

Scottish Left Review

Issue 90 November/December 2015 - £2.00

**Is it the saviour
of socialism?**

**Is it the end
of Labour?**

**No! It's...
SUPER
CORBYN!**



What does Labour's
new leader mean for
the Left in Scotland?

Issue No. 90: 15 years of analysis and debate

ASLEF CALLS FOR AN INTEGRATED, PUBLICLY OWNED, ACCOUNTABLE RAILWAY FOR SCOTLAND

*(which used to be the SNP's position
– before they became the government!)*



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Comment: Ninety, not out

At the risk of sounding ageist, we'd like to proclaim we're 90 editions not out – rather than say we're 90 editions young. Publications and organisations like ours exist and operate on very little in the way of money and bodily resources. Printing, postage and website costs have increased. We have not made a financial appeal in many years. So please consider making a one off or regular donation – take out or give someone a subscription to the magazine as a Christmas gift.

The where, when and how can be found on our website at

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Of course, we still accept cheques by 'snail mail' – see form on page 30.

Okay financial appeal over, let's get down to the politics. Are the wheels coming off the SNP bandwagon or are the gripes just really those of the chattering classes so that next May the SNP will steamroller Labour again? Property deals and difficulties over education and health especially have started to take the shine off the SNP's lustre while many of its 56 MPs have sunk into near oblivion in the public mind.

Yet if the general mood of the public is the Tory Westminster government is the rightful bogeyman then the SNP would still seem to be best placed – in this majority public mind – to fight the Tories. The corollary is that Labour in both Scotland and Britain is still not the opponent it needs to be to change this calculation. But the rub is that the SNP is better at talking the talk than fighting the fight. Yet talking the talk is better than nothing in this mind set. How long will that mind set last?

If the SNP wanted to do more than this, it would need to see itself as more than a centralised parliamentary party. With over 100,000 members (and their families and friends) as well as its modern, high-tech campaigning organisation, could it not think about mobilising these masses to oppose a whole number of Tory acts, ranging from welfare cuts, the Trade Union Bill and letting the steel industry perish? This would supplement any fine speeches in the debating chambers of Edinburgh and London.

Although Nicola Sturgeon was still at school at the time, she should ask the old lags of Alex Salmond, Jim Sillars and Roseanna Cunningham what the 'Group

of 79' was all about given that it sought to organise the 'Scottish resistance' to Thatcher and the Tories, advocating direct action and industrial action to mount that resistance.

An occupation or work-in would be a good start and be more than merely saying that the Scottish government was thinking about nationalisation or forlornly seeking in Westminster for Scotland to be exempted from the Trade Union Bill. But even if this seems a bit farfetched the SNP Scottish Government could be bolder and more radical using existing and new powers, including EU directives to oppose, to delay and mitigate much of the Tories attacks on families and workers.

Scottish Labour's conference in Perth has just taken place as this editorial is penned. After a less than successful British conference on the Trident issue, the advance in Perth is being contested. As the themed articles in this edition attest to, Corbyn has much potential to transform Labour but also much challenge (especially from factions within Labour, especially the Parliamentary Labour Party). Momentum – the new organisation of Corbyn supporters – has its work cut out to help Corbyn and McDonnell get Labour in shape for fighting the 2016 elections on a successful and radical basis.

There have certainly been a few teething problems for Corbyn and McDonnell so far. All of these will be easily forgotten if they not only do better in responding to the Tories but even more critically take their own policy initiatives and start mobilising their supporters outside parliament into a visible fighting force. Of course, Momentum has a role to play here but it is not the meetings it has or its behind-closed-door actions that will count. Rather it will be the campaigns, the numbers attracted to them and what leverage they develop that will be critical in overturning austerity.

Corbyn and McDonnell need to get their skates on – let's see what comes out of the Labour Assembly Against Austerity in London in mid-November. But surely, there are no shortages of ideas given Corbyn's leadership campaign itself, the deployment of radical tax expert, Richard Murphy, and the move of Andrew Fisher from head of policy at the PCS union to head of policy for Corbyn. Indeed, Murphy is a voluminous writer and Fisher recently published the book, *The Failed Experiment: And How to Build an Economy That Works*.

To use former US president, Lyndon Baines Johnson's, salty phrase, they need become quickly well versed 'in farting and chewing gum at the same time' in terms of taking initiatives to counter-balance the obvious reactions they have to make to government policies and actions (as well as the attacks on them).

Here in Scotland, Dugdale seems to have sensed the way the wind is blowing so she is more likely to have to move towards Corbyn than vice-versa. Time will tell whether it will be enough though but trying to reluctantly follow Corbyn will not be sufficient as that will lack the killer instinct needed to take on the SNP.

What does all this mean for the rest of the left? The battle for next May is a peach coloured fight for sure. The Greens, RISE, Solidarity and maybe assorted others will all battle to say give us your second vote as it will be wasted on the SNP given the D'Hondt method used (where parties winning more constituency seats are precluded from winning so many of the list seats). Voters decided to do this in 2003, resulting in the 'rainbow' parliament. It seems the Greens are best placed to benefit from this while others still face the challenge of brand recognition and political credibility. The ripples from Greece (Syria's capitulation) and Spain (Podemo's waning star) do not augur well.

Our on-theme articles consider many of these issues while our off-theme ones look at a variety of hardy perennials from class and nation to workers' rights and modern apprenticeship.

Pen-ultimately, we are delighted that the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, is to give the third annual Jimmy Reid Foundation lecture at the University of Glasgow (see p15 of this edition). She will address the issue of workers' rights as human rights which takes on added importance with the third reading of the Trade Union Bill just beforehand. The lecture is already overbooked but there may be some return of tickets. There will also be a livestream of the lecture to the STUC headquarters with a debate following this. Please visit the Jimmy Reid Foundation website (<http://reidfoundation.org/>) for the details of these.

We wish all our readers/supporters a good festive break when it comes and we'll see you again early next year.

Labour is the only Britain wide anti-austerity party now

John McDonnell calls for the winds of change to blow away cobwebs of the old politics

This summer marked a paradigm shift in Labour's recent history and British politics. Jeremy's election represents a change in the party which, to be frank, no-one would have predicted a year ago. But no-one should be under any illusions about the origins of his win.

It wasn't simply about his undoubtedly persuasive and polite demeanour and his inspiring campaign. Rather, it was a win that reflects the huge desire for change and hope across Britain.

That is why as Shadow Chancellor I have the huge honour of developing Labour's economic policy and vision that rejects austerity. I intend to deliver on that by working alongside Jeremy, colleagues in Parliament, and across the whole Labour membership and wider movement.

Our economic vision is clear - to balance the country's finances by ending the unfair tax cuts to the wealthy, opposing austerity, tackling tax evasion and avoidance and investing for growth. To make these plans a reality, I'm bringing together an expert panel of leading economists including Danny Blanchflower, former Bank of England Monetary Policy committee member, and the Nobel Prize winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz, to test and test again our fully costed plans.

Having this unstinting vision is quite clearly resonating with people. Since Jeremy ran for leader, the numbers joining increased dramatically, with new sign-ups equating to more than the entire Conservative Party membership. Those numbers still continue to grow. Many are young people who represent the future of Labour. Jeremy is aiming for one million members. I think we can do it.

Of course, we want to restore the faith many Scottish people once had in Labour but has now dwindled. But we also want those on the left who were inspired by the referendum campaign last year to remember they have a place in Labour still, and that they can use that energy to achieve our shared socialist aims.

After all, the history of the Labour left and Labour in Scotland are intertwined - from Keir Hardie to Jennie Lee and

Tam Dalyell. Although, the debate has moved on since last year, the desire for a better nation has not.

Therefore people who share with us many of the same values should know they have a space to express these views. Enabling that space means that we need to get back to being more like the movement that created our party and being interwoven across all our communities and civic society. This is why Jeremy and I were pleased to launch Momentum last month - a grassroots network organically born out of Jeremy's leadership campaign.

Momentum intends to be a gateway for people who feel unsure or want to know more about joining Labour yet still want to stand with us and campaign on shared causes. It calls on people to organise in every town, city and community in the campaign for social justice. I urge anyone who wants to get rid of the Tories and build that better society we all know is possible to get involved.

So, if the SNP is serious about tackling poverty and challenging austerity, I call on it to fix the Scottish NHS

However, we must point out flaws wherever we find them and yes that means a focus on the Tories at Westminster but it also means that we cannot ignore the failings of - and the choices made - by the Scottish Government either.

In Scotland, like elsewhere, Labour has traditionally been seen as the vehicle for transformative change. Yet somewhere along the line we have badly disappointed people. This disappointment hardened after the referendum, culminating in May's electoral catastrophe.

Our job now, working alongside our excellent and energetic new Scottish

leader, Kezia Dugdale, is to inspire people and to regain our vigour again as the party of progress that is for the many, not the few.

Our catastrophe was matched by the SNP's triumph. Its apparent stance on austerity came through clearly in the same way the Tories 'long term economic plan' cheap slogan did.

I honestly welcome a genuine anti-austerity SNP in Scotland but I challenge it to stick by its word on this. The truth is the SNP's record is coming under increasing scrutiny. It welcomes Tory cuts to corporation tax while proclaiming its anti-austerity credentials.

It needs to put its rhetoric into action. For example, will it now support Kezia's stance on using the new powers over taxation at the Scottish Parliament to mitigate the impact of Tory cuts to tax credits on working people?

We are clear we want to redistribute wealth and rebalance our economy. Whereas, the SNP despite having the power and the ability to turn rhetoric into reality - has not introduced one redistributive policy in eight years.

So, if the SNP is serious about tackling poverty and challenging austerity, I call on it to fix the Scottish NHS, which Audit Scotland say is under so much pressure. I call on it to reinvest the money it has taken out of colleges and ensure young people - and those seeking to re-train and start again from the most deprived areas - get the opportunities others receive. Likewise I call on it to sort the widening educational attainment gap between Scottish children, which we know is all too often determined by the socio-economic circumstances of our children.

If it doesn't then perhaps the SNP's anti-austerity stances is just games that reflects the old politics - spin and deception in order to gain one over your opponent. Only time will tell. But time is not on the side of people who need change the most. That is why if you want to oppose austerity then you must stand with and help strengthen the only British-wide anti-austerity party.

John McDonnell MP is Shadow Chancellor

How the contest was won

Martyn Cook and Tommy Kane provide an anatomy of Corbyn's challenge

When it was announced Jeremy Corbyn's campaign to become Labour leader was successful, there were hardened campaigners and elected representatives overcome with emotion. They have given literally decades of their life to winning Labour to a socialist agenda, suffering defeats and insults from others (both inside and outside Labour) and being made to believe that what they were doing was pointless. So it was no surprise that many were crying with happiness, and not a little sense of vindication.

Corbyn becoming leader isn't enough in itself, of course. One leadership election is not enough to change society, nor even Labour, but it does present a significant break with recent tradition and opens up numerous opportunities for socialists to make gains. To put the scale of the victory in to some sort of context, the last time the right was as concerned about a leadership election was Tony Benn running in 1981. Even then, it has to be remembered that this was only for the *deputy* leadership, and that Benn had served in the Cabinet, unlike Corbyn who has resolutely remained on the backbenches and has broken the whip more than any other Labour MP (but always on the basis of principle and always with thoughtful explanation about why he made the decision that he did).

As a result we now have a leader (and shadow chancellor) who are openly anti-austerity and pro-public ownership and who are articulating a vision of a rebalanced economy that invests in our people to create jobs paid for in part through more progressive taxation and tackling the scandal of tax avoidance and evasion. This is the new brand of Labour politics, the paradigm shift if you like, that will occur as a consequence of Jeremy's election as Labour leader. It is worth examining how we got here, and why this campaign was so successful.

We should start by thanking Eric Joyce. His drunken head-butt in Westminster's Stranger's Bar started the chain of events that caused a selection procedure in Falkirk, which led to (unjustified) accusations of illegal interference from Unite and which eventually resulted in the Collins Review and a move from the electoral college system to 'One Member One Vote' (OMOV) and the registered supporters scheme.

It is not an irony lost on either wing

of the party that changes brought in at the behest of the right, designed to dilute the power of the unions, and broadly opposed by the left may have ultimately led to the success of the Corbyn campaign. Under these new rules, the first hurdle for the fledgling campaign was simply getting Corbyn on to the ballot paper. Despite the promotion of OMOV as enhancing democracy, there is little doubt that it was meant to be a democratic process that was controlled by the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) in so far as it was to be the gatekeeper which decided who got on the ballot paper. In other words, it was supposed to prevent someone like Jeremy ever getting on the ballot.

The rules compel 15% of the PLP (in this instance, 35 MPs), to nominate a candidate to secure a place on the ballot. As noted, given the PLP's gatekeeping role, this was always going to be difficult. Let's remember John McDonnell's leadership attempts saw him fail to secure sufficient nominations. That was compounded by Corbyn being comparatively late to announce his bid, which meant many MPs had already declared for their preferred candidate, leaving limited scope for gaining the required support. Behind the scenes, ordinary members, who wanted a genuine left-wing candidate, began to mobilise via social media. Contact details for MPs still to declare were drawn up, and members within their local areas were encouraged to email, phone, tweet and message them with arguments for nominating Corbyn. Several MPs subsequently stated that they were bombarded with messages and gave their nominations as a result of this effective social media campaign.

From here, the serious groundwork began. A central campaign team began lobbying unions for support, and set up a network of regional organisers. In Scotland, we already had significant levels of experience; the Scottish Labour Campaign for Socialism group had been central in helping build the Neil Findlay and Katy Clark Scottish leadership campaigns at the end of 2014. Although unsuccessful in those races, it built the foundations for Jeremy's campaign just a few months later. Not least by giving many new, young volunteers experience and a network of contacts across the country that would help quickly mobilise an effective campaign.

Street stalls to sign up new members and register supporters were held across the country, as were phone banks to speak to thousands of individuals who had a vote. The unions backing Corbyn encouraged their members to opt-in to the leadership election and use their democratic right to help select the new leader.

This groundswell of grassroots activity was complimented by an inspirational message for change from Corbyn himself. Instead of engaging in negative or personal attacks, the campaign spoke explicitly about socialist ideas in an open, positive and persuasive way, catching the eye of many younger people who were hearing these ideas for the first time as well as making many, who had become jaded with Labour's rightward shift, to look again at Labour and either join or become registered supporters.

A key point in the campaign was the Welfare Reform Bill vote on 20 July. The other candidates abstained, and subsequently dug themselves a deeper hole in trying to justify their absurd position; Corbyn took a clear and principled position. After this point, many voting in the contest, and in the wider public, began to realise that Corbyn was presenting a genuine alternative, and one that so many have been looking for, for so long.

In August, a series of public rallies were announced across Scotland, and were sold out within hours of being advertised. Venues had to be upgraded to meet demand, which in itself was a sign of just how much Corbyn's ideas had caught the imagination. It was remarkable that so many people, both party members and non-members, were turning out to hear a politician speak as part of an internal Labour election.

This culminated in packed rally at the Old Fruitmarket in Glasgow. By this point comparisons were being made to the 'yes' campaign in the referendum – in that people were becoming inspired by a positive campaign of hope that they saw had the potential to be a vehicle for change.

There was definitely commonality, but there were also fundamental differences. An indicator of this was the fact that our rallies didn't end with renditions of *Caledonia* or *Flower of Scotland*, but with *the Red Flag* and *the Internationale*. In contrast to narrow discussions on the constitution, or attempts to smuggle in left-wing

ideas to the essentially nationalist programme of the 'yes' campaign, Jeremy's campaign was inspired by class politics, which was openly and explicitly at the heart of all that was being done.

On 12 September the results were announced. With almost 60% of first preference votes (and not taking in to account all the second preference votes that Corbyn would have received) there was no doubt that there was still socialist life in Labour. For so long suppressed due to a combination of wider societal events and the disproportionately influential MPs of the PLP, there was a now a genuine sense of grassroots members regaining control of their party.

Before the night was out there were discussions taking place (over numerous celebratory drinks) about how best to harness the energy that had been unleashed. In the months since the result, discussions have been taking place with left groups in Labour, such as the Campaign for Socialism, to build a broad coalition. We all know that one leader, as significant as Corbyn's win was, is not enough.

Now we have to organise both inside Labour to bring about genuine democratic structures that will reflect



the views of members and affiliated supporters, and also reach out to groups and social justice campaigns outside Labour. The ultimate aim is to build a genuine mass movement that can challenge the orthodoxy of the past 30 odd years and present an alternative vision with socialism as its essential terms of reference.

The recently announced organisation, Momentum, is beginning to form these structures and links. Although in its formative stages, it emerged from Corbyn's campaign (though remains separate to him) and will continue beyond his term of office. Anyone seeking to support this initiative, and join in what is one of the most

exciting prospects for the left in a generation, should sign up at <http://peoplesmomentum.com> and follow on Twitter (@peoplesmomentum) and Facebook (facebook.com/peoplesmomentum).

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Kez + Jez = something spezial?

Laying out her step plan, Lesley Brennan says Jez achieved the impossible so why can't Kez?

Corbyn won with a huge mandate by standing by his principles, offering mainstream Labour thinking, (which included re-distribution and public ownership) in clear contrast to both Tories and SNP. He recognises Labour cannot win in Scotland without change; and Labour cannot have a path back to power in 2020 that fails to speak to Scotland. Interestingly, a poll reported in the *Guardian* stated: 'more than a third of people who voted for the SNP in the general election say they are more likely to vote for Labour now Jeremy is the leader'. This all sounds great but how does Scottish Labour fit in?

Scottish Labour is in a peculiar place following the defeats of 2010 and 2011, the referendum, the 2015 wipe-out, the lengthy and tetchy UK leadership campaign, and umpteen Scottish leadership contests. Thus, Kezia Dugdale has a colossal challenge of inspiring and leading party members whilst recognising that many are experiencing burn-out and becoming detached from the Scottish party.

Kezia working constructively with Jeremy can facilitate change in the Scottish party. Jeremy is an authentic leader, meaning that he is self-aware, genuine, confident, self-assured and is highly committed to his values. Kezia shares many of these attributes but can still learn from his leadership style. So here are my step-by-step prescriptions on how Kez, with a light touch of Jez, can achieve the almost impossible task of resuscitating the Scottish Labour Party.

Step 1 - the path to Scottish Labour's current position has been long and winding so there needs to be realistic expectations for May 2016. It will take at least another five years to build a solid base before Scottish Labour can defeat the SNP at Holyrood.

Step 2 - many Scottish members, who were very active in Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaign, took very little interest in the last Scottish one even though we had been actively involved in previous one supporting Neil Findlay. I do feel members – me included – ought to overcome our own ambivalent attachment to Kezia.

Step 3 - Kezia ought to be given an opportunity to develop as an authentic leader assuming she addresses the fundamental problems within the Party, such as the fractures, the burnout, and works to resolve these. Healing the party requires building resilience.

Step 4 - individuals and organisations that demonstrate commitment to their values through their behaviours are more resilient. Unfortunately, over recent years, the electorate and Party members have questioned the Labour Party's values as it has not always acted in accordance with these. The ray of hope is Jeremy's election, which demonstrates members and supporters want a Labour Party that is committed to its core values whilst aiming to win 2020.

Step 5 - Jeremy and his team understand the importance of building a broad consensus to deliver a decent society, which was demonstrated by the inclusion in his plan that 'Labour must become the party of economic credibility AND economic justice'. Kezia must engage with members in a values clarification exercise in order

to ensure that going forward the Party's actions and priorities are in line with agreed values. These values will underpin our purpose including policy priorities and electoral goals. Having a clear sense of purpose similar to Corbyn's plan will help motivate activists and win back voters.

Step 6 - autonomy encourages motivation but we need autonomy to strengthen our Party and Jeremy is supportive of this. Autonomy is critical for our survival especially over policy as it will strengthen our political position with respect to our opponents, and we may develop different policies on issues such as welfare and Trident from the UK Party. To ensure policy documents reflect the membership, increased democracy is needed.

Step 7 - Kezia, with Jeremy's help, needs to heal a fractured party. A party that is divided will never succeed and to win a majority in 2020 and 2021. To increase Party unity, in addition to clarifying our values, concerns and comments need to be raised and heard, such as at conference and policy meetings. This will help strengthen our commitment to the Party.

With people feeling discontent with politics and looking for change, this has had some in Scotland become obsessed with where the powers lie. I believe Kezia can overcome this by tapping into Momentum, which consists of trade unionists, campaigners and activists, to strengthen our Party and the labour movement.

It may seem an impossible task for Kezia to turn around Scottish Labour; however, a few months ago, it seemed that Jeremy had an impossible task!

Scottish Labour needs to end its downward trajectory.

Kezia needs to develop as an authentic leader and learn from Jeremy. With strong guidance, Scottish Labour can start to regain support by having a clear sense of purpose, autonomy and unity.

Lesley Brennan a Labour councillor in Dundee and contributor to the forthcoming third edition of 'Is there a Scottish road to socialism?'



Challenges for Corbynmania in Scotland

Doubting whether Corbyn will turn around Scottish Labour, Daniel Kenealy nonetheless sees a way forward.

Many believe that the election of Corbyn should turn the tide of Scottish Labour's fortunes. The party has witnessed a devastating collapse in support since the independence referendum, losing all but one of its 41 MPs at the May 2015 general election. The story of Labour's decline in Scotland has, by now, been quite well analysed. The Scottish electorate stopped listening to it, but why? The answer is a complex one that blends short-term dynamics with longer-term ones, and that mixes SNP pull factors and Labour push factors.

It was Labour that established the Scottish Parliament in 1999 and emerged as the most powerful political force in this new political landscape, leading coalition governments for eight years. But, having created Holyrood, Labour had no narrative about the purpose of devolution. Through its years in office it failed to cultivate a reputation for competent government. In parallel, UK Labour, of which Scottish Labour was so often seen – and often treated – as a mere branch office, was moving firmly to the right in government.

The SNP was all-too-happy to step into the vacuum. Following the first Holyrood elections, it became the political opposition on the devolved political landscape. With the public perception that the SNP was a battler for Scottish interests, an advocate for more powers for Holyrood, and a competent government in waiting, the SNP took office in 2007. In the 2011 Holyrood elections the issue

was once again competence, and the SNP triumphed once more, this time with an unthinkable majority. With defeat in the much anticipated independence referendum, it was understandable many began to wonder if 2011 was the SNP's high watermark. Alas, it was not. Having been defeated in the voting booths, the SNP won the aftermath. The referendum acted as a catalyst, further territorialising Scottish politics. It brought to the forefront of many voters' minds the question, 'who will best defend Scotland's interests in a devolved UK?'

That Labour joined forces in the referendum campaign with the Tories in 'Better Together' served to further alienate many of its identifiers, feeding the notion that the party was 'Tory-lite'. The referendum also catalysed another trend, namely the SNP's growing reputation – and it can only be called a reputation, as their record in government does not substantiate it – as the party perceived to be at the heart of progressive politics and social justice.

Attitudes data reveal SNP supporters are more to the left (although not markedly so) than Scottish Labour supporters, which creates a puzzle. Why are voters with left-wing attitudes backing a party that has introduced so few progressive, left-wing policies in government? The answer is that, in politics, perception and narrative matter just as much as policy.

Scottish Labour's challenge now is a complicated one. Partially, as Kezia Dugdale has pointed out, it has to gain the ear of the electorate again. But beyond this are some more concrete requirements. First, it has to regain a reputation for competence – often very difficult to do as an opposition party. Second, it must convince the electorate it has sufficient autonomy to do what a majority believes the SNP does – stand up for Scotland's interests within Britain. Third, and perhaps most tricky, is it has to understand the dynamics of Scottish social attitudes and public opinion, and craft policy accordingly. So let's call it the CAP (Competence, Autonomy, Policy) challenge. Will Corbyn have an impact?

Probably less of an impact than many might think, or hope.

On competence it is really for Dugdale and her Holyrood frontbenchers to do the hard work. If Corbyn continues to preside over a shadow cabinet riven with disagreement, and a broader parliamentary party containing many who would rather see him deposed, then he may do a rather bizarre service to Scottish Labour in making them positively competent by comparison. But that is hardly the impact Labour supporters are hoping for. Dugdale needs to get Scottish Labour focused on recruiting articulate, creative, and ambitious candidates for Holyrood. If that cannot be done in time for 2016 then she should start at the grassroots with the 2017 local elections and build from there. Ultimately, the perception of competence will return to Scottish Labour through a mixture of SNP mistakes, new Scottish Labour talent, and a clear and coherent message from Scottish Labour.

That Labour joined forces in the referendum campaign with the Tories in 'Better Together' served to further alienate many of its identifiers, feeding the notion that the party was 'Tory-lite'.

On autonomy, Corbyn has said of Dugdale, 'She's the boss'. The greatest service he can do for Scottish Labour is to act as if he means that. The early signs are positive but the work must continue. Dugdale's vision of Scottish Labour in which grassroots members, working through local parties, can develop policy is the right vision. But how the Scottish Policy Forum interacts with the National Policy Forum remains a thorny issue.



Whilst the idea of a fully independent Scottish Labour Party has not been taken up, a mechanism has to be found to allow Scottish Labour politicians, including MPs (presuming in the future that there are some), to back distinctly Scottish Labour policies even on non-devolved issues and even when they contradict the UK Labour line. Corbyn can have his biggest impact on Scottish Labour simply by recognising this challenge and taking it seriously.

On policy, the challenge is greatest, because the data available reveals the incredibly messy and complex interaction between left-wing attitudes and attitudes towards independence. By May 2015 90% of those voting 'Yes' in the referendum backed the SNP (about 40% of whom were Labour voters in 2010). Winning back individuals who clearly want to leave Britain is a tall order for a unionist party and it is hard to see how Corbyn could help here. Dugdale's attempt to diffuse the issue, by saying Labour members could choose how to vote in a second independence referendum, has been hailed by some as shrewd but risks looking like opportunism and the abandonment of principle for electoral reward.

But there is more to the policy challenge than the constitution. Scottish Labour has been outflanked by the SNP on the left, but perhaps not quite in the way that it thinks it has. British Election Study data shows those who voted Labour in 2010, but who have moved to the SNP since the referendum, are both more in favour of equality in society and more likely to think that the SNP is the party to deliver that. Nearly three-quarters of those lost voters favour income redistribution and three-quarters of them saw the SNP as delivering that (versus slightly less than half who felt the same about Labour).

Surely Corbyn must help on this front by shifting the perception of Labour in a left direction? Yes, in the broad sense that it makes it nigh impossible for the SNP to paint Labour as 'Tory-lite'. But the battleground for Scottish Labour now ought to be Scottish politics and devolved public policy. And here it must be remembered that Scotland is not crying out for a socialist policy agenda. The facile notion that Corbyn's socialism will speak directly to many more people in Scotland than it will in the rest of the UK simply has no basis in the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey. Indeed, a good working hypothesis is that many are supporting the SNP because it makes them feel as though

they are supporting progressive principles without having to make any of the sacrifices that go with it.

The job of positioning Scottish Labour should fall to Dugdale, not Corbyn. If it does not then Scottish Labour will be failing their autonomy challenge. What Scottish Labour needs to do is develop a clear narrative that both encapsulates the policy failures of the SNP and, at the same time, begins to put the case for Scottish Labour.

I am no political strategist but, for what it is worth, the message should be about the SNP being all style and no substance when it comes to progressivity, equality, and fairness, and Labour is where the authenticity is. This should be coupled with a new and open mode of policymaking that harnesses much of the enthusiastic energy uncorked by the independence referendum.

What of other forces on the left of Scottish politics? It remains too early to say exactly what Corbyn's impact will be. The empirical data simply does not give us the basis to reach any firm conclusions. However, it's hard to see Corbyn having much impact here. The polling evidence suggests new movements such as RISE (Respect, Independence, Socialism,

Environmentalism), and the more established Solidarity Scotland, are failing to break through in any significant way, and the notion of a Syriza-style coup is fanciful. Given that the British Election Study confirms that those on the far left were the ones most disappointed with the referendum result, it is hard to see the unionist Corbyn attracting them.

The Scottish Greens remain a different proposition with polls suggesting they could snatch several list seats from Scottish Labour. Their leader, Patrick Harvie, continues to be a well-regarded figure although anecdotal evidence suggests that Corbyn's leadership has proven attractive to Green party supporters in England. A similar dynamic could be replicated in Scotland; it's too early to tell.

Scottish Labour faces many challenges and must play a long game if it is to govern again from Holyrood. The challenges are not impossible to meet but, as Scottish Labour begins the task, it may be advisable to proceed largely ignoring the unpredictable, and potentially short-lived, Corbyn factor. *Daniel Kenealy is a lecturer at the University of Edinburgh's Academy of Government.*



Corbyn challenges cosy consensus

Tom Mills argues the media has meted out special treatment for the 'enemy inside'

At the beginning of October the Complaints Committee of Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) – the sham regulatory body set up by the big news corporations in response to, and deviance of, Leveson – ruled on a complaint from Ivan Lewis MP. The Labour right-winger had featured in a *Telegraph* front page story on 15 August with the headline 'Labour grandees round on 'anti-Semite' Corbyn'.

The offending article quoted from his *New Statesman* op-ed the previous day. In it, he had written Labour needed 'a leader who can build a new vision' so it could 'hold the Tories to account for their attacks on working and vulnerable people'. His proposed visionaries were Liz Kendall, Yvette Cooper and Andy Burnham, in that order - anyone but Jeremy, whom he accused of being soft on anti-Semitism.

Lewis had not though, he noted in his complaint, actually accused Corbyn himself of antisemitism as the *Telegraph* implied. IPSO upheld the complaint, ruling the article was 'significantly misleading', thus breaching of Clause 1 of the Editors' Code of Practice, which states the press 'must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information'.

It was a curious ruling in some ways because though plainly misleading, the article was not in the least bit unusual. Taking the same standards applied by IPSO, and examining coverage of Corbyn's campaign and his subsequent Labour leadership, would lead to the conclusion the media has cheerfully violated its

most basic ethical and professional standards on an industrial scale.

Most of us are too weary to be outraged by the political and moral depravity of the press. But if we take the professed values of the media seriously – *Guardian* and *BBC* included – then what we have witnessed is remarkable.

The overall message seems to have been Corbyn and his supporters – who make up the majority of Britain's largest political party – are simply beyond the pale. This is not just a question of unfavourable coverage. One can disagree with Corbyn and his supporters. There has been a general failure to engage in any serious way with the policy ideas they advocate.

Many of the Corbyn and his allies' views and positions have been attacked and ridiculed are based in international law or mainstream macroeconomics. A good number have significant public support, and some are completely uncontroversial. This has led to some curious lines of attack. One article, by the *Telegraph's* political editor, Peter Dominiczak, in September, for example, reported Corbyn 'appeared to blame George Bush and Tony Blair for using the September 11 attacks in New York to allow them to go to war'. This, he suggested 'raise[d] questions about his suitability to lead' Labour.

A BBC *Panorama* programme broadcast shortly before Corbyn was elected blamed him for the death of British troops in Iraq, despite Cooper and Burnham voting for the illegal war, and Corbyn against. The BBC's rationale was that a conference in Cairo, which

it transpired Corbyn had not even attended, affirmed the right of Iraqis to resist occupation – a right which happens to be recognised in the Geneva conventions.

Corbyn has been attacked for opposing the renewal of Trident despite the UK being a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which commits signatories to undertaking 'effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament', and steps towards 'complete disarmament'.

Corbyn has also been attacked for lamenting the extra-judicial execution of Osama Bin Laden, despite his arguing Bin Laden should have instead stood trial being in clear accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Bin Laden smear was echoed by Cameron in his Tory conference speech so it's important to recognise the media is not operating in isolation here. There has been two-way traffic with the 'political class', with much of the ammunition coming from MPs like Ivan Lewis. The corporate friendly, pro-war faction of Labour seems as yet unwilling to concede defeat handed out by democracy to it.

The reaction of the news media to Corbyn's rise has to be understood in this broader context. The corporate press is by its nature hostile to more democratic and egalitarian politics, and in that respect its reaction is not in the least bit surprising.

The BBC is supposed to be impartial and the *Guardian* is, by reputation, left-wing. Yet both have looked not to 'civil society' to define reasonable boundaries of politics, but to the state and the cluster of corporate friendly institutions and networks in and around it. The hold these networks have over Labour suddenly, and unexpectedly, collapsed this year.

Tom Mills has a PhD in sociology from the University of Bath where he works as a researcher. His thesis examined how the end of social democracy and rise of neoliberalism impacted on the BBC. His forthcoming book on this is published by Verso in 2016. He is a former New Left Project editor.



Corbyn and the anti-austerity movement

Phil McGarry and Keith Stoddart welcome the Corbyn advance but worry about duplication of efforts

The People's Assembly had some 100,000 folk marching past the Tory conference in Manchester on 4 October followed by a week of meetings, concerts, comedy nights all full with people calling for an end to the government's policies of austerity. Scotland with its own STUC supported demo in Dunfermline the day before made it clear that the country was against austerity regardless of whether it emanated from Holyrood, Westminster or even Brussels. Tories at their conference were left in no doubt that the People's Assembly was the leading anti-austerity group throughout Britain.

These activities were building on earlier demos held in London, Glasgow and Swansea capitalising and channelling people's anger at what was happening both to them and their communities. These demos led to an explosion of local campaigns on a variety of issues that were causing concern and fear for working class people.

There are campaigns opposing the wholesale sell off of housing estates, cuts to benefits and local services, ending of working tax credits for many, job losses, end of school bus services, education, the fight for peace and against fracking, all in some way relating back to the struggle against austerity. It seemed that there was no issue large or small, local or national that did not have a grouping either promoting or fighting against it.

The People's Assembly, building on the earlier demands of the People's Charter, brought together these activists and the wider union and labour movement. Together they have become the political counter offensive to the war being waged on our class by the forces of capitalism largely, led by the Tory party (but aided and abetted by an assortment of others including those who supported 'new' Labour).

So-called 'anti-austerity' policies with attacks on the poor's income and workers' rights to organise in protection of their interests via the 'Trade Union Bill' are their current weapons of choice. It is opposition to these actions that is the People's Assembly's frontline fight for the coming period.

We believe Corbyn's victory,



unexpected as it was, has immeasurably helped us in this. The panic in both 'new' Labour and Tory elites along with their friends in the banks and financial institutions is not only because Corbyn won but why he won.

Corbyn is not part of these elites despite being a long term parliamentarian - he has always stayed true to his beliefs, working locally while thinking globally. With his work within CND, international solidarity movements alongside continuous support for unions and the wider labour movement in the struggle for change and justice, he stands apart from many in the Parliamentary Labour Party.

His candidature characterised by simplicity and clarity of message clearly ignited a latent resentment to the perpetual spin of the wealthy and their representatives with their justifications for inequality. In other words, Corbyn made class and class inequality an issue.

As he put it: 'Since the dawn of history in virtually every human society there are some people who are given a great deal and many more people who are given little or nothing. Some people have property and power, class and capital, status and clout which are denied to the many'.

In saying this, he exposed one of the fundamental illusions of capitalism, namely, that we're not all in this together and that neither national identity nor middle class aspiration can deny the fundamental structuring of society that allows an elite immiserate

the majority.

During his campaign he correctly argued austerity is not an economic necessity, it's a political choice. He promised a real living wage; Labour would force Starbucks, Vodafone, Amazon and Google etc. to pay their fair share of taxes; there would be cuts to subsidies paid to companies taking money but not providing the jobs; and there would be cuts to the billion pound tax breaks given to buy to let landlords for repairing their properties, whether they undertake the repairs or not.

However, Corbyn's problem is that most of those who sit behind him in parliament will have no truck with much of his programme. At present, they are waiting for the opportunity to discredit him aided by their allies in the capitalist press and in business elsewhere by whom Corbyn is seen as a threat.

Corbyn recognises this and calls upon his supporters to remain engaged with politics locally building grassroots campaigns to support those in parliament. This is interesting - not because it is wrong to build up community supports - but because rather than directing those new activists towards the People's Assembly he has set about creating a new organisation Momentum.

It is being launched in an attempt to keep the army of volunteers that had developed throughout the leadership campaign engaged and probably also in the hope that they will become full Labour members rather than

supporters. A political party seeking to recruit members from its supporters is not unusual and its part of what they do.

What is unusual is that it plans for Momentum to become a social movement similar to the people's movements. But rather than a loose arrangement where people come in and out often based on specific issues, Momentum intends to be a membership organisation with branches, campaigning against national and local cuts, promoting voter registration and encouraging members to develop local campaigning initiatives.

All of this would appear to duplicate the work already being done on the ground by local People's Assemblies in partnership at least in Scotland with local Trades Union Councils and major unions.

Momentum's organiser Jon Lansman in the *Morning Star* describes it as 'the biggest movement of the organised left for decades and that it will 'create a space for debate and creative solutions'.

Somewhat tellingly he also said policy would be "debated and agreed in a democratic Labour Party". So not with the wider labour movement but within a Labour party made more democratic by increasing the membership through their involvement in Momentum.

The plan is to begin campaigning on local issues inside and outside Labour with Momentum's intention to act nationally as an umbrella organisation for local groups across the country. However Momentum does not plan to have any formal links with other organisations, although it will work with other campaign groups and trade unions on issues like TTIP and the Trade Union Bill.

This is unfortunate as the anti-austerity movement is not the property of one party. The People's Assembly's success in mobilising across divisions against those actually implementing austerity and the cuts shows this. This is its greatest strength - it has been able to do this by remaining unaligned to any party. In Scotland, it took no position on the independence referendum recognising that there is not a YES or NO anti-austerity campaign only the campaign against austerity.

In Scotland, we have seen in local government a limited 'Corbyn effect' with some councillors perhaps emboldened by his victory showing themselves willing to engage albeit in a limited way with unions and the People's Assembly. Often this is to discuss how to lessen the impact of the cuts rather than opposing them but it's a start and one that we can build upon.

We see MSPs and other elected members from Labour and perhaps more significantly the SNP joining in demonstrations and actions organised by the People's Assembly. No doubt Labour members whose spirits were lifted by Corbyn's victory are now more able to push their representatives into beginning some form of challenge to cuts has helped this.

SNP members are now no longer able to claim the moral high ground of being Scotland's anti-austerity party and are fearful that a Corbyn-led party will challenge the Scottish Government's own record of support for the politics of austerity and cuts while not being written off as 'Red Tories'.

In Westminster, the Tories are not now having the easy ride they enjoyed under 'new' Labour. So his victory will help those opposing the attacks on working people not least by the fact that he presents an alternative to what has become the established orthodoxy (even though Momentum may pose some issues for the wider anti-austerity campaign). That we have had to rely on the Lords to challenge the changes to tax credits shows however there is still much for our movement to do.

Phil McGarry is the Chair and Keith Stoddart the Secretary of the People's Assembly Scotland

Corbyn's challenge: to survive and prosper

Eric Shaw looks at the challenges of leadership

Can Corbyn survive? And if so, can he provide effectively leadership - for he may linger on but lack the capacity to place his imprint firmly on party policy, strategy and organisation. These are the two questions this article will address. I will briefly address the first question before moving on, in more detail, to the second.

How secure is Corbyn's leadership? He was elevated to Labour's highest office with a huge democratic mandate which greatly strengthened his legitimacy. Further protection is afforded by the rules governing a leadership challenges. Triggering a contest requires 20% of MPs nominate a challenger whilst the incumbent would automatically be on the ballot.

Not only does Corbyn's massive endorsement suggest he would be very difficult to dislodge but both the party's traditional reluctance to depose

leaders combined with the absence of an obvious successor make the effort more perilous: any effort to forcibly him risks precipitating bitter internal strife.

But there is another option for those wishing to terminate Corbyn's leadership - persuade him to retire voluntarily. The most likely form this would take would be for the bulk of the shadow cabinet to threaten mass resignation. They may be tempted to do so if the party performs very poorly in forthcoming elections (local, London, Scottish, Welsh and by-elections), if it is lagging well behind in the polls and if Corbyn's personal standing sinks to rock bottom. However, the new leader has around a year or so breathing space before these particular storm-clouds really darken.

This brings us to the second, more immediate, question: can Corbyn manage the party effectively? Party

leaders perform multiple functions such as presiding over the formulation of public policy, shaping campaign strategy and overseeing the co-ordination of party activities but effective party management is a condition of effective leadership. Party management is about preserving party unity, mobilising collective effort and enabling it to respond swiftly to external challenges.

Not only do Corbyn and his closest advisers have negligible experience of party management they are confronted by a range of managerial obstacles more formidable than faced by any predecessor in a generation. The most obvious of these is the minimal support and loyalty he can call upon in the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). Fewer than 10% of MPs can be considered to be Corbynites. Recall almost half of those nominating him did not vote for him in the leadership race. A substantial segment is implacably opposed to him: they do not believe he can succeed, do not want him to and will do their best to ensure he does not.

But these are a minority and there are many others who are either preparing to give the new leader the benefit of

the doubt, biding their time or simply calculate that their careers will best be served by a show of loyalty. This amorphous group, mainly on the centre and soft left, dominate the shadow cabinet and the frontbench in general.

They accept Corbyn has a very strong mandate and whatever their reservations (many of which are deep) and forebodings about the future (often intense) show some willingness to work with Corbyn. But they have little ideological affinity to the new leader and their loyalty will be contingent on his ability both to manage the party in a consensual spirit and to revive the party's flagging electoral fortunes. If he fails, their loyalty will soon begin to evaporate.

How, then, should Corbyn enact his managerial role? Broadly speaking, we can distinguish between two styles of managerial leadership, the transformative and the consensual. For the former, the leader's prime managerial responsibility is enhancing the party's capacity to operate as a vehicle of social or political transformation. Philip Williams in Kavanagh's *The Politics of the Labour Party* (Unwin Hyman, 1982) describes this role as that of the 'pathfinder' who feels 'a duty to lead in a particular direction' and is endowed with his 'own vision and destination in mind'. It is a style animated by a clear sense of mission with the leader's election platform conceived as conferring a democratic mandate for realising it.

By contrast, the consensual approach envisages the leader's role principally as a stabiliser whose priority is sustaining party cohesion through balancing the various interests and institutions of views which compose the party. Stabilisers will have their own principles and their own sense of the course they believe the party should follow but are prepared to dilute this to minimise internal party fractures.

Corbyn may find the transformative option more tempting. He clearly envisages Labour as an agency for radical change, he campaigned on a strongly left wing platform and has repeatedly emphasised that his sweeping victory has given him a mandate to implement it. Finally, he may well reckon that such an approach will have resonance as there is some evidence that his authenticity and his clear and forthright leadership style impress many tired of the banalities,

evasions and insincerities which have become the stock in trade of so much political discourse.

Transformative politics would, of course, provoke entrenched resistance in the PLP but its adherents believe this could be overcome through mobilization of the extra-parliamentary party. Labour's greatly expanded membership base, they believe, offers a formidable source of energy, drive and creativity which could surmount opposition and facilitate the pursuit of transformative politics. The democratisation of policy arrangements, with the active involvement of the grassroots in decision-making would compel MPs to accept the democratic will of the party. Added to this, some Corbynites are prepared to revive mandatory reselection of MPs as a pressure point against recalcitrant parliamentarians though Corbyn himself seems to be lukewarm about this.

The alternative approach to party management is the consensual one. The core argument here is that, irrespective of how much support Corbyn has amongst the party membership and within the affiliated unions, he cannot manage the party effectively in the teeth of PLP opposition. The premise behind this approach is that Labour's ruling stratum must remain a coalition which accurately reflects the actual balance of forces within the party. Corbyn should concentrate on widening his political base in the PLP and, therefore, the emphasis should be less on driving through the leader's programme through the mobilization of the wider party than on persuasion, conciliation and compromise.

Of course, the assumption here is that a sufficient number of centre and soft-left MPs and NEC members are prepared to play ball. Whilst there is a solid block of irreconcilables others, advocates of this approach would argue others can be wooed. Several senior figures – mostly much younger than Corbyn – still have their eyes on their leadership and may consider their prospects can best be advanced by a co-operative rather than a combative approach to him. Their calibrations may be influenced by the powers of patronage and career advancement Corbyn has available. Finally and above all, exponents of consensualism

would warn transformative leadership – calling in the wider party to redress the imbalances in the Parliamentary one – runs a serious risk of heightening tensions within the party, polarising opinion and alienating many of those who may be prepared to co-operate.

It is as yet unclear which option Jeremy Corbyn will choose. On the one hand his personal style and attitude towards the conduct of politics may predispose him to the consensual. The appointment by John McDonnell, with his approval, of economists such as Joseph Stiglitz, Danny Blanchflower and Simon Wren-Lewis – highly-regarded but scarcely from the radical left – to the panel of economic advisers can be taken as signs of his willingness to practice the politics of accommodation. Further, presumably he is well aware that (in sharp contrast to Blair) he lacks a firm grasp the main centres of decision-making within the party and is hemmed in by an array of institutional constraints. Added to this, he has indicated that his preference is for a tolerant, liberal and pluralistic approach to settling differences within Labour's ranks.

On the other hand, he is, above all, a conviction politician, animated by deeply-felt moral values and ideological attachments and may find too much compromise distasteful. Further, he may well feel under obligation to satisfy the hopes and aspirations of those placed their faith in him during the leadership race. His appointment of radical leftists such as Seumas Milne as his Director of Communications and, in particular, the controversial and abrasive Andrew Fisher as head of policy suggest he may indeed be contemplating a more transformative approach.

A concluding thought: transformative politics can work if the leader enjoys the confidence of the electorate at large (recall Thatcher): engaging in bold, unflinching and determined leadership then becomes feasible. But in the absence of that confidence, particularly when a party is plagued by poor electoral results consensus-defying transformative politics may amount to a form of political euthanasia.

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Workers' rights are human rights

Carole Ewart looks at what needs to be done to make human rights effective

Human rights defenders and union activists are united by the shared experience of being demonised by a UK government desperate to justify its decision to abolish the *Human Rights Act 1998* (HRA). The HRA enables us to assert and enforce rights including freedom of expression, the right of peaceful assembly and the right to form and to join unions for the protection of our interests.

There is a growing line of people who have been demonised by the UK Government including disabled people who are diagnosed unfit to work by NHS GPs but judged able to work by private contractors, single parents who are portrayed as scroungers on welfare payments, migrants who are blamed for the lack of jobs for 'locals' and unemployed people promoted as work shy to hide the fact there are no jobs for them. To paraphrase Pastor Niemöller, if we accept that certain groups should not have human rights, who will be there to stand up for our human rights when we need them?

Divide and rule is an old tactic. GB polling by the Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF) in 2013 concluded 22% are pro-human rights, 41% are conflicted, 11% uninterested and 26% anti. The sample size from Scotland, although small, confirms similar views although the results may have changed given the referendum and the general election.

The Scottish Parliament has declared a view for Scotland in 2014 by voting 100 votes to 10, that it

re-affirms and re-asserts, on behalf of all of the people of the community of Scotland, the inalienable human rights and fundamental freedoms that are the common inheritance of all members of humanity; recalls the particular importance to the Parliament, through its founding statute, its founding principles and in all aspects of its day-to-day work, of human rights in general and of the European Convention on Human Rights in particular; acknowledges the constitutional responsibility of the Parliament to uphold the principles and values expressed in the convention and to respect, protect and realise the rights and freedoms that it enumerates;

further acknowledges the importance of that work not only in relation to Scotland, but also in establishing and maintaining standards of best practice, which provide a benchmark for human rights elsewhere in the world; expresses its confidence in, and support for, the Human Rights Act 1998 as a successful and effective implementation of the convention in domestic law, and believes that the principles and values that inform the convention, the rights and freedoms that it enumerates and the Acts that incorporate it into law, should be a source of unity and consensus across the whole of society and should enjoy the unequivocal backing of all who are committed to upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law.



It is ironic the SNP is talking about what unites us across the UK just as Cameron and the Conservatives are continuing the tradition of Tory Prime Ministers by promoting disharmony in the UK – reminiscent of Mrs Thatcher quoting St Francis of Assisi when she entered No 10 in 1979 and achieving quite the reverse for so many people in Scotland. Thus, 'where there is discord, may we bring harmony' became 'where there is harmony, may we bring discord'.

Cameron's intentions on human rights are detailed in the 'Queen's Speech briefing pack which states:

The Government will bring forward proposals for a Bill of Rights to replace the Human Rights Act. This would reform and modernise our human rights legal framework and restore

common sense to the application of human rights laws, which has been undermined by the damaging effects of Labour's Human Rights Act. It would also protect existing rights, which are an essential part of a modern, democratic society, and better protect against abuse of the system and misuse of human rights laws.

That selective strategy contradicts the foundation of international law which is the equal enjoyment of human rights. For example, as the UK Government has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), each of us is entitled to basic economic, social, cultural, civil, political and environmental rights from which we realise our dignity as individuals.

The rights to a decent standard of living, social insurance and highest attainable standard of physical and mental health are to be progressively realised to the maximum extent of the UK's available resources. Collective rights are also set out including the right to join a union. Such human rights sit uncomfortably with the UK Government's austerity strategy. There is clear political gain in portraying human rights as a liability so the UK government can promote an ideology rather than being constrained in practice by international human rights standards.

The potential clash in the design of UK austerity measures with their impact on people has been raised by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It has just published a list of 32 'Issues' that the UK must answer, in writing, prior to next year's formal Hearing on compliance with ICESCR.

The issues include an expectation that a new Bill of Rights will include all the ICESCR rights, questions about the content and impact of the *Trade Union Bill*, progress on measures to combat blacklisting, actions to ensure health and safety at work, concrete steps taken to ensure welfare changes do not 'disproportionately impact disadvantaged and marginalized groups and individuals' and inequality in pay and conditions.

So yes, the UK Government is in

difficulty internationally about its human rights record, and civil society can take some credit – the Human Rights Consortium Scotland's (HRCS) 20 pages written submission included evidence from the STUC, UNISON and Unite, and UNISON paid for the project as the HRCS has no grant income.

Another development is in respect of private sector. The UN recognises the role of private companies to adopt a 'respect, protect and remedy' framework on human rights within their sphere of influence. No longer is it just up to governments to deliver on human rights. The UN's Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on business and human rights set out how that should be done and has prompted the Scottish Government to fund a national baseline assessment. Private companies, located in Scotland, will be examined and a final report, on their human

rights activity internationally and domestically, is expected by the end of March 2016.

Ensuring human rights principles and standards are respected and promoted in the design, delivery and funding of public services will re-balance power between people and government, and deliver a fairer society. People can assert their rights and the government, via public sector agencies, has a duty to proactively deliver those rights. Unsurprising then that politicians have invested so much effort into convincing us that human rights are the problem rather than the solution to the injustices that face too many people in our rich nation.

Mainstreaming human rights in Scotland will rebalance the power relationships between government and people, and between businesses and workers to make our democracy

stronger and poverty a thing of the past. That does not need to be a party political issue. As we campaign to defend the HRA and gather evidence to submit to the UN next year on economic and social rights, we also need to achieve what the Scottish Parliament voted for in 2014 'establishing and maintaining standards of best practice, which provide a benchmark for human rights elsewhere in the world'. The challenge remains to make the rhetoric a reality which positively impacts on people in Scotland.

Carole Ewart is a public policy and human rights consultant. The full paper on which this article is based can be found at <http://reidfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Workers-Rights-are-Human-Rights-10th-Aug-20151.pdf>



The Jimmy Reid Foundation

THIRD ANNUAL JIMMY REID MEMORIAL LECTURE

'WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS'

SPEAKER: Rt. Hon. Nicola Sturgeon MSP, First Minister of Scotland

Chair: Grahame Smith, General Secretary, STUC

Tuesday 24 November at 6.30pm Bute Hall, University of Glasgow

Doors open from 5.30pm, tea and coffee available.

Free entry by ticket only, tickets will be available online at website shortly.

In honour of worker's leader, Jimmy Reid, Nicola Sturgeon will address the issue of why worker's rights are human rights and how this can be used in defence against the Tory Governments attacks on workers economic, political and social rights in Scotland.

The First Minister and guests will be welcomed by Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Glasgow, Professor Anton Muscatelli. Following the speech there will be a question and answer session. Our Director, Professor Gregor Gall, will make a short contribution on our work programme to conclude the event. The Foundation has just published a policy paper on the issue of workers' rights as human rights (which is available on our website).

Jimmy Reid was installed as elected Rector of the University in the Bute Hall in 1972 where he made his famous 'The rat race is for rats. We're not rats. We're human beings' speech. His archives are maintained by the University and some will be on display prior to the lecture. We are grateful to the University for their assistance in organising the lecture.

VISIT the WEBSITE at www.reidfoundation.org

Indyref 2014: nat

We are pleased to reprint summaries of the debate 'Class and nation in contemporary Scotland' conference

The referendum transformed Scottish politics. It is, however, neither accurate nor politically useful to characterise it as a triumph of nation over class. It was precisely the *combination* of class sentiment and national identification which made the movement so powerful and which today defines its potential both for progressive change and also for populist reversal.

In the referendum, the slogans which won support from Scotland's most impoverished communities were those which denounced austerity as an imposition of an external Westminster elite. Benefit cuts, sanctions and falling real wages were posed as a product of both class *and* national oppression.

The result was to add another 20% of principally working class supporters to the existing nationalist core vote – voters who as recently as the 2012 local elections had been overwhelmingly Labour. This process was carried even further in the general election. This growth in support for independence and the SNP cannot, therefore, be detached from a mass perception of class injustice resulting from existing constitutional arrangements.

Yet it was also a weak and unstructured perception. It failed to distinguish the slogans of the referendum from what was on offer. Sterling, NATO and the EU involved endorsing exactly the same neo-liberal, pro-big business framework that determined policies in Westminster. The manifest feeling of class injustice was not matched by an understanding of the class power that enforced these policies. Nor is this surprising. To a great degree it reflected more than two decades in which Labour retreated from any class analysis and endorsed exactly the same institutional framework as that called for by the SNP – and did so in a society where union density has fallen to near half its previous level.

In some ways there is some resemblance to the transformation of voting behaviour elsewhere in Europe. In Greece, Italy and Spain mass parties have emerged calling for the rejection of austerity while at the same time not seeking to challenge existing institutions.

In Scotland, this situation holds very considerable dangers. The SNP is both a populist and nationalist party which is in the privileged position of being able, for the next five years, to deflect blame for austerity to Westminster.

At the same time, it also seeks to remodel basic attitudes. It invites the Scottish union movement to endorse institutions of social partnership within a wider perspective of a European Union that defends working people and the associated prospect of developing a West German model of capitalism in Scotland that, according to Sturgeon combines 'competitive markets with strong social protection and partnership' (*Scotsman* 13 June 2015).

This poses a significant challenge to the left in Scotland. Some sections seem disposed to ride on this populist tiger – in the hope that a future crisis will offer opportunities for a socialist challenge. More seriously, there are indications that sections of the union movement see immediate practical benefits in responding to the Scottish government's partnership model.

In both cases the danger is that Scottish politics will become increasingly insulated from wider struggles at British level – struggles which have the potential, but so far only that, to expose the class character of the British state and to redevelop a class-based mass movement.

There are indeed some similarities between the mass base of the new Corbyn leadership of Labour Party and the populist movements on the continent. The 250,000 Corbyn supporters are, it would seem, largely

individuals responding individually to the crisis of austerity. But there are also three major differences. First, Corbyn's election programme – this contained at least some systemic challenges to the existing order. Second, close links to the union movement. Third, the depth of the Conservative government's attack on both working people and the union movement itself, a level of class extremism that betrays significant over-confidence.

In some ways the 2014 referendum represented the first mass upsurge of rejection of neo-liberal austerity policies in Britain. That potential still exists. But it is currently being recalibrated in a nationalist direction. Scotland, it is argued, is different. Scottish capitalism will be different.

This is the danger we now face. In immediate practical terms there are the cuts that will be imposed on local government over the coming months. How far can the People's Assembly and the union movement together develop a resistance, involving some class critique of the Scottish government, that links with similar movements elsewhere? How far can this redevelop a broader union and labour movement campaigning across communities, stressing the importance of organisational strength and class understanding?

The 2014 referendum did not mark the triumph of nation over class. However, its aftermath could – in terms of the triumph of populist nationalism. But the Scottish rejection of austerity could equally add strength to a movement that has the potential to redevelop class politics and expose the class character of the British state and of the European Union.

John Foster is a labour historian and a member of the Red Paper Collective

The overwhelmingly majority of the Scottish radical left supported 'yes' in the referendum and was right to do so.

tion vs class

between Foster and Davidson from the recent ence in Glasgow in September this year.

Socialist supporters of a 'no', centred around the remnants of the Labour left, had no way of relating to those newly radicalised by the 'yes' campaign, except to denounce their 'nationalism' and castigate the bourgeois nature of the SNP - something most of us were quite aware of. They have since paid the price.

One of the reasons why there has been no Scottish Labour 'Corbyn bounce' is the party so thoroughly alienated potential supporters that many migrated to the SNP, the Scottish Greens or RISE. Corbyn-mania is the English equivalent of radical independence but has come too late. Nevertheless, left arguments for 'no' still abound. In essence there are two.

The first is calling for independence automatically means 'capitulating to nationalism'. Nationalism is about establishing new states and defending existing ones, so arguing for maintaining the United Kingdom is no less 'nationalist' than arguing for Scottish secession from it. These left opponents argue maintaining the unity of the British state is driven not by British nationalism but by class considerations. Why then do they find it so difficult to accept proponents of a Scottish state might have precisely the same distance from Scottish nationalism?

As a political ideology, nationalism involves two inescapable principles: the national group should have its own state, regardless of social consequences; and what unites the national group is more significant than what divides it like class. Neither of these principles animated 'yes' campaigners, who saw establishing a Scottish state, not as an eternal goal to be pursued in all circumstances, but as one which offered better opportunities for equality and social justice in the era of neo-liberal austerity – in other words as a way of conducting the class struggle, not denying its existence.

Voter registration drives in working-class communities were one aspect of this. Even unionist opinion-makers in London felt obliged to report the packed public meetings, debates in pubs and so on. For the 'yes' campaign marking the ballot paper was merely the final moment in months of debate and activity so that it needs to be seen as a social movement, not merely another political campaign. Its closest comparisons are therefore not to be found in Scottish history, but in contemporary Spain and Greece.

But there were weaknesses in the campaign. One was an inadequate focus on skilled and organised workers in their workplaces. Unorganised or precarious workers could be reached in their communities but where workers were faced with an alliance of employers and unions arguing for 'no' (as in defence-related industries) response was required to challenge this even if this had to be mounted from outside. Failure to reach, let alone convince, organised sections of workers at least contributed towards the 'no' victory.

The second argument was the referendum merely concerned constitutional issues, and whatever the result it would leave the situation of workers fundamentally unchanged, but potentially with a divided British working class. With claims of irrelevance, it's usually good to examine the attitudes of the ruling class. Who stood behind 'no'? The supposedly neutral institutions of the British state; most British capitalists; UKIP, BNP, Orange Order; the entire press bar the *Sunday Herald*; the US President; EU Commission; and rulers of nation-states with insurgent minority national movements like Spain. In short, Unionists were supported by the British and international capitalist class.

Keeping this company, the 'no' left should have asked itself whether this motley crew could have misunderstood

its class interests for preserving the unity of the British labour movement is surely not one of them. And, for two weeks before 18 September 2014, the 'yes' campaign reduced the British ruling class to a panic unparalleled since the 1984-1985 miners' strike. If the referendum was so irrelevant, why were they so concerned?

A 'yes' vote, achieved on the basis of a mass left-wing insurgency, would have immediately changed the balance of class forces and open up a new possibilities. In a capitalist society, all politics is by definition 'bourgeois' unless working-class interests are forced onto agendas which would otherwise exclude them.

What of the future? The main impetus for 'yes' was not nationalism but social change expressed through the demand for self-determination. The danger is it will now *become* nationalist if the movement becomes an SNP electoral support-group. Thousands of mainly working-class people who joined the SNP will change its inner dynamics, but not its overall character as mildly reformist on the left wing of the social neoliberal spectrum. This is why a left opposition to the SNP is of such importance. Deranged by its sectarian SNP hatred, Labour cannot simultaneously oppose the latter party and attempt to win over its new, and highly conditional membership, but the radical left can.

Meantime, whatever respective attitudes to independence, there are a whole range of issues –defending unions and welfare state, opposition to fracking and nuclear weapons – on which the 'yes' and 'no' left can and must unite.

Neil Davidson was an activist with RIC and is a founding member of RISE

Lessons from America on the Trade Union Bill

Sarah Collins writes a letter from America after a recent trip there

If the *Trade Union Bill* passes then you can imagine the future headlines we can look forward to: 'Local Authority issues ASBO to pesky trade union picket-line!' and 'Trade union fails to give employer 14 days' notice of latest tweet – how very dare they!'.

The list of problems the Bill will create and concretise is endless. Coupled with the pre-existing anti-union legislation, they are potentially fatal. Our anti-union laws are already similar to the USA's so-called 'right to work' legislation. This legislation, a package of anti-union measures, has been in force in some states since the 1940s. Now covering 25 states, the 'right to work' laws are designed to bankrupt unions. And they have nearly succeeded. Union density is now around 11%, down from the peak of 35% in mid-1940s with that decline has accelerated when 'right-to-work' rules have been passed.

The most recent examples of 'right to work' legislation have come from Michigan and Wisconsin, two of the heartlands of (de)industrialisation and, therefore, two of the strongest states in terms of organised labour. 'Right to work' is essentially the same as Thatcher's ban on closed-shops and aims to develop 'competition' within unions whereby workers can pick and choose which unions to join and, indeed, can decide not to join a union at all.

However, 'right to work' goes further for it makes it unlawful for unions to have mandatory dues, meaning that workers who do not join the union or who decide that they want to enforce their 'right' not to pay membership fees will still be represented – not just through collective bargaining but also by being able to access services offered by the union, e.g. representation.

There is also a 50% turnout threshold for ballots on industrial action and similar restrictions as to turn-out when it comes to 'important' public services. It is unsurprising then that in 2014 there were only 11 major work

stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers, the second lowest total since 1947.

Nonetheless, it is clear that it is in the private sector (where density is 7% compared to 30% in public sector) that unions are focussing on their fight back. And there are three important lessons for our 'kill the bill' campaign.

First, we need a coherent, co-ordinated strategy which covers all bases. This seems obvious but it is something which labour organisers in the US have complained their own unions did not have in Michigan and Wisconsin to defeat the law, and there was certainly no 'plan B' for the legislation passing.

The 'right to work' states have similar secret balloting procedures and the reason for this was the same as introduced in Britain, namely the government wants to limit workplace meetings discussing and deciding on industrial action. However, it is not clear whether all states impose a home, postal ballot. It seems that some permit secret ballot boxes in the workplace. This, coupled with e-voting, would ensure internal union democracy. If we can learn something from the US here, it is that it's not going to be enough to simply state our opposition to the Bill. We need to put forward our own alternative system and balloting is an area in which we can do this.

Second, US unions are faced with multi-million dollar union busters, the scale of which has simply not been seen in the UK yet. The union busters have extraordinary marketing and advertising strategies. Only in the past few years have labour organisations,

like the UAW, began putting money and resources into combating these tactics using the same publicity methods.

All of our unions and confederations need to get a lot better, very quickly, at communicating online and through social media.

Third, the model of social movement unionism is perhaps the most important. This model could enable us to recruit and retain new, younger, members. The Better than Zero campaign run by the STUC at the moment is loosely based on the US 'Fight for \$15' movement which is an example of such a model.

The idea behind these campaigns is activists outside of the workplace pull visible, professional and vibrant stunts and then do follow-up engagement with the workers in order to unionise them. This appeals to the idea of social movements where there isn't one sector protecting their own interests and where different methods of organising can be used. Such forms can potentially overcome the picketing restrictions (you're not a picket if you just happen to fancy a flash-mob on Ashton Lane, are you?) and can actually begin growing membership again.

A thorough debate is needed in all unions about the tools and methods to 'kill the bill'. We also require a strategy for dealing with the consequences of the Bill if enacted. We have seen in the US what happens without, and then with, such a strategy. Let's use this to ensure our fate is in our hands.

Sarah Collins is a founding member of RISE – Scotland's Left Alliance.



Union political funds

Jim Slaven says opening up union political funds to reflect diversity will make them effective

Some time ago, I discussed with an STUC General Council member how a number of my branch members had opted out of the political fund as a result of the independence referendum. In response, she cheerfully informed she had no such trouble as her union had set up their fund in such a way that their members signed up to Labour automatically while making it deliberately awkward to find out how to opt out. To me this seemed symbolic of how unions viewed the political fund more as a statement of political allegiance rather than a means of influencing the political process.

I believe the consequence of such an approach is a growing chasm between union leaders and their members within Scotland and a political fund that is wholly ineffectual in promoting a progressive union agenda.

Consider that despite vast sums being directed to Labour and 13 years of Labour Government the anti-union laws remained, privatisation spread and our manufacturing base continued to decline. All unions seemed to get for our money from 'new' Labour was pious lectures on the need to modernise.

Yet unions are not merely wage bargainers but a social movement dedicated to the creation of a fairer society. Therefore, I'm not making an argument against the concept of a political fund but rather a plea for one that works. Unions who use their political fund solely to support Labour have no recourse short of the nuclear option of completely removing funding. Inadvertently, they are creating a system where they have no leverage to influence the behaviour of the party or candidates they support. No union would enter into pay negotiations in such a weak position.

At the same time the current system does not encourage activism or participation from union members who are treated as little more than voting and cash fodder. At best every five years members vote on the continuation of the political levy. When we consider the technologies available how often are members consulted if they endorse the party and candidates their union support?

The current system creates the mirage of influence allowing union leaders to make critical speeches at Labour conference which may soothe a few consciences but in reality changes nothing. All the while decent union members who wish to become active in parties other than Labour are seen at best as eccentrics or at worst traitors to the one true faith.

However this is not a call simply for disaffiliation from Labour or the cry for a formation of a new workers party which in themselves would solve nothing. Rather it is a plea for reform to create a new system that increases trade union leverage in the political process.

For me the starting point is an acceptance that members' politics are pluralistic and not confined to one party. At the same time unions have their own values and policies which the political fund has to respect. This would exclude supporting racist and anti-union parties such as UKIP and Conservatives but could create some healthy competition among others.

The first model would be that we support candidates and not parties depending on their union record. This could mean supporting more than one candidate and different parties in different parts of the country.

A more radical approach could look at unions having approved candidates who meet union friendly criteria who

are put up for election. Candidates would have to win the nomination of union members in a democratic election and we could use the latest digital technology to facilitate a vibrant debate where politicians actually have to persuade and engage with union members.

Both systems would not limit themselves to providing funds but would encourage members to become involved in the campaigns of union endorsed candidates. No doubt some siren voices of party tribalism would object citing contradictions and the complexity of a different system.

But uniformity is not strength and I for one would be quite happy to tolerate a messy system that supports candidates such as Partrick Harvie, Cat Boyd, Mharri Black or Katy Clark and Neil Findlay. Surely, this is preferable to a system which supports candidates because of the colour of their rosette rather than the nature of their values.

A new approach could fit in with the temper of the times, reject party tribalism and respect that union values transcend that of party. In doing so, we could revitalise our members' participation in the political process which in turn could drive the union values of fairness and justice into the heart of a new political discourse.

John Slaven is a member of Glasgow Trades Council



CWU political fund campaign poster, 1995

Real reform or a missed moment?

Will Dinan examines Scottish government proposals on regulating lobbying

The Scottish Government recently published its draft bill to regulate lobbying at Holyrood. While this marks a potentially significant development in terms of promoting greater accountability and transparency in decision-making, the proposals have been criticized by transparency campaigners and some lobbyists.

The issue of lobbying regulation has been on the agenda at Holyrood since Neil Findlay proposed a private members bill to increase transparency around lobbying in 2012. Since then, the scope and ambition of the planned lobbying register has been altered significantly. To understand this outcome, it's necessary to compare Findlay's bill with the current proposals in order to highlight the processes reshaping Findlay's proposed lobbying register template.

Private members bills are rare at Holyrood. Findlay proposed a register of lobbyists at Holyrood following Westminster scandals surrounding improper lobbying activity. His bill provided for regulating lobbying in and around the Parliament, Scottish Government and government agencies, covering MSPs, ministers, civil servants and regulators.

Consultation is required to advance a private members bill at Holyrood. After seeking submissions from interested parties, the essence of the scheme emerged. Findlay proposed a Scottish Register of Lobbyists should strike a balance between straightforward compliance and ensuring that the information disclosed would make transparent who is lobbying, what issues and regulations they are lobbying on, who is being lobbied and the financial resources devoted to influencing political decision making. The overall purpose was to help inform judgements about whether lobbyists had influenced decision makers, and how.

Findlay's proposals attracted sufficient cross-parliamentary support to go forward in 2013, and at this point the Scottish Government exercised its prerogative to take over the bill and bring it forward as government business. Findlay deserves credit for

taking the initiative and generating sufficient parliamentary consensus to progress the debate.

During this phase the lines of debate were drawn, remaining largely unchanged since. In the pro-transparency camp, the argument is a lobbying register would enhance equality of parliamentary access for organisations of all sizes and resource levels as increased transparency would improve accountability, address fears about undue influence and transparency would be the best guarantor to prevent Westminster-type of lobbying scandals emerging in Scotland.

The issue of lobbying regulation has been on the agenda at Holyrood since Neil Findlay proposed a private members bill to increase transparency around lobbying in 2012

The skeptics argue regulation creates a barrier to participation (particularly for small groups), dismissing registration as a disproportionate response for Scottish polity which has not been tainted by the lobbying scandals. Other arguments were the onus for lobbying transparency should be on MSPs and the lobbied, and problems defining lobbying and demarcating thresholds for disclosure were likely to produce an unfair system that would put individuals and groups off approaching Parliament (without ever being substantiated).

Holyrood's Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments (SPPA) Committee was charged with examining the case for a register, instituting a consultation. This allowed a further examination of the merits of a register, and some of the claims about the desirability and practicality of lobbying disclosure were carefully interrogated. The SPPA inquiry concluded with a report to the Scottish Government earlier this year, recommending introducing a register to 'detail lobbying activity as opposed

to simply being a list of names of lobbyists. The register should detail who is lobbying, how and why'.

The SPPA also recommended an open and accessible digital register to capture consultants and in-house lobbyists (including charities) in order to target 'organisations who have significant contact with MSPs or who invest significant amounts of money into lobbying MSPs on behalf of others'. However, the SPPA shied away from financial disclosure and lobbying directed at civil servants that were core elements of Findlay's bill.

The Scottish Government published a further consultation in May 2015. While key issues like financial disclosure and lobbying scope remained off the agenda, the question of exemptions for certain types of lobbyists was re-opened and critically reframed the entire purpose of the legislation as one of 'heightening the transparency of those who are directly engaging with MSPs and Ministers' despite direct engagement with MSPs and ministers being only a small part of the lobbying universe with lobbying campaigns routinely including civil servants, special advisors, online and media relations as well as political monitoring and stakeholder engagement. Moreover, disclosure of financial resources supporting lobbying, and communications with officials, advisors and regulators has been omitted.

It remains to be seen if there is appetite to revise the Government's proposals. Yet questions about the sustainability and impact of the draft bill cannot be easily dismissed. Can these proposals really aid public understanding of decision-making? Will they produce an accurate picture of how influence is brought to bear? Unless the answers to these questions are an unambiguous 'yes' then it is important that the Parliament properly exercises its scrutiny function over the coming months.

Dr Will Dinan is a lecturer in Communications, Media and Culture at the University of Stirling. He is also a founder member of Spinwatch (<http://www.spinwatch.org/>).

Lessons from Greece: reclaim the state, reform the EU

Peter Lomas argues for a Europe of citizens not spivs and speculators

In a lecture in Geneva in 2011, the journalist, Myret Zaki, told a tale of recent events in international financial markets. Early in 2010 the currency-speculator, George Soros, joined by five US hedge-funds, bought up Greek government debt in such quantities that a mass movement of competitors ensued. The debt interest-rate rose from 7-8% to 20%, and the Greek authorities, despite having just received an EU bailout, declared bankruptcy for the second time in a year.

The hedge-funds' aims were 1) a killing for their investors, and 2) a drastic weakening of the Euro against the dollar, their preferred currency of transaction. Moreover Soros hoped for a financial domino-fall among Euro member-states which would destroy the currency and perhaps the EU itself, an organisation he viewed as too socialist by far. The leading hedge-fund, Goldman Sachs, had actually advised *corrupt* Greek governments before 2010 in ways to conceal their real financial position. Now the firm turned its coat, sharing privileged information to help undermine that position fatally.

Nothing in this operation was illegal - hedge-funds being unregulated internationally, and Soros gambling his money in a personal capacity. The conspirators themselves never bothered, after the event, to deny their intentions. The operation failed only when EU leaders bailed out Greece again to defend the Euro. But the conspiracy itself damaged Greek people's lives, innocent bystanders in the complex and confidential affairs of international financial markets.

Clearly, those markets are inherently corrupt and corrupting. According to Zaki, financial speculation now exceeds tax evasion and money-laundering in the volume of funds manipulated and the personal fortunes made. Yet still the neo-liberal economists dominating policy in Northern societies refuse reform of the system. In fact, they increasingly argue the solution is not more regulation, but no regulation - and that functions of state should themselves be open to being bought and sold. This debate is live again since the further economic troubles in Greece. All of which should

give us pause to think about the long-term development of the Euro and the EU.

Here there are two opposing models of institutional construction. One is functional integration: the idea that merging states' inbuilt functions will enable economies of efficiency. It's the idea behind the formation of regional intergovernmental organisations, like ASEAN and the African Union after the EU: not only trade, but practical learning and saving, will benefit from sharing key tasks across state boundaries. On this logic, it makes sense also to have a common currency; but this step comes last, not first, in the construction process. The ultimate goal may be integrated states, or even a single state - a United States of Europe. Or the EU future could remain open, somewhere between single state and intergovernmental organisation.

The opposite view is a purer economism. Currencies precede states. Sound money depends on security of property and predictability in financial transactions. Sound money underpins the state itself - comes first in the planning process; so integrating *several* states depends even more upon it. You can envisage a common currency in an organisation like the EU, but only if you also envisage a single state at the end of the road.

It's because these two models are diametrically opposed - and probably always have been, in the minds of European leaders - that confusion exists about the EU's identity. After all, the first-stage and last-stage models for common-currency creation were both ignored, and the Euro was invented in the middle of the EU's development. Given this institutional instability, only in prosperous times can the EU ride out large-scale speculative attacks. At least, if the international financial system is to be maintained, enabling liquidity to continue to flow across borders. Earlier this year European leaders chose once again to bail out Greece for this reason, even though it meant encouraging Peter to pay Paul, through Greek reimbursement of debts to the IMF.

But why defend the system anyway, when it's so nonsensical? When it

allows unscrupulous people to do harm by manipulating occult and arcane financial devices? Surely, EU reform lies in the opposite direction, through revitalising the functions of state - those material services which should be run by the people, for the people, like our infrastructures of energy, transport and communications - precisely those which, since the 'single European market', have been sold off to hedge-funds and venture-capitalists, and which they have subsequently and brainlessly been selling on to each other.

It's time to change the EU's moral basis; to throw out this acid of privatisation and self-seeking individualism which corrodes all social relations. This task is even more urgent than the EU as a social project (one of the original founding aims) because the EU itself, as a convention of democracies - the only one of its kind in the world - is nothing without moral reform. For this reason key functions of state should be taken *out* of financial markets altogether, and saved from the speculators, crooks and airheads of our unlucky culture.

By the same token, we can justifiably ask of private investors they concentrate their activity in democracies, instead of following the lowest common denominator of wages to countries like China. If successful inventors like Dyson must invest outwith Britain, why not in Greece? It is because there is so little advanced manufacturing in that country that its economy is so fragile.

For the rest, the neo-liberal economic orthodoxy that individual wealth-creation gives rise to liberal-democracy has patently been exposed as wrong and crass by recent experience in China, where a massive growth in consumerism has gone hand-in-hand with maintaining oligarchy.

Let's be clear about our values. A strong society rests on active ownership of the shared practical functions of states. And beyond Scotland, beyond Britain, we can fairly ask of private investors that they show some European patriotism.

Peter Lomas is a contributor to the Common Weal and writes on European issues

Sulphur + brimstone for BBC

Leslie Mitchell says the very basis of the BBC offends the Tories

For a few days following the general election there was a distinct whiff of sulphur and brimstone in the air, and the smell still lingers. The true nature of the Tory agenda was rapidly becoming clear and revealed a government which seemed intent on acts of petty (and not so petty) revenge.

On 6 July 2015, John Whittingdale, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (CMS) revealed 'the BBC will take on the cost of providing free television licences for those households with over-75s' and 'the Government [is] pleased that the BBC has agreed to play its part in contributing to reductions in spending'.

At a stroke and behind closed doors, Fagin's boys had deftly dipped around £700m from the corporation's annual budget. Ironically, an earlier deal in 2014 for the BBC to take on the full costs of around £245m of its World Service operation was rumoured to have been agreed in order to avoid the Corporation being forced to take on the pensioners' concession.

Now it's perfectly proper to argue that in a period of austerity the BBC should take its fair share of budget trimming, and a case can certainly be made that this particular pensioner concession (originally awarded as a 'sweetener' by Labour) should be shouldered by the BBC. But that's not the point I wish to make.

Not only was this deal done in the dark but the timing could not have been worse. The BBC's whole scope, structure and funding is up for reconsideration. The decision of the BBC Trustees to meekly acquiesce and accept this deal without any public debate could still prove fatal to the independence and health of the broadcaster.

A principled response to government pressure would have been the threat of resignation by Rona Fairhead, and would have brought the Machiavellian manoeuvres of the Department of CMS into the full light of day. Such a stance would also have revealed what threats were used by the government to force such an early and humiliating defeat upon those responsible for running the

BBC. A swift response à la Sturgeon might have been a braver, riskier but ultimately wiser rejoinder.

Just ten days after the pensioners' concession announcement was made, Whittingdale was back in the Commons, this time to launch a Green Paper on the future of the BBC. The consultation is to cover the BBC's overall purpose, the services it should provide, and its funding, governance and regulation. This was hardly a surprise, especially since the licence fee settlement is due to expire in 2016 and such renegotiations are expected to be tense and tough.

The Green Paper was, however, a pre-emptive strike with a far wider and, it has to be said, far more threatening agenda than any licence negotiation. The government's aggressive stance became even clearer when the composition of the advisory panel appointed by the Secretary of State was announced.

Examining its composition reveals that despite his avowed admiration for the core values of the BBC, Whittingdale has manifestly failed to respect the ethical pillars of fairness and impartiality in his selection of a band of advisers not one of whom has been identified as an ally of the BBC. So far, in dealing with the licence fee negotiation and the forthcoming enquiry into the future of the BBC the government has had nothing whatsoever to say about the role of the public and any voice the audience may have in these deliberations.

There is no doubt there are questions to be asked about the BBC's conduct of its affairs. It has made some spectacular and serious gaffes both on the human, ethical and management judgements over the Savile affair and in its squandering millions in its failed and subsequently scrapped Digital Media Initiative.

The Board of Trustees (and its predecessor the Board of Governors) has not impressed in its leadership and management. Of course, the BBC has not always been in the wrong. Director General, Greg Dyke and its Chair, Gavyn Davies, resigned over the Gilligan Affair when the management and the (then)

Governors would have been right to stand firm, admit some editorial shortcomings and fight back against the bullying tactics of government 'advisors' notably Alastair Campbell.

The point is that the BBC has a duty to hold power to account and not surprisingly 'power' just doesn't like being held to account, especially when it harbours a strong sense of entitlement.

The Tories' behaviour since May 2015 has put the BBC on notice that it is under an existential threat. This is bullying of a high order, taking strength and courage to criticise government action when the institution's throat is grasped by the hands of those it proposes to hold to account.

So far there is little evidence those in charge of the BBC's response are robust enough to take on these tactics - which is why Fairhead's decision not to challenge the government's pre-emptive strike could still prove fatal.

So it is all the sadder to note in Scotland support for the BBC has been seriously eroded. Confidence is lower in Scotland (48%) than any other part of Britain and it's not hard to see why. Poor general coverage of Scotland as a nation and accusations of lack of impartiality during the referendum campaign have weakened Scots' confidence.

Its Scottish management failed to give any notable coverage to a highly detailed research report from the University of the West of Scotland which landed substantial critical blows on the BBC's journalism in the run up to the campaign, accusing it of in-built pro-union bias. Curiously, the BBC team fielded no fewer than four of its top managers wriggling uncomfortably before the Scottish Parliament's Education and Culture Committee in an effort to defend themselves and their impartiality.

The SNP's broadcasting policy for an Independent Scotland rests on a seemingly simple and uncomplicated proposal for a Scottish Broadcasting Service which would take over BBC facilities, staff and real-estate in Scotland and would have full access

to BBC1/BBC2 for Scottish viewers in return for supplying a range of programming as it presently does to the BBC Network.

This whole proposition needs a great deal of critical examination. One example: much of BBC Scotland's current contribution to the UK network consists of 'warehoused' programming which boosts apparently 'Scottish' production quotas. Such programmes, like 'Waterloo Road' and 'Question Time' could be made anywhere and have no distinctive Scottish cultural content. It's hard to see why the 'rump' BBC would entertain such an unattractive deal. An independent Scotland would also need to ensure that its worldwide influence is facilitated in any broadcasting settlement.

It can be convincingly argued Britain is a world leader in soft power, the non-coercive exercise of influence. One of the principal currencies of this

power or influence is culture – and here is one of the major reasons why the BBC is of such huge international significance. It's trusted by millions because it's usually right in its facts and its approach and has a mission to ensure it remains so. It's arguably the world's biggest and finest cultural organisation which commissions more drama, funds more orchestras, provides factual programmes and popular entertainment of such overwhelming quality than any other. Its website is one of the world's most visited.

Back home it has been suggested the BBC should cut down on its more popular (read downmarket) shows, most of which it is argued can be provided by commercial alternatives. Here's the heart of the Catch 22 – if the BBC provides great ratings success it's accused of unfairly competing with commercial rivals like ITV. If it doesn't, it leaves itself open to accusations of cultural elitism and of neglecting

its duty as a public institution to *inform, educate and entertain* all its stakeholders, and not just a few.

Now it's emerged the Tories have in their sights selling off Channel 4, another remarkable and unique British institution. It's the job of government to satisfy itself that such important institutions are fulfilling their brief in an efficient and cost-effective way. So yes, the BBC and C4 need careful scrutiny and good governance, not overt threat; not covert attack. A government which fatally weakens these institutions will not easily be forgiven by the voter, nor, I suspect by much of the world at large.

Leslie Mitchell is a former radio and TV producer. He was a senior teaching fellow at Stirling University in film, media and journalism until retiring and has written books on television production management and freelancing in the media and contributed to publications on broadcast journalism.

Building worker links Davy Brockett

I started employment with *Scottish Left Review* (SLR) as Trade Union Development Officer last November.

Although circulation was reasonable, the Editorial Board felt there were opportunities to increase not only circulation within unions but to also encourage more contributions from a union perspective on key issues of the day.

In last year, we have implemented a coordinated plan for SLR to be promoted at various conference events covering most political parties and attending recent RISE, RIC, Morning Star, STUC and other community events. Although initial outlay for stalls at such events can on occasions be costly, the advantage is that this has helped with our overall promotion of not only SLR but also the Reid Foundation and the work we've been contributing to the movement with the development of various policy papers.

One area of feedback we have received by attending these events is that many of our supporters are reading SLR online, which is currently free and figures for accessing it through this media are exceptional. During September 2015 visits were averaging 1040 per day - a visit categorised as reading an average

of 5 pages per visit. From December 2014 to mid-June 2015, we had 128K visits, 542K pages read and 996K hits with an average of 994 visits per day. A hit is just going into the website not necessarily downloading any articles.

Most newspapers and publications operate a fee or donation for accessing/downloading and this is something the Board has discussed and will upon decide on early in 2016. Our overall circulation of hard copies in the 12 months from November 2014 has increased by substantial numbers and we are looking to continually grow and improve on this for the year ahead.

We have been successful in gaining support of Scotland's two largest unions - Unite and Unison - with both agreeing to issue the magazine to their individual senior lay committee in their region. This alone increased our circulation by over 100 per edition. This is along with the continued long term support from subscribers/advertisers including ASLEF, CWU, EIS, FBU, GMB, NUJ, PCS, RMT, TSSA, UCATT and UCU - many of whom have been with us from our launch in 2000 and order bulk copies.

We also have made inroads into workplace branches and area activist committees covering a wide

geographical spread and are currently developing a programme in this category for 2016. All of the above has seen a significant increase in financial support either through affiliation or donation which has put SLR and the Foundation on a more sound footing.

The potential for continued growth within unions requires coordination where we can visit workplaces and branches giving the opportunity to discuss the key issues facing the movement but also taking into account current views of the magazine.

We'll be inviting current SLR friends and supporters to a special meeting early 2016 to discuss how they feel about SLR's contents, whether the agenda is correctly focused and how we can encourage more individuals to contribute articles.

We believe it is vital for SLR's future that this engagement becomes a priority if SLR is to not only grow but to develop in the correct manner. The challenges facing the labour movement are testing and we want SLR and the Foundation to be at the heart of debates on the industrial and political challenges. Finally, I'd like to thank everyone for their support over the last year and look forward to having another challenging but successful one ahead.

Managerialism in the public sector: a political critique

Gary Fraser a worrying political consensus exists over our public services

My purpose here is twofold. First, to discuss managerialism in the Scottish public sector whilst making an argument that managerialism is linked to the political project we know as neo-liberalism. Second, to discuss key features of what constitutes managerialism.

Managerialism, sometimes referred to as 'new public management', has become a successful organisational strategy for controlling politicians and public servants, and for implementing neo-liberalism. Whitfield provides a good working definition of neo-liberalism. Taken from his *In Place of Austerity* (2012), neo-liberalism 'is based on reducing state intervention in the economy, opening up new markets in public services and deepening business involvement in the public policy making process'.

The neo-liberalisation of the public sector involves the state becoming a purchaser but not always a direct provider of services. This process involves privatisation, creating new markets via procurement where profit can be made, and where it can't, contracting services out to a closely monitored third sector whose grants have been replaced by contracts and service level agreements.

The nature of 'work' in the Scottish public sector is also being transformed. For example, public sector employees are increasingly expected to behave and act like they work in the private sector.

The state is attempting to do two things at once. The first involves increasing the productivity of the worker; the second, an annual commitment to reducing expenditure. 'Increased productivity' is achieved through a rigorous culture of managerialism; key features of the system include appraisals, performance related pay, regular monitoring and surveillance by a computerised bureaucracy, work plans with quantifiable outcomes, regular target setting, performance indicators and inspections. When you

marry these developments with the financial instability already mentioned, the result is a permanent culture of fear and insecurity.

Managerialism is also a discursive project; citizens are constructed as customers or clients, whilst workers are routinised into talking a language of 'targets', 'outcomes', 'outputs', 'evaluating impacts', 'quality assurance' and so on. Managerial language depoliticises the realm of the political. For example, austerity is absent from the discourse. Instead, cuts to public expenditure are presented as 'efficiency savings', or 'trimming the fat'; I've even heard some senior managers talk of 'bend the spend', or being 'BOLD', which in managerial jargon stands for 'better objectives, leaner delivery'.

One of the more troubling features of managerialism is the extent to which its practices continue to dominate the public sector regardless of who is in office in Holyrood.

Managerialism involves devolving budgets to middle managers, and whilst arguments exist that devolving budgetary control is based upon devolution or democratising bureaucracies, these arguments ignore the extent to which the 'devolution of budgets' has been accompanied by greater strategic control from the centre. Moreover, and this is a critical point in relation to the implementation of neo-liberalism, the devolution of budgets encourages junior managers to think of the budget as their own, in effect creating a 'fiscal consciousness' which makes it easier to devolve responsibility for cuts down the way, sucking many managers into a neo-liberal way of thinking.

Defenders of the system usually argue that performance management is based on accountability, or following the public pound, arguments I do not intrinsically oppose. However, these arguments fail to acknowledge two things. First, the relationship between managerialism and neo-liberalism discussed here, and second, the extent to which performance management actually takes workers away from doing their job. For example, social workers, sometimes better understood as 'care managers' in the current context, note spending less time devoted to clients, and more time allocated to routine paperwork, often leaving the frontline work to lesser qualified staff. Teachers discuss 'teaching to the test'. One UK wide study of 11,000 teachers by the National Union of Teachers in 2012 revealed many teachers resented 'undermining duties' such as 'low level administrative tasks and the paperwork for inspections', with 'bureaucracy/paperwork' identified as two of the top three pressures facing the profession. When teachers were asked to comment on how they felt about performance management, some recorded feelings such as 'losing confidence, feeling inadequate, de-professionalisation, increased workplace stress and anxiety'.

One of the more troubling features of managerialism is the extent to which its practices continue to dominate the public sector regardless of who is in office in Holyrood. Despite the overblown rhetoric of a 'politics of difference', when it comes to the Scottish public sector, both Labour and now SNP are wedded to a neo-liberal agenda. With the SNP, the increasing managerialisation of the public sector under its watch, coupled with greater strategic control from the centre, highlights a gap between official SNP hype and SNP practices.

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The trouble with foreigners

Chris Sharpe says xenophobia knows the price of everything and the worth of nothing

For more than ten years, I've divided my time between Britain and South America. Over my comings and goings, one of the main changes I've noticed has been an increasing hostility to foreigners—or, more accurately put, certain types of foreigners—in Britain. We have become a deeply xenophobic country (some parts more so than others). Perhaps this has always been the case—maybe I have merely discovered a reality I was hitherto unaware of.

The rise of anti-immigration sentiment would seem to have two immediate causes: firstly, the arrival of large numbers of people from other EU member states; and secondly the apparent scarcity of resources in what remains one of the world's most affluent countries—a phenomenon exacerbated by the austerity prescribed as medicine to the recent protracted economic downturn. And there a third cause whereby immigration provides a convenient scapegoat for the deeply rooted problems of a grossly unequal society.

There's no question freedom of movement represents a major political challenge for the EU, but it is not one that is going to be solved by a 'send 'em all home' mentality and a retreat into the illusory comfort zone of 'Little England'.

Solving the problem constructively means working together with other EU countries to find commonly acceptable solutions, an approach to which Britain's aloofness in European affairs does not lend itself well.

Leaving to one side the social problems created by British citizens exercising their right to freedom of movement in places such as Benidorm and Magaluf, back home in a country with an aging demographic and an extremely high cost of living the presence of other EU citizens plays a vital role in our highly imbalanced economy. Who else, for example, would be willing to work for a recently rebranded 'living wage' (a masterstroke of Osbornian newspeak) that still falls far short of reflecting the real cost of living?

Yet our intolerance of foreigners is not solely confined to the EU, as shown by

the relatively recent introduction of a minimum income threshold for spouse visas. Thus, UK citizens marrying non-EU nationals are now effectively treated like second-class citizens, debarred of an automatic right to family life in Britain. If, for one reason or another, at one point in your life you find yourself classed as 'poor' (regardless of any previous contributions you might have made to your country), there exists the possibility you'll face the stark choice between Skype parenthood or involuntary exile from your homeland.

The injustice of this piece of legislation is hard to avoid. That is, unless, you monetise it. After all, why should hardworking people be forced to subsidise the luxury of marrying and starting a family with someone from another country?

If there is a common theme to all our concerns about immigration, it is an irrational paranoia that people who come to Britain do so with the sole intent of extracting the maximum possible gain from the welfare state. Surely, it's more reasonable to assume most people who come to settle in a country are keen to find a job, pay their way and contribute to their new home. That low-income families are reliant on state support says more about the divergence between wages and the cost of living than it does about any opportunistic desire to leech from the public purse.

But that's the problem with monetising everything. Not everything can—or should—be reduced to a financial cost-benefit calculation. Sometimes benefits are collective. Sometimes they are not immediately tangible. How to measure the collective contribution made by the members of a family unit over the course of their lives? How to measure the collective

contribution of many such families? To be sure, studies show the net economic benefit of immigration to be positive. Useful information no doubt, but do we really want to live in a society in which we measure people's worth by their economic value and by default see them as a threat to our material wellbeing? Yet that is precisely the type of society we have become: materialistic, self-interested, 'aspirational'.

Returning from abroad, a colleague asked me if I thought people in Britain were selfish. Later that day, I found words from Jimmy Reid's rectorial address going round in my mind: self-centred; grasping; bang the bell Jack, I'm on the bus. Reid made his address in 1972, yet his warning seems more prescient than ever and our growing hostility to foreigners is merely a reflection of the malaise he painted so vividly.

The central issue concerns the set of values with which we, as a society, approach them. Or perhaps Reid's arch-nemesis was right: there is no such thing, just individual men and women, islands of self-interest adrift on a sea of material wealth. If that is the case, we are certainly much the poorer for it.

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Modern apprenticeships in Scotland

Margaret and Jim Cuthbert argue they're not much more than cheap labour for unskilled sectors

On 31 August 2015, the *Independent* carried an editorial on modern apprenticeships: Cameron had announced his government was going to increase the number of modern apprentices [MAs]. The editorial argued more quality was needed rather than quantity, and that the types of apprenticeships on offer were unlikely to make major inroads in improving productivity.

Do these conclusions also apply in Scotland, where MAs are a devolved area of responsibility and where there are plans to increase the number of modern apprenticeships in Scotland from 25,000 to 30,000 by 2020? This article looks at some of the available evidence.

Some background: MAs were introduced in Britain in 1994 in response to the decline of traditional apprenticeships, and the loss of skills at craft, supervisory and technical level, compared to what was happening among other major economies. The new apprenticeships offered work based training leading towards an industry approved qualification. They are marketed to young people as a means of getting the appropriate skills and to business as a means of getting the skilled workforce they need.

Apprenticeships are available to all ages. Training is organised and delivered through a training provider. The basis of the apprenticeship is a contract: the apprentice has employed status and is paid a wage, the length of the apprenticeship is at least a year, and there is a defined training programme or framework leading to qualifications.

The Modern Apprenticeship programme in Scotland is managed by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) quango for the Scottish Government. SDS provides funding and support to employers. In 2014, its operating expenditure on the modern apprenticeship programme and skill seekers was £74.5m. According to its statistics, of those starting apprenticeships in 2014-15, 52% were aged 16 to 19, 27% were 20-24, and 21% were 25 or over: that is, just over half were for young people from

school. The split of male/female was 60/40.

Now let's look in more detail at SDS statistics relevant to how well the MA programme is likely to be meeting economic needs. In terms of level of training, 36% of participants were on apprenticeships leading to qualifications less than school higher level; 61% were on courses leading to a the equivalent of a schools higher or HNC qualification; just over 2% were on course for the equivalent of an Ordinary Degree or HND; and the remainder, less than 1%, to an Honours degree. In total, less than 3% were aiming for a post-school level qualification.

In terms of length of course, the programmes are between 1-4 years long. Statistics are not provided by SDS on the average length by type of course. However, comparison of numbers on courses compared with numbers of entrants suggests that the average participant is in a modern apprenticeship for approximately a year and a half.

And in terms of subject areas covered, there are 106 frameworks offered in MA. These are courses designed to cover specific topics such as, for example hairdressing. In total, the highest number of starts was in hospitality at 11.1%, followed by business and administration (10%), social services (9%), and retail (8%). Looking only at men, freight logistics (10%), building (8%) and hospitality (8%) have the greatest number of starts; and for women, social services (21%), business and admin with 17%, hospitality with 15% and retail at 11% are the most popular.

In interpreting the relevance of these figures, it is worth recalling that both UK and Scottish governments have repeatedly stressed the need to turn the economy around from a high dependency on the services sector, particularly the financial sector, to one more broadly based.

Manufacturing, for example, has been in steep decline: research, development and innovation are all at low levels. The competitiveness of our export trade and our ability to compete with

imports from elsewhere all depend on our re-engineering the economy towards more manufacturing – and as one ingredient in that, we need a highly skilled workforce in the types of trades relevant to manufacturing, research and development. These include, for example, maths, science, engineering, IT and electrical.

On first entering government in 2007, the SNP acknowledged 'it is apparent that our modern knowledge economy will be ever-increasingly reliant upon a steady supply of skilled scientists, technologists and engineers..... We believe that the primary aim of the [MA] programme is economic development through enabling individuals to earn while they learn and develop skills relevant to their job' (Skills for Scotland 2007).

And Scotland has particular problems in that, in 2015, it is still the case that productivity is lower than the UK average, which itself has lower productivity than a number of EU competitor countries and the US.

Against this background, the Scottish figures given above suggest that the aforementioned criticisms of what is happening to MAs down south are equally valid here in Scotland. Programmes so heavily based on hospitality, business administration and retail are unlikely to be vital ingredients of any policy to restructure the economy. They reflect the fact that the service sector dominates the Scottish economy. The continuing very low numbers entering modern apprenticeships in engineering, IT, and science based subjects are a cause for concern.

And just to emphasise the point, in 2014/2015, while the number of starts in hospitality was 2,856, the total starts over all frameworks in IT and Telecoms numbered 736. This is out of a total number of MA starts of 25,247.

Many sectors that supply goods to us daily have few or no MA starts. So for example, there are no MAs for the framework courses of food manufacture, or of meat and poultry processing, despite the Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise promoting the food sector as being

a Scottish success story. The country is experiencing a massive increase in the hugely subsidised wind turbine industry, and yet only two people were taken on as MAs.

And although MAs are frequently publicised as a means of obtaining high level skills, the evidence above on the level of training provided through the MA programme suggests that the bulk of participants are not attaining qualifications significantly above school level. This is not surprising as we have seen above that the average participant is in the programme for only 18 months.

These conclusions might seem to run counter to evidence which the SDS has published on satisfaction with the MA scheme. In July 2014, SDS carried out an online survey of MAs to determine their level of satisfaction with the scheme. The report stated the MA programme is 'highly regarded by the majority of [Mas] with almost all of them (98%) saying it is useful and over three-quarters saying it is very useful'.

However, this evidence has to be treated with great caution. The survey had been sent to all MAs with valid email addresses (13,600 out of 37,338 in training). Just 1,531 replied. And although SDS weighted their survey results on age and gender, we have

no idea about whether those without emails, or those who chose not to respond to the survey, actually had quite a different view of satisfaction as compared with those responding.

Recording that 'At the 95% confidence level, the sample size of 1, 531 provides a confidence interval of 2.5%' seems at best a brave statement and at worst just plain wrong. All one can say is that of the 1,531 respondents, 98% found it useful. We cannot attribute this percentage to the population of all modern apprentices. It is impossible to say, therefore, on this basis how satisfied apprentices are with their courses. Without a proper analysis of potential non-response bias, the high level of satisfaction reported should certainly not be taken as any strong indicator of the success of the programme. And, of course, the level of satisfaction says very little about how relevant the MAs are to the need to transform the economy.

Following the recommendations of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce in May 2014, the Scottish Government has set itself the following goal in relation to MAs: 'The number of [MAs] at level 3 and above to be increased. The target is for 20,000 out of a total of 30,000 MA starts to be at this level by 2021.' Level 3 is up to the equivalent of an HNC, and is still

below a post-school qualification.

And, in May 2015, the Scottish Parliament debated modern apprenticeships. In the final motion, it recognised 'the success of the modern apprenticeship (MA) programme'. In addition, it resolved to encourage 'employers to consider workforce development and higher workforce skills that support long-term sustainable growth'. Such aspirations, fundamental to transforming the economy, require a grasp of why the distribution of MAs is as it is, and what mechanisms can be used to change it.

The evidence we have presented here suggests the MA programme is not meeting what is required to transform the Scottish economy: on average, an apprentice will spend 18 months on an MA to a level below the equivalent of higher education. If the government's aspirations are for 'improved pathways for progression to degree-level qualifications in a work-based setting', then it is time for a serious re-appraisal of the programme.

Margaret and Jim Cuthbert are independent economists and statisticians who conduct research for the Jimmy Reid Foundation (see <http://reidfoundation.org/?s=cuthbert>)

Sources to read about the struggle

Given that we have covered the employment rights in this edition and in recent previous ones, if you want to know how the issues are being progressed, what battles are being fought and, of course, how the struggle is going, the following are the best aggregators of news and views.

LabourStart

www.labourstart.org/2013/country.php?country=UK&langcode=en

Set up in 1998, brings together newspaper reporting and union sources. Probably, the most comprehensive of all the various sites available. Also pages by country so <http://www.labourstart.org/2013/state.php?country=UK&langcode=en&stat>



Union News
Keep Union Members Working



UK's #1 Source
for Labor News

e=Scotland for Scotland <http://www.labourstart.org/2013/state.php?country=UK&langcode=en&state=England> for England, <http://www.labourstart.org/news/state.php?country=UK&langcode=en&state=Wales> for Wales <http://www.labourstart.org/2013/state.php?country=UK&langcode=en&state=Northern%20Ireland> - for Northern Ireland.

<http://labornews.uk/>

Set up in 2009 and even though it looks like it comes from America, it brings together all union news releases from Britain. Similar to the TUC's *Union Newswire* (www.unionnewswire.org.uk/).

<http://tigmoo.co.uk/>

Standing loosely for 'This Great Movement of Ours', Tigmoos specialises in union blog content so is good for views and analysis.

<http://uniteresist.org/>

Unite the Resistance is an SWP initiative established in 2011 to do what it says on the tin. Consequently, it carries information about strikes and protests.



<http://shopstewards.net/>

Established in 2006 on the initiative of the RMT union and now sponsored

by eight other national unions, the site carries reports of and appeals for strikes and protests.



<http://unitelive.org/>

Unitelive aggregates outputs from Unite, Britain's biggest union.

From the TUC comes too Stronger Unions which has a domestic and international focus.



<http://strongerunions.org/>



Probably taking its name from the Billy Bragg song, Power in a Union (www.powerinaunion.co.uk/) is a website edited by Tony Burke (of Unite) designed to provide information,

news, views and comment on British, European and worldwide union and political issues, and to provide a forum for debate and discussion.

At <http://unisonactive.blogspot.com.es/> UNISONActive is an unofficial blog produced by UNISON activists for UNISON activists. It brings together news, briefings and events from a progressive left perspective.

<https://uslive.org/news/>

Finally, there is Union Solidarity International which carries a mixture of independently generated reports and union releases.

Of course, there are also a host of socialist newspapers such as the Morning Star (<http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/britain>),

Britain's only daily socialist newspaper, Socialist Worker (<http://socialistworker.co.uk/>), the Scottish Socialist Voice (<https://scottishsocialistvoice.wordpress.com/>) and The Socialist (http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/main/The_Socialist) amongst others.



Union Solidarity International

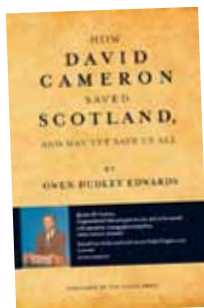
Book Reviews

How David Cameron Saved Scotland, and May Yet Save Us All,

Owen Dudley Edwards
Luath, 9781910021699, £9.99

Reviewed by Finlay Smith

This book will not sell well in the Home Counties. I'm as assured of this as Owen Dudley Edwards is assured that the voting population of Scotland ticked the wrong box in September 2014. He sets his store out early on. At the start of this extended open letter to David Cameron, he alludes to the fact that the Union of England and Scotland was



abolished by its own Act of Union in 1801 (which ushered in the United Kingdom), but that Mr Cameron was sophisticated enough to conceal that from the hapless voters, who patently cannot think for themselves. Ouch!

He then goes on to state quite categorically that an independent Scotland will be a country divested of the nuclear deterrent and that it will be a shining template for the world to follow into a utopia of peace and harmony (or something like that). A bit of a leap, but the reader is starting to get the picture.

I toiled on in anticipation of some balance and some shade to the light, but was ultimately left disappointed and ashamed at myself for being taken in by the beguiling Mr Cameron. Home Counties readers will leave this on the

coffee table open at page 2, which is a pity. If you can manage the bias and Owen Dudley Edwards's right to be right you'll find 275 pages rich in facts, opinions traded as facts, humour and a peppering of the type of quotes we all like to stick in the bank for later.

The core of the book follows a series of chapters entitled 'The xxx Education of a Prime Minister'. For xxx substitute sequentially Etonian, Oxonian, Scottish and National. As a concept this sounds like a nice vehicle to drive the story along, but in practice many of the topics visited have only a tangential connection with the phases of Mr Cameron's learning.

The narrative is dense, but delivered with a light and elegant touch which makes the book an easy read. An unexpected bonus is that you'll learn a bit about the history of the two Irelands along the way. It's a satire so we can expect some sneering, with politicians being fair game, of course. For example, Thatcher is described as 'crass, vulgar and stupid' (fair

enough), Blair as Thatcher's 'disciple' and Ruth Davidson inexplicably as 'the little Colonel'. However, you feel an undercurrent rising that Owen Dudley Edwards might just be having a wee pop at us too. Wait a minute, is that me he's talking about?

He knows his stuff, that's for sure. However, to enjoy the book it's first advisable to be endowed with an encyclopaedic knowledge of Irish and Scottish politics or, like me, with Google on tap to understand what or who he's talking about.

The disparagement heaped on the 'no' campaign is as expected, but some of the language exercised is questionable. Of the tactics employed by Messrs Osborne, Balls and Alexander the author asks 'What is this behaviour but terrorism?' Really? In the world we live in now many will find such utterances hysterical, possibly objectionable.

The book extolls at length Mr Cameron's intelligence, craftiness and political genius, carefully masked by his success in cultivating an image of cossetted mediocrity. All is delivered tongue in cheek, but it does make the reader wonder if one individual can possibly have masterminded the 'yes' campaign with the completeness and delicacy attributed to him. The book's sleeve notes wonder if David Cameron might be too busy to reply to this letter. Well, if he expends the same time and effort in all other aspects of his Prime Minister-ly duties as Owen Dudley Edwards suggests he invested in the 'yes' campaign, then it's a sure fire certainty he won't, unless every day has about 500 hours in it.

Who will buy this book? I suspect only likeminded folk who will end by punching the air, exclaiming 'Aye! See!' then shaking their heads in sorrowful agreement that, indeed, the Scottish voter hasnae a clue. But collectively and democratically they ticked another box, like it or not. This book is worth reading for many reasons, but don't expect it to change your opinion. If you buy it, I suspect you'll already have one.

Finlay Smith is a manager in part of the aviation business, an ex-RAF officer and an atypical lifelong Labour fan.

Will Thorne; My life's battles

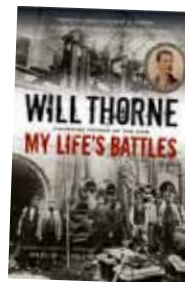
John Callow (ed.), Lawrence and Wishart, London, 227 pages, £9.99, 9781910448090

Reviewed by Gregor Gall

The GMB union is to be commended for bringing back into print the autobiography of an outstanding figure of trade unionism in Britain. This is the life and works of one Will Thorne. It comes with a new foreword by Paul Kenny, soon to depart GMB general secretary, and an introduction from historian, John Callow, Director of Archives of the Marx Memorial Library.

Leaving school at the age of six, Thorne became a semi-skilled industrial labourer in Birmingham and went on to found the gas workers' union in 1889, campaign on behalf of the unemployed and fight for the eight-hour day. Eventually, he went on to lead the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, a forerunner of today's GMB union, being its general secretary for 44 years and was an east London MP for almost forty years.

Born in Hockley, Birmingham, on 8 October 1857, Thorne's father died in a fight when he was seven. The young Thorne worked from six in the morning to six at night, with half an hour for breakfast and an hour for dinner. Thorne recalls that when the spinner he worked for wanted to reduce his wages from 2 shillings and 6 pence to 2 shillings, he 'went on strike' and never returned to the job. His family was on poor relief. Thorne took a job with his uncle at a brick and tile works, and later, at another brickworks further away. At the age of nine Thorne recalls 'my mother got me up at four o'clock every morning to give me my breakfast'. It was a four-mile walk to work. He wrote on page 19:



I had to give up this job finally because my mother said that the work was too hard and the distance too long for me to walk every morning and night. I remember her telling me that the 8 s[hillings] a week would be missed; someone would have to go short. But it was no use being slowly killed by such work as I was doing, and it was making me hump backed. It was not until I had been away from the work for several weeks that I was able to straighten myself out again.

In 1882, he moved to London and found employment at a gas works. There, he became a Marxist and member of the Social Democratic Federation, soon becoming a branch secretary and saying later in 1910 at the Trades Union Congress of that year that he described himself as a 'revolutionary, class conscious, trade

unionist and social democrat' (when social democracy meant socialist). It was the experience of state oppression as the organised expression of capitalists' interests that led Thorne to realise the state must be challenged so he stood for and was elected to Parliament in 1906.

In 1889, he played a major role in founding the gas workers' union and later helped organise the London dock strike. These were key events in the development of what was known as 'new unionism', namely, the unionisation of semi- and unskilled workers. Then in 1925, he sat down with pen and paper to record it all. In this he was assisted by Eleanor Marx who many years before had helped teach him to read and write. But by the time he died in 1946, he was no longer quite the radical and internationalist he had once been. He recruited workers into the army for the Great War, gaining a CBE for his pains in 1930, and opposed the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. He had also experienced the defeat and retreat of the 1926 general strike and its aftermath with Labour joining an austerity inducing National Government.

Yet because *My life's battles* was written in 1925, it concentrates most on the early years of his life when hope was in the ascendancy and everything seemed close to possible. And because, he was a humble man, Thorne underplays his own role in many episodes he recounts. Nonetheless, he records the spectacular growth of the union and then the counter-offensive of the employers as well as the internal struggles within the union between radicals and moderates (and which led to his marginalisation as a more radical figure).

My life's battles is not a simply story of a radical that became less radical due to old age or the corrupting influence of the trappings of Westminster or those of high union office. In fact, it is not that at all. The explanation for why Thorne moved in the ways he did belies a simple linear path. Indeed, as John Callow demonstrates in his introduction, Thorne was still an active member of the Social Democratic Federation in 1936.

My life's battles is a valuable and dynamic memoir of a key figure who pulled himself up by his own bootstraps for the benefit of others. Along the way, he became an accomplished orator, negotiator and organiser. Whether it is for inspiration, understanding or succour in these times, *My life's battles* is well worth a read.

Gregor Gall

Kick up the Tabloids

Several weeks into his leadership of the Labour Party, it is still far too early to assess what impact, if any, Jeremy Corbyn has made on all but one person in Scotland.

While south of the border, lefties were chanting 'Jez we can' and getting understandably excited by Corbyn's new vision for Labour, there was less excitement up here. His demands for an end to austerity, and promises to scrap Trident may have sounded mould-shattering for the people of England, but were hardly ground-breaking policies for voters in Scotland. After all, these are the very same policies on which we voted back in May, to give the SNP its landslide. So why vote Labour, particularly since the new leader barely gave Scotland a mention in his first speech to the party conference?

In fact, Corbyn's victory only affects one person, constituting shaking things up big style for Kezia Dugdale. I don't know whether or not she has passed her driving test, but less than a month into her own job as leader of Scottish Labour, she has already had to perform numerous U-turns, pulled off several emergency stops, done a number of five-point turns and reversed around a couple of corners. And that's only a few weeks after taking the car out of the garage, so who knows what state it will be in by the time it's MOT is due next May. Also, given that the 'car' in question is a 1997 Ford Mondeo, with a 'new' Labour sticker on the rear window, she's had to do a fairly swift trade-in.

Having swept to power in Scotland against the heavyweight opposition of Ken McIntosh, or "the other bloke" as Ed Miliband knows him, Kez immediately set out her stall as to what kind of Labour Party she wanted to see in Scotland. She was very open about her enthusiasm for addressing the deficit (in other words, austerity) and her support of a multi-lateral deterrent (i.e. Trident) as well as making it very clear that she was not going to vote for Jeremy Corbyn as leader. Indeed, she was at pains to point out the doomsday scenario which could unfold in the

unlikely event of him being elected. An unlikely event which, of course, came to pass. Cue red faces all round, or a distinctly-pale-pink face in Kezia's case.

She, of course, was not alone in predicting 'The End of The Civilization as We Know It' in the event of a Corbyn victory. Indeed, it was with a faint glow of nostalgia that I read the scare stories in the *Daily Mail* and *The Express*. It was like being back in the summer of 2014 once again, as the right-wing press once again were predicting financial ruin, terrorist attacks and the freezing-over of Hell, merely substituting the word 'Corbyn' for the word. 'Yes'.

Corbyn has been criticised for not wearing a tie, being a teetotaler, not singing the national anthem, having trousers that don't match his jacket, riding a bicycle and being vegetarian. And worst of all for appointing a vegan as shadow minister for agriculture. The last of these would appear quite far-sighted, now that we are told that sausages and bacon could be as dangerous as smoking or asbestos.

In the space of a few days, veggies and vegans have gone from being nutters and cranks to being ahead of the curve. Furthermore, as a vegetarian himself, it is highly unlikely that he took part in the kind of obscene student rituals as David Cameron did.

My one reservation about the man, on watching his speech to the Labour Party conference, is that he totally lacks the ability to tell a joke. But is that important? Boris Johnston can tell jokes, but we all cringe at the thought of him ending up as Prime Minister. I tell jokes for a living, but I wouldn't want me running the country.

Furthermore, Corbyn obviously has a sense of humour. Otherwise, he would not have appointed Lord Mike Watson to his shadow cabinet, ten years after his expulsion from the party, after he was jailed for fire-raising in 2005. It's possible Jez took one

look across the dispatch box at the government, and thought 'What I need here is a convicted arsonist'.

However, my main disappointment so far in Corbyn has been his performance in Parliament, and in particular his lacklustre showings at Prime Minister's Questions, where he reads out questions sent in by the public.

Rather than the gladiatorial verbal jousting of PMQ's of old, it has the feel of Cameron taking part in a question-and-answer session with his local vicar at a coffee morning in the church hall. I know we are told that the general public are turned off by yaboo politics. However, with a government such as we have now, I think most people are looking for a Leader of the Opposition who is willing to shout "Ya!! Boo!!" at this Prime Minister.

Vladimir McTavish', Keir McAllister and Mark Nelson will be appearing in The Stand Comedy Club's monthly satirical show 'So That Was November?' at the Edinburgh Stand on Wednesday 18 Nov and the Glasgow Stand on Monday 23, both shows start 8.30pm.

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