamous Hutton whitewash, one might be left with a judgement which asserted that OFCOM

acted in good faith, even if they ended up by doing then opposite of maintaining and strengthening public service broadcasting but rather weakening pluralism, loading further requirements on the BBC, helping to reduce quality and standards, undermining democracy and diversity by allowing less current affairs and access to Gaelic ideas and perspectives on mainstream Scottish channels (even if supporting a Gaelic digital channel which is welcome and long overdue).

Ultimately, the argument turns on whether or not regulation is seen to be a help or a hindrance to the media industries. In my view, we have a successful broadcasting industry in the UK **because** of regulation not in spite of it and the current trends towards deregulation as required by the Communications Act (2003) will themselves militate against OFCOM being able to develop policies which strengthen public service broadcasting. The 1950's and 1960's saw a flowering of television outside London because broadcasting policy - for example the way in which channel three was organised - not only allowed but ensured that there were regionally-based centres of production across the UK. Yet consolidation is the name of the game. Who knows how long SMG will remain independent - it could end up like Grampian! So both the BBC and OFCOM will need to make every effort to try to intervene to support production in Scotland - whether by quotas or the creation of investment in in-house production and training- and here we need not an out of London strategy but an out of Glasgow strategy even though Pacific Quay needs the critical mass to become viable as a competitor to Manchester. Employment policy dovetails - in joined up government - with media and cultural policy. We hope.

However, the Scottish Parliament, unlike say, the Welsh Assembly, has shown a reluctance to more fully engage with the processes of media policy. Leaving it to London simply will not do. We need more focussed debates about the further powers which need to be devolved in relation to the media and broadcasting, not least because Westminster itself seems incapable of finding the time and will to monitor and enforce its own existing legislation.

In Scotland we have had a renaissance in our creative industries in the realm of fiction - mostly in novels but also in other forms of literature. Perhaps the time has come for the Scottish Parliament and Executive to increase and extend support and investment into other forms of creative endeavour by moving on from submissions to a DCMS in London to amending the Scotland Act so that Scottish broadcasting is enabled (or required in some cases) to make and transmit media content which is more in tune with the diversity and creativity of Scottish citizens and culture and which will then enable us to invest in - and benefit from - creative capital. Our efforts will need to extend Edinburgh and London. Whatever and wherever - Edinburgh, London, Brussels or more globally in the case of the Internet and net-casting - we need to develop alliances, analyses and understanding of how best we can ensure the public and citizen interest is articulated, heard and has an impact on developing and renegotiated media policies. If we do not, then Scotland will remain, in the new digital age, stuck between the Scylla of Monarch of the Glen and the Charybdis of Taggart without translating our vibrant contemporary literary culture of McCall Smith - for example - into media content which speaks to, for and about us. ■

Robert Beveridge is a lecturer in media at Napier University.

quality press: oxymoron?

Christopher Harvie suggests that Scotland is badly let down by its influence-forming media and asks why Scotland doesn't follow the regional route of other European countries.

Every so often, when feeling spry and youthful, I remind myself that I have been writing for the **Scotsman** for 44 years. A chilling thought. But as nothing to the depression that sets in when one thinks of the Scottish press as a whole.

'He has sold his heart, to that old black art, that's called the daily press.' Thank you Rudyard Kipling. I'd own up to being a newspaper junkie, but with life's winged chariot at my shoulder, I deal briskly with my papers: out sofort go sport, fashion, houses, cars. Politics, reviews and editorial stuff stay around a bit longer, in the hope of a decent feature article. Business stays longest: the rottenest of all our

public teeth, where the mark of the PR plant is laid bare, and the hacks have to cope with their earlier hype.



In

general our press is in trouble, and our qualities are more exposed than most. The Scotsman and **Herald** have recently changed hands, but the only results visible so far involve attenuated editorial content. There are year-on-year declines in sales; the on-line versions are expensive for management without revolutionising the product (do I want to pay the Scotsman thirty quid to read its editorials?). Content is much less original than it was a decade ago, the syndicated feature more salient.

Could things get worse? Almost certainly. The qualities have survived on the property boom and 'equity release': ads for houses and shopping, travel, restaurants, cars. Culture may be our 'one thing needful' but since its message is often anti-commercial it gets short shrift: Mike Russell gets ditched by the Herald. The apparatchiks of the Arts Council are out after Alan Taylor and **The Scottish Review of Books** (otherwise a plus for the Herald and the indispensable Derek Rodger of Argyll Publishing) for saying rude things about them. The Waterstones-writ-large carousel of the Herald-sponsored Edinburgh Bookfest whirls the usual lot round - Rowling, Rankin, McCall-Smith, Welsh - and if you say it might serve Scotland's intellect better, you're out.

The 'print-culture' spoilers here have been the London papers with their northern editions. These probably have their core readership among our half-million incomers/students, a disproportionate presence within 'settled Scotland'. They 'do' Scotland, sure, but as Rob Brown of Napier University found out, almost nothing of this finds its way south: I write this piece days later and have yet to see a mention of the Moray election in any London paper. An example of the sort of important story that gets lost is the manoeuvring to do with nuclear power, and the associated political institutions. No worthwhile coverage of the Aviemore Labour conference's lunge at the nuclear option, nothing on why the usually critical STUC was reported as backing it, Nothing indeed on what seem to be worrying internal problems at the STUC itself.

Scotland's media problem is centred on the press as a whole, and in particular the red-tops. No decent society deserves the **Daily Record** or the **Sun**: and in fact the decline of both rags has been even more precipitate, with the circulation of the Record halving in recent years and the Sun only biting into it because of a crazily-reduced cover price. The political course of the Sun is potentially interesting because of the Prince of Darkness, with his hatred of losers, is now faced in Scotland with the gruesome twosome of Labour and the Tories. His moves here will, as ever, be fascinating. But the red-top formula of footie, tottie, tv gossip and 'real crime' isn't just an insult to the readers' intelligence: it probably is running out of road, under competition from intertripe - lad's mags, OK!, Hello!, - and Metro-type freebies.

Will the present fad for blogging rejuvenate the qualities, or dumb down even further? I was asked to take part in the Guardian's 'Comment is free' blog but my experience has been mixed. A hierarchy exists which seems to conserve the - overblown - status of the usual megamouths (Roy Hattersley, Max Hastings, Simon Jenkins, etc.) with their predictable and

well-rewarded opinions, followed about by a coven of anonymous blogproles cheering or booing like 'the crowd' in a Shakespeare play, Comment is free, sure, but facts, well-researched and presented, are more interesting.

Let's go abroad. They do things differently there. In Germany the notorious **Bild Zeitung** makes up about 20 per cent of circulation, but the mainstream papers are regional dailies with strong local sections. The Tübingen **Schwäbisches Tagblatt** runs three sections of local news and sport for Tübingen, Reutlingen and Rottenburg (collectively about the population of Dundee!); foreign and national coverage comes downline from the **Sudwest Presse** headquarters fifty miles away at Ulm. Its level is somewhere between the Herald and the **Press and Journal**. There are competing locals in Reutlingen and the Black Forest, the two Stuttgart dailies, and the überregional qualities based in Munich, Frankfurt, Zurich and in the case of the radical **Taz**, Berlin. The regional papers (which receive some public funding as official 'journals of report') are part of an arms-length state-sponsored media culture, along with galleries and theatres, political education, and the Third Channel of regional TV and radio, not just the **SudWestRundfunk** based at Baden-Baden, but the Franco-German **Arte**, based at Strasbourg. To me, this mixture works exceptionally well, and we should think along such lines in Scotland.

Media responsibility should, without any question, pass to Holyrood. A useful cross-party policy to be worked up before May 2007? A Scottish Ofcom should be established - somewhere other than Edinburgh - and its policy drastically changed from promoting competition to developing a pluralistic, citizen-driven, multi-media network. We should aim for solid regional dailies on the German pattern, combining local papers with national content. We can experiment with hybrids, part printed and part online. We - and

this means the likes of the contributors to the Scottish Left Review - should also be working **now** at two things: charting the range and impact of our own co-operative media cultures, from journals to websites. My own **www.intelligent-mr-toad.de** is still expanding and will of course contain this piece. But isn't it time that we had a Scottish equivalent to the **www.openDemocracy.net** website, aimed to act as a sort of press agency for radical and in particular didactic and investigative journalism? ■

Christopher Harvie is an academic based in Germany

look now, pay later

Peter Murray argues that the BBC seems to be driven by people who seem to see the regions and nations of the UK as a nuisance and the profit-making sector as the priority

As Scottish Left Review goes to press, thousands of staff across the BBC are preparing for a likely second campaign of industrial action in twelve months against another cornerstone of Europe's biggest public service broadcaster. In 2005, the (then) recently-installed Director General, Mark Thompson attempted to push through the most far-reaching attack in the institution's history on jobs and programme-making capacity. In mid-2006, a new industrial battlefield has opened over an attack on the Corporation's pension scheme. Both sets of revenue-saving cuts are aimed at demonstrating to the Treasury and Department of Media Culture and Sport (DCMS) that the BBC is implementing the kind of cuts in budgets and staff numbers which Chancellor Gordon Brown had welcomed in the Gershon Report on the future of the civil service.

However, as BBC and DCMS negotiators begin the final round of talks over the renewal of the Corporation's 10-year licence, it's unclear whether the public service broadcasting ethic which has governed the BBC throughout its history will survive the political and financial assault. The role and future of the BBC has been at the centre of political debate in the UK for more than two years. Its coverage of the war in Iraq, the reporting of the 'Dodgy Dossier' which attempted to prepare public opinion for the February 2003 invasion, the unmasking and subsequent suicide of the WMD advisor, Dr David Kelly and the Hutton Inquiry which followed are key items on the agenda. They were rightly seen by much of the left as part of a process by Tony Blair's government to 'soften up' the BBC ahead of the 2005 Westminster General Election and the process of renewal of the BBC's 10-year broadcasting licence which would follow and which is coming to a conclusion as we go to press.

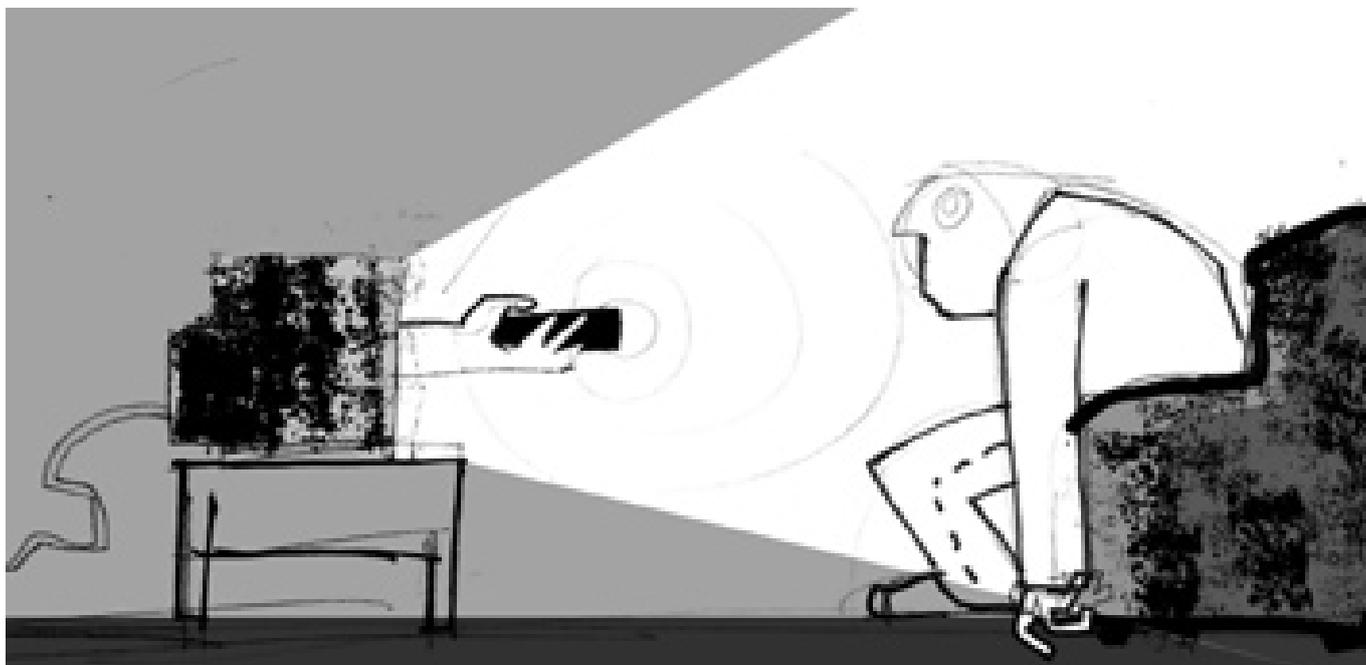
However, the role of the BBC on the political agenda, the impact of Mark Thompson's cuts on the media economy and the wider questions over public service broadcasting itself also have a distinct Scottish context. The employers' assaults on jobs and the waves of redundancies in Scottish print and broadcasting media are addressed elsewhere in this issue. In a comprehensive review of the possible impact of Mark Thompson's self-styled 'Value For Money' job cuts, the Enterprise and Culture Committee of the Scottish Parliament concluded that: "From the evidence it heard, the Committee is not convinced that BBC Scotland can guarantee that both technical and programme quality can be maintained and indeed increased following any of the changes proposed".

That conclusion was warmly welcomed by staff and trade unions at the BBC. Indeed, having watched a somewhat stumbling and apparently poorly-briefed performance before the Committee by the Controller of BBC Scotland, Ken MacQuarrie, staff in Scotland signed a vote of no-confidence in him in the weeks shortly before the one-day strike against the cuts in May last year. However, by entirely ignoring the views of both staff, unions and lobbyists such as the Voice of the Listener and Viewer, the Executive's responses in July 2005 to the four-month Enterprise

and Culture Committee inquiry show that ministers had simply decided to endorse the BBC's own account of the intentions and likely effect of these cuts. Unsurprisingly, the Executive's response also runs rigidly parallel to the New Labour's view on the future of broadcasting production in Scotland: "the Scottish Executive welcomed the way that the Green Paper recognises the different circumstances in the devolved Nations of the UK and the broad obligations proposed for the BBC concerning production, news and programming for the Nations and regions. We will continue to work with DCMS to ensure the Charter White Paper does not diminish these obligations. The Executive will continue to engage with the BBC to ensure it honours its obligations in Scotland."

Yet in practice, the White paper which followed and – critically – the draft Royal Charter and Framework Agreement give no such undertaking to ensure any targets for production of BBC programmes in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland – 'The Nations' in BBC-speak. Instead the Draft Charter requires only that the BBC makes arrangements for a "suitable proportion" of programmes to be made "in the United Kingdom outside the M25 area". Despite the construction of the new £130 million BBC Scotland production centre at Pacific Quay in Glasgow – due for completion in mid-2006 – some senior staff and former BBC executives doubt the ability of the current senior BBC management in Scotland to secure the quantity and quality of production contracts in the accountant-led contests which are likely to feature in the BBC's future. Indeed, the DCMS' own inquiry into BBC finances and operations already indicates there may be more demands of cuts from the government in the 10-year course of the BBC Charter. Under such circumstances, and in the broader context of attacks on standards, employment and breadth of journalism in the Scottish media, the questions of the role of public service broadcasting in Scotland's still infant devolved democracy have never been more relevant, nor urgent.

As many commentators have noted, public service broadcasting is facing an identity crisis, generated in part by technological change, but also driven by political objectives – issues of social justice, diversity and equality as much as the matter of Scottish cultural identity. In this respect, Scottish media and the BBC are no different from other nations across Europe. But while the most dramatic changes to the broadcasting sector in eastern and central Europe followed the collapse of the Eastern Bloc states in the late 1980s, the key events that have led to the increasing commercialisation of public service broadcasting in the UK date back to the 1986 Peacock Report at the height of Thatcherism and New Labour's Communications Act of 2003. Numerous studies in the last two decades have warned that the BBC would come under increasing pressure from its commercial rivals – ITV, Channel 4 and 5 – for a slice of the licence fee to help fund their own programme-making, with similar demands from the independent production companies (which grew from a plethora of relatively modestly-budgeted



companies in the '80s and early '90s, to the 'SuperIndys' of today, such as Endemol). However, one recent study warns that increasing commercial competition in the television sector in the UK "may well be at the expense of the UK's unique model, whereby terrestrial broadcasters as a whole are responsible and legally required, to provide a television service that not only entertains, but also educates and informs the public across a wide range of subject areas with quality programming".

Although the Culture Secretary, Tessa Jowell, has ruled out 'top slicing' the BBC licence fee in this way for the moment, few supporters of the BBC have any doubt that pressure on the Corporation's funding mechanism is likely to increase, rather than fade, following the Charter renewal negotiations, in mid-2006.

There will be other pressures on the BBC's funds, too. Mark Thompson's 2005 cuts programme was designed not only to cut costs by sacking staff; its other main purpose was to open up the publicly-funded Corporation still further to independent producers. The key outcome will be to ensure that more and more of the licence-fee payers' money goes to the shareholders and board members of the independent production companies. Furthermore, the government's blueprint for the BBC's future – as spelt out in the White Paper – envisages that the broadcasting regulator, OFCOM, will have unprecedented powers to fine the BBC if – for instance – it keeps certain programme-making sectors within the Corporation, rather than contracting them to the private sector, or if it decides to operate any service which the regulator decides would interfere with commercial competition sectors.

But most expensive of all is the plan spelt out in greatest detail in the White Paper for the BBC to pay for the switchover to digital transmission at the turn of the decade. This is despite the multi-million pound benefit which the Treasury will reap when it resells the analogue frequencies to specialist and high-definition TV broadcasters in auctions which will reprise the bidding war for the G3 mobile spectrum. The scenario is not a happy one – growing commercial interference, a greater role for a regulator which has shown itself almost uniformly to favour commercial interests over public service ones, and BBC management

which remains heavily metropolitan in its outlook and which is obsessed with finding new platforms to deliver programmes, rather than with retaining the staff to make them.

The left in Scotland is entitled to ask serious questions of the BBC and of the politicians who seek to direct it to become a more commercial, profit-driven organisation. How, for instance, will the BBC fulfil its duty to reflect the increasing diversity and maturity of Scotland when media industries are shrinking north of the border, partly under pressure from increasing concentration of ownership in England? But also when BBC executives, board members and the politicians who appointed them appear systematically to disregard the views of staff, viewers, listeners and others who hold the public service broadcasting ethic dear. The enchantment – some might say entrapment – of broadcasting employers and planners with technology and new delivery platforms at the expense of employees, viewers and indeed the programmes themselves is not new. As the broadcaster and anti-McCarthy campaigner Ed Murrow put it – in remarks revived for the film, *Goodnight and Good Luck* – "This instrument [television] can teach, it can illuminate; yes, and it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise it is merely wires and lights in a box. There is a great and decisive battle to be fought against intolerance and indifference."

That same battle for ideas, serious journalism and challenging programme-making, rather than television dominated by profit, celebrities, 'reality' shows and imported soaps remains as relevant now as it was in the years of McCarthy's witch-hunts. ■

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the point of scottish enterprise?

Danny MacKinnon looks at the history of Scottish Enterprise and suggests what its future ought to be.

To say that the last few months have been difficult for Scottish Enterprise (SEn) would be an understatement. A £34 million overspend in its budget for 2005/06 has generated widespread criticism, requiring the agency to be 'bailed out' by Scottish Executive ministers. At the same time, Chief Executive Jack Perry's restructuring plans, involving rationalisation of the Local Enterprise Companies (LEC) network and a greater focus on the metropolitan regions of Glasgow and Edinburgh, have failed to generate the expected support. Beyond calls for senior executives to resign and for the reform of internal accounting procedures, the current crisis raises important issues about the role and purpose of Scottish Enterprise within a devolved Scotland. Examining the evolution of the agency over time not only provides important context for understanding its current difficulties, it also helps to inform the development of alternative policy options.

SEn and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) were established in 1991 to replace the Scottish Development Agency (SDA) and the Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB). Along with the Welsh Development Agency (WDA), the SDA was created by a Labour government in 1975 as a response to deindustrialisation in West Central Scotland and increased support for nationalism. The SDA and HIDB had to adapt to the prevailing neoliberal climate after 1979, adopting business friendly practices and speaking the language of efficiency and entrepreneurialism. But in terms of actual strategy and operations, the SDA retained considerable autonomy. Top officials such as George Matthewson actually set much of the direction rather than Tory ministers like George Younger and Malcolm Rifkind. The 1991 reforms reflected the Thatcherite instinct of the Conservative Party in terms of breaking up the SDA and HIDB as expressions of the interventionist corporatist state in Scotland and handing over control of economic development policy to business leaders. Important strands of continuity remained, however, not least in terms of retaining the structure of regional agencies in addition to the network of LECs. This owes little to neo-liberal ideology, which suggests that local agencies should compete directly for funding from central government. Instead, the specific organisational form of the SE and HIE networks can be as the product of a compromise between Conservative philosophy and established regional structures.

The nature of this compromise has been reflected in the development of the enterprise networks since 1991, shaped by an underlying tension between local flexibility and central direction. Local business leaders were told that they would have the power and autonomy to determine priorities, a belief that clashed with the audit and target-driven ethos of the new managerialism of the 1990s. In the event, the vision of local consortia competing for the contracts to run LECs for fixed periods never transpired, and the agencies evolved into local outposts of the state. This process intensified under devolution as concerns about duplication and fragmentation grew, leading to

greater integration and centralisation across the networks.

SEn has undoubtedly been subject to closer political scrutiny and direction under devolution. The Smart, Successful Scotland strategy stresses the importance of commercialising Scotland's scientific research base and encouraging a culture of lifelong learning. Under the leadership of the former Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Wendy Alexander, this became popularised as the 'science and skills' agenda. Given the historic emphasis on attracting inward investment, the 'science and skills' agenda represents a significant departure for economic development in Scotland, gaining considerable support from business and economic commentators. At the same time, the enterprise agencies retain considerable latitude to interpret and implement the Smart, Successful Scotland agenda. SEn has developed large-scale initiatives such as the Scottish Co-Investment Fund, the three Intermediate Technology Institutes and the Pacific Quay regeneration scheme in Glasgow.

SEn's restructuring proposals reflect its embrace of a business competitiveness agenda in recent years, stressing its role in fostering innovation and skills, encouraging university spin-offs and improving communications. The vision underpinning Smart, Successful Scotland is one of regions competing against one another for growth and investment within an increasingly globalised economy. The importance of metropolitan regions as drivers of growth and innovation has become an important strand of economic development thinking in recent years. SEn's plans to recast its internal structure by rationalising the LEC network and focusing more of its resources on Glasgow and



Edinburgh should be seen in this light. Whilst the principle of metropolitan regions has gained broad acceptance, the internal restructuring proposals have proved highly controversial. The idea of reducing the status of LECs to branch offices proved a step too far for ministers with Nicol Stephen announcing that the 12 LECs would remain in place, retaining their independent, business-led boards. As a consequence, the new metropolitan boards seem to be being grafted to the existing structure, forming an intermediate tier between the main SEn board and the LECs. Whilst the picture is still rather unclear, the danger of this is that it creates further complexity by introducing another level of management into an agency that is already seen as too large and unwieldy in many quarters.

This is not the first time that SEn proposals have been rejected by ministers in recent years. In 2004, Jack Perry asked that the agency be relieved of its social inclusion responsibilities, allowing it to focus solely on business development and competitiveness. In refusing this request, ministers indicated that they wished SEn to retain a broader regional development role, supporting regeneration and the social economy alongside business growth and research and development. The problem of high levels of economic inactivity, particularly in the West of Scotland, highlights the crucial links between economic and social factors. In practice, however, SEn appears to have embraced a narrow vision of itself as a business development agency, focusing on the needs of large firms and undertaking large-scale projects to stimulate innovation and growth. The old idea that the role of development agencies is to address market failure – formulating initiatives which are unattractive to the private sector and focusing on social groups and places neglected by it – has been lost.

The financial problems of SEn came to light in November last year when internal forecasts indicated that a projected overspend was likely to occur. Assumptions, based on past experience, that some projects would be delayed were not being borne out. The high volume of projects reflects the more pro-active approach adopted by the agency in recent years, in response to difficulties in fully spending its budget in previous years, with staff encouraged to initiate and generate projects. A devolved budget system introduced by Perry to encourage new projects was not accompanied by adequate mechanism for prioritisation, placing strong pressure on the budget. In addition, public accounting rules prevent the agency from accessing its cash reserves. The overspend was eventually 'managed down' from around £100 million to £34 million, comprised of a £24 million 'non-cash' overspend and a £10 million cash overspend, after budget capping was introduced in January 2006. In agreeing to make additional resources available and not as yet demanding major changes within the agency, ministers have provided a surprising level of support for SEn in the face of negative publicity and opposition criticism. This is in stark contrast to their responses to the difficulties encountered by other quangos with the Chairman of Scottish Water being sacked and the Scottish Arts Council facing abolition.

Ministers in Wales have adopted a very different approach from the Executive, abolishing the WDA and the Wales Tourist Board and incorporating their functions within the Welsh Assembly Government. The revamped Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks, incorporating the functions of the WDA, was launched in early April this year. This move was driven by the centralising instincts of the Labour administration, following

conflicts between ministers and top officials in the quangos. It reflects the much higher profile of economic development and concerns over the growth of an unaccountable quango state in debates on devolution in Wales compared to Scotland. Whilst ministers have emphasised the benefits of increased political accountability and cost savings, the abolition of the WDA has provided highly controversial, raising concern about a loss of commercial flexibility and entrepreneurialism within the bureaucratic culture of a government department. It appears highly unlikely that Scottish ministers will follow the Welsh path, with the most likely outcome of the current crisis being changes in procedures and personnel within SEn. The existence and purpose of SEn is largely unquestioned, beyond opposition proposals to reduce its £500 million budget, reflecting its status as a symbol of politicians' commitment to the economy and an absence of alternative visions of economic development in Scotland. Yet the role of enterprise agencies is an important component of any kind of alternative economic strategy. Developing such a strategy surely represents an important task for the left in Scotland, enabling it to start to reclaim the economic agenda from orthodox, neoliberal thinking.

As a starting point, the broader regional development role of enterprise agencies such as Scottish Enterprise should be emphasised, reinforcing their commitment to the social economy and regeneration. Support should be focused more strongly on disadvantaged areas, empowering communities to address the priorities with expert assistance and finance. Against the discourse of globalisation and competitiveness emphasised by ministers and Scottish Enterprise, it is worth remembering that the bulk of economic activity remains tied to meeting local demand. As such, there is scope for demand-led approaches which seek to boost overall level of demand in the economy over the prevailing neoliberal emphases on supply-side measures. Such measures are more likely to stimulate economic expansion in demand-deficient labour markets through classic Keynesian multiplier effects than any number of knowledge-based initiatives.

In terms of structure, the incorporation of SEn functions into the executive is one option. This would lead to increased political accountability, but at the expense of operational flexibility and autonomy. The best option may be to slim down the central operations of Scottish Enterprise, particularly in terms of corporate functions like advertising, consultancy and public relations, and recast the agency as more of a strategically-orientated regional development body. SEn management were right to focus attention on the role and purpose of LECs, although their proposed solutions were questionable. There is no inherent reason why a fragmented structure based on somewhat arbitrary geographical units, should be retained. Indeed, there is a strong argument that the delivery of local regeneration and training programmes would be best handled by local authorities, leaving Scottish Enterprise to operate as a strategic regional development agency. Local and regional and national measures can only offer part of the answer, however. To be truly effective, they need to be linked to the introduction of political and economic reforms at the UK and European levels that allow greater scope for the implementation of progressive economic policies.



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independence caged?

Christine Grahame MSP examines whether Special Branch spying operations against the SNP represent the thin edge of British establishment dirty tricks against the party of independence.

Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they are not out to get you. How true. The extent of 'British intelligence' in Scotland, that greatest of all oxymorons, took my interest last summer after my office uncovered the fact that a significant number of documents, 32 in all, which contained the title 'Scottish National Party' were held at the Public Records Office in Kew in Surrey. Two of these, one marked 'SNP General, 1974 to 1976' and the other 'North Sea Oil, Scottish National Party' had been closed for 50 years. These files require the personal approval of the Lord Chancellor and a special advisory Council to extend the closed period for such documents from the nominal 30 years to 50, but they had clearly deemed that the information contained within them was too sensitive for Scottish eyes.

Later, similar documents obtained under Freedom of Information by my colleague Kenny MacAskill determined what might rest in those closed files; the 'black secret' that the British state has repeatedly tried to keep from the people of Scotland for decades. The secret? That Scottish independence would give us free access to an oil wealth other nations will only ever dream of. Instead the British government decided to deliberately suppress this knowledge and have left large swathes of our population in poverty for 30 years or more, and ultimately they conspired over the best way to 'take the wind out of the SNP's sails'.

Following on from this I requested under Freedom of Information the number of files held by Special Branch offices in Scotland which contained the title Scottish National Party and also what period these files related to. Asking for the number of files as opposed to what is in them would, I believe, establish that a process of surveillance was being routinely carried out against the SNP. Initially Fife Special Branch came back and said

they held no files on the party. Then Dumfries and Galloway responded and applied the seemingly innocuous 'section 18' from the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 where they could 'neither confirm nor deny the existence of such files', but, and this is where it started to get interesting, 'if the information is held we consider that it would be exempt from disclosure under the following sections [of the Act]; national security and defence, investigations by a public authority and finally law enforcement.'

The use of Section 18 is a bit of a black hole in terms of the Act. On the face of it the application of this 'exempting section' neither confirms nor denies anything. Yet the sub exemptions which lead on from it make it clear what information may be lurking away in the background. The notion that SNP files held by Special Branch could be exempt because their potential release was so sensitive it may endanger UK national security and defence was intriguing and equally a little baffling. That did not last long however. No sooner had I started to ponder the who, what and where aspects of how the SNP posed a threat to UK national security when a second email came through from Dumfries and Galloway Police. The content was in typical ponderous police prose but went something like this: "OK, sunshine, its like this see. We seem to have made a wee mistake, er... about the reasons we can't show you the 'maybes aye, maybes no' files. Actually they wouldn't be exempt for national security reasons... the reason we can't tell you if we hold this information is because it would put at **real** risk the lives of all those grasses, I mean informants, we're already using inside the Nat party. Over and out."

Then, like the classic animated Bagpuss TV stories, all the other mice on the mouse organ fell into line and every other police force



came back and applied the exact same set of exemptions; "that disclosure would prove the existence of 'information received in confidence' by informants and as a result, would place them at risk", which led neatly to the second exemption which they applied under 'health and safety', by which they clearly meant the health and safety of the informants. I later determined, through my own 'well placed police source' that after I lodged my request for information the Metropolitan Police in London contacted every police force in Scotland advising them how to respond to what is meant to be entirely Scottish legislation. Dumfries had unfortunately responded too quickly it seems and were left in the embarrassing position of changing the exemptions to files which 'may or may not exist', an interesting concept in itself. According to my police source Fife Constabulary had left the rest in a bit of a quandary, seeing as every other force apparently did hold files on the SNP. Fife Police were meant to have followed the same line, but as we all know it tacks a lang spoon to sup wi' a Fifer. ACPOS, the Association of Chief Polis Officers in Scotland and a body which really is a law unto itself and accountable to no one, not even Scottish Ministers, also got themselves into a right froth about my request.

The use of informants and surveillance operations against the principal democratic political opposition in Scotland should be abhorrent to all true democrats. It is clear such tactics are being deployed against the party and I know from my own police insider that these files are 'current and active'. What I'm trying to determine is the extent of this activity. It could well be that what we're seeing is directly connected to the options the British Prime Minister (Harold Wilson) and successive unionist governments of both Tory and Labour considered and implemented back in the mid 1970s; a strategy aimed at taking the 'wind out of the SNP sails'. Ironic really given that it was Wilson's own well founded paranoia about the reach of the security service and covert intelligence which resulted in his introduction of the Wilson Doctrine, a convention which banned covert surveillance gathering by MI5 on MPs and which incidentally does not extend to cover MSPs. Indeed very recent reports show clearly that the real powerbase of the British establishment, the senior military generals and senior select Royals, both of whom had an arm lock around the neck of the Wilson administration for its duration, were quite prepared to use military force to ensure the sovereignty of their class and their view of how Britain should be. The SNP clearly had the capability to upset that apple cart and potentially still does.

The notion therefore that we are dealing with some benign and tolerant British establishment which cares neither one way or other whether Scotland goes its own way is a complete illusion. The reality is quite different and a long way from the cosy consensus politics we are so familiar with in Scotland today. The cosy politics ignores the true nature of the British establishment figures and organisations that are racked against Scotland and any attempt by us to see real social justice and prosperity redistribution take place. Amongst the documents that Kenny MacAskill uncovered was the thinly-veiled threat that the rump UK would have to use armed force to secure 'its' strategic economic interests if Scotland chose independence. Professor Noam Chomsky described that disclosure as a 'bombshell' and concluded that genuine democrats across the world, including those in the US, would be rightly horrified to learn of it. The use of violence is of course nothing new for the British state and only a few years ago Jack Straw said during a BBC Radio 4 interview: "...the English are potentially very aggressive and very

violent. The English have used their propensity towards violence to subjugate Ireland, Wales and Scotland." – an open admission of this fact.

Of course officially sanctioned state violence is still quite likely the weapon of final choice for the British establishment if 'their' state and their power base are threatened by a democratic move to independence in Scotland. Before that situation arises we can expect to endure the full weight of non-violent, democratically subversive activities directed towards those who seek a better and fairer future for ordinary Scots. This process is already well underway and has been active for years; a sort of modern version of the 'rough wooing' tactic used by England against Scotland in the 16th century. Again I learned from recently released documents that supposedly independent state broadcasters like the BBC had, until relatively recently, an MI5 officer in place who personally vetted **all** BBC editorial appointments. Blue Peter and Andy Pandy will never seem quite the same again! Furthermore I established that it was previously routine for all BBC staff to sign the Official Secrets Act. Staff in other news organisations don't sign this censorship Act so why should BBC journalists sign it when it can so seriously impede their journalistic investigations? This policy is clearly designed to prohibit scrutiny of key government policy areas and wouldn't have been out of place in the offices of Pravda. MI5 officers also used to stamp the personnel files of potential subversives within the BBC with a green Christmas tree. I asked under Fol for the number of personnel files which presently had such a stamp only to be told that "following a review of the personnel department all green Christmas tree stamps were removed". Presumably MI5 and BBC chiefs have a more electronically friendly way of monitoring the reds under the bed, or Nats under the mats in our case.

The accepted wisdom promoted by Blair and his predecessors is that such tactics are the sole preserve of totalitarian regimes like North Korea. If such tactics are being deployed here then clearly we need to look closely at what actually defines democracy in a supposedly modern society like Britain and who are 'legitimate' targets for such democratically subversive operations. Devolution is designed with three strategic functions: to distract the public and political herd in Scotland away from questioning whether there is actually exists fundamental political democracy and at the same time it deceives us into thinking that we are working within a purely civic political environment. Crucially however its main function is to act as a block to Scottish independence.

Caught cage-like no one should be deluded into thinking that we can simply saunter over and open the door to freedom. That exit door is padlocked shut and guarded by the British State which, in the shadows and with stealth, stalks, watches and listens. It is a cliché "that dark forces are at work" but the limited evidence gleaned so far would appear to support this. The Information Commissioner will shortly reach his decision on whether Special Branch should release the number of files it holds on the SNP and I hope the extent or otherwise of police informants will be exposed. If the outcome of those investigations reveals widespread use of informants and police agents at the heart of the SNP then very serious answers will be required from the Labour Justice Minister, to whom all police officers are ultimately accountable. ■

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clowns and courtiers

Most people now seem to agree that Tartan Week is something of a national embarrassment, but why are we quite so obsequiously obsessed by the US elites, asks Isobel Lindsay?

Those of us who have long argued for an international role for Scotland did not have Tartan Week in mind. Honestly. Is there anyone in Scotland who did not cringe at the spectacle of our Scottish elites trying to ingratiate themselves, not sure with whom or for what purpose? One begins to look sympathetically at Harry Lauder's American tours which had rather more dignity than some of our senior figures playing the clown. Is this our role - to be the clown nation, begging for a little attention and a few tourist dollars? I concede that sometimes we have to mix with the less desirable for the sake of jobs, but there should be limits. It's bad enough having Donald Trump dictating our planning policies but asking him to be an 'ambassador' for Scotland is one lick of the boots too many. I don't want to decry Tartan Week entirely; it makes a useful contribution to the New York hospitality industry in the low season, but this is not a good enough reason to make the rest of us suffer and pay upwards of £1.4 million for the pain.

There is, of course, a more serious context in this American fetishism. Or rather, this fetishism with one side of the US. Just as Jack couldn't be more obsequious to Trump, so he couldn't find a few minutes to welcome Cindy Sheehan, the anti-war campaigner, when she visited the Scottish Parliament. The love-affair is with money and power; it's not with the radical campaigners in the States nor with the poor who clean up in Trump's property empire.

The preoccupation with rich America is much more significant when we consider Brown and Blair. With all the cultures of the world to explore, Brown's holiday dream year after year has been to play at being one of the Kennedys in Cape Cod. This might seem trivial, but the dreams tell us something of the values. There was no doubt by the time Brown gained office that the guiding light would be the transatlantic model - shift the balance of power even further than Thatcher had done in the direction of capital with the massive PFI programme and other private sector opportunities in the public services, low taxation on the wealthy, a cosy relationship with corporate friends like Murdoch, supply-side economics. There was never any rumour of disagreement with Blair's support for US neo-conservative militarism or any suggestion that he would not find the savings from other budgets to finance the billions that have been spent on the Iraq war.

Again it is the trivial with its 'taken for granted' assumptions that signify the core attitudes. In this year's budget speech a minor initiative quite irrelevant to a major presentation of economic

strategy was announced. The Commons was told that the Government would be launching a US enterprise scholarship scheme for UK university students who had excelled in engineering, science and technology to be administered by the Ewing Marion Kaufmann Foundation in the US and the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship. Apart from the fact that this should have been at most a minor announcement by the higher education Minister and that it was virtually saying that UK Business Schools were not much use, it also illustrated this American-centric world view. If you want to make enterprise scholarships available, let potential students decide in what country in the world they might find it most useful to study. In the Chancellor's world view, there appears to be only one option and he's so proud of the way it makes him look dynamic and Ivy League that he puts this in his budget speech.

Of course, in Scotland we have exactly the same example from the First Minister. He launched the £1million Tomorrow's Leaders International programme to send 20 Scottish students to the US for work experience. Examples given of where they would be working were the Smithsonian Institute and the

Kennedy Centre. We do museums and cultural centres quite well in Scotland so it is difficult to know what we would be gaining. Compare this to the 'Schools of Ambition' programme where a small number of secondary schools are only being given an extra £100,000 each, supposedly to transform their schools. Again this programme, like the Brown enterprise scholarship scheme, is not offering opportunities in a wide range of countries but only the US. Is there no leadership or enterprise anywhere else in the world? Perhaps some Scandinavian placements might be more relevant or is that going off-message? This particular scheme has been cut by Scottish Enterprise as one of its economies and we can only hope that no other budget will be raided by the Executive to continue it. Alex Neil described it as "a brilliant project". Why?

Ironically these initiatives are taking place at a time when corporate America is witnessing a series of appalling scandals; some like Enron have ended up in court, others, like the Haliburton Iraq contracts, have been substantially covered up. The current scandals in Congress have also opened up just a little of the corrupt political/business interface. Surely there should be questions about whether this is the business culture that we should be holding up to our young people as a model. Enron was, after all, one of the shining examples being promoted in US Business schools right up to its collapse as a

We know that in the earlier post-war period there was a well-funded project to identify and nurture pro-US 'champions' in the UK in politics, trade unions, journalism and literature. We do need to look more closely at some careers. How do you get to be in charge of NATO?



model of a dynamic and successful business organisation. But for Gordon and Tony and Jack there is still a vicarious thrill they seem to get from some-things-American. They are the true courtiers and are in denial about the real USA.

Of course in the case of Blair there is another dimension. There is little doubt that he is an ideological neo-con but he is also a man interested in money and a future corporate career. The Carlisle Group will no doubt welcome him generously but he must hope for even bigger pickings to support a Berlusconi lifestyle. The best of these pickings will come not from Europe but from the States. His extreme support for the US state and corporate interests may have an ideological base but there is also a substantial degree of crude future self-interest in his political positions.

There are those in Scotland in touch with the other America, an America airbrushed out of the New Labour vision. The peace movement has welcomed many US visitors and has organised speaking tours for Military Families Against the War. The environmental movement maintains links. Look in any bookshop in Scotland's cities and Noam Chomsky sells well. Scottish and US universities have student exchange programmes which are not elitist.

Is this our role - to be the clown nation, begging for a little attention and a few tourist dollars?

This love affair with corporate America is probably just the same kind of deferential response to power as that of the Anglophile Indian princes in the 19th century. But for those inclined towards conspiracy theories, there is no shortage of material. We know that in the earlier post-war period there was a well-funded project to identify and nurture pro-US 'champions' in the UK in

politics, trade unions, journalism and literature. The background to the Encounter journal is one of the better-documented examples. We do need to look more closely at some careers. How do you get to be in charge of NATO? In the contemporary context we know there is a huge industry of commercial organised targeting (see Spinwatch) but it is less clear how much of a state-sponsored 'friends' programme there is. Perhaps with the kind of governments we have had in the UK, our Washington supervisors feel they don't have to bother. But let us keep a sharp eye on who is promoting what and why?

Finally, the least we can expect of good courtiers is that they can sense when power is beginning to shift. Our Scottish courtiers are unfortunately not very astute or they would already have transferred Tartan Week to Beijing. ■

Isobel Lindsay is a lecturer in sociology at Strathclyde University and Convener of Scotland's for Peace.

not too late this time

John Ainslie explains why there is plenty of scope to oppose the replacement of Britain's nuclear arsenal

At 3 PM on 12 October 1986 President Ronald Reagan met with Mikhail Gorbachev at Hofdi House in Reykjavik, Iceland. The transcript of their meeting was recently declassified. It includes the following exchange:

The President It would be fine with him if we eliminated all nuclear weapons.

Gorbachev said we can do that. We can eliminate them.

The Secretary [Shultz] said "Let's do it"...

The President said that if they could agree to eliminate all nuclear weapons, he thought they could turn it over to their Geneva people with that understanding, for them to draft up that agreement, and Gorbachev could come to the U.S. and sign it....

Shevardnadze said... the two sides were so close to accomplishing a historic task, to decisions of such historical significance, that if future generations read the minutes of these meetings, and saw how close we had come but how we did not use these opportunities, they would never forgive us.

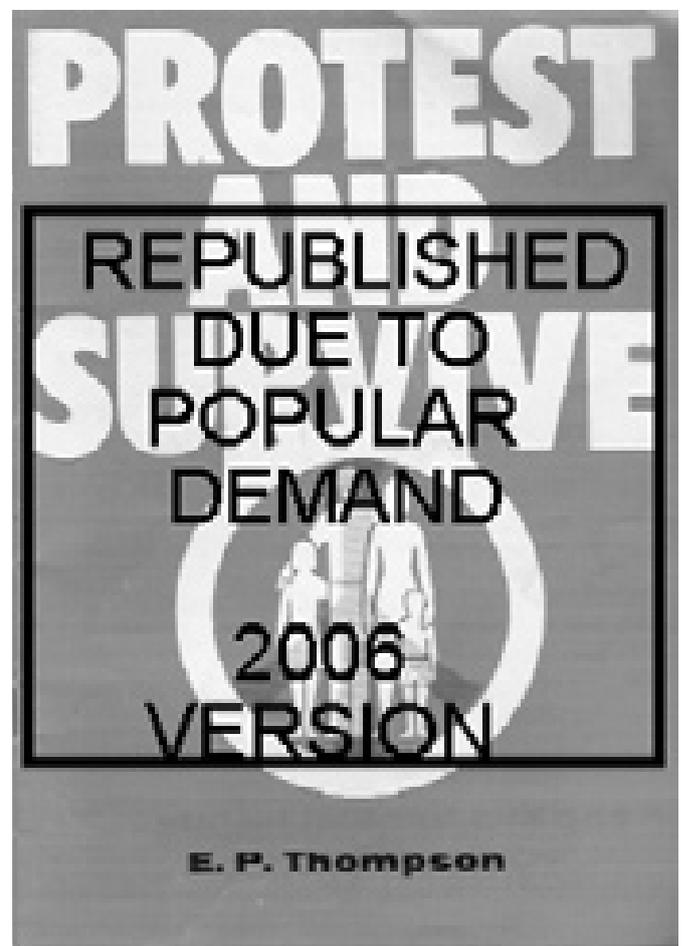
When the negotiating teams from both sides realised what their leaders had been discussing they began to backtrack. The opportunity passed.

Secret US papers reveal that twenty-two years earlier another chance had been missed. When Harold Wilson came to power in 1964 there was strong opposition to nuclear weapons within the Labour Party. In America the State Department anticipated that Wilson would want to pull out of the Polaris Sales Agreement. They prepared a briefing for President Lyndon Johnson. The paper said that if Wilson wanted to disarm then Johnson should not oppose this but should help Britain to end its nuclear status. However the State Department had misread the true feelings of the Labour leader. Far from pursuing disarmament, Wilson implemented the deal to buy Polaris missiles. In the late 1970s a small group of Ministers in the Callaghan Government considered the future of British nuclear weapons. While there appeared to be several options, it is now clear they only really had two alternatives – buy Trident or get out of the nuclear business. When Margaret Thatcher came to power the Trident deal was signed. Although there was an upsurge in CND activity it only reached its peak after the decision had been made.

Today there is a great opportunity. A decision on whether or not to replace Trident is looming. For 15 years politicians have hidden behind the line that the money has already been spent. Now they are having to justify not just what these weapons are for today, but whether billions of pounds should be spent on the next generation of weapons. John Reid has said that some decisions should be made in the lifetime of this Parliament, ie before 2010, on a replacement for Trident. Tony Blair announced that they will agree the timetable for making a decision by the end of 2006. A small group of officials in the MoD has begun to draft papers looking at future options.

For the anti-nuclear movement the first objective is to ensure that the debate is as open and public as possible. John Reid has acknowledged that he cannot get away with deciding this behind closed doors, in the way all previous nuclear decisions have been made. He promises that there will be opportunities to debate the issue. But at the same time he has stonewalled a series of written questions placed by MPs in the House of Commons. The Defence Committee started an investigation into "The future of the strategic deterrent". But Mr Reid would not allow any of his officials to give evidence to the Committee. The Defence Committee hearings have helped clarify the question of Trident Replacement. One of the most interesting contributions came from David Boucher. Until last year Mr Boucher was the British Ambassador at the UN Disarmament Conference. He played a leading role in the British delegation at the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference.

The pro-nuclear lobby claims that if Britain gave up its nuclear status this would have no impact on the Russian nuclear arsenal or on whether more countries will try to join the nuclear club. Mr Boucher torpedoed this argument. He said "we are, as it were, an actor in this play and the actions of others are conditioned by the way in which they perceive us". He argued that confidence in the NPT was flagging, not just because of the actions of North Korea and Iran, but "through the failure of the existing nuclear weapons states to live up to their obligation



to pursue negotiations on multi-lateral disarmament in good faith". Strong words from the man who only months ago was leading Britain's contribution to these negotiations.

Mr Broucher and his colleague from Southampton University, Professor John Simpson, argued that the Trident Replacement decision presents an opportunity for Britain to kick-start negotiations on disarmament and the NPT. They said that any decision on replacement should be linked to progress on wider disarmament. CND could not accept an approach which meant that Britain would keep nuclear weapons if there was no progress on global disarmament. However there is some common ground between the Southampton University position and our own. We should be arguing not only that Trident should not be replaced, but that this decision should go hand-in-hand with Britain taking a leading role strengthening the NPT and promoting global nuclear disarmament. With the end of apartheid, South Africa gave up its nuclear weapons programme. This enabled South Africa to play a leading role in strengthening the NPT during the 1995 review conference. A nuclear-weapons-free Britain would be well placed to use its diplomatic influence to promote disarmament and to discourage nations from acquiring nuclear weapons. This would be a far better way to tackle the dangers of nuclear proliferation than keeping our own Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Mr Broucher also condemned any link between having nuclear weapons and sitting on the Security Council. He said "this line of thinking is absolutely pernicious". The MPs on the Defence Committee asked how France would respond if Britain did not replace Trident. Dr Bruno Tertrais, an expert on French nuclear strategy, replied that they would be two reactions. Some might feel it made France more important. But there would also be pressure on France to follow Britain's example. He added that the French were content with the current situation where both nations have the bomb. Again this revealed that not replacing Trident could break the mind-set of nuclear deterrence and encourage others to follow suite.

Several witnesses before the Committee argued that Trident should be replaced. Their main claim was that Britain needed to have an insurance policy in an uncertain world. Professor Simpson criticised this approach as "a very unsatisfactory basis for committing scarce defence resources to this activity". Sir Michael Quinlan, former Permanent Secretary at the MoD, argued that while the hardware for Trident is procured from the US it is operationally independent. Dr Dan Plesch challenged this view saying "the historical record and documentary evidence shows that for some considerable time this country has effectively not had an independent strategic nuclear deterrent". The Defence Committee also heard from Kate Hudson (CND Chair), Dominick Jenkins (Greenpeace) and Professor Shaun Gregory (Bradford). The strength of evidence clearly showed the absurdity of replacing Trident. It remains to be seen how much logic will survive the political deliberations of the Committee. Their report is likely to be published in June.

The main option that the MoD is considering is 'more of the same'. This means building new submarines to carry first

Trident and later the next generation of US missiles. But new nuclear submarines are not cheap. Barrow dockyard is currently building three Astute class submarines. These will be armed with conventional weapons, but are nuclear powered. The total cost for three vessels has risen from £2.5 billion to £3.5 billion and the programme is running four years behind schedule. An order for five more Astute submarines has been postponed because of concerns over cost. Four new submarines to carry nuclear weapons would probably cost around £8 billion. The complete costs of keeping in the nuclear business would be far higher. The annual costs of the British nuclear weapons programme are around £1 billion a year. If the new system has a planned life of 25 years then replacing Trident would be committing £25 billion to Weapons of Mass Destruction. The

costs of building new shore facilities are prohibitive, so the MoD will only seriously consider a system based in Scotland. They are planning on 2020 - 2050 timeframe. Who knows where the devolution process will have led by then - if not to independence, then at least to a beefed-up Scottish Parliament, possibly with powers that could make basing nuclear weapons at Faslane untenable.

Three of the main political parties in Scotland, the SNP, Green Party and SSP, are opposed to Trident. Scottish CND has been engaged in a long-term lobbying exercise. Last summer we surveyed all MSPs and Scottish MPs. The response from MSPs was mixed. This year we have urged our supporters to write to their MP. We are asking MPs to sign two Early Day Motions. EDM 1113 calls on the Government to publish its options on the future of nuclear weapons. It is supported by 188 MPs from all the main parties. A few more signatures will take it over the 200 threshold which only a handful of motions reach each year. EDM 1197 calls for a debate and vote. It is supported by 115 MPs, 87 of them from the Labour Party. With more lobbying it should be possible to increase this to 100 Labour MPs. The Catholic Church in Scotland have recently taken a stand. On 12 April the Bishops issued a statement opposing Trident Replacement. Cardinal Keith O'Brien focused on the issue in his Easter address. The Church of Scotland continues to actively work against new nuclear weapons. At its April Congress the STUC reaffirmed its opposition to nuclear weapons. Last year a System Three opinion poll indicated that 78 per cent of Scots opposed spending billions on new nuclear weapons.

Scottish CND is co-ordinating Scotland's Long Walk for Peace from Faslane to the Scottish Parliament from 14 to 19 September this year. We will be urging the Parliament to take a stand and oppose any replacement for Trident. During the walk there will be street activity and meetings on the route across Central Scotland. Bruce Kent will be taking part. The opportunity before us today is not just to create a nuclear-weapons-free Scotland or Britain. An end to British nuclear weapons would allow diplomats to push forward the disarmament agenda and oppose nuclear proliferation. In the words of Cardinal O'Brien - "We here in Scotland have a duty to lead the way in campaigning for change, because we have the shameful task of housing these horrific weapons". ■

*John Ainslie is Co-ordinator of Scottish CND
www.banthebomb.org*

reviews

Soil and Soul: People versus Corporate Power, by Alastair McIntosh, revised edition 2004, Aurum Press, London

Reclaim the State: Experiments in Popular Democracy, Hilary Wainwright, 2003, Verso, London

What do activists do when they go home from the G8? Such events make visible a diverse movement, unified by criteria of 'Humanity versus Capital', 'Popular Democracy', and 'Non-violence', as Eurig Scandrett noted in Scottish Left Review in July 2005. These two books show us what activists are doing about those themes on their home turf, as each writer explores the attempts of local communities to control their own resources against the forces of global capitalism.

I found the differences between these books as well as their points of contact fascinating. Each is written by a respected thinker and activist, based on their real-world experiences. Each stresses the importance of ordinary people's knowledge and the transformation, not seizing, of power. Yet although neither writer is at the extreme of the broader movement, there appears to be a cultural gulf between their approaches, hinting at some fundamental divide between reds and greens. While Hilary Wainwright explores inner-city democracy from a participatory left perspective, Alastair McIntosh brings human ecology to bear on the west coast of Scotland.

Hilary Wainwright investigates grass-roots initiatives in Brazil and inner-city Britain. She finds that where the idea that 'another world is possible' has taken root locally, people have had to engage with the state. The idea, from Tom Paine, that "the construction of government ought to bring forward, by quiet and regular operation, all that capacity which never fails to appear in revolution" is taken as a watchword.

Today she is editor of Red Pepper, but Hilary Wainwright's own history reaches back into the 'participatory left' – from the alternative plans created by trade unionists at Lucas Aerospace, through socialist feminism and popular planning in the GLC. These movements, in the face of growing power of multinational companies, worked "in and against the state" – not only committed to public provision of services such as health and education, but seeking direct involvement of the people delivering and using them. She argues that, in contrast to neo-liberalism and social democracy, the participatory left acts in the belief that conscious social evolution is possible: practical knowledge in the hands of ordinary people can be shared to support social change from below.

Hilary Wainwright asks questions about the connections between resisting unaccountable power and creating new institutions, and how to strengthen popular control without also strengthening parochialism. She focuses on local initiatives

for social justice, in Porto Alegre, and in places in Britain bearing "the marks of a recent economic showdown". She finds optimism that, when real opportunities exist, people do engage and take on power and responsibility, but also contradictions around the limits of that power, when it clashes with powerful interests. Her careful and honest accounts offer detailed insights into how stronger forms of democracy can support humanity versus capital.

Alastair McIntosh uses his own history in the western isles of Scotland to explore the power of colonialism and globalisation, and looks at how, by embracing the diverse, grounded cultures of place, we can combat the meaninglessness of modern life and "decolonise our soul". Although "not an autobiography" Alastair McIntosh's book is grounded in many interweaving personal stories of his youth on Lewis and campaigns against a gigantic quarry on Harris and for community land ownership on

Eigg. In his unselfconscious storytelling, he tracks off into the bushes to explore some connection, then swerves back to the main path with new insights gathered from etymology, mythology, theology or history.

Alastair McIntosh's thesis is that "the ills of the world are essentially spiritual". From the liberation theologian Walter Wink he borrows the idea of spirituality as "the **interiority** of a person, an institution, a nation" which "shapes the flow of power". Action for transformation, he argues, "starts with becoming truly aware of how we feel: within ourselves,

in our communities and in relation to nature". Through stories of his own activism, Alastair McIntosh illustrates Wink's model for transforming the 'Powers that Be'. Naming, unmasking and engaging the Powers means linking the local to the big picture, using the "heart as an organ of vision", continually addressing conflicts, using life's **poesis** to find meaningful patterns, and working on your own fears and ego-trips alongside the public campaign. Faced with a plan to blast Mount Roineabhal into roadstone, the real question, Alastair says, is "What is a mountain actually for?". Behind his process is a re-integration of **mythos** into the dried-up **logos** we call reason.

All the evidence suggests to me that Hilary Wainwright and Alastair McIntosh are part of the same movement, with the same broad goals of environmental sustainability and social justice, and share the principles of 'humanity not capital', 'popular democracy' and 'non-violence'. They each owe a debt to feminism and to Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educationalist. Their books, about power, will speak to activists coming home from the G8, hungry to make another world possible in their locality.

As that activist, I admire each and I'm disappointed by both. I'm disappointed that **Reclaim the State** fails to tackle redefining abundance – to see that we can no longer define social justice without thinking about what it is we want everyone to have

It's time for America to accept 9/11 for what it was; a lie which killed thousands of people, in turn killing hundreds of thousands more; to make billions upon trillions of dollars

plenty of. I'm disappointed that **Soil and Soul** spends so much time responding to religion, and so little speaking to those whose suburban hinterland is less resplendent with myth than the Hebrides. And yet I know that such thinking is there: ideas about how the human mind is rooted in the earth, about what can make us really happy, about what we really need as humans. And there is thinking about human spirituality just as powerful without getting caught up in the vestments of the church.

So, for a while, activists will need to read both these books. The old leftie will tell them how to organise politically, and the wild green man will stir their spirit. But one day, perhaps soon, red and green will meet in the middle, suspicious no more, and create a culture and process that can truly put humanity before capital.

Jenny Patient

Loose Change 2nd Edition, dir. Dylan Avery, USA, 2005

Avenge But One of My Two Eyes, dir. Avi Mograbi, Israel, 2005

Described by Christopher Hitchens as 'the exhaust fumes of democracy', the left is generally less than fond of conspiracy theory (unless, of course, we speak of the collusion of business interests commonly known as capitalism – see below). Conspiracy theory is usually associated with right-wingers, more inclined to personify complex social phenomena as an ongoing drama of might and right. It tends to be structural in its logic, automatically suspecting those who are in power as 'accomplices after the fact'. The last quote comes from Oliver Stone's *JFK*, a film that takes a generally leftist standpoint. Whatever your view of that film, anyone familiar with history (and takes pinches of salt with their common-sense cereal) is usually aware that its two parents are cock-up and conspiracy. But what was 9/11? It is fair to say that Bush's use of the event as all-purpose pretext has changed the attitudes of many on the left (though not of the neo-neo-con Hitchens). Officially, 9/11 was a cock-up. According to Dylan Avery, director of the documentary **Loose Change** (2005) it was no less than a 'psychological attack on the American people, and it was pulled off with **military** precision'.

What he means of course is the military-industrial complex and it is probably no accident that his statement resembles Kevin Costner's final statements in *JFK*. Hardened conspiracy buffs will recognise the familiar resurrection of a 'coup d'Etat' mythos and the reappearance of the military industrial complex, international finance and other 'vital interests'. The problem with conspiracy theory films (and theories in general) is one of overstretch. Lacking as they often do hard and conclusive evidence (that is usually classified - or incinerated) reasoning from what is left. Eyewitness accounts can be notoriously unreliable and subjective; media imagery is ephemeral and open to interpretation; identifying consistency between what happened in the event, and otherwise unrelated events (controlled demolition, the behaviour of bullets) give a very narrow frame of reference. Such conspiracy theses generally present evidence that deserves further study yet make too large an epistemological leap in fingering the culprits. Avery's leap of faith lands us right at the heart of the American system; the faceless conspiracy to make money. "It's time for America to accept 9/11 for what it was; a lie which killed thousands of

people, in turn killing hundreds of thousands more; to make billions upon trillions of dollars... America has been hijacked by a group of tyrants willing to do whatever it takes to maintain their hold on this country".

And yet while Avery is an angry young man, he is no crank. He is thorough, and his arguments merit further debate. This reviewer has yet to find any evidence that comprehensively refutes the oddly graceful manner in which the towers collapsed. His arguments deploy physics, an impressive array of cannibalised footage and star witnesses that range from government seismologists to Galileo. If they are not conclusive, their value lies in their incitement to further question which given the current condition of post-Patriot Act America, is bolshiness is to be cherished.

To Israeli filmmaker Avi Mograbi, the beneficiaries of Israel's democratic system are accomplices to the awful facts of Palestinian occupation. To say that his latest documentary **Avenge But One of My Two Eyes** (2005) is a beautiful film is a horrible, but necessary judgement. Similarly inspired by acts of terrorism (the wave of suicide bombings in Tel Aviv in 2002) *Avenge* is constructed from over two years of filming in the occupied territories, the historical site of Masada, around Israel and his own living room. Public debate in Israel on the 'death culture of Islam' prompted Mograbi, ever the iconoclast, to turn the question upon his own people. Like Avery, Mograbi sees his country's troubles as the result of an integral structural fault; the Israeli's own obsession with death, defence and their historical persecution.

Following a prologue set on a Palestinian farm, the film begins atop the Masada citadel with a group of bright eyed young visitors. Taking them through a meditative process, a guide gently insinuates them into direct identification with the besieged Zealots. This is followed by sequences from the occupied territories, Mograbi's own confrontations with soldiers (he eschews the fly on the wall approach, favouring direct involvement as in his own words, 'a fly in the soup') and vignettes that return us to Masada or, to modern Israelis – everyone from school children to dope-smoking hippies - offering their take on the Samson story. Samson's famous plea to God is of course the title of the film; what it suggests is that Israel need not look to anything but its own to understand what motivates a suicide strike. Mograbi's film cleverly uncovers Israelis deep-seated fear of humiliation where Philistines or Romans become confused with those Palestinians who actually are humiliated. As with much of the recent crop of Israeli nonfiction, truths are expressed through the poetic truth of his imagery, never more potent than in the disembodied voices of Israeli soldiers who are from behind their watchtowers and armoured tanks, seem to embody the sinister, faceless agenda that perpetuates such misery. Some call it Homeland Security, others a strike with a jawbone – tragedy is almost guaranteed.

Mitch Miller

Loose Change is distributed via the internet. To watch the film, visit:

f4d3r.blogspot.com/2006/03/911-documentary.html

web review

Henry McCubbin

Is there an alternative media? Out here in cyberspace many are trying to get into the act from bloggers to internet publishers like ourselves at SLR. Blogging must be the ultimate in 'narrowcasting'. Imagined by many as the plaintiff cry into the woods of 'Is there anybody there?'. It reminds me of shortwave enthusiasts or 'hams' as they are known who had the capacity to communicate one to one across the globe and had whole communities formed within their own sector. Independent media is an interesting forum. Independent from whom one has to ask?

Well in Scotland we have our own Indy Media in the form of The Scotland Independent Media Centre (IMC-SCOTLAND) which is according to them a non-corporate, anti-authoritarian network of independent media makers, media activists, and media outlets, and is the local organising unit of the global Indymedia network. Indymedia was founded in direct action reporting and the Global Days of Action, and it is in this path we walk. They also have a mission statement which states "The Independent Media Centre is a global network of collectively-run media outlets for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of truth. We are motivated by a love and inspiration for people who work for a better world despite corporate media's distortions and unwillingness to cover efforts to develop an egalitarian and sustainable society."

We can subscribe to that since our own contribution to the above goals has only been made possible due to the innovations surrounding the internet and cheap quick digital printing technology and the willingness of able contributors who support our objectives to provide thoughtful articles. What is interesting is that this sector has variety in its content and in its forms of ownership. For those wishing to pursue this issue further try visiting:

scotland.indymedia.org/

www.cpbf.org.uk/

www.londonfreelance.org/owners/index.html

For information on corporate media the following site offers some interesting threads:

www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/index.html ■



67% say no to road trains Mori poll August 2005

Shift freight onto rail

Shift rail into public ownership

Executive Committee Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
Keith Norman general secretary **Alan Donnelly** president **Andy Reed** national organiser

Kick Up The Tabloids

BROWN IN ROONEY CELEBRATION SPECULATION

While many Scots would have rejoiced at the sight of Wayne Rooney posing for the cameras, showing off his broken leg to the world, with only a month to go before the start of the World Cup, I must admit I was not one of them. This does not necessarily mean I will be supporting England at Germany 2006. Indeed, as someone who has childhood memories of the summer of 1966, the painful events of that year can still induce trauma on recall. I am probably not alone in considering England's 1966 World Cup victory to be a low point in Scottish history on a par with the Highland Clearances. If, indeed, not worse. Controversial opinion perhaps, but consider the following scenario; someone knocks on your front door tomorrow morning and gives you a choice of (a) They are going to burn your house down and send you off on a boat to Canada, or (b) England win the World Cup. What are you going to choose? You can always come back from Canada. At least the BBC was not on hand to film the Highland Clearances, and to endlessly replay them every summer for the next forty years.

Scots who cannot find it within themselves to support their neighbours and cousins this summer appear to be gravitating toward two alternatives. Many Scots will be favouring Trinidad and Tobago, due to their high percentage of Scots-based players including Rangers' Marvin Andrews, a born-again Christian ("What? A religious nutter at Ibrox?" I hear you cry). However, many Celtic fans, out of loyalty to Henrik Larsson, will continue to shout for Sweden. This is all well and good until one realises that Trinidad & Tobago have been drawn in the same group as Sweden. I, for one, do not want to watch that game in a pub in Glasgow. We are all, after all, aware of the undercurrents to that age-old hatred that the Trinidadians have for the Swedes, dating all the way back to 1690.

On that note, while one has to admire David Murray at Rangers claiming that he wants to rid the club of "The Ninety-Minute Bigots", such a statement does send out mixed messages. Firstly, is he not worried about the hardcore 24/7 bigots? Secondly, what happens to the ninety-minute bigots if a Rangers-Celtic cup final goes into extra-time? Are they suddenly united in love, peace and harmony? I fail to see how someone can only be a bigot for ninety minutes? You never hear English cricket fans claiming to be "Five-Day Racists". English football, to its credit, has done much to rein in its hooligan element over the last few years. Indeed, the greatest threat to public order at this summer's tournament is posed by the Poles. There is now an enormous problem in Polish league soccer from far-right hooligans. This is now so extreme that apparently the German authorities are genuinely worried about the threat of Polish

Nazis invading their country in June. How ironic is that?

The reason I am not doing catwheels over the physical state of young Mr Rooney is that I am not doing cartwheels full stop. I too have a fracture in the lower-limb area, not a metatarsal but a distal tibia. My leg-break was the result of mixing snow, alcohol and an uneven pavement back in March. This has meant several trips back and forth to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Those readers familiar with our flagship PFI hospital will know there is one word wrong in its title. Namely "Edinburgh". The Half-Way-To-Galashiels Royal Infirmary" would be a much more appropriate name. On arriving at the ERI, the first thing one encounters is a mall of shops. Including, believe it or not, a travel agent. Presumably the purpose of this travel agency is to add insult to injury, making outpatients feel like losing competitors on Bullseye: "Here's what you could've won!".

The Health Service is, of course, just one of a multitude of problems facing Blair at the moment. With, Precott, Clarke, Reid, local election meltdown and the cash-for-honours scandal he certainly does not have his problems to seek. While Charles Clarke made history by becoming the first-ever government minister to be sacked, there were many who expected Precott to fall on his sword. After all, quite a lot of women appear to have fallen on his sword over the years. What induces all these women to sleep with John Prescott? Have they been offered peerages?

The one thing that could finally do for Blair would be England making an early exit from the World Cup. While this may sound fanciful, Harold Wilson blamed his defeat to Ted Heath on England being knocked out of the 1970 World Cup. Also, the case for Scottish devolution was put back twenty years by Scotland's dismal showing in Argentina in 1978. Some Scots may be upset by Rooney's broken foot. Some may be shouting for England this June. I suspect, however, that Gordon Brown will not be among them. An English World Cup embarrassment would suit him just fine. ■

Kick Up the Tabloids is the Stand Comedy Club's monthly satirical comedy show. Totally live and interactive, it offers an irreverent take on who and what has been making the news in Scotland or beyond. The Kick Up the Tabloids team include regulars Bruce Devlin, Susan Morrison, Paul Sneddon, Frankie Boyle and Miles Jupp with surprise guest appearances. The show takes place on the third Wednesday each month at The Stand, Yorkhill Place, Edinburgh (Tel 0131 558 7373 or visit the website at www.thestand.co.uk). Doors open at 7.30pm, with the show kicking off at 9pm.

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134

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Whose Justice? The Law and the Left is not simply a critique of the current state of our law and justice. Drawing on an array of perspectives and international experiences, the contributors lay out a set of ideas and proposals to resolve and ameliorate the current deficiencies and injustices. In doing so, they cast new light on some of the rather tired and hide-bound traditional approaches of the left to law and justice. Consequently, the political parties contesting the 2007 elections would do well to consider the proposals and conclusions of **Whose Justice? The Law and the Left** if they genuinely want to create the best small country in the world to live in.

Whose Justice? The Law and the Left has contributions from Colin Fox MSP, solicitor-advocate John Scott, Professors Gregor Gall and Jacqueline Tombs, Tommy Sheridan MSP, Sheriff Alastair Duff, councillor Keith Baldassara, former HM Chief Inspector of Prisons Clive Fairweather, justice activists John McManus and Richard Haley, lawyer Mike Dailly, STUC health and safety official Ian Tasker, and Dr Nick McKerrell.



“The free market project has been as much about the contraction of hope as about the expansion of the economy. They didn’t want to defeat the Labour movement, they wanted to defeat the belief that there could be a Labour movement.”

Almost every change in the history of mankind has come from an idea or vision which was shared by a small group of people which grew bigger. This is the social imagination. Almost every one of those ideas was opposed and resisted and almost every one of those people was persecuted or marginalised. This is the control of the social imagination. A sense of resignation – or even hopelessness – is encouraged in order to suppress new ideas at source. The result is that we live in a grossly unequal society in a grossly unequal world and yet we have no widely-shared persuasive ideas about how things should be changed for the better. **No Idea** argues that if we can understand the ways in which the social imagination is controlled, we can recapture it. If we can recapture it, ideas will come and change will happen.

Available at www.slrp.org

