

Scottish **Left** Review

Issue 86 April/May 2015 - £2.00

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

The major parties of the Left want *your* vote.
So who do you choose?



fig 1. the elect-us-aurus

PLUS... The union movement and industrial democracy

MANAGERS SHEDDING CROCODILE TEARS WON'T WASH

GMB

SCOTLAND

Managers shedding crocodile tears now for their part in blacklisting 3,213 workers won't wash, neither will the Nuremberg Defence of "just following superior orders" says GMB.

These are the managers who organised the construction industry blacklist: they have yet to apologise for the damage they caused

- **Michael Aird** – Balfour Kilpatrick, Glasgow
- **Kathy Almansoor** – Kier Group, Bedfordshire
- **Dave Aspinall** – Carillion/Crown House, Wolverhampton
- **Alan Audley** – Vinci, Watford
- **John Ball** – Carillion/Crown House, Wolverhampton
- **Ron Barron** – CB&I, Kent
- **Valerie Bennison** – Whessoe, Darlington
- **Ernie Boswell** – Kier Group, Bedfordshire
- **Richard Bull** – HBG Construction (BAM), London
- **Iain Coates** – Emcor, Twickenham
- **David Cochrane** – Sir Robert McAlpine, Hertfordshire
- **Ann Cowrie** – Balfour Beatty Civil Engineering, Edinburgh
- **Tony Crowther** – AMEC, Cheshire
- **John Dangerfield** – Balfour Beatty Scottish & Southern, Hampshire
- **Lynn Day** – Cleveland Bridge UK, Darlington
- **John Dickinson** – Skanska, Hertfordshire
- **Frank Duggan** – Carillion/Crown House, Wolverhampton
- **John Edwards** – Carillion/Crown House, Wolverhampton
- **Kevin Gorman** – Carillion/Crown House, Solihull
- **Elaine Gallagher** – Balfour Kilpatrick, Glasgow
- **Gerry Harvey** – Balfour Kilpatrick, Glasgow
- **Roy Hay** – Tarmac, Solihull
- **David Hillman** – Sir Robert McAlpine, Birmingham
- **Keith Horner** – Ballast, Wiltshire
- **Dianne Hughes** – Tarmac/Crown House, Solihull
- **Geoff Hughes** – Costain, Berkshire
- **Greg Ingleton** – Emcor, Twickenham
- **Prue Jackson** – Haden Young, Watford
- **Vince James** – Balfour Beatty Scottish & Southern, Hampshire
- **Armar Johnston** – Balfour Kilpatrick, Livingstone
- **Liz Keates** – Carillion/Crown House, Wolverhampton
- **Sheila Knight** – Emcor, Twickenham
- **Ian Leake** – Taylor Woodrow, Watford
- **Tim Llewellyn** – Walter Llewellyn & Sons Ltd, East Sussex
- **Alf Lucas** – Mowlem
- **Bridget May** – Nuttall, Surrey
- **Cullum McAlpine** – Sir Robert McAlpine, Hertfordshire
- **Paul McCreath** – HBG Construction (BAM), London
- **Steve McGuire** – Morgan Est plc, Warrington
- **John Morrison** – Morrison Construction, Edinburgh
- **Arnold Nestler** – AMEC, Cheshire
- **Lisa O'Mahoney** – Laing O'Rourke, Kent
- **Danny O'Sullivan** – Kier Group, Bedfordshire
- **Sandy Palmer** – Carillion/Crown House, Wolverhampton
- **Harry Pooley** – Rosser & Russell, Watford
- **Derek Price** – Morgan Ashurst, Stratford upon Avon
- **Stephen Quant** – Skanska, Hertfordshire
- **Paul Raby** – Balfour Kilpatrick, Glasgow
- **Murray Reid** – NG Bailey, West Yorkshire
- **Roger Robinson** – Carillion/Crown House, Wolverhampton
- **Sylvia Smith** – Laing O'Rourke, Kent
- **Trevor Spice** – Costain, Berkshire
- **Lisa Stevenson** – Shepherd Engineering Services, York
- **John Stoddart** – SIAS Building Services, Keighley
- **Alan Swift** – Crown House Technologies, Manchester
- **Pat Swift** – BAM Nuttall, Guildford
- **Alan Thorniley** – Vinci, Watford
- **Brian Tock** – Carillion/Crown House, Solihull
- **Ken Ward** – Costain, Berkshire
- **Trevor Watchman** – Balfour Beatty Major Projects, Surrey
- **Steve Wigmore** – Crown House Technologies, Solihull
- **Allison Wilkins** – Skanska, Hertfordshire
- **Carolyn Williams** – Haden Young, Watford



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Comment – Midway Point

In Scotland, we are now approaching the halfway mark in a journey that will determine its political settlement for some years to come. The starting point was the referendum on 18 September 2014, the midway point is the general election on

May 7 this year and the final point is the election of the new Scottish Parliament on 5 May 2016.

After 5 May 2016, we will be in a reasonable place to judge how society and politics in Scotland will evolve, what values will

guide this evolution and how relations will develop with England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

It will be evolution and not revolution not least because the left in Scotland – inside and outside of Labour and the SNP – has much ground to make up just to get back to where it used to be – and that was not a position of commanding authority. This, of course, would be an advance but it will still leave the left in a pretty lamentable state if it wants to be a contender. Lowering our short-term expectations (but not long-term aspirations) will be important as we set out on another journey of many miles by taking just a few small steps forward.

That said, one thing seems very much more certain. This is that the mainstream parties of Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats will continue to be beholden to neo-liberal ideology no matter what the voters say on May 7. Political disillusionment with them will continue apace but this will still mean millions will vote for them. The main beneficiaries of the political disillusionment with these three parties will be the likes of the SNP and UKIP. Sooner or later, the hopes placed in them will be disavowed as their ideologies are but mere variants of neo-liberalism.

Will there be a revolt within the SNP against this social liberalism

In the case of the SNP, it's called social liberalism. The essence of social liberalism is to grow the capitalist economy so that it can provide more employment and more tax receipts in order that living standards can be improved directly (through more in work) and indirectly (through the welfare state). The obvious problems faced here are weak economic growth for the moment and for the foreseeable future, continuing government austerity and the power of capital to make governments bend to their will. Nicola Sturgeon's change of SNP policy on cutting corporation tax – from being blanket to being more selective and targeted – does not change this.

Moreover, there are growing concerns about the SNP government's tendencies towards centralisation so that the democratic part of any alleged social *democracy* is also being

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called into question. It appears not only is managerialism taking over but internal enhanced devolution is not on the cards either.

Will there be a revolt within the SNP against this social liberalism from those on the left that have recently joined? Will the revolt be to leave and establish a new left party; will it be to fight to change the SNP from within; or will it be to walk away from politics altogether? There's room for all three but the critical factor will be which response is the major one.

Meanwhile, the debt deferment deal signed by Syriza has occasioned internal and external revolt. Within Syriza, 41% of its Central Committee opposed the deal while the Greek Communist Party (KKE) has mobilised against the deal. Whether the deal represents the buying of time or a catastrophic setback remains to be seen.

But what is clear is that if the radical left was much stronger in Europe – especially in Germany – the terms Syriza has agreed to could have been much better. Die Linke is not an insignificant force now in German politics but only three of its MPs voted against supporting the terms of the deal Syriza chose – or was forced – to accept.

Turning back to Scotland, the populist and opportunistic left-leaning pronouncements

of Jim Murphy have become ever more noticeable. Of course, there is his credibility problem in making them because of his thoroughly Blairite past. But what is more concerning is that sense of promising the earth this side of 7 May with the prospect that the ruse of being in opposition allows just about anything to be said – when, of course, being in government means he would then have to get 'serious'. One cannot imagine Jim Murphy standing up to Miliband when the prospect of ministerial office hung in the balance.

It is a measure of the poor quality of Scotland's media that his pronouncements are so very much taken at face value and reported as he wishes – see the hullabaloo around his supposed 'Clause 4' moment with his insertion of the words 'patriotic interest' into the Scottish Labour constitution.

In the articles that follow concerning the general election, different appeals to the constituency of left, radical and progressive views are made. The appeals are made not just by political parties (important though they are). With only 33% of 18-24 year olds voting in 2010, the argument Terri Smith makes is very important.

This is very much the role that the *Scottish Left Review* sees for itself – broad and

pluralist without being too broad and too pluralist, and informative and provocative yet always constructive. Differences will be detected not only between the options offered but also compared to this editorial. Free and independent thinking that arrives at left conclusions is what we encourage and hope we help achieve.

The other articles in this issue mainly concern the union movement in Scotland given that the STUC meets for its annual congress in late April – not long before the general election. It is very unlikely that there will be a repeat of the attempt by the STUC general council to make a call for union members to vote Labour for such has been the change in the tectonic plates of Scottish politics since 2007. Another indication of the changed political mood is the demand for industrial and economic democracy is being made more seriously than for a long time because unions understand - no matter which party is in office - they need full rights and powers.

Finally, in recognition of International Women's Day on 8 March, we have two articles examining not just the challenges women face but ways to resolve these. And, in our next issue (May/June 2015), we will dissect the election outcome and analyse what it means for the left.

Vote left - vote Labour

Kenny Selbie argues Labour can make the difference that is needed

This article presents the case for the Labour left and why it is important to vote for Labour, with a focus on policy and the current political circumstances within which those policies are placed. It's not about my candidacy or campaign. It considers wider policy commitments from Labour – but the selection decision by local Labour members is a legitimate part of the wider context I will address.

I come from a working class family, rooted in the working and cultural traditions of the mining communities of Fife. A grassroots activist for Labour all of my adult life, I have no background of privilege and have had to work hard to get on. Like so many families across the country, we were substantially impacted upon by economic policy and circumstances of recent years. The fallout of the run on Northern Rock put our home into negative equity and left us abandoned by mortgage providers.

The rising cost of living hit our household hard, with a fixed income, a young family

and as a public sector worker; our household faced a freeze on wages at the same time as a reduction in our eligibility for tax credits. Yet my family consider itself lucky. We are in work, can afford to get by and, unlike so many other families, do not have to rely on food banks or have to constantly face the choice of paying the heating bill or the pay day lender.

Through my professional and political life, I have witnessed first-hand the impact of Tory austerity on families on low wages or without work, the disproportionate impact of cuts on women and people with disabilities – and as a local councillor, I have had the privilege, but also faced the significant challenge, of working to support people through these times.

My selection as a parliamentary candidate is, I believe, a positive vote in favour of working class representation, highlighting a broader sense within the wider labour movement of a need to once again ensure that politics in general, but Labour

in particular, is representative of and connected to the realities of life in our communities. This in itself is a positive step forward for Labour and for working class influence.

There is no doubt that for a variety of reasons, ranging from the impact of the referendum to the way the Party is structured and how it should be led, that the past year has been one of the most turbulent in the Scottish Labour's history. While the challenge faced is clear and present, I firmly believe that the current political climate offers us a once in a generation opportunity to re-engage with our communities about the change we want to see in Scotland, Britain, Europe and the world.

The reawakening of citizenship and political activism across Scotland over the past eighteen months has been exciting and positive for democracy. We must maintain that momentum and work hard to once again reignite the hope of change for a better future through a progressive policy

offer from both Labour and the wider labour movement. I am proud of and committed to maintaining the Labour-union link. The unions were integral to founding Labour and I believe firmly their role is as critical to Labour's future as it has been to its past.

Labour's existing policy framework for government provides a number of important levers to help enable this vision of a better future. The introduction of a lower ten pence starting rate of tax, the commitment to implement a mansion tax, a bankers bonus tax and re-introducing the fifty pence top rate of tax will start to bring about a clear progressive shift in the balance of economic power away from private interests and super-rich individuals, and towards the vast majority of people in our communities.

The commitment made in Scotland to fund 1,000 new nursing posts for Scotland's NHS via the mansion tax is a clear example that we are serious about pulling and sharing resources to where it is needed most and to focus on priorities which will help to achieve social justice and investment in public services.

Labour's commitment to an energy price cap holds firm as a key pledge despite the recent shift in wholesale energy prices globally – the current savings for energy companies continue not to be passed to consumers and yet we see scandalous rises in profits and salaries within the biggest energy firms.



the Labour candidate

Labour's plan will offer protection to some of the most vulnerable individuals in our community. It's plans to allow a state-owned train operator to bid for rail operator franchises is an important intervention in a key part of our transport infrastructure which is vital to economic and social development.

I have witnessed first-hand the impact of Tory austerity on families on low wages or without work

Labour will also scrap the bedroom tax and put a stop to any Tory moves to further attack and demonise working people who need time, help and support – not benefit sanctions whether due to drug and alcohol issues or obesity. By cutting back on tax relief for the highest pensions, Labour will fund a guaranteed youth job scheme within which those who can work will be offered support and opportunity. Ending of the brutal Tory sanctions regime with the introduction of the youth job guarantee will offer confidence that Labour is committed to full employment while at the same time offering the right support and social security protection to those who need it.

While Labour can and should be bolder on a minimum wage, the commitment to raise it to £8 per hour alongside the campaign for a Living Wage over the course of the next parliamentary term is positive. Plans to end exploitative zero hours contracts, support union backed proposals on health and safety, and scrap the Tory imposed fees on Employment Tribunals are further important commitments to begin to create fairness again in the workplace.

Labour will implement a range of specific measures to deal with tax avoidance which will include a combination of legislative and process changes to bring about more rigorous enforcement and penalties for both businesses and individuals. Revelations on the scale of tax dodging are shameful but unfortunately not surprising. Dealing effectively with tax avoidance and evasion is critical to creating a fairer country, given that the £34bn in unpaid tax could single handedly wipe out the Tories public plans for £30bn of further austerity cuts beyond 2015.

The election's outcome will have far reaching implications for devolution in Scotland. Labour is committed to implementing the Smith Commission recommendations in full which will enhance the powers of the Scottish Parliament, bringing £3bn of welfare powers to Scotland for the first time.

Further commitments to enable Scotland to top up reserved welfare areas such as child benefit and state pension, and devolving housing benefit will provide Scotland with additional tools and flexibility to promote equality and social justice. It is important also to recognise Labour's commitment to 'double devolution' ensuring local government once again will have more levers of control and democracy at its disposal so that councils can take decisions at a local level which suit local circumstances.

As the party of working people, Labour can and should go further in government. After five years of austerity with dogmatic attacks on the welfare system, huge cuts to public sector funding, and tax cuts for the richest, it is our responsibility to do everything in our power to be on the side of the many not the few. Despite all the Tory rhetoric, public sector debt has increased, economic and social inequality has risen to scandalous levels, and executive pay has soared at an ever faster rate while the vast majority of workers have faced pay freezes and cuts.

Frequent warnings about failing to invest in public services and infrastructure during the recession to stimulate economic growth were not heeded, and we are now seeing the inevitable outcome of this approach – slower than anticipated economic recovery in spite of, not because of, Government economic strategy and an economy which is balanced in favour of the elite minority, not the working majority. Britain is a rich country. Labour must focus its efforts in government on harnessing and redistributing that wealth and power to communities, and to protect and improve our vital public services.

By tackling tax dodging, re-balancing tax in favour of workers and investing in public infrastructure to grow the economy, there is a path out of the current depression of austerity so we can create a fairer and more equal society, offering hope and a vision of positive change for working people.

Kenny Selbie is the Scottish Labour Party candidate for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath. He is an Equalities Policy Officer in local government and a Labour councillor in Kirkcaldy.

Ending Tweedledee and Tweedledum

Tommy Sheppard calls for strategic socialist support for the SNP

Labour might do okay in some wealthier areas of Scotland as it picks up some who voted LibDem or Tory last time. But its vote in working class areas is plummeting and amongst the definition of social classes C2, D and E, it's toast. The move is more than a swing – it's a structural shift of political allegiance. As a result supporting Labour is fast becoming a pastime for the liberal middle classes.

Why is this happening and is it a development socialists should welcome? Views are changing as disenchantment with the current political set-up combines with a realisation that they can do something to change it. This is what happens when alienation and self-confidence collide. Of course, just because political developments are supported by the working class doesn't of itself make them a good thing. So let's look at whether this is a progressive force in society – one likely to enhance tolerance, fairness and equality.

Let's begin with what it is not. It is not about identity. Jim Murphy and his ilk spraffing on about patriotism – whatever that is – misses many points. Sure, people will take pride in their country, but the Yes campaign in last year's referendum wasn't about flags and anthems - it was about empowerment and opportunity. People sensed the chance to take control of their own lives and it tasted good. It's been said before, but it's so true - you cannot put that energy back in the bottle.

That ambition is not assuaged by waving the saltire or singing *Flower of Scotland*. This is a deeper feeling, and Labour's failure to *feel* it, never mind understand it, is why it is floundering now. The SNP itself is still coming to terms with the legacy of the referendum. You can't quadruple your membership and not expect things to change. The change is coming slowly but already its character is clear – the move is towards a party which is younger, more female and very much more radical.

There are four main reasons why anyone who calls themselves a socialist should line up behind the SNP on 7 May. For starters, the SNP is the only major party at this election offering an alternative to the austerity economics practiced by the Coalition and promised - albeit in lesser measure - by Labour. The main Westminster parties are determined to eliminate the deficit by curbing public spending. But

deficits arise through not having enough income as much as spending too much. And service cuts lead to even less income and often more spending in other areas. In short, you cannot cut your way out of a recession.

The SNP proposes a real term increase in public spending of half a percent a year. It doesn't sound much but the effect over five years would be to deliver £180bn more than the published spending plans of the Conservatives and about £80bn more than Labour. Not only would it provide the things we as a society need, but the spending will of itself generate growth leading to increased tax incomes. Keynesian thinking is alive and well at the heart of SNP policy – and yet it has been all but extinguished in Labour.

Second, the SNP retains a universalist approach to public services and welfare whereas the Tories and Labour regard them to varying degree as safety nets to mop up the worst effects of the market. I remember Tony Benn saying that public services are the way in which people can buy collectively the things that they cannot afford individually – so everyone gets to own a bit of a hospital, a school, a bus. This underpins SNP thinking from school meals, to tuition fees, to personal care for the elderly.

Critics who argue that these policies benefit the middle classes too and should be restricted through means testing to the poorest in society miss the point. Socialism isn't about unequal shares; it's about people contributing according to their ability to pay. The wealthy should pay more through higher taxation. But keeping services universal means everyone can see some benefit from their contributions. If everyone gets something back support for collective provision is higher. Residualizing public services fuels resentment at their funding. It leads to a vicious downward spiral creating political support for tax cuts and privatisation.

Public services should be there for everyone. Not just in the field of health and education. Everyone should want to travel by public transport because it is cheaper, faster and more convenient than taking the car. We should strive to make rented public housing so good that it becomes the natural choice for young professional couples rather than the shelter of last resort.



the SNP candidate

Third, the SNP advance opens up the prospect of nuclear disarmament for the first time in all of our lives. Cancellation of the Trident replacement programme and the switch of the three or four billion pounds a year it will cost to health and education would be a momentous victory for the left.

This is not a pipe dream. In a hung parliament, movement on Trident will be the price of SNP support for a minority Labour government. And with surveys showing that three quarters of Labour's election candidates support the move it will be very much on the cards. There are forces within the MoD who will welcome the move as it will relieve the pressure on conventional armed forces and even the Americans are unlikely to too be alarmed at the eventual loss of a system which contributes just two percent to NATO's capability. This actually could happen.

But it will absolutely not happen if either Tory or Labour parties form a majority government.

And finally, there's home rule. This election is not about independence, although the results may advance the conditions in which that question can be asked again. But it is about how much power the Scottish government should have. The equation is blindingly simple – the more votes the SNP get, the more powers the Scottish government gets.

Crucially for socialists, we seek the power to intervene and manage the Scottish economy for the benefit of the people who live here. Powers that will allow us to increase minimum wages, scrap the bedroom tax, change tax allowances, clamp down on tax evasion, and borrow to invest in our infrastructure. We seek the competence to make these changes here even if they are not shared by the good people of the Home Counties.

There are, of course, a few Neanderthals who will argue that this is not progressive because we can somehow only operate within an eighteenth century polity that can never be altered. Most, though, would accept that such economic democracy would be a good thing. And, as with

independence, our aim is not to set ourselves apart from the people of Britain, but to set them an example. Let England follow where Scotland leads.

By any measure, the SNP offers a social democratic prospectus to the people of Scotland. Against this, Labour has only one defence. They will cry that a vote for the SNP will increase the chances of a Tory government. This is beyond glib: not only facile and shallow, the argument is false.

The truth is this. It is not the largest party, but the one which can command a majority in the House of Commons that gets to form a government. When all the constitutional protocols are exhausted one of two things will happen. Either there will be a government looking rightwards built around the Tory party – or a government looking leftwards built around the Labour party.

Despite what Lewis Moonie and Gisela Stuart may think, there really is no other option. SNP MPs will never put a Tory government in power. So, whether an SNP or Labour member is elected in a particular Scottish seat has no bearing on whether the Tories succeed in forming a government.

There is currently one Tory member of the Westminster parliament in Scotland. After

the election there will be one or none. Scots voters have pretty much zero impact on the size of the Tory group in the UK parliament: we can only wipe them out once.

Voting SNP doesn't get Tories elected. Here's what it does do. It obliges the Labour party to consult and agree a programme for government with smaller parties like the SNP. This is actually good news for Labour voters. Why? Because by any conceivable outcome, the price of such support will drag Labour away from the neo-con orthodoxy in which it and the rest of the British establishment is steeped.

That's why socialists should vote SNP at this election. The alternative is to give Ed Miliband *carte blanche* to spend five years playing at Tory-lite. And whilst he does that, we can watch Scotland and the concerns of its inhabitants slide towards the bottom of the UK agenda.

Tommy Sheppard is SNP prospective parliamentary candidate for Edinburgh East. His website is <http://www.tommysheppard.com/>. He was a member of the Labour Party for 21 years (including eight as a councillor and three as Assistant General Secretary of the Scottish Labour Party), joining the SNP in late 2014. He is also a member of the Scottish Left Review editorial board.

Adding red to the green

Patrick Harvie shows Green policies tackle much more than environmental degradation

Yanis Varoufakis, Greece's new finance minister and a leading figure in Syriza, showed his cultural chops during a *Today* interview by quoting the poet, Dylan Thomas. He said Greece would not go gentle into the night and would instead rage against the dying of the light. That sort of feisty, principled attitude will be crucial in the coming weeks as those of us on the left advance our arguments for ending austerity and attempt to expose a political system designed to ensure politicians kowtow to big business and wealthy individuals.

I'm reminded of Edwin Morgan's poem for the opening of the Holyrood parliament: 'A nest of fearties is what they do not want' he said of voters. There's no doubt the electorate across Britain is tired of the bland Westminster consensus, and parties such as the Greens are in a better position than ever to take it on.

There's a big chance for progressives not just to rage but to exercise substantial influence. My party will stand in the majority of Scotland's 59 Westminster constituencies - more than ever before

- with a high proportion of women and young people among our candidates. With our biggest slate of candidates, Scots will have an unrivalled opportunity to vote for the bold and positive politics that only Greens represent. We're a decentralised party so the decision to stand has been down to individual branches and members. By contrast, we see Labour continuing to use a top-down committee structure to draw up shortlists.

Our membership has surged to almost 9,000 with one in ten of them ex-Labour members. We've seen a steady rise in the polls; we're regularly ahead of the LibDems across Britain, and when we consider the variations within local constituencies we know that there are some seats, such as Bristol West and Norwich South, where the bookies are increasingly expecting Greens wins. In others, such as Glasgow North and Edinburgh East, we can break old party traditions and create genuinely exciting marginals.

We also know we poll well among young voters. Almost of a quarter of 18-34

year olds intend to vote for the Scottish Greens. And, while other parties are tying themselves in knots with messages about the sort of tactical voting that represents the politics of old, our candidates are out and about engaging with voters on our ideas for protecting public services, reforming democracy and tackling inequality.

Hot on the heels of the referendum, this election has clear implications for devolution. The Scottish Greens engaged as positively and constructively as we could with the Smith Commission. The pace of agreement was frankly daft, and anyone who thinks we got a robust or durable settlement is kidding themselves. We've now seen the draft clauses, which are basically the main points of the Smith agreement converted into potential chunks of legislation.

Whoever ends up in government after 7 May will be playing with fire if they try to water down the legislation, but it will have to be made workable. Labour has made itself something of a laughing stock with their varying offers on devolution. First

it was 'Devo Max', then the 'Vow', then Home Rule, and finally (I say finally but I'm not optimistic) the 'Vow Plus'.

Given that Labour's heels were dug in deeper than anyone else's, it's pretty astonishing to see it try to take credit for devolution in areas like employment and welfare. These were exactly the areas where it had to be dragged kicking and screaming. Indeed, the union movement seemed dismayed at this position. Greens would give exploited employees the legal right to buy out their companies and turn them into workers' co-operatives and we'd encourage employee involvement in management, product development and innovation. We would also introduce laws to limit the size of CEO pay relative to the lowest paid workers in the company. Voters who see workplace democracy as a priority should aim for more Green voices at Westminster to drive home the importance of these issues.

As for the assertion that more SNP MPs guarantees the best deal - it's a neat bumper sticker but let's not forget the baggage that comes with that party like a tendency toward Laffer curve tax policies, willingness to work with tax exiles, further tax breaks for the highly profitable aviation sector, support for the NATO nuclear alliance, support in principle for the TTIP corporate trade deal, support for maximum fossil fuel extraction and the door left ajar to fracking. Let's not forget that the strength of the

Yes campaign was the range of voices that could be heard. Those now urging tactical voting are retreating to the politics of old, the kind of politics we worked so hard to challenge. Huge numbers of people who voted last September have been ignoring elections for many years and it's essential that we continue to encourage them to stay involved.

Telling people to vote X to keep out Y or vote Z to avoid 'splitting the vote' simply risks making many retreat, seeing politics as an unchanged, negative business. Instead, the principles and ideas a political party stands for should come first. My fellow Green parliamentarian, Caroline Lucas, has shown that even a small party can make the breakthrough when it is clear, committed and hardworking. Her track record as an MP, promoting public services and standing up against fracking, has proved the only wasted vote is a vote for something you don't really believe in. Voters clearly want to hear a range of voices. Just look at how broadcasters changed their tune in recognition of that demand.

We can also see with the mobilisation of public protests against fracking and growing concern at deals such as TTIP, there's a desire for social, economic and environmental progress in Scotland. We can build on that desire by focusing on the possibilities rather than engaging in the divisive language of Westminster, pitting 'hardworking families' against 'scroungers'.

The battle in our society is inequality. Greens address this by a £10 minimum wage to reduce in-work poverty, a citizen's income, public ownership of rail to provide good quality transport for all, and taxes on land and wealth to ensure those who can afford to pay a fairer share do so.

By emphasising that unique stance, we have a chance to harness the enthusiasm built up during the referendum. So much of British politics is mimicry, with two big parties being as bland as possible to appeal to the middle-ground. It seems that whenever the Tories criticise Labour's alleged spending commitments, Labour spinners go into overdrive issuing denials and proud boasts of their own plans to cut public services.

On austerity, the LibDems have been cheerleaders for

the Tories' determination to punish the most vulnerable people in society for the failures of banking and big business. All the while Labour has proved an ineffective opposition and signed up to Osborne's ridiculous budget charter, which commits to public spending cuts. Greens would introduce a wealth tax on the richest 1%, raising billions, and crack down on tax evasion and avoidance to bring in further revenues to invest in new jobs, good wages and public services. We'd prioritise equal pay for women, a fundamental issue that successive Westminster governments have failed to tackle.

By offering a £10 an hour minimum wage by 2020, we show how Labour's current offer of £8 an hour would still leave millions working in poverty, with the public purse continuing to subsidise low pay.

On jobs, we urgently need more Green voices in parliament to make an economy that respects the environment. By expanding industries such as food and drink, chemical sciences, digital technology, construction and engineering, we can ensure a successful and sustainable jobs market. And, by refocusing our oil and gas sector towards decommissioning and investing in skills transfers towards renewables, we can capture the clear opportunity that exists to excel in the clean technology that can bring us lasting prosperity.

By renationalising the railways, we'd show market failure won't be tolerated and public services – for that is what mass transport is – must be cherished rather than 'marketised'. Despite this policy's huge popularity, Labour simply can't bring itself to adopt it. And as for popular policies, we know that when people are asked to say how they would vote on policies only, like at the voteforpolicies.org.uk website, it's the Green agenda which ends up on top.

On democratic reform, thanks to the LibDems' botched AV referendum, it may take some persuading to get people to back a move to proportional representation in elections but, of course, we've lived with a couple of PR systems in Scotland for some time. If we see a surge in votes for the Greens but that then not translating into new MPs we can build the case for PR at Westminster. It's telling that neither of the two big parties is interested. They're clearly happy to take it in turn to undo the other's work. It's a cosy arrangement and the best way we can break it wide open is to vote for what we believe in.

Patrick Harvie MSP is the co-convenor of the Scottish Green Party



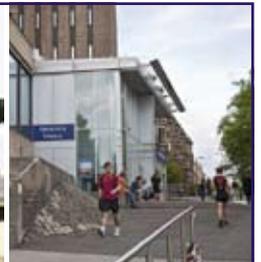


CWU Scotland welcomes all delegates and visitors to STUC Conference 2015 in Ayr.

We wish everyone a successful and enjoyable conference.

John Brown
Regional Secretary Scotland

Pauline Rourke
Regional Chair Scotland



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For offshore safety
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Aiming to be Scotland's socialist party

Sandra Webster writes of a rejuvenated SSP planning to put socialism back on the agenda

After the referendum, the SSP - like other parties of the 'yes' campaign - had a huge surge in applications for membership. We can now begin to rebuild our party and offer an alternative socialist agenda to that of other parties. Scotland has changed and demands a different kind of politics. We in the SSP can offer this and continue to support the radical left in gaining credence with the electorate again. The radical left is changing too and we must be a part of that. During the referendum, the SSP was the party which campaigned for a different Scotland. For us, independence is the initial step by which to create a socialist society. Alongside other groups like the Radical Independence Campaign and Women for Independence, we took the message into the communities we live in. The referendum changed our party - many of our activists got involved in public speaking and campaigning, growing with confidence.

We worked alongside other political parties, especially the SNP. We shared the goal of independence but our vision of that independence was different. Post-referendum, we called for a 'yes' alliance for the general election but it was evident that their construct of an alliance differed from ours. For the confident, vastly enlarged SNP, this meant no other candidates standing against them. It might offer some non-SNP members seats but they must then accept the party whip. This was a lost opportunity to transform the face of Scottish politics from the current 'two tribes' model to one with more plurality and consensus. At a local level, many SNP branches had already announced they were seeking candidates.

Our decision to stand was, therefore, not an easy one. We knew we could be accused of splitting the 'yes' vote. However, we decided to stand four candidates in traditional Labour seats. In two of these seats, Glasgow North East and Paisley and Renfrewshire South (the others being Glasgow South West and Edinburgh South), Labour had actually increased its majorities at the last general elections. All of the seats are in working class areas, where austerity is biting hard.

All the MPs in those areas voted with the government to continue austerity. Some of these MPs, like many in Scottish Labour, are out of touch with their constituents. These are generational safe Labour seats where you vote for Labour because your parents and grandparents did. For many including myself with some sadness, Labour is no longer the party of the working class but we as the SSP with our vision can remind them of the party they used to be.

This election is being seen as a two horse race. One message is 'Vote Labour as a vote for anyone else is a vote for David Cameron'. Another is 'Vote SNP because we alone can support Scotland's interests in Westminster'. We in the SSP say vote for us and other radical left parties who dare to be different if you want a different society.

The blitzkrieg attack on the poor and most vulnerable has had a huge impact on many in our communities. SSP members are not poverty tourists and many of us know hardship from personal experience. Our policy pledges will be ones that tackle inequality. The SNP, some Greens and, indeed, some Labour activists do not use the word 'socialism' instead using 'social justice'. We are not ashamed of being socialists or of our socialist vision. Our main policies centre round the eradication of poverty. We want a living wage of £10 an hour now. We condemn the use of benefit sanctions which cause absolute poverty in one of the richest countries in the world. We will end the misuse of zero hour contracts which lead to uncertainty for many workers. We will end the care tax which means many people with disabilities have to pay from their disability payments to allow them to receive self-directed support. We also believe that that Trident and its replacement should be scrapped. The billions being spent could be used on our people. Our full manifesto will be published soon with our full range of policies all designed to create a more equal society. These are pledges which can change individual lives and society for the better.

The first-past-the-post system does not suit a smaller party like us. The SNP claims to be left of Labour and it is likely that many voters will vote tactically. It is a Westminster centric election with voters fearing the impact of another five years of Tory rule. It is important to note though that neither Labour nor Tory rule have ever ended in child poverty. These elections are important for us as we continue to grow and regain a foothold in Scottish politics. For the past year, we have been active in our communities. That will be our strategy in the election showing we are neighbours in the constituencies we stand in. All of our candidates are local people and know the people whose vote they will be asking for. Our strategy will be to continue to build relationships and show we are still here after the election.

Many of our activists are amazing, vibrant young people who will definitely play a part in the future of Scottish politics. This election campaign will give them the much needed

experience they will require in the future. Most importantly, we will demonstrate that we are not the type of party who drops in at election time and are never to be seen again. We will continue to reach out to people in their communities demonstrating the radical left has something to offer them.

These elections are only the beginning. With the Holyrood elections in 2016 and the local elections in 2017, we feel a responsibility to the left to begin the spadework for gaining left representation and to share with the electorate that socialist policies are not unachievable but an alternative to austerity.

The SSP feels the burden of standing. We feel the responsibility in ensuring that radical left parties will be elected in the 2016 and 2017 elections. It is our responsibility to make those policies understandable and tangible for our electorate. We also need to stand to show an alternative to austerity and offer a programme that can transform society.

We believe in independence but this is just the beginning for us. We offer a manifesto that is left of the Scottish Greens, the SNP and Labour. That is why we need to stand to demonstrate what socialism means. Our vision of an independent Scotland is not a mind dream but a realistic vision.

We look forward to knocking on doors and speaking at hustings, challenging other parties' ideologies. We also look forward to the challenges of the political landscape post-election, ensuring SSP candidates are prepared and experienced for the elections that follow. The emerging picture looks like that of an SNP victory. The '45' may have now become the majority. If the SNP win as many seats as is predicted there may be the potential for a sooner rather than later call for another referendum. How the SNP as such a broad church performs in Westminster will be closely monitored.

We on the left know that there are many other parties that should make up a vibrant left in Scotland. It is important we all do and that all our voices are heard. In two years, with the Smith Commission proposals being implemented, we need to be there to shape policy and challenge the opinion of the party which holds power. Only we on the left can stand up for ordinary people and not the interests of big business. The spirit of the 'yes' campaign meant many of us worked together towards a common goal. We need to remind ourselves of this in the months and years ahead.

Sandra Webster is the SSP candidate for Paisley and Renfrewshire South. She is also the co-national spokesperson for the SSP

Laying down a socialist challenge

Brian Smith argues only total opposition to austerity and neo-liberalism will do

The Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (STUSC) is supported by the RMT union, Socialist Party Scotland, Socialist Workers' Party, individual socialists, trade unionists and anti-austerity campaigners. TUSC was co-founded in 2010 by the late Bob Crow.

We are standing in ten seats in Scotland. TUSC in England and Wales is standing in 110 seats. Together we will make a strong case for no cuts to our public services and welfare benefits, and for a reversal of the poverty people in work are being driven into through real wage cuts and part time, temporary employment.

The Scottish TUSC believes politicians should stand on the side of the 99% by refusing to implement the austerity plans of the main parties. Our campaign aims are to put the arguments for democratic socialism to as many people as possible, increase the numbers involved in socialist and anti-austerity activities, begin to lay the ground for a socialist challenge at the 2016 Scottish Parliament Election and 2017 Council Elections and, of course, win as many votes as we can on 7 May.

There will be no constituency clashes between the Scottish TUSC and other socialist candidates on 7 May. The organisations which are part of Scottish TUSC campaigned for a 'yes' vote in the referendum, and we will be arguing for the maximum devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament including on minimum wage, all welfare benefits, pensions, employment law, corporation tax and the power to bring into public ownership key parts of the economy.

Our public services are under attack as never before. In the last five years, we have seen 24% cuts in local council spending in Scotland and the loss of 50,000 jobs.

These cuts have been meekly passed on by both Labour and SNP controlled councils. The SNP Scottish Government has slashed college places and our NHS is under increasing pressure to cut costs which is impacting upon the levels and quality of care that frontline health service workers can provide.

There is, of course, plenty of wealth around – it is just in the wrong hands. We should, therefore, massively increase tax on the super-rich. We should bring into public ownership the energy companies, North Sea oil and gas, the big drug companies and the banks.

These massive resources should then be used to create decent jobs for our young people, better health and social care services and an environmentally sustainable economy. Education should be free for all, with no-one having to miss out because of the fear of debt or student poverty. We should use the wealth in our society to tackle the root causes of racism and other forms of discrimination by providing secure jobs, good wages and affordable housing.

Whilst no two countries are ever the same, we only have to look at the events in Greece to see that a radical, left wing electoral force can be built from small beginnings. The interests of the 99% in Scotland need a new political voice - a new working class party which represents us and not the super-rich elite who are getting richer whilst most struggle to get by on lower wages or inadequate welfare benefits. Scottish TUSC intends to play an important part in building that new party.

Labour and the SNP are not the answer as they are both wedded to the current capitalist system and the inevitable austerity that accompanies it. We need to get rid of free market capitalism and build a society based on democratic public ownership of the economy and human co-operation not profit-making and exploitation. Let's not wait any longer.

Brian Smith is the Scottish TUSC candidate in the Glasgow South constituency and UNISON City of Glasgow branch secretary. He writes in a formal capacity for STUSC and in a personal capacity regarding UNISON. See www.tusc.org.uk for details of the seats TUSC is standing in Scotland.

No More Guy Fa

Peter Lomas makes the case for radical

At some point last autumn, Alex Salmond hinted at the possibility of the SNP winning all Scottish seats on 7 May - panache or desperation? What the SNP leader imagined, in that enticing fantasy, was a Scottish UDI - certainly, a quicker route to independence than a second referendum.

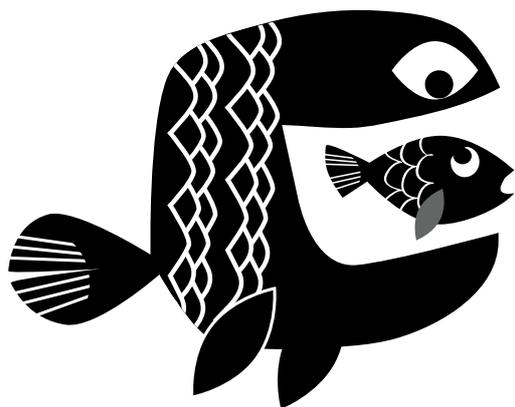
The SNP under its revised, post-referendum leadership, however, has been operating under a more modest strategy, one of pragmatic engagement with Westminster, based on projections which would give the party only half, or fewer, of Scottish seats. This seems to me a stopgap policy: holding the UK parties to their promises to Scotland while giving Alex Salmond something to do, once he has (presumably) won a Westminster seat himself. It is a strategy for the post-referendum lull, and for the year-long gap before the Holyrood elections of 2016 which are the SNP's direct concern.

But what use are these half-measures for hypothetical futures which may or may not come about? How do they reflect the changed atmosphere in Scotland post-referendum? Very little, I would answer in either case. Besides, we have been here before: a rootless SNP, under a charismatic leader at Westminster, undermining politics where it counts, at home in Scotland.

What we need instead is a set of fully constructive ideas transcending the short-term needs of party politics, and restating independence as a concrete prospect in Scotland - the great, abiding achievement of the referendum campaign. With this aim in mind, I have three proposals.

First is a policy of no pacts at Westminster: a principled strategy of voting issue by issue on UK-wide legislation - or not voting, as the case may be. No more trouble-making in London; instead, preparation for full withdrawal from the degraded UK political process. This is still a proposal for the SNP, since the SNP is effectively the only party representing independence for Scotland.

But the challenge spreads wider. There is a problem of identity for the SNP, partly owing to its new swollen membership; more deeply, because of the underlying question left unanswered by the referendum result: what would happen to the party if it were to succeed in its fundamental aims? What kind of social vision would there be for the first independence years if it was to dissolve



Awkes: Scottish politics after 7 May

al withdrawal from UK plc

itself (which still seems to be official policy), or mutate into a party of total government?

So far only a vague 'social-democratic' aura surrounds either of these possibilities. But it seems to me that post-1997, and certainly post-2011, Scotland and the rest of Britain have been moving so far apart in terms of laws passed (and radical change frustrated) that there is very little constructive for an SNP plenipotentiary at Westminster to do. Even blocking the upgrading of Trident would not remove the missiles from the Clyde. Opposing further NHS privatisation in England would not guarantee resources to copper-bottom public ownership of the NHS in Scotland.

Here, I'm assuming the UK parties will carry through on increased powers for Holyrood promised in the Smith Commission - recognising that any other action would be counter-productive for them (like widespread calls for another referendum). But in general, I think a parliament where the political tone is dictated by staving off UKIP (Conservatives), 'resetting markets' (Labour), or preserving minority hold onto power (Liberals) is unworthy of serious attention. Surely in Scotland, we have gone beyond this kind of politicking around an outdated system, in an austerity coalition which punishes the people for the sins of elites.

Second, as a nation we should prepare to take institutional and social reform fully into our own hands, through further debate of our ideal independent Scotland. We should continue and refine the process begun at grassroots level in the referendum campaign. This would cover at a minimum: the final form of the Holyrood parliament and the electoral system; demographic planning, decentralisation and infrastructural development to make all parts of our country equally inhabitable and economically-viable; EU policy, especially on the future of the EU's own institutions; foreign policy, especially development aid; and the structure of industry and land-ownership.

Here are just three suggestions at random: i) formalise the Holyrood parliament as our highest constitutional body *tout court*, ruling out any 'revising' chamber or constitutional monarchy while retaining fixed-term parliaments. There can be no second-guessing of the people by unelected elites. 'We the people' are the only recall

mechanism. This works perfectly in Sweden, where the monarchy has even less of a constitutional role than in Britain, and general elections take place every three years.

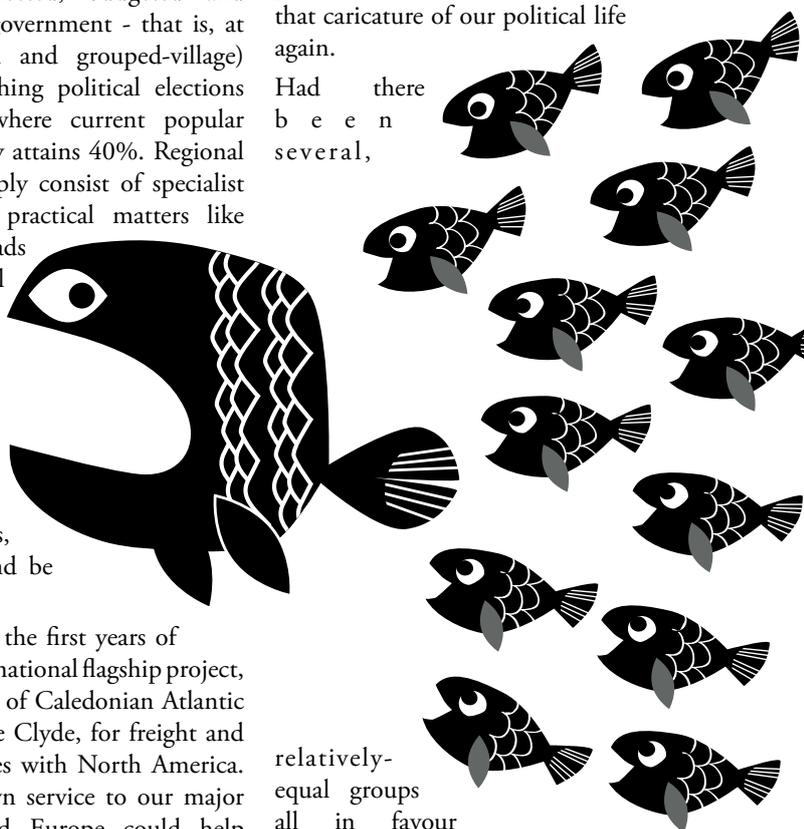
Combined with this ii) adopt the French model of fully-elected, budgeted and empowered local government - that is, at community (town and grouped-village) level, while abolishing political elections in the regions, where current popular participation barely attains 40%. Regional bodies should simply consist of specialist administrators in practical matters like education, roads and other essential services, while community councillors - people known and visible on a day-to-day basis - should have real powers, be accountable, and be properly elected.

Then iii) focus for the first years of independence on a national flagship project, literally: say, a fleet of Caledonian Atlantic ferries, built on the Clyde, for freight and passenger exchanges with North America. Such a home-grown service to our major destination beyond Europe could help redevelop the marine sector - and in time, enable us to impose international standards of seaworthiness and shipboard control which would exclude dangerous, under- and ill-manned vessels from our hazardous waters.

Third, for all those in the broad intellectual and cultural movements born in the referendum, largely outside parliamentary politics, think of the responsibilities of power, and the realisation of their ideals. There are many reasons why the referendum result was the wrong result. But all of them boil down to a sense of national insecurity, partly due to the novelty of the independence referendum, partly the SNP's rigidity in not adopting an alternative currency policy or not mounting an effective intellectual challenge to the threatened EU-membership veto, partly due to outsiders, from the Pope to Barack Obama and NATO chiefs piling into our democratic process with their short-termism views and fuelling a general panic.

But partly also to the narrow, unstable political base of one predominant (and governing) party, which made it possible for critics of the referendum inside and outside Scotland to portray the whole exercise as the irresponsible ego-trip of one party leader. We cannot afford to allow that caricature of our political life again.

Had there been several,



relatively-equal groups all in favour of independence presenting articulate, developed prospectuses for the referendum would have taken place under different circumstances and with a different result. That is what we in grassroots movements have to plan for next time - the next Scottish elections, the next referendum: what kind of parties will we form, to express our particular visions of the future?

In any case, politics in Scotland from now on ought to be wholly different from anything that goes on at Westminster. We should rescue from the referendum campaign those intimations of the free, dynamic and creative society we hope to realise, and be an inspiration to movements for democratic change elsewhere.

Peter Lomas is a contributor to Common Weal



Working towards economic progress for women

Angela O'Hagan and Morag Gillespie show how to tackle women's poverty and marginalisation

Have we reached a crossroads in Scotland at least with Scottish Government's new economic strategy? Will economic policy keep equality at its heart as intended? In the long run, how we measure progress on equality in the Scottish economy has to change because measures like GDP are inadequate for reflecting the lives we live and the roles we perform, paid and unpaid. In the short-term, what can politicians do to put equality at the heart of their plans for economic progress, particularly for the forthcoming general elections? We consider the answer from a gender perspective.

The Scottish Women's Budget Group (SWBG) has long argued the economic system is broken. The fundamental flaw is the system for measuring economic progress fails to recognise and account adequately for women's contributions, paid and unpaid. In particular, unpaid care, done mostly by women remains invisible and unaccounted for in GDP and the system of national accounts.

Women are bearing the brunt of austerity and the Westminster government's policy responses are increasingly harmful to women's wellbeing. So, while men stand to benefit from the tax giveaways of personal tax allowance increases and transferrable tax allowances, a recent Fawcett Society report showed 85% of cuts to benefits, tax credits, pay and pensions since 2010 have come from women's incomes.

Yet most analysis and debate amongst politicians and other key actors ignores the impact of government decisions on women in general and unpaid care in particular - despite unpaid care being the glue that supports the formal economy. For example, the recently published Centre for Labour and Social Sciences (CLASS) booklet asks 'What's at stake for work, pay and unions?' In its foreword, Frances O'Grady argues the general election is 'a chance to reject a broken economic system'. The booklet, however, maintains the established concept of the economy in arguing 'the economy must work for all working people'.

SWBG agrees the economic system is broken and believes it should work for everyone, including those whose contribution is unpaid. Economic analysis that reflects waged work only, ensures that care and women's unpaid contribution to care and provisioning for waged workers will remain invisible, unaccounted for

and overlooked in measures of economic analysis, despite their importance. *Marginal Eyes*, a short satirical film, launched this International Women's Day by Engender is a sharp take on this.

Government spending cuts have had the harshest impact on women, both as workers and service users. This is compounded by the effects of Scottish government's council tax freeze. Several factors combine to push women back into gendered roles within households while still trying to maintain household incomes through low paid, vulnerable jobs (including jobs losses in the public sector previously held by women who are the majority of public sector employees, withdrawal of public services, downward pressure on wages and social security reforms).

The aforementioned Fawcett Society report clearly shows how significant flaws in Job Seekers' Allowance mean the 'distinctive circumstances of many women's lives' of caring, low paid jobs and the risk of domestic and sexual violence are not recognised. One consequence has been large numbers amongst some groups of women experiencing sanctions, particularly lone parents. The report suggests high levels of successful appeals against sanctions are due to the unreasonable or inappropriate nature of the sanctions in the first instance.

In the world of paid employment, despite acknowledged gains, we are still a far cry from realising equal pay for equal work and legal and financial independence (which were key original demands of the women's liberation movement). Ongoing equal pay disputes with Scottish local authorities still involve tens of thousands, denying women the earnings they are due. The introduction of Employment Tribunal fees further reduces women's access to justice for equal pay and other sex discrimination claims. These present a formidable list for union action.

Political parties vying for women's votes must do much better than capping child benefit as a deficit reduction measure or sticking doggedly to current spending plans. There is a long list of actions to advance equality, eliminate discrimination, and mitigate the excesses of austerity, some of which are: reverse tribunal fees, introduce mandatory pay audits, include equality clauses in public procurement contracts, ensure recourse to public funds for asylum seekers and refugees, and make

better use of the transformational potential of the Public Sector Equality Duty and holding public authorities to account.

Having the political courage to implement an alternative approach to equality and economic policy is essential for creating a more sustainable and inclusive economy and society. Policies based on feminist and heterodox economic analyses will re-focus long-term investment policies and put the caring sector at their heart. This means investment, not just in the physical infrastructure of school building, childcare centres, hospitals and care homes, but also in the publicly funded workforce required to deliver these essential services, guaranteeing them much better terms and conditions of work that are key for high quality services. These measures would build the social infrastructure and human and social capital of the UK and its constituent countries.

The UK and Scottish Women's Budget Groups are calling for *Plan F* as an alternative to austerity. It is a set of feminist policies aimed at creating a caring and sustainable economy which offers better conditions and pay for care workers and more support for unpaid carers looking after family and friends. *Plan F* core demands that could be funded by non-renewal of Trident, reversing tax giveaways and expanding the tax base from participation in paid work are:

- Reversing cuts to public services and social security that have adverse impacts on women
- Reforming plans for Universal Credit
- Investing in social infrastructure - care, health, education and training services, social security and housing, complemented by investment in renewable energy and environmentally friendly public transport.
- Ensuring access to affordable care and improving the terms and conditions of work for the paid work (leading to better quality care).
- Strengthening worker's rights including collective bargaining rights and raising the minimum wage to a level that ensures a decent living.
- Improving support for people - currently mainly women - who provide unpaid care in families and communities. Men should also be supported to contribute more to unpaid care, for instance

through well-funded care leave schemes and a reduction in full-time working hours.

- Creating a social security system that aims at fairer sharing of caring and the costs of caring.
- Increasing investment in social housing and in insulating homes

In fixing a broken economic system we need to develop a caring economy that nurtures individuals, recognises the value of care

and rewards the provision of care. As the election campaign ratchets up, these are the key demands to make of political parties and key political actors in unions. They are also the kinds of measures that should fit well with the Scottish Government's new economic strategy, with its twin pillars of competitiveness and equality. There should be no more 'business as usual' and a long-term aspiration to ensure that women count properly in measures of economic wellbeing.

*Angela O'Hagan and Morag Gillespie,
Scottish Women's Budget Group.*

Web addresses:

[http://www.gov.scot/
Resource/0047/00472389.pdf](http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00472389.pdf)

[http://www.engender.org.uk/content/
projects-makeworkvisible/](http://www.engender.org.uk/content/projects-makeworkvisible/)

[http://www.swbg.org.uk/content/
publications/PLAN-F-2015.pdf](http://www.swbg.org.uk/content/publications/PLAN-F-2015.pdf)

A tale of two countries?

Malcolm Harvey explains why the political and constitutional unravelling will continue

In 1995, Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, Lord Robertson, asserted 'devolution will kill nationalism stone dead'. Sixteen years after the first devolved elections, and six months after a 'No' vote in the referendum, his pronouncement appears no closer to coming true. By contrast, the two-party Westminster system looks to be under a far greater threat if the polling for general election is accurate.

In hindsight, this was always a more likely scenario than devolution seeing off nationalism. For while it did take care of the perceived 'democratic deficit', it provided nationalists in Scotland and Wales with a structural advantage in devolved institutions elected on a proportional basis. By 2007, nationalists in both Scotland and Wales entered their respective governments, emphasising the clear differences between the party systems at central and devolved level. If the 2010 General Election, with coalition government the outcome, was seen then as an outlier, May 2015 looks likely to make it a trend.

Duverger's Law suggests that, where first-past-the-post plurality electoral systems exist, a two-party system tends to be the result. Britain has long been cited an example. In 1951, the zenith of two-party politics, Tories and Labour gained 97% of the vote. The latest opinion polls show these two parties totalling just 65%. So, is the two-party system over?

In truth, the two-party system has been a misnomer for some time and a caricature which did not take into account national differences in England, Scotland and Wales (and the entirely different party system which exists in Northern Ireland). Since the rise of the SNP in the 1970s and the merger of the Liberals and Social Democratic Party in 1988 established the Liberal Democrats, the Conservative-Labour duopoly has diminished.

The LibDems regularly polled more than 25% but due to its vote's geographical

spread and the nature of the first-past-the-post electoral system, it rarely won more than 10% of seats. The party had to work hard to overcome this structural disadvantage, with support varying widely in different parts of the country. Targeted campaigning and personable candidates have helped to establish and secure seats in areas such as the Highlands and Cornwall, but there are swathes of the UK where it has failed to make an impact.

The electoral picture in England remains, in party-theory terminology, a 'two and a half party' system. The two large parties continue to alternate in government, albeit most recently in coalition with the 'half party'. The emergence of a Green MP and of UKIP as a credible electoral force (with two by-election victories) has already impacted upon the nature of electoral competition on both sides of the political spectrum. UKIP's Euroscepticism has forced both Labour and the Conservatives to debate EU membership and immigration, which have become dominant themes in the election campaign. While these parties themselves are unlikely to obtain sufficient numbers to change the categorisation of the party system, they are influencing the political debate.

By contrast, the party system in Scotland has long departed from the traditional duopoly. Identity, centre-periphery and the Unionist-Nationalist dimension have led to complicated patterns of voting at different electoral levels: local, Holyrood and Westminster. Different electoral systems at each simply add to the complications. Prior to the 2014 referendum, there appeared to be a pattern to voting in Scotland: the SNP did better in elections to the Scottish Parliament, with other party identifiers 'lending' them a vote in this strictly 'Scottish' electoral contest. For elections to Westminster, however, those identifiers returned to their 'natural' home, and Labour continued to sweep a majority

of Scottish seats at Westminster. However, post-referendum, polls suggest that this pattern no longer holds, with the SNP expected to increase their representation substantially at Labour's expense.

Thus, a straight 'count' of parties might not serve as the most useful classification of the party system. Giovanni Sartori's criteria for establishing the 'relevance' of a party – whether the party has the potential to enter government or to 'blackmail' the major parties into delivering particular policy objectives – provides us with an opportunity to consider parties which perhaps do not have the strength of numbers required to form government but still retain an influence in the political debate. After 7 May, it looks like we can extend the list of 'system relevant' parties to include not only the three major ones, but the SNP (now the third largest party by membership in the UK), UKIP and the Greens (based upon agenda-setting) and, potentially, the Northern Irish parties which may have a say in who takes office.

The dynamics of electoral politics in Britain have also changed markedly. It is no longer (and hasn't been for some time) a straight left-right contest fought upon class-based expectations. Valence issues have become prevalent, with parties finding a position on a spectrum, rather than a definitive position for or against a particular issue.

So what happens on 7 May is likely to be a function of both an electoral system that favours a party system which no longer exists, and the radically changing dynamics of party competition in the wake of a constitutional referendum (which threatened the very existence of the existing state). The result, in electoral terms, is likely to be a hung parliament. In Scotland, the likely increase in SNP MPs looks set to reduce further the chance of majority government.

Historic Labour strength in Wales also looks to be in decline, though not as markedly

in Scotland. And in England, the contest varies by region and by constituency, as seats become marginal between increasing numbers of different parties.

What does this mean in constitutional terms? Scotland, and independence, is not off the political agenda, and nor is the prickly issue of English Votes for English Laws, and how to better govern England. Extending

the constitutional question upwards, what happens with EU membership after the election is also up for debate – the potential UKIP increase in seats and influence could play a substantial role here. Indeed, with more parties increasing their representation at Westminster electoral reform might also be on the agenda once again.

In short - those who hoped that the

referendum in Scotland would settle the constitutional question appear destined to be disappointed. Constitutional questions look set to dominate for some time to come.

Dr Malcolm Harvey is a Research Fellow at the Centre on Constitutional Change and the University of Aberdeen.

Responsibilities lead to progress

Terri Smith argues that the referendum has helped positively engage young people with politics

Young people are an integral part of society. They are engaged, active and informed citizens, keen to play their part in creating a better Scotland. With age comes responsibility. As a society, we already allow our young people to marry, have children, leave school, and get a job, but also more importantly, we recently made a historical decision to allow our young people to vote on the constitutional future of Scotland in the independence referendum.

This responsibility empowered young people to become actively involved in the political process by having their say about the future of their country. This decision, and the effort afforded to encouraging young people to register to vote, resulted in mass participation from the people of Scotland, and an exceptionally high turnout of young voters.

Admittedly, voting on constitutional change is different to voting in the general election, but the underlying principles are the same. Often, young people don't want to partake in party politics and they are more focused on issue-based politics. While many may argue this could hinder young people's participation in the general election, I would disagree on the basis that young people actively choose to research the issues important to them and consider which party they believe best represents their views.

During the referendum campaign, the Scottish Youth Parliament engaged with over 18,000 young people and registered thousands of first time voters. As a Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP), the opportunity to be at the forefront of one of the most historic moments in Scottish history was astounding. The process gave me the opportunity to engage with young people right in the heart of their communities.

I've spoken with young people from all over Scotland and they all have opinions on issues ranging from immigration, the economy, and Trident, to more localised issues, such as access to opportunities

for young people within their local area. Each and every one of the young people I met with were informed, engaged, full of passion, and excited about exercising their democratic right to cast their vote.

I believe it is absolutely vital that young people continue to pursue issue-based politics because this enables them to understand how their everyday lives are affected by political issues, and how the issues important to them are political topics.

Issues-based politics is fundamental to connecting with the most disenfranchised young people who would not necessarily engage with the democratic process. It opens up the opportunity for young people to explore what it feels like to be involved in politics, and for many first time voters, the experience of casting their vote provides them with the enthusiasm and passion to continue engaging with political debate, and that is what we should be aiming for as a country.

The Scottish referendum has made lasting impact on mass participation in politics. Young people were welcomed into the process with the responsibility and long overdue right to vote at the age of 16, and the enthusiasm created around this momentous occasion inspired many to become involved.

Generations of families who had never participated in an election or referendum before got involved. Many will argue over the reasons behind this, but for me this happened because of a focus on issue based politics, and an increased recognition of the impact politics has on people's everyday lives. I believe there was a widespread acknowledgment that everyone's opinion was valued.

Another pivotal factor during the referendum was young people's access to unbiased information. The Scottish Youth Parliament provided a unique youth engagement programme, called 'Aye Naw Mibbe', which focused on providing young people with important information on how

and when to register to vote, and enabled them to access impartial information on the referendum and other upcoming elections. This access to information is crucial to furthering engagement because it allows young people to make an informed choice for themselves.

When young people become actively involved, you inevitably see decision-makers direct policy changes towards them: in essence the more young people are involved, the more politicians are keen to win their vote. This is actually a good thing because it closes the gap between young people and decision-makers, and it also highlights the importance of political participation as it broadens people's horizons and opens them up to endless opportunities.

The effort afforded across the country to facilitate a range of young people's question time events, hustings and debates, and general engagement sessions ahead of the referendum was fantastic. I'd like to see more events like this being made available to young people on a regular basis, and in particular leading up to the General Election. Politicians need to be regularly making the effort to engage with young people through events such as those I mentioned in order to show that young people's opinions are truly valued and this won't be something that changes once the ballots are counted.

Young people want to be involved and we saw that throughout the referendum process. Having seized the opportunity to have their say, young people now have a need and desire to remain involved. The single most important method of encouraging young people to register to vote and utilise their vote is having conversations that help young people relate politics to their life.

We need to continue to respect young people and treat them like the young adults they are, whilst ensuring that the formality and language used does not scare them away.

The right to vote comes with responsibility and young people deserve to be afforded that responsibility in all elections.

As the democratically elected voice of Scotland's young people, the Scottish Youth Parliament has always known that 16 and 17-year-olds are capable of making

informed decisions when it comes to voting, and I hope the rest of the country can see that too. We are delighted that the voting age will be lowered to 16 in time for the next Scottish Parliament elections, and we believe this will have a very positive impact on the overall levels of engagement.

I hope we can continue to encourage our young people to have their say and shape their own futures, and I am looking forward to encouraging participation in the upcoming General Election.

Terri Smith MSYP is Vice Chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament

Righting a collective wrong

Grahame Smith argues collective bargaining is necessary for economic success and social justice

When the STUC's 118th Annual Congress convenes on 20 April, there will be just over two weeks of campaigning left before the general election. Its theme is 'Decent Work - Dignified Lives', adopted by the STUC to provide the bridge from our pre-referendum 'A Just Scotland' campaign to our work to ensure that Scottish political discourse continues to focus on the issues of poverty, inequality and social justice that dominated the referendum campaign.

As we see the Scottish parties set out their election pledges, it seems clear that the impact of STUC and union campaigning, the priority Labour has given to highlighting the cost of living crisis and the Scottish Government's new focus on fair work (not unconnected to the emphasis this has been given by the STUC) will mean that policy on workplace protection will be given more than just superficial attention.

Our *Manifesto for Decent Work* draws together a range of demands that union members have been encouraged to raise with candidates of all parties and to consider their response to these demands when deciding how to cast their vote. Our Manifesto includes a range of policies to strengthen individual employment rights and, given the pronouncements already made by the parties, some of these at least should receive broad support.

Labour's advocacy of 'pre-distribution' has been translated into a commitment to raise the minimum wage to £8 per hour by 2020; use public procurement and tax incentives to encourage more employers to pay the Living Wage; ban 'exploitative' zero hour contracts; reform the tribunal system so affordability is not a barrier to justice; set up a proper inquiry into the blacklisting and deal with umbrella companies; and double the length of paternity leave and increase paternity pay.

The Tories have been driven to propose a £7 per hour minimum wage; have flagged their intention to repeal the Human Rights Act and to replace it with a British Bill of Rights; end the use of exclusive zero hours contracts; and tackle trafficking through a

Modern Slavery Bill. We even had Cameron call on employers to increase the wages of their staff and pay the living wage for lower paid workers from the record profits they are enjoying as a result of the fall in the oil price.

The Fair Work Convention which the Scottish Government is working with the STUC to create, has been identified by the SNP as a mechanism for union and employer leadership on workplace issues and to ensure more employers, particularly in the private sector, pay the Living Wage, abandon the use of zero hours contracts and promote fair working practices and workplace innovation.

While adopting progressive policies to improve individual employment rights is essential, as our Manifesto makes clear, economic inequality in Scotland cannot be effectively challenged, the cost of living crisis alleviated and decline in real wages reversed without a wider commitment to remove the restrictions on union recognition and representation and allow unions the freedom to organise and to bargain collectively.

We already know about Tory proposals to introduce thresholds for strike ballots in the utilities and public services. However, while Labour's National Policy Forum Report, on which its manifesto will be based, contains some warm words about the importance of the union voice for people at work and in wider society, aside from welcome commitments to support union learning and to repeal the Lobbying Act, it contains no firm proposals. The policy document considered at Scottish Labour's recent conference, and on which its 2016 Scottish election manifesto will be based, goes a little further in committing a future Labour Government to promote unions.

The SNP government has made tackling inequality a priority and has given its support, in principle, to the recommendations of the Working Together Review, included in which are proposals to enhance the role of workplace reps and explore the potential to extend collective and sectoral bargaining in

Scotland and to increase levels of workplace democracy. While both its Programme for Government, published late last year, and its recently refreshed Economic Strategy, are positive about the role of unions and set a different course on industrial relations in Scotland, they are silent on the importance of collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining is about more than obtaining a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, protecting terms and conditions and safeguarding our members' health and safety. It is about equality. It is about building and sustaining workplace democracy. It is about the development of a society which is fairer, more equal and democratic - and where economic power is more evenly distributed.

The sorry truth is that for far too long now, successive governments have refused to acknowledge any kind of positive role for collective bargaining. It has been considered an unwelcome rigidity which prevents the otherwise flexible labour market adjusting to meet changes in demand for labour. The wider benefits of collective bargaining have been deliberately obscured and diminished. For flexible labour market read low wage, low regulation, and low valuation of a disposable workforce.

What has been ignored is that high levels of union membership and extensive collective bargaining coverage are not an impediment to economic success. They are central to redressing the asymmetries in economic power that are the root cause of inequality. All in all, the commitments made so far by both Labour and the SNP fall some way short of our Manifesto demands to extend the scope and reach of union recognition, collective bargaining and the role of workplace reps.

It is not enough for both parties just to oppose Tory plans on strike ballots (that is the least we should expect). They both need to raise their voices in support of the right to strike and for the introduction of secure on-line and secret workplace ballots.

The Tory strike ballot proposals are an outright attack on the fundamental,

democratic right of workers to withdraw their labour. They are an affront to civil liberties and a violation of ILO conventions. They are presented as a solution to a problem that doesn't exist. In Britain, we don't have a strike 'problem'. The most recent figures we have on strikes are from 2013 when only 1% of workers participated in a strike. There were only around 100 strikes most of which were in the private and not the public sector and the number of working days lost due to strikes was 1.4% of the 28.2 million days lost to work related accidents and ill-health. Based on that evidence you would think that the priority of government would be to strengthen health and safety regulations rather than those governing strike ballots!

It is interesting that the only proposals the Tories have for ballot thresholds is in relation to strike ballots. In 2013, the current government's reform of the way top executive pay is influenced by shareholders left decisions to be based on a simple majority of those voting!

But strikes in the public sector are more

disruptive to our public services and the economy than the level of executive pay say the Tories. Leaving aside the obvious point that the Coalition's austerity policies are each and every day causing more damage to public services and our economy than public sector strikes - it appears to be lost on the Tories that it was excessive levels of executive pay, the increased income inequality that accompanied it, and the corruption in corporate behaviour that it provoked, particularly in our financial institutions, that caused the 2008 crash and the recession that followed and from which we are still recovering.

Some political strategists may consider displaying too positive an attitude to unions and to defending the right to strike to be an electoral liability. Politics must be about more than parroting the findings of focus groups. It must be about ideas, about values and about ideology. It must be about winning support for policies that might be unpopular with some groups of voters but for which the evidence is sound and which are underpinned by fundamental freedoms

that should be protected.

A colleague who attended the recent ILO right to strike negotiations in Geneva told me that he heard a robust defence of the right to strike from Nordic governments that he'd never heard in Britain for 40 years (from either government or unions).

If Labour and the SNP are serious about reducing inequality and about tackling the cost of living crisis, they must not shy away from a positive policy agenda on union rights, extending collective bargaining and increasing levels of workplace democracy, as well as defending the right to strike.

Our Decent Work Manifesto is a litmus test for those political parties that claim to be progressive. If politicians do, indeed, want to tackle economic insecurity and income inequality then government at all levels must urgently reassess the benefits of collective bargaining- support an agenda for collective bargaining or stop the platitudes about inequality, low wages and decent work.

Grahame Smith is general secretary of the STUC

Willing to work together?

Jim Mather gives a personal reflection upon on the Working Together Review he chaired

In offering a personal perspective on the Working Together Review, I should say at the outset that the work of the Review Group has crystallised in my mind the sequential conditional potential of having management and capital working in a more collegiate and considerate way with workforces and unions and, as a result, having many more organisations better able to both meet the reasonable and legitimate needs of their customers and have the resilience and cohesion needed to innovate, endure and grow.

Meanwhile, if there is an immediate tangible result from the Working Together Report it appears as paragraph 68 in the publication of Scotland's recent 'Programme for Government', which reads: 'We will work closely with the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and business representatives in the new Fair Work Convention, which will be a powerful advocate of the partnership approach which characterises industrial relations in Scotland at their best – and recognise the fact that business productivity goes hand in hand with proper pay for employees and progressive workplace policies'.

That commitment makes it all the more likely that Professor Ewart Keep's aspirations for the review will come to pass and we will

see many more of the recommendations of the Working Together Review, being implemented. Keep succinctly described the prize Scotland could achieve if it manages to implement the Working Together Review recommendations as: 'Scotland is liable to be heading in a very different direction, from that which England is likely to follow in the short to medium term, and that Scotland (or at least some elements therein) wants to end up in a very different conceptual place and space from England (essentially Northern Europe rather than a point somewhere in the mid-Atlantic)'. That is a sentiment I believe all members of the Review echo and one that finds broad support from all across Scotland.

In fulfilling the remit, it was no surprise to find imbalanced power relationships in many workplaces and the need for an overdue rebalancing that could produce materially better outcomes based upon fairness, mutual respect and increased industrial democracy. Nor was it a surprise to see the causal link between poor workplaces and all the negative effects from low-productivity, low staff-retention to poverty, migration and poor health.

Indeed, the Review exposed the damage being caused by misguided workplace

policies over many years as well as the 'winner's curse' that many management teams have been progressively inflicting on themselves through misuse of power and their over-emphasis on short-term results.

The Review, and my reading in recent years, prove 'results at all costs' were achieved at great cost: a huge waste of opportunity for businesses and people to develop, and massive collateral damage as people and communities have faced the consequences of mismanagement, short-termism, discord and disengagement.

The report not only suggests that there is a better way, making practical recommendations to that effect, but it also makes a case for increased union recognition, higher levels of both union membership and collective bargaining and more direct employee-involvement in the co-authoring of strategy in private, public and voluntary organisations.

However, not only did we find a great deal of evidence to show that there was a better way for management, employees and unions to work together but also we found that evidence compelling; whether it was our Scottish examples or Rajendra Sisodia's *Firms of Endearment* which tells us businesses that outperformed the markets between 1996 and 2011 by 10.5 times

adopted the following principles:

1. Align interests of all stakeholders (customers, employees, partners, investors, and society) rather than seeking profit optimization.
2. Pay below-average executive compensation.
3. Maintain open-door policies to allow employees to escalate issues with management.
4. Pay above average for industry employee compensation and benefits.
5. Deliver above-average employee training.
6. Help employees to be more able to satisfy customers.
7. Hire employees who are passionate about the organisation's purpose.
8. Humanise customer and employee experiences.
9. Enjoy below-average marketing costs.
10. Honour the spirit as well as the letter of laws.
11. Focus on corporate culture as a competitive advantage.
12. Channel energy and attention into innovative practices.

I know that we could emulate both process and results in Scotland, weaving in other lessons from elsewhere, building on what is already working, drawing on the wisdom of mediators and systems thinkers, who know that optimising any 'system' needs everyone to be involved, fairness to be established and a combined clarity of purpose to be discussed, agreed and formalised.

In the process, I believe we could roll back the misuse of Lean, Performance Management, Sickness Absence Policies and the perverse paternalism that have often limited the potential for fulfilment and rewards that people have a right to expect.

Equally, during the review, I became convinced that, whilst our recommendations would make a material difference and help us achieve this transformation, it would also be necessary for us to have a match for what Gary Hamel calls 'Management 2.0'. That 'match' has to be the creation of 'Unions 2.0'. I am confident that this can be achieved given so many skilled committed people in the union movement in Scotland, successful role model workplaces and the Review's recommendations on developing capacity and capability in industrial relations with emphasis on learning and training.

Unions 2.0 could make an even better case for union recognition, union membership and collective bargaining and

also help prove the damage being done by managerial short-termism. Union 2.0 is yet to be written, but if it was, it would read like this:

- 1: Ensure collaborative work of management, workers and unions serves a higher purpose.
- 2: Help to fully embed the ideas of community and citizenship in management systems and the minds of all involved.
- 3: Reconstruct management's philosophical foundations and work to have this co-authored and co-owned by unions and workers.
- 4: Eliminate the pathologies of formal hierarchy – take advantage of natural leaders and learn the lessons of commercial aviation's Crew Resource Management approach
- 5: Expose and eliminate use of fear and intimidation and take joint steps to develop, increase and maintain trust.
- 6: Work with management to reinvent the means of control and create more autonomous teams committed to continuous improvement.
- 7: Redefine leadership in terms of developing and communicating goals, gaining necessary resources, improving work and developing people.
- 8: Create workplaces that value and leverage diversity, disagreement, and divergence as much as conformance, consensus, and cohesion.
- 9: Reinvent strategy-making as emergent and evolving that is respectful of all legitimate inputs and all reasonable voices.
- 10: Work with management to de-structure and disaggregate the organization, making it more adaptable and innovative – and helping large entities to be disaggregated into smaller, more malleable units.
- 11: Work with management and workers to share setting direction to engender commitment and create conditions that can help to restore pride in work.
- 12: Work with management and workers to develop holistic performance measures that their mutual customers would find acceptable such as end-to-end times for job completion.
- 13: Work with management, workers and public opinion to produce wholesome and reasonable alternatives to compensation and reward systems that encourage managers to sacrifice long-term goals for short-term gains.

14: Work with management and workers to create a democracy of information so every employee has the data needed to act in the best interests of the entire enterprise.

15: Work with management to encourage all employees to bring their complete authentic selves to work and to ensure that they are heard and their ideas put to the test.

16: Work with management to expand the extent to which employees can autonomously propose and test workplace ideas aimed at improving the work and/or the products and services on offer.

17: Work with management to create internal demand for ideas, talent, and resources aligned with the purpose that drives the organisation.

18: Work with management to depoliticise the decision-making processes – making them free of positional biases and leveraging the collective wisdom available from the entire organization and beyond.

19: Work with management and workers to maximize employee engagement through the sort of alignment, fairness and engagement that can unleash purposeful passion.

We have the skills and the allies and the scale to make this happen – all we now need is some initial conversations and some early pilots.

There will be those who immediately look for statutory underpinning as they believe is needed to make this happen but unlike Northern Ireland, even after the Smith Commission, employment law is not devolved. And I have no confidence that we will see such measures from any Westminster government. But, in spite of that, I am not pessimistic – for I believe that the report's recommendations, the Fair Work Convention, and continuing focus and open dialogue on the evolution of the workplace will offer more momentum and legitimacy and improved results – that would be better than those produced by reluctant compliance with new legislation.

The key driver will be the realisation that a more collegiate and fairer approach to employees is the best way to reverse the negative effects of the higher costs, lower customer retention and lower levels of innovation and lower growth. Finally, a message picked up from Ireland following the financial crisis's impact on its social partnership was that those 'partnerships' that allow the interests of the partnership to eclipse the legitimate interests of the

respective partners, can, in times of stress and strain, be gradually dishonoured, devalued and breed division. My hope is that we can learn from this and other aspects of the report, creating a sound open and honest basis for the development of legitimate competing interests managed

in the context of higher purposes, such as customer needs, common-good, fairness, resilience and longevity, that unites all of those involved.

Jim Mather is chairman of Gael Ltd and a visiting professor at Strathclyde & Heriot-Watt Universities and was the chairman of the

Working Together Review (January to August 2014). He was also an SNP MSP and former Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (2007-2011). The report of the Working Together Review: Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland can be found at <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00457659.pdf>

Failed austerity gives opportunity for new industrial relations

Steve Turner argues for rebuilding our unions and institutions for a fairer society

When new Greek finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, observed austerity is akin to trying to milk a sick cow by kicking it, he was spot-on. Austerity is the latest failed, ideological and unacceptable face of capitalism, deepening inequality and poverty and, in Greece, causing a desperate collapse in living standards and public services. Syriza's election was the successful outcome of a mobilisation to reject austerity; inspiring hope that democratic politics shape an economy fit to serve its people, snubbing decades of uninterrupted neo-liberal economic doctrine across Europe.

Austerity has entrenched deepening inequality, stagnating wages and growing poverty. It entrenched but did not start these, being not accidental but the direct and intended consequences of neo-liberal economic philosophy. Evolving in Chicago in the 1970s, refined by brutal regimes in Latin and South America, they inspired Thatcher and Reagan to bring this philosophy to shores of Britain and America.

While we struggle with the political necessity to rebalance our economy from low wage, insecure work and growing personal debt, it's hard to believe that just 40 years ago 84% of workers were covered by collective agreements and 64% of economic wealth (measured by GDP) went to workers as wages.

Not only was our economy growing and corporations and wealthy individuals paying their fair share of taxes, workers were getting a bigger share of the pie and spending it on the high street (unlike today's rich, syphoning off billions into overseas tax havens). An organised, confident, powerful union movement led struggles for political and social advances, and millions experienced strides forward in living standards, horizons were expanded and new opportunities opened up.

Thatcherism put a stop to this. To provide for the soar away super-rich and powerful political elite – the 1% v the 99% - you need to crush opposition. Flexibility, insecurity and inequality were to become money-spinners and growing poverty an opportunity to be exploited rather than an obscenity to be addressed. Dismantling the structures of workers' power, shackling unions and eroding bargaining were crucial to this project. Undeniably, the decline in union power since the 1970s choked off social and political progress as well as efforts to redistribute the wealth we create.

Bargaining coverage slipped and by 1990 fell to 55%, heading further south ever since. Today, it's 23% while, over the same period, the share of our economic wealth going to working people has fallen by 11%. There is something very wrong with an economic system that has fed wealth inequality to the point that the UK's richest 10% own 44% of wealth. Indeed, just five families now have a combined wealth equivalent to that of the poorest 20%. Austerity is being used as a guise for systematic shrinking of the state, privatisation of public services and removal of social protection while further concentrating wealth and power amongst the few.

Low wage exploitation is, however, only one part of growing employment inequality – the Office for National Statistics confirms precarious working continues its rise as zero and short hours working, so-called self-employment, agency and casual employment swell further. Look across Scotland's central belt; bars, retail and hospitality work replace what were once shipyards, and where once there was the car plant in Linwood there is now a retail park, home to a drive-in Starbucks. We are not a poor nation; the UK is the fifth largest economy in the world yet last year over 20m meals were given out by food-banks.

In our labour market, the impact of these trends is the lived experience of millions. Hollowing out of decent jobs, welfare support, social housing, hope and opportunity disconnects people from their communities. If society does not value its people enough to put in a floor of basic securities – not just pay, regular hours and safe, secure employment but access to homes, financial security in old age, health, social care and an environmentally sustainable planet – then we are heading for serious conflict over the coming period.

So how do we reverse these trends and begin to build decent work? Aside rejecting failed austerity economics and invest in a growing, confident, fair economy, a critical step in righting what is wrong will be the restoring of union freedoms, removing employers' rights to undermine democratic ballots with petty, technical challenges and reintroducing regulated systems of sector level bargaining. Political and business leaders need to understand that diminishing the value of work diminishes our own future and the opportunity to build a vibrant, high-skill, high-productivity economy.

Our corporations hoarded over £500bn as they continue with a long-term investment strike while 'corporate welfare' forces us to pay the price of low pay via tax credits and housing benefit. This is the politics of the mad house. As citizens, we demand visionary, bold government that's prepared to seize the moment in the collective interests of society.

A National Investment Bank and industrial strategy to rebalance and renew our economy; rebuilding our infrastructure, providing desperately needed new, environmentally refurbished social homes, governments using public procurement to rebuild our manufacturing heartlands and investing in decent, safe, unionised jobs, alongside hope, apprenticeships and opportunities for our young.

In Scotland, debate about new industrial relations models is already taking place. For us in the rest of Britain, we can only look on in envy – the idea of the union movement as a welcome partner in social progress has some way to go south of the border. While Scotland's government is engaging unions as partners in a cross-community discussion on social progress through *Working Together*, their counterparts in Westminster only see a chance to launch a further assault on unions' ability to defend and represent members and their communities.

So as Jim Mather and his colleagues from across business and the union movement were sitting down to consider the model of industrial democracy best suited for modern-day Scotland, back in London a highly ideological effort to dismantle further union power was taking shape. The road the Tories choose to travel is a world away from the serious tripartite effort that is needed to restore fairness and stability to our economy and labour market.

As opposition to deepening inequality finds more voice, too many among those who seek to govern us stick to their doctrine that the people serve the markets, rather than the other way about. The parameters of political debate are kept to defending the status quo. But the status quo is not working.

The Resolution Foundation, in discussing the future of the minimum wage, argued: 'It is increasingly clear that low pay is a systematic feature of the 21st century UK labour market that will not solve itself through a light touch approach of pursuing growth and investing in skills. ... Simply equipping individual workers to navigate these conditions will not be enough. Institutions are needed that change the labour market itself'.

If we are to reverse the growing inequality and increase the workers' share of national

wealth, we need to build the structures that could facilitate this. So Unite Scotland argued in its 2014 evidence to the Scottish government, submitted as part of the *Working Together* exercise: 'Industrial democracy is not about putting one worker on a board in order to provide an employee 'voice'; industrial democracy goes beyond this and is fundamentally about the power balance in the workplace'. Industrial democracy of the sort that genuinely delivers for workers and their communities can only be achieved through the collective strength of workers organised in effective, powerful unions.

A new 'fair wages resolution', modern wages councils and National Joint Industrial Councils can structurally address the economic democracy deficit. Regulations introducing new models of collective union engagement in corporate governance and requirements on corporate boards to take responsibility for the social and economic consequences of decisions rather than cowering to the demands of short term investors could fundamentally shift the nature of the debate at board level.

In the motor industry, we have some of the most productive, best skilled, fairly rewarded workers in the country. This is no accident. It has arisen because their Unite and employers understand the best future is a common one, collectively negotiated. I could take you around many UK workplaces with a similar outlook, where the workers – through their unions – are fully engaged in the development and planning of successful businesses. As a result, employers are able to retain skills and staff who are more productive, retaining social capital in their local communities.

But there are still far too many employers who harass, threaten, sack and blacklist those who stand up for union rights. There can be no place employers who

think nothing of holding their workforce and even national economies to ransom. A modern economy cannot continue on a downhill race to the bottom. So Unite Scotland is pressing Holyrood to introduce collective bargaining into three central sectors: road haulage, the voluntary sector and hospitality. Putting a floor beneath the tens of thousands of workers in these sectors will be a good start, ensuring collaborative decision-making and a fairer share of the wealth they create.

If the Scottish government can be persuaded to agree that collectivism is a better deal for the people of Scotland than 'co-determination' or conventions, then those young people forced onto zero hours contracts, minimum wage jobs or cafes were car plants used to be can begin to believe that they are valued by their country and have a shared stake in its future.

Unions themselves have to face up to the challenges of organising the precarious that so many believe are too difficult to organise. It was casual dock and gas workers, matchgirls, agricultural workers and others that built our movement some 140 years ago. It's our responsibility and duty to reach out, organise and fight for that better, fairer world, a socialism based on the needs of people not demands for profit.

This is our challenge, and no new institutions, rights or structures will deliver it for us. We have to enter any new structures with power not just as a voice for the dispossessed. We have to engage, protest, mobilise, build confidence, networks and alliances to win. Our governments must decide whose side they are on. Surely, the time has now come for them to conclude that our 'sick cow' cannot deliver when it's getting kicked.

Steve Turner is Assistant General Secretary of the Unite union

Solidarity to defeat government union-busting

Lynn Henderson argues the attack on PCS is an attack on all unions

In its dying days, the Coalition government desperately spews out anti-union bile against the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union, the union representing the government's own workers. Labour MP, Ian Lavery, former NUM president, described the Tories' attack on PCS as the most serious on any union since the 1980s. He is not joking! Personally coordinated by Cabinet Office

Minister, Francis Maude, the Tories aim to bankrupt our union through withdrawal of check-off subscriptions deducted at source from members' wages. This is all part of the unremitting determination to take back gains won by the working class through generations of struggle, including the NHS and welfare state. They want to remove union and human rights and to institutionalise inequality.

It's clear the attacks are because PCS has dared to stand up for our members against the erosion of pay, pensions and jobs in the civil and public services that the Tories seek to run down and hand over to profiteers. PCS has also dared to advocate and popularise an alternative to austerity economics, rich-club tax favours and welfare misery. The first PCS pamphlet post-financial crash was simply entitled,

'There is an alternative', and it was in research for PCS that tax justice expert, Richard Murphy, exposed the £120bn annual loss to our nation's coffers through tax avoidance and evasion.

PCS may be the target today but this attack is part of a wider anti-democratic strategy to eliminate effective, campaigning unions. The Tories want free rein to plunder and destroy the public sector and unions stand in the way of that.

Attacks on jobs, conditions and services all stem from the same ideological source and class interest, and will only be defeated by the joint, coordinated industrial might of our movement acting together. With the manifestos pledges of all main parties containing only austerity-lite or austerity-max policies, it is only the union movement that can make any effective challenge to the political consensus that there is no alternative.

What PCS is up against today is a government that, as an employer, refuses to negotiate at national level while implementing a clear national cuts strategy. It won't negotiate national agreements but try to diminish or rip up those already existing by driving through disadvantageous conditions wherever they can and remove bargaining rights on a piecemeal basis. Union facility time has been slashed in an attempt to weaken the union's ability to defend and represent members.

A leaked document from inside the second biggest civil service employer, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), revealed vicious union-busting proposals including 'proactive measures targeted at key union activists' and 'degradation of PCS's organising capability by permanently reducing the influence of union leaders'. HMRC has refused to negotiate on legitimate industrial grievances and has attempted to marginalise and isolate the

union.

HMRC HR has comfortably accommodated a staff association (RCTU), a scab outfit designed to undermine effective trade unionism in the department. It has summarily removed facilities from legitimate union representatives, deliberately targeting lead representatives.

HMRC chief executive, Lyn Homer, presides over a government agency treated as a standing joke by the tax-dodging corporate elite. But rather than concentrate on tackling tax evasion and avoidance she presses ahead with cuts that further compromise tax collecting efficiency, while giving top priority to smashing PCS. While chief executives in other departments, albeit lamely, cite pressure by ministers to carry out Maude's union-busting edicts to end check-off, the decision to withdraw it in HMRC was entirely hers.

Homer neatly epitomises the new breed of highly politicised civil service executives, slavishly loyal to the cuts and privatisation agenda in the sure knowledge that a grateful corporate elite will never forget their services. Is it any surprise, therefore, that Maude has appointed HMRC HR director and would-be union-buster, Jonathan Donovan, to oversee a Cabinet Office project on 'Responsible Trade Unionism' to root out campaigning trade unionism in the public sector. That senior civil servants are being instructed to engage in this politically contentious activity is in itself a disgrace.

Meanwhile, in a bizarre and sinister over-reaction to a PCS survey on staffing, the Home Office secured a secret injunction against the union and ITV News on the grounds of endangering national security. It is not the identification of staff shortages that advantage terrorist organisations like ISIS and Al Qaeda. Surely, the fact they exist is of more worrying concern.

Although PCS is efficiently organised and administered, it will take a tremendous effort to sign over all current members to direct debit. We learn from other unions who faced check-off withdrawal that it can take upwards of three years to recover subs-paying membership levels. It is clear that the Tories' intention is to seek to exploit potential lower union density levels in the short term as a pretext to denying union recognition altogether. Alongside their threats to further tighten anti-union laws, this attack is part of a plan to effectively outlaw industrial action.

The Tories are wreaking their havoc now, before the general election, and if returned will seek to turn their bile on the rest of our movement, starting with the other public sector areas, where trade unionism is strongest. Also, the haste to crush PCS is clear that even under a Labour government committed to maintaining check off, much of the damage will have been done.

In Scotland, a third of PCS members work in the devolved Scottish Government sector. We expect better from a Scottish Government prepared to commission the Working Together Report with the STUC and to set up a Fair Work Convention. That the SNP administration hasn't cut facility time for PCS reps nor removed check off is positive. Yet, we remain vigilant against an austerity pay policy and any attempt by either Ministers or employers to undercut long held union agreements, partnerships or principles.

At this time, it is important that our movement stands together. PCS calls on the solidarity of our union brothers and sisters in our struggle against the most hostile industrial conditions that have ever been faced in the public sector.

Lynn Henderson is PCS Scottish Secretary and National Officer for Northern Ireland

In Euro Veritas

Patrick Maguire alerts us to a grave attack on workers' health and safety rights

I have always believed political policies fall into one of two categories. First, issues above pandering to populist narratives, party political games and crass vote (perhaps even donation) winning tactics. These are inalienable rights - matters in relation to which the political direction of travel is strictly one way, where rights given can and should never be taken away, where each stride forward represents a Rubicon crossing. Equalities, a free NHS and the universal right to education all fall into the first category.

Second, there are the issues of the day where politicians try to tap into and shape the prevailing Weltanschauung. Here, issues are political footballs to be juggled with at least one eye on the reaction of voters in the crowd. The Coalition government juggling notions of the 'compensation culture', 'cutting red tape for business' and 'standing up to Brussels' fall this category.

Following those mantras, the legislative onslaught against unions and workers over the last 5 years has been relentless, vitriolic and utterly savage. We have seen

the qualifying period for unfair dismissal doubled; barriers erected blocking access to employment tribunal through tribunal fees; the 'rights for shares' sale; and the entire court system south of the border radically altered with the apparently sole purpose of preventing union members accessing justice. Each of these matters may fall into the second category.

But there is one blatantly anti-worker piece of legislation the Coalition has enacted which represents a deliberate, unabashed,

continued page 25



Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians

Best wishes to all STUC Congress 2015 Delegates

- **An end to the Umbrella Company scam**
- **Justice for Blacklisted workers**
- **Dignity and fair pay at work**

Harry Frew
Regional Secretary
<https://www.ucatt.org.uk/join>

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OUR SCOTLAND SERVICES FUTURE

PCS sends greetings to all delegates attending the 118th Annual Congress of the STUC



Janice Godrich
National President

Mark Serwotka
General Secretary

Lynn Henderson
Scottish Secretary

Public and Commercial Services Union | pcs.org.uk

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and for that, morally unacceptable (if not reprehensible) erosion of hard fought rights. I am referring to s69 of the *Enterprise Act* in which workers' right to a safe workplace was simply removed in flagrant disregard to European Law.

Under European Framework Directive on Safety and Health at Work an employer must 'ensure the safety and health of workers in every aspect related to work'. That is why we had a series of health and safety regulations in the UK. s69 ended

the protection under the UK regulations and removed the obligation on employers to ensure workers safety. Because of s69 workers no longer have a right to a safe workplace, the Tories have removed an inalienable, basic, human right and until now they have been allowed to do so. But that cannot be allowed to stand.

There are 2 things that can be done and I would call upon everyone to assist. Firstly, call upon the European Commission to intervene by writing to one's MEP

demanding that the Commission take action. Secondly, Richard Baker MSP is currently consulting on a Members' Bill to restore workers European rights at least in Scotland. I would encourage everyone to support Richard's proposal.

Patrick McGuire is a solicitor advocate and a partner with Thompsons Solicitors. He is a leading campaigner for law reform and has worked with many campaign groups and trades unions over the years to improve our country's health and safety record.

Fight against Walmart goes global

Andrew Brady explains how and why the campaign against Walmart is developing

The transposing of marketing tactics from North America is well documented with the latest ploy in Britain being 'Black Friday'. Many looked on in bewilderment as shoppers fought in supermarket stores over 'discount' products such as TVs. However, we should not be surprised as the public is bombarded by tactics to prise open our wallets and credit cards as consumer demand remains anaemic after the global depression. For fans of TV programme, *Mad Men*, one gets to appreciate the skills and effort involved in marketing and creating demand for products which we really don't need, indebted us or endanger our health.

In America, the Wirecutter website analysed the various Black Friday deals, discovering almost all of them were bogus. Gadgets that were supposedly discount bargains were, in fact, 20% more expensive than before Black Friday. Of the 54,000 deals Wirecutter investigated, less than 1% were worthwhile. So if this isn't about bargains and helping hard-pressed consumers, what is about? Well, it's far more sinister than a marketing ploy - it is specifically about a strain of cut-throat capitalism being exported around the world even more aggressive than the Washington consensus and which the notion of trickle-down economics is anathema to it. It's called *Walmartism*.

With close to 2.2m employees worldwide, Walmart has built a reputation for low wages, poor working conditions, inadequate health care and strong anti-unionism. It is the world's biggest private sector employer so quite simply what happens at Walmart matters. The poorest 10% of people in Britain would take on average 11m years to earn the wealth of its ruling Walton family (who also control Asda).

Walmart has begun to test Black Fridays in other countries. In Mexico, they have been coined Buen Fin. However, not enough people around the world are aware

the company goes by different names in different countries: Asda in Britain, Massmart in South Africa.

After the successful Black Friday strikes and protests at Walmart stores across North America in recent years, the campaign against this corporate Leviathan went global on 19 November 2014. The global day of demonstration proceeded the successful #FastFoodGlobal campaign in May last year which witnessed the day of awareness go viral and become one of the top trending hashtags on twitter last year. This was no mean feat for the labour movement which has struggled to gain traction on social media by focussing on workers issues. In essence, social movement unionism in America was exporting a model of campaigning to the world which we could participate in, namely, a global response to Walmart's economic strategy.

The FastFoodGlobal campaign, designed to improve the appalling wages and conditions set by the fast food industry, was an example of the power of social media fusing with on-the-ground energy to highlight corporate abuse. The success of the Occupy Movement, as well as revolutions from Egypt to Hong Kong, in harnessing both elements is well documented. However, the global union movement is now getting to grips with a dynamic which combines the spontaneity required on social media through turning people out on to the streets in conjunction with organisation and a rigorous programme for action.

On 19 November 2014, just nine days before Black Friday, the global union, UNI, coordinated thousands of local actions across the world to send a message to Walmart that it's time to treat workers with respect and not simply as an economic unit in the market place. The demands are simple:

A) Respect: Workers who assert their freedom of association in an attempt to resolve issues or improve working

conditions frequently face company retribution. Workers are harassed and intimidated by management when they try to voice concerns. So workers are asking for respect, safety and job security.

B) Living Wages: Extremely low wages along with inconsistent work scheduling make it difficult for workers in many countries to support their families. In fact, due to the low wages of workplaces Governments in effect are subsidising the company by providing entitlements.

C) Employment Security: The imposition of part-time work, casual employment contracts or - in the case of Walmart's 1.4 million US workers no contracts at all - means workers have no employment security. Workers are asking that full-time, permanent work be the rule rather than the exception.

The day of action resulted in actions using the #WalmartGlobal hashtag in an effort to make people aware of the presence of the company in their country on social media as well as hundreds of protests in countries around the world at stores controlled by Walmart.

It's time to stand up against Walmart to ensure its cut-throat strain of capitalism does not penetrate every part of our world - it's time this fight went global as it is in all our interests to know exactly what Walmart is exporting and not just its Black Fridays.

Andrew Brady is director of Union Solidarity International.

Poverty Alliance Scotland (PAS)

PAS's vision is of a sustainable Scotland based on social and economic justice, with dignity for all, where poverty and inequalities are not tolerated and are challenged. Established in 1992 after growing out of an informal network of groups and individuals active, it is a membership organisation with a range of experience in addressing issues related to poverty and social exclusion.

See <http://www.povertyalliance.org/>

Can the tide be STEMmed?

Linda Somerville on turning the tables on discrimination against women in science and engineering

Scotland is changing - its industries and workforce bear little resemblance to that of the last generation. Young people in education and training will start careers in jobs that no one has yet imagined. Advancing technology will create products and services to meet the demands of a new tech savvy generation. Scotland's key economic sectors have high growth potential and rely heavily on science, engineering and technology occupations – all increasingly in demand - with skills shortages reported across sectors.

Women's labour market participation has increased dramatically in recent years with the current rate of 68.3%, the highest since comparable records began in 1971. Yet women are still segregated by occupation and grade. Fewer women than men choose to study and work in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Those that do are more likely to leave with 73% of qualified women no longer working in STEM.

Late last year, two reports added to this weight of evidence. The Institute of Public Policy Research reported only 7% of the professional engineering workforce in Britain is female while campaign group, Science Grrrl, identified 'a deeply flawed education system and cultural environment that is putting up barriers for girls'. The Scottish Government's Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce also reported earlier in 2014 only 3% of engineering modern apprenticeships were held by women, and only 1% in construction.

The research from these reports contains some welcome recommendations, focusing on school initiatives, careers advice and role models – all essential parts of the solution but there is another area - less documented and less tangible for many – that of women's lived experience in the workplace.

A recent survey by the Prospect union of over 2000 women working in science, engineering and technical roles reported that 30% of respondents felt that their career had been hindered by their gender. Notably that percentage increases with age, as nearly 40% of women over 50 felt that way. Women leave STEM employment in higher numbers than men – dropping out at each key transition point and career stage – often called the leaky pipeline.

At Equate Scotland, we aim to increase

women's STEM participation in education and employment. Every week, we hear stories of qualified women facing challenges at work such as resisting the culture of long working hours; being overlooked for promotion; struggling to be taken seriously as they work reduced hours; being left out of decision making in their team; and being unable to balance caring responsibilities and workload

The lack of quality part-time roles can lead to underemployment as women are unable to progress their careers, or leave as they can't see a solution. Women working in industry and academia often conclude pressure to work long hours while combining family responsibilities is too much. Many companies and universities use short fixed-term contracts which can further deter women due to the lack of security. There is strong evidence of unconscious bias where senior male managers choose to mentor and promote those that are similar to themselves.

This everyday sexism and indirect discrimination in the workplace is the challenge to the success of women in STEM. It is a much harder task to engage employers when asking them to reflect and evaluate their organisation's culture and attitudes to women - rather than list the equal opportunity policies that they have.

As the role of men within families evolves, and they are encouraged and enabled to spend time caring for children, will the demand for a good work-life balance increase? Will real progress in the workplace only occur when men chose alternative careers and sharpen the skills shortage? Would this elicit a more creative and rapid response?

The case for improving diversity in STEM is well documented with both economic and moral arguments. There is strong evidence a diverse workforce brings significant benefits to employers, both in creativity and profit. Yet barriers still remain to women's career entry and progression.

At Equate Scotland, we highlight and challenge these barriers, working with industry to demonstrate the business case for gender equality, but equally important we support women at every stage of their career.

In Scottish colleges and universities, there are far fewer women than men studying STEM subjects – computing has only

18% female students and engineering and technology just 16%. Our student network, Interconnect, brings female students and women professionals together to help end the isolation often reported by female students studying in male dominated areas.

Female STEM graduates are less likely to transition into employment in the field they have studied than men. Working with employers, we find solutions to bridge this gap and placed over 40 female undergraduates in paid work placements last summer.

Beyond career entry, we ensure women are supported while in work, or looking to return to work after a career break. In the past year, over 200 women have received direct support through our career development workshops and coaching programme. When asked about the impact of our work, 83% of women felt more confident about their career and 24% had obtained a new job.

Bringing women together for career development, to share their experiences, act as role models and celebrate their success is essential. However, the bigger challenge is for employers to take positive action to create diverse and family-friendly workplaces where both everyone benefits and women can fulfil their potential.

Linda Somerville is the Project Director of Equate Scotland which is based at Edinburgh Napier University

Institute of Employment Rights (IER)

The Institute of Employment Rights is a think tank for the labour movement. It exists to inform the debate around union rights and labour law by providing information, critical analysis, and policy ideas through our network of academics, researchers and lawyers. Established in 1989, it is an independent organisation to act as a focal point for the spread of new ideas in the field of labour law.

See <http://www.ier.org.uk/>

Labour Research Department (LRD)

LRD exists to co-operate with labour, socialist and cooperative movements in promoting and carrying out research into problems of importance to workers, to supply information, and to issue publications. Founded in 1912, LRD has maintained these principles by publishing booklets and magazines and providing information and research services.

See <http://www.lrd.org.uk/>

Red Alert – mayday, mayday, mayday!

Chris Bartter outlines a packed long weekend of events

Mayday festivals have been celebrated by working people since pre-Christian times. Earliest celebrations marked the beginning of summer and linked to a variety of pagan festivals including the Gaelic Beltane. In 1891, Mayday was formally adopted by the Second International as International Workers' Day – primarily to mark the anniversary of the 1886 Haymarket Massacre in Chicago, where four strikers were killed when police opened fire on a demonstration after a bomb was thrown.

Despite the gravity of this initial event, and possibly because of the links to earlier festival celebrations, the festival side of International Workers' Day is longstanding and international, nowhere more so than Glasgow. The story of labour in the west of Scotland is peppered throughout with cultural developments – choirs from the Orpheus to the Eurydice, theatre companies from the Glasgow Workers' Theatre to 7:84 and Wildcat. Glasgow Trades Council even once ran a film society.

It was this tradition that led to the MayFest festivals of the 1980s and 1990s and is the reason why Glasgow Friends of MayDay (GFoMD) was formed 5 years ago. Along with the Glasgow TUC and STUC, it thought it was worth organising a more co-ordinated set of events around International Workers' Day in Glasgow. The first was in 2011, and it has grown every year. Now it reaches out to other parts of Scotland.

The festival events in Glasgow take place in the weeks before and after the Mayday weekend (this year Sat 2-Mon 4) and are organised by a wide variety of union, cultural and campaigning bodies.

The Glasgow TUC continues to organise the increasingly popular MayDay march and Rally on Sunday 3. Starting at the city's George Square, the march will go to rally at the O2 Academy, just over the river

in Eglinton Street. Speakers are still being finalised.

The now hugely successful Great Mayday Cabaret celebrates its third anniversary at Oran Mor on the Mayday Monday (4th) evening. This year's headliner is the celebrated Irish folk singer, Tommy Sands. Also performing are poet Elvis McGonagall, comedians Bruce Morton and Susie McCabe, actress Juliet Cadzow, singers Arthur Johnstone and Siobhan Miller, and musicians Fraser Speirs and Stephen Wright. Dave Anderson will comper.

In addition, the Friends of MayDay have commissioned a rehearsed reading of John and Willy Maley's play, *From the Calton to Catalonia* (which was republished last year by Calton Books). This will start with an appropriate performance in the Calton and go on a small tour during the period including Blantyre Miners' Welfare (1st), Irvine's Harbour Arts centre (2nd) and Oran Mor (3rd).

Love Music, Hate Racism have organised a gig in Glasgow's Old Hairdressers on the evening of May 1st and are also showing the film, *The Clash: Westway to the World*, on Sunday 10 May at the CCA. Discussions are still going on with the Glasgow Film Theatre that may lead to other film showings, but already confirmed is the third in a series of film showings at the CCA organised by a local GMB/Apex Branch. In an attempt to link International Workers' Memorial Day with MayDay, they are showing Ken Loach's *The Navigators* on April 30.

An interesting joint project of Glasgow Museums and Glasgow University plans to get some union and campaign banners out of storage and into local communities where they were based. There people who had a connection to the struggle will tell their story. One is scheduled in Castlemilk

on the afternoon of May 1 based on banners of the local Anti-Poll Tax Union, the Tailors' and Garment Workers' Union (there was a large clothing factory close by) and the ubiquitous Co-operative Women's Guild. Similar events will take place in Barmulloch and Govan later.

A new MayDay tradition of walks through Glasgow's heritage continues, with the Friends of MayDay organising a *Women, War and Rent Strike* walk on Saturday April 25. And the Glasgow Women's Library has one of its *Women of the Merchant City* walks two weeks later (9 May).

Of course established venues often have relevant events – most obviously The Tron's Mayfest festival – an important part of which will be *Rites*, a powerful National Theatre of Scotland/Scottish Refugee Council-backed piece by Cora Bissett on female genital mutilation. David MacLennan's legacy, *A Play, a Pie and a Pint*, also serves up *The War hasn't Started Yet* – a view from modern Russia from May 4-9.

Amongst a number of talks and discussions from the likes of Hope not Hate, and the Scottish Cuba Solidarity Campaign, the ever-interesting Morning Star 'Our Class, Our Culture' series has an intriguing presentation by John Quinn of Glasgow School of Art – *Portraying the Heroes of Red Clydeside* in the STUC on 5 May.

Over the last five years Glasgow Friends of Mayday (GFoMD) has built on the base of the cultural history of the Glasgow labour movement. Now other organisations are joining them.

Chris Bartter is Chairperson of GFoMD. Look out for its 2015 programme (published early April). Tickets for the (Third) Great MayDay Cabaret are on sale now from Oran Mor direct or at <http://www.oran-mor.co.uk/whats-on/great-may-day-cabaret/?eID=11787>



The Charlie Hebdo massacre

David Fowler provides a radical – at root – explanation of the Paris massacre

By strange coincidence one of France's best known novelists, Michel Houellebecq, published *Soumission* on 7 January this year, the same day as the massacre at the satirical weekly, *Charlie Hebdo*. His style has been described as depressive realism but miserabilist is more accurate. His nostalgia for public smoking and Stalinism combines with Islamic fantasie. *Soumission* imagines France under Muslim rule.

Houellebecq and *Charlie Hebdo* consider themselves part of the left of French politics. Hebdo was founded as *Hari Mari Hebdo* in 1968 by those involved in the pre-revolutionary situation that broke out in May of that year. Always virulently anti-establishment, it was banned in 1970 for its mockery of De Gaulle when he died, immediately being relaunched as *Charlie Hebdo*.

Contrary to George Galloway, *Charlie Hebdo* has never been consciously racist. It has exposed the Front National and French fascism in articles that would not have been out of place in *Searchlight*. At the same time, its politics have always been anti-Zionist, but the feature that will be most alien to the British left is the vehemence of its anti-religious stance. This assumes a prominence that it never would in a similar British publication, even though, to be fair, Charlie Hebdo treats all creeds with equal disdain.

To judge by the tone adopted by the 'survivors' issue, it is unlikely that these attitudes will change: the front page once more depicted Mohammed in unflattering terms and its comment of the presence of Hollande, Cameron, Sarkozy and Netanyahu on the demonstration following the attack was 'recupere par les cons' (co-opted by the bastards).

Looking at events from a different angle, we might ask why working class men from a colonial background end up committing such an atrocity against potential allies. The answer lies in French Imperialism and French republicanism.

It says much about the French Republic's fear of religion that women were the last in the western democracies to receive the vote (in 1946). It was denied them on the basis that they were more likely to be under the influence of Catholic priests and, therefore, more inclined to vote for rightwing confessional parties. This was inexcusable even though it is true to say that since 1789 the enemies of democracy had always been a coalition of monarchists and Catholics. Matters reached crisis point with the

Dreyfus affair of 1894 - a Jewish artillery officer was found guilty of selling military secrets to the Germans unleashing wave of anti-Semitism, in which the clergy was prominent. The military refused to back down when it became obvious that another officer was the real culprit. One outcome was a 1905 act passed separating church and state. All Catholic teaching orders were banned, no religious education would take place in state schools, and no religious symbols were allowed in classrooms (like crucifixes on walls or on chains round pupils' necks).

It must also be remembered that France is a relatively recent political construction and not a homogenous ethnic entity. Nice and its environs only became part of France in 1860. Alsace and Lorraine were ceded to Germany in 1870. And, large minorities spoke Breton, Basque or Catalan. Yet primary instruction was in French and secular. French citizens are required to owe allegiance, not to their region or church, but to the state. Furthermore, France has been repeatedly the destination of successive waves of immigration including eastern European Jews, Armenian refugees, Portuguese, Poles, Italians and republican Spaniards

A large part in this assimilation was played by the French educational system. But two other institutions also were at work: the French Communist Party (PCF) and, ironically, the Catholic Church. A further irony is that many of these immigrants felt no discomfort in participating in both while sending their children to state schools. The outcome was that by the 1980s, around 25% of French people were immigrant descendants but often the only indication would be their names.

Obviously, for those brought up as Muslims, the Catholic Church had no attraction. The PCF's decline removed another force for integration. French imperialism suffered a crushing defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, resulting in loss of its Indochina empire and forcing it to concede independence to Morocco and Tunisia along with its colonies elsewhere in Africa.

France, however, decided to hold on to Algeria leading to its War of Independence (1954-1962), with atrocities committed by both sides. Somewhat reluctantly, the PCF mobilised support for the liberation movement while the French Socialist Party formed the government of the time that waged the war. Yet, as late as 1986, the French left was able to mobilise massive

demonstrations against the murder in police custody of student, Abdel Moussekine, arrested while demonstrating against education reforms.

1989 was a crucial point - three schoolgirls were suspended for wearing the hajib, allegedly contravening the 1905 act. Lionel Jospin, former Trotskyite and then education minister, tried to avoid the issue by declaring it was up to schools to decide what action to take on individual basis. This led to prolonged confrontations between teachers claiming to defend secularism and oppose women's oppression and the Muslim community (some of whom reacted by adopting the niqab).

Until then, this female dress was more or less unknown. Before, most immigrants followed the Maliki tradition, a very relaxed form of Islam compared to the puritan Wahhabism that emanated from Saudi. But under its influence and other factors like repeated French interventions in North and central Africa and combined with global events such as the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, militant forms of Islam began to rise in France.

The role of the judicial system here needs recognising. Condemned to unemployment and segregated in large ghettos around Paris, the best the Kouachi brothers could look forward to was delivering pizzas, dope dealing, and intermittent incarceration. With this, France's prisons have become seminaries for violent sectarianism.

Charlie Hebdo sees itself as acting in the tradition of socialist anti-religious propaganda but given the French left has little to offer young French Muslims, today this is perceived as part of the West's attack on Islam. The left needs to ask itself: 'what is the social content of French radical Islam?' We can recall Trotsky's remarks on Marcus Garvey, a West Indian who migrated to the USA in the 1930s and led a mass movement of black Americans wishing to return to Africa. Trotsky drew attention to an incident where racially harassed black woman retorted, 'Just wait till Marcus Garvey takes over'. She was not thinking of the future situation in Africa when she said this. So if the French left is able to paralyse French imperialism, combat racism and unemployment, the worst excesses of Islamic fundamentalism would start to wither away.

David Fowler is studying for a PhD in French at the University of Stirling and is a SSP member

Book Reviews

Empire and Revolution: a socialist history of the First World War,

Dave Sherry, Bookmarks
(9781909026629, £7.99)

Reviewed by Gordon Morgan

This history of the causes, course and aftermath of the 1914 to 1918 war focuses upon the increasing resistance to the war amongst civilians and troops in each of the main protagonist countries and the reasons these revolts were largely contained. The savagery of the warfare and its casualties are described but as a counterpoint to the social and political developments.

It is a readily accessible, concise book (200 pages) with many pertinent referenced quotations. Its fourteen chapters each deal with an aspect of the war and could be rewardingly read separately, perhaps in a study syllabus.

Sherry quickly demolishes several myths propagated by named historians such that the duration and savagery of the war was unforeseen (Engels in 1887 and Warsaw financial analyst, Ivan Bloch, in 1899 both predicted a long war killing millions) or that war was inevitable as one 'side' Germany, was more barbaric and militaristic than the other (given that Britain's butchery in Sudan, Ireland and in the Boer war belie this.) The origins of the war in the imperialist stage of development of capitalism are well argued.

The opposition to war by all the social democratic parties and their leaderships' collapse into actually supporting their war leaders in each of their countries is documented. More significantly the less well known strikes, occupations and mutinies across each country are detailed. Particular attention is given to Maclean, the Glasgow rent strike and the unionisation of women, the shop stewards movement across the UK, and Connelly, the Dublin rising and its international impact.

As the war progressed, opposition grew and these developments in Britain, France, Germany and, of course, Russia are described as are the development of revolutionary currents in each country, notably Germany, Italy and Russia. The

mass revolts, desertions and insurrections which effectively ended the war are described country by country as are the accidents, lack of organisation, illusions, betrayals by union leaders and political representatives and use of force which ultimately prevented the successful spread of revolution beyond Russia. How close European wide revolution was in 1918-1919, even in Britain, has been effectively suppressed. Here, the veil is lifted.

Gordon Morgan is a longstanding member of the Scottish Left Review editorial board

World in Chains: the Impact of Nuclear Weapons and Militarisation from a UK Perspective,

Angie Zelter (editor), Luath, 2014,
9781910021033, £12.99

Reviewed by Malcolm Balfour

I found this to be a very educational and enlightening book. The direction of many of the contributors was interesting. I found both chapters 4 and 7 to have a direct link when you look at both. They appear to have a link to money and military. By this, I mean that in chapter 4 where both industrialisation and the military build-up of nuclear weapons are linked to climate change, we then must look at the reasons behind this for surely it is not only about 'boys and their toys' but more about the rise of big companies who want to dominate the globe in their own fields.

This can be seen in chapter 7 where we learn who really profits from the build-up of WMDs for it is not just individual nations and their leaders that do so but more importantly the companies who supply them for it is no longer countries like North Korea, Israel, India or even Pakistan that we need to fear - it is those who profit that we must worry about because profit now comes before people.

As for the rest of the book, we learn a lot about the problems of people being oppressed in their own countries torture. And, rape and genocide would seem to be the norm in some countries. However, whilst agreeing with many of the points produced in this book and given that all right thinking people would agree that they must be addressed, for me it did not give a clear solution to how we do so.

But perhaps a meeting between the contributor and a pulling of their ideas may result in a book or plan that may point our global masters in the right direction. In conclusion, this is an informative book

but information and education alone do not give all the answers to the problems contained within it.

Malcolm Balfour is an SNP councillor in Glasgow

Scotland's Democracy Trail,

Stuart McHardy and Donald Smith,
Luath, 2014, 9781910021675, £6.99

It was Chick Murray, iconic comedian who spent most of his life in Edinburgh, who coined the phrase, 'The best way to walk', the prescribed method being to place one foot in front of the other. Now you may not believe that such advice could be bettered, especially when walking in that city but it can be simply by carrying a copy of *Scotland's Democracy Trail* with you. McHardy and Smith have provided a compact guide which covers the history and politics of Edinburgh and of Scotland, which will be of enormous interest to both Scots and to visitors to Scotland who wish to understand this country and how it has reached the position in which it now finds itself.

The authors have packed an amazing amount into the 125 pages, which includes a map of the trail as well as 36 photographs, poems, songs and quotations from plays and speeches. In addition, its final pages contain a Timeline from the 16th century to the present day which 'mature' readers - like myself who were taught little of Scottish history - will find useful.

There is so much information within its pages that it would be perhaps be advisable to read the text before setting out on the trail, then have a second look at the appropriate pages while actually on it. And, you may want to make more than one visit, although the distance involved could be covered in a day. So if you come across a wee Glasgow man who, like yourself, is studying the appropriate pages at one of the sixteen locations detailed on the map, it will most likely be me - I can't wait to get going!

Andy Sanders is a former teacher and a lifelong socialist

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Kick up the Tabloids

I am writing this from Australia, where I have been for the past six weeks, performing shows at Fringe festivals in Perth and Adelaide. Despite its stereotypical image abroad, this is a country with a strong radical history. In a country which was built on the slave labour of petty offenders and political dissidents transported here in the nineteenth century, this is not surprising. Indeed, I have yet to meet an Australian who can understand why Scotland voted against independence. Having said that, I have yet to meet an Australian who will admit to having voted for Ozzie Tory PM, Tony Abbott.

Abbott has a fairly low profile internationally, so you may require a brief description of the man. Imagine the beliefs of Margaret Thatcher, the smarm of Tony Blair and the competence of Ed Miliband. Think Nigel Farage without the excuse that he's permanently pissed.

The day I arrived, 26 January, Abbott commemorated Australia Day by giving a knighthood to the Duke of Edinburgh. Quite what a man who is already a prince, a duke, the husband of the current monarch and father of the next needs with a knighthood is anyone's guess. It's a bit like sending Donald Trump a birthday card with a five pound postal order inside.

As I have been out of the country for a month-and-a-half, I have to rely on the BBC World Service, Scotsman website and Sky News to find out what's happening back home. In other words, I haven't a

fucking clue what's really going on.

I did read that Ruth Davidson has proudly been claiming that the Tory vote in Scotland 'is holding up well'. In other words, it's the same as it was. That's a bit like the chairman of Albion Rovers celebrating the same amount of season ticket sales as last year, or Rangers fans saying, 'Brilliant, we're in no more shite than we were yesterday'.

I did read that Scotland's only Tory MP, David Mundell, had been warning of dire consequences of voting SNP in the General Election. He warned us of the danger of electing a 'Rainbow Coalition'. He then made the supposedly witty remark that Alex Salmond would be the 'Zippy' in this 'Rainbow Coalition' to the 'socialism of the two Ed's'. I nearly fell off my seat laughing at that one. Miliband and Balls socialists? Absolutely hilarious!!!

Aside from the weakness of the gag, any Tory making reference to children's TV shows from the 1970s and 1980s is on pretty dangerous ground. At least none of the cast of 'Rainbow' is doing time for child abuse unlike many other popular children's entertainers of the era, all of whom (unless you've forgotten) were supporters of the Tory Party at the time.

While the Tories were warning us 'Vote SNP and get Labour', Labour has been warning us 'Vote SNP and get Tory', rather than the more honest warning of 'Vote Labour and get Tory'. Ed Miliband is clearly gearing up for May, accusing David Cameron of

being a coward for ducking out of a head-to-head and opting to have a debate of all the party leaders. Talk about over-rating yourself. Who would, given the choice of having their policies put under the scrutiny by five of the major political minds in the UK, plus Nick Clegg and Nigel Farage, opt for anything other than trading insults with Mr Bean? Ed's quote of the campaign so far is 'Don't mistake my decency for weakness'. No, we don't, Ed. Nor will we mistake your weakness for decency.

Captain Murphy of the sinking ship that is Scottish Labour was recently trying to bolster the party's coffers, and recruit a new army of foot soldiers by offering party membership for a pound. So, by a modest estimate, Scottish Labour's fighting fund may well have risen by as much as seventy-five quid since the start of the year

Seriously, when parties start offering memberships on the basis of value-for-money, we may as well all give up. That is, of course, if a pound for Labour membership is - indeed - value for money. Think of what else a pound could buy. Two copies of the *Daily Record*, and a cigarette lighter to burn both those copies of the *Daily Record*? Or half-a-dozen eggs to chuck at Jim Murphy when he gets on his soapbox between now and May.

Vladimir McTavish will be hosting a new political show 'So We've Got An Election' at The Stand Comedy Club in Glasgow on Monday 27th April and The Stand in Edinburgh on Wednesday 29 April. See www.thestand.co.uk

DECENT WORK DIGNIFIED LIVES



The blog of the anti-austerity There is a Better Way campaign by STUC staff is about policy issues that are, or should be, in the news. The blog has guest contributors on issues of social justice.

Written from a STUC perspective, contributions will often cover areas where there is yet no settled STUC policy and go into areas in more detail than our formal decisions. We welcome debate here.

See <http://stucbetterway.blogspot.com.es/>



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