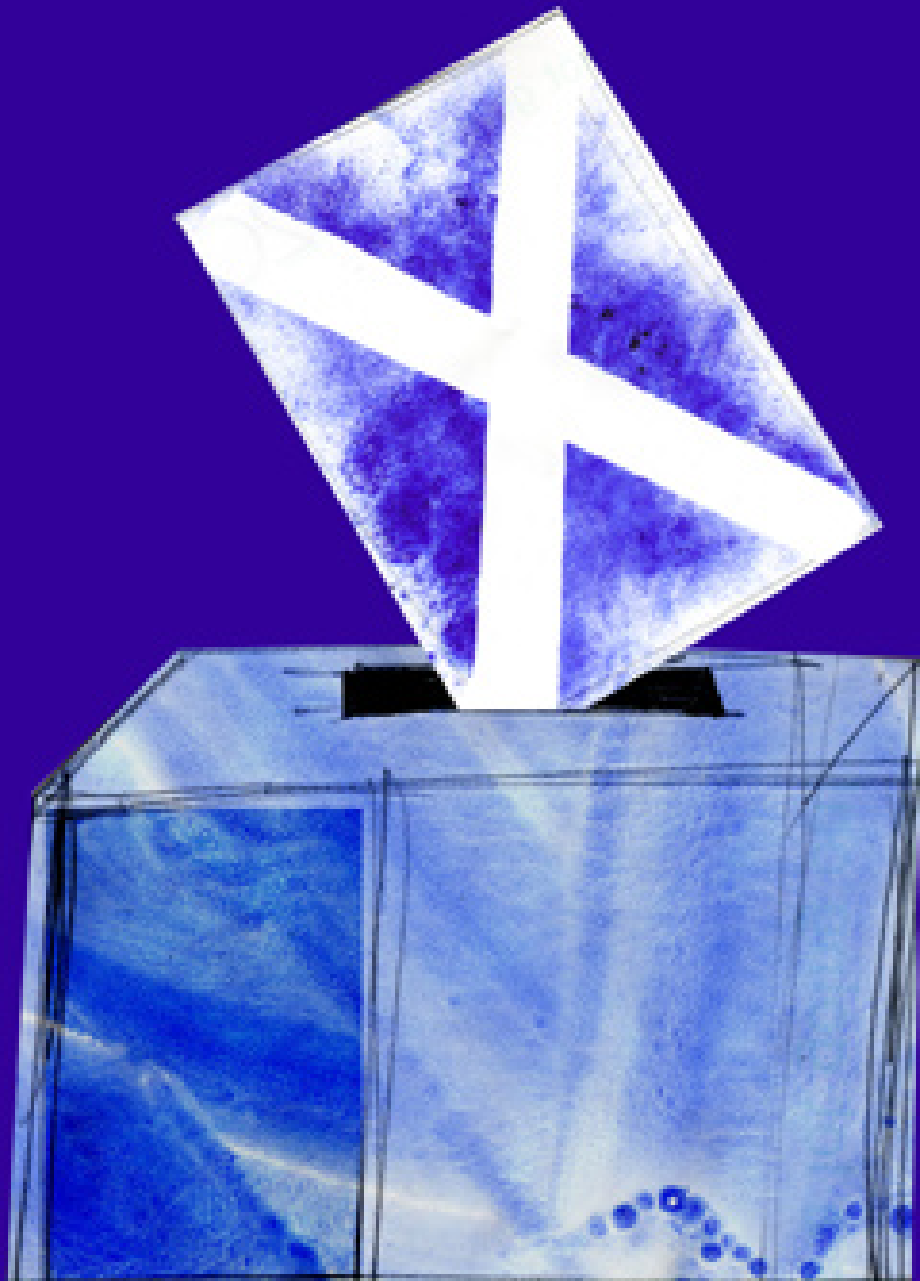


Is the old order finished?



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Feedback

Letters should be emailed to feedback@scottishleftreview.org

The publication of the third book from Scottish Left Review Press, *Is there a Scottish road to socialism?*, has found a not inconsiderable constituency of interest. As a collection of essays from contributors across the left in Scotland that straddle the 'nationalist-unionist' divide, *Is there a Scottish road to socialism?* has sold out of its first print run of 200 copies in its first two months and is now on its second print run.

Launch meetings in Edinburgh, Dundee and Glasgow have been attended by around 80 people. Although relatively small beer, this is not bad for an operation that has no book distribution or retail network behind it and should reassure us that there is still a market for such books.

The dialogue the book sought to create between the different strands on the left has led to a greater understanding of each others' positions (but not, of course, yet agreement and consensus). Whatever the outcome of the elections, there will be the potential for greater space for these arguments to swim within and win adherents.

Part of this process involves the holding of the Scottish Left Review conference *Where Now for the Left?* on Saturday 23 June in Glasgow to bring the left in Scotland together to discuss what we should be doing and how we should be doing it after the elections.

There will be an array of plenaries and workshops with leading speakers from across the left to take the discussion forward. The obvious themes will be the prospects for independence, a post-Blair Britain, dealing with and relating to the SNP, the decomposition of 'new' Labour, and the disunity between the SSP and Solidarity.

Please make every effort to come along to the event as well as publicising it. For purchase details see the back page.

Professor Gregor Gall, Editor of Is there a Scottish road to socialism?

WHERE NOW FOR THE SCOTTISH LEFT?

ScottishLeftReview is planning a conference to discuss this and other issues including Peace and War; Human Rights; Public Finance; Environment; Arts and Culture

Date: 23 June 2007 (tbc)

Venue: STUC conference centre, 333 Woodlands Road, Glasgow (tbc)

Time: 10am-3pm

For more information: email contact@scottishleftreview.org or write to 741 Shields Road, Glasgow G41 4PL

Kick Up The Tabloids.....23

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Comment: Who won the election?

The difficulty of producing a political magazine is that when it comes to covering or commenting on current events it is always difficult to find something to say which hasn't been said hundreds of times in the daily press and on air. It is particularly difficult to be sure what to think – this is being written in the days after the election but before we know the shape of our government. But that does not mean that there is nothing to be covered that hasn't already been said – far from it – and it doesn't mean that there aren't some pretty important changes ahead that it is possible to foresee now.

Left or right?

If you only read the newspapers you would think that no election had ever been fought between the left and the right since 1987. Every election since then was supposed to be about a battle between two styles of management (and at Westminster that is more or less true). In Scotland elections are supposed to be about that too but with the added complication of the constitution. Elections are presented as a process of selecting the best governor of Scotland, complicated by one party's obsession with the 'national' question. None of it (least of all the constitutional question) is considered to be political. Even the election or otherwise of the parties to the further left (the epithet far left is a symptom as much as a tactic of the 'new consensus' politics) is dismissed. It is remarkable to note the self-assurance with which BBC political editor Brian Taylor dismisses the votes received by the SSP, Solidarity, Greens, pensioners and independents. These, he tells us in his avuncular tones is just a 'protest'. Well, in a way it is; it is a protest against the right-wing consensus. But it is a decision, not something people do because they can't think of anything else. The treatment of the small parties in the hands of arrogant journalists and commentators has been a disgrace for eight years and has improved little after this election; but more on these things later.

In fact of course the election was political. What is interesting is the continuity as much as the change. Regular readers of the Scottish Left Review will have read our analysis before – in 1999 there was a Labour vote, and SNP core vote and a left-of-Labour vote. Given the expectations of previous first-past-the-post elections the left-of-Labour vote went for the part most likely to deliver a left-of-Labour outcome. In that election the SNP stood on a tax rise to fund public services and achieved their (then) second best result ever because it was the best left option. By the 2003 election the left-of-Labour vote split. This is mainly because of the success of Tommy Sheridan in the first four years – it became clear that in fact it was possible to get people successfully elected on an explicitly socialist ticket. And so they did – a large part of the SNP vote shifting to the SSP, Greens and independents producing a block bigger than

the size of the current Liberal Democrats. The SNP looked as if it had slumped and this was taken to be a comment on the performance of John Swinney as leader, despite strong evidence that it was more likely a comment on the success of the small parties.

Finally, in 2007, commentators are beginning to recognise this phenomenon of a left-of-Labour vote seeking the best avenue through which to express its views. Or, in their degraded language, 'the protest vote has moved from the SSP to the SNP'. But it seems strange to patronise this group of voters given that it is they who have largely dictated the last three elections. One might paraphrase the Brain Taylor line as follows: the acceptors just stuck their crosses where they always do without thinking, the political left kept trying different strategies. First time round they didn't realise the potential, second time round they shook up the house with a new kind of politics in Scotland, third time round they ended Labour hegemony. They have been Scotland's most significant voters for a decade now. Perhaps Scotland's future is actually in the hands of radicals.

Now, this is slightly optimistic. In fact, the majority of people voted much the same this time as last time. And while there is clear evidence of a concerted attempt to shift Scotland to the left by a strand of voters, this was not alone enough to change our government. The SNP was elected by a strange coalition. There

was the core SNP vote which has been there fairly solidly. There were the enterprise-minded who saw potential for dynamism in an independent Scotland, a group which is basically neo-liberal in economic outlook (though perhaps more socially democrat on other issues). There were those angry about Trident and Iraq. And importantly there were the time-for-a-changers. This group seemed varied but included

people who were simply tired of a listless Labour administration, unconvinced by Jack McConnell as a national leader, people whose sense of fair play was uncomfortable with one-party hegemony and probably a group who were not nationalist but who were turned off by the repetitive negativity of the Labour campaign. The left-of-Labour vote could not have done it alone as they failed to in 1999. But there is little doubt that, seat by seat, the biggest factor in the End of Labour was the left.

Does that mean Scotland has therefore moved to the left? Well, it is of course too early to tell. There was much talk about whether this election was 1992 or 1997. This meant 'is the mood for change going to chicken out at the last moment or is it going to finally sweep all before it?'. The answer was somewhere between – the analogy was accurate but the outcome decisive in neither direction. The first thing to note with some reasonable comfort is that, yes, Scotland has moved the Scottish Executive to the left (assuming we end up with a Salmond administration). It is not exactly a revolution, but policy for policy the SNP is distinctly to

the left of Labour – with one big caveat. To win this election the SNP felt that it had to shore up the weaker parts of its image, and especially its reputation for ‘enterprise’. They were probably right, and simply by making the economic case one which was contested (some businessmen say one thing, but there are some who are saying something else this time so it ain’t an open-and-shut case) there seemed an increase in genuine confidence in the SNP’s ability to run things. Remember, many people looked at the two challengers for First Minister and concluded that Salmond wasn’t going to be worst than McConnell.

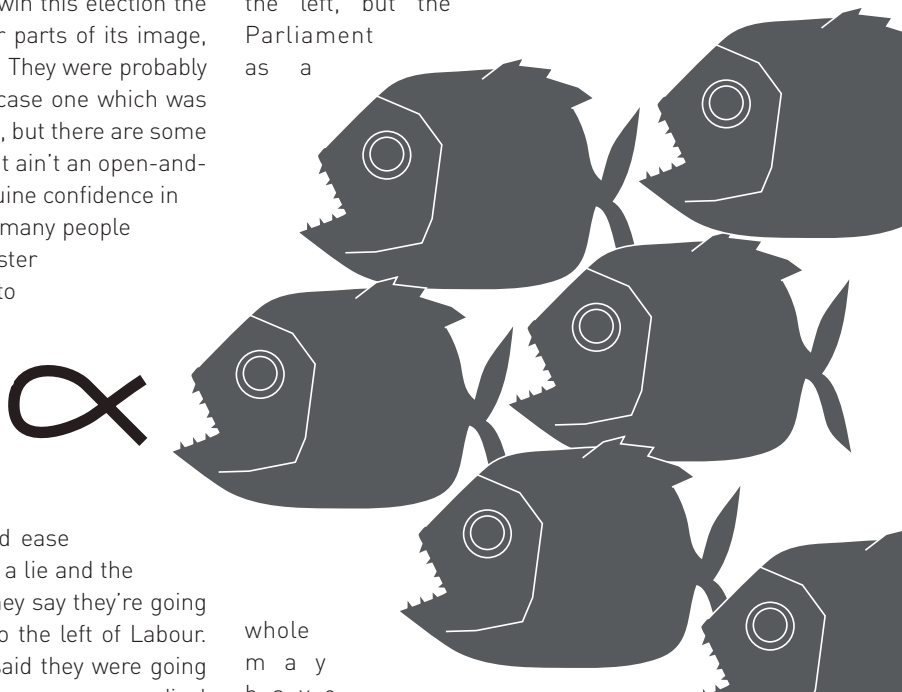
Triangulation – so far, so New Labour. The question is, what now? New Labour played social-democrat-but-enterprise-minded while telling core supporters that when in power they would ease the social democrat bit back up to the top and would ease off on the neo-con stuff. Of course, this was a lie and the opposite happened. Simply by doing what they say they’re going to, the SNP will end up as a government to the left of Labour. But they may not be able to do what they said they were going to – and they may not want to. Few people become more radical once in office – the system is set up otherwise. As soon as you have power you find yourself among the powerful; no longer are your colleagues fellow-travellers but rather many are the hired help of civil servants and delivery agencies. At the top end, these people tend to drag you in a ‘moderate’ (which is to say right of centre) direction. And suddenly the rich and powerful in society take a very big interest in you. It is hard to stay honest.

So we can’t know if the SNP will become blunted once in power, but there is reason for hope. One thing we can be sure of is that the SNP is going to feel like an outsider for quite a while yet. The civil servants are all scratching their heads. They talk about the SNP like an alien species and profess to have no idea how they can work with ‘these people’. The Big Names in Scottish life are not all in a good position to take the SNP under their brandy-and-cigar-soaked arms given how many of them made clear their distaste for the SNP and independence. There is reason to believe that the SNP will do what it wants precisely because it has been treated badly by the establishment.

But it is not a done deal. Alex Salmond is brighter than Jack McConnell and much more capable of imposing his will, but he has parliamentary arithmetic against him. And he has interest groups in the party which will want to take things in their own directions. Up until now, the SNP has been able to be a little bit schizophrenic by moving left on social issues and right on economic issues. Under Swinney this drift was seen to be incoherent, but the Salmond team has made it look consistent. The problem is, at some point soon decisions will have to be made. There will be less resource than expected – there always is when a party is banking on efficiency savings – and it can’t be spent twice. We will see the priorities which are pursued and whether the money goes to the business community or to the people. This will be decided by the extent to which Salmond is persuaded by his own neo-cons like Jim Mather or whether he follows the more progressive instincts he probably shares with other of his colleagues. But then it may also be a matter of what he can get through – one can pretty well be sure that the Labour Party isn’t going to be seen to block a business rates cut but will do anything it can to prevent the Council Tax being replaced with something fairer.

And this is the crux of the question ‘has Scotland moved left or right?’. The answer is that the Executive has just moved to

the left, but the Parliament as a



whole
m a y
h a v e
gone slightly the
other direction. But there is reason for hope.

A new dawn - whatever

One thing we can be sure of is that there has been some sort of tectonic shift in Scotland. There is a lot of debate about how much the public has actually changed its views and some bragging from Labour that its vote held up well. But there really is no mistake to be made – more people in Scotland voted SNP than voted Labour. We have been primed for this outcome since the turn of the year at least, but even two years ago such an outcome would have been considered inconceivable. There is still a stunned incomprehension among some of Labour and some of the establishment.

The need for change was obvious to many. It wasn’t a matter of Labour being bad or corrupt, but that inevitably one-party rule for too long would embed people in power which became a self-sustaining establishment. In the 1980s and 1990s this was a bit more confused because while Labour had an iron grip on the trades unions, local government, the Scottish bit of Westminster and much of civic and artistic life, there was still a Tory government at Westminster and the business community along with other parts of the country such as the legal profession had a much more conservative outlook. But by 2000 the last remains of any kind of plurality were diminishing. The business community had largely abandoned the Tories in favour of the continuity candidate – Blair – and the Scottish Parliament was becoming the focus. In early 1999 many of the establishment (those at the top of non-elected sectors in Scottish life) were most awfully wary (to say the least) of the incoming Labour administration. The presence of an old hand like Donald Dewar settled nerves a bit, but there was a patronising assumption that the Scottish Parliament would not be capable of running Scotland ‘properly’. Now, what this really meant was that it would be ‘improper’ to meddle with the entrenched position of the establishment. Any sign that this might be the case (abolishing tuition fees for universities, ending warrant sales, banning foxhunting) caused a build up of arrogance and anxiety.

There was some easing of this fear as it became clear that there was to be no wholesale privatisation of the means of

production, but nevertheless there was a mounting unease as Henry McLeish was besieged by a sense of incompetence at just exactly the time that the Scottish Executive was at its most ambitious and therefore most threatening. But Henry fell and Jack promised what the establishment wanted – the Scottish Parliament put back into its box. Thus it is that to Henry you can chalk up the big changes such as free care for the elderly, tuition fee abolition (when he was at Enterprise) and McCrone while Jack mainly tries to claim the smoking ban as his success (even though it was actually an SNP private member's bill which he realised he had to hijack when it became clear it was going to pass anyway).

Over the last five year McConnell has pursued a strategy of doing less, better. Safety and conformity has been the key aim, and it has been achieved. Make no mistake, the establishment in Scotland are scathing about Jack in private, but they are very glad to have the 'stability' (meaning compliance) they seek. The establishment in Scotland has become remarkably comfortable with Jack and were willing his administration a long life (given the alternative options). On top of this Labour has had nearly a decade of making its appointments, a decade of support from most of the press (by sales) and a decade of control over the agenda. Coming after 40 years of administrative control over Scotland in local government, Labour was the undisputed source of power. But even more than this was the implication of the 'mental colonisation' by Labour. Anyone working anywhere near public Scotland will be aware of it, the attempt to 'think like' Labour. Policy would be teased and twisted to fit the Labour agenda ('smart, successful Scotland', 'NEETs', 'the Best Small Country in the World') to the extent that civic and non-governmental Scotland was shapeshifting into a New Labour world.

Any doubt about this should be dispelled by the election aftermath. There are powerful people with jaws hanging, unable to comprehend a world in which Labour is out of power and the SNP are in. The spectrum runs from confused through patronising to insulting; 'my God,

we've really got a job on our hands educating these people' is the cry, as if barbarians have just inherited the empire. But perhaps most tellingly, Labour itself seems so completely in a state of shocked denial that it is unable to comprehend this new world. It seems that they actually thought, at first, that it was really a draw. This they though meant they could simply put everything back together again. But it wasn't a draw, so they call it tantamount to a 'coin toss'. But surely this is the single most patronising thing ever said about the voters of Scotland? In fact, this comment is remarkable in its disgracefulness.

Scotland no longer needs to imagine itself as a Labour creation. Policy may no longer be the dull,

safe hegemony it has been, so we may be able to work to new horizons. There are many things that may go wrong with the SNP administration, but whatever the experience of the next four years, the old establishment is about to change. Possibly forever.

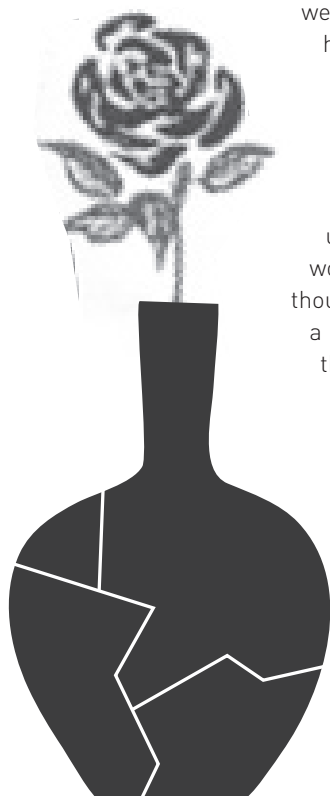
The End of the Rainbow

However, that is the end of the good news. The really bad news of course is the collapse in representation of the small parties. The reasons for this have not really been explored in great depth but there has been plenty of quick explanation (the Scottish media still doesn't see a party outside the big four as worthy of too much examination). The reasons for the virtual extinction of independently-minded groups are four-fold. The first factor which caused this was the split in the SSP – even with the best will in the world it was hard to know if a vote for one or the other half of the former party would be worthwhile without knowing what everyone else was going to do. The second factor was the effect of an election which became extremely polarised between SNP and Labour, pushing people towards using both votes for the one of these two they wanted to win. This was exacerbated by a number of independently-minded voters (traditional Greens or socialists) switching to the SNP given the apparent opportunity to defeat the not-independently-minded Labour Party. The third factor is probably the enormous number of uncounted votes. It is very hard to know what effect this had, but it has certainly been rumoured that in some counts a ballot paper with a vote for the list but not the constituency was discounted. This is utterly unacceptable. In addition, it seems credible to argue that mistakes were more likely to be made by those wishing to spread their votes among different parties. But the final major factor is the voting system. The Greens' vote did not collapse, but a slight reduction in vote can take you below the threshold where you get seats, a threshold which was pushed higher because of the competition for list votes between Labour and the SNP.

It is by far the most disheartening thing about this election that we have reverted to a Parliament of the Whipped. Given that there isn't much evidence of rebels among the main parties, we might as well give each party one weighted vote each. The role of the smaller parties in keeping the bigger parties honest is missed by many commentators. We know the big parties didn't like the small parties because of the effort that was put in to marginalising them – the order of the list and constituency vote on the ballot paper wasn't reversed (at the behest of the big parties) for the benefit of the small parties but to try and penalise them. But it doesn't mean that Scotland's flirtation with rainbow politics is over. We need to see this Parliament (as we must the two previous) as something specific. This was the occasion in which people felt that there was a genuine chance to beat the establishment party and many seem to have decided that if the small parties had to pay a price, then it was worth it this time round. So the fact that we may well have a Parliament with barely a socialist in it does not mean that Scotland has abandoned socialism. If the left can sort itself out in time for the next election it has every reason to believe that it can again find a presence in a diverse Holyrood.

The Coming Coup?

So what now? This is a piece of speculation which is particularly unsuited to a bi-monthly magazine appearing just before we get a First Minister elected. Let us assume that Alex Salmond is elected as a result of the Lib Dems and Tories abstaining and has to run a minority administration. In this circumstance the



Labour old guard remain of the belief that they can simply bring the Government down at an early opportunity and take over again. Indeed, there are plenty phone calls being made to try and will this outcome into being. Labour may try to do anything it can to make Scotland ungovernable and hope that others will help with their 'establishment coup'.

The problem for Labour is that they have become divorced from the reality of Scottish politics. The Tories have no self interest of any sort in putting Labour back into power. Indeed, the Scottish Tories have much to gain from an SNP administration causing discomfort for Gordon Brown in the run-up to a 2009 UK general election. The Greens are much closer in policy to the SNP than to Labour (something Labour insiders apparently did not realise directly after the election when they are believed to have tried to woo the Greens into an anti-SNP coalition) and will not bring Salmond down for Jack's sake. And the Lib Dems got a nasty shock in the election. They had previously been seen as a 'nice, reasonable' party and were not used to negative attacks. But the experience of Lib Dem behaviour alienated many commentators and even more so voters who seemed to see the Lib Dems as chancers hanging on to Labour's coat tails. Added to this is the low recognition factor of Nicol Stephen who saw his majority collapse in an election a new party leader could have expected to do well in. The Lib Dems realise that they are in some degree of trouble with the public and the last thing they can afford to do is to be seen to be at back-room deals with Labour to bring down the party that won the election. Labour will not find it easy to form a coalition. Frankly, they seem to have started to believe their own hysteria about the Union being at risk and seem to think that Annabel Goldie and Nicol Stephen will put their own party interests to the side, or that they really like Jack but hate the SNP. That these things could be believed is a sign of their isolation. We will have much time to consider how effective a minority government can be in Scotland, but it would be wrong to assume that it will inevitably be weak and achieve nothing. In fact, it is perfectly possible that it could look ambitious and successful in comparison to the previous administration – there are enough big issues on which a consensus can be reached and absolutely loads of things and administration can do without parliamentary votes.

The Unelected

It will be interesting to see how the unelected behave in the new Scotland. Now that the SNP holds the purse strings, can the Daily Record be quite as psychotically hostile as it has been? There are already rumours that senior SNP figures have explored other places to put the Executive's £1m advertising budget. Will the other newspapers be inclined to give the SNP a fair chance or to close ranks? The evidence is varied, but on balance there is reason to believe that nobody in the media liked the previous administration enough to really pursue the new one with vigour. We will see, but the media in Scotland is now a clear problem – how can a 'free' media be quite so biased in one direction with almost no counterbalance?

And then there are the others. What will the trade unions do? Will they rally round the fallen Labour Party and try to harm and SNP Executive? Or will they see it as an opportunity to pursue policies the unions really ought to support (remember, it looks like we will have a Scottish Executive which is opposed to Trident replacement, hopefully shaming Jack as he deserves). And will civic Scotland see this as an opportunity to bring forth new thinking and activity? The impact of a change in government in

the outside world may play an important part in the success or failure of a Salmond administration.

Labour-saving

This election should provide Labour with an opportunity to rediscover itself in Scotland. By the end of this term labour may well be in opposition in Westminster. The increasingly weak, desperate and discredited figure of Gordon Brown is visibly losing his grip on Scotland and the Scottish Party. Jack McConnell has been an honourable enough leader of Scottish Labour and for all the criticism in this Comment piece it is worth remembering that he has stopped the most extreme of Blair's policies at the border. But it is not enough for Labour – 2007 is the time for the Party to regain its purpose. It is helpful that a rush to replace Jack did not begin directly after the election, giving the Party time to consider its next steps. Unfortunately, the options are limited. This could enable Labour to move back to the left and really challenge the SNP (may we all pray that the juvenile Douglas Alexander 'Scotland is rubbish' strategy will be canned). But who would take the lead? The only candidate that many saw as a potential, credible heavyweight who could help the party to reform was Susan Deacon. And she just stood down. This is a fruitful time for Labour to rediscover its roots, if only it can secure someone effective at its head.

How to run an election

Finally, what more is there to say about the polling fiasco? Really very little which hasn't been said. There is no potential to run the election again, so it is probably a stain on our democracy for at least four years. We can't be completely sure of the result that Scotland actually willed, but we cannot allow that to mean that it is open season on the Parliament. We can be pretty sure that the usual right-wing commentators will spend the next four years telling us it isn't even a legitimate institution; this cannot be accepted. There were terrible, unforgivable flaws. But barring legal challenge we have what we have. There are two important outcomes that must come from this. One is that Douglas Alexander must be held to account. He is probably the most overrated politician Scotland has seen for generations and his smugness is so far out of step with his ability that everyone – Labour included – will benefit from his departure. And then we need to find a way to make sure elections are run fairly and independently. We can no longer consider it reasonable to organise an election on the basis that the four big parties are happy with a stitch-up. We need to rethink the process in an independent way, removing the process from the taint of politics. We all know why the list and constituency votes were reversed. We all know why the local government elections were held on the same day. And we all know that none of it was to do with achieving better democratic outcomes.

And when we do redesign the system, it is time to argue for something which this election has shown to be a continuing ill of the Scottish system – it just isn't proportional enough. Labour has such a disproportionate amount of constituency seats that it can only be righted by giving enormous numbers of the list seats to its main competitor. By 2007 we need a system which checks Labour's undemocratic dominance but does so in a way that doesn't penalise the smaller parties. Scotland should move now to using the Westminster boundaries for Scottish Parliament elections, giving the extra 18 seats to be added to the lists. Surely there can be no credible argument against making the system fairer – especially after the 2007 debacle. ■

not on your life

Tom Nairn looks at recent political developments in Britain in the post-Scottish Election period and asks what it means for national identity and democracy

It looks very much as if a new character will, in only a few weeks, be stage-centre in the United Kingdom: 'New Britain'. As Chancellor Brown moves house (it's called 'flitting' in Scotland), a hurricane warning seems in order. All our nations should expect a storm of renewal and appropriate constitutional change. Presaged by Jack Straw's hints as well as assorted rumblings from Brown himself, the objective of such appeals is becoming reasonably clear.

The United Kingdom must be saved. This both is and isn't the debauched lout featured in Blair's farewell address at Sedgefield: "The British are special. The world knows it. In our hearts we know it. This is the greatest nation on earth." Our reformed character will remain the latter, naturally; yet in their hearts almost everyone now knows he needs substantial changes to keep going at all. Whatever the retreating Premier was invoking, he could not help evoking the verminous rogue of buy-and-sell Peerages, Iraqi destruction, side-winding Third Ways, mounting inequality and Washington groveling. A reformed image is desperately needed by Blair's pre-anointed successor. Is this not why constitutional change has suddenly reappeared on the Westminster agenda? An elected House of Lordship, tantalising talk of written constitutions and even of PR — hints from Jack Straw added to Brown's own New-Brit rumblings?

Modernising constitutional reform has long been a democratic demand. As we cross the present watershed it is, at least partially, being turned into a conservative one: Austria-Hungary must be preserved at all costs. And one objective conceals another. For ideally, the affordable costs should not include devolution to England. Britishness could conceivably survive even much fuller Scottish and Welsh self-government; but what's left of it would evaporate in a flash with an English parliament or assembly.

However, one way to hold back the latter might be via Constitutional conventions and Fabian Society pamphlets. The pseudo-Federal fog machine is already resuming full production, to be given weekly outlets at all-round, all-party confabulations. Here the Liberal-Democratic Party could play a key part. Unable to win power, the latter would confirm spiritual state office by propping up civic British nationalism — at the same time helping to counter accusations of a government fix. We have already seen the machinery at work since the SNP's victory in the Scottish election: Lib-Dem refusal of 'all cooperation' with nationalists means putting them beyond the Pale — the Holy Family 'Union' within which alone reasonable deals can be made. More concretely, this means preservation of Great Britain's Security Council seat, and self-proclaimed

world rôle — but a re-polished halo and wardrobe for the old scoundrel are part of the act.

After Iraq such re-legitimation will be even more necessary. And Brown's aim is a reconstitution of the 'sacred' in this vital sense. Kirk, Party and British nationhood could then come together in emotional rejection of the new 'profane' — separatists bent on exit from the re-consecrated imagined community.

This re-imposition will also benefit from persistent confusion about 'federation'.

Federalism in modern history has not been an alternative to central state authority, but one way of enforcing it, and rendering it more tolerable. In the Soviet imperium, as in the post-civil war United States, it served great-power purposes by harnessing ethnic and regional diversities to a geopolitical strategy. Britain now possesses but a shadow of the latter; yet for that very reason, the political élite sees clinging to it as vital for. The true contrary of the central isn't the federal but the **confederal** — an

arrangement where sovereignty resides in the contributing parties, rather than the centre they support. As Alan Massie has recently put it:

'A confederation... is a different matter, an agreement made between equals. It offers the Gaullist "Europe des États", joined together to achieve common purposes but retaining the right to maintain differences from their partners, retaining the right to opt out of policies of which they do not approve... It alone offers the balance between the whole and its parts.' (Scotsman, May 10 2007).

He is arguing mainly about European Union, and pointing out that confederation alone offers any hope of a workable constitution. But in the British-Irish archipelago this is surely no less true. Formally equal and independent partners alone could join together in any new way, retaining rights of opt-out and disagreement. Federation, by contrast, entails permanent cession of such rights, saccharined with magnanimous concession of cultural entitlements and secondary powers.

Devolution was an informal slide in the same direction, meant to exorcise nationalism in Wales and Scotland without too much fuss. There is still a huge gap between the nationalist advances of May 3rd last and anything like confederation: but no longer as huge as the grandeur-entranced élite would like. Devolution having failed to 'kill nationalism stone dead' (as Scottish Labourites once loved to put it), isn't it reasonable to consider some more formal barrier to irresponsibility — even of a written-constitutional kind? Devolved government was

something given; the recent advances of Plaid Cymru and the SNP represent something taken, programmes likely to breed growing self-confidence as they unfold. Sovereignities threatening the special nature of earth's greatest nation are at the end of such roads, best closed off. Being capable of constitutional thought, and hoping for enthronement as apostle of the greater nature, Brown may try to redefine it more formally and irresistibly — even if it means the nuisance of an elected second chamber.

As Guy Rundle has written of the Sedgefield chosen-nation climax, in a scathing critique from Melbourne:

What a thing for a social democrat to say. What a thing. Not an expression of left patriotism, of love of country and community, of a hope that its virtues had been strengthened, that it had contributed to the greater human good. Instead, a braying chauvinistic triumphalism, a mixture of Kipling and cod-Americanism. (www.crikey.com.au, May 15th).

But Americanism and pseudo-federalism also mean that a democratic dimension will be part of any new deal. It simply has to be: as Jackie Ashley pointed out in a comment on the House of Lords debate, it would be impossible today to set up a new elected Chamber using first-past-the-post — and unthinkable after that not to find a fairer electoral system for the House of Commons (**Guardian**, March 12 2007, 'Cash for Peerages Provokes Constitutional Explosion'). Does this mean



democrats will have to support such changes, in spite of their overall reactionary direction?

It goes without saying that a more democratic United Kingdom should be welcomed, in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as England. However, constitutional reform should be distinguished much more emphatically from that direction. These stratagems are forced by the times upon a crumbling polity. New Britain must resort to them in order to prop up the old: the succession of Charles and Camilla, the two-party order at Westminster, and the dwindling zombiedom of Great-Britishness. No wonder returns from the grave feature so prominently in British cinematic culture: Brits don't just watch the House of Hammer, they live in it. In the arguments on and around the May 3rd SNP and Plaid Cymru advances, it was always a curiously unqualified 'Union' that had to be saved. It felt like a form of religious faith, bordering on fundamentalism and unrelated to the Windsors, grotesquely disproportional representation, Baghdad, Trident and most popular experience.

Brown was once a begetter of devolution. That failed to sustain Brit-House; so he thinks a new and more ambitious fix is required. Yet devolution can't be undone — not even in Northern Ireland. And a dose of democracy has to be part of the prescription. All the more reason, surely, for tying additional changes down in less easily alterable ways. Which is likely to mean, in written, holy-script format. Then farther insubordination could be pre-empted more respectably. Unholy betrayal is already in the air; all the more need for it to be fought via some constitutional, Royally-blessed document. Thought not of course centuries-old, a measure of fake immemoriality would be bestowed by claiming it as simply an evolution from 1688, etc. Measures once regarded as mob-rule would overnight become special-British wisdom of the ages. That's how Bardic nationalism functions, and should complete the Brown flitting. The 2008 applause from Washington can already be heard — whether Republican or Democrat.

The fact is that any such development will carry the same contradiction within it as devolution. Democracy is inherently stronger than those who would misuse it. And in this case, **English** democratic wishes would benefit most plainly from a shift towards renewed constitutionalism. The process would quickly acquire its own momentum, at variance with the motives of New Labour redemptionism. And naturally, it would also be a suggestive gift to David Cameron's novel form of English conservatism, already widely perceived as a veiled Anglo-nationalism. That's why I think it's possible for citizens to discriminate among the features of any 'Austro-Hungarian' package. Some bits of it could be greeted with relief, in Scotland and Wales too. Yet for much of the rest, it will really be important that Brown and Menzies Campbell hear the message: **'Not on your life!'** ■

*Tom Nairn is a world-renowned academic and author of **The Break Up of Britain***

was stv fairer?

Gordon Morgan analyses the results of the local government elections and asks is STV really fairer?

Having Local Government Elections on the same day as the Parliamentary Elections was opposed by most local authorities, all Electoral returning officers and several parties including Tories, Greens, Solidarity and SSP. But looking beyond the confusion regarding the Parliamentary votes, did STV for the Council elections work as anticipated? STV is promoted by its supporters as the fairest form of PR, every vote counts in equal measure. However, the system introduced in Scotland with only three and four member wards is the least proportional tried out anywhere in the world. Only in Ireland do a minority of constituencies elect as few as three or four. So did it: deliver PR in councils; allow independents to be elected; lead to confusion? These and other questions are examined below.

Due to time constraints, only Glasgow has been examined in detail. Glasgow has however, advantages in that the local authority and parliamentary regional boundaries mostly correspond thus a like for like comparison is possible. There was a substantial reduction in the number of candidates standing. This was largely due to tactical considerations with the main parties putting up as many candidates as they believed could get elected and no more. The LibDems, Tories, Solidarity and SSP stood one candidate in every ward. Labour stood one in one ward, two in seven wards and three in 14 wards. The SNP stood one in 20 wards and two in one ward. Apart from the above there were only 27 candidates of whom only eight described themselves as Independent. None of these candidates nor the SSP were elected.

The total electorate for the parliamentary votes was 477,586 and council elections was 434,423. The discrepancy relates to Rutherglen most of which lies outwith Glasgow but counts for Regional list purposes. Only 6,841 Rutherglen electors (out of 50,000) can vote in Glasgow Council Elections of whom 3,445 did. A total of 20,807 voters in the Scottish Parliament elections voted in South Lanarkshire council elections.

The number of votes cast was:

	Valid	Spoilt	Total
Scottish Parliament Constituency	198,734	16,933	215,667
Scottish Parliament List	206,667	9,000	215,667
Council	188,376	4,505	192,881

Removing the 20,807 Rutherglen/South Lanark voters, it would appear that 1,979 voters who turned up to vote in the Parliamentary election did not bother to vote in the council election. If one adds the spoilt papers then 6,484 voters going to the polling station did not validly vote in the council election.

This is a lower figure of spoilt or blank papers than for the parliamentary ballots. The following figures ignore spoilt

papers. Thus 10,500 more valid council votes were counted than constituency votes.

Glasgow ('000s) Including Rutherglen							
Lab	SNP	LD	Cons	Grn	Sol.	Other	Total
Constituency							
90.5	60.5	21.0	17.0	3.0	0.0	6.8	198.7
List							
78.8	55.8	14.8	13.8	10.8	8.6	24.1	206.7
Excluding part Rutherglen							
Constituency							
81.7	55.5	16.2	15.2	3.0	0.0	6.3	177.8
List							
70.4	50.6	12.2	12.0	10.2	8.0	22.3	185.7
Council First Prefs							
81.4	46.2	15.3	14.2	12.2	9.1	10.0	188.3
Excluding part Rutherglen (%)							
Constituency							
45.9	31.2	9.1	8.5	1.7	0.00	3.6	100.0
List							
37.9	27.3	6.6	6.4	5.5	4.3	12.0	100.0
Council First Prefs							
43.2	24.5	8.1	7.5	6.5	4.8	5.3	100.0

A comparison of voter numbers is complicated by an absolute increase in valid votes resulting from the higher number of spoilt papers in both Parliamentary counts. The percentage of votes may give a clearer understanding. Comparing the constituency and the list, Labour vote fell 8 per cent, SNP 3.9 per cent, Lib Dems 2.5 per cent and Tories 2.1 per cent. The Greens who only contested one Constituency seat got 5.5 per cent up 3.8 per cent and Solidarity who didn't stand in constituencies gained 4.3 per cent. The other category got 12 per cent. No party got over 4,000 votes but several got over 1 per cent including (in descending order) BNP, Senior Citizens, Christian Party, SLP, Christian Alliance, SSP.

It is unclear if spoilt papers disproportionately affected any one party on the list or constituency. The Local Government results show Labour, Lib Dems and Tories broadly back to their percentage of votes achieved in the constituencies. It might be inferred that the "other" category largely came from there which declined 6.7 per cent. The SNP decline in local government votes compared to both other polls (4,400) 2.8 per cent less than their list vote and (9,300) 6.7 per cent less than their constituency vote) is more surprising. It may reflect the emphasis they placed on the parliamentary result and previous lack of emphasis on local government. On the other hand their vote did secure the election of every one of their 22 council candidates.

Glasgow has 79 councillors in 21 wards, 5 with three members and 16 with 4. The Election outcome was as follows:

Glasgow							
Lab	SNP	LD	Cons	Grn	Sol.	Other	Total
Councillors '07							
45	22	5	1	5	one	0	79
Councillors '03							
71	four	3	1	0	0	1	79
% Councillors '07							
57	28	6	1	6	1	0	100
% First Prefs							
43	25	8	8	7	5	5	100

Clearly the result is more representative of the votes cast than the previous system which gave a huge reward to the largest party. Both Labour and the SNP received more seats proportionately than their vote, Greens and LibDems were broadly proportionate with Tories and Solidarity and other losing out. Under STV you need to both concentrate your vote and receive transfers. The highest number of first preference votes received by a candidate subsequently not elected was 1,342 (15.5 per cent Tory) in a three member ward, and 1,699 (13.3 per cent Labour) in a four member ward. The lowest first preference votes received by those subsequently elected was 250 (2.4 per cent SNP) in a four member ward, and 628 (12.1 per cent Labour) in a three member ward. Both of these results were achieved as a result of transfers of surpluses from candidates of the same party (the SNP stood two candidates in only one ward, the first candidate polling 3,199 the second 250). The lowest vote of a successful candidate where only one of that party was elected was 703 (8.2 per cent) for the Greens. In fact the Greens achieved the lowest first preference votes of candidates subsequently elected in four of the wards where a Green was elected. This shows the importance of transfers from other parties. Because all candidates elected in the first round had their surpluses distributed and in later rounds candidates eliminated had their votes distributed, it is possible to identify the trend of distribution of second preference votes between parties.

In 17 out of 21 wards, the SNP candidate secured enough first preference votes to be elected. In 16 of these no other SNP candidate stood. In these 16 wards, 6,825 votes were transferred as surplus, however, these represented the votes of 36,135 SNP voters, 19.2 per cent of all voters. The second preference of these voters was: Labour (14.7%), Green (14.3%), Solidarity (13.1%), Lib/Dem (11.7%), SSP (7.5%), Tory (4.7%), Ind/Other (2.3%), BNP (0.3%), no second vote (31.4%).

In the one ward where the SNP stood a second candidate there were 3,199 voters whose first preference was SNP. Their second preferences were: SNP (59.4%), Labour (8.7%), Green (2.2%), Solidarity (3.9%), Lib/Dem (3.5%), SSP (2.5%), Tory (3.4%), Ind/Other (0.4%), no second vote (15.9%).

It can be inferred that had a second SNP candidate been available in other seats, most SNP votes would have transferred to the second candidate. Further it can be inferred that at least half the 31 per cent of SNP voters who did not express a second preference did so consciously. Would the SNP have gained more seats by standing more candidate? The one ward where they stood two was also where they had their largest transfers of

surplus votes 1,122. Only in two other wards did the surplus exceed 750 i.e. less than 9 per cent. Given the quota of around 1,700 in these wards, it is likely that the SNP would not have gained more seats by standing more candidates.

In only one ward did Labour have only one candidate and in that ward they were elected in first round so all 2,575 voters second preferences are known. These were: SNP (13.7%), Green (9.8%), Solidarity (4.5%), Lib/Dem (11.5%), SSP (2.6%), Tory (5.5%), Ind/Other (9.3%), no second vote (43.2%).

In three wards Labour was elected in the first round and other Labour candidates and SNP candidates were standing. The 6,423 second preferences were: Labour (63.0%), SNP (3.8%), Green (1.1%), Solidarity (3.5%), Lib/Dem (2.0%), SSP (1.3%), Tory (1.2%), Ind/Other (1.7%), no second vote (22.3%).

Seven Labour candidates in six wards were elected in the first round and there were other Labour candidates but no other SNP candidates as they had also been elected in the first round. The 14,847 second preferences were: Labour (60.8%), Green (2.9%), Solidarity (3.5%), Lib/Dem (3.2%), SSP (2.3%), Tory (1.6%), Ind/Other (1.2%), No second vote (24.5%).

Where there was another candidate of the same party standing, voters for both SNP and Labour overwhelmingly cast their second vote for them 59.4 per cent for SNP and over 60 per cent for Labour. This shows that voters clearly understood their second preferences counted. Where no candidate of the same party was standing an increased per cent cast no second vote. For Labour voters 43.2 per cent, compared with around 23 per cent where Labour candidates were available. For SNP voters 31.4 per cent, compared with 15.9 per cent where another SNP candidate was standing. This indicates that many voters see little point in casting a vote for another party.

With such high fixed affiliations of party views, Council Elections are largely subject to party tactics over the number of seats stood in. Both SNP and Labour tactics were broadly a success. SNP in getting all candidates elected and on votes cast no more would have been elected had more stood. Labour in ensuring votes were in the main transferred to second and third candidates.

Clearly in Glasgow party loyalties still hold strong. In that situation it was difficult for minor parties to break in. four out of the 5 Green councillors and the one Solidarity councillor were elected in the last round of voting. In three out of those 6 cases, all four member wards, they were elected with less than the original quota i.e. they got less than 20% of the vote including transfers. Generally this results from a high number of voters not completing a full preference i.e. only listing one or two votes.

The Local Government election broadly did what its designers had intended – continue to give a greater than proportional number of seats to larger parties, whilst increasing proportionality.

Voters coped with the system fairly well, however, having two voting systems led to confusion in the Parliamentary vote.

The larger parties, particularly Labour and SNP's voter management and electoral tactics broadly worked. ■

Gordon Morgan was twenty years a Principal/Chief Officer in Glasgow and Inverclyde Councils.

red flag, red dragon

Chris Harvie examines how the Welsh and Scottish experience of devolution has differed and looks at the impact of nationalism

Karl Francis's film 'Miss Rhymney Valley, 1985' is about a Welsh community in the miners' strike. A rambling, discursive creation, ranging in milieu from methodist chapels to miners' clubs, its leather-jacketed central figure, NUM activist Dr Kim Howells, has turned out a monster, a new Labour careerist last heard of defending BAE from bribery charges. But its argument survives: the miner's original notion of a beauty contest - 'Our Nerys in a swimsuit' - is hi-jacked by the wives who are keeping the place running. Miss Rhymney Valley will be

collective, middle-aged, female, and in charge.

As indeed it turned out in 1999. The National Assembly was almost half female (this in a country which had returned only six women MPs between 1918 and 1997) and now there's a female majority in Rhodri Morgan's Cabinet.

The Assembly itself was only just carried in the 12 September 1997 referendum - Scotland's decisiveness a week earlier was probably, as intended, crucial. (Sometime, we may need to cash in on the goodwill). A decade on, and no-one can think of Wales without it. Its legislative limitations have proved, paradoxically, something of a strength: less time faffing around with the details of bills, more opportunities to finesse administration and decentralise authority. The Welsh Development Agency and Tourist Board have been taken over by the Assembly Government, giving it an economic role. A new regional headquarters is building at Aberystwyth. Thirty miles of railway (compared with Scotland's five) have been, or are being, reopened, between Cardiff and Bridgend and Cardiff and Ebbw Vale. And as of 1 April, NHS prescriptions are free.

The Three Waleses

In 1980, in the sub-zero aftermath of the 1979 referendum debacle, the Aberystwyth political scientist Denis Balsom came up with his three-Wales model of political allegiance: Y Fro Gymraeg 'fortress Wales', in the north-and-west, housing Welsh-speakers, the Universities of Aberystwyth and Bangor, and Plaid Cymru's first-past-the-post seats; Welsh Wales, basically the former mining valleys: Anglophone, rugby-playng and Labour-voting; and British Wales, a diffuse arc in the east from the Cardiff suburbs to Llandudno, where allegiances were mixed and often - through retirees and cross-border commuting - not Welsh at all.

The economy still underperforms that of Scotland. That's because of the absence in Cardiff of high-level financial services and law: Edinburgh's two sure-fire goldmines. But there is still conventional smokestack industry: steelmaking along the Bristol Channel coast, oil refining at Milford Haven and opencast coal working, along with the sinking of new drift mines in the valleys and even the possibility of a big pit at Margam, near Port Talbot.

The Welsh remain interested in technology in a way in which the Scots are not: so much of the Scots endowment having been schlepped offshore. There's nowhere in Scotland like the Centre for Alternative Technology near Machynlleth and its spin-offs, or



for that matter like the Great Little Trains as a resource of rail engineering training. Country towns have a strong small-shop culture: organic food, local cheeses, fish, mountain lamb. It seems to be holding its own with the supermarkets and rivals the quality of Baden-Württemberg, and that's saying a lot. Welsh rock music is said to take its cue from great caverns of vinyl in the northern second-hands. The language issue has promoted a parallel 'Welsh writing in English' culture and the medium is the locally-owned bookshop, near-extinct in Scotland. The Welsh haven't succumbed to the Rowling-Rankin-Welsh-McCall-Smith superstardom which, for London groupies, passes for Scottish literature, though they'll shortly have to thole the golden geezers poncing about at Hay-on-Wye.

The Balsom model is changing. In South Wales we may be getting closer to Patrick Geddes' 'Walestown', where the capital (now with the prestige of Richard Rogers' near-legislature and the fine public buildings of the Millennium Centre) fuses with the valleys, and may offer a more civic alternative to an overpriced London. A frontier is beginning to define itself in the east along the Newport-Chester railway, which now has through trains from the north and west of them comparative advantages in industrial location. Though there's quite a gradient to make up. A survey by Dr Alex Böhm of Tübinge University found however that political consciousness, on a European level in Aberystwyth in Y Fro Cymraeg, plummeted when British 'values' took over at Wrecsam.

Wales has a combination of the intimate and the disputatious quite different from Scotland, perhaps owing to the limited supply of names. You could construct a case history of almost every stream of economic and political activity by stringing together Williamseses (Raymond, Glamor, Gwyn Alf, Phil, J L – see!) or Davieses or Morgans. Christian names are thus allowed, but don't betoken any lessening of rigour or in politics violent hostility.

This takes different shapes in the different Waleses. The Blaid's cultural radicalism can provoke a conservative Anglophone backlash which, as in Ceredigion in 2005, favoured the LibDems. And despite Rhodri Morgan's advertisement of the 'thick red water' between Cardiff and Whitehall, Welsh Labour is split several ways, from Dr Howells to bomb-throwers like Paul Flynn.

In Blaenau Gwent, at the heart of Welsh Wales, a New Labour attempt in 2005 to force in one of its clones provoked a revolt by the former Assembly Member, the ailing Peter Law, who got in as an independent. Law died and in the subsequent by-election the seat remained independent. In the campaign a friend driving a Plaid Cymru van was halted by an immense examiner: 'Plaid? There's OK. If you'd been New Labour, we'd have smashed your fookin' windows in.' This was once, as Ebbw Vale, the constituency of Nye Bevan and Michael Foot.

Blaenau Gwent reflected the fact that the Blaid didn't manage to sustain its Welsh Wales successes of 1999. Perhaps because Labour itself was by 2003 so divided as to offer several options

within or against the party, as at Blaenau Gwent. The Blaid is still struggling to find an Assembly presence equal to that in Westminster under the combative and well-briefed Adam Price. This may change if Dafydd Wigley makes it back into Cardiff on the North Wales list. The 'national left' Forward Wales movement under Ron Davies and John Marek (Presiding Officer at Cardiff Bay) hasn't really got anywhere. The Liberals amaze by surviving, as do the Conservatives, who have bounced back, but have also shifted to positive support for devolution and even federalism.

Party loyalty and animosity is fierce, and the personalities involved are more striking than Holyrood, coming from the forcing houses of the Crachach (the Cambrian élite) the University of Wales, and the Welsh-speaking Labourites. I first encountered Rhodri Morgan in the National Library in 2001, taking delivery of the French King's treaty of alliance with Owain Glyndwr on its sixcentenary, not the sort of thing that would have interested Jack McConnell in the least. His partner, Secretary of State Peter Hain has (surprise?) a presence denied Douglas Alexander. In contrast with Patricia Hewitt's failure to get McConnell's name right, no-one is likely to mistake Rhodri for anyone else.

Rhodri's brother 'Prys Swansea' is a very subtle historian of the complexities of Welsh literature and religion, demonstrating that there is in Wales a central salience of culture which is absent from Scotland. It was the media issue which picked up the devolution parties from the floor after the catastrophe of 1979, in Plaid Cymru's – and in particular Gwynfor Evans's – campaign for a Welsh-language TV station. The language has intervened to construct something of an Offa's Dyke against the centralisation of Ofcom and the greedy, philistine world of the London media and its lawyers and agents. Devolution was always important in Wales (Welsh Labour had a more consistent record on it than Scottish Labour until the 1970s) but it wasn't generally regarded as a step towards full independence. After the 1980s Europe certainly mattered more. This meant that known home rulers such as John Osmond, director of the respected and fiercely nonconforming Institute of Welsh Affairs, got influential roles rarely conceded to their Scots equivalents under both Tories and Labour. This might be coming to an end, as the Ukanian nationalism of Blair and Brown falls apart, and the Cameronian blend of soft PR and hard anti-Europe takes over. Tom Nairn has sounded a first blast of the trumpet 'against Brown, Bard of Britishness in a special edition of the IWA's Agenda. The Labour devolutionist-plus-cultural nationalist (and no further) line represented by First Minister Rhodri and my old friend Ken Morgan seems increasingly as secure as a sandcastle on Borth beach.

If the SNP win in Scotland on 3 May, things could be far different. For the London literati springtime in Hay, 2007, might come to resemble the long summer of 1914. We can but hope. ■

Chris Harvie was elected to the Scottish Parliament on the SNP list for mid Scotland and Fife

is anything public anymore?

Tommy Kane and Shona Russell discuss the implications of the changes to the water sector since devolution and ask what can the new parliament do?

The sewage spillage from the Seafield plant into the Forth offered insight into the relative responsibilities of different parties in the water sector in Scotland. This example lasting three days following a catastrophic failure of a treatment pump was rightly documented by media around the UK. The plant is operated by Thames Water under a PFI contract with Scottish Water, Scotland's publicly owned water company. Agreed by the regional water authorities in the late 1990s these 30 year contracts with numerous private companies were signed in order to attract the finance, apparently lacking in the public sphere, to meet the requirements of the EU Bathing Water Directive and Urban Waster Water Directive designed to clean up beaches and to stop untreated sewerage being dumped in the sea. The appalling incident at Seafield does however serve to highlight concerns over the current drive for economic efficiency in the water sector. As well as drawing attention to some of the immense changes introduced since 1999 and which are explored here in an attempt to answer the question 'How public' is Scottish Water?'.

Recent legislation has centralised provision of water services to Scottish Water from the previous three regional East, West and North water authorities. The Water Industry (Scotland) Act (2002) centralised the provision of services, and was done on the basis of equity of charges and investment requirements around the country. The Act also enabled Scottish Water to undertake joint ventures with private sector companies through Scottish Water Solutions (SWS); over and above existing PFI contacts. SWS is owned by Scottish Water (51 per cent) and numerous private partners (including Thames Water, Alfred McAlpine, Gleeson, United Utilities and Morgan Est) and was responsible for delivering over 1,200 projects, 70 per cent of Scottish Water's £1.8billion capital investment programme between 2002 and 2006. Another act, the Water Services (Scotland) Act (2005), enhanced the resemblance of the regulatory framework to that in which privatised companies in England and Wales operate and introduced competition in the provision of water services in the non-domestic sector.

The creation of the Water Industry Commission for Scotland (WICS) in the 2005 Act, meant an independent economic regulator replaced the Water Industry Commissioner. This very slight name change should not be mistaken for a simple cosmetic tinkering with the system. The WICS has significant new powers and is chaired by an important and controversial political figure in Sir Ian Byatt (former chair of OFWAT, water services regulator for England and Wales), who oversaw the privatisation of the sector in the 1990s. Mirroring developments south of the border, the WICS has been given statutory powers to set the budget, whereas previously the Commissioner could only advise ministers on such matters.

Since then the WICS has introduced the Regulatory Capital Value model: a system that resembles a form of corporate welfare due to its guaranteeing a high rate of return for investors; from the payments from Scottish users of water (see J and M Cuthbert SLR Sep/Oct 2006). Effectively there has been an increase in the participation of experts in the water sector. Arguably this has been to the detriment of participation by the public through a

lack of representation of local interests which was previously characteristic of former regional water authorities. Though the 2005 Act did reorganise customer representation with the creation of WaterWatch Scotland. Used to be known as Water Customer Consultation Panels WCCPS. Given greater powers due to perceived failure of WIC to fully represent customers interests.

Economic efficiency dominates assessment of the performance of Scottish Water by the WICS. Currently, budgets are set by WICS according to Scottish Water's ability to be **cost effective** and agreed objectives are met at the lowest possible cost. The Quality and Standards (Q&S) Investment Programme is the mechanism used to improve and upgrade the infrastructure of water In Scotland. The objectives for Q&S are set by Ministers, with advice from regulators and other stakeholders given through a body known as the Water Industry Objectives Group.

The ability of WICS to set budgets has not been without controversy. For example, there was a dispute between Scottish Water, the WICS and the Scottish Executive in 2005/6 about the level of funds Scottish Water needed to meet objectives for the period 2006-2010. Scottish Water disputed the budget of £2.15bn, determined by the economic regulator, estimating £3.2bn instead. After the resignation of Scottish Water's Chairman, Alan Alexander, Scottish Water agreed to greater operational efficiency and new strategic developments to meet objectives within the terms of the budget. Nonetheless, a diverse array of organisations have subsequently expressed serious doubts as to whether the Ministerial Objectives will be carried out within the lower budget. (See www.publicinterest.ac.uk, 'The Drift To Privatisation and How Democratisation Could Improve Efficiency and Lower Costs', October 16th 2006 for more information). If it does prove insufficient then the calls for mutualisation/privatisation will undoubtedly grow louder.

If disagreements such as that above arise in the future and cannot be resolved they can be referred to the Competition Commission, rather than involving the Scottish Executive. This UK body is normally involved in the mediation between interests of private sector companies; addressing allegations of price fixing or monopolistic behaviour. The STUC have questioned the implications for democratic accountability in the water sector given that the Competition Commission members are neither democratically elected nor used to mediating between views in the provision of water in Scotland, which is part of the devolved responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament. We share these concerns. The water trade unions and the STUC, have also expressed concern that the drive towards efficiency is having a detrimental impact on workers. Particularly for those working for private firms where there is concern about their workload, pensions, annual leave, and a deterioration of adherence to health and safety procedures.

The WICS incentivised Scottish Water to improve their performance by benchmarking them against English Water companies. Known as the Overall Performance Assessment (OPA), they will be measured in key areas of customer service. Nevertheless, there are instances of customers conveying

concern on levels of service and investment. Did the drive for economic efficiency, for example, contribute to the horrendous sewerage leak at Seafield? Such a focus on economic efficiency could have been influential in financing decisions as there is no current budget to deal with the issues of external sewerage flooding as it was not an 'essential' part of the ministerial objectives. This is despite the increased threat of further flooding due to the infrastructure being unable to cope with the rise in the instances of heavy rainfall. Acknowledged by a spokesperson for Scottish Water earlier this year who said 'Scottish Water, does not currently have a budget for climate change nor external sewerage flooding' The drive for effectiveness continues with incentive programmes for senior management who may receive over £1million between them on achieving targets. Incidentally, this drive for effectiveness has seen a reduction in the workforce of Scottish Water by 40 per cent since 2002. Subsequently, leading to increased dependency on the private sector to build and maintain capital investment while decreasing the capacity of the 'public' company to do likewise.

The commercialisation is not solely found in the operations and regulation of Scottish Water. Scottish Water is also increasingly being treated as a commercial enterprise by those setting legislation. For example, Sarah Boyack recently announced the end of the exemptions from charges for charities and voluntary organisations by 2010, effectively meaning they are to be charged like any other business. Go to <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/webapp/wa.result> for more information.

Commercialisation and privatisation of water companies has been criticised the world over. In England and Wales the water companies have been roundly condemned for their inability to simultaneously achieve the panacea of efficient service, low prices, adequate investment and shareholder dividend. Thames Water has been criticised for 894 million litres of water leaking from its pipes daily, of planned increases in customers bills (by 24 per cent over the next five years) and reduction in workforce (1200 jobs). Furthermore, Thames Water has been fined £140 million and £128,000 for failure to meet its customer standards and for pollution incidents, respectively by OFWAT. However, the company is still benefiting shareholders with their most recent pre-tax profits rising by a third to £328million. The English water companies combined have accrued profits of over £2billion at the same time as households are facing rising bills and restrictions on their water use. In terms of leaks all English companies have a combined leakage of 3.6 billion a day. While globally, the privatised water industry is increasingly criticised for huge price rises, and not honouring promised investments and for disconnecting rather than serving the poorest and most marginal users. (See Research by the World Development Movement, Public Services International Research Unit, Reclaiming Public Water Network).

The provision of water around the world, not least because of mounting global water scarcity, is increasingly being seen as an opportunity by the business world. For example, MFS Limited, an Australian investment and Finance company, recently set up a Global Water fund to tap into the global \$460million water market. Their reasoning is clear. A spokesman for MFS said, "inevitably the price of water is going to rise...It's a global supply and demand issue". He also made clear that 'it wasn't a green fund or an environmental fund, but "purely a money-making fund". (See The Australian 'New MFS Business Fund to tap into \$460million Water Market' <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,21578316-643,00.html>). These views correspond with the Multi-National Business Lobbyists 'The

World Business Council for Sustainable Development'. They also said recently 'In a world of ever-increasing water scarcity, the business sector is confronted with a host of strategic challenges as well as significant opportunities'. In these global circumstances it is clear that the governance of water service provision here in Scotland is of vital importance.

Recently the Lib Dems intention to mutualise Scottish Water as part of their 2007 manifesto. The Tories also support mutualisation, though the Greens, the SSP and Solidarity have rejected it. Worryingly, neither the SNP nor Scottish Labour mentions plans to change the legal status of Scottish Water in their manifestos. At first, this seems reassuring - one could assume that no further changes are planned. But given that none of the far-reaching changes to our water system in Scotland since devolution were properly discussed in the manifestos, for the 1999 and 2003 elections, it's not quite as comforting as it should be. Mutualisation, despite conventional association with customer co-operatives, has developed differently from its theoretical image. Evidence from Welsh Water suggests that mutualisation of water companies creates a 'shell like' public corporation whose main purpose is to purchase services from the private sector rather than produce the services themselves. Further critics have observed that mutualisation has in effect handed control of water to a small group of private contractors and financiers, reducing the possibilities for meaningful democratic participation by others. Moreover, this fragmentation could lead to a lack of accountability and a deterioration of water service provision in Scotland

Instead of focusing on mutualisation we should aim to match the underpinning principles of the Scottish Parliament with greater participation and democratisation in the governance of water services in Scotland. This could mean engaging local communities in regional boards, giving local people the opportunity to help set local priorities rather than having instructions set from above. Not just for the sake of adherence to these 'so-called' abstract values, but because there is evidence to show that they lead to a service that's more responsive, cheaper and effective, as shown by Stockholm Water in Sweden, where representatives from local interest groups sit on the company's board. See Public Interest Research Network, report commissioned by the STUC, 'Scottish Water, The Drift to Privatisation and how democracy could improve efficiency and lower costs' October 2006 (www.publicinterest.ac.uk).

The Strathclyde Referendum firmly rejected privatisation in 1994. Yet since devolution, the Scottish public has not been given a chance to vote on the future of their water service provider or indeed the changes that have seen further commercialisation and an erosion of the public ethos and ownership of Scottish Water. Rather than just calling for the protection of Scottish Water in its present form, the forthcoming parliament could and should be used to work towards encouraging greater democratisation and participation in the sector. Moreover, it should address Scottish Water's needs, its current capacity and its reliance on the private sector. ■

Tommy Kane is doing doctoral research in the area of governance of water, particularly in Scotland and is based in the University of Strathclyde.

Shona Russell is completing her doctoral research on accountability in the water sector in Scotland at the University of Strathclyde.

the trouble with trident

Mike Brider discusses the debate (or lack of it) surrounding the renewal of trident and asks why the government is not listening to the people?

The T&G has a very long record of supporting the removal of Britain's nuclear weapons, stretching back to the 1950s.

It was due to this proud opposition that our Union looked forward to the debate, the first in a generation, in the belief that the public would support our position that nuclear weapons have no place in a peaceful, modern and progressive Britain. A Channel 4 News/Populus opinion poll in March confirmed this belief by indicating that up to 75 per cent of the population are opposed to renewal or in favour of a delay.

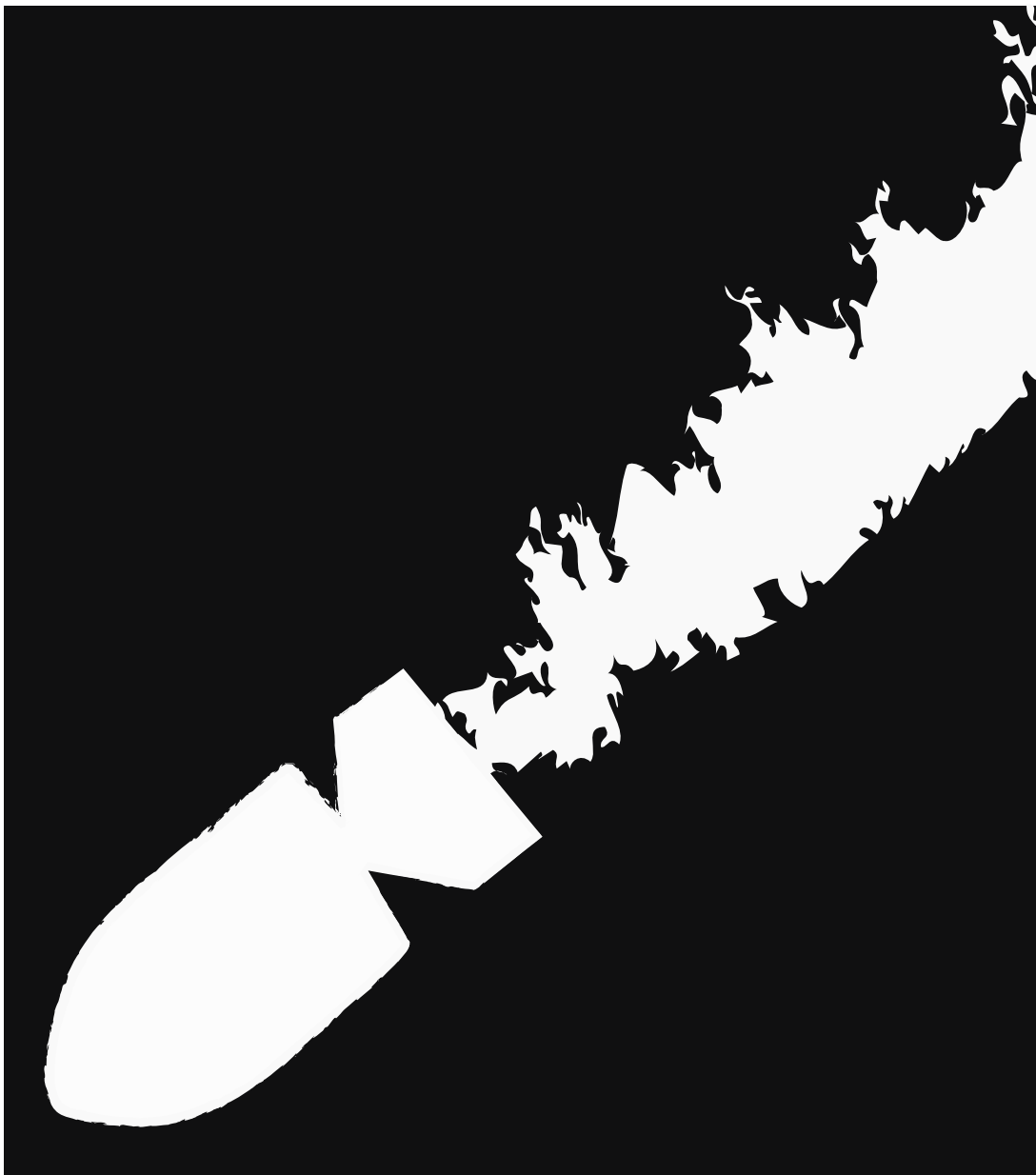
Despite widespread opposition within the Labour movement and the public, the Government's proposal to renew the Trident nuclear missile system was approved in Parliament on the 14th March. The decision was only secured through the assistance of the Conservative Party as 161 MPs opposed renewal including 95 Labour MPs.

The Government unnecessarily rushed through a decision on the renewal of Trident, despite the fact that there had not been a full national debate as agreed by the Defence Select Committee. This view is also shared by Richard Garwin, the principal architect of the first US hydrogen bomb. In advance of giving evidence to the Committee in January, he argued the Government had 'stacked the deck' in favour of replacement and that the life-existence of the current fleet of nuclear submarines could be extended by 10-15 years.

The Labour Party and Labour movement has simply not had the chance to take a view on Trident replacement. It has been argued that the replacement of Trident was a manifesto commitment; in fact, the manifesto simply committed the government to consult. Surely the process - of three months' consultation then a whipped vote in parliament - does not constitute a national debate, particularly when there is no over-riding urgency compelling an immediate decision?

The replacement programme will cost £25 billion at the most conservative estimate. It is likely that the true figure will be a great deal higher. Such great sums of money should not be committed without the most detailed examination.

Replacement will not only undermine the Non-Proliferation Treaty, despite the Government's pledge to continue reducing missile war-heads, but contribute to global insecurity. Nation states throughout the world could accelerate their own nuclear ambitions by determining that the only effective bargaining chip that they have is to possess nuclear weapons - North Korea being a prime example. Rather than Trident being a



deterrent, ironically it could act as an incentive, which is why we believe that non-replacement would contribute most to the security of the British people.

At the Scottish Trade Union Annual Congress in Glasgow this April, the trade union movement will continue our debate on this very important issue despite the vote in Parliament. This is in light of the recent joint report by the STUC and CND, which demonstrates significant benefits domestically from non-replacement in addition to our view that it contributes to greater global security.

The report argues that the non-replacement of Trident represents a major opportunity for productive investment and a net job gain for the Scottish economy. This includes developing technologies for energy efficiency, energy conservation and renewables - in line with existing Scottish Executive commitments on carbon emissions - not to mention significant investment in our public services throughout Britain, which would dramatically improve the life chances of our young people and reduce poverty. I believe this is a more beneficial use of public money rather than upgrading and maintaining a system we will, hopefully, never use.

While this report does not provide all the answers, it does clearly demonstrate that there are significant opportunities to gain from non-replacement. However, it is absolutely crucial that there are extra government resources for the Defence Diversification Agency so that it can focus on the development of achievable proposals for sustainable alternative employment for the workers directly or indirectly employed through Trident by 2022.

I believe we still have the opportunity to make our case and that the debate is not closed. We must keep up the pressure on our elected representatives and Government. It is vital that the Scottish public continue the campaign of opposition to Trident. Let's maintain the momentum we have built to secure a more peaceful and prosperous future for generations to come. ■

Mike Brider was Scottish Regional Secretary TGWU now part of the new union Unity

Post-election Conference

SCOTLAND TRIDENT & the new political settlement

New opportunities to work together for peace inside and outside the new Scottish Parliament

Kate Hudson, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Professor William Walker, Katy Clark MP, Michael Matheson MSP, Matt Smith (UNISON), Rebecca Johnston, Marilyn Glen MSP, Isobel Lindsay, David McKenzie plus Lib Dem, Green and STUC speakers

Workshops:

- Winning a majority against Trident in the new Scottish parliament
- Hosting an International Disarmament Conference in Scotland
- Scottish parliament and the transport of nuclear weapons
- Outlawing nuclear weapons in Scotland
- Peace Education/Scottish Centre for Peace & Justice
- Trident & Faslane - an alternative employment strategy

Saturday 26 May 10.30am - 4pm
Partick Burgh Hall, Glasgow

Organised by:
Scottish CND, 15 Barrland Street, Glasgow G41 1QH
www.banthebomb.org tel: 0141 423 1222



Renewing Trident will cost Scotland jobs

A new report commissioned by the STUC and Scottish CND shows that Scotland would be the net loser, in terms of jobs, if Trident is renewed.

The report reveals that the Faslane base carries out a wide range of functions as well as supporting Trident. Using Government figures it calculates that 1536 jobs are sustained by Trident in Scotland.

Scotland's share of the annual in-service cost of Trident is estimated to be £153 million. The report proposes that some of this money should be used to generate jobs in the public sector and the social economy. There should also be a major financial commitment to arms conversion, enabling the workforce to move from military to civil projects. One area where the skills of the Trident workforce could be redeployed is on projects to tackle climate change.

In addition Scotland's share of the cost of renewing Trident is estimated to be £85 million per year for 15 years. This additional expenditure could put at risk 3,000 public sector jobs in Scotland

Got to:

www.stuc.org.uk/files/STUC%20-%20CND%20Trident%20Report%202007/STUC-CND%20Trident%20Report.pdf

for a copy of the report

for health's sake

Nathalie Holmerin Bartfay and Janet Muir discuss the challenges and benefits of involving communities in health provision

Public Health Role in health inequalities

Health inequalities are an extremely complex issue and reflect the wider social and economic environment in which people live. People who are most affected by societal inequalities related to factors such as low income, gender, social position, ethnic origin, geography, age and disability are more likely to have poorer physical and mental health than the general population. The relationship between deprivation and a range of diverse health outcomes has been much documented, however, other examples of risks to health resulting from societal inequalities might also include poor access to good quality food or housing through socio-economic inequality, sexual abuse or exposure to anti-social behaviour through gender inequality, or racist assaults or poorer access to services through ethnic inequality. A major cause for concern is that inequalities in health status are increasing within Scotland, for example, in significantly greater increases in life expectancy in more affluent parts of Scotland compared to the least affluent. The narrowing of this gap is now one of the main aims of the health improvement challenge in Scotland.

Therefore it is a vital role for the public health bodies to actively engage with the work to improve Scotland's health. However there is an ongoing debate on where public health has its platform and part of the problem may result from a lack of clarity over the public health function. For example many engaged in public health cite its core purpose as being health improvement based on addressing lifestyle issues such as stopping smoking or increasing physical exercise. Whereas others, prioritise life circumstances with the need for improved joined up working with those responsible for policies such as affordable housing and effective public transport systems. A key partner in this joined up process are communities themselves. The public health role in tackling health inequalities will be greatly developed by forging strong partnerships with local communities and ensuring that they are meaningfully involved in shaping and implementing public health policies. The following articles by the Community Health Exchange (CHEX) and Voluntary Health Scotland (VHS) highlight the benefits of community led health and the contribution of the voluntary sector. They explore how community and voluntary sectors could be better supported by government policies in particular with a sustained funding base, which underpins core work. ■

Nathalie Holmerin Bartfay is the UK Public Health Association Development Officer

Community-led health – Challenges and Solutions for the next Scottish Parliament

Community-led health has much to offer sustainable development both within the environmental and social justice movements. At a local level, people get involved in initiatives such as community food initiatives, community transport schemes and recycling schemes as well as strategic planning with influence on shaping and implementing health and social policies. The evidence shows (ref 1) there are real benefits for communities when people themselves bring their knowledge, expertise and experience to changing structures and services. Services become more targeted and responsive to need. Health professionals report on stronger relationships with community groups and voluntary organizations. Local people demonstrate new skills, confidence and report on enhanced wellbeing from participating in processes which actually improve their health, environment and overall quality of life.

A recurring aspiration of the Scottish Executive in many of its consultative and policy papers is to 'place communities at the heart of its policies' (Ref 2). Community-led health has demonstrated it is well placed to assist the effective implementation of these policies. Many examples across the country show that effective engagement and partnership working with communities has led to decision-making in local services, especially through the involvement of more excluded communities, working with them to find solutions to difficult problems.

Community-led health – what difference does it make?

Community-led health is a term used by different sectors to describe working with communities on health improvement and tackling health inequalities. The nature and extent of involvement varies greatly; from 'one-off' consultations to working with community organizations as partners in decision-making and resource allocation. The Community Health Exchange (CHEX) would advocate that in order to achieve the maximum health outcomes, community development approaches should be adopted in the following way:

Promoting learning, knowledge, skills, confidence and the capacity to act collectively;

Taking positive action to address inequalities in power, access and participation;

A major cause for concern is that inequalities in health status are increasing within Scotland, for example, in significantly greater increases in life expectancy in more affluent parts of Scotland compared to the least affluent.

Strengthening organisation, networking and leadership with and between communities;

Working for change through increased local democracy, participation and involvement in public affairs.

Taken together, the evidence shows that these four processes can lead to communities having greater control and influence on positive health, social, economic and environmental outcomes, which result in a better quality of life for all people.

However, working in this way with communities has created significant challenges for many health professionals, both in the NHS and within the wider public health workforce. While there has been confidence about informing and encouraging people to become involved in pre-determined health improvement priorities. There has been limited expertise in development approaches required to empower community members in joint planning and influencing local services. The CHEX Network of Community Health Projects and Healthy Living Centres have reported that until recently, much of the experience and expertise in reaching and mobilizing communities has come from community and voluntary sectors. But, the work of the Scottish Executive Community-Led: Supporting and Developing Healthy Communities Task Group has now gone some way in providing leadership and support for more strategic and operational commitment from all sectors.

Community-led: Developing and Supporting Healthy Communities Task Group – a strategic approach

In Dec. 2006, the Task Group launched a range of support materials, which reviewed the evidence-base and highlighted methods/approaches, which maximise the benefits from community-led approaches. It also produced a number of recommendations aimed at embedding good practice in community-led health at a local level. A Steering Group has been set up to oversee the implementation of these recommendations and during 2007 will focus on

further assessment and development of the evidence-base

planning and partnership working in integrated health improvement

capacity building on community-led health

sustainability of community-led activity

CHEX together with Voluntary Health Scotland (VHS) have been given a lead role to take forward the recommendations on capacity building on community-led health – and are currently planning a development programme aimed at working across the community/voluntary and public sectors to develop more effective strategic approaches.

The Task Group clearly identified a structural weakness underlining community-led health because of the significantly fragile funding base i.e. community/voluntary organisations delivering the work receive short term funding and 'project work' is often neither mainstreamed nor supported in autonomous voluntary organisations. Therefore, not only are services lost and learning dissipated, but communities are damaged and

grow cynical about future involvement in any further community activity.

Community-led health: future challenges

We welcomed Mark Ballard's (Green MSP) initiative last November in co-ordinating a cross-party debate on this funding challenge and were heartened by the contributions of all political parties in recognising the value of community-led health in health improvement and tackling health inequalities. Both CHEX and VHS informed the debate with Briefings. We identified key questions and recommended practical solutions, which would help ensure accountability and transparency of decision-making such as calling upon the Scottish Executive to:

Require each Health Board and Local Authority to produce within its strategic planning documentation a clear statement, with strategies and targets as to how it will support community-led and voluntary sector health initiatives.

Require from each local Health Board and Local Authority an annual accounting of any funds allocated to those bodies specifically to support community-led and voluntary sector health initiatives.

Strongly encourage Health Boards, Local Authorities and other public funded agencies to commit themselves to the National Standards in Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector Compacts.

Ensure that the National Task Group recommendations on Community-led are implemented and resourced at a local level.

Community-led health has come a long way over the last ten years with policies and resources that support the practice, together with an increased expectation from communities themselves to be consulted and involved in decision-making. Communities that have strong networks, active in reaching out to more vulnerable and isolated individuals and active in shaping their surrounding environment are more likely to be sustainable and healthier places to live in the next ten years. However, the involvement of communities in affecting local health issues is a fragile process and one easily undermined if not consistently supported. The need for strong, concerted encouragement in participatory democracy and judicious allocation of funding resources to ensure that community-led health is consolidated and effectively embedded within structures and decision-making process is a significant challenge of policy makers and practitioners. As we enter a new parliamentary period, CHEX is hopeful that all political parties will coalesce around the need to work with communities as equal partners and ensure that all groups have a fair and equal stake in bringing about healthy communities and quality of life for all people.

For further information about the Chex involvement in Implementation Group on the Task Group recommendations, contact Janet Muir Janet@scdc.org.uk.

Janet Muir manages all aspects of the CHEX work. She has over 25 years of experience in community development

the will of the establishment

Jim Cuthbert looks at how the British intelligence system has consistently tried to dampen the will of the people and asks what implications this has for Scotland

On 17th April, 1923, Colonel J. F. C. Carter, of Scotland Yard, wrote to General Diarmuid O'Hegarty, director of intelligence in the Irish Free State. Colonel John Fillis Carré Carter was Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, with responsibility for what would now be called anti-terrorist activities: he also played a key role in the relationship between the British government and the newly formed Free State. [Carter is a mysterious and rather sinister character, to whose career there clings more than a whiff of the brimstone of espionage: in fact, the smell is almost literally of brimstone in his case, given that Carter had later dealings with the notorious satanist, and likely secret service informer, Aleister Crowley.]

Colonel Carter's letter to General O'Hegarty is of interest for two main reasons. First of all, because it tells us a lot about the relationship between the British security services/establishment and the Free State. The tone of the letter is very much that Britain regards the Free State as a client state, with the UK's shadowy "Advisory Committee", [presumably linked to the UK Cabinet Committee on Ireland], taking a close and avuncular interest in the travails of the newly formed state. Carter indeed tells O'Hegarty that he has, in effect, been representing Ireland's interests before the Advisory Committee, and resisting pressure from the committee to call over the senior management of the new state to London to account for themselves.

While this is fascinating, what is of even greater interest to us in Scotland today is the second main strand in Carter's letter, which deals with the techniques used by Britain in managing and controlling the cultural and political aspirations of the inhabitants of British territories and Dominions. It is this latter aspect which will form the main topic of this note: but for those who are interested in the full text of the Carter letter, it can be found on the website www.cuthbert1.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk, in association with the text of this paper.

The relevant part of Carter's letter to O'Hegarty begins as follows:-

"I have recently heard from intelligent people criticism of Irish affairs in this country and it is to this effect. There is no proper body of reputable people or an organised proper Irish Free State association or something along the lines of the Caledonian Society for Scotland or the Welsh Society for Welshmen, societies which have annual dinners and meetings and which all classes of patriotic people belong to. People say that so much harm is done by these hole in the corner Irish Self-Determination Leagues and other things...there is nobody to direct the younger members of your State in proper

patriotic lines towards your State...such a society should embrace all classes and particularly have amongst them men of general Empire repute of Irish birth."

On a slightly lighter, but nonetheless informative, note, Carter concludes this section of the letter with:-

"I attended as a guest the other night the Welsh gathering; there were 600 persons present, Welsh songs were sung and all that sort of thing. I was rather impressed by it, and then there are Canadian dinners in town, which are very good too."

This section of Carter's letter was taken very seriously by O'Hegarty. He immediately copied the relevant part of the letter to Cosgrave, the Irish President, and to the Irish Minister of Defence. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it does not appear, however, that there has been any lasting legacy, in terms of a pan-Irish society, embracing men of good empire repute!

Carter is in fact dealing with three different objectives within this section of his letter: these are:-

- attitude control within the client country: ("directing the younger members of your State in proper patriotic lines.")
- attitude management within the diaspora from the client country.
- how to influence the British Establishment to have a positive attitude towards the client country or group: (O'Hegarty certainly took this latter point: in his covering letter to the Minister of Defence, O'Hegarty states "...I feel that the comments contained in the extract were intended to suggest that a little more attention to social functions in England could make Bodies such as the Advisory Committee more anxious to assist us.")

Note that Carter clearly sees these objectives as being entirely consistent. What is wanted is a controlled and happy celebration of minor differences, within an overall context where there is seen to be a coincidence of interest between the client state, and the UK/Empire establishment.

The interesting conclusion to be drawn, therefore, is that both the unionist establishment, and the nationalists, are performing badly in different aspects of the vitally important arena of attitude management

Although the letter is in Carter's name, the context tells us that the message is actually coming from much higher up-from Advisory Committee or Cabinet level. So what we have here is a clear statement both of the importance that the highest levels of the British establishment attached to managing attitudes within client states, and of some of the methods they thought appropriate for achieving this.

The main interest of this material, from a Scottish perspective, is, of course, what it tells us about the techniques the British state is likely to be deploying

nowadays, to counter the move towards Scottish independence. Normally, we would expect a fairly successful, (in terms of political survival), state like Britain simply to get better through time in the techniques it deploys: and certainly, Scotland should not expect to escape as relatively painlessly as the Free State did in the 1930s from its intended orbit as a client state. But when we look at the specific strategy of attitude management outlined in the Carter letter, we can see that the UK nowadays is not performing well: unfortunately, however, neither are the nationalists.

As regards the first and third objectives identified above, (that is, attitude control within Scotland, and managing the attitude of the establishment towards Scotland), then the UK state is currently doing outstandingly badly. There are several reasons for this. Scotland's long running relative economic and demographic decline engenders a sense of grievance among many Scots which is beyond being simply massaged away. On the other hand, seeking to implement a devolved but non-federal system in which the West Lothian question is endemic inevitably leads to an inherent sense of grievance and hostility on the part of what one might term the English establishment. Further, with the decline of Empire, it is much more difficult to project a sense of common and wider purpose: as a result, the London dominated media have come to adopt a tone that is parochially English and chauvinistic- witness the recent world cup coverage as an extreme example. This has profoundly antagonised much non-English opinion, and has at the same time de-sensitised much of the Establishment to the kind of broader concerns which underlay the Carter letter.

However, as regards the middle objective, that of influencing the Scottish diaspora abroad, it is the nationalists who have underperformed. To a disappointing extent, cultural movements among the diaspora appear to be very much of a type of which Colonel Carter himself might well have approved, being either of an innocuous "Tartan Day" character, and/or involving men of "good repute" on a basically cross-party agenda. This is a tragedy from the nationalist viewpoint, given the importance of mobilising the diaspora if independence is going to be achieved. It should never be forgotten that, without the political leverage which the Irish diaspora was able to exert in America, it is extremely unlikely that Irish independence could have been achieved.

In this respect, a recent example of a disastrously missed opportunity on the nationalist side has been the neglect of the Scottish diaspora in the recently finalised constitution of the Scottish Independence Convention. The relevant parts of the constitution are as follows:-

"III 2. Sovereignty in Scotland resides only in the people of Scotland.

III 3. The Scottish people for these purposes are defined in civic, not ethnic, terms: all those who make Scotland their

main home have an equal right to participate in the choice for or against independence."

It is absolutely right that the constitution adopts a basically civic, rather than ethnic, approach. But unless this civic approach is supplemented by a right to return to, and live and work in, Scotland, for the wider Scottish diaspora, then there are two extremely grave side effects.

First of all, it has the effect that any EU citizen, since they have the right to live and work in Scotland, has a greater stake in, and say in, Scotland's future, than members of the Scottish diaspora resident in Canada, Australia, or the United States. This can only have a profoundly de-motivating effect, as regards attempting to encourage the wider diaspora to take an active

part in Scotland's future. Far from seizing the opportunity to open up an active pro-independence second front among the diaspora, clearly differentiated from the safe Burns night and haggis tendency, the independence convention constitution will have precisely the opposite effect.

Secondly, consider what happens if a coalition of nationalist parties in the Scottish Parliament were able, at some future date, to mount an independence referendum - and that this then narrowly failed to obtain the required majority for independence. As the independence convention constitution is currently worded, this outcome would have the effect of settling the independence question once and for all - and in the negative. However, if a right of return for the wider diaspora had been enshrined in the independence convention constitution, then an initial negative referendum result could not be

regarded as disposing of the independence question: but would rather be a spur for greater pressure and involvement from our diaspora. By failing to include a right of return provision, the convention has failed to take out the most obvious form of insurance against the consequences of a negative result in an independence referendum.

The interesting conclusion to be drawn, therefore, is that both the unionist establishment, and the nationalists, are performing badly in different aspects of the vitally important arena of attitude management. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the two sides. The problems faced by the unionist side are to a large extent intrinsic: with the loss of Empire, and the rise of the EU, it is very difficult to see what the underlying rationale of the UK now is: and it is thus inherently difficult for the media and establishment to project an image of other than narrow English nationalism. On the other hand, the problems faced by the nationalists are largely self-inflicted: as illustrated above in relation to the independence convention constitution, there are opportunities for the nationalists to grasp. The key question, on which past performance does not give great grounds for optimism, is whether the nationalists will be willing and able to grasp these opportunities. ■

Jim Cuthbert was formerly Chief Statistician at the Scottish Office.

web review

Henry McCubbin

So its goodbye from him and its good riddance to him. The departure of Blair is a sad day for all those involved in keeping track of what he was actually up to and who exactly he was meeting at No 10 or Chequers. With Blair's political passing a whole section of cyberspace dedicated to keeping us informed will, I hope, archive itself in order that future generations can reminded the ease with which a political movement can have its brain removed and a coterie of friends of the new leader implanted to replace the corpse's cognitive functions.

To mark the Great Leader's passing we should pause for a few moments to thank organisations such as Red-Star- research (to be found at <http://www.red-star-research.org.uk/index.html>) for the all of the information they have made available to us during the Blair interregnum. Who could ever forget the Friends of Tony - New Labour's rich and powerful chums? The taskforces - Blair's main line to the heart of big business - donors - the official donors and sponsors of New Labour and of course the special advisers - the unelected party political workforce. They are all there but read with care for I'll bet a pound to a penny that they all have their names in the Gordon Brown's address book.

Next group of surfers to be shedding a tear will be <http://www.blairwatch.co.uk/> . Indeed so great is the pressure on them that they have had to temporarily close Blairwatch as it will be under

going a server upgrade due to Blair's departure and they hope to be able to bring us a much better service. As they say "We will be back, not like our namesake."

This is one site I hope keeps going <http://www.impeachblair.org/index.shtml> and keeps harassing the bugger until he's nailed. What irony if he was the first criminal to be extradited from the US to the UK under Blunkett's one sided extradition treaty. Meanwhile it is worth while watching <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1.asp> in case he does flip before departing. His behaviour appears to be becoming more and more erratic as D day approaches.

I think that we're due a little satire and <http://news.aol.co.uk/best-of-the-web-tony-blair/article/20070427052609990002> AOL has provided just this at the above URL. ■



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

John Leach, President

Kick Up The Tabloids

SALMOND HUNGER STRIKE FEARS

As Tony Blair's six-week resignation tour gets under way, the focus is on his legacy. On the plus side he delivered devolution to Scotland. But then proceeded to piss us off to such an extent that we voted Labour out of power for the first time in 50 years.

Because on May 3rd the people of Scotland made their voices heard. And those voices unanimously said: "Did I vote? I'm not sure, I think I might have spoiled my paper by accident. Was it meant to be a tick next to the one you wanted, and then 1, 2, 3 for the others you don't want?"

Things were already reaching farcical proportions during the BBC's live coverage, when with perfect comic timing, a captikon appeared on screen stating that "the count in Edinburgh West has been delayed due to an attack on a polling station by an intruder with a golf club".

What a particularly Edinburgh form of protest. In Paisley, a baseball bat would probably have been wielded. However, it is a sign as to how disenfranchised Tory voters are now feeling that they have to resort to direct action with the aid of their mashie.

And as the SNP now become the largest party in Parliament, Labour's scaremongering tactics, or blatant lies, about the consequences of voting SNP obviously went unheard.

In the lead up to the election we were warned that independence could lead to all manner of horrendous outcomes. We would have obviously when not concocting ever-more lurid scare stories about the consequences of independence...border guards, passport checks if your granny wanted to visit her cousin in Stevenage (although why anyone in their right mind would want to visit Stevenage was never explained), Al Qaeda setting up training camps in Dundee and the Bay City Rollers making a comeback. Most voters quite sensibly deduced that the party that is capable of telling lies in order to fight a war in Iraq is equally capable of inventing all kinds of porkies to get the gullible public to vote for it.

Prince Harry, meanwhile is to be sent to the front line in Iraq, an issue which raises three vital questions:

Number one, is it right, safe or sensible for the third in line to the British throne to be fighting on the front-line in Iraq? Number two, is it right, safe or sensible for anyone (third in line to the British throne or not) to be fighting on the front line in Iraq? Number three, how come the love child of James Hewitt and Diana Spencer is third in line to the British throne?

Meanwhile, Edinburgh University is debating whether or not to strip Robert Mugabe of his honorary degree. Which, if they do, should put an end to his appalling behaviour. After all, how can any self-respecting dictator expect to be able to commit acts of genocide on his own people without the necessary qualifications. Perhaps we didn't need to execute Saddam Hussain after all, it might have been enough just to cancel his GCSE's.

But as Scotland now sets out on its brave new future, the SNP minority government may be scuppered in their promise to hold a referendum on independence. If they are to hold a referendum, they'd better make the question one that is simple to answer. "How did you vote in the referendum? I think I got it right. I put a Y next to Yes, and a 2 next to No."

Furthermore, it may be naive to assume that independence can be achieved solely through the ballot box. It may not be enough just to vote SNP or vote Yes in a plebiscite. History tells us that the British don't tend to give up colonies without a fight. Look at the USA, Ireland or India. Ghandi had to go on hunger strike in the struggle to overthrow British rule... what are the chances of Alex Salmond going on hunger strike? Pretty slim, I'd have thought. ■

Vladimir McTavish (aka Paul Sneddon) is touring A Brief History of Scotland at venues throughout Scotland this spring, finishing at The Stand Comedy Club in Edinburgh on Tuesday 29th May at 8.30 pm]

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