

# Scottish Left Review

Issue 108 November/December 2018 - £2.00

'best re(a)d'

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE.....



WE'RE LATE! WE'RE LATE! FOR A VERY IMPORTANT DATE...

HARD RIGHT TAKEOVER?

What does  
Brexit

AMERICAN DOMINANCE OF BRITAIN?

mean for the Left?

BREXIT BREAKDOWN?.....

COMPLETE MELTDOWN?





## Brexit breakdown beckons

This was an issue of *Scottish Left Review* we could not put off any longer. Since the referendum in June 2016, we have covered the decision of Britain to leave the EU and its attendant prospects every so often and with one or two articles. But until now we have not made it the theme of an issue – because while we might harbour our particular suspicions and thoughts about how things might turn out, this would have been little more than a combination of idle and informed speculation. Now that the 29 March 2019 date of leaving is very nearly upon us and the fault lines have become relatively clearer – not so much in terms of what different sections of the Tory party want and more in terms of the interplay of what the EU has demanded and the British government has been prepared to concede – we can with less speculation and more insight cover and analyse some of the main salient issues.

‘Car crash’ and ‘train wreck’ are over-used phrases in the present day political

lexicon but they seem increasingly apt as the ever more likely deleterious and disruptive impact of a Brexit under the Tories becomes clear. The issuing of statements by the government on various matters in the event of a ‘no deal’ as well as the impact on workers’ pay and jobs as a result of employers’ recent decisions on investment and production have headed up the trouble ahead. That is why the title to this editorial comment, ‘Brexit breakdown beckons’, seems appropriate.

What is so marked about the political situation is that despite the clear and present danger to their profits from the ensuing uncertainty and disruption, employers have not had more influence on their political party, the Tories, to make sure there is a smooth transition to a single market or customs union. Somewhat ironically given her weakness, this must be because May’s parliamentary majority depends on trying to assuage the rampant Brexiteers and the Democratic Unionist Party.

So, in this issue, we have an array of

leading figures from the left writing about what their positions are on Brexit and what their preferred options are after Britain has left the EU (or not). But we also cover the likely ramifications of Brexit for politics and economics. These articles cover issues of both process and outcome. Of course, there is much we still don’t know, especially concerning what any Westminster government will do with powers repatriated from the EU and where it might place them (Westminster or Holyrood, Cardiff Bay or Stormont). Much will depend here on which party is in government. If there is a general election which Labour wins, then the post-Brexit outcome is likely to be shaped in a very different way from if the Tories hold on to office. The SNP Scottish government has often talked up the politics of the power grab and the prospects for further devolution would very much depend on what happens at Westminster.

It was tantamount to political harikari or self-immolation to raise the issue of any kind of referendum on the deal negotiated by the British government to exit the EU any time soon after 23 June 2016. This is now not so and this is correct – simply because the vote to leave (as with the vote to remain) reflected a number of different, sometimes conflicting, concerns so that it was also the case that voting to leave was not synonymous with a particular type of deal to leave, be it a ‘soft’, ‘hard’ or ‘no deal’ Brexit, where the configurations of single markets, custom unions and WTO rules could be very different indeed.

Any notion of popular sovereignty does demand that the deal negotiated to leave is not only voted upon by parliament – a concession grudgingly rung out of the Tories – but also subject to a popular vote. Only time will tell whether this then becomes a *de facto* second Brexit referendum – but, as some fear, the danger of that cannot be allowed to prevent the referendum on the terms of leaving from happening at all. It is also legitimate that any deal also has the agreement of the devolved governments

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in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. If there is another simple 'in/out' referendum on whether to continue to leave or re-enter the EU, there must be tight controls on not only expenditure but campaign claims.

One of the Brexit outcomes that might have been prophesied was a tightening labour market as migrants from within and without the EU no longer arrive and many who were here (sic) leave. In days gone by, this would have led to a downturn in the supply of labour, pushing up wages. Yet since the financial crash at least and despite the reduction in unemployment, wages have (in real terms) stagnated or fallen for most. Job insecurity and in-work poverty abound and it is likely these factors help explain why workers in Britain are unlikely to receive a fillip from what might have been a Brexit bounce. Somewhat similarly, the costs of leaving – direct and indirect – never featured in the arguments of the main 'leave' campaigners. The now iconic claim of £350m per week being saved and destined for the NHS has long since faded into political oblivion.

For those on the left advocating a left Brexit – a *lexit* – it should have become apparent long before the referendum that now was not the time. It's not their arguments for leaving are without merit – far from it. The EU was always a capitalist institution from the 'get go' and it was captured by the neo-liberals so that any of its (limited) benign characteristics have increasingly been dispensed with. A number of what count for its minimum social protections were fought for and won in Britain given that EU members must have only have in place national laws which meet the minimum requirements of EU directives. Only a few things like the limit on the working week (with the British-inspired opt out) came from Brussels and Strasbourg and not London, requiring a directive to be implemented in law through regulations. But you didn't need a crystal ball to see that the balance of political ideologies and class forces meant then and now that a 'lexit' was not - and has not been - possible. Indeed, any left votes for Brexit have benefitted the right by giving it a narrow mandate (52%:48%) to pursue its policy of the further deregulating capital over a whole host of issues like workplace health and safety and other forms of corporate responsibility over the environment. This is now quite an argument for 'better the devil you know' by staying in the neo-liberal EU or a backdoor argument that the EU can be

reformed from the inside. Rather it is an argument for 'don't try to do anything that makes the situation even worse than it already is'. In other words, pick the fight at a time of your choosing when you're likely, at least, to have a good chance of winning – and not when a faction fight inside the Tory party demands it. This requires the kind of tactical deft that the likes of Lynn Henderson, this year's STUC president and vice-chair of *Scottish Left Review's* sister organisation, the Jimmy Reid Foundation, showed when she voted 'yes' for independence in 2014, then for Labour led by Corbyn in 2015 and 'remain' in 2016.

Following the party political conference season, it is increasingly clear that Labour under Corbyn and McDonnell offers a genuinely social democratic alternative to the Tories and SNP. While the SNP promised to hold a consultation on establishing a state infrastructure company, Labour has already committed itself to do this and more with its investment plans. But there was no starker evidence of the clear 'red water' between Labour and the SNP than Labour's proposals to transform corporate governance. Policy on worker directors (a third of a board) and employee share ownership (10% after ten years) show that Labour is prepared to use the levers of state power to progressively alter the way the market operates – even if searching questions can still be asked about how effective these proposals would be in practice. This is something we will examine in the first issue of 2019.

One of the reasons why the term social democracy – and not socialist - is used to describe Labour under Corbyn and McDonnell is because Corbyn speaks of wishing to govern in the 'national interest' while McDonnell has made repeated appeals to employers that a Labour government would be in their best interests (because it would make investment in the infrastructure which businesses rely upon). Even where Labour today is predicated upon being 'for the many and not the few', this is not the language and practice of socialism where clashing class interests cannot be reconciled or subsumed within a single interest. It is disconcerting to note that even these 'concessions' to the right have not led to a lead in the polls. Despite the Brexit shambles presided over by Theresa May and the considerable internal Tory divisions, Labour is still behind. It would, therefore, not be entirely unreasonable to conclude that along with a most robust form of leadership from Corbyn and a

more socialist-inclined outlook, Labour could do better than it actually is doing.

After the mammoth independence march in Edinburgh on 6 October, the continuing strength of support amongst the activist-orientated milieu cannot be doubted. But that is not the same as there being majority support for independence. Polls suggest there is still some way to go there, and this is what is pre-occupying the SNP leadership. Will Brexit make the difference given that most people living in Scotland voted to 'remain'? The credibility of the SNP's leadership's hope there is a rather tenuous one. It reckons the worse a Brexit is, the more support there will be for independence so that Scotland could re-enter the EU. But any serious prospect of independence requires a consent motion for another referendum from Westminster. If the Tories get their way on Brexit, the clamour for another independence referendum might be greater but that would not change the will of the Tories. If Labour enters Downing St due to the Brexit breakdown, it is more likely to give consent for another referendum but the clamour for one might be a lot less because Brexit might not be quite as bad as many expected as Labour smooths off the Tories' rough edges. An interesting fly in the ointment here is that Scottish Labour under Richard Leonard's leadership has signalled its intention to oppose a second independence referendum, repudiating the 1989 Claim of Right which Scottish Labour signed, and putting it on a difference course from British Labour under Corbyn. If there is a snap general election occasioned by Brexit, it will be interesting to see how reliant a potential prime minister Corbyn will be on Scottish Labour MPs and what sway those MPs will hold to make him not concede said consent motion.

In all this, there is a clear parallel between the 2014 and 2016 referenda. Referenda almost inevitably condense complex issues into binary questions. Just as those that voted for Brexit could not know what shape Brexit would take, the same is true for those that voted for independence. The 45% of those voting for independence did so for many different, often conflicting, reasons. What independence could or should mean was essentially a battle to be fought out after a vote for it. Just the same as in the case of Brexit - but with one key difference. Proportionately, more citizens in Scotland voted for progressive social change in 2014 than did citizens in Britain in 2016. Oh, and happy Xmas and New Year when the holiday season comes!

# Helping capitalism digs its own grave

*George Kerevan sets out his socialist position in the context of the contradictions of capitalism*

**W**HAT position should socialists advance regarding optimal trade arrangements with the rest of Europe, in the event Britain does quit the EU? Let's leave aside the tactical debate on the efficacy of a second Brexit vote, or the fraught arguments concerning any valid transitional arrangements. Bottom line: what trade set-up is the least worst for Scots, English, Welsh and Irish working people post any Brexit?

This debate is as old as the hills. It goes back at least as far as 1847, when an international congress of radical economists, liberal intellectuals, trades unionists and left-wing activists convened in Brussels to discuss the arguments for European and global free trade. At that point in history, a triumphant British industrial capitalism was championing an end to protectionism everywhere. The cocky British industrial bourgeoisie had just succeeded in abolishing the infamous Corn Laws – tariffs on imported grain that protected aristocratic British land owners and kept the price of bread artificially high for the rapidly growing urban proletariat.

With the Corn Laws gone, bread prices fell. However, the industrial bourgeois class used this as an excuse to cut wages. Then and now, free trade proved a two-edged weapon. Its actual impact depends on circumstances and what class you are talking about. This inconvenient fact was pointed out forcibly by one delegate to the Brussels free trade congress – a certain Karl Marx. His conclusion was that free trade deals should be supported pragmatically by socialists. But only because they usually help capitalism spread, thereby, creating more revolutionary proletarians.

Modern socialists should imbibe Marx's approach to so-called free trade. We are for it tactically because bigger markets are more likely to lead to economic expansion, more jobs and a stronger proletariat. Eliminating protective barriers also undermines the power of domestic monopolists, strengthening the leverage of the local working class. But this *general* approach has to be applied in the light of given economic circumstances and a given balance of

forces. For instance, a genuine workers' government might want to control import and capital flows, and so avoid foreign trade pacts that limited its ability to do so.

How does the current economic conjuncture influence capitalist trade policy? The neo-liberal era (c.1980 onwards) bulldozed away international barriers to the free movement of capital, labour, goods and services – so-called 'globalisation'. This has led to the hegemony of US investment banks and world market domination by a tight band of American high-tech monopolies (Amazon, Google, Apple, Facebook) which make super-profits. European capitalism – still dominated by Germany's unsustainable, high-cost luxury manufacturers and faded domestic banks – has retreated further behind EU protectionist walls. Rising Chinese capitalism has resisted the US onslaught by protecting its own, vast domestic market and building local rivals to the US technology giants behind these tariff walls - companies such as Alibaba and Tencent.



The rise of Trump represents a political backlash by sectors of traditional US capitalism which lack the technological superiority of the Amazons and Apples, and so are vulnerable to EU and Chinese protectionism. Hence, Trump's new trade wars against China and Europe. Here's the political contradiction. Once you start global trade conflicts, they do not end in greater free trade. Instead, tit-for-tat protectionist measures lead to a complete breakdown in the global market, the emergence of regional blocs under the hegemony of individual imperialisms; and ultimately to military clashes. This was the pattern in the run

up to both World Wars. It is where we are destined in the 21st century.

Where does Britain fit in? In the short term, post-Brexit it will find itself alienated from Europe and treated with patronising contempt both by Trump's America and Xi's China. Result: British capitalism will be forced to launch a massive onslaught on worker's rights and public services just to survive. The logical game plan for British capitalism is to turn Britain into a giant version of Singapore – deregulated, authoritarian and relying on semi-fascist English nationalist currents to demobilise working class resistance. All this will sharply circumscribe the room for manoeuvre of a Corbyn government imprisoned by its Blairite backbenchers. It is against this background, we need to test the pros and cons of any post-Brexit trade arrangements.

This analysis leads to the conclusion it would be political madness for socialists to ally themselves with those extreme elements of British capitalism pursuing a globalist, free trade model. Those Labour MPs or former MPs who sided with the Farage wing of the 'leave' campaign – like John Mann, Frank Field and Kate Hoey – have merely reinforced the slide towards a Britain where workers' rights are almost totally abrogated. Besides, a 'hard' Brexit based on World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules is not what it seems. The big imperialisms, e.g., China and the US, have already forced the EU to concede so-called Mutual Recognition Agreements which eliminate routine border checks. Following a 'hard' Brexit, Britain would not have the clout to negotiate such bi-lateral arrangements.

Exactly what sort of post-Brexit arrangement best protects workers? Labour proposes negotiating 'a' new customs union for physical goods – as opposed to staying in 'the' present EU Customs Union. Assuming Europe accepts, this would leave existing cross-border supply chains tariff free, protecting British jobs. Of course, the phrase 'a' customs union is pure sophistry. The rebranding would allow Labour to say it had left the EU without changing anything as far as the British and German industrial bourgeoisie were concerned. It would also mean that

Britain would continue to apply common EU tariffs against the rest of the world. So Britain would be forced to follow the line laid down by Franco-German imperialism in future global trade disputes. That's a poisoned chalice.

However, Labour would stay outside of the Single Market because - in common with the Tory Brexiteers - it wants an end to free movement of people. The Labour leadership, thereby, capitulates to the prejudices of the most backward and racist sections of the working class and petty bourgeoisie. Unfortunately, on the continent, elements of Die Linke and France Insoumise take the same line as Labour against free movement. This plays directly into the hands of the anti-immigrant, extreme right which is gathering force throughout Europe.

There is an obvious progressive alternative: for post-Brexit Britain to remain inside the Single Market through membership - alongside social democratic Norway - of the European Economic Area (EEA). The EEA encompasses the free movement of goods, services, capital and people across the EU and other partner states. It is a free trade area but - crucially - *not* a customs union. Norway is, thus, free to have different trade arrangements with nations outside the EEA. The trick is that goods transiting Norway from the outside world into the EU are taxed by the Norwegians and the money passed on.

If Britain was a post-Brexit member of the EEA, physical goods would flow freely between it and the EU, preserving just-in-time supply chains and the jobs dependent on them. It would also eliminate the return of a hard border between Northern Ireland and Eire. Free movement of people would remain, though it is perfectly possible within the rules (as applied by Switzerland, and EEA member) to insist that European immigrants prove they have paid employment inside a minimum time period. EEA members handle trade disputes with the EU via a special independent court, not the European Court of Justice. Britain inside the EEA would even recover unilateral control over its farming and fishing grounds. The only barrier to this progressive solution is Labour and Tory hatred of free movement - a position aimed at dividing the European working class.

And this brings us to Scotland. As we

all know, 62% of folk voted 'remain' north of the border, seeing Europe as a counterweight to the Tory government in London. It is incumbent on all socialists in Scotland to respect that decision, even if Britain quits the EU. And that is why the SNP Scottish Government has been arguing consistently since the publication of its Brexit *White Paper* in December 2016 that Scotland should have a bespoke solution even while remaining inside Britain, namely, that Scotland should stay inside the Single Market, even if England remains outside. There is no technical barrier to this. Scotland and England would remain a free trade area with a common external tariff. Goods passing from England through Scotland to an EU jurisdiction (either as entities or incorporated into Scottish manufactures) would be liable to any European taxes. But the Scottish authorities would take responsibility for collecting these tariffs and passing the money to Brussels (i.e. the Norwegian model).

Simultaneous Northern Ireland membership of the Single Market via the EEA would eliminate the border question both with the EU and Britain. In fact, it is difficult to see any other practical alternative short of Irish reunification. However, I remain ever sceptical of the Tories or Labour recognising the national democratic demands of Scotland and Northern Ireland, in respect of maintaining internationalist links with Europe.

Of course, the present EU treaties are aimed at defending a protected space for European capitalist exploitation. But creating a socialist Europe will not be advanced by dismantling the existing, collective social and democratic gains achieved by the European workers movement through the EU. That is why free movement must be defended. And why I, as a socialist, am committed to keeping Scotland inside the EEA.

In this revolutionary sense alone, to paraphrase Marx, I am in favour of free trade.

*George Kerevan is a member of the executive of SNP Socialists and former SNP MP for East Lothian (2015-2017).*

**Cover:**

Nadia Lucchesi  
([nadia.shemail@gmail.com](mailto:nadia.shemail@gmail.com))

**Proofing services:**

John Wood and John Daly

**Communications and organisational development:**

Carole Ewart

**Editor Email:**

Gregor Gall  
[gregorgall@outlook.com](mailto:gregorgall@outlook.com)

**Web:** [www.scottishleftreview.org](http://www.scottishleftreview.org)

**Tel:** 0141 424 0042

**Address:**

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**Scotland  
didn't vote  
for a Tory  
Brexit...**

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# Brexit still represents an opportunity

*Jim Sillars say capital rules the roost in the EU so the only way is out*

In requesting views on preferred options 'after Britain has left the EU', the editor has almost asked for the impossible as no one knows what Brexit will mean until a deal is struck and we can study the details. If the Prime Minister and the EU continue on the present path of so-called negotiations, Britain will effectively remain in on the worst possible terms – subject to EU rules without a say in how they are made. Nothing, therefore, will change. Those of us who voted Leave were clear. Out of the customs union and single market, no further contributions to the EU budget, out of the Common Fisheries Policy and Common Agriculture Policy, no longer subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice; and able to strike free trade deals with countries outside the EU bloc.

I never met anyone on the 'leave' side who, on the hard facts, thought other than that a sensible trade deal would emerge from negotiations. One of those facts is the trade surplus of £68bn in favour of the EU, showing how important the British market is to exporters in key EU states such as Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands and Denmark. Another was underlined by the Deloitte study of the effects a British departure on WTO terms would have on the German vehicle industry.

A 10% tariff, resulting in a revenue fall of 12.4bn euros (-18%), with 550,000 fewer units sold in Britain, causing 18,000 jobs to go. But economic logic and the EU do not go together. There is for the Commission a bigger agenda.

As the Commission has shown in the handling of the euro zone, it gives more weight to its political ambition of ever greater integration than to the economics. It has applied the same principle to British-EU trade relations. The Commission has a need to punish Britain for leaving as a warning to other member states, because if others take the British road then the objective of finally creating a United States of Europe, a single state, will vanish.

The euro zone was a giant step towards that ambition, because to make it work it requires political and fiscal union; and no matter its inherent flaws without that union, and the severe punishment dealt out to the peoples of Greece, Portugal and Spain due to those flaws, it has been kept in place – a triumph of politics over economics, still the forcing agent of that final piece of the integration jigsaw that remains the Brussels ambition.

As we have moved from the Prime Minister's 'Brexit means Brexit,' to her

Lancaster House speech with its red lines, to the Chequers stitch up, the Government has a different definition of 'leave' than those of us who voted 'leave'. It looks like we are heading to be no longer legally in membership of the EU on 29 March next year, but still in the customs union, single market, and under the jurisdiction of the EU, with EU access to our fishing waters not clear, providing not only a whopping £39bn pounds, but continuing to pay over a proportion of our VAT proceeds to the EU budget during a prolonged transitional period.

How a British Government can lay £39bn on the table and be unable to make 'leave' mean 'leave' on the definition the majority voted for, is something of a wonder; something that should destroy the Tory party's self-declared claim to competence. So, given the uncertainty about the eventual outcome of what are called negotiations but have in reality been an EU blocking, tackling and dictating the agenda, it is only possible to speculate between the two scenarios seemingly considered by the Cabinet – Chequers and WTO, and within the former the future of Scottish fishing waters. The lead EU negotiator has talked of continued EU access in any deal. Would a Tory Government accept that, given the number of Scottish Tory MPs whose constituencies are in fishing areas? Never mind them, would the Scots?

Before looking at these options, let me re-state the reasons why I voted Leave. Away back in 1972, before Britain entered the EEC, at a special Labour conference, I denounced the Treaty of Rome as the ethic of capitalism, and I have been proved right as the EEC evolved into the EU. The Laval and Viking judgements by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) are one point of proof. Both cases posed a conflict of interest between capital and labour. In both the ECJ, properly in my view, applied the EU treaties which enshrine the rights of capital, and said that capital's rights to move at will within the EU trumped any workers' rights to stop it. Properly? Yes, in law, as there is nothing in the EU treaties, which are the basis of EU law, that make labour



even equal to capital. Both can move freely, but that gives capital the whip hand as Laval and Viking showed.

The second point concerns the fears often expressed on the left that out of the EU, Britain will see a massive attack on workers' rights by an illiberal Tory government; and that, therefore, sticking with the EU one way or the other, is the best defence workers will have. The fact is on rights like paid holidays, maternal and paternal leave, British standards - introduced by different governments - are above the EU minimum. But more important is the question of who, in defence of capital in the form of French and German banks, tore up workers' rights, and imposed the sale of national assets on the peoples of Greece, Portugal and Spain? The EU - that's who. The workers in those countries were then forced to use their 'right' of free movement to find work elsewhere, at low wages.

Out of the EU, we in Britain can campaign and evict a Tory government, whereas in Greece and Portugal, for example, a change of government has not meant lifting the yoke of the Troika, until the governments have fully submitted to the Commission in Brussels. A Commission we cannot evict. Britain has no written constitution and this gives capital supreme rights over labour, as do the treaties and ECJ judgements in the EU. Throughout our history, there has been a struggle between capital and labour, and labour through political and industrial action has been able to recoup its losses and win significant victories: all because, unlike the EU treaties, the rights of capital are not entrenched in law.

This is where the Corbyn-McDonnell Labour leadership has me puzzled. It is sensibly preparing for an onslaught by international capital the day it takes office. Yet, if Britain remains subject to the rules of the EU, it will be powerless in the face of that organisation's assertion of the absolute right of capital over any legislation that curbs its powers, or gives labour advantages. That the Labour left wishes to stick with an organisation that gives capital pre-eminence is a wonder to behold.

Given that fundamental advantage to

capital in the EU treaties, it is logical for the CBI to back the Chequers position, which will continue the rule of the ECJ and its pro-capital and anti-labour precedents. For the rest of us, it is a different matter. Britain will be of, but not in the rule making of the EU. The worst possible outcome to joke negotiations; with money continuing to flow to Brussels instead of into our public services. A vassal state.

Chequers and the Irish border is a false problem, and the idea that Britain must stay in the customs union and single market to solve it, equally false. A 'hard border' already exists in respect of fuel duty, excise duties, VAT, taxation and currency, without effect on the Good Friday Agreement, which is not about trade but managing relations between the nationalist and unionist communities. If trade between Switzerland and the EU states can flow freely, then the same can be done in Ireland where the volume of trade is much lower. Over 2.4m people cross the Swiss-EU every year; 23,000 lorries cross it every day. Switzerland exports 56% of its goods and services to the EU. It is not in the customs union, yet the traffic flows easily.

A World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules Brexit is not cliff-edge. It is a known system, being the one used for Britain's trade of £342bn with the rest of the world. The same one EU states use to trade with the rest of the world. In the WTO system, EU tariff barriers, except on cars and agriculture, are low at around 3%-4%. As the British pound has been devalued by at least 15%, they will prove no punishing barrier.

On Scottish independence, not unusually, Nicola Sturgeon has got the wrong end of the EU stick. My vote for 'leave' was strategic: it takes the EU out of the triangle of power between Edinburgh, London and Brussels that existed in 2014, with the latter two

hostile to independence. Moreover, Brussels has come down firmly against Scotland having a seamless entry to the EU, with the Spanish veto always available to prevent a precedent that would give Catalonia a case for its independence.

Take the EU out of that triangle of power, and it will be much easier to deploy a case for independence when only our relations with the rest of Britain at stake.

*Jim Sillars is a former Labour and SNP MP*

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# Tory Party implodes as Brexit explodes

Neil Findlay articulates Labour's position

The next few weeks and months will see the culmination of a forty-year civil war amongst Tories. From the days of Heath taking us into the Common Market, Thatcher signing the Single European Act, Major the Maastricht treaty and Cameron's referendum dilemma, each has faced a hostile onslaught of criticism from the within their own ranks - Enoch Powell, Teddy Taylor and David Davis immediately spring to mind, all buoyed and sustained by a romantic and outdated notion of British nationalism where Britannia still rules the waves. For many Tory zealots, the EU and hatred of it is part of the reasons why they got into politics. Their vision is one of a deregulated, ultra free market world where corporations and capital can do what they like with no pesky interference from Government or any other meddling institution. To hell with workers' rights, consumer protection or environmental cooperation - why that's just communism by another name! For the Tory far right, this is their big chance and it won't come again. It is all or nothing - all the chips are in in this insane game of chance. The stakes are huge.

Meanwhile in our communities people worry about their jobs, they worry about whether the NHS will cope, whether their child's school has enough teachers and how they will pay the bills at the end of the month. Of course, there are none of these worries for Boris De Pfeffel Johnson or Jacob Rees Mogg. Imagine taking these two for a pint with your mates - I suspect you wouldn't have them as mates afterwards! They are two of the most excruciating political frauds I have ever had the displeasure to observe. It's not their inherited millions that are at stake. They won't need to wait weeks on a Universal Credit payment to settle their bills. Their private school fees will still be paid. As manufacturing workers and NHS patients amongst many, many others hold their collective breath, these two balloons jockey for position to be the far right candidate when May is despatched as inevitably she will. Johnson did not resign over a disagreement over policy - he resigned for one reason, namely, to challenge May for the top job.



THE LABOUR PARTY MANIFESTO 2017

All through this process, Labour has called it right - suggesting and winning the argument for a transition period, suggesting and winning the argument for a 'meaningful vote', and advancing and winning the public argument for a customs union. Keir Starmer and Jeremy Corbyn set out six tests Labour will apply to any deal:

- 1) produce a strong collaborative relationship with the EU, where we work with our friends and colleagues in countries across the continent to improve the lives of working people;
- 2) secure the benefits of the single market and customs union, protecting jobs, building a prosperous future for Scottish businesses and their workforce;
- 3) have a fair and transparent immigration system - ending the exploitation of workers wherever they come from;
- 4) maintain all rights and protections enjoyed by people currently - including rights over employment, health and safety, the environment etc;
- 5) protect our national security - and have a system of cross border policing to ensure that dangerous and organised crime is tackled internationally; and
- 6) protect Scotland's interests at all times.

As it stands, Theresa May's shambolic negotiations exemplified by her humiliation at Salzburg and failure to find a solution to the crucial Irish border question delivers a score of zero out of six. Whilst only a fool would predict what will happen over the next few weeks, it appears she is heading for defeat. The DUP have set out their red, or maybe that should be orange, lines.

The Tory zoomers will never support 'Chequers' and have said so, and Labour will reject the deal - any Labour MP who considers voting to support May's position really must examine their conscience, and be held to account for their actions.

In Scotland, the SNP is using Brexit as both leverage to advance independence and to distract attention from its dreadful stewardship of our public services. It's had numerous positions over the last 2 years including joining the Euro, joining EFTA, the EEA, re-joining the EU, the single market and customs union membership and now a second referendum. If Brexit has taught us anything then it is the uncertainty and economic consequences of withdrawing from any political union is complex, time-consuming and riddled with problems. So, surely withdrawing from a 300 year old arrangement and a market four times the value to Scotland than that of EU would be many times as seismic as leaving a 40 year old institution. And now that SNP MPs will support a second EU referendum, Sturgeon must commit to the same if there was ever a time that independence was again proposed. Or is the case that a second referendum is only on the cards when Sturgeon loses?

So the next few weeks and months will be tumultuous. We could see a deal (very unlikely), we could see a Government defeat in the meaningful vote in the Commons (highly likely), we could see a second EU referendum (possible) and we might see a new PM (probable). I hope and pray we see a general election.

*Neil Findlay is a Labour MSP for the Lothians and the Brexit spokesperson for Scottish Labour*

# Against Brexit and for a ratification referendum

*Molly Scott Cato makes the case for stopping a disaster by having a 'People's Vote'*

'Brexit means Brexit' declared Theresa May. Though what exactly Brexit means depends, of course, on who you speak to. What is clear is that there is no version which commands majority support in Parliament, let alone any version that is feasible. Theresa May's 'Chequers Plan' is effectively dead, though it barely ever saw the light of day. The plan is loathed by most within her own party, opposed by Labour and declared unworkable by the EU.

Then there are various far-right versions of Brexit, but all share something in common. They are all being promoted by powerful and secretive organisations best described as the Brexit syndicate. All want to usher in new 'free trade' treaties - whether this be a 'Canada plus' model, or a 'no-deal WTO' (World Trade Organisation) scenario - that would rip up the standards, protections and rights the EU has brought us over the past four decades. And all seek to rewrite the rules of global capitalism in favour of the 1%. The powerful lobby group, the European Research Group (ERG) chaired by Jacob Rees-Mogg, is one such organisation. Its hard Brexit demands were described by Conservative MP Nicky Morgan as 'a ransom note'.

So, a referendum that was meant to heal divisions inside the Conservative Party over Europe has only exacerbated them further. The party has now descended into bitter in-fighting and chaos. Our country has been left ungoverned by the ungovernable. Neither does Brexit make any economic sense, unless you are part

of the 1% or a disaster capitalist looking to benefit from a crisis.

Britain's trade with the EU accounts for 44% of this country's exports and 53% of its imports so any disruption will put jobs and livelihoods at risk. There has been a steady succession of industries and businesses warning that Brexit also means their exit from Britain. Some have already walked. Lloyds of London has begun the process of morphing into Lloyds of Brussels and Aviva is moving to Dublin. Love it or loathe it, insurance represents a huge proportion of our services exports. Then there are corporate giants such as Airbus, who have said they could leave the country if Britain leaves the single market and customs union, and car manufacturers like Honda, warning about severe disruption to their 'just-in-time' supply chains. But at the other end of the spectrum too, farming businesses could be devastated. A recent report concluded that a 'no-deal' or WTO rules Brexit would impact on Cornwall more adversely than any other region in Britain, due to the high proportion of EU exports in highly vulnerable sectors, particularly with food and live animals, accounting for 90% of exports to the EU, and with material manufactures, accounting for 69%.

But it's not just businesses sounding the alarm bell. A stream of studies, including the government's own impact analyses, have indicated that Brexit would be a disaster for the economy and employment. All reach similar conclusions: any Brexit option will impede Britain's trade with the EU;

British exports to the EU will suffer and imports from the EU will become more expensive.

And the Westminster government already knew all this before the referendum. In 2014, it published 'the most extensive analysis ever undertaken of the UK's relationship with the EU'. This Balance of Competences report concluded that membership of the single market resulted in the GDP of both the EU and Britain being 'appreciably greater than they otherwise would be' and that 'integration has brought ... appreciable economic benefits'.

The result of the EU referendum has also been seriously undermined by law breaking. The official 'Vote Leave' campaign was fined £61,000 and reported to the police after evidence emerged of illegal coordination with another campaign group, 'BeLeave'. Meanwhile, the unofficial 'Leave.EU' campaign, headed up by Nigel Farage, was fined £70,000 over multiple breaches of electoral law. All this has led to a crisis in our political and democratic system. But rather than address these problems, proponents of Brexit have deflected a crisis of their own making onto others. They blame those who voted 'remain', accusing them of 'talking down Great Britain'. Then they blame the EU for lack of respect or failing to come up with alternative plans. Or if none of that is convincing, they turn it back on the electorate, pointing out that they are just fulfilling the will of the people, however tough that may be.

And that brings us to the 'People's Vote'. Two years on from 'Brexit means Brexit', parliament is in political paralysis and the idea of a vote on the final deal between the Britain and the EU has been gaining increased cross-party as well as public support. Last weekend some 650,000 marched in support of the 'People's Vote', the biggest London demo since the 2003 Stop the War march, when a million people protested against the Iraq war. This movement is now looking unstoppable and the rate at which it has grown is breath-taking. A



similar march in June attracted 100,000, which was considered a huge success given that at the beginning of the year the campaign was still in embryonic form.



Political parties have found it difficult to keep up but have now begun to move. The Greens and Lib Dems have long backed the idea of a vote on the final deal. Indeed, it was the Green Party of England and Wales that first put forward the idea of a 'ratification referendum' which has since developed into the 'People's Vote'. Both the Green Party of England and Wales and the Scottish Greens confirmed their backing for a 'People's Vote' at their autumn conferences. The Scottish National Party, with the third largest bloc of members at Westminster, also passed a motion at its autumn conference, pledging its MPs to vote for a new referendum if that choice is put to Parliament. Even Theresa May, who has consistently refused to countenance the idea of a further referendum, was forced to address the issue in her conference speech, faced as she is with a growing number of her own MPs calling for the second vote.

But what of Labour, the Party that is most able to make this happen? At their conference in September, the opposition Labour Party passed a motion which agreed to 'all options remaining on the table, including campaigning for a public vote'. Such a move was driven by members, 9 in every 10 of who support a 'People's Vote'. But Labour's leadership is still reluctant to back such a vote. Corbyn seems to regard the EU as a bosses' charter, out to wreck Labour's economic programme, and specifically

its plans for public ownership. But Corbyn needs to listen to leading law experts on the matter.

A legal assessment of 26 of Labour's economic proposals found the effect of EU or Single Market membership to be negligible. The authors noted Britain would have to more than triple the amount it spends on state aid to even match the proportion of GDP which Germany spends on subsidising its public companies. And, of course, French railways and German municipal energy are examples of exactly what Labour wants to do in terms of public ownership.

Alongside growing public support for the 'People's Vote', leaving the EU can no longer be considered 'the will of the people'. Demographic changes, - where many more pro-European young people have now reached voting age - along with many who have changed their minds since the referendum, means remaining in the EU now commands majority support. Of course, to the people of Scotland, leaving the EU has never been 'the will of the people' and they are being dragged into Brexit against their will.

But is such a vote feasible? The Article 50 letter notified the EU of our intention to leave, but Britain is still a member state, so has the right to withdraw the letter. As to government legislation for a new vote, the 'People's Vote' campaign believes there are currently at least six plausible parliamentary routes. And the EU has made clear - despite the trouble and expense Britain has caused - it would be happy to extend the Article 50 timetable to allow for a 'People's Vote' to take place.

A 'People's Vote' offers not just an opportunity to extricate ourselves from an impending disaster. It also offers - indeed, it must offer - a chance to fashion a new vision for a Europe based on the principles of social, economic and environmental justice. Above all else, the vote to leave the EU was an expression of discontentment; of alienation; of feeling left out and left behind. No wonder those regions most affected by austerity, poverty and inequality jumped at the promise to 'take back control.'

A 'People's Vote' which simply offers a return to the *status quo* simply won't do. It needs also to offer political and constitutional reform. This must include self-determination, which is why the Scottish Greens want to see an independent Scotland in the EU, allowing the nation to collaborate with other European countries on equal terms.

Democracy did not end on the 23 June 2016. So much more is now known and understood about the EU and our relationship with it, and about the corruption that was central to the 'leave' campaigns. People have a democratic right to demand a further opportunity to decide whether the reality of Brexit, as opposed to broken promises, is actually what they wanted - or, whether their interests are best served by remaining in the EU. It's time to let the people decide the best way forward.

*Molly Scott Cato is Green MEP for the South West of England and Gibraltar. She is also a professor at the University of Roehampton.*



# Demanding what was promised

*Mick Whelan lays out why his union supported Brexit and what it expects from the negotiations*

**A**SLEF backed Brexit – the campaign to leave the European Union – in the referendum in Britain in 2016. Not because we wanted to stand shoulder to shoulder with Nigel Farage – a man memorably described by *The Economist* as ‘a saloon bar bore’ and with whom we had, and have, nothing in common, politically, industrially, or ideologically. Instead it was because we believe the EU has become a rich man’s club which offers plenty for the boss class – for the neo-liberals whose siren calls echo around the corridors of power in the capitals of Europe – but very little for the ordinary hard-working men and women trying to earn a living in this conservative age of austerity.

I’ll be frank. We didn’t realise that the Tory government was going to make such a horse’s arse of leaving the European Union. I was a district organiser for ASLEF before I became general secretary, and I know that our eight full-time divisional organisers, and our company council reps, are much, much better negotiators than the risible lightweights Theresa May has sent to try and do the business in Brussels. And, while I know that she was a ‘remain’ supporter during the referendum campaign she did, famously, say ‘Brexit means Brexit, and we will make a success of it’ when she succeeded David Cameron as Prime Minister.

Now there were cynics who suggested that ‘Brexit means Brexit’ was one of the more fabulously fatuous remarks of the twenty first century. But many of us took it to mean that there was no going back, and that May would be able to do a deal that was good for Britain. That, after all, was the promise she made.

But it doesn’t look, right now, as if she will be able to do a deal at all. And any deal which she does put before Parliament – or, if some people get their way, the British people in another referendum – looks as if it will fall far short of what Boris Johnson, Liam Fox, David Davis – so memorably lampooned by Duncan Wisbey on Radio 4’s *Dead Ringers* as hapless Brexit Bulldog – and the other Brexiteers cheerfully promised during the referendum campaign just two years ago. £350 million – remember the Boris bus promise – for the NHS, anyone?

At the heart of our objections to the European Union were a couple of proposals which we knew would be bad for Britain, in general, and bad for the railways, in particular – the European Commission’s Fourth Railway Package and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the United States.

The Fourth Railway Package is a controversial set of proposals which would foist the British model of rail privatisation on the rest of Europe. Now we know that privatisation does not work. It’s not the right model for Britain and it’s not the right model for Europe. But this package, which despite the reservations of many MEPs, and protests from rail workers across the continent, is the one the neo-liberal ideologues at the heart of the EU are determined to foist on people whether they want it or not. It will turn what we see, and is still seen in many European countries, as a public service into an opportunity for a few firms to plunder a private profit.

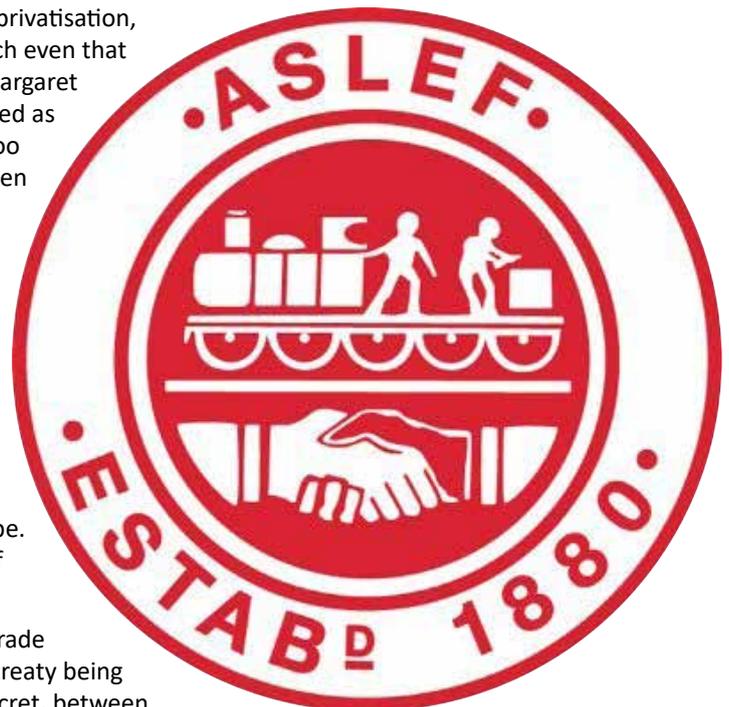
Because privatisation has not worked, does not work, and will not work in what is – like other public services, such as the provision of gas, water, electricity and the Royal Mail – a natural monopoly. The model is broken and is selling Britain – passengers, taxpayers, and those of who work on the railway – woefully short. In the last 20-odd years, since John Major privatised our industry in the 1990s – a privatisation, incidentally, which even that arch-privateer Margaret Thatcher described as ‘a privatisation too far’ – we have seen our rolling stock get older, our trains get more crowded, and our fares go right through the roof. We now have the highest passenger fares in Western Europe. Why? Because of privatisation!

TTIP was a free trade and investment treaty being negotiated, in secret, between

the EU and the US. It was, and is, unnecessary, as the EU and US already enjoy strong trade and investment relationships, with tariffs at minimal levels. So why were – and are – some companies so keen to see this new deal signed? Because the aim was to remove barriers which restrict the profits transnational corporations can make.

The problem, of course, is that what global corporations perceive as barriers include vital regulations protecting our labour rights, food safety and banking safeguards. It might be handy for a profit-hungry corporation if it didn’t have to comply with pesky social and environmental regulations – many cheerfully admit they would like to live in a free market Wild West – but it would not be very good for the rest of us. TTIP appeared to wither away – first there were problems in the European Parliament and then Donald Trump seemed to prefer to pursue his aggressive America First policy – but there are signs that this zombie deal has been, rather quietly, resurrected behind the scenes.

Britain’s public health and education sectors have suffered gradual privatisation – under, sadly, ‘new’ Labour as well as the Conservative-led coalition and now the Tory government of May – and TTIP or TTIP2 or whatever else the bureaucrats in Brussels might like to call it would only accelerate this



transformation of our public services into privately-run sectors. For those who want to make a private profit at public expense.

As the aim of Brexit was – and, I hope, still is – to take back control of our destiny it would be totally wrong to sell the people – and the public sector – out to the EU or the US. We do not want a Brexit deal with the European Union – or any deals with other countries after Brexit – which would make it easier for companies to source goods and services from countries, such as the United States, where labour standards are lower, or to eradicate workers' rights, such as collective bargaining and our right to organise, on the grounds that they restrict a company's business model and its profit margins.

Remaining in the single market would make our decision-making process even

less democratic here in Britain as we would still be bound by EU directives without having a voice around the table as they are drawn up. Norway, for example, a country often touted as a possible template for Brexit, incorporates single market rules as they are made in Brussels and Strasbourg. And we should remember that the Norwegian government's recent *Outside and Inside Report* concluded that, through its single market membership, Norway is three-quarters integrated into the EU compared to a typical EU member country.

And state aid – or any kind of preferential treatment designed to protect or promote specific companies or strategic industries, such as steel, for example, whether in the private or the public sector – is banned as a distortion of competition under Article 107. The EU Commission may grant very limited or

temporary exceptions but has indicated that it is highly unlikely that these would not be granted to Britain. As we prepare to leave the European Union on 29 March 2019 we need to ensure that the terms on which we leave – whatever the deal, or no deal, and however it is sold to us by Noel Edmonds, Theresa May, or Boris Johnson – does not leave us in a worse position than we are at the moment – because that wasn't what we voted for.

*Mick Whelan spent 34 years on the railways, and all as an active trade unionist. Elected general secretary of ASLEF, the train drivers' union, in 2011, he became chair of the Trade Union and Labour Party Liaison Organisation, which co-ordinates the activities of the 12 affiliated unions, in 2016; and was elected to Labour's national executive committee in 2017.*



# The Jimmy Reid Foundation

## Report from sixth annual Jimmy Reid Memorial lecture

A successful lecture was held on Thursday 27 September in the Banqueting Hall of the City Chambers in Glasgow with Frances O'Grady, General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) speaking on 'A Future after Brexit? Unions and the Scandinavian model of social democracy'. Introduced by Lynn Henderson, current president of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and vice chair of the Foundation, some 180 people were in attendance. Lord Provost of Glasgow, Eva Bolander, welcomed all to the City Chambers.

The Jimmy Reid Foundation wishes to thank Glasgow City Council for facilitating the lecture and the numerous unions, trade union solicitors and other progressive organisations for sponsoring the published programme of the lecture.

The full text of Frances' lecture can be found here:

<http://reidfoundation.org/2018/09/text-of-frances-ogradys-annual-jimmy-reid-foundation-memorial-lecture-27-sept-2018/>

The full text of Lynn's introduction can be found here:

<https://daughterofrosa.wordpress.com/2018/09/28/introducing-frances-ogrady/>

The video of Lynn's introduction and Frances' lecture can be found here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5\\_AbNMNtMmM&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_AbNMNtMmM&feature=youtu.be)

# Bordering on the insane: against borders and Brexit

*Steven Agnew argues that only avoiding Brexit can resolve the border issue in Ireland*

It's now been around 850 days since the EU referendum and there is still no agreement as to what 'no hard border' means in practice. And yet, the Brexiters promised us that it would all be so simple. That, as Tory MP, Liam Fox, infamously said: 'the trade agreement that we will have to do with the European Union should be one of the easiest in human history'. The 'leave' campaign neglected to engage in any meaningful debate about the Irish border during the referendum campaign.

Any debate around frictionless trade was brushed off with nonsense on how Brexit would be glorious and Ireland would be chomping at the bit to similarly leave the EU, solving the issue. Since then, we have been told that technology that does not yet exist will ensure frictionless trade across the island of Ireland.

The People's Vote campaign is a way to navigate our way out of a bad deal for Britain or worse still no deal at all. We all went in to the EU referendum in June 2016 in a state of ignorance. No one knew what leaving the EU would mean. So, while those of us who voted 'remain' may have known what we were voting for, we could have no idea what exactly we were voting against. The reverse is true for those who voted to leave. The momentum for a People's Vote is growing across Britain – witness the 700,000 marching in London on 20 October. It is no surprise to us in Northern Ireland, the majority of whom voted to 'remain', that the Irish border issue is proving to be the stickiest of sticking points between the UK and EU 27.

Yet, in Northern Ireland the traditional parties predictably view Brexit through a sectarian lens. Nationalists have argued that the impact of a 'hard' border in Ireland would devastate the all island economy and this would be the worst possible scenario. Unionists argued that a border down the Irish Sea will impact on our trade with the bigger Britain market and that this is the worst possible scenario. This is an argument

about degrees of harm. As Greens, as a cross community party, we see that any hard border will result in hardship in Northern Ireland.

The May government is now dependent on the DUP in the form of their confidence and supply arrangement. I can tell you that I have no confidence in what the DUP might supply. The DUP claims that Northern Ireland's regulatory checks must not diverge from the rest of Britain. Our 'Precious Union' is everything to the DUP and we're told Belfast must not be any different to Bradford, Birmingham or Battersea. Except when it comes to reproductive rights for women and equal marriage for our queer citizens that is!

The reality is that Northern Ireland is already treated differently, with agri-food products transported across the Irish Sea already facing checks. The threat of a border down the Irish Sea is the Project Fear that the DUP have been operating since its inception. There should be common cause in Northern Ireland to ensure that we have no 'hard' border anywhere on these islands by Britain remaining in a customs union, the single market and a 'people's vote' on any final deal.

It is utterly irresponsible of the British government insist on leaving the customs union in the full knowledge that a 'hard' border will be the inevitable consequence. Twenty years of hard won peace could be put at risk and must be protected. The conflict in Ireland dates back over 600 years. It would be naïve to think that a relative peace of two decades is secure and there could never be a return to the violence of the past. Do not take my word for it – listen to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Chief Constable, George Hamilton, when he says that the police service is 'working 24/7 to keep a lid on it' – the 'it' being the troubles and conflict here in Northern Ireland. That's the reality of this particular part of the 'Precious Union'. So instead of denying the extent of this cluster for us here in Northern Ireland, give us a 'People's Vote' to have the final say on any final deal.

*Steven Agnew is the leader of the Green Party in Northern Ireland. He was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for North Down in Stormont in 2011.*



# Brexit: what about the workers?

Jane Carolan examines the consequences of the neo-liberal EU for workers' rights

What do you want? Do you favour a Chequers Brexit or a 'no deal' deal? Should it be Canada plus or WTO rules? Another choice is another referendum, in the hope that a rerun will produce a different result from 2016. Bombarded by multiple options for a future relationship with Europe, it can be difficult to keep up with the acronyms, never mind critically analysing the politics behind them.

Discussions are curiously clouded by selective amnesia, wiping any memory of debate prior to the referendum when left opposition to the EU was side lined completely. The left critique, however, began with the 1975 referendum. Then, a coalition of the Labour left and unions coalition was the official opposition. Over time the TUC solidly defended 'Social Europe' as promoting democracy, egalitarianism and social liberalism while individual union contributions to Congress were critical from the Maastricht Treaty onward. TUC standing orders ensure that statements from the General Council take precedence over motions. Thus, critical motions are passed by vote of Congress but superseded in terms of policy. Motions critiqued the undemocratic and unaccountable nature of EU Institutions, highlighting the critical role of the European Central Bank, and lambasting the neo-liberal economic policy embedded within the EU constitution. Indeed, in taking forward the doctrines of the free market, privatisation and the withdrawal of the state from the economy, British governments has often led the way.

This is not only of historic interest. No re-evaluation of these policies has

ever followed, even after the 2007-2008 economic crisis. Across the EU, states weakened by the banking crisis had bailouts and imposed 'structural adjustment', meaning privatisation, cuts in wages, pensions, benefits and social provisions. From Ireland to Greece, the prescription ensured destructive economic and social decline. Britain went through the same processes, albeit voluntarily. Larry Elliott (*Guardian* 19 August 2018) noted: 'Greece has been a colossal failure. It is a tale of incompetence, of dogma, of needless delay and of the interests of banks being put before the needs of people.' Few on the Left would doubt Elliott's analysis could be applied to Britain, and that the EU has been far from a source of protection for workers here.

Left discussion of trading policies has a highly developed critique of EU trade treaties such as the EU/Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement or Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. These treaties provide the freedom of capital to operate in every country on its own terms, to penetrate the public sector, and to secure conditions for employment that maximises its own advantage. These treaties negate basic democratic processes by locking in privatisation and making it difficult for governments to regulate in the public interest. Such treaties incorporate the Investor-State Dispute Settlement offering corporations significant rights to sue governments in private international tribunals, essentially being private courts.

Thus advantages of a 'Canada plus' deal between the UK and Canada can only be obvious to the Boris Johnson-

type Brexiteers. The alternative May 'Chequers' proposals continue the current EU prohibitions on state aid and comprehensive public ownership of the utilities. 'Canada plus' and Chequers are lose/lose options surely for progressive politics. The least examined argument in relation to the EU has been on workers' rights, where labour market developments have been influenced by neo-liberal thinking emanating from Britain. Current TUC discussion is focussed on maintaining existing protections from EU directives (on equality etc) and seeks to transpose these and any future EU protections into British law. This ignores most recent initiatives and the direction of travel, where policies are deliberately aimed at reducing the wage setting powers of unions in order to limit collective agreements, increase the scope to undercut national sectoral agreements, and extend the right to participate in collective bargaining to non-union groups. Taken in combination with the Court of Justice of the European Union judgements, the extent to which EU workers' rights have been eroded and degraded is well documented, as is its centrality to the nature of the European project. Such developments are currently at the centre of a wave of industrial unrest in France.

Austerity Britain needs a genuinely new economic policy that seeks to repair and improve the social and industrial fabric of an increasing divided unequal society. That policy has to break from the neo-liberal model. In Labour's 'For the many, not the few', progressive policies that challenge the EU's neoliberal principles are offered. This includes plans to secure the rights of unions as proposed in the Institute of Employment Rights' *Manifesto for Labour Law*. That is the challenge that needs to be prioritised. Only a general election will do that.

Jane Carolan was until recently a Unison NEC member, chairing the union's Policy Development and Campaigns Committee. She represented the union on the TUC General Council and Executive Committee for a number of years. She is currently working as Scottish coordinator for the Institute of Employment Rights. She works with Radical Options for Scotland and Europe (<http://radicaloptions.scot/>)



# Where is Brexit heading and with what impact on independence?

*Kirsty Hughes shows Brexit has thrown up many more questions than answers*

The October summit where a Brexit deal was meant to be signed off has come and gone. Plans for an emergency November summit have been put on ice, with the EU's regular summit in mid-December now looking the most likely end point.

Uncertainty reigns: will there be a deal and what will it look like, will a deal pass at Westminster, what happens if not – an election, another EU referendum, neither? Certainly, if there's no deal or a deal is rejected at Westminster, there will be an intense political crisis which will get worse if MPs at Westminster cannot agree on a way forward. Yet lack of agreement is quite possible – Corbyn may not muster a majority for a no confidence vote, supporters of a second EU vote might not find a majority for that to happen.

If there is a general election, will the stalemate at Westminster be resolved by an election – and in what way; and will a second vote produce a 'remain' outcome or not? Uncertainty is pervasive and is bad for the economy, bad for individuals (not least EU citizens in Britain and British citizens in the EU) while continuing political instability and deadlock is not a recipe for good governance or good policies in the midst of this chronic Brexit crisis.

If a deal does pass at Westminster – perhaps not until January – then the Britain will, indeed, leave the EU on 29 March 2019. But that will not be the end to uncertainty, just the start of a new phase. How long will the transition period be – until end December 2020 or longer? Will a Britain-EU free trade and wider relationship be negotiated successfully and what will it look like, and when might it be ratified? How damaging

might it be to Britain-EU trade?

Even if the political declaration (alongside the withdrawal agreement) is more detailed than some now expect, the talks are likely to take sufficiently long that there could well be a change of government and change of tack before they conclude. And, unless the British government decides to go for a 'soft'

Brexit of staying in both the customs union and single market (as a rule-taker – an unstable and undemocratic outcome), it is hard to see how there will be frictionless Britain-EU borders.

If there aren't frictionless borders, then whatever Northern Ireland backstop is agreed should come into play. If that turns out to be a Britain-wide indefinite customs union plus regulatory divergence for Northern Ireland, the future trade deal may never come into being (unless the rest of Britain does end up in a separate customs relationship to the EU than Northern Ireland).

If Britain and Brexit politics is unpredictable in the coming months, then so is Scottish politics. At the SNP conference in early October, Nicola Sturgeon gave a clear message that a second independence referendum may not come very quickly. She has promised an outline of a route ahead once the Brexit deal is clear – although that may not now be until December, and even then the future will not be that clear.

A recent Survation poll suggested a potential 'Brexit bounce' for independence – with a 50:50 split on independence if Brexit goes ahead, and a 52:48% majority for independence in the face of a 'no deal' Brexit. But opinion could change more quickly in the face of an intense political crisis – with knock-on sharp, negative economic effects – if Westminster rejects a deal.

YouGov polls also show that, across Britain, only a minority expect a deal to be done in time for Britain to leave in March - 62% do not expect a deal in



time (or 75% excluding 'don't knows'). So, if there is a deal, this will be a shock to the majority of the public. Nor is any deal, however hedged about, expected to be one of staying in the EU's single market and customs union, so it will be one that the SNP's MPs would be expected to vote against.

Whether the certainty of Brexit will lead to a larger independence bounce than polls currently suggest remains to be seen. But SNP politicians may find their 'slowly-slowly' approach to independence might not fit well with either the shock of Brexit actually happening, or the political turmoil that will go with 'no deal' Brexit or the rejection of a deal.

Of course, it's still possible that a second EU referendum could keep Britain in the EU after all – something the SNP now back. And that outcome would certainly take away any Brexit-driven pressures for a rapid independence vote. But staying in the EU could still be accompanied by deeper political divisions and instability in England. Wherever Brexit goes next, business as usual looks very unlikely in Scotland and the rest of Britain.

*Kirsty Hughes is Director of the Scottish Centre on European Relations (<https://www.scer.scot/>)*



# Brexit, the ruling class and prospects for a left Labour government

Neil Davidson warns of dangers past, present and future for Corbyn, Labour and socialists

For over 200 years after 1688 political governance in England, then Britain, was a relatively simple matter for British capitalism. Two parties representing different wings of the ruling class, Tories and Whigs, would alternate in office, with different emphasis reflecting their respective agricultural and industrial bases, but united in exercising hegemony over the emerging working class. The crisis of the Liberals and emergence of Labour at the beginning of the twentieth century complicated the picture, in two ways.

First, although Labour in office has always been committed to maintaining capitalism, albeit in a more humane form (above all between 1945 and 1951), it has also always contained a left, with historically varying degrees of strength and coherence, which has sought to transcend capitalism rather than ameliorate its worst effects. Second, the links between Labour and the unions and wider labour movement means that there were limits to how far Labour governments could go in responding to capitalist demands: the neoliberal era began in the mid-1970s, but the Wilson-Callaghan government of 1974-79, anti-working class though it undoubtedly was, could not have imposed the new order; for that Thatcher and the Tories were required.

Consequently, Labour governments, usually from the moment of taking office, have been subjected to disciplinary actions, from business itself (particularly in the form of investment strikes and capital flight), international markets ('runs on the pound'), the state apparatus (notably the Treasury but, *in extremis*, the security services), geopolitical pressure from the USA and attacks in the predominantly right-wing press. The advent of 'new' Labour made it seem as if these tactics would no longer be necessary; such was Blair and Brown's willingness to appease capital it appeared that a modern alternative to the old Tory/Whig alternative government might have been established.

The ascendancy of Corbyn and

Labour's massive membership growth, overwhelmingly from the left, has put paid to that particular illusion, but Labour has been brought to heel many times before the advent of 'new' Labour; what is different on this occasion is the extent of the Tory crisis.

David Cameron hoped to sideline UKIP and the Tories' Europhobes by calling a referendum - which he assumed 'remain' would win. To an even greater extent than the Scottish Independence referendum, this was a gamble. The majority of British capitalists do not want to leave the EU, but are now saddled with Brexit because of the ineptitude of the politicians who are supposed to represent them. In other words, the Tories, main political representative of British capital for over 300 years is, temporarily at least, no longer capable of playing that role, not least because of unresolvable internal divisions and the incompetence of its leading figures.

It is precisely at moments like this that a suitably disciplined Labour Party would be expected to step into the breach and restore some kind of order 'in the [British] national interest'. The leadership and mass membership of Corbyn's Labour are obviously unwilling to play this role, and many of the usual pressures will be brought to bear, yet there are four specific dangers facing a potential left Labour government, all stemming from weaknesses in party's own political positions.

First, attempts to remove Corbyn himself following the smears about his entirely imaginary anti-Semitism. While this may well have been assisted by elements in the British (and Israeli) security services, the main driver has been an alliance of Zionists wanting to make fundamental criticism of Israel effectively illegal and Labour right-wingers prepared to do make any accusation to get rid of Corbyn, such is their horror at an actual left winger coming to power with mass support inside the party. Corbyn and Momentum's capitulation over the IHRA definition of anti-semitism will come back to haunt them in

future, given, for example, any Israeli repression of a future Palestinian uprising. But this is essentially aimed at Corbyn himself. The biggest threats to his programme lie elsewhere.

Second, while a calculated ambiguity over Brexit may have allowed Labour to avoid alienating 'leave' voters in particular, capitulating over the issue of freedom of movement, accepting that migration is a problem is to concede the right-wing populist case and make it more difficult to resist. Third, what has been remarkable about the response of the CBI, and those sections of the media where the ruling class conduct serious exchanges of views (*Financial Times* not *Daily Mail*), is how prepared they are to take seriously Corbyn and McDonnell's economic proposals. The danger here is that the novelty of this situation will lead a government trying to avoid economic dislocation to compromise with a business sector looking for a realistic alternative to the Tories.

Finally, Labour's refusal to take the national question seriously in either Scotland or Ireland (at a time when unification is beginning to look like a feasible option) is to needlessly deprive itself of allies. Scottish Labour's unhinged sectarian hatred of the SNP is partly to blame here, but no-one expects Labour to necessarily support Scottish Independence or Irish Unification - just that the Scots and the Irish should be able to take that decision. Here, as always, democracy would be an aid to radicalism.

*Neil Davidson lectures in sociology at the University of Glasgow and is the author of numerous books like 'Nation-States: Consciousness and Competition' (2016); 'We Cannot Escape History: States and Revolution' (2015); and 'Holding Fast to an Image of the Past: Explorations on Marxism and History' (2014).*

# Making positive use of Brexit in hospitality and tourism

*Sarah Collins argues for using Brexit to sort out longstanding ailments on wages and conditions*

The TUC and many others are keen to highlight the potential impact that Brexit will have on workers' rights, or the erosion thereof. In its August online briefing, the TUC noted: 'right now, EU law protects equal pay for equal value work, pay and conditions for outsourced workers, and equal treatment for people in insecure jobs. That means bosses can't treat anyone like a second-class citizen - including agency, part time and temporary staff. And EU law also ensures workers have the right to a voice at work'. In the same month, as the TUC published a report called *Ending the Undercutters' Charter* showing agency workers are being treated inequitably, there is a massive equal pay dispute at Glasgow City Council, and the poor conditions of hospitality and tourism workers have been consistently exposed by the Better than Zero campaign, Unite and BFAWU.

Regardless of whether Brexit will be a disaster for workers' rights in Scotland, the fact is that many workers already face adversity day-in and day-out – from low wages to insecure contracts and poor and overpriced accommodation. We have an understanding of what sectors migrant workers work in, and we know the terms and conditions of workers across Scotland that are suffering most from lack of empowerment in enforcing their basic rights in these sectors. What we need is to look at how Brexit can be used to enact a strategy which promotes all workers' class interests in these sectors.

There are an estimated 150,000 EU nationals in employment in Scotland, representing nearly 6% of the workforce in employment in Scotland. For EU nationals, similar to British nationals and non EU nationals, the highest proportion are employed in distribution, hotels and restaurants; public administration, education and health; and banking, finance and insurance. Around two-thirds of all EU nationals in employment in Scotland work in these three industry sectors. However, a Scottish Government report



identifies the tourism and hospitality sector as the one that would be particularly hard hit by restrictions on immigration into lower-skilled work.

The two prominent options open to the Government for attracting migrant workers in are an expanded youth mobility scheme, and a work-permit system that channels workers into specific, low-wage jobs. Already in sectors like tourism, EU nationals are not necessarily paid less per hour than British counterparts, but the terms and conditions under which they are expected to work mean that many British workers do not undertake these jobs. The STUC recently reported on treatment of workers at a hotel on Skye staffed predominantly by EU nationals, where workers sleep in staff bunks, which are scarce, or in makeshift pods and caravans. For this, they pay the employer £50 per week. Workers have little guarantee about the length of their stay and therefore, will often accept whatever they are given, and will often be denied paid holidays, sickness leave, and other rights that are written in statute, but overlooked in situ. As the Director of the Migration Observatory has said: 'if workers can't leave a bad job, there's more responsibility on government to prevent exploitation. In theory this should be possible with careful monitoring and oversight, but enforcing labour standards is not an area where the UK has the best track record.'

Instead, in agriculture, the influence of the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board is more evident. Generally, there

is a standard entry level minimum wage, with some more experienced workers earning more than double this rate. As the industry effectively still works on piece rate (i.e. per kilo/bunch/tray harvested) or a system of bonuses, the statutory minimum wage effectively sets the floor, with experienced workers capable of earning considerably higher hourly wage rates. A similar collective bargaining body should be set up for hospitality and tourism, particularly if young people are going to be encouraged to work in Scotland from other EU countries.

EU, or indeed British or Scots, law is not a panacea for putting workers, migrant or otherwise, at the forefront of the industrial and labour struggle. Whilst the floor of workers' rights should be defended, it is clear from the daily fight to empower workers to challenge their employment conditions that despite laws on minimum wage, maximum working hours or holiday pay, employers all over the country are flouting these laws even prior to Brexit. As such, focusing on Brexit as the cause of workers' rights erosion masks the underlying and more pervasive issues of enforcing workers' rights in an employer's world. Instead, ensuring a robust collective bargaining framework, particularly in the context of Brexit, is the best way to shore up all workers' rights and increase wages in characteristically low wage and low skill sectors.

*Sarah Collins is a policy officer at the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC)*

# Claim of rights repudiated

Bob Thomson argues Scottish Labour's leader has ditched its policy of the Scottish people having the right to decide their own form of government

Public and media attention on the debacle that is Brexit meant there was little attention given to the speech given by the Scottish Party leader, Richard Leonard MSP, at this year's Labour Party Conference in Liverpool in late September. In it, he said that the Scottish Labour's manifesto for any forthcoming Holyrood or Westminster elections would oppose a second referendum on independence. This was unqualified and at odds with Jeremy Corbyn's position that he was against a second referendum but that if the Scottish Parliament was elected with a majority with a mandate for a second referendum, he would not oppose it but would campaign against independence in that referendum preferring radical constitutional devolution for the whole of Britain.

Leonard's statement is a profound change of Labour policy of over 30 years. In 1989, Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the STUC, the Scottish churches and civic Scotland agreed the Claim of Right which asserted the sovereignty of Scotland within Britain. It stated that the signatories **'acknowledge the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of Government best suited to their needs, and do hereby declare and pledge that in all our actions and deliberations their interests shall be paramount'**. The Claim of Right was launched at a historic ceremony in the General Assembly Hall in Edinburgh. I attended as Vice Chair of the Scottish Labour Party. It was

signed by every Labour and LibDem MP who was then serving, including Gordon Brown and Alistair Darling with the exception of the late Tam Dalyell. The Claim of Right was the genesis for the 1997 Scottish referendum which led to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament. Is Labour now repudiating the Claim of Right?

If this measure is adopted, it means that the official position of the Labour Party is that it does not matter what Scotland votes for; it does not matter if Scotland returns a majority for parties that seek a referendum on independence whether in a Westminster general election or a Holyrood election; and it does not matter if a party achieves a mandate within Scotland to seek self-determination. That mandate could be overturned by whatever it is that the 92% of voters in Britain outwith Scotland have voted for.

As well as being undemocratic and contrary to a nation's right of self-determination contained in the UN Charter of Human Rights, it is also electorally disastrous. It could put Labour together with the Conservative and Unionist Party in a Catalan scenario where there was overwhelming support for a referendum but the Spanish Government stopped it by brute force and the imprisonment of politicians – Better Together with stilts!

Richard Leonard passionately argues that the problems and solutions for working people are class related and not those of national identity. He is

partly right! But where and at what level those class solutions are applied are for voters to decide on tactical and other considerations. Working class solidarity does not and never has ended at borders.

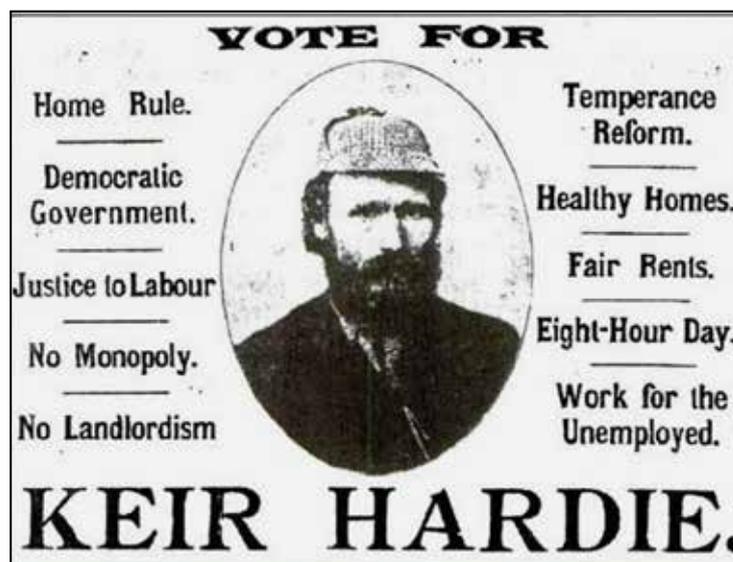
Voters in Scotland have

rejected the Tories for over fifty years and ended up with Tory Governments for the majority of that time. This was undoubtedly a factor in many traditional Labour voters switching to the SNP over the last ten years. Richard Leonard's strategy is predicated on a rejuvenated radical Labour Party under Corbyn winning a British general election; most working class voters including many SNP voters support this. However, polls consistently show Labour and the Tories neck and neck. If the Tories win the next general election but are again rejected in Scotland the clamour for a second referendum will become unstoppable. If Labour was then to oppose a consent motion for a referendum at Holyrood and Westminster, it would be an electoral disaster in Scotland worse than the 2015 general election and the 2016 Scottish election

Political parties must have a vision beyond the next election. Keir Hardie, one of Labour's founders, famously supported home rule for Scotland. Unfortunately, Labour's record on constitutional change has been slow, reluctant and timid on issues such as devolution, decentralisation, and a fair voting system. It has been promising to abolish the House of Lords for more than the 50 years I have been a member of the party. It has made crass mistakes such as the botched handling of the 1979 Scotland Act, the failure to use the full powers of the Scottish Parliament, not insisting on a devo-max question in the 2014 independence referendum then agreeing to the Vow which was supposed to offer more devolution when the British party leaders panicked when it appeared that 'yes' might win.

After the 2015 general election wipe-out in Scotland, the 2016 Scottish Labour conference agreed on setting up a constitutional convention to review all aspects of our unwritten constitution. Nothing has been heard of it since! Labour in Scotland will have to have more than Corbynism to offer voters at the next and future elections.

*Bob Thomson is a past Chair and Treasurer of the Scottish Labour Party*



# Facilitating fairness in post-Brexit Britain

Mary Senior summarises the recommendations of the influential new report on economic justice

Established in the wake of the EU referendum, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) *Commission on Economic Justice* is a landmark initiative to rethink economic policy for post-Brexit Britain. Commission members came from all walks of life, different political view points, and brought perspectives from across Britain. Its plan for the new economy was published in September 2018.

The conclusion that the economy in Britain is not working is hardly a surprise to unions. Representing workers at the sharp end - facing casual contracts, declining pay, bogus self-employment, and a growing gap between rich and poor - we see the casualties of our economy on a daily basis. The Commission demonstrated the state of economic injustice in Britain, with average earnings stagnating for more than a decade, even while economic growth has occurred. Nearly a million people in Britain are on zero hours contracts, young people are set to be poorer than their parents, and the nations and regions of Britain are diverging further.

The Commission is clear that we need a new deal, a fundamental reform of the economy, a change as significant as the Attlee government's Keynesian reforms of the 1940s and the Thatcher government's neo-liberal free market reforms. But this time we need change that builds fairness and equity into the economy. We've described it as 'hard-wiring' economic justice into the way the economy works to create a more equal economy that generates stronger growth, lower social costs and greater wellbeing.

There is no silver bullet to tackle the injustices and inequality in our economy for we need to address this in the structures of our economic system. This includes in the labour market and wage bargaining; in the ownership of capital and wealth; and in the governance of firms - giving workers a voice on boards, and restricting voting rights of temporary shareholders, so those wielding power are committed for the long term.

Building on Scotland's Fair Work agenda, the Commission sets out a

plan for good pay, good lives and a 'good jobs standard', where good work enables individuals and their families to contribute to society. We need a pay rise, and the National Living Wage should be raised to the level of the voluntary Living Wage, which meets the cost of a decent standard of living. To help increase wages more widely, the Commission proposes a doubling of collective bargaining coverage to 50% of workers by 2030, with a focus on the lowest paid sectors. Unions are key to making a difference, and we know that organised work places are healthier and safer, and have higher pay rates. The Commission proposes introducing union auto-enrolment in the gig economy, to help provide isolated workers the opportunity to organise together.

Everyone in work should be entitled to rights and protections, and the Commission calls for stronger employment rights for people in insecure work, and the extension of work-related benefits to the self-employed. The law on employment status and rights must be clarified and backed up by properly funded, proactive enforcement to crack down on employers who are flouting their legal responsibilities.

To shine a light on inequality in the workplace, the Commission calls for greater transparency on pay, and all firms with more than 250 employees should be required to publish their pay scales. We've seen how gender pay gap reporting has drawn attention to women's pay, but this should now go further to people of different ethnicities.

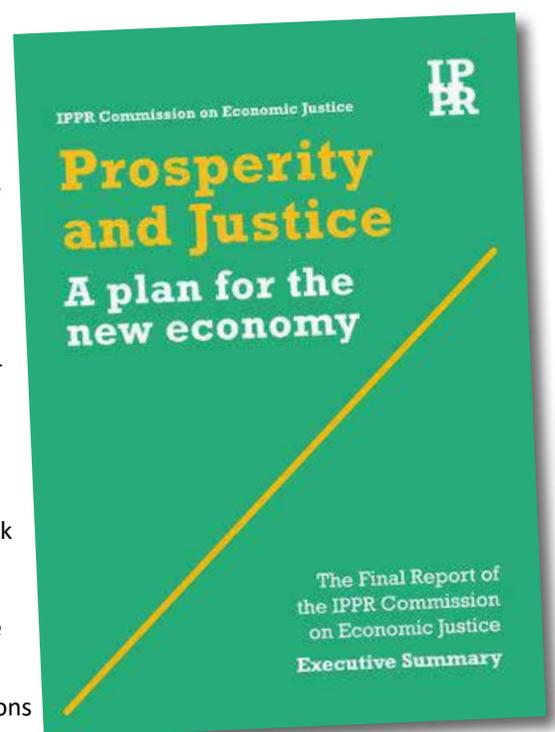
To rethink how we balance work and family and other aspects of our lives, the Commission calls for jobs to be advertised as flexible by default, for 'use-it-or-lose-it' parental leave to enable and encourage men to take part in raising children, and for more bank holidays so that economic growth is not just shared financially, but in the form of time for life outside work.

The Commission's recommendations include a 'managed automation'

strategy to support the adoption of new technologies, but also importantly to ensure that workers don't lose out, share in the productivity gains, and are helped to retrain. There's also a call to rethink the immigration system to promote human dignity, prosperity and justice, and to give Scotland and the other devolved nations more control over our immigration rules. This will allow us to tailor immigration rules to suit Scotland's economic needs, where we benefit from overseas labour in industry and our public services - including the NHS and universities.

We can't just muddle on hoping for the best. The Commission is very clear that as we confront the challenges of globalisation, technological, democratic and environmental change, on top of Brexit uncertainty, doing nothing will not keep things the same - it will only make it worse. Fundamental reform can be achieved, and the Commission's proposals would place more power with workers, provide Scotland and all regions of Britain with more economic levers for change, widen opportunity and ensure we all benefit more fairly from economic growth and prosperity.

Mary Senior is Scotland Official of the University and College Union (UCU) and a member of the IPPR Commission on Economic Justice (see [www.ippr.org/cej](http://www.ippr.org/cej)).



# Preparations for the day of reckoning on independence

Max Wiszniewski explains what the Scottish Independence Convention funding raising initiative is about

It's time for the Scottish independence movement to build beyond its base and get support consistently beyond 50% in the polls. In the absence of any formal campaign body, it's commendable that the movement has maintained support at its current level despite a glaring media onslaught. Yet, faced with the most incompetent Westminster Government for generations presiding over a shambolic Brexit process and an official opposition that is (at the time of writing) lagging in the polls, there has not yet been a silver bullet that has significantly moved the polls for us. The many broken promises of the 'Better Together' campaign and the underwhelming deal on new powers failed to make Scotland anywhere close to 'the most powerful devolved country in the world' nor did it make Scotland anywhere near part of a more federal arrangement. And yet, frustratingly for many there has not been a significant move in the polls.

There has been a debate within the independence movement about the need for a campaign to make movement in the polls, with some believing that we need another referendum campaign to change minds. This is no doubt achievable, provided there is a manifest strategic backbone and the necessary preparation given to this campaign. However, while an effective national campaign is necessary, it does not

need to happen after a referendum is called. On the contrary, the Scottish Independence Convention (SIC) is setting up a campaign organisation to drive popular support and show that independence is not just possible but the best option for our country.

It is now widely accepted in the movement that we should talk less about referendums and discuss the *why* of independence much more. This is an argument that the SIC presented at the *Build: Bridges to Indy* conference in the Usher Hall last year and has now been adopted as a narrative by the political parties. The pro-independence parties have done a good job overall in the Scottish Parliament – they could always do more but they have taken on important policies like a Scottish National Investment Bank which is now on its way.

However, it will take more than political parties to win a referendum when it comes: it will take people like all of us to persuade our friends and neighbours who are more open to independence than ever. They might not be there yet but the hard hitting fact is that being dragged out of the EU against the will of the Scottish people, regardless of how you voted, and with every proposal for a special deal for Scotland profoundly rejected, it's easy to see why people will be questioning our supposed equal relationship with the rest of Britain. A silver bullet? No, because the movement will need to work hard to win the trust and support of our fellow citizens in Scotland.

The independence movement is growing all the time and is becoming more organised at every level. The grassroots have kept the momentum going since 2014 with their hearts and their heads and SIC want

to offer it the legs that it needs to get running faster than before. Regional hubs for autonomous 'Yes' groups like Yes Highlands and Aberdeen Independence Movement (AIM) have already joined the fold with more on their way. The appetite is there to get on with the work and this new campaign organisation aims to sit alongside the movement to offer them the front-foot media handling and strategic tools it needs to reach undecided voters across Scotland.

'But what is the strategy?' some people have asked. We're going in strategy neutral. It's up to the qualified people who will go through our recruitment process to work with the movement in developing it. It's not for us to decide. We do know, however, that there are tens of thousands of people ready to work with a campaign that can make a genuine difference to the stories of independence, contrary to the framing in mainstream media. It was interesting to read the response to our fundraising launch by the opponents of independence. They reverted to the usual call for the SNP to 'get on with the day job' and totally ignored that this is an all-movement, all-party campaign vehicle.

This campaign initiative could have, and should have, begun a long time ago (perhaps right after the 2014 referendum). It has been time-consuming to navigate these plans for a campaign organisation in a genuinely inclusive way and by consensus so that the entire movement can be supported when the time comes. Nevertheless, that time is near and with such variety and talent coming together, the independence movement is poised to become a very powerful united force – something that the well-resourced opponents of independence will not be able to ignore.

*Max Wiszniewski is a voluntary organiser for the Scottish Independence Convention and has coordinated the conferences and its fundraiser (<https://thisisit.scot/>).*



# A role for unions in careers education

Nick Cimini and Pete Robertson say careers advice should not be shackled to neo-liberal diktats

Unions are well placed to support career education and guidance for young people. Though the TUC and STUC currently have initiatives of this nature, we believe there is scope for a greater role for unions, and that educationalists and policy makers need to renew their commitment to union involvement. Jeremy Corbyn recently made a similar point when he said: 'Children should not only learn about ... unions and their rights at work, but should be fully equipped to exercise and develop those rights'.

Career education and guidance are provided in schools, colleges and universities to support students to make choices and plan their future. In recent years, the thinking in this field has been dominated by a belief that work is undergoing a transformation, and as a result careers are defined by chronic uncertainty. This is a partial truth. Eurostat data shows that stable and open-ended employment contracts still account for a great deal of employment. It is, however, younger workers that are experiencing greater insecurity. Nearly eight million young people in the EU, representing almost half (43.9%) of employees aged 15 to 24, are on a temporary employment contract.

Educators and policymakers responsible for career education and guidance have promoted the notion that work is unstable and careers are fluid. This logic insists that individuals should be self-reliant, flexible and learn 'career management skills', because they cannot look to employers to provide secure career pathways. Similarly, students and the unemployed are encouraged to develop their 'employability', i.e., attributes that make them desirable to employers. Through being adaptable, skilled and co-operative they gain security in the labour market, even if no single employer can provide a certain future.

These ideas are okay up to a point, but there is growing disquiet among career education and guidance practitioners that their work has become infused

with a neo-liberal agenda. The rhetoric of career management places all the responsibility for dealing with change on the shoulders of individual workers, not on employers.

If we teach young people to be flexible, and they follow this advice, it may not deliver for them a good career and an economically sustainable lifestyle; it may even be setting them up to be disadvantaged at work. For example, young adults encouraged to think that 'flexible' employment contracts help them to work around pregnancy or intermittent absence due to a mental health condition can find themselves without maternity or sick pay rights.

Employers are already actively involved in career education, providing speakers, opportunities for industrial visits and work experience amongst other activities. Employer involvement is actively encouraged by educators and policymakers. For example the curriculum guidance for schools produced by Education Scotland in the *Career Education Standard* (2015) makes explicit a strong role for employers. Though this document highlights the importance of partnership, there is no mention of a role for unions.

This is not an argument for the radicalisation of school pupils. Nor is it not an argument for reducing or replacing employer involvement. There is some evidence that employer involvement can lead to positive outcomes for school pupils. Rather, it is an argument for a rebalancing. Both employer and employee perspectives should be represented in the curriculum.

Unions have a history of involvement in supporting lifelong education - from the colleges established for working people in the late nineteenth century to the ongoing role of learning representatives in workplaces across the UK.

Union involvement in careers education could take many forms. The TUC and STUC have already made a positive start on this through

their *Unions in Schools* initiative. This initiative includes a wide range of teaching materials, videos, lesson plans, etc., that are freely available online - on topics ranging from the history of unions to workers' rights and responsibilities. The initiative also provides contact details to allow teachers and educationalists to invite union members into schools. More of this is required - for young people and students at all levels of education.

With the growth in non-standard employment contracts, one thing that young people entering into the labour market would benefit from understanding is the different employment status types: workers, employees and the self-employed. Knowledge of these categories, and the rights accrued by each, would support young people to make informed career decisions. Labour market entrants should also be given opportunities to learn about pensions, income tax and national insurance, benefit entitlements, their rights to join a union and collective bargaining.

Teachers, lecturers, career advisers and policymakers need to sit down with unions to consider how best this might be achieved. We envisage teaching unions playing an important role: acting as a bridge between educationalists and the union movement and promoting union initiatives in their own schools, colleges and universities.

Learning materials need adapting for learners of different ages and regular updating to reflect the changing world of work. Fourteen year olds just beginning to think about work will not require the same provision as a final year college or university student. If unions have the know-how and experience of dealing with workplace rights, and educationalists and policy makers commit to working in partnership, then this can only improve the provision of career education and guidance to young people.

Nick Cimini is a lecturer in sociology and Pete Robertson is a lecturer in career guidance, both at Edinburgh Napier University

# Labour, anti-semitism and hostile ethnocentrism

*Sandy Hobbs makes a plea for reassessing how we look at anti-semitism*

In 1993 socialist historians Dorothy and E. P. Thompson were interviewed for a television programme. Summing up their lives in politics, Dorothy expressed regret that they had underestimated the extent to which people are willing to fight for their racial, ethnic, cultural and religious interests rather than their economic ones. I suggest that this is a failing they share with many socialists (including myself).

Reading the valuable commentaries by Henry Maitles and Vince Mills (issue 107) concerning supposed anti-Semitism within Labour, I was reminded of that interview. I suggest that the current issue of Labour and anti-semitism should be looked at in a broader context. Dorothy Thompson used four words to refer to the problem, but I suggest that one is sufficient, ethnic. When socialists condemn 'racism', they are giving too much to the people they are criticising. There are no human 'races'. People differ culturally and tend to be attached to the culture in which they grew up. This applies to language, religion and much else. The term for this is 'ethnocentrism'. Such attachment is not a problem in itself. It is hardly a big deal if a Scotsman is more comfortable hearing a Glasgow accent than a Birmingham one. It becomes a problem when love of the familiar is combined with hostility to the stranger or the outsider. 'Ethnocentric hostility' would be a better term than 'racism'. I write this as a former secretary of the Glasgow Committee Against Racism. Scotland has had a problem usually labelled 'sectarianism'. I suggest it is best seen as a particular form of hostile ethnocentrism.

Labour in Scotland long suffered in the past from the fact that many working class Protestants saw voting for Tory/Unionist candidates as a defence against Catholicism. It is regrettable that Labour has not had a long-standing clear position on ethnicity. This would have included a clear acceptance of people's rights to

attachment to their particular culture and a clear statement of opposition to hostility towards particular cultural groups. Had such a policy been explicit there would have been no need for the 'Working Definition of Antisemitism' Labour has recently been pressurised into adopting. Why would there be a supposed need to come out against hostility to Jews, when there was already an explicit position which applied across the board? Note too that adopting a position on Jews seems anomalous when this has not been done for other groups, such as Muslims, Roma, Gypsies or Travellers, for example.



## ***The pro-Corbyn, non-Zionist Jewish Labour group***

The 'Working Definition' itself is deeply flawed, as Henry Maitles argued. However, there is a more profound criticism of it than he mentions. Anti-semitism is defined as 'a perception of Jews' which may be 'expressed' in 'rhetorical and physical manifestations'. Referring to 'a' perception rather than perceptions plural or, as would be preferable, words and actions, encourages the idea that anti-Semitism is a 'thing' rather than a set of things. Shouldn't we distinguish between, for example, saying there are too many Jews in Parliament and putting Jewish people in gas ovens? Account should also be taken of the context in which things are said. Words spoken in the heat of argument might be called 'anti-Semitic', or as I would prefer 'show ethnic hostility towards Jews', but that does not justify labelling the speaker 'an anti-Semite'. The words may be condemned, but they should

not be casually equated to conducting a pogrom. Margaret Hodge's recent outburst against Corbyn shows that tempers can be lost on both sides of the 'debate'. It does not make Margaret Hodge an 'anti-socialist'.

Labour could benefit from a clear policy statement on ethnicity. Attachment to one's own ethnic roots is not incompatible with socialism but to be hostile to other ethnic groups in any form is. This is not only because it is morally objectionable but because historically it has been a barrier to achieving goals of social justice. Capitalist exploiters have been harder for people to identify than neighbours with a different religion or skin colour. Nineteenth century German socialists called anti-semitism 'the socialism of fools', meaning anti-semites saw evils in society but mistook the causes of those evils. International socialist solidarity collapsed at the outset of the First World War. Examples which enforce Dorothy Thompson's observation are legion.

If Labour had a clear position on ethnicity and racism what relevance would this have to 'anti-semitism'? One by-product is that it might encourage socialists who criticise Israeli policies to make more explicit that their objections are against policies which are racist. It also might encourage supporters of Israel to look more critically at that country's policies towards the Arab ethnic minority within its borders.

Maitles is surely right to expect that Labour's acceptance of the flawed Working Definition will not mean the end of attacks on Labour on this issue. The party's position would be stronger if, instead of simply reacting to accusations, it took a proactive stance by clarifying its position on ethnicity and ethnocentric hostility across the board.

*Sandy Hobbs, honorary research fellow, University of the West of Scotland and Labour Party member.*

# Age, ageing and older people's issues

In the first of a series of articles, Bill Johnston looks the so-called troublesome demographics.



This is the first in a series of three linked articles on the implications of an ageing population for Scottish politics and civil society. This article outlines the demographic issues, and challenges the current 'dependency' framing of retirement. Current Scottish Government innovations are described as offering a platform for critical dialogue and contributions from the left. Subsequent articles will confront *ageism* and develop the arguments for a rights-based approach to ageing. Some of the issues raised may also resonate with age-related aspects of the debates over Scottish independence (see Craig Dalzell, *The Demographics of Independence, 2018 edition: A study of polling on and since the 2014 referendum*, Common Weal) and democracy more generally. My view is that demographic ageing is a key issue for the left's challenge to neo-liberalism and requires a much higher profile amongst commentators and activists.

The population of Britain has undergone a fundamental demographic shift in age structure including: falling birth rates; longer life expectancy; increase in the average age (see British-Irish Council (2016) *Population Ageing Society: Policy Implications*; 'Foresight Report' (2016). *Future of an Ageing Population*, Office for Science; and Scottish Science Advisory Council (SSAC) *Reaction to the UK Government Office for Science Foresight report 'Future of an Ageing Population'*). This requires substantial changes in policy and practice. In effect, we are living in

a society where the majority of people are in older age groups and this trend is set to continue. At the same time, key concepts like 'old age', 'retirement' and 'state pension age' are being reframed in a public narrative shaped by a neo-liberal agenda. Ageing is presented as entailing unsustainable pension costs with equally unsustainable associated health and care costs (J. Macnicol (2015) *Neoliberalising Old Age*, Cambridge University Press; 'Cridland Report' (2017) *State Pension age independent review: final report*, DWP). Thus, state policy links retirement with the concept of pensioner dependency on economically active age groups, i.e., the ratio of older 'dependents' to those of working age.

Social attitudes based on a dependency concept of retirement and old age can be corrosive in policy debates, whilst also creating intergenerational tensions. The cynical manipulation of the apparent material differences between generations creates a narrative of blaming older people for the problems of younger people and promoting the notion that the only way to support the young is to penalise the old. Such a distorted view of ageing and older people should be challenged by commentators and activists of the left as part of their opposition to neo-liberalism and support for equality and human rights. The 2017 resistance to the May government's strategies on pensioner winter fuel allowance, 'triple lock' on pensions and funding of social care, demonstrates that such a challenge would have popular resonance.

The recent Cabinet reshuffle introduced the post of Minister for Older People and Equalities, currently held by Ms McKelvie, MSP. This is welcome and offers greater focus and accountability within Scottish Government, the Parliament and civil society. The Plan for Government 2018/19 (<https://beta.gov.scot/programme-for-government/>) contains a very specific commitment to publish an Older People's Framework by March 2019, thereby, providing an immediate focus for interventions. The potential scope of such a framework is substantial including areas such as: Transport; Adult Health and Social Care;

Housing; Social Isolation & Loneliness; Funeral Poverty; Carers; Volunteering; Community Safety; Workplace Equality and the Older Workforce; Population Demographics. A key question will be whether the Framework perpetuates a negative, dependency construct of older age, or introduces a positive, rights based ethos.

Taken together these developments should benefit our democracy and encourage social cohesion but they raise important questions for the left: i) how effectively will the Scottish Government deliver and what are the barriers to change; ii) can the left develop a coherent, longer-term position on the ageing population whilst supporting demands for immediate improvements in areas like health and social care; and iii) what are the most effective ways of influencing the content of the Scottish Government's proposed Older People's Framework? These are questions for unions, political parties, community groups, and opinion formers to tackle during the rest of 2018 and into 2019. The period to end March 2019 is a key one for interventions to shape Scottish Government policy on older people and should be used to improve provision for current older age groups, and lay down a framework for the next twenty years for current 'younger' age groups to inherit.

Bill Johnston is Chair of the Scottish Seniors Alliance and writes in a personal capacity.



# Culture for the many, not the few

*Mike Quille explains why culture is critical to human being and how it and we can flourish*

Culture matters to the many, not just the few. This article is a contribution to the growing debate and campaigns on the socialist left, in the labour movement and in academia about culture, the cultural struggle and cultural democracy. It covers what culture means and why it is so important; the links between culture, class and politics; the general principles of a democratic and socialist approach to all cultural activities; and examples of measures which might form part of a programme for a left-leaning Labour government in Westminster, for national and local authorities in Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland and which could also form the basis for campaigns by social movement activists in the Labour and elsewhere.

'Culture is ordinary: that is where we must start' said Raymond Williams. This means culture is about much more than the arts, including all those learned human activities which give life purpose, meaning and value, and which human beings engage in for enjoyment, entertainment and enlightenment. To restrict discussion of culture issues to a selected menu of arts-based activities is to immediately devalue and exclude the majority of cultural activities, as practised by the majority of the population, from analysis and political action. Applying Williams's insight means as well as the arts, culture includes sport, TV and the media generally, eating and drinking, fashion and clothing, education, religion and many other popular activities.

Given this inclusive approach, what are the common characteristics of cultural activities, and why are they so important to socialists? Fundamentally, they tend to be social, unifying and egalitarian. They tend to express and assert our common humanity and solidarity against divisions of class, gender, race and other social fissures caused by unequal economic arrangements like the capitalist system. Additionally, cultural activities such as art, music and religion can directly inspire and support radical

change, both personally and politically. So practising and enjoying cultural activities are not optional extras for us. They are essential for us to develop and flourish as human beings. They sustain our health, well-being and happiness, and equip us to live with and liberate ourselves from oppressive political systems and exploitative economic arrangements.

Those are the common characteristics of cultural activities. But class divisions in society, based on unequal and antagonistic relationships of property ownership, constrain or prevent the full and free enjoyment of culture by everyone. Cultural activities may be potentially liberating and essentially shared, socialising activities, but in societies divided by class they are limited, appropriated and privatised. Historically, in class-divided societies like our own, tiny minorities of dominant social classes often succeed in making cultural activities inaccessible, costly, irrelevant and of poor quality. Cultural activities become an instrument of political hegemony, designed to secure consent and co-operation through legitimising, concealing and ignoring the on-going, systematic oppression and exploitation of working people.

So we face a cultural struggle to reclaim a cultural commons against the co-option, misuse and appropriation of cultural activities. This runs alongside our economic and political struggles for a better return for our labour, and for ownership and control of essential goods and services like our schools, our railways and our health service. Neo-liberal capitalism has shown itself to be incapable of providing adequate public services in these areas, and in meeting basic human material needs fairly and equally – and neither can it sustain cultural production, delivery and consumption. The rich and powerful assert their economic and political domination of our lives through corporate influence and control over cultural institutions, and through the co-option of elites in all areas of social

life. We can see this not only in arts institutions, but also sports clubs, social media platforms, broadcasters, pubs and clubs, churches and supermarkets.

Let's look in more detail at some examples of the cultural issues and problems we face, which show the need for an inclusive culture policy which can make cultural democracy a reality in our lives. In sport, owners and management bodies are failing to make sport accessible, affordable and enjoyable for everyone. Ticket prices are too high for working-class families to afford; 'light-touch' regulatory authorities are undemocratic and toothless; and elite sports and sportspeople are subsidised at the expense of school sports and grassroots sports. Capitalist ideologies of individual excellence and competitiveness prevail in sport, rather than its essentially social and co-operative nature. This causes regular scandals involving drug-taking, cheating and corruption.

In the media, private ownership of large swathes of the means of communication by gigantic corporations like Amazon, Google, Apple and Facebook prevent us enjoying human interaction without being watched, manipulated and influenced by commercial capitalist interests. Corporations like Sky, Netflix, Disney and Fox are all dedicated to making profits rather than meeting human need. State-controlled media like the BBC, as well as commercial broadcasting platforms, are designed to support and legitimise the economic and political status quo, and have clearly shown themselves to be institutionally biased against socialist politicians, newspapers and ideas.

Our daily activities of eating and drinking are also cultural activities, as well as biological necessities. We eat and drink in company with family and friends, for pleasure and to express and enhance our common and social natures. Yet huge corporations produce and sell us food and drink loaded with far too much sugar, salt, and fat, and we are encouraged to consume unhealthy

**CULTURE**  **MATTERS**

amounts of alcohol. Corporate profits flow from human obesity and drunkenness.

In the arts, the situation is not much better than when Raymond Williams said, in a *Guardian* lecture in 1985: 'The central socialist case, in matters of culture is that the lives of the great majority of people have been, and still are, almost wholly disregarded by almost all arts'. We face inaccessibility, obscurity, and vapid spectacle, and the fact that state funding is so unequal. The money that comes from our taxes and our lottery tickets is overwhelmingly focused on cultural provision in the London area, which benefits mainly the already well off, and tourists. The spectacular failure of funding institutions to develop and sustain fair allocation of the massive increase in resources it has received from the taxpayer and from Lottery funds over the last twenty odd years is truly appalling.

As Jeremy Corbyn has said: 'There is a poet, author, singer, pianist, actor, playwright, and artist in every single person'. However, for working-class people wishing to have an arts career, it is getting harder to become a musician or actor or writer without rich relatives to support you. And cuts and curriculum changes in education mean our children are being deprived of the chance to learn how to appreciate and participate in artistic, sporting and other cultural activities, at both primary and secondary school stages.

Religious and other broadly spiritual activities are also important to many working-class people. Yet in most areas of the country the valuable real estate, wealth and other material and spiritual resources held by religious institutions are under-used. They could be better focused on achieving the common good, and particularly for the benefit of the less well-off in society.

The Government's politically-driven austerity policies have led to huge cuts in cultural facilities – libraries, community centres, youth facilities and sports facilities, which are set to continue for years to come. Most scandalous of all, they have been knowingly targeted at sections of society which are the least well-off.

All this is taking place against a background of a possible expansion in leisure time in the next few decades,

as more labour-saving technology is introduced. Over time there will be an increasing need by working-class people for accessible, relevant cultural activities.

To tackle these growing problems, what should be the general principles for building a social movement on culture issues? What should political parties, authorities and governments do so that culture works for the many, not the few?

First, accept that culture is ordinary and every-day, and that it is essential and not marginal to working people's lives. Both spectatorship and engagement in cultural production and consumption are fundamental to human fulfilment and flourishing, and therefore central to any progressive political programme. Second, development a more inclusive approach to culture if we genuinely want to transform the world for the benefit of working people. Discussions on culture policy should cover cultural activities which matter to most working people, and which can attract the support of the labour movement. Third, develop approaches in which communities of practitioners and audiences are empowered, through various structures of social ownership and democratic control, to direct culture towards their own defined ends. Scotland has some very good examples of people working together at various forms of cultural activity – whether learning to play a musical instrument, paint, write poetry, cook, play football or make films – for enjoyment, education or the value generated by doing things in a social environment.

Some examples of specific proposals which flow from this approach would be:

- Dismantling the barriers of class, cost and geography that stop working people from accessing culture as consumers and as practitioners;
- Embedding cultural education – both appreciation and practice – into the national curriculum;
- Reclaiming the media – newspapers, online platforms, TV and radio – by reforming its funding, ownership and control and providing space for working-class voices and truly diverse, community-based providers;
- Massively shifting public spending on the arts and sport towards more support for grassroots participation,

working-class communities and provision outside London and other capital cities;

- Increasing the representation of working-class people in all cultural institutions, especially the arts, sports, and the media, in terms of content, audiences and practitioners;
- Developing and applying various kinds of social partnership, ownership and democratic management models to the whole range of cultural institutions such as pubs, supermarkets, churches, arts and sports venues.

All these points could also inform local campaigns by activists working together to audit, challenge and transform the local landscape across all cultural activities.

Cultural activities tend to reflect and serve the needs of the dominant class in a class-divided society such as ours. At the same time, they can also provide the space to resist the status quo and overcome alienation and oppression. They can help people envision better, fairer ways of organising our society, as well as promoting our physical, mental and spiritual well-being. The Labour manifesto of 1945 contained these words: 'We desire to assure to our people full access to the great heritage of culture in this nation'. Cultural democracy was promised in 1945 and is long overdue. Now is the time for Labour and for other local and national political parties and authorities to adopt new kinds of radical, democratic and socialist culture policies. And now is the time to build a social movement through diverse local, grassroots campaigns around the cultural issues outlined here, involving activists and sympathisers from all the relevant cultural institutions. This is because culture matters to the many, not the few.

*Mike Quille is editor of Culture Matters (<https://www.culturematters.org.uk/>), which promotes a socialist approach to culture. Culture Matters Co-Operative also publishes books, runs arts awards, and delivers cultural education to unions. With thanks to members of Culture Matters Co-Operative, and various contributors to the Culture Matters website, for their valuable comments and contributions to this article.*



## **BlackKlansman (2018) -**

Writer and Director: Spike Lee

Reviewed by Jackie Bergson

For those of you who missed out on seeing *BlackKlansman* while it was on general release earlier this year, you might like to make a point of catching it now on a digital format. Insightful and pointedly timely, Spike Lee's crime drama's truth-telling quality bears relevance from the 1970s until today, through both political and social currency.

Lee famously directs dramatized real-story genre films with political savvy and knowing wit. Amongst his award-winning back-catalogue of films is the powerful, biographical drama, *Malcolm X*. Narrative connections into *BlackKlansman* are represented through such as Black Panthers founder, Kwame Tunde (Corey Hawkins) whose main influence was reputed to be Malcolm - real last Little.

*BlackKlansman* itself is based on a true story about Ron Stallworth (John David Washington, Denzel's son) who was the first African-American police officer and detective in the Colorado Springs Police Department. His journey begins when, armed with a college degree, he decides to become a police officer. This moot point is itself fascinating because it coincidentally – intentionally for the purpose of the film - represents his character's schismatic value.

Enrolled into the police department, Stallworth quickly tires of being demeaned by his records department supervisor. Subsequently, he succeeds in requesting to be transferred to

the undercover division. During the division's first task of infiltrating a Black Panthers rally, he witnesses the charismatic Tunde delivering an expressly intelligent, vitalising speech which succeeds in changing African-American self-perceptions. Reporting back to the police station, Stallworth and his detective colleagues assure their Chief that no violent threat is imminent from Black Panthers. Other more sinister KKK goings-on are, thus, given due priority thanks to Stallworth already being on the case.

Understated and assured performances by Washington and Adam Driver as his detective colleague, Flip Zimmerman, justly reflect the actual men's trusting, intelligent partnership. Driver's laconic style and Washington's confident demeanour of natural ingenuity draw us into their bold world, from the offset to the closing stages of the film. In particular, Driver's ability to portray terse rage just under the surface of his character is impressive in scenes such as when, as Stallworth's white proxy, he has to fall into line with his 'fellow KKK members' as they habitually espouse racist hate and vitriol. Another scene, where the infiltration detective trio rehearse so that Zimmerman's voice and dialect will be identical to Stallworth's reverberates with irony and satire which are internal and external to the film.

Intrinsically strategic to the film's plot is the fact that the detectives' infiltration and exposure plan could be easily exposed to the KKK, if their judgement of characters or situations fails. There is a lie detection scene, where the odious, sadistic Felix Kendrickson (Jasper Paakkonen) corners Zimmerman,

who he suspects may be a police officer. Covert listening devices and Stallworth's pragmatic action save the moment, while coincidentally almost revealing the sting operation itself. This palpable tension throughout the film contrasts with the incidental love story between Stallworth and Black Student Union president, Patrice Dumas (Laura Harrier), although both situations rely upon Stallworth's ability to reveal his real identity at exactly the right time: perfectly judged, in-film characterisation and direction reassures.

Humour-drama paradoxes reflect the real necessity of the detectives having to keep their nerve under the eyes of sinister and dangerous KKK idolatry. Ultimately, Stallworth, with help from his detective colleagues reveals both the 'great white wizard', David Duke (Topher Grace), and his KKK members as abusively misogynistic and absurdly farcical. Wryly accurate in conveying terrifyingly ignorant witlessness of prejudice and vitriolic hate, espoused from the inside out through the film's plot medium, *BlackKlansman* on the whole delivers thought-provoking, truly edgy impact rather than a more blockbuster-type visceral thrill.

Superb matter of fact-ness; theatrical support cast; a clear message at its heart about the unthinkable repeating itself - legendary singer Harry Belafonte as Judge Jerome Turner, calmly describes the lynching of his friend to Black Panthers; a quietly divulging, private conversation between Stallworth and one of his police colleagues that Americans will eventually elect someone who embodies racist ideals embody this film's power.

The currency and relevance of casting fine actor and erstwhile Trump impersonator Baldwin as right wing, ill tempered, prejudiced academic, Dr Kennebrew Beauregard, is right

A SPIKE LEE JOINT

**BLACKKLANSMAN**

on the money. With his introduction bookended by the real Trump's Charlottesville 'there was blame on both sides' speech, which is cut with recent documentary news footage of the horrific event itself and of David Duke's resurgence as a right wing activist, the meaningful impact of *BlackKlansman* is stunningly executed.

*Jackie Bergson has worked in the voluntary sector and commercial business development in technology and creative sectors. Educated in and living in Glasgow, her political and social views chime left-of-centre.*

Chris Bambery and George Kerevan,  
***Catalonia Reborn; How Catalonia Took on the Corrupt Spanish State and the Legacy of Franco, 2018,***  
Luath, £12.99, 9781912147380  
*Reviewed by Bill Bonnar*

This recently published work is a welcome account of the current struggle for Catalan independence. Most relevant are the first chapter, Birth of a Republic, and the last four chapters which outline the current struggle. In the middle is a journey through Catalan history: interesting but not particularly relevant to the modern case for independence.

The outline of the current state of the independence movement is clear cut. The overwhelming majority, probably in excess of 95% of the native Catalan population, supports independence. This has led to the largest and most successful independence movement in modern European history. Evidence of this has been some of the colossal pro-independence demonstrations in Barcelona in recent years often involving in excess of a million people. However, native Catalans are not a majority in their own country. Spanish policy particularly in the post-war years has been to encourage Catalan emigration while actively promoting Spanish immigration to Catalonia, the aim being to create a Spanish majority in the country and finish the independence issue for good. This means that there are now almost as many Spaniards living in Catalonia as Catalans; many of whom bring a settler mentality; 'this is our country not yours'. Therefore, for the independence movement to succeed it needs to reach beyond the Catalan

population and win non-Catalans to the cause. There is some evidence of success here in recent times.

Of course, this could be a description of the situation twenty or thirty years ago, so what has changed? What additional factor has been brought into play? The book locates this definitively in the financial crash of 2008. This had a devastating effect throughout Spain with the return of mass unemployment, particularly among young people and the implementation of an austerity programme more draconian than that imposed on Britain.

For Catalonia, this impacted in two ways. The people of Catalonia felt the same levels of austerity as suffered elsewhere in Spain, with young people suffering the most. For those supporting independence, the conception arose, largely accurate, that Catalonia's more developed economy was now subsidising the rest of Spain and its increasingly anti-Catalan government. As one Catalan commentator put it: 'those Guardia Civil forces who are attacking us during this referendum - we are paying for them'.

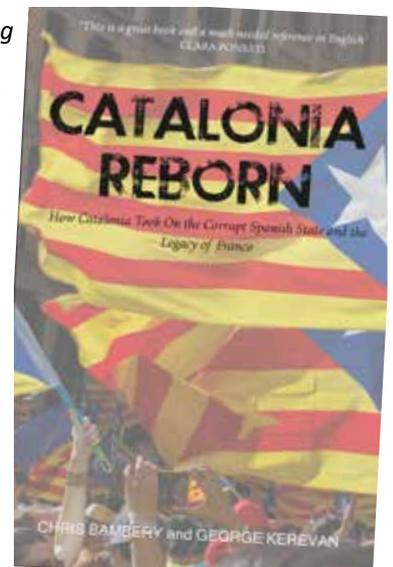
The book also deals at length with the very diverse nature of the independence movement. On the one hand, there is a very definite conservative wing which draws much of its support from more rural areas and has strong links with the Catalan bourgeoisie class - independence is well supported by Catalan based small to medium-sized companies. This wing also draws heavily on Catalan cultural traditions and language. On the other hand, there has emerged a more radical wing - often urban based and drawing support from a much younger generation. This wing has been very successful in welding radical social and economic demands to the independence cause, seeing it as a means to an end rather than simply an end in itself. These two wings often differ over strategy with the former much more cautious in its approach.

One weakness of the book is that it does not sufficiently take on board the perspective of the Spanish Government and how this perspective informs its strategy. The Spanish Government's position is shaped by three factors. First is an absolute principle. It will never willingly concede Catalan independence as it sees Catalonia as an integral part of Spain - part of a process of

assimilation and conquest which has shaped modern Spain and forms part of the modern Spanish identity. Second, its tough stand on Catalonia is very popular with large sections of the Spanish population and any attempt to compromise on this issue would certainly result in a serious political backlash. Third, the government will not concede a referendum in Catalonia in the fear that this would fuel a similar demand in the Basque Country; a referendum which the Spanish Government would have no confidence in winning.

The book concludes by looking at the future. The independence movement is stronger than ever although divided over how to proceed. While the tough actions during the referendum inflamed much of that movement, it also left other sections severely shaken and highly reluctant to go down that road again. Keeping this movement united will be a challenge. And although there has been a change in government in Madrid the fundamental approach of the Spanish Government will be the same. In fact, there is evidence that this strategy is now as much about reversing the current constitutional settlement established in the immediate post-Franco years and returning to direct rule. The recent move to undermine the status of the Catalan language is an example of this. The main problem with the book - and this cannot be helped - is that it comes out in the middle of an unfolding drama. The situation in Catalonia changes from month to month. As such it is a welcome commentary on current events and should be read by everyone following this moment in history.

*Bill Bonnar is a founding member of the Scottish Socialist Party and serves on the Scottish Left Review editorial committee.*



James Hogg,

***The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner, Commentary by Douglas Gifford,***

Readings by John Sheldon, Association for Scottish Literary Studies, £14.95, 9780948877827

Reviewed by Sean Sheehan

This is a set of two CDs, not the book by James Hogg that was published anonymously in 1824 and best read in the Oxford World Classics edition. Not having read the novel is no barrier to enjoying this commentary and Douglas Gifford explicates the plot and the characters without assuming listeners are familiar with the story. Interestingly, the commentary begins with a full-blooded reading of Robert Burns' poem 'Holy Willie's Prayer' by John Sheldon. It is seen as a representation of the Calvinist bigotry and belief in predestination that goes a long way to understanding the characterisation of Robert in Hogg's novel. The self-righteous narrator of the poem is able to justify his lechery because he is a 'chosen one'.

Robert is brought up by his adoptive father, the Reverend Wringhim (like characters in Dickens, his name is a clue to his nature), whose religiosity does not preclude the likelihood that he is Robert's real father. Brainwashed by Wringhim, Robert becomes 'a prisoner in a Calvinist jail' and this is the subject matter of the second track on the first CD. The final track on this side is all about the enigmatic Gil-Martin who can be seen as the devil in one interpretation of the novel. Such a supernatural reading is one of two interpretations considered in the second CD, placing it within a context of Borders legends and folk tales, a world of devils and fairies, spiritual pride and demonic possession. Alternatively, a psychological reading allows for an understanding of Robert as a schizophrenic individual, tormented by hallucinations.

*The Justified Sinner* becomes 'a book of riddles' in the way these apparently conflicting interpretations co-exist within the novel, the ambiguity being its strength. The final track looks at Hogg's other writings and the snobbery of Edinburgh's arbiters of literary taste that dismissed Hogg because he wasn't a 'gentleman'. In truth, convincingly argues Gifford, he 'has as much raw talent as Walter Scott' – one of those who looked down on him and helped

ensure his talent went unrecognised. *The Justified Sinner*, for Douglas, is 'one of the greatest novels in Scottish – and in English – literature and his commentary goes a long way in validating the claim.

***The International Companion to James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian,***

edited by Dafydd Moore, Scottish Literature International, £14.95, 9781908980199

James Macpherson,

***The Poems of Ossian: The Son of Fingal***

(Classic Reprint), Forgotten Books, £12.85, 9781331367130

Reviewed by Sean Sheehan

James Macpherson was born in Inverness-shire in 1736, the son of a tenant farmer, and he died at the age of sixty not far away though on his own estate and in a house built for him by the Adams brothers. Educated for the clergy at Edinburgh University, he told a member of the city's literati that he had collected fragments of Gaelic poetry and was persuaded, apparently reluctantly, to make them public. They were published as the work of a poet called Ossian (an 18<sup>th</sup>-century edition is available from Forgotten Books in its original format; modern editions are very expensive) and Macpherson became a literary sensation. He also became an MP for a seat in a rotten borough which he never visited – and he never spoke in the House – and his success enabled him to acquire the wealth to purchase his own estate and pay for his own burial in Westminster Abbey.

The authenticity of Ossian's poems was soon doubted and Samuel Johnson wasn't alone in calling them forgeries. But they entered the cultural bloodstream of Europe, as the editor Dafydd Moore puts it in a new collection of essays about Macpherson and his poems, and they were enormously influential. Recent scholarship is intrigued by the text's cultural politics and how they impact on a sense of Britishness and Lesa Ní Mhungaile's essay explores the relationship between *Ossian* and the Gaelic culture of Scotland and Ireland. To what extent Macpherson collected genuine Scottish Gaelic ballads and to what extent he

made them up remains unresolved but what these essays suggest is that, in terms of their afterlife, it matters little whether they were fake news or not.

Sean Sheehan is author of *Žižek: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Continuum, 2012) and *A Guide to Herodotus' Histories* (Bloomsbury, 2018).

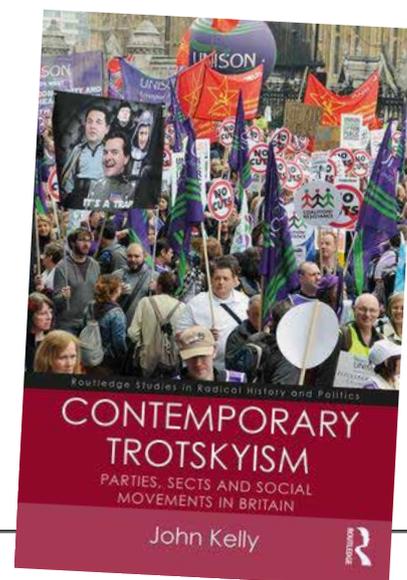
John Kelly

***Contemporary Trotskyism: Parties, Sects and Social Movements in Britain, 2018***

Routledge, 9781138943810, £23.99, Reviewed by Gordon Morgan

The Fourth International held its first congress 80 years ago on 3 September 1938 in France. It is timely that this book has been published as it relates to the enduring legacy of Leon Trotsky, the Fourth International(s) and the many groups which describe themselves as Trotskyist particularly in Britain.

Chapter 2 of the book sets out and briefly explains the key theories espoused by Trotsky and espoused in some sense by Trotskyist groups. This is useful for those not familiar with terms such as 'permanent revolution', 'united front', 'transitional demands' and 'the workers state'. Those who have argued over these terms for decades may be frustrated. Nevertheless, it is a fair summary. Chapters 3 and 4 outline the development of the main Trotskyist groups in Britain from 1950-85 and 1985-2017. The significance of 1985 is that in some ways this marked the height of most groups and, thereafter, only the SWP and the Socialist Party have a significant membership, with most others diminishing in size or disappearing. It is here that some



caveats need to be made. Many leading members of groups continue to identify as Trotskyists whilst working within other parties. Moreover, Ireland and Scotland are excluded from the analysis, largely due to lack of archival material, the complexity of the movements and lack of time.

Chapter 5 looks at doctrine, orthodoxy and sectarianism as part of the author's analysis of the internal workings of the various groups as 'sects' within a wider movement. This section appears overly anecdotal and fails, I believe, to relate the many splits and internal disagreements to real events in the wider world. The next two chapters on party recruitment, electoral performance and organisational resources provide a very valuable record of how groups attracted members, how well they did in elections, the money they raised and the number of full-time party workers employed.

The following two chapters will prove most interesting to those who come across Trotskyists (but are not themselves Trotskyists) working in the unions and in social movements and 'front' organisations. This in reality is the meat of most Trotskyists' activity irrespective of the group. Whilst different groups analysed priorities differently, Trotskyist groups invariably were at the forefront of many union disputes and campaign groups from 1968 to the 2000s. The final two chapters summarise the various splits in the Fourth International and provides the author an opportunity to assess the achievements and weaknesses of Trotskyism in Britain.

Overall this is a worthwhile book, well researched, most significant participants have been discussed with and provides a number of facts those of us who spent forty years in such groups did not know. It is a very academic book, lots of references and inevitably slightly skewed by lack of space and archival information. The focus on Britain and not Scotland and Ireland is understandable. However, some reference to Trotskyists in Vietnam, China, Latin America, France, USA etc over the past eighty years would have been worthwhile, otherwise the debates many of us had with other groups seem purely parochial.

*Gordon Morgan is a member of the Scottish Left Review editorial committee*

Darren McGarvey

**Poverty Safari:  
Understanding the Anger  
of Britain's Underclass**, Luath,  
2018, 9781912147038, £7.99

*Reviewed by Seán Duffy*

Something of a surprise winner of the Orwell Prize, Darren McGarvey's journey through the travails of growing up on the sharp end of the economic spectrum is a worthy recipient of praise and pondering. The avenue of attack experienced in this book is not, perhaps, one you would immediately predict. McGarvey is at his best when tackling what he refers to as the 'poverty industry', a term used here not in the sense of payday lenders and bookies shops, as has become the standard usage in much sociology, but in the sense of those third sector and state funded organisms that operate and flourish in a manner that is distinctly separate from the actual impoverished communities they claim to advocate for.

In short, it's no wonder the left has lost so much ground as we engage with the working class from on high, and take a moralistic tour through those communities in order to fulfil some sense of progress. It is easy to see parallels with the Brexit vote in 2016 and, perhaps, the larger than anticipated vote for Scottish independence in 2014. McGarvey's tendency to question class assumptions is refreshing, particularly in regards of the emotional effect of poverty as opposed to the more discussed material consequences. In particular, the author shines a light on the ingrained aspects of working class reality that few celebrate on the socialist podiums of the left, the desperate reality of many young men in particular who sustain themselves on an existence of alcohol, unhealthy food, drugs, and more quietly – depression.

For anyone who has grown up in and around Britain's council estates, there is a great deal to be nostalgic and equal parts morose about in this memoir. Yet McGarvey navigates these themes with a more critical and self-reflective eye than most. There is little of the contemporary trend for pity here and much more that is reminiscent of those social commentators of old who saw pride in the solidarity evident in these communities and an eminent desire for action stemming from the sense they have been forgotten.

Where McGarvey excels is in his take down of the onward march of

gentrification, a force that many on the organised (student heavy) left passively enact. The blueprint of Marxist dialectic means little to someone living on the dole that has just seen their local community centre knocked down to be replaced by a trendy café, and the author (a rapper as well as author) has experienced first-hand that patronising experience in the cultural sphere.

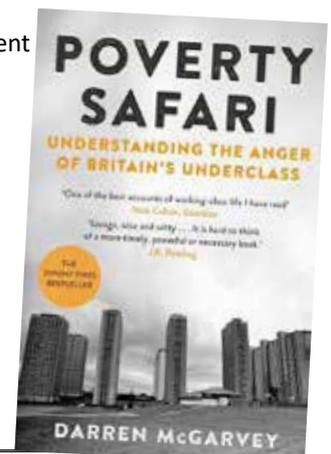
McGarvey, like many of us who grew up in smallish post-industrial towns and either through education, talent, graft or luck found ourselves mixing with those from an entirely different background, adeptly depicts the sense of being forever wedded to a past that we sense we are leaving behind, whilst also never feeling completely comfortable with the more middle class world we have entered.

Unlike many other tales of life on the lower rungs of the ladder, this book does engage in overt political points that are not missed by anyone who has spent even a brief amount of time looking at the effects of austerity and underfunding through successive governments.

Where the book strays from this path is in its overreliance on the belief that pointing out individual autonomy plays a part in deprivation is in some way remarkable. Whether McGarvey thinks this, I do not know, but it certainly bubbles up from the broth whenever the root cause of poverty is discussed. The consistent referral to this as an inspired point becomes rapidly uninteresting.

This is not an academic text, and is all the better for it. If you have experienced poverty you will find great kinship in McGarvey's ability to reflect that it is an experience only those who have encountered it can ever fully understand, yet it is not a tale heavy on prescription for a new political path. The lesson here is that politics not embedded in the day-to-day lives of those you are looking to represent will inevitably fall by the wayside. It is a lesson the left continues to struggle with.

*Seán Duffy  
is the Senior  
Parliamentary  
Researcher in  
the office of Neil  
Findlay MSP.*



Wade Rathke

***Nuts and Bolts: The ACORN Fundamentals of Organizing, Social Policy Press, 2018, 0997094311***

*Reviewed by Tony Adams*

**N**uts and Bolts is a compendium of tools, examples from the field, advice and tips for building power and effective mass organisation in the community, workplaces, politics and the media. Rathke shares almost 50 years of organising experience with a look at the 'nuts and bolts' of how ACORN was organised and able to build a mass membership and achieve major victories in the US, Canada, Britain and around the world in plain language that can inform organisers, leaders, activists and policy makers about how to change and build power. Written in a strident but inspiring tone with tongue-in-cheek reminders, the book is dedicated to 'all great leaders, members and organisers that have worked in these same vineyards to empower people and force their voice to be heard'. After all, community organising explicitly seeks to build the power base of the poor so they can affect and change the public policies and private market forces that create and sustain social and economic inequality.

Community organising is fundamentally about oppression, inequality and the struggle for social change that come from them. It begins with the assumption that small and great injustices are typically the results of power imbalances and those most hurt by the system are those who are the most powerless to act on the system. Organising does two central things to seek to rectify the problem of power imbalance. First, it builds a permanent base of people power so the dominant financial and institutional power can be challenged and held accountable to values of greater social, environmental and economic justice. Second, it transforms individuals and communities, making them mutually respectful co-creators of public life rather than passive objects of decisions by others. In this regard, ACORN's community organising model posits the organiser as a key component in developing an un-organised and apathetic community into a viable organization. There are a vast numbers of roles an organiser plays in ACORN's model. The most simple is that he/she brings in members and keep them there.

*Nuts and Bolts* is about building an organisation. Rathke goes for the jugular with his first chapter entitled - *All About the Base- Who Do You Organise and Why?* If you are going to build an organisation it all begins with a set of decisions on who, why and where you are organising. The first principle of organisation is that it is never about you and always about the base. Whether working for an organisation or founding one, the decision to build an organisation is a commitment to serve and represent the people being organised.

The acronym ACORN stands for Association of Community Organisation for Reform Now. It started life as the Arkansas Community Organization for Reform Now with its roots in the community organising teachings of Saul Alinsky the founding father of this approach. Any discussion of the history and current practice of community organising must feature Alinsky. He organised the Back of the Yards Neighbourhood Council that was made famous in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. Alinsky wrote two books that are immensely popular and in constant use as tools in the training for community organisers and leaders, *Reveille for Radicals* and *Rules for Radicals*. If the *Prince* was written by *Machiavelli* for the haves on how to hold power, *Rules for Radicals* was written for the have nots, on how to take it away.

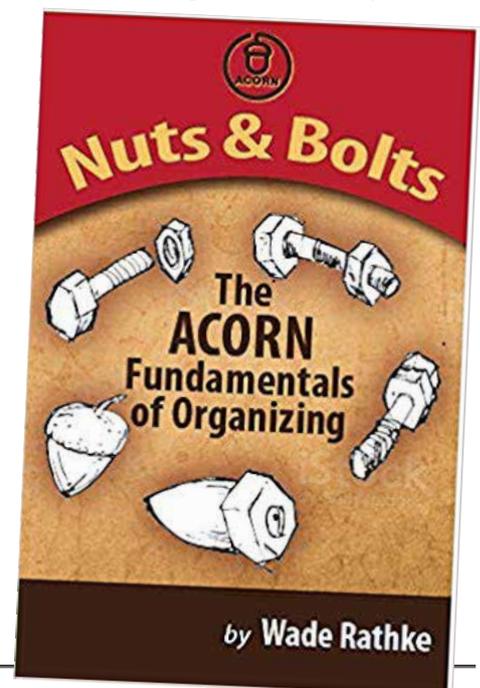
Alinsky's work from 1938 until his death in 1972 was unique and had a powerful multi-dimensional influence on the community organising. It has influenced every generation of community organisers since. His inspired approach to community organising was a catalyst in the creation of many organizations while he was still alive and he spearheaded efforts to modify organising methods and strategies for maximum effectiveness.

ACORN's model also emphasizes that an organisation must be permanent with multi-issued concerns achieved through multi-tactics, direct action, and membership participation in policy, financing, and achievement of group goals and community improvements. It unites communities for social change and in contrast to traditional unions which organise around workplace interests, ACORN unionises on social and community issues. When Rathke visited Scotland for the first time in May 2013, he was invited and hosted by Edinburgh Private Tenants Action Group.

In May 2014 ACORN UK was formed by 100 tenants in Bristol. Supported by 3 staff organisers they voted to organise for more security, better quality and more affordable housing. ACORN has combined online organising via social media with its traditional door-knocking approach to organise transient private sector tenants. The group combined local direct action 'member defence' actions with larger regional and national campaigns. For example, ACORN runs #Renters Rising, a movement to build a national tenants' union, fighting for renters right against rogue landlords. Last year, it celebrated a huge win for people power, beating international banker Santander. Buried deep in Santander's buy-to-let mortgages was a hidden clause that forced landlords to raise rents to the maximum. They also worked alongside Generation Rent to register and mobilise the renters vote in the 2016 general election. Living Rent is Scotland's tenants union which is also affiliated to ACORN International has branches in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The organisation recognises the necessity of direct action in creating change, not just in supporting a fairer society but fighting for it.

*Nuts and Bolts* is hardly a template but it offers the basic tools and principles to organising. They must be seen as guidelines and suggestions to be evaluated and adapted to meet your needs and particular situation. Ultimately, only hard work and dedication to organising will make change happen. Justice is just us.

*Tony Adams is a lecturer and EIS equality rep at City of Glasgow College. He has published in the Asian Times, Caribbean Times, Morning Star and Weekly Journal.*



# Kick up the Tabloids

There has been no lack of hyperbole in the media over the past few months as Britain approaches the cliff edge of a 'no-deal' Brexit. The headlines have boomed out on the front pages and on the BBC.

This is 'The Most Important Constitutional Crisis since the Abdication', 'The Biggest Challenge Facing Britain since World War II', 'The Biggest Disaster since Suez', and 'The Most Monumental Cock-Up since Profumo'.

The important thing when considering how the Left responds to Brexit is to learn from history, and to learn our lessons from the past - because that is precisely where we are heading. Back to the past. Or at least that would appear to be the world that where the most rabid Brexiters would like to inhabit. Exactly which part of the past we are headed to is still open to question.

It seems a bizarre co-incidence that as Brexit talks stumble from one impasse to another, the BBC launches a new series of *Doctor Who* where a shape-shifting, two-hearted alien travels through space and time in a 1950s police box. Not just the programme itself, but the associated nostalgia surrounding it, could be seen as a perfect metaphor for the entire Brexit expedition.

Britain entered what was then the European Common Market in the early 1970s and that is a time and place for which many of the 'leave' persuasion would like us to return. Indeed, were one to assemble Jacob Rees-Mogg, Andrea Leadsom, Michael Gove, Boris Johnson and Arlene Foster in the same room, it would look like the cast of one of those dreadful nineteen-seventies sitcoms like *Are You Being Served?* Indeed, as the stress of trying to work out what it is she is meant to be doing, Theresa May is increasingly taking on the look and demeanour of Blakey, the grumpy and careworn inspector in *On The Buses*. Like many of those characters from a seventies sitcom, the Prime Minister doesn't actually appear

to be reading from a coherent script so much as trotting out a succession of well-worn catchphrases.

It is entirely likely that a 'no-deal' Brexit could take us back to some dystopian version of the early seventies with power cuts, a three-day week and trouble in Northern Ireland. In fact, it wouldn't surprise me if Jacob Rees-Mogg were to start proposing that television should shut down at eleven o'clock at night, and that the BBC should bring back the test card.

Of course, what all this right-wing nostalgia for 1970s Britain ignores is that in the seventies the right-wingers were getting dewy-eyed and nostalgic about the nineteen-forties. And, let's face it - that is where we could be headed at the end of March 2019. There is a genuine prospect of food rationing if Britain crashes out of the EU without a deal, not to mention what the impact will be on the NHS. Andrea Leadsom, who always reminds me of a tuneless Vera Lyn, yearns for us to return to the times when *The White Cliffs of Dover* were the end of the world as we knew it. Come next March, we're all going to driving off the edge of those cliffs into the unknown.

Jacob Rees-Mogg yearns to take us back to World War II when Britain stood alone against the threat of German Nazi tyranny. The irony in that attitude is that the likes of Rees-Mogg would have been the first to collaborate with the Nazis if they had invaded. Indeed, he could easily be cast as a rather sinister Gestapo agent in that other awful BBC sitcom, *'Allo 'Allo*.

Likewise, Boris Johnson could have walked straight off the pages of a P.G. Wodehouse satire on upper-class buffoonery in the nineteen-thirties. Even Wodehouse, however, would never have thought it credible that a clown like Boris would actually be put in a position of power and influence.

The truth, however, is that Brexit will take us further back in time, to the Victorian era. Indeed, we are already well on our way there now, with the subtle difference that Victorian Britain

had a thing known as industry.

There can be few things more Dickensian than Deliveroo. Students trying to earn a crust and workers on zero-hours contracts peddling the streets at all hours of day and night providing fast food for rich people who can't be bothered to get off their arses and cook themselves a meal or even go get it themselves. In this modern version of *Hard Times*, there is no Gradgrind, just an algorithm. It is hugely ironic that the only young people in Britain who are not clinically obese spend their working lives cycling untold miles delivering food to lazy fat bastards.

100,000 people marched through the streets of Edinburgh in October in support of Scottish independence. A fortnight later, 700,000 gathered in London demanding a People's Vote on Brexit. If their voices are not heard, and we crash out of Europe without a deal, many young people face no jobs, no education, no future and no career. As a comedian, satirist and social commentator, I suspect my job will be safe. I take no joy in that.

Vladimir McTavish is appearing in 'THE END OF THE WORLD SHOW' at The Stand Comedy Club, Edinburgh on Wednesday 19 December.



Vladimir McTavish

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

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



Mick Whelan  
General Secretary

Tosh McDonald  
President

Kevin Lindsay  
Scottish Officer

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