

# Scottish Left Review

Issue 93 June 2016 - £2.00



'best re(a)d'

**STILL  
ON TOP**

but who are the real winners & losers?

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## 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

## - All change and all stay the same

The tectonic plates of Scottish politics have moved again. But the third part of the tartan trilogy did not end as was expected. After the referendum in 2014 came the SNP landslide in the Westminster general election. This trend was then expected to deliver a majority SNP government at Holyrood, giving Nicola Sturgeon her own personal mandate. It was not so much that the polls were wrong as in 2015 (with regard to Labour) but that the little cognisance was taken off the late polls suggesting the SNP lead was slipping.

Either the tactics of #bothvotessnp did not do the trick (given 5% less voted for it on the list) and/or the gloss is coming off the SNP

and Sturgeon. The Westminster election last year was a highpoint and Salmond's landslide of 2011 was not replicated. The Holyrood election was a boring campaign by and large, with not the same sense of the Westminster bogeyman to set the heather alight. Turnout was down compared to the referendum (85%) and last year's Westminster election (71%) at 56%. So much for the new 16-17 year old voters and 'generation independence' of engaged voters making a big, positive difference.

The beneficiary of the SNP stumbling was not the left but the Tories. Now clearly ahead of Labour as the second largest party (in seats and votes), the Tories appear – compared to Labour

- to have triumphed because of their stance on not taxing the rich, their stauncher defence of the Union and Ruth Davidson being a more able leader than Kezia Dugdale. If this is the case, the other side of the coin concerns Labour itself. The continued decline of Scottish Labour started with its domination by 'new' Labourism and working with the Tories in Better Together. But it has continued with a leader that voters don't trust despite moving to the left on policy issues. The fact that Dugdale was allied to Jim Murphy and opposed to Corbyn before he was elected Labour leader has been part of this. Indeed, one unnamed Labour activist quoted in the *Sunday Herald* (8 May 2016) said:

## ScottishLeftReview

Issue 93 June 2016

### Contents

Comment – All change and all stay the same.....	3
Feedback .....	4
A predictable surprise? <b>Malcolm Harvey</b> .....	5
School report - progress is possible. <b>Larry Flanagan</b> .....	7
The last fantasy election? <b>Jim Cuthbert</b> .....	8
Patient at continuing risk. <b>Lilian Macer</b> .....	9
Neither Holyrood nor Westminster. <b>Gordon Munro</b> .....	10
Back to banning the bomb. <b>Veronika Tudhope</b> .....	11
EU: better out than in. <b>Ian Davidson</b> .....	13
'Fixit': the lesser of two evils. <b>Colin Fox</b> .....	14
Big Brother in Scotland. <b>Tommy Kane</b> .....	15
It's trade but not as we know it. <b>Liz Murray</b> .....	17
Trade Union Bill is now law. <b>Carolyn Jones</b> .....	18
The unending imperialist war. <b>Andrew Murray</b> .....	19
Remembering the blood of Spain. <b>Mike Arnott</b> .....	20
Imperialism abroad – racism at home. <b>Jock Morris</b> .....	21
No liberation from technology. <b>Allan Grogan</b> .....	22
Self-employment and in-work poverty. <b>Mike Danson &amp; Laura Galloway</b> .....	23
Recalling a great Scottish socialist novelist. <b>Dave Sherry</b> .....	24
Agony of chronic pain. <b>Dorothy-Grace Elder</b> .....	25
Failing at the first hurdle. <b>Gregor Gall</b> .....	26
Book reviews .....	28
Vladimir McTavish's Kick up the tabloids.....	30

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'She is a New Labour politician who backed an Old Labour agenda'.

The Greens did not do as well as expected (at least one list seat in each region) and did not surpass their highpoint of 2003. But with six MSPs rather than two, they may wield greater influence with a minority SNP government than before. For RISE and Solidarity, the election was yet another disaster. While Solidarity outpolled RISE, their combined Scotland-wide vote was a miserable and puny 25,000 (with the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition gaining 3,500 votes from six constituency seats), being well behind UKIP in meltdown's 46,000. Neither Tommy Sheridan nor Cat Boyd, the candidates with the so-called 'best chance', came anywhere close to being elected on the Glasgow list.

For those that aspire to something more radical than the mainstream can offer, it shows not just that a disunited left is not credible but that a pre-existing party (Solidarity) remained soiled goods and a credible new electoral outfit (RISE) cannot be created in a mere nine months. Moreover, both Solidarity and RISE exaggerated their chances of success because they misunderstood the ramifications of the independence campaign. As it was a political and ideological campaign and not a struggle over material grievances (like the poll tax), it concerned making propaganda and not agitation or mass action. Consequently, what long term left radicalisation could come out of it was, unfortunately, limited. Lessons from the success of the Anti-Austerity Alliance and People Before Profit in the north and south of Ireland urgently need to be learnt – most obviously that being a local councillor is a good springboard to national office.

So where does this leave us in parliamentary terms until the next Scottish elections in 2021? If Labour is to regain its credibility, it must show that its turn leftwards is genuine, long-term and more extensive. Along with the Greens, it must drag the SNP to the left so that the SNP does not seek to rely on *de facto* Tory support

over a host of issues like tax. For the Greens, progress on tax, fracking and land reform will be paramount. But Labour must go further and provide the resolve to organise resistance to austerity (which will now come in a different form given the fiscal settlement). In other words, it must become Corbynised. Only by doing so can Labour shed its skin of 'new' Labourism, a variant of neo-liberalism called social liberalism. Its dismissal of further movement on the constitution was a big mistake taking into account that the figures show that a majority of traditional Labour supporters voted 'yes' in the referendum.

The issue of unspoken issue of social liberalism will remain central. The worldview of the SNP is that the economy in Scotland needs to be more efficient and productive in order to generate more employment, private wealth, and the public tax revenues to pay for its social programme. In other words, the SNP has a social liberal approach to economy and society. Its approach is not entirely neo-liberal for the state in Scotland does seek to act to promote some elements of social justice and social equality - but it is not social democratic either for it does not seek to redistribute wealth or use the state to act to change market outcomes by way of public ownership, regulation and intervention. A Corbynised Scottish Labour could, thus, present a genuine social democratic challenge to the SNP.

Has the issue of independence been parked for the moment? Yes must be the answer in terms of any foreseeable referendum (should 'Bremain' win out). While there is a still a majority for independence in the parliament, the Greens are less ideologically attached supporters and Sturgeon is more cautious than Salmond was. But so long as Labour under Corbyn shows itself as making insufficient headway against the Tories (with the elections results across Britain neither pushing him back nor forward), then independence for many on the left will remain the way to crack the nut of escaping from austerity and neo-

liberalism. Whether a re-invigorated federalism or confederalism can alter the contours here remains to be seen.

- *Scottish Left Review* would like pay its respects to Ken Cameron (1942-2016). Ken was the FBU general secretary from 1980 to 2000 and helped Jimmy Reid and Bob Thomson in gaining the support of the FBU for the magazine when it was launched in 2000. Bob Thomson commented: 'He was a good trade union negotiator, always seeing the bigger picture as well as maintaining himself as an international socialist'.

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## Feedback

It was with some sadness and increasing anger that I read Derek Torrie's contribution in the last issue. His was a 'defence', if I may grace it with such a description, which has been offered by the Tory Government, the right wing press, anti- Corbyn Labour MPs and, God help us, Jackie Baillie. He even used the term 'deterrent'. Fortunately, his views are opposed by the Scottish Government, the Labour Party in Scotland (belatedly), the STUC, the Green Party, the SSP, RISE, the Scottish Churches and much of civic Scotland. Finally, he states that he would not stand up in front of his members and ask them to put their jobs at risk 'on the basis of political principle'. There you have it – surely, the case for the most immoral and expensive job creation scheme in history.

*Andrew Sanders*

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# A predictable surprise?

Malcolm Harvey surveys the victors and the vanquished

Shakespeare's Macduff asks 'Stands Scotland where it did?' After this month's election, the answer appears to be a categorical "no". Ruth Davidson's detoxified Conservatives hoisted themselves to second, doubling their representation. Labour's decline was at once shocking and expected – the former hegemon in Scottish politics reliant on regional MSPs to save face. Patrick Harvie and Alison Johnstone will be joined by 4 more Green MSPs, including the Parliament's youngest ever, and may find themselves courted by the SNP for support. And the Liberal Democrats, buoyed by Willie Rennie's surprising victory in North-East Fife, held steady with 5 MSPs, surpassing all expectations. Though falling two seats short of a majority, the SNP's maintained their dominance of Scottish politics, albeit they will be required to reach out across the chamber.

And yet, the more things change, the more things stay the same. The SNP dominated the constituency vote – as they did in last year's General Election – and returned to government, as they were prior to the election, and the one before that. The constitutional issue dominated the campaign, as it has dominated Scottish politics for the past half-decade or more. Ruth Davidson positioned herself as the 'real' opposition to the SNP, continuing a theme the party have adopted since her election as leader. And Labour's decline is also nothing new, their fall to third another staging point on their dramatic fall from hegemony.

The SNP's failure to retain majority government will be both a disappointment and an opportunity for the party, though their 63 seats was only a reduction of one from the 64 they ended the previous session with. A disappointment for obvious reasons – an emboldened

opposition will make delivering their manifesto in its entirety rather difficult – but, as we saw from 2007-11, the party know how to make minority government work, and Nicola Sturgeon has already indicated a willingness to work across party lines to build consensus on an issue-by-issue basis. The opportunity for the party now lies in reaching out beyond their core to work with those with whom they do not necessarily agree.

The Scottish Conservatives – or, perhaps more accurately, the Artists Formerly Known as the Scottish Conservatives – gauged their audience perfectly and were rewarded with a revival that surpassed even their most optimistic expectations. Utilising a strategy championed by her rival Murdo Fraser in the leadership election 5 years ago, Ruth Davidson avoided using the Conservative brand as much as she could in election literature. Campaign boards in fields across the North-East carried candidate names in the party's distinctive blue, but more prominent was the slogan 'Ruth Davidson for a Strong Opposition'. The Conservative brand may remain toxic to some, but focusing on the leader and their intended role post-election, as well as positioning the party as the primary defenders of the Union was a strong suit, and the party played that hand well.

Scottish Labour's woes continued, but with no appetite to appoint a seventh new leader in nine years, Kezia Dugdale appears set to stay on as leader with the difficult task of rebuilding on her shoulders. The immediate aftermath of the election prompted much (rather literal) soul-searching within the party, and a renewed ambition to declare the ideas and principles that the party stands for – just as soon as they *identify* what they are. In 2003, after Labour had returned to

coalition government in Scotland, an undergraduate exam question in a course on Scottish politics I completed asked the following question: 'Left-wing and nationalist, just not as much as Labour: is this the reason for the SNP's continued electoral weakness?' Now, with the fortunes of the parties reversed, the question can be recast of Labour. While this may well be an explanation – the SNP are, at least, perceived to be more social democratic and, naturally, more nationalist than Labour – it is likely an explanation which will not help Scottish Labour that much. They don't want to be a nationalist party – though, post-referendum, this appears to be where most of their voters have gone – nor do they particularly want to be a left-wing party, at least as far as Jeremy Corbyn's leadership goes. Trying to appeal to the Yes voters who abandoned the party for the SNP allowed the Conservatives to target the No voters that were concerned with the Union and Labour's commitment to it. In the end, neither group voted for the party in the numbers Labour are used to in Scotland.

For the Scottish Greens, trebling their seat numbers must be seen as a good outcome, especially given their position as the only other pro-independence party in Holyrood and the SNP's status as a minority government. An increase in numbers and an increase in potential influence suggests those Green MSPs will play a significant role in the forthcoming session. However, two points are worth noting. First, the election result for the Greens was, once again, significantly lower than pre-election polling, which heightened expectations of as many as 10 MSPs. Second, despite zipping their regional lists for gender balance, and pairing those lists in line with expected levels of support, the party returned 5 male MSPs to a sole female MSP. This speaks to the fact that the party over-performed expectations in some

regions (West, and Lothians) and slightly underperformed in others (North-East, South) where they were squeezed out by the increasing Conservative vote.

The Liberal Democrats, though displaced as Scotland's fourth party, will be relatively cheered by their results: retaining Orkney (against a significant SNP campaign) and Shetland, despite the legal case surrounding Alastair Carmichael MP, and re-gaining North-East Fife and Edinburgh Western on the back of strong candidates, hard-working local campaigns and a measure of pro-Union tactical voting. The return to Holyrood of Mike Rumbles as a list MSP for the North-East offset the loss of Jim Hume in the South, albeit the party are now, like their Westminster representatives, 100% male at Holyrood.

And what of the parties who did not make it into Holyrood? UKIP's expected breakthrough did not materialise, though they did double their share of the regional vote (from 1% to 2%). With just over 46,000 list votes across Scotland, there remain more Gaelic speakers (c. 57,000 according to the 2011 census) than UKIP voters in Scotland. Their Scottish leader David Coburn had identified Highlands & Islands as his best chance of election, but the

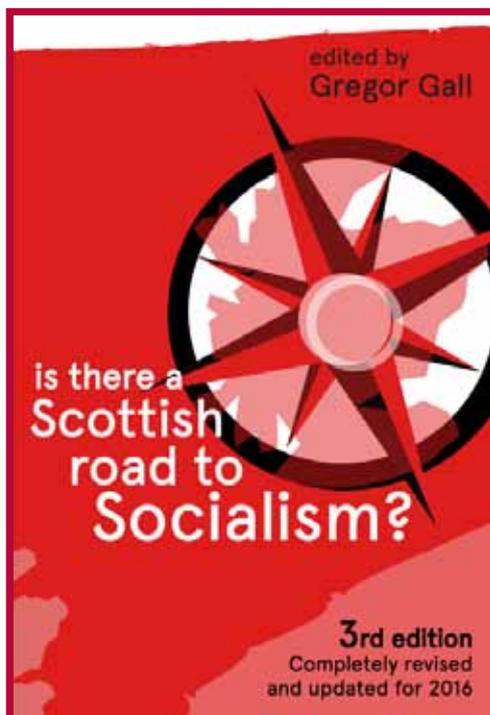
5,344 votes he secured there was a considerable distance short of what was required for a seat. On the other end of the political spectrum, RISE (Respect, Independence, Socialism, Environmentalism) did not. With 10,911 votes representing 0.5% of the list vote, RISE were outpolled by the Scottish Christian Party (which stood in only 2 regions) and Solidarity, who competed for the same voters. The fragmentation of the left – a common theme across European history – continues in Scotland, though on this occasion is unlikely to have cost the left any seats, since their combined vote remains far short of the level required to gain representation in any of the regions.

What's next for Scotland? Well, the now-minority SNP Government faces a dual challenge from Ruth Davidson's party: a reinvigorated conservative Unionism and a main opposition on the centre-right. There will be a requirement for collaboration across party lines to deliver manifesto commitments, while the new powers of the parliament may be utilised as each of the parties looking to derive advantage from the new parliamentary arithmetic. The constitutional question will remain a running sore, with both sides

attempting to maintain support for their preference. Tax will become an issue, with the more significant power to vary income tax levels devolved, and a clear left-right division between government and major opposition.

The initial devolution of a Scottish Parliament took some time to bed in, but now there is a generation of voters who were born after the parliament was established. Further powers have strengthened the parliament, and party fortunes have fluctuated significantly in the devolution period. Post-election, commentators have spoken of an 'Ulsterisation' of Scottish politics, but that seems a gross misnomer for politics in Scotland. Rather, the reference point may be the southern part of that island, and the politics of the historic Irish Free State, where Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael originated on either side of the Treaty debate. Where that leaves Scottish Labour is the existential question they currently face, but post-referendum Scotland, this looks like the new normal.

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



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# School report - progress is possible

*Larry Flanagan argues education can improve with funding and the right policies*

During the election, education was centre stage in terms of manifesto commitments to 'close the attainment gap', 'improve standards' and, even to increase funding, in one way or another. Whilst welcome, the EIS cautioned against creating a narrative of failure around Scottish education simply to score political points.

There remain significant challenges facing schools and colleges (and universities) but we are building on significant success in our system. Even a cursory review of some of the international commentary on Scottish education reveals its inclusive nature, commitment to social justice, high professional standards of teachers, and commitment to career long professional development building on a highly respected induction programme. All recognised and celebrated by significant voices. This success should be the starting point for policy development.

Intense focus is correctly placed on closing the attainment gap – an aspiration almost universally shared by politicians, certainly one which the First Minister (FM) embraced, and an agenda in which teacher unions such as the EIS are firmly engaged.

But if it was as simple as wishing it, we'd be there already for the challenge of overcoming the impact of poverty on educational attainment is a deep and complex one. Schools make a difference but action in the classroom, in isolation, has limited impact. Government needs to simultaneously address poverty at source. And, a danger exists that in wishing to demonstrate progress, it looks at short-term approaches which create the illusion of action but which fail to address the manifest issues.

National assessment is a case in point. The FM said she's interested in 'what works'. We know national testing doesn't work - look at SATS in England, the US's now abandoned No Child Left Behind (aka No child left untested) and the OECD report on Scotland which cautions against aspects of nationalised standardised testing.

What is proposed in the new National Improvement Framework does not constitute high stakes national testing, thanks in part to the EIS campaign against such an approach, although the nuance is often lost on journalists and commentators.

The potential direction of travel is ominous, however. We see this echoed in the FM's softer comments about 'Teach First' – an accelerated route into teaching for high flying academics, avoiding the need to become a qualified teacher. This will fundamentally undermine our world renowned induction programme and the General Teaching Council. In England, 'Teach First' and academisation combined to undermine the teaching profession, leading to the current crisis around recruitment and retention.

The FM has said she's 'not ideological' about these matters but she should be. These aren't incidental developments for they are part of the Global Education Reform Movement, the agenda Michael Gove and his successors so damagingly pursued and the drive to privatise public education (which is globally worth \$50bn).

In Scotland, we have a free public sector education system, democratically controlled by local and national government, and built upon a comprehensive model of entitlement and inclusiveness. We should fight to protect these characteristics – not succumb to the vacuous vanity of being seen to do something different for the sake of it.

The SNP manifesto mentioned 'regionalisation', with some seeing this as an indication of Regional Boards being created to take education out of direct local authority control. Whilst remaining a possibility, it is unlikely any firm proposals exist. Of much greater interest is the developing notion of looser regional/district educational leadership groupings focussed on pedagogical practice and professional networking. In terms of what makes a difference in the classroom, this support model has much to commend it. By contrast,

organisational restructuring would be a time consuming distraction.

Tension exists between national and local government over the Scottish Government's intention to pursue its education agenda, with or without COSLA support. This has been made explicit in the new National Improvement Framework which moves significant leverage around standards away from councils in the direction of Holyrood. Whilst local authority control of schools should be defended, councils need to demonstrate how they are adding value to the education process.

From an EIS perspective, it has been depressing to note COSLA's biggest recent educational battle has been around challenging Scottish Government's commitment to maintain teacher numbers. Scottish Government is already experimenting with providing some direct funding to schools. This can be a good thing if it is a way of ring-fencing education spending and potentially empowering schools. But there are limits and drawbacks for economies of scale may be lost; not all schools have democratic structures for spending money; and head teachers are already overworked without taking on more duties.

What is clear is additional resources are required to deliver improvements in education and in a coordinated and planned manner otherwise the impact will be blunted (with sufficient teachers to deliver them). The election focus on education provided a strong basis for developing a consensual approach to policy development and implementation. Teachers try instilling into pupils an understanding that cooperation and collaboration are more effective and progressive than competition. Let's hope the politicians understand this too.

*Larry Flanagan is the general secretary of the Education Institute of Scotland (EIS) union and was a principal teacher of English in Glasgow before being elected to the post.*

# The last fantasy election?

*Jim Cuthbert says we're sleepwalking into big financial trouble*

The 2016 Scottish election was notable for being conducted in a strange, make-believe world, where some key issues were almost completely ignored. Three such issues are likely to intrude into this cosy world long before the next one in 2021.

Let's start by looking at the fiscal context. In the light of Osborne's 2016 budget, the Scottish Government's Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) revenue (the amount the Scottish government would have got from the old Barnett formula to spend on current services) is projected to drop by about £1.2bn in real terms from 2015/16 to 2019/20 – a drop of almost 5%. This is a severe cut.

But, of course, this time the Scottish government has got significant tax powers: so the SNP propose to use new, and old, tax powers to raise an extra £2 billion or so, from changes in income tax, council tax, and business rates. But this £2bn is spread over the lifetime of the parliament. A charitable interpretation of the figures suggests that not more than £880m extra in tax would actually be raised in 2019/20.

The SNP manifesto made a large number of new spending promises on current services: to give two examples, an extra £500m pa by the end of the parliament on the NHS revenue budget, and another £500m pa in doubling free years of early education. These two measures alone come to more per annum than will be raised from the tax changes.

In other words, funding the manifesto commitments is going to use up significantly more than is being raised from the tax changes, and will therefore imply even deeper cuts in expenditure on non-protected services than Osborne's cut in the DEL. This is the first big issue that was glossed over. What is

the actual scale of cuts in revenue expenditure on non-protected services, and where will these occur?

The second issue relates to capital expenditure. The SNP government has been assiduous in developing ways of funding capital expenditure from off-balance sheet methods. For example, the SNP's Non-Profit Distributing (NPD) programme is expected to deliver over £2.2bn of capital expenditure in the years 2014 to 2017 alone. However, revenue funded methods of providing capital imply a contractual commitment for the public sector to make future revenue payments to repay capital, and for services.

Some of these payments fall directly on central government (e.g., in the form of support payments to local authorities) and John Swinney has a prudential rule to ensure that these central government payments do not become too large. But other contractually committed payments fall upon local authority budgets, and no-one seems to be keeping an eye on what proportion of local authority budgets is being pre-empted by such contractual payments. So the second big issue which was glossed over is: are local authorities going to hit future budgetary problems because of over-use of revenue funded capital?

The third issue relates to income tax. Paradoxically, the SNP is proposing to raise £1.2bn extra over the life of the parliament by cutting income tax. This apparent paradox arises from a quirk in the new fiscal settlement. In the rest of the UK (rUK), income tax rates are being cut (in the form of an increase in the threshold for the higher rate tax band) by more than in Scotland. But the indexation factor

for the abatement of the Scottish government's block grant is related to the change in rUK tax revenues. So by cutting tax rates less than rUK, Scotland gains more from the indexation factor than it loses in tax revenues – and so is an overall gainer. Scotland is, in effect, gaming the indexation arrangements in the new fiscal settlement.

This, however, is potentially a dangerous game. In the long run, if Scotland's economy, and therefore tax revenues, does not grow as fast as rUK, the indexation arrangements in the fiscal settlement will penalise us very severely. Raising tax rates relative to rUK could accentuate such a process, particularly at a time when a major part of the Scottish economy, relating to oil, is in secular decline. The public, therefore, deserved a mature debate about the balance of risks involved in deciding to game the fiscal settlement: but this debate did not take place.

All three of these issues could well become critical during the new parliament. If so, while the major consequences could be very uncomfortable for Scotland, we would at least have one minor consolation. Never again are we likely to be subject to a fantasy election campaign, where such vital issues are ignored.

*Jim Cuthbert is an independent economist and statistician (see <http://www.jamcuthbert.co.uk/>)*



# Patient at continuing risk

Lilian Macer assesses the health of our NHS

There is a growing financial crisis in NHS Scotland. NHS spending is not 'protected' from austerity measures. With little scope to deviate from the current footprint of acute services this year, for the first time ever, health boards are potentially producing unbalanced Local Delivery Plans. There's an increase demand to move to community-based services but with no political appetite to provide sufficient resources of trained staff and finance, the shift will not become a reality.

With the SNP not returning an overall majority, this will potentially give rise to consensual politics within the Scottish Parliament - something that UNISON has called for in relation to the NHS for some time. So how will the party manifesto commitments translate into delivering healthcare for the Scottish population? NHS Scotland remains a priority within the party manifestos but the shape and focus differ in some part in policies and funding commitments.

Scottish Labour stated it would protect the NHS from privatisation, with commitments to fully support UNISON's *Ethical Care Charter* in social care. However, this needs to be seen in the context of health and social care integration with significant service and budget responsibility moving to the Integrated Joint Boards (IJBs) established in April 2016. This significant reform of public service provision opens the door to further privatisation of social care (and potentially health services) commissioned by the IJBs.

Both SNP and Labour gave commitments to increase health spending in vital areas: health visitors; advanced practitioner in nursing and AHPs; and medical staffing with a particular focus on GPs. All this comes with a price tag and unless fully funded, under the

current financial crisis, health boards will not be able to deliver.

The Tories proposed to protect health spending in Scotland with the health budget rising annually in line with the Barnett Consequentials. As expected, they'd move away from a universal service with as a starter the re-introduction of prescription chargers which they have estimated to generate £65m by the end 2021.

During the campaign, a number of NHS services were debated but the main issues focussing the minds of the parties were major trauma centres, integration of health and social care and GP out-of- hour provision.

Labour committed to investing in four major trauma centres (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen), something it says the SNP has broken its promise on. The SNP manifesto highlighted the same four trauma sites but referred to the trauma network. If this does become a reality, it will mean one major trauma centre in the West and three in the East. The former will be required to service 2.6m people covering Ayrshire and Arran, Dumfries and Galloway, Forth Valley, Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Lanarkshire. Notwithstanding geographical dispersion, surely there is the need to examine the case for three in the East or to increase the number in the West.

All the manifestos highlighted the huge pressures on GP delivery services and made commitments to invest here. The Ritchie Review of 2015 made 28 recommendations for health boards to ensure they could provide out-of-hours services (among them multi-agency teams).

One of the main pressures on NHS spending is delayed discharge. It is estimated the current number of patients in hospital across Scotland who do not need to be is the

equivalent to number of beds in the new Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Glasgow. IJBs need to be properly funded to deliver the quality and capacity of social care to get people into social settings.

Decisions that should be based on care and clinical need are heavily dependent on financial and human resources (like the ability to recruit, train and retain a skilled and fairly paid workforce). The current NHS Scotland Healthcare Strategy (published in February 2016) takes little account of the new integrated approach to health and social care provision. It rightly focuses on ensuring safe, effective, person-centred and sustainable services delivered through a workforce that has the right skills and competencies and is able to achieve the best possible outcomes for patients. It is notable this strategy does not have a Ministerial Foreword giving government support.

Additionally, the strategy has little insight into the potential drive towards future public service reforms which the SNP highlights require structural and regulatory change. This will undoubtedly impact on local council's provision through the IJB. There is a need for the union movement to move from a reactive mode to more of a proactive engagement to influence the decisions that will shape public services for the next generation. Staff governance arrangements and work emanating from the Fair Work Convention give us some leverage to seek to achieve this and be a voice for the workforce on how best to achieve quality outcomes for our citizens and taxpayers.

*Lilian Macer is the Convenor of UNISON Scotland and an Employee Director at NHS Lanarkshire*

# Neither Holyrood nor Westminster but ...

*Gordon Munro argues local government independence is a wilting flower*

The work of local government just got a lot tougher with confirmation that the agenda of the centre right will dominate the new Parliament. The SNP and Tories agree the new taxation powers should not be used to increase the basic rate of tax or the higher rate of tax to provide more income - which could have been used for services provided by local government. Even the limited tax raising ability of the Council Tax, approximately 12% of local expenditure is raised through taxation, is restricted with a maximum of 3% and token tinkering with the top 4 bands rather than a wholesale revision as was promised by the SNP. Even by the SNP's own figures, this will only raise a maximum of £300m in Scotland which is less than has been removed this financial year from local government.

Reduction and restriction of finance is one thing but it is also clear that powers will continue to be removed from councils and centralised. Mention was made of education being removed and administered by local boards and the integration of health and social care is still a contested area in local government which could be removed and centralised by the new Scottish Government. Councils will not just be hollowed out but reformation including a reduction in number of Council's is also on the agenda. So what can be done?

COSLA has called for a summit to 'redraw the partnership between local and national government' aimed at delivering a new framework with 'local variation' in what Scotland wants and to a certain extent that is what is demonstrated by the election results. Whilst the debate in Scotland tends to be restricted to the primary colours of black and white and all the depth of Twitter, Scotland's politics are, in fact and in practice, more sophisticated

as it gets to grips with tactical voting. Swings to the Tories in the north east and south west show that their strength there is returning and the mixed results in Edinburgh, combined with the fact that nearly 45% of the electorate did not vote, show that how power is wielded and who holds it in Scotland at Scottish Parliament, City Council and citizen level needs to be reviewed. COSLA's challenge to the new Parliament to work with it in the first 100 days of the new Parliament to deliver 5 pledges to a) make Scotland's public services local by default; b) redraw the partnership between local and national government; c) give communities financial choices; d) open up Scottish democracy; and e) join up thinking on reform.

Applying this approach we could, if taken up, begin to renew local government so that rather than continue the 'rate capping' and demolition approach used by the UK Government in the 1980s towards local government, a different way is taken in Scotland. This would continue the work of the *Scotland Act 2003* and that of the Christie Commission but, to date, increased centralisation has been the only change. This agenda contains dangers as well as opportunities but doing nothing is not an option.

Another challenge from a different source is the City Deal agenda promoted by the UK government. This too has dangers and opportunities, but does give power locally in a way that has seen councils queue up to take part as a potential solution to the squeeze on their finances by the Scottish Government. Westminster's willingness to take this forward and the absence of a considered response to the COSLA challenge could aid

Tory fortunes in Scotland as they show willingness to accede power to cities in a way that the Scottish Government has not done to date.

There is an irony in that 'nationalism' is the dominant narrative in Scotland and the 'independence' word is invoked as a part of that narrative. Yet when it comes to local government, it has seen a diminution of power and the taking away of its 'independence' since the creation of the Scottish Parliament 17 years ago. When you consider that 50 years ago councils raised 50% of their finance locally, it is maybe time we framed the debate about local government in Scotland as 'autonomy' versus 'centralism'. This would reflect 'local variation' and the fact that doorstep issues in this campaign were really about services delivered by councils as opposed to rhetoric delivered by parliamentarians and their 'wannabe' successors.

*Gordon Munro is Labour councillor for Leith ward on Edinburgh City Council*

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# Back to banning the bomb

*Making demands in the new political landscape remains the priority says Veronika Tudhope*

**T** Trident is a reserved issue, so how can the recent Holyrood election results affect it? During the campaign, Trident and nuclear weapons were not mentioned very often. Because it's devolved, because parties feel their stance is well known or for some other reason?

Despite this all the parties published a manifesto position about Trident. The SNP has clearly been against nuclear weapons all along. An anti-Trident agenda has been pursued; supporting a cross-party group, sending delegates to international conferences and calling debates. It has been difficult to support the settled will of the Scottish People against nuclear weapons.

The Greens have been consistently against Trident within their wider remit of seeking peace. Specific manifesto promises support this. The 6 MSPs were elected on a ticket of 'bolder Holyrood' so can be expected to use their pivotal position to help the SNP move towards a nuclear free Scotland.

Labour has been a bit of a mess, fudging the answers at hustings until the manifesto was eventually published, a position complicated by the unions. Unite is divided over Trident replacement and GMB is definitely in favour while other unions, and the STUC, take that traditional view that bombing trade unionists elsewhere is unacceptable. The Scottish Labour conference in November took an anti-Trident position forcing Dugdale to reverse her position to being against Trident. In theory, of the 24 Labour MSPs only one, Jackie Baillie (with majority of 108!), is in favour of Trident.

No change with the Conservatives staunchly supporting mass destruction, now with twice the number of MSPs. This rise in numbers means that even though Scottish Labour has changed its position, Trident might now have more support in a Scottish Parliament, not less.

Unfortunately, and negatively, the invisibility of Trident in the election campaign might also be an expression of a general poverty of aspiration around the Scottish elections. In some of the larger parties, there appeared to be a genuine lack of vision of Scotland as a nation with its own place in the world. This may be lack of confidence, or down to selection of candidates not yet used to looking beyond local politics. And yet, we can look further. Scotland can align herself with the 127 nations in the world who reject nuclear weapons and are calling for a global ban.



It is universally acknowledged that one of the main benefits of the referendum campaign was to unite our disparate parties and factions (though we condemned Labour and the Tories for doing this). For a short time, it looked as though we could learn to lay aside differences to unite in campaign-based politics, thus, also giving voice to people who find the party system toxic. Sadly this temporary unity slipped during the election campaign but opposition to Trident provides an opportunity to regain it.

In the British context, the next challenge will be the Trident renewal vote. What form will it take? And when will it be? Of the 59 Scottish MPs, 58 have stated they will vote against renewal. This is likely to show a clear divide between the will of Scotland the will of the rest of Britain.

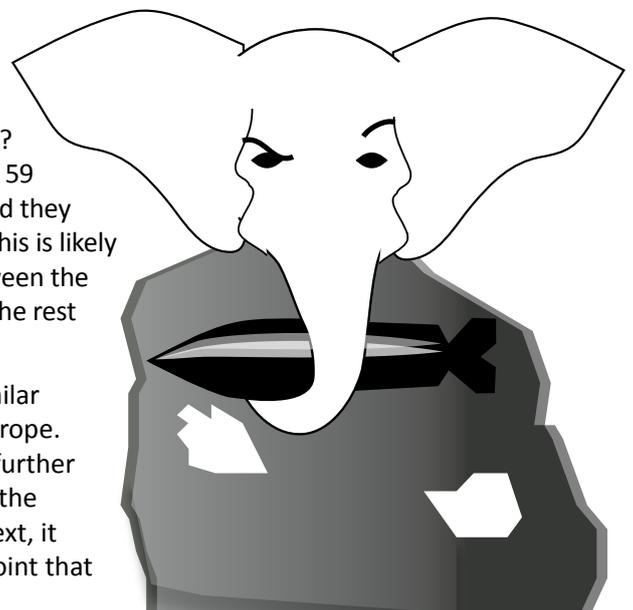
Possibly there will be a similar division of opinion over Europe. Scotland will have moved further again from the position of the rest of Britain. In this context, it will be easy to make the point that

independence is the likeliest route to nuclear disarmament. At Scottish CND, we are planning a summer campaign to drive this point home, coinciding with the SNPs planned summer campaign for indyref 2.

So what's changed as a result of the election? Without an overall majority the SNP must compromise/work with other parties and the main opposition is no longer Labour (24 MSPs) but Conservatives (31 MSPs). What can we hope for? That the anti-Trident parties acting together without succumbing to point scoring; leaders of all anti-Trident parties signing up to support the Global Ban; Labour unites strongly in anti-Trident position; small tweaks to the law to protect protestors and try to hinder convoys are made; some government funding for the disarmament movement is provided; an active cross-party group for nuclear disarmament gains engagement from all parties; and myths are debunked such as the erroneous jobs argument promoted by Jackie Baillie

Plenty to be going on with there, then!

*Veronika Tudhope was vice-chair of Scottish CND for several years and is now a staff member. She was a candidate for the Scottish Green Party in 2016 Holyrood election and the 2015 Westminster election.*





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# EU: better out than in

*Ian Davidson argues boldness is required to liberate ourselves from neo-liberalism*



Faced by big decisions, the default position of too many in the Labour Party for too long has been to find reasons to work with, rather than to challenge, the status quo. We need the courage to argue for change as working within usually results in absorption. And so it is with the debate on this referendum. 'We know it's crap – but there is no alternative' is a common refrain, while those who argue 'Another Europe is Possible' fail to admit that another EU is not.

The EU is firmly in the grip of neo-liberalism with Christian/Social Democracy confined to the margins. Jacques Delors' gains were 30 years ago, and have not been repeated. Economic austerity rules with constant diktats on competition, privatization, drastic reductions in public spending to centrally determined targets, attacks on collective bargaining and fierce cuts in the social wage.

EU policy continues to be driven by the needs of capital and multinationals, with legislation co-written by business lobbyists, and the European Court of Justice (ECJ) regularly ruling against unions and workers whenever their interests clash with business.

The Common Agricultural policy (CAP) continues to absorb the largest share of the budget, keeping food prices high, benefiting rich farmers disproportionately and impoverishing the Third World (by restricting imports, especially of

value added products, and dumping surpluses, thus destroying their domestic and export markets, causing impoverishment for millions and mass migrations).

We continue to hand over huge amounts of money, over which we lose control, to an EU elite who remain committed to 'ever closer union' by mission creep. While remaining, we lose control of our borders, and of the ability to determine how many people come into our country.

The left has been traditionally afraid to tackle these issues for fear of being called racist, but we must recognise the class dimension of uncontrolled immigration. Those who benefit are employers, who use a reserve army of labour to hold down wages and conditions; those who lose are workers of all nationalities, who have their bargaining strength reduced while having to compete for underfunded, and thus scarce, public services.

Individual migrants are not the problem – it's the scale that causes difficulties. Yet the economic and social planning which could set migration targets, dependent upon sectional and regional needs and capacities, is illegal under EU rules.

And, the crisis of the Euro means that things will only get worse. The currency is inherently unstable and unsustainable and the EU will be forced to seek additional fiscal powers and to increase austerity

to keep it afloat. We will inevitably be drawn into the crisis, and the subsequent European recession will damage our own economy.

But 'what is to be done?' as someone once said. Overthrowing the present hegemony is simply not possible within the existing EU structures. Unanimous decisions of all 28 governments would be necessary to rewrite those Treaties which enshrine neo-liberalism and the forces of capital. The vested interests supporting the ECJ and its capacity to expand EU competencies in favour of free market solutions are simply too strong to allow a frontal assault.

Even a radical Labour Government would find itself crippled by EU rules. Public ownership of the railways would be ruled inadmissible, as would ending or reversing the privatization of the NHS. And, similarly public ownership for the energy companies would be ruled out. Public economic planning would be subject to rulings of the European Court.

We cannot win from within. Of course, there are risks which come with change. Often exaggerated. Remember the warnings against introducing the NHS, or the National Minimum Wage, or not joining the Euro. But the Left has always stood for change, for hope and aspiration. We need to reject the 'crap-but' chorus and TINA.

We need to look forward, not back to the times following the Second World War. We need to look outwards to the world, nor restrict ourselves to the top left-hand corner of Eurasia. Leaving the EU could free us from neo-liberalism and austerity, not inevitably but potentially, whereas remaining in an EU of bankers and multinationals condemns working people to an ever reducing share of National Income. Be Bold - Vote Leave. (And remember, Cameron goes if we win, or get close).

*Ian Davidson is the former (Labour) MP for South West Glasgow*

# 'Fixit': the lesser of two evils in the EU

Colin Fox outlines the hard but necessary tasks for left 'remainers'

The socialist case for remaining in the European Union is not straightforward. Nor is it easy to sell to a disengaged public. Superficially, 'Brexit' appears more attractive inferring as it does that 'if we leave the EU, our problems will be over'.

The opinion polls suggest, arithmetically at least, the left could tip the balance on 23 June. This potential was highlighted when Cameron met TUC leaders and agreed to drop features of his anti-union Bill in return for their backing his case to 'Remain'.

Ironically, the left's case for remaining is hindered by Cameron who threatens, *inter alia*, 'Tough new restrictions on access to our welfare system for new EU migrants. They will not have access to benefits until they have worked here for up to four years' if he wins. This attack on migrants is one of many differences 'Remainers' on the left have with the right.

It is little wonder the SSP describes a vote to remain in the EU as 'the lesser of two evils'. For both propositions are bedevilled by unattractive arguments and dubious 'bedfellows'. This is a referendum only UKIP and the Tory right wanted. And tempting as it is to adopt the attitude 'my enemies defeat is my victory', the left must resist it and examine the political circumstances rather more objectively. The choice then is not between left and right. It is a tactical question.

The EU is an anti-democratic organisation gripped by neo-liberal finance capital. The socialist case for remaining is about changing that utterly. It is about working to convert the EU into an organisation that puts the needs of 500m people ahead of corporate elites. A 21<sup>st</sup> century EU could guarantee full employment with a living wage for all. It could push for publicly provided universal

healthcare and education across the continent. Rich in resources and talent it could ensure Europe's great wealth is shared out among all its citizens. There is no lack of ambition in that goal.

But if our objective is to transform the EU along these lines, the question is how? Left 'Remainers' are therefore obliged to bring forward detailed plans to democratise and 'socialise' the EU. The idiosyncratic former Greek Finance Minister, Janis Varoufakis, provides some suggestions in his recent book, *And the weak suffer what they must?*

He refreshes the French triptych 'liberty, fraternity and equality', arguing: 'No European nation [or people] can be free as long as another's democracy is violated. None can live in dignity as long as others are denied it. None can hope for prosperity if another is pushed into permanent insolvency and depression' [p233]. Varoufakis proposes several basic demands such as open transparent decision-making to undermine the secrecy of the Brussels bureaucracy, the primacy of the rule of law applied equally to all and the terms of trade regulated to be mutually beneficial and fair to all sides. Such basic demands are far reaching in their implications for the future of the EU.

The answer to the 'How?' question then is by mobilising those political forces of like mind to transform the EU in this direction. Tariq Ali and Neil Davidson are among those on the 'left leave' side who disagree with this approach. Speaking to them both after a recent RISE election rally in Edinburgh, they insisted the EU was an untouchable bureaucracy closed off to such reforms.

But in my view they are wrong. The EU is entirely constrained by European political realities and therefore constantly subject to

change. Admittedly recent reforms have been driven by the right, by neo-liberal finance capital and not the left. But all EU Treaties reflect the political balance of class forces in Europe at the time. And, in recent decades these have reflected the supremacy of French and German capital particularly.

Leaving the EU because of its neo-liberal programme is a cop out. It implies Westminster does not employ the same agenda or pose the same risks. No, the left must face the harsh realities behind our pan-European weakness. That is one lesson from Greece we must learn. The Italian left has a saying 'la lotta continua' - the struggle continues. And that 'struggle' needs a serious programme and strategy to transform the EU. Those who seek to oppose the EU's attacks on working people need to link up far more effectively. That is the conclusion that confronts all of us on the left regardless of the outcome of the vote on 23 June.

Colin Fox is the national co-spokesperson of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP)

## EU referendum info point

How do the unions line up on 'should I stay or should I go?' for the EU referendum? Those for a critical 'stay' are: Unite, UNISON, GMB, USDAW, CWU, UCATT, FBU, BECTU, TSSA, and Musicians' Union (plus the STUC and TUC). Those for a 'leave' are: ASLEF, BFAWU and RMT. The NUT has decided not to take a position and, as we went to press, the PCS union had not yet decided upon its position.

# Big Brother in Scotland

Tommy Kane makes the case for an inquiry into undercover policing in Scotland

The Undercover Policing Inquiry, otherwise known as the Pitchford Inquiry, was announced by Home Secretary, Theresa May, last July. Its purpose is to 'inquire into and report on undercover police operations conducted by English and Welsh Police Forces in England and Wales since 1968'. The inquiry's scope will 'include but not be limited to, whether and to what purpose, extent and effect undercover police operations have targeted political and social justice campaigners', covering police undercover units, the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) and National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU).

May felt bound to initiate such an inquiry because of growing and compelling evidence that undercover police had systematically abused their position, impacting upon peaceful and law abiding individuals and organisations targeted with dubious and sinister policing practices. However, as we know, inquiries can often be about suppressing the truth, whilst offering pretence towards actually finding it. Time will tell with regard to Pitchford.

The Pitchford Inquiry should to be extended to Scotland and, if it is not, a similar style inquiry should be launched here by the Scottish Government. If not, we will have the ridiculous sight of a Tory Government acknowledging a problem in undercover policing and being seen to try to do something about it, whilst a supposedly more progressive Scottish Government trenchantly refuses to acknowledge a Scottish dimension to such police operations, let alone trying to do anything about it.

A key consideration of Pitchford

is the malpractice by officers in the SDS and NPOIU who were undercover, including how they even entered into sexual relations with people they were spying on. One woman likened this to 'being raped by the state'. What must be fundamental is how the information gleaned from all types of police spying is then used against working people, especially as it has come to light recently that working people were prevented from gaining employment as a result of their political and union activities.

Collusion between the state - elements within the police and intelligence services, business, corporations and their representative bodies and some in the media - has been occurring and used against working people and their representatives since the end of the First World War, the extension of the franchise and the emergence of the labour and union movement as a serious force in British political life.

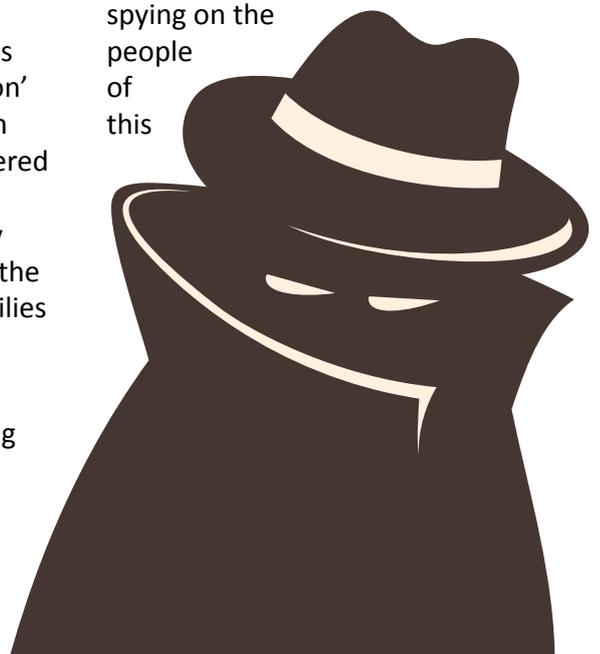
The most prominent organisation that organised the networks against the organised working class was the Economic League, forerunner to the Consulting Association. Set up in 1919, its aim was to 'counter subversion' and identify and prevent from working those people considered subversives. These so-called subversives were, just as they are now, activists fighting for the means to provide for the families and end exploitation in the workplace.

In recent times, the Consulting Association provided information to multi-national construction firms for blacklisting trade unionists for the 'crime' of fighting

for better and more secure terms and conditions for the members and for safer and improved health and safety on building sites. Not an unreasonable objective you would think given building sites are still seen as being amongst the most dangerous workplaces in Britain today.

The extent of the collusion between the state, and the likes of the blacklisters, will hopefully be exposed during Pitchford. However, evidence of the extent of state surveillance on so-called 'subversives' and 'subversive activities' already exists. The Shrewsbury Three, Grunwick strikers, British Leyland unions, the 1984-1985 miners' strike, and the peace and Anti-Apartheid movements were all victims of spying and undercover police activity.

It was said in Peter Taylor's programme, *True Spies*, that in the 1970s there were over one million paper files on people. In today's electronic world one can only imagine the number of people who are now having files opened up on them. It would be good if Pitchford touched upon this systematic spying on the people of this



country but no-one should hold their breath waiting on that happening.

The notion that the SDS or NPOIU has not been active in Scotland or that Scottish officers have not been involved and complicit is preposterous and has been proven to be so through reporting by the *Ferret*, *Sunday Herald* and *Sunday Mail*.

When the offices of the Consulting Association were raided the names of hundreds of Scottish workers were found on their blacklist. At a meeting in the Scottish Parliament, a blacklisted activist, Eleanor Hutson, reported how during the G8 the now notorious, Mark Kennedy, was the transport coordinator of activists protesting in Scotland. Hutson was then found to be on the Consulting Association blacklist. Moreover, a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in 2012, *A review of national police units which provide intelligence on criminality associated with protest*, said: 'Although Mark Kennedy worked for a national unit his undercover activities were authorised by senior officers from the police force that covered the particular local area in which he was working'.

Recently, reports have shown how the new Chief Constable of Police Scotland, Phil Gormley, had oversight of the activities of SDS and NPOIU.

While the *Ferret*, through FOI information, reported how senior Scottish police officers attended meetings of the Association of Chief Police Officers' Terrorism and Allied Matters Committee (ACPO TAM), which is responsible for counter-terrorism and controlled the units currently being investigated by Pitchford. The senior officers who attended ACPO TAM meetings included Sir Willie Rae, former Chief Constable of

Strathclyde Police, Paddy Tomkins, former Chief Constable of Lothian and Borders Police, and former Chief Constable, Sir Stephen House.

Two other Scottish Police officers, Eleanor Mitchell and Paul Hogan, have recently been reported to have been working for NPOIU. Paul Hogan was seconded from Tayside Police to the NPOIU and was said to have worked with 'key industry partners on the work of the department in order to develop intelligence sharing opportunities and maximise opportunities'. This sounds eerily like the type of collusion which sees information passed between state agencies and businesses and which provides the information from which blacklists are constructed. The Scottish connection is also exposed by the ex-undercover cop, Bob Lambert, who fathered a child with a female activist and worked recently at St Andrews University before resigning in the midst of the furore over his past activity.

Calls have, thus, grown for Scotland to be included in Pitchford, and if not, for the Scottish Government themselves to launch its own inquiry. The response from the Scottish Government has been disappointing at best and distinctly obstructive at worst. Its latest position is it is in discussions with May, but as yet there is still no sign Pitchford will be extended to Scotland, nor is it clear whether the Scottish Government actually want Scotland to be included in Pitchford.

Neil Findlay has led the way in calling for Pitchford to be extended to Scotland, asking the Justice Secretary, Michael Matheson, in Parliament whether he shared his concerns that Police Scotland will neither confirm nor deny that it is monitoring the activities of environmental, union and political activists or say whether that

information is being provided to third parties.

Mathieson's response was woefully inadequate suggesting a flagrant and reckless disregard for the seriousness of these allegations: 'I have no knowledge of Police Scotland having certain individuals under surveillance. If Mr Findlay has concerns about that, he could pursue it with Police Scotland. If he is dissatisfied with that, he could take it up with IOCCO—the surveillance commissioner—which would be able to look at the matter'. Mathieson, therefore, sought to absolve himself and his Government from any responsibility in looking into these matters despite being the responsible for police activity in Scotland. The First Minister in another response to Neil Findlay said that there would be no plans for an inquiry here and that Scotland would pay attention and look to learn lessons from Pitchford. It was an embarrassingly complacent answer.

The SNP Scottish Government has 'form' in ignoring or obstructing such investigations. It refused to countenance any inquiry into the disproportionate number of miners arrested and convicted in Scotland during the 1984-1985 strike and always refused an inquiry into blacklisting in Scotland.

The case for Scotland to be included in Pitchford is overwhelming but if it is not included then Scotland must conduct its own inquiry. If not the reputation of Police Scotland will continue to be stained and the Scottish Government will rightfully be exposed for taking the side of the old order and establishment at the expense of the rights of ordinary working people.

*Tommy Kane is Senior Researcher for Neil Findlay MSP*

# It's trade but not as we know it

*Liz Murray highlights how a new wave of trade deals are changing the rules of global governance*

With trade talks at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) continually stalling since the 1990s, countries around the world have turned increasingly to negotiating bilateral trade deals rather than the multilateral deals that the WTO was set up to foster.

Recently, however, the character of new bilateral agreements has changed as they aim more and more to consolidate power. And the rich countries have put in particular effort as political elites have become nervous about competition from fast growing economies like China and India. Add to that the recession since the financial crash in 2008, felt particularly acutely by Europe and the US, and you have the context for a new set of 'mega' trade deals (and the acronyms to go with them!).

Thus, we have the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and US, and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between the EU and Canada.

These deals have been optimistically described by politicians as 'the cheapest stimulus package imaginable', with hopes pinned on them to provide jobs and economic growth. But whether or not the modest growth predictions turn out to be correct (and they are but much disputed), the crucial point is that they rely on some key structural changes to the economic and political systems – and what amounts to a huge transfer of power from governments to big business.

The big prize for TTIP and CETA is the reduction or removal of non-tariff barriers to trade and the opening up markets, especially

those in procurement. These things are what set these new deals apart from some of their older counterparts. They are not trade deals in the way we have known them in the past, but are part of a neo-liberal drive to deregulate and to move capital from public into private hands.

TTIP and CETA give powers to big business and take them from elected governments, through mechanisms such as the controversial investor state dispute settlement mechanism (ISDS). Also sometimes nicknamed 'corporate courts', ISDS threatens to have a chilling effect on governments passing progressive legislation designed to protect public health, workers' rights and the environment due to the threat of legal action for compensation by trans-national companies.

The impact of these deals is likely to be as much felt here in Scotland as anywhere else. Successive Scottish governments prided themselves on going beyond Westminster to protect public health, public services and the environment. Scotland banned smoking in public places before the rest of Britain, Holyrood set higher targets for cutting carbon emissions than Westminster did, the NHS here is less privatised than in England and Wales, and Scotland has set a moratorium on fracking and committed to no new nuclear power stations.

Under TTIP and CETA, these kinds of things could result in trans-national companies suing for compensation on the basis that they could threaten their profits. And, in addition to this, we recently learned that if those companies sued for compensation for lost profits as a result of the policies of

the Scottish government, then it would be the UK government who would fight those cases – but if the UK government lost then the Scottish government would have to pay the compensation.

We've known for a long time that TTIP will hand more power than ever to big business. Now we also know that when business uses that power to challenge Scottish government policy, then Scotland will have to rely on Westminster to fight its battles while bearing the financial burden if it loses.

We believe that the Scottish political parties and the Scottish Government should be very worried about this, as it could seriously limit their powers to pass legislation in the public interest. The only parties in power in Scotland who are completely opposed to TTIP and CETA are the Greens and Labour. The Tories and LibDems remain resolutely in favour, and the SNP are worried about parts of both deals but have stopped short of opposing them entirely.

After the SNP was returned to government on 5 May, it's important to remember that the SNP wants an independent Scotland with the sovereignty to take its own decisions. Yet in not opposing TTIP and CETA, it is risking ceding power to both Westminster and multinational corporations.

*Liz Murray is head of campaigns and policy (Scotland) for Global Justice Now. For more information on Global Justice Now and its campaign, see back cover of magazine.*

# The Trade Union Bill is now law

Carolyn Jones lays out a response to the new legislation

The *Trade Union Bill* received Royal Assent on Wednesday 4 May – the ninetieth anniversary of the 1926 General Strike – and much of it is likely to be in force by the end of the year. The Act is a shadow of the Bill first proposed, but dangerous details hide in those shadows. Shining a light on the dangers ahead and exposing the intentions behind the Act are vital. If not our kids will suffer as the power of unions to organise, to represent, and to defend living standards are choked off.

Some of the more bizarre and extreme proposals have been removed. But many of the ‘flagship’ elements of the Tory Bill are now law. On ballots, the imposition of three thresholds imposes near impossible targets for many of those leading the resistance against privatisation and cuts. Promises to review and roll-out e-ballots were dumped, kicked into the long grass of an independent review.

And proposals to bus in agency workers – often vulnerable people coerced into taking jobs under new Universal Credit rules – still lurk in the background.

On political funds, though delayed for 12 months, the opt-in system is now law and threatens to undermine the political voice of unions. The bureaucratic nonsense of unions having to declare all political expenditure over £2,000 pa stands in complete contrast to the privacy and anonymity given to offshore funds and offshore Tory funders, and is laughable coming from a party itself under investigation for electoral fraud!

The idea of giving concessions where agreement can be reached permeates much of the Act. But if the Government was really supportive of industrial relations being conducted by agreement, it

would have introduced statutory procedures to encourage collective bargaining. Instead, it has created a statutory safety net for employers to fall back on should relations at work deteriorate still further.

The backdrop to this unnecessary Act is the newly empowered state surveillance officer. The Certification Officer (CO) has powers to initiate complaints, undertake inspections, record names, determine outcomes and impose fines of between £200 and £20,000 on any national, regional or local branch.

It’s true the government inserted a clause saying the CO would not be ‘subject to directions of any kind from any Minister as to the *manner* in which he is to exercise his functions’. But it’s not the *manner* that is so objectionable. It is the nature of the work that raises concerns and it is the nature of the work that is set by Ministers.

Parliamentary activity has delivered what it can in the face of a government determined to silence political opposition, cull collective action, criminalise picket line solidarity and strangle unions with bureaucratic red tape controlled by a state surveillance officer.

If this Act, like the 1971 one before it is to be defeated, the immediate battle will be extra-parliamentary, led by workers responding to attacks on their standards of living and working conditions. Those battles are already being fought and will continue to grow as current economic policies fail to deliver anything other than growing inequality and lack of opportunity.

In the longer term, Jeremy Corbyn and his team need to be given the space and time to develop alternative economic and industrial policies that will expose the political nature of Tory attacks and show how another political agenda is

possible (see Labour’s *Workplace 2020* initiative [www.workplace2020.org.uk](http://www.workplace2020.org.uk)). To that end, the Institute of Employment Rights (IER) is working on a manifesto for labour law which places unions back at the heart of economic, industrial and social regeneration.

## Restrictions imposed by the Trade Union Act include:

- Need to appoint an authorized picket supervisor, known to the police and employer
- Breaches of the picketing code will be a criminal offence
- 50% and 40% ballot thresholds imposed
- Yet more bureaucratic balloting requirements which will be costly, time consuming and open to challenge by bosses and the CO
- The ballot notice to be given to bosses is extended (14 days) while the “life” of a ballot is restricted (6 months)
- Unions wanting to retain check-off will have to win the boss’s agreement and pay the cost
- After 12 month research, Minister can instruct any public sector employers to end facility time
- All new members will be required to opt-in to the political fund
- A state surveillance officer, the CO, will have vastly extended powers to investigate, condemn and fine trade unions on a wide range of issues

Carolyn Jones is the Director of the Institute of Employment Rights (<http://www.ier.org.uk/>)

# The unending imperialist war

*Andrew Murray explains the reason for the continuing carnage*

The present unending war, which has rolled from one country to another since 2001, has already gone on for longer than the two world wars of the twentieth century combined. Its battlefields have covered a vast region from Libya and Mali in the west to Afghanistan and Pakistan in the east, with most of the Middle East in between.

The rationalisation has been to fight a 'war on terror' against an 'axis of evil' to use US President Bush's cartoonish formulations. This has been a falsehood from the start. Of the five states which have been destroyed since 2001 four – Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen – had absolutely nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks or, indeed, with terrorism at all, at least at the time of their destruction.

On the other hand, the country which supplied almost all the 9/11 attackers, and which has funded and provided ideological inspiration for jihadism – Saudi Arabia – remains a valued ally of the USA and Britain. Terrorism, meanwhile, has become a still greater challenge, as the rise of Islamic State and the barbaric attacks in Paris, Brussels, Beirut and elsewhere demonstrate.

This huge disparity between stated objectives and the actual course of events indicates that another agenda is at work. It is an agenda rooted in the same imperialist impulses which led to the world war one hundred years ago – but with one major difference. Unlike during that great slaughter, when several imperial powers of roughly equivalent economic power and military strength competed for hegemony,

in 2001 the USA stood alone as sole superpower. Its military budget is as great as that of the next ten powers in the world combined.

US policy since the end of the Cold War has been to use this 'unipolar moment' to enforce a global order with its own business interests – and those of its closest allies – firmly in the driving seat. Even as the US has faced a relative economic decline, with the rise of the Chinese economy in particular, it has sought to bolt in place a world capitalist regime secure against all challenges and run from Washington.

It is no surprise that it has devoted the greatest effort to trying to impose this order in the Middle East. It is both the source of much of the world's oil – and the major share of the cheapest-to-produce and most-profitable-to-sell oil – and also a huge market for western arms companies. For the last century, the big powers have devoted extraordinary efforts to keeping the Middle East 'safe' for western business.

In the case of Britain, the vast influence oil and arms companies have had on government of both parties of late is clear. Their pressure alone would go a long way to explain the drive to war. Still more powerful, however, is the City of London and the global financial interests which direct so much of British policy.

They are now closely entwined with the ruling elites along the Persian Gulf, recycling the vast oil wealth which has been amassed in their hands. Stability – for business – in the Middle East feed directly into the bottom lines of the biggest of big businesses.

The whole-hearted backing given to Saudi Arabia in its murderous war on Yemen, and to the rulers of Bahrain in their brutal suppression of the democracy movement in their country, over and above the interventions in Iraq, Libya and Syria, have all had uniformly disastrous results. All this has little to do with fighting terrorism, and still less to do with supporting democracy. It is about supporting compliant regimes, and destroying awkward or inconvenient ones, like Assad's in Syria. The cost in human lives, in refugees and material destruction in Syria alone has been immense. And why did Britain join in the bombing of Syria? Not for Britain's insignificant military contribution but to 'get a seat at the table' when the powers redesign the post-war Middle East.

Rather than promoting peace talks, the Tories have sought to impose wrecking pre-conditions on discussions, thereby helping prolong the suffering. It could get worse. Tensions are rising in eastern Europe and in the Pacific as well as in the Middle East. The role of a mass, united movement against war, of the sort which has developed across Britain in the last fifteen years, has never been more important.

*Andrew Murray is Chair of the Stop the War coalition and Chief of Staff at the Unite union*



## Stop the War coalition

# Remembering the blood of Spain

*Mike Arnott recounts the civil war and the commemorations of it*

This July will see the eightieth anniversary of one of the most defining military and political events of the last century. On 18 July 1936 in colonial Morocco, and in mainland Spain the day after, Generals opposed to the republican government staged a military coup with the intention of its overthrow. Tensions had been building in Spain since the election that February of a progressive Popular Front government, intent on reviving the democratising programme of the 1931-33 government, including reform of land, education, aspects of gender equality and regional autonomy. By May 1936, armed groups representing elements of both left and right were openly assassinating members of the other side in the streets. Conservative politicians were able to stir up fears about stability and openly called for the government's overthrow, encouraging plans for the coup to be developed by leading figures in the military, including General Francisco Franco who would later become its leading figure.

The nationalist coup was immediately supported by military units in places like Morocco, Pamplona, Burgos, Zaragoza, Valladolid, Cádiz, Córdoba and Seville. However, rebelling units in important cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Bilbao and Malaga were unable to capture their objectives, primarily due to workers' militias taking to barricades and fighting the insurgents in the streets. These were heady days, captured vividly in black and white archive film, showing cars and lorries, some with quickly improvised armour, crammed with clenched fist saluting militia, heading out from the loyalist cities to take on the insurgency.

Virtually from the outset, Hitler and Mussolini agreed to help the nationalists, particularly with the important airlift of the experienced

Army of Africa over to the Spanish mainland, from where they began their advance which would eventually lead to the outskirts of Madrid in November.

For the 'democracies', France outdid Britain in its eagerness for a Non-Intervention Agreement, which was signed within 3 weeks of the outbreak of hostilities. Their desire to appease fascism, rather than defend Spanish democracy, saw the Madrid government denied the right to even purchase weapons to defend itself. Though Germany, Italy and Portugal became signatories they had no qualms about blatantly supporting their fascist allies in Spain. The Soviets also signed and provided important military aid to the Government side but this became less sustainable as the conflict progressed. In the final analysis, the impact of non-intervention on the Republican forces, as opposed to the nationalist side, proved the crucial factor in the eventual outcome of the civil war.



The conflict soon became internationalised. Some of the first to take up arms alongside Spaniards were overseas competitors in Barcelona in July for the Workers' Olympiad, being held in opposition to the Berlin Olympics. The first from Britain to fall was sculptor and Communist Party member, Felicia Brown, also in Barcelona ahead of the coup. She volunteered to join the PSUC (Catalan communist) militia, the Karl Marx, heading for Aragon to defend the republic. She fell on 22 August attempting to

sabotage a nationalist train.

The first of the International Brigades were formed in October 1936, an event whose eightieth anniversary will be marked this year with an IBMT/Philosophy Football social event in London on the first of that month, followed later by a week of events at the Marx Memorial Library and the unveiling of a special memorial at the Gare d'Austerlitz in Paris. The British Battalion wasn't formed until just after Christmas 1936 and best wishes will surely be sent to its last survivor, Stan Hilton, now living in Australia. Further events in Spain will also be held, with ambitious plans taking shape for the traditional Jarama weekend in February 2017 and subsequent eightieth battle commemorations will include Brunete in July and no doubt the Ebro the following year. Those who might contemplate less strenuous opportunities to remember might like to order in some Brigadista Spanish Civil War Ale from the Blackhill Brewery in County Durham, with proceeds going to the IBMT.

In the last ten years, a number of places have renewed or begun the practice of holding an annual commemoration at their local International Brigade memorial like Dundee, Edinburgh, Renton, Motherwell and Glasgow. There are also groups planning new memorials in their areas such as Inverness with the memorial to British Merchant Navy casualties of the war to be sited in Glasgow. If you have a local memorial, why not use the eightieth anniversary as a focus for launching an annual commemoration? To keep tabs on events coming up, check the IBMT website, or the Scotland and the Spanish Civil War Facebook page.

*Mike Arnott is the Scotland Secretary of the International Brigade Memorial Trust*

# Imperialism abroad – racism at home

*Jock Morris says racism's purpose is to divide and conquer us*

Standing up to racism is not a moral add-on for the left - it is a central political dimension of the fight back against neo-liberalism. The racism and concessions to racism of the main ruling political parties is integral to their answer to the global economic crisis. The wealthy are hoarding their wealth, our wealth, because the return on their investments isn't high enough. The answer of governments, British, European and worldwide, is austerity. Drive down wages, working conditions, welfare, provision of housing, health and the social wage so that an even bigger share of the wealth society produces can go to the already wealthy. Then maybe they'll invest. And most politicians support austerity because they are members of that world of the wealthy or they subscribe to their worldview.

But to get away with a policy of impoverishment while retaining political power they need to appeal to a common national interest and simultaneously divide and rule, demonise a perceived threat and identify scapegoats. So 'we're all in it together', but the employed are turned against the unemployed, the able against the disabled, the 'deserving' poor against the 'undeserving', Muslims harbour a threat to our liberal civilization, and immigrants, not employers and the government, reduce wages, destroy working conditions, cause unemployment and put pressure on health and housing.

The refugee crisis has exacerbated the political polarisation to left and right elsewhere. The rise of the populist and fascist right and the radical left (like Syriza and Podemos) in response to the

effects of the economic crisis has been mirrored by the response to the refugee crisis. On the one hand, increased electoral support for anti-immigrant parties and on the other, in response to the photo of little Aylan Kurdi, the upsurge of practical and political support for refugees from thousands of ordinary people, campaigning, collecting, delivering, volunteering, unwilling any longer to leave it to the inadequate response of governments.



If Cameron, Hollande and the like had behaved like the enlightened, liberal representatives of 'Judeo-Christian' civilisation they claim to be and supported Merkel's call to welcome the Syrian refugees, the whole political mood of Europe would be radically different. Emergency measures would be being taken everywhere, empty property requisitioned to provide housing, surplus food and clothing distributed, integration programmes initiated.

Refugees, instead, are met at Calais and the Macedonian border with barbed wire, bulldozers, dogs, rubber bullets and batons. We now know the decision to reduce emergency naval support in the Mediterranean was taken in the full knowledge that it would lead to more drownings. As it crucified Greece financially in defence of

austerity, Europe is crucifying the refugees from its own wars and proxy wars.

Scapegoating refugees and immigrants and demonising Muslims makes racist and xenophobic politics more mainstream. The spectre of fascism is taking corporeal shape once again in Europe. There is another Europe though, a liberal and enlightened, sometimes even socialist, one, as we've seen in Greece, Spain and Portugal when thousands supported refugees and in the 150,000 who marched against racism on March 19 in London with three and a half thousand in Glasgow.

The task for the left, inside or outside of Fortress Europe, is to encourage and give a political lead to that movement. While fighting for better wages, full-time contracts, better working conditions, and defending pensions, the health service and so on, it means simultaneously standing up to racism and fascism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. In standing up to racism, we undermine a main pillar of austerity and the rule of the wealthy. We have common cause with the refugees and Muslims for the rule of the wealthy is global and drives the extreme poverty and war that is creating the greatest migration of humanity since WW2. Together, we can realise that better world that is possible.

*Jock Morris is chair of the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees and a longstanding SWP member*

# No liberation from technology

*Allan Grogan says technology will exacerbate inequality*

For the last fifty years, our lives have continually adapted and improved with the advances of technology and automation. During the post-war years, this advancement was mutually beneficial to labour and employer. The development of machinery led to higher production which led to an increase in wages. Yet as the twentieth century ended and next began the advancement of technology has only helped to increase capital while wages (in real terms) have fallen. There is now a very clear and present danger that automation and robotics will develop at such a rate that the Bank of England predicts that machines may take over up to 50% of jobs in Britain and the US.

In *The Rise of the Robots*, Martin Ford explains why the threat to human labour by technology has suddenly become a daunting prospect. So citing Moore's Law, which states that over the history of computing hardware the level of advancement has doubled every two years with the effect that as we've progressed over time the more advanced computer hardware has become, the quicker the next breakthrough comes.

Those who have been paying attention will notice this starting to occur. Go into most supermarkets and you'll find self-service checkouts where cashiers used to be, Fast food restaurants like McDonald's now employ touch screen order boards in many of their establishments. Farm work, in particular fruit picking is now increasingly done by robots, with new visual perception software. Many politicians have written this off as a non-issue, removing low skilled, low waged service jobs allows workers to retrain and seek

better opportunities. This only works if there are better, higher paid jobs provided.

The job market is becoming more crowded, with life expectancy growing, retirement ages rising and a worldwide population expected to reach 9bn in coming decades means that thousands of new jobs need to be continually developed just to cope with the current labour market. This is what JFK meant in 1963 when he said: 'To even stand still, we have to move very fast'.

Ford describes the current labour market as a jobs pyramid, which reflects why half of UK graduates are unable to find anything other than what would be described as 'non-graduate work'. This has led to the growing inequality in our society as 95% of total income gains between 2009 -2012 went to the top 1%. The question we all need to therefore ask is how will we be able to produce enough jobs to keep an ever growing population working? Not only that but a society based on who has jobs or doesn't have jobs is far more likely to further increase inequality, thus, allowing the richest to maintain control and have less pressure exerted on them to produce progressive policies.

It is clear there is a need for both long- and short-term plans to be set out. Indeed, Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders plan to increase vocational training and creating employment through infrastructure are positive steps. Yet these measures will only provide short-term relief against an oncoming technological tide.

It seems the most attractive and logistical proposal is to introduce a basic income. This would result in an income given to all on an

individual basis without means testing and condition. Through this everyone will have a safety net allowing us to alleviate poverty, end extreme poverty and homelessness and eradicate income inequality.

It is time now for this discussion to be given the importance it deserves. While politicians dance around, moving chess pieces one space around the board, a radical shift is fast approaching that they are either too blind to see or too concerned with the next opinion poll to care. Short- and long-term plans must now begin to be put in place to ensure we are ready for the advanced pace of the continuing technological revolution and that we have invested in education, developing infrastructure, and most importantly developing an affordable safety net for those who no longer find their labour of worth. This would be a step towards combatting a society which has and will continue to get more unequal, with more extreme poverty and despair; and for an economy currently incapable of maintaining the equilibrium of production and consumerism. If we don't begin to move to address this now, I fear it may be too late to even stand still.

*Allan Grogan is the former convenor of Labour for Independence and a political activist*

# Self-employment and in-work poverty

Mike Danson and Laura Galloway show entrepreneurship is a new form of poverty for many

Self-employed cycle couriers in London have been active in Employment Tribunals recently, trying to gain access to the sorts of basic rights enjoyed by workers across the country. Our recent report - launched in the Scottish Parliament in March - showed how the reality for many Scottish entrepreneurs are all too similar to the conditions faced by these workers. Being self-employed, they are not entitled to the national minimum wage, never mind a 'living wage'. Without an employer, they are not entitled to statutory sick pay, maternity or paternity pay, paid holidays, training support, and they are reliant on the state and their own savings in retirement with no employer contributions to pensions. Is this important for unions and the left?

The earliest forms of unions in Scotland were the clandestine cooperatives of weavers and others, self-employed and at the mercy of monopoly and cartel buyers of their work. Today, one-sixth of the Scottish workforce is self-employed, mostly unorganised with many undertaking work that was until recently the responsibility of unionised local authorities and other public bodies. From being directly employed with secure jobs, rights and pensions, they are now suffering from 'contractualization' and, thus, casualization. Many others have been forced into 'being their own boss' by a flexible labour market and the DWP or are self-employed as a way to avoid sanctions.

Successive British Governments have claimed that work is the best route out of poverty, and that enterprise is to be encouraged. Popular rhetoric about private

business enterprise is that it is positive and contributory to lives and to economies yet, using HMRC statistics on the self-employed, Richard Murphy suggests between 77% and 84% of the self-employed are in poverty. There is further evidence of a very different reality for many entrepreneurs than the media likes to portray, with insurance to pay, expenses to meet and uncertainty to address.

As well as analysis of official statistics, our research is based upon testimony from specialist key informants in Scotland as they relate their perceptions of enterprise as a poverty context. We support this with profiles of self-employed people and business-owners which are living in poverty. The purpose of the research was to determine if and how poverty and enterprise intersect. This research does not dispute the macro-level view that private enterprise is a net economic contributor.

It does, however, highlight a hidden form of enterprise; one where self-employment is used as an alternative to unemployment, to mitigate or avoid benefits sanctions, and to address financial need as a crisis response. This type of entrepreneurship is related in the testimonies of our key informants and the experiences of our case studies as cynical and at times exploitative. There is clear evidence of work at rates of pay well below 'minimum' or 'living' wages. The firms created under these circumstances are low value and, in fact, are likely to have a net negative value in socio-economic terms and cause harm to health and wellbeing for individuals.

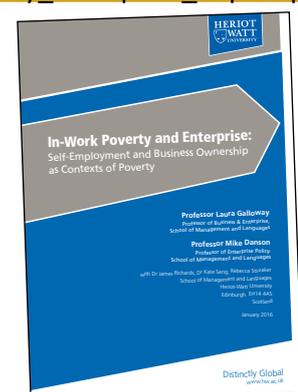
More broadly, informants confirm an increase in contractualisation of what were formerly 'regular' forms

of employment. This is described as exploitative of individuals and workforces as organisations shift financial responsibilities and duties of care to individuals on low rates of pay and without contractual employee rights. This trend is bad for individuals, for organisations, for national innovation and competitiveness, and for national economies. Tax and National Insurance receipts have fallen, while employers have been further avoiding paying their fair share of taxation, increasing poverty and inequality and impacting on public sector budgets.

Key recommendations include the need for more reliable statistical information on the scale of the enterprise-poverty interaction so that who is benefitting and who suffering from these structural changes in the economy and labour market is transparent. Unions need to consider how they can organise these poor, reluctant entrepreneurs. And, the arguments for a citizens' basic income are strengthened.

*Professor Mike Danson and Laura Galloway work at Heriot Watt University. 'In-Work Poverty and Enterprise: Self-Employment and Business Ownership as Contexts of Poverty' by Laura, Mike Danson and others is available at*

[https://pureapps2.hw.ac.uk/portal/files/9934375/In\\_work\\_Poverty\\_Enterprise\\_Report.pdf](https://pureapps2.hw.ac.uk/portal/files/9934375/In_work_Poverty_Enterprise_Report.pdf)



# Recalling a great Scottish socialist novelist

Dave Sherry looks back at the work of Grassic Gibbon



Terence Davies's *Sunset Song* went on general release last year. Based on Lewis Grassic Gibbon's novel, it had a lot to live up to. Although it didn't fully succeed, its release brought a remarkable writer back into the public eye.

Grassic Gibbon was the pen name of James Leslie Mitchell during his burst of creativity in the early 1930s. He remains arguably the most prolific and provocative of Scottish writers.

His short life spanned the WW1, the Russian revolution, the general strike, the Great Depression and the rise of fascism - the backdrop for his best known work, *A Scots Quair* - the trilogy of novels he wrote in the last two years of his life.

*Sunset Song* was the first part of his trilogy - the most ambitious effort in Scottish fiction since Walter Scott created the popular novel. Like Scott, Mitchell was a wonderful storyteller but they were worlds apart. Scott was a rich Tory. Mitchell was of peasant stock and a socialist.

In his short career, Mitchell wrote seventeen books. *Sunset Song* appeared in 1932 and for the next two years, he worked flat out to complete his trilogy. Part two, *Cloud Howe*, was published in 1933 when he also wrote another great novel, *Spartacus*, the story of the slave revolt against Rome.

In 1934, he completed five other books including *Grey Granite*, the last of his trilogy. He was working

on two other books but worked himself into ill health. Tragically, *Grey Granite* was no sooner published than he died of a perforated ulcer before his thirty fourth birthday in 1935.

Hailed as 'the best novel written this side of the Channel since Thomas Hardy stopped writing', *Sunset Song* won rave reviews from the *New York Times*. Set in a rural community facing irrevocable change as the WW1 looms, it ranks alongside socialist classics like Silone's *Fontamara* and Steinbeck's *the Grapes of Wrath* - novels in which capitalism threatens a class of independent smallholders with annihilation.

It is the song of a young woman growing to adulthood and the end of an old song for a way of life that is dying. With the character of Chris Guthrie, Mitchell created what Paul Foot described as 'one of the most remarkable characters in all literature, more remarkable than any female character in Jane Austen, George Elliot or even the Bronte's'. When it was published, readers assumed the author was a woman.

Yet the book was banned from local libraries and from the shelves of *Boots* in Aberdeen because it was regarded as pornographic. It was the 1970s before Mitchell's writing won proper recognition in his own country.

Born the son of a poor tenant farmer, Mitchell was fiercely proud of his peasant origins. The crofters rented their smallholdings on fixed term leases from the landed gentry. When Mitchell was eight his family was forced to move south to Arbutnott in the same way as his heroine in *Sunset Song*.

Mitchell captures the haunting beauty of the farm and moorland between the Grampians and the North Sea but he had a healthy

contempt for the backwardness of rural life and the burden of agricultural toil. His primary school teachers were told not to educate the children of crofters. His father, a dour Calvinist, opposed the idea that his children should learn anything that might interfere with farm work.

In 1917, he ran away to become a cub reporter on the *Aberdeen Press & Journal*. When the Trades Council launched a soviet in solidarity with the October Revolution, the 16-year-old became its biggest enthusiast. Later he described how 'along with a cub reporter from another paper we were elected to the Soviet Council, forgetting we were pressmen. We spent anxious moments with our chief reporters afterwards, explaining that we could not report the meeting, being ourselves good sovietists'.

In 1919, he moved to Glasgow to work on *Farmers' Weekly*. After a few months he was sacked for his Marxist views. Blacklisted by the employers, he enlisted as an army clerk and travelled the world. Posted to Mesopotamia, he developed a thirst for ancient history. In 1925 he married his childhood sweetheart and left the armed forces in 1928 to write full time. When he started on his trilogy in 1932, the pseudonym he chose was his mother's maiden name - Grassic Gibbon.

His writing is fuelled by his keen sense of solidarity with the oppressed and downtrodden. He saw capitalism tear people away from the rural world of his childhood and pull them to the industrial cities. His materialist understanding made him a great chronicler of change.

*Dave Sherry is a retired public sector housing worker. Still active in the Unite union, he is a long standing SWP member.*

# Agony of chronic pain

*Dorothy-Grace Elder exposes the fear that leads to pain mismanagement*

Secrecy is suffocating NHS Scotland. The media is forced to deal with controlling spin-doctors instead of real doctors. Staff fear speaking up, even on small matters. As for major controversies, lack of protection for whistleblowers is appalling. Spin over appointment of 'whistleblower champions' is laughable as all are in-house Board appointees. God help any patients or carers trying to get answers as even MSPs get sleekit no answers to Parliamentary questions. Health is dominated by unelected boards. Why bother having elections? But health ministers allow them to rule.

Take a subject affecting 800,000 in Scotland (to varying degrees) which should be uncontroversial: chronic pain. It took 15 months of struggle by the Parliament's Cross Party Group on Chronic Pain to force publication of the waiting lists at NHS pain clinics. Even a Scottish Government promise in November 2014 that they'd be disclosed as late as November 2015 was broken. So I had to use FOI and that helped force publication. It turned out the Government was publishing only the waiting lists for first time patients.

But most of the 57,000 appointments annually are for 'return patients' needing continuing treatment (hence 'chronic'). First timers are under a guarantee of being seen and treated within 18 weeks. These smaller numbers are bound to be better.

What isn't publicised is that there is no guarantee, no timescale and no protection for patients needing return treatments. These are still concealed. So sufferers are

effectively split into two classes of patients. And the unfortunate 'returners' can be pushed further down waiting lists in the rush to tick boxes for the first timers. Even under FOI, Boards refused my requests to reveal how many returners were still in the long queues, claiming this would exceed cost stipulations.

Liz Barrie of East Kilbride is one of many patients forced to be 'second class'. 'You wouldn't let a dog endure the excruciating pain I suffer daily' says Ms Barrie, a mother of two. 'I was heading for a year over the time my spinal injections needed renewal and I've been 18 months over in the past'. Gross delay by NHS Lanarkshire has, she says, meant giving up her job and being on morphine and 22 other tablets daily.

She has damaged discs, requiring twice yearly injections. But NHS Lanarkshire still doesn't provide enough staff, despite years of complaints about understaffing. Ms Barrie says: 'Being doped up to the eyeballs is no substitute for the injections, which lift the worst of the agony and reduce the other meds. Lanarkshire's pain staff are very skilled and caring. It's not their fault there are so few'.

A letter to Ms Barrie from Heather Knox, NHS Lanarkshire Director of Acute Services, reveals current Scottish priorities. Knox wrote: 'Regrettably, there is continued increasing demand for chronic pain services in Lanarkshire which is outstripping the current available capacity. The increasing number of new referrals has impacted on the number of available return appointments which has, in turn, increased the wait for return patients'. However, a few weeks after I revealed Ms Barrie's plight in

the *Herald*, she got her injections. The same happened when four other Lanarkshire patients sought the Cross Party Group's help. But we can't know of countless others.

Dr Richard Simpson, former Labour shadow public services minister, told me: 'Waiting times for repeat appointments are not just hidden, they are being buried'. 'The Scottish Government and health boards should be ashamed of themselves. The current health ministers refuse to intervene and tell the boards to provide enough staff for this multitude of patients' says Ian Semmons, chair of the Action on Pain charity.

Pain services improved when Alex Neil was health secretary - he had a history of concern for pain patients. He also stood up to Boards when needed. But after Neil was switched to another cabinet job in 2014, there's been slippage. Currently, elected ministers seem to be doffing caps in subservience to unelected health boards. Maureen Watt was put in charge of chronic pain, as public health minister. She stated: 'In terms of follow up appointments, we agree this is very important. However, our ministerial steering group continues to examine this, in order to further drive the improvements we all want to see'. That's the Ministerial Group which Action on Pain calls 'a toothless talking shop'.

So secrecy in health is at unhealthy levels and potentially dangerous to the public interest.

*Dorothy-Grace Elder is a former SNP MSP and now not a member of a party but pro-independence.*

# Failing at the first hurdle

*Gregor Gall argues the Fair Work Framework fails because it's not statutory*

Previous Scottish Governments signed Memorandums of Understanding with the union movement in Scotland through the STUC. These memorandums were attempts to treat the union movement as a social partner. However, the Scottish Government under Nicola Sturgeon has gone further by establishing the Fair Work Convention (FWC) in 2015 after the *Working Together Review* of 2014 recommended taking such a step.

The first output from the FWC is the Fair Work Framework. It has been developed after consulting with a wide range of organisations including unions. The FWC and its framework aim to not only provide guidance for how the relationship of the union movement and Scottish Government is framed but also how private sector and other public sector employers should treat their workforces.

The context of the FWC is the worldview of the SNP Scottish Government that the economy in Scotland needs to be more efficient and productive in order to generate more employment, private wealth, and the public tax revenues to pay for its social programme. In other words, the SNP has a social liberal approach to economy and society. Its approach is not entirely neo-liberal for the state in Scotland does seek to act to promote some elements of social justice and social equality - but it is not social democratic either for it does not seek to redistribute wealth or use the state to act to change market outcomes by way of public ownership, regulation and intervention.

Being social liberal – and not neo-liberal or social democratic – is critical to understanding the

SNP's approach to employment, employers and unions. Unlike the Conservatives, the SNP finds a positive role for unions in its worldview but like 'new' Labour's worldview, it is one where the only kind of unions favoured are those prepared to engage in partnership for a productivity and efficiency agenda. This then has crucial implications for the Fair Work Framework (FWF), where its hallmark is the complete absence of any statutory underpinning to its aspirations. Thus, in May 2015, the Scottish Government launched its Scottish Business Pledge, which it described as a 'voluntary commitment by companies in Scotland to adopt fair and progressive business practices in support of our shared ambition to improve business competitiveness and productivity while tackling inequalities'. So as with the Scottish Business Pledge, the same is true with the FWF. Consequently, employers can only be cajoled not compelled to agree to or implement the recommendations of the FWF so that it and the FWC are toothless tigers.

The FWF (p5) states its vision is that 'by 2025, people in Scotland will have a world-leading working life where fair work drives success, wellbeing and prosperity for individuals, businesses, organisations and society' with the fair work being defined as that which 'offers effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect; that balances the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers and that can generate benefits for individuals, organisations and society'. The FWC states of its FWF (p5): 'Our aim is for this Framework to be used by everyone in the

workplace to guide practice: to help improve understanding of fair work, benchmark existing practice and identify areas where improvement can be made. This requires real leadership in the workplace at the highest and at every level. For the many organisations and stakeholders beyond the workplace but involved in the wider work and employment landscape, we hope that this Framework will also be used to guide their activities in supporting the delivery of fair work in Scotland'. The FWF (p8) continues: 'These [five] dimensions cover the scope of workers to 'have a say' and to influence and change practices, how people can access and progress in work, the employment conditions they experience, the work that people do and how people are treated at work'.

So the FWF is relatively strong on aspiration but as the following section makes clear it is entirely woeful on the means of delivering these aspirations – in other words, attested outcomes. In its FWF (p25), the FWC says it 'makes one overarching recommendation: that organisations deliver fair work in the dimensions outlined here, providing effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect' and then asks 'How can this recommendation become a reality?' and answers by stating (p25):

*First, we put workplace activity at the heart of fair work. Fair work must be located in the workplace and delivered by employers and workers and, where present, union representatives. We invite everyone involved in the workplace to assess critically whether their current practice supports our ambition and can help deliver fair work. To*

do this, it is important to think about how to apply the Framework in a particular business context; to benchmark policy, practice, behaviours and outcomes against our overarching ambition for fair work and what this means in each of its dimensions; to verify the evidence used to make such an assessment; and to assess and identify the appropriate actions and timescales necessary to make progress and to review and improve in response to changing circumstances. Second, while those directly involved in the workplace must own fair work at workplace level, other stakeholders also have an important role to play. There are a wide range of interested parties and organisations in the fair work landscape.

As this quote makes clear, neither the FWC nor its FWF envisage using the levers of state power and compulsion (legislative, regulatory order, financial). Intriguingly, the FWF (p25) then states:

*Many of the workers and campaigning organisations who spoke to us pointed to legislation and regulation and wanted to see a strengthening of employment protection, easier access to remedies for breaches of rights, better access to employment tribunals without the barrier of high fees and better enforcement of employment tribunal awards' and 'some stakeholders expressed a desire for greater use of existing regulatory and enforcement powers to support fair work, for example, through more searching use of the public sector equality duty. Others focused on who could deter bad practice and how.*

But the FWF then proceeds to dismiss such views because the whole tenor of the perspective is that a voluntarily induced mutual gains agenda will lead capital and labour to adopt 'best practice'. The FWF talks of role

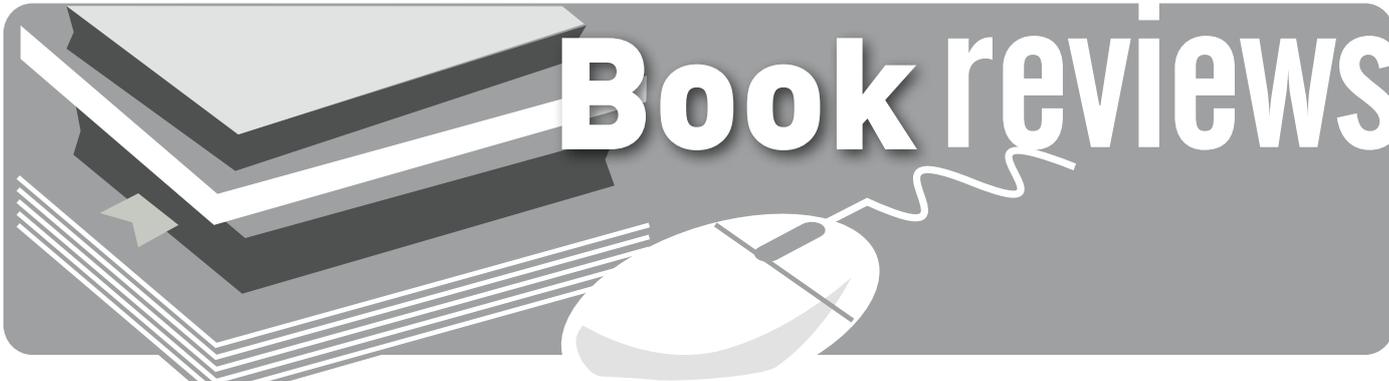


models and ambassadors, sharing information, learning, advice and support, awareness, and creating a 'coalition of the willing'. Put bluntly, the argument is that market and competitive advantage will induce labour and capital to work together in a productivity coalition (see p25 on 'incentivising good practice'). This ignores that an equally credible route to profits for capital is the 'race to the bottom' in terms of competing on low wages and labour to compensate for low skill and investment levels, and especially when economic growth is slow or non-existent. The unwillingness to use state levers even extends to not establishing an accreditation agency to verify whether employers have achieved or implemented 'fair work'.

Now, of course, there is a limit to what the Scottish Government, if it so chooses, can do given that a number of the legislative powers relevant to the FWF are reserved to Westminster. But there is no evidence that even with those currently reserved powers as devolved powers that the SNP Scottish Government would use them to act in anything other than a social liberal way. For example, the FWF (p25) states that: 'Procurement – by government and the public sector – is also an

important lever. Crucially, public contracting can be creative in delivering good use of scarce public resources without sacrificing fair work in the process. Support from the public agencies – finance and expertise – can both encourage and reward fair work practices'. Despite acknowledging this, the FWF makes no pledges or promises to use this lever. And not even being willing to have an accreditation system (like the independent living wage system does) further highlights the abject refusal to create a regulatory system for fair work. Any regulatory system should also have periodic reviews built in to it as well as the establishment of robust criteria for conducting these reviews. Thus, neither the FWC nor its FWF are social democratic in outlook or intention. This is again highlighted by there being no proposals to enforce sectoral collective bargaining even where the Scottish Government is ultimately the employer as it is the paymaster. This means that the warm words of the aspirations will never have force of law behind them.

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# Book reviews

## Objectors & Resisters: Opposition to Conscription and War in Scotland 1914-18,

Robert Duncan,  
*Common Print, £7.99,*  
*9780993096518*

In a century that has seen conflict in one part of the world or another, Robert Duncan has produced a timely little book that reminds us that war in all its guises was met with opposition. At the simplest level, this is a social history forgotten in a wider historiography surrounding the First World War.

In *Objectors and Resisters*, Duncan's aim is not simply to rescue anti-war protestors from the condescension of posterity but to rescue them from abuse, acceptable violence and vilification that much of history has decreed on them. The title itself reminds us that protest was not simply a moral choice of individuals but part of a movement of organisations actively seeking to prevent the war or to bring an end to an undoubted carnage.

In seeking to right these wrongs, Duncan has done his own time in the archives in rescuing the individuals concerned and has painstakingly given historical record to many of the brave men and women who were Conscientious Objectors. This is all the more impressive given an incomplete historical record. However, at times this does read like

a roll call of those involved.

The largest bloc of resistance lay within the broad labourist and socialist movement in Scotland. Duncan traces this history and, at times, provides some good context to strengthen the narrative. Of some merit also is the last chapter on peace movements and their activities in the leading cities, complete with examples of violence and intimidation inflicted by pro-war groups.

From this reviewer's perspective, the role of the Great British state is particularly interesting and the author traces this through a climate of ongoing punishments, intimidation and accommodation as it sought to come to terms with the objectors. The accommodationist strategy led to alternative work programmes and largely involved the setting up of labour camps including one to build the road between Ballachulish and Kinlochleven. The camps were far from an easy ride as the example of the Broxburn 'manure slaves' testify. One notable point is that the camps became centres of opposition and political education.

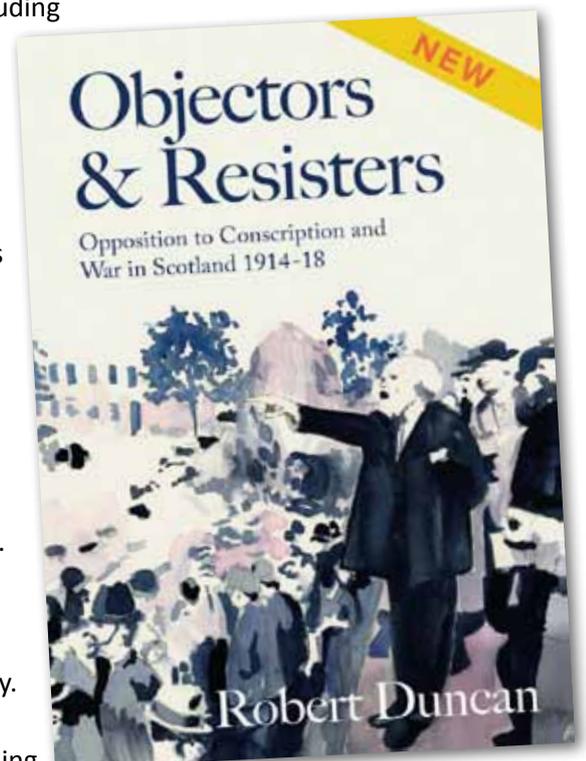
After the declaration of war, a change of direction was inevitable, bringing about the anti-conscription movement and again the author traces this and provides useful insight. This is partly done with an examination of the trials and testimonies of those charged with refusing to join the military.

In all of this it must be acknowledged that we are dealing

with a minority movement. At its height the number of prisoners approached 7,500. The number of activists and sympathisers is difficult to determine but attendance at public meetings was often impressive. 10,000 people attended a public meeting in Glasgow in December 1916.

What Duncan has portrayed is a history of men and women who suffered at the hands of the state but who showed tremendous courage and bravery when the odds were stacked against them. In its way it is a small reminder that human beings are not mere recipients of the blind forces of history but that choices can and will be made.

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# Is there a Scottish Road to Socialism?

third edition

Gregor Gall (ed.)

Scottish Left Review Press,

Glasgow, 9780955036293, £5.99

The first edition of this book appeared just under ten years ago in 2007. By any criterion, the decade since has been an extraordinary one. The return of global capitalist crisis; revolution and counter-revolution in the Middle East; the biggest movement of refugees since the Second World War in response to imperialist wars; the growth of racism and xenophobia across Europe; and so on and so on.

For once it is not hyperbole or inflated parochialism to say that Scotland has played its part in this global drama. Comparison with events in Greece is justified, even if unfortunately we have not seen the thirty plus general strikes that the Greek working-class has engaged in since 2010.

For as most, if not all, of the nineteen contributors to this book from across the Scottish left recognise - in a way that Jim Murphy and the Labour leadership never did - the 'yes' movement was never primarily a nationalist movement. At the most basic level, it was a movement against austerity but it was more than that. It was a movement for social change, for a different kind of world - and independence was seen as a way of achieving that world.

Sadly of course the referendum was lost and most of the contributors here are rightly concerned with grappling with the post-referendum realities. Three of these realities will be discussed here.

The first and most obvious fact of current Scottish political life is the astonishing growth and dominance of the SNP since September 2014. At the time of writing, it seems highly likely that that dominance will be confirmed in the 2016 Scottish

parliamentary elections. The SNP's success has been due in large measure to its ability to present itself as a social democratic party to the left of Labour (in truth, not hard to do). As many of the contributors here demonstrate, however, the SNP's radicalism is very shallow indeed - and the cracks are starting to appear. 152,000 less students in further education than in 2007; the abandonment of the 50p tax band policy for high earners; support for tax cuts for major corporations; and the willingness of SNP councils in Dundee and elsewhere to impose austerity with the same zeal as Labour councils. 'A big boy in London did it and ran away' increasingly will not wash as an excuse for the SNP's unwillingness to lead a real fight against the Westminster government.

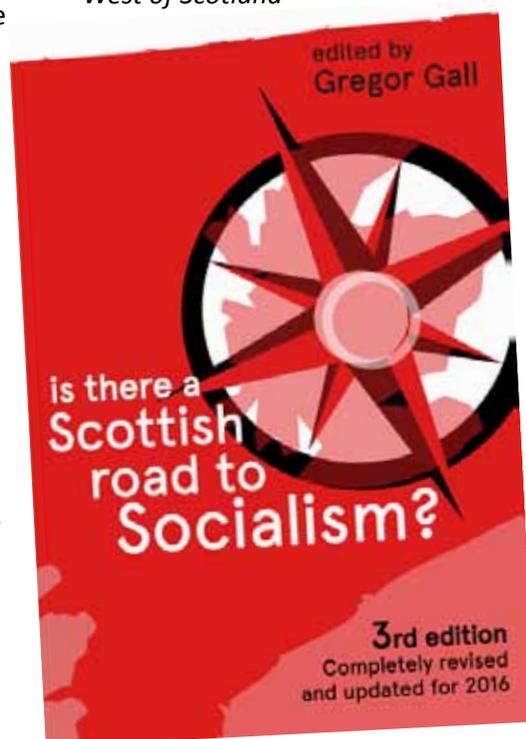
That the SNP is currently enjoying such dominance is in large part a function of the second feature of the Scottish political scene, the meltdown of the Scottish Labour. Not surprisingly, Labour Party contributors to this book, like most of us, have been heartened by Corbyn's election as Labour leader. In reality, however, there is limited evidence of a Corbyn 'bounce' north of the border and while Dave Watson is correct to argue that Scottish Labour can only beat the SNP from the left, the chances of that happening under the current Scottish leadership seem remote.

Which brings us to the radical Left in Scotland. It played an important role in the referendum campaign, particularly in building support in working-class communities. What is less clear from these contributions, however, is how it goes forward from here. Different elements of the left are represented in the book, by and large saying very similar things. At the time of writing, however, none seem particularly well-placed to secure a decent vote, let alone win seats, in the 2016

elections, not least because socialists are standing against other socialists.

Re-building that left is likely to require three things. First, engagement in the day to day- to-day struggles against cuts, austerity and racism. The victory of the SNP in 2015 demobilised the 'yes' movement and steered it into parliamentary channels. Yet as the experience of the Syriza government shows, deep-seated change will not come through parliament. Of course, we want socialist MSPs and MPs but an over-emphasis on electoralism will kill our movement. Secondly, socialists will only win the hearts and minds of recent SMP members by engaging then in joint action at every opportunity over issues such as cuts, austerity and racism. Most joined the SNP from the left and want to see manifest change - simply denouncing their party as 'neo-liberals in kilts' will not cut it. Finally, in the face of brutal austerity and growing racism, the socialist left needs to get its act together. Too many of us are still fighting the battles of a decade ago. In the face of a brutal ruling-class offensive, the need for a united socialist left has never been greater.

*Iain Ferguson is an Emeritus Professor at the University of the West of Scotland*



# Kick up the Tabloids

**N**ever in all of the five Scottish parliamentary elections of the post-devolution era has so much nonsense been written about the result. According to the Unionist press (in other words ninety per cent of the press), Scotland has overnight become a Tory-loving country who have overwhelmingly voted against the very idea of independence. Really ?

Let's examine the actual facts. Running on an overtly pro-Union ticket, the Conservatives polled twenty per cent of the vote. In other words, eight of ten Scots utterly rejected the Conservatives' message. Furthermore, while the SNP may have fallen two seats short of an overall majority, when grouped together with the Greens the pro-independence parties have a clear hold of Holyrood for the next five years. On top of that, the only parties to constantly bang on about 'The Second Referendum' were Labour and the Tories. The Greens and the Nationalists hardly mentioned it all and it featured in neither party's manifesto.

There was a ludicrous assumption pre-election that there were no Conservatives in Scotland. In a seat like Edinburgh Central, it has always been a mystery to me that people haven't voted Tory. The New Town is so utterly posh that is socially acceptable to wear a tweed sports jacket and crushed strawberry coloured trousers non-ironically and people still did not elect a Tory until now. Basically, if you live within walking distance of a Waitrose, you should not be surprised if your neighbours vote Conservative.

There have always been Tories in Scotland - it's just for the last twenty-five years, they have voted Labour. Take Eastwood as another example. The leafy streets of this

Glasgow suburb would be safe Tory territory down south, but until last May elected Jim Murphy to represent them in Westminster. Admittedly, that is pretty much the same thing as voting Conservative.

This was definitely the most presidential election we have witnessed in Scotland, with each party running a personality-led campaign - which explains why Labour did so badly. The TV exposure of the leaders' debates gave a big boost to Ruth Davidson and Willie Rennie and was undoubtedly a huge negative for Kezia Dugdale.

While Davidson clearly enjoyed being photographed driving a tank and rodeo-riding on the back of a water buffalo and while Oor Willie managed to come out looking statesman-like despite being upstaged by a pair of fornicating pigs at Gorgie City Farm, young Kez continuously displayed a rabbit-in-the-headlights demeanour which looked like she was terrified in case some hack asked her a slightly difficult question.

Kezia Dugdale always reminds me of the teacher's pet of limited ability who would sit on the front row in primary school and who was always first to put their hand up whenever a question was asked, almost inevitably giving the wrong answer.

Labour's ideas, according to the polls, were popular with the voters, but the leader was not. Whenever she announced a new policy, it sounded as if she had memorised it parrot-fashion and was repeating it back to herself to try to convince herself that she believed what she was saying. She seemed faintly robotic, which is never a good look if you're trying to court the public. It speaks volumes that the only party leader with a lower popularity rating

was UKIP's revolting figurehead in Scotland, David Coburn.

One part of the problem is that the public don't know what Kezia Dugdale stands for. The other part of the problem, I suspect, is that Kezia Dugdale doesn't know what Kezia Dugdale stands for. Having been fervently anti-Corbyn and pro-Trident, she had to perform ridiculous U-turns when the party elected Jezza and voted to scrap the nuclear deterrent.

Much has been made of Dugdale's tender years. Many people have said she is too young to lead a major party. It's distinctly possible that by time Labour are in a position to challenge again for power in Scotland, she will be far too old for the job.

So we move on now to the European Union referendum, and with it the intriguing prospect of how a pro-Europe Scotland would react to an English Brexit vote. In particular, that would put the fervently pro-European Lib-Dems in a difficult situation as regards a second Indyref. Are they more pro-EU than pro-UK? Perhaps, Willie Rennie should do another TV interview at Gorgie City Farm to enlighten us.

*Vladimir McTavish, Keir McAllister, Stuart Murphy and Mark Nelson will be appearing in The Stand Comedy Club's monthly satirical show TOPICAL STORM at the Edinburgh Stand on Wednesday May 18 and Wednesday 22 June at and the Glasgow Stand on Monday May 23 May and Monday 27 June.*

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