

# WHAT NEXT FOR EUROPE?



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## Comment

To many it may feel like having a debate about the future shape of Europe is like having a debate about whether a dead mouse would have preferred cheese or chocolate. Surely the decisive rejections of the proposed European constitution in France and Holland – along with the almost certain rejection it would have received in a UK referendum – have spelled the end for any imminent reshaping of the EU? The constitution is dead and it will be extremely difficult to resurrect it, so shouldn't we all get back to worrying about other things, certain in the knowledge that there are plenty of other things to worry about?

The answer to the question is an easy one, and has been provided by Tony Blair. Anyone who was in Paris in the Spring of this year will have been handed leaflets at the exits to Metro stations. And even without a detailed grasp of political French it was easy to decode the message; vote No to a Europe designed for big corporations. In Britain there is a widely-held nationalistic strand to Euro-rejectionism. Had there been a referendum in the UK it would have been difficult to know why people voted No – was it the arguments of the Daily Mail or the arguments of Bob Crow (which he summarises in this issue) which were crucial. In France that question does not really arise, and a deeper analysis of the voting patterns cross referenced with party affiliation showed that it was opposition to the free market, anti-social protection aspects of the constitution which provoked rejection most. The reason that the left cannot just feel content and walk away is that Blair has made perfectly clear that he has no intention of listening to this message.

The Euro constitution was a creation of Brussels, which in turn means that it has the fingerprints of the big business lobby all over it. It was not popular demand that started the whole process off, it was the never-ending project of neoliberalism being exported around the world by right-wing think tanks, the right-wing business lobby and right-wing governments (with

Blair in the lead). That we got there under the propulsion of this coalition is all we need to know to assume that this isn't over. Blair has defiantly told us all that he is going to address the concerns of those who voted know by giving them a double helping of what they didn't want in the first place. He is like a Victorian schoolmaster pouring twice as much cod liver oil down the throat of the child who complained.

### **Blair is like a Victorian schoolmaster pouring twice as much cod liver oil down the throat of the child who complained.**

The neoliberals project is tireless. It never wearies because it has the resource needed to buy itself eternal youth. When the truly scandalous Multilateral Agreement on Investment was finally exposed and had to be dropped, the lobbyists were quite open about the fact that the next day they started finding ways to get the same provisions into other trade talks (and elements of the MAI recurred almost immediately in the Doha round of World Trade Organisation negotiations). That is the means through which this project operates; it never speaks in public so you seldom see that it is there but it never stops, so you can always be pretty sure that it is. Tony Blair left us in

no doubt that, so long as he is running the show, a neoliberal Europe will remain the goal.

The risk is that the neoliberal project will revert to type and find a way to achieve its goal by circumventing democracy. The other great constitution of the year – the one being dictated in Iraq – should give us cause for concern. It is, of course, quite outrageous that we can read in our papers that America as 'agreed to compromise' on parts of the constitution; one has to keep reminding oneself what sovereign is supposed to mean. But the arguing is over matters of religion and geography. What is not up for debate is the structure or ownership of the economy, because that is already set in stone by diktat of the occupiers. So Iraq may find an accommodation with itself or it might tear itself apart, but what it will **not** do is nationalise its oil. Similarly, in the 1990s the left largely averted its gaze as the US and the neoliberals invented the post-Soviet eastern part of Europe as an Adam Smith Institute theme park. Africa belongs to the neoliberals, as does most of the American continent,

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much of Asia, increasingly Australasia is joining the group and the 'Orange Revolutions' have swept any resistance out of Eastern Europe. It is us and our pesky social welfare which remains the final barrier to the total colonisation of Europe. The neoliberals have never let the interests of the people get in their way before and we should not assume that it will happen again.

For all these reasons it is essential that across Europe the left engages in a serious debate about what Europe ought to be about. If we walk away, we can be quite sure that the field will be left to the other side. This issue of the Scottish Left Review offers some perspectives on how we might start. ■



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# feedback

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Congratulations on the latest issue of SLR. I have just read it online in Denmark and it was consistently interesting, well written and asking many of the most important questions on the left. SLR has also improved over the last few years and offers a valuable nonsectarian platform for the left in Scotland which is much needed and I am interested by your publishing project also a valuable idea.

Where SLR is weak, and this has been a central feature since its inception, is in developing a political strategy to improve the prospects for socialism in Scotland. Of course this may be due to the broad coalition behind SLR, ranging from Cathy Jameison who I suspect is too busy privatising our prisons and defending Group 4 to attend editorial meetings, to left critics still in the Labour Party, through leading figures in the SNP committed to rightwing procapitalist economic policies for Scotland and independent socialists, Greens and SSP members.

Occasionally these strategic issues surface in the pages of SLR but usually they are notable by their neglect – or is it a deliberate choice to preserve the broad coalition behind the journal? Of course as an activist in the SSP I have a particular perspective on the future of the left and despite its recent difficulties believe that the SSP provides the best hope for Socialists in Scotland something John Mcallion also said when he announced his decision to leave the Labour Party. So what about a debate in the pages of SLR on the future of the left in Scotland it is certainly needed.

*Hugh Kerr*

Gordon Morgan has accused “a small dedicated group of fanatics” of exaggerating the problems of the AMS voting system at Holyrood and of ignoring the risk of reducing party proportionality if their preferred STV system is put in its place (**‘Ballot Boxing’, SLR Issue 29**). As I have campaigned for more than forty years for the use of STV-PR for all public elections, have been a member of the Electoral Reform Society for nearly as long, and have made a submission to the Arbuthnott Commission urging them to dump AMS and recommend STV instead, I am probably one of those he had in his sights. But I would reject the description of ‘fanatic’. My position is based on rational analysis of the effects of different voting systems and if I knew of a system that would give better democratic representation than STV-PR, I would recommend it instead.

Gordon Morgan’s main objection to STV was based on his claim that it would reduce the diversity of representation in the Scottish Parliament and keep out the Greens and the SSP in particular. If I thought for one moment that replacing AMS with STV would do that, I would never recommend such a change. The evidence from real public elections, however, supports my view that party proportionality with STV-PR will be every bit as good as it has been with AMS. If we compare the

results of the most recent elections to the Scottish Parliament (AMS) and to the Dáil Éireann (STV-PR) we can see that both voting systems gave similar degrees of party proportionality, both allowed smaller parties to win their fair shares of seats and both allowed the election of independent candidates. Seven parties, large and small, won seats in both elections, but 13 independents out of 166 TDs were elected to the Dáil compared to three independents out of 129 MSPs elected to the Scottish Parliament. If that is what can be achieved with STV constituencies returning only 3, 4 or 5 members (average 3.95), there need be no fear about proportionality with STV constituencies electing 4 to 8 MSPs (mainland average 5.48) as I suggested in my submission to the Arbuthnott Commission.

Gordon Morgan also claimed that changing to STV would break the constituency link for many MSPs. It is true that STV would do away with the single-member geographical constituencies, at least on the mainland, but the real constituency links would be strengthened with STV. The most important difference between STV and all other PR voting systems is that, with STV, each elected member is elected because he or she has the personal support of a constituency of voters. That would make MSPs elected by STV-PR much more accountable to their respective local voters. That would be a much stronger constituency link than is ever possible with geographically defined single-member constituencies. It must also be remembered that with STV all the MSPs would be constituency members, all elected on the same basis and all directly accountable to the local voters. That would remove all the problems that inevitably come from having two kinds of MSP and it would strengthen democracy by getting rid of the party lists.

In his article, Gordon Morgan suggested that the Arbuthnott Commission was set up to look at the problems of having four different electoral systems in Scotland. That is indeed in the Commission’s remit, but in fact, most of the clamour that led to this Commission came from a group of Westminster MPs who were concerned about the problems, real and imagined, of having different constituencies for Westminster and for the Scottish Parliament. It was also clear at the time that the clamour was fuelled by political undercurrents that had nothing to do with constituency boundaries or the number of voting systems. Fortunately, as well as protecting party proportionality and strengthening the voters’ democratic control, STV-PR will also provide a simple solution to the boundary problems which the Commission must address.

The Arbuthnott Commission has said it intends to place the citizen at the centre of its concerns. There could be no better way of achieving that, and of achieving the Commission’s other objectives, than to change the voting system for the Scottish Parliament from AMS to STV-PR. That would really strengthen our fledgling democracy and give us a people’s Parliament.

*James Gilmour*

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# five years of scottish left review

In this fifth anniversary issue, Editor Robin McAlpine recalls why the SLR was established and looks at where it should go over the next five years

This issue marks the fifth anniversary of the Scottish Left Review. Editor Robin McAlpine looks back over the half-decade and explains what we think we are for.

In September 2000 the first edition of the Scottish Left Review rolled off the printing presses. It has appeared every two months since then and has covered and, we hope, contributed to the politics of Scotland and beyond over that time. We think that it is some mark of success that we have survived – believe us that it is not easy keeping a non-profit operation such as ours going purely on the basis of people donating their time (and some money). But we have never been happy simply to ‘keep going’; rather we have sought to produce something of high-quality which will make a difference. We think we have at least made a pretty good stab at this.

Looking back now, September 2000 was a pivotal moment for Scotland and the world. At the time we expected a big change in Scotland, this being right at the birth of the Scottish Parliament. If we look back at early writing in the first issues of the SLR there remained a genuine optimism for a ‘new type of politics’ in Scotland. Most of us will be very happy that the Parliament is here (we do not face such odd-ball experiments such as ‘city academies’ which only two people want and ‘faith schools’ which no-one seems able to cogently defend), but we may also be disappointed that the vision of a consensual, collaborative politics did not really become a reality. This is a complicated point. There are those on the right who complain that in fact we do have a strongly consensual politics based on the social provision with much added pragmatism of Scottish local government. Meanwhile there are few on the left who don’t get enraged by the consensus of Westminster, a chapel in which few dare raise their voices against the twin Gods of Atlanticism and Economism. We broke international law and destroyed Iraq on the basis of a Labour-Conservative consensus; we privatised the water of desperately poor Africans as one; we continue to sell weapons to some of the worst people in the world but we stand together as we do it. Consensus need not be good, and you don’t have to be a Hegelian philosopher to recognise the value to be gained from a genuine and open clash of ideas. And yet we did think that there were enough shared values that we could press ahead with a pretty radical process of change. We were largely wrong.

What in fact happened was somewhat different. Rather than develop cross-party working, the parties instead have appeared to realign themselves in a manner designed to avoid it. This is not to say that there has been no cross-party cooperation; in fact, many of the better things that have emerged from the Parliament are a result of such working. But this cross-party politics is cult politics in the sense that the coalitions develop around individuals and

not parties. It was Mike Watson’s anti-fox hunting Bill, Elaine Smith’s breastfeeding legislation, Tommy Sheridan’s ending of Warrant Sales and so on. What we have scant evidence of is **parties** working together, rather than **individuals from different parties**. Anyone who is involved in Scottish politics knows that the best way to ensure that something doesn’t happen is to make it SNP or SSP policy first. ‘There’s no way we’re giving them anything to crow about’ is the mantra of Holyrood politics. It shares characteristics with the culture of the Mafia in which you need your ‘name’, you need to save face, before you have the credibility to achieve anything. Thus it is that the Liberal Democrats can vote against proportional representation for local government because the debate has been instigated by an opposition party. There is a perfectly cogent logic in this – the logic of electoralism – but then one can glean logic from cutting one’s nose off to spite one’s face. What we hoped for in 2000 was the higher logic that produced the Constitutional Convention, the logic of Ghandi or Mandela rather than the logic of Tony Soprano. Looking forward from September 2005, there is bound to be less optimism than there was in 2000, but let us hope that the pessimism is equally overstated. There are plenty of observers who are concerned about the polarisation of Scottish politics into an ‘inside’ and an ‘outside’, with the door being closed (and depending on what happens with voting reform very possibly locked) on the smaller parties.

This is the first factor which has driven the SLR since its inception. We will struggle over and over to try to remain beyond political sectarianism. The SLR is not about creating a comfy sofa for those who all agree on everything but about offering a table round which people with different views on achieving similar goals can gather. It isn’t easy. When we receive an article making the case for the left to embrace a flat tax, something almost everyone on the Editorial Committee will strenuously oppose, what do we do? Well, we printed it in the last issue. But the problem becomes harder to resolve the greater the split. So it would be our perception that most of the readers of the SLR will be supporters of proportional voting systems, but we know that not all will. How do we secure that balance? One of the most difficult issues to balance has been the constitutional future of Scotland. Most of the parties of the left have some sympathy towards greater autonomy for Scotland and those likely to describe themselves as ‘of the left’ are generally more sympathetic to independence than those who don’t. And

yet this is a massive divide, not least in party political terms. If you take the issue head on, are you demonstrating nationalist sympathies? If you don’t take it on are you an insufferable unionist? The answer is that no editorial decision will make everyone happy and even with dozens of balancing articles someone will feel that the balance is wrong.

**Rather than develop cross-party working, the parties instead have appeared to realign themselves in a manner designed to avoid it**

There is a reason that this is very important to us. The Scottish Left Review as a project was about trying to embed the attitude which led to the Constitutional Convention into left politics in Scotland. The magazine was created to bring people together and to try and find common ground. Of course, the business of putting it together makes it difficult to stay focussed on your larger goal. But we will aim to keep reminding ourselves why we started this in the first place. And we will continue to make our best attempt at balance in everything we do.

If we think back again to 2000, what you will find less optimism about was world politics. This wasn't a mistake; the mistake was insufficient pessimism. It is easy to look back now and realise what might have been seen in advance. This was a period in which many still believed that the 'third way' politics might be a pragmatic solution to changing Britain, Europe and possibly the world for good. Europe was under centre-left management and Clinton was in the White House. We should have looked closer. The first issue of the magazine appeared not long after Belgrade stopped smouldering. The reaction of the left to the NATO action in Kosovo was somewhat split between those who thought this might be the start of 'moral interventionsim' and those who thought it was an unnecessary use of force. It now appears quite clear that, like a child testing its mother's patience to see what can be got away with, the Kosovo action was about testing the limits of what militarism was possible in the post-Cold War period. There was no genocide in Kosovo (everything you remember that looked like genocide happened **after** the bombing started), and most of the propaganda suggesting there was was quickly discredited. This was the start of the neoliberal wars, the extension of economics by other means. We didn't know that the neoconservatives were organising like they were. We didn't take the Project for the new American Century seriously enough, we didn't think George W Bush was quite such a problem. We misread the chain of events that was to lead to an enfeebled United Nations sitting impotent while a small group of free-market ideologues do largely as they please around the globe (including war and pillage).

The flaw in global politics that enabled this was ignorance. Most politicians do not know enough about the issues on which they are asked to take an opinion (especially on matters economic and international) and most of the rest of us know much less. It is pretty galling for anyone with even a very basic understanding of international law to listen to a public debate which could be summarised as two groups in a debate, both of them demonstrably wrong. Likewise, a passing familiarity with some core economic and social statistics makes it hard to swallow current debate about economic and social policy. A new kind of ignorance was born in the 1990s which has been christened 'knowledgeable ignorance' – to have the ability to know something or even to know it, and yet to be willing to either not know it or to 'know' something else instead. We should have known that the neoliberal march was well underway; instead we were seduced by lifestyle marketing. So the second mission of the SLR has been to provide clear and approachable yet sophisticated and useable analysis and information. This is also a fraught enterprise – if analysis is too complex or specialised

then people will skip it, but if it is too simple or obvious they will feel patronised. We have aimed pretty high and have asked many highly expert writers to give us their views on some difficult issues. But we hope that it has always been helpful, and that it will at least help to increase the 'knowledgeableness' at the expense of the 'ignorance'.

Finally, in 2000 we hoped for a flourishing of ideas. There were many of us who believed that the moribund structures of Westminster and its party system were stifling the development of ideas. We hoped that the dozens of things that people had wanted to do throughout the Tory years but couldn't would come flooding out in 1997 when Labour was elected. There are few who now would look at those years and identify them with innovation. Matters such as a minimum wage and devolution were greatly to be welcomed, but this was a tidying up exercise of things that really ought to have happened decades previously. So by 2000 it was our collective hope that the Scottish Parliament

would prove a fertile ground for innovation. And so it has proved, but to a much lesser degree than we might have hoped. There is genuine innovation in there, but it does not really seem to have added up to a whole greater than its parts. And if the political parties have felt less inspired and inspiring than we hoped they might be, with some exceptions civic Scotland has been much less creative than many had hoped it would be. Where in Scotland do we now look for new ideas, the force which will drive change?

This was the third purpose of the SLR, to be a forum for ideas. On this we feel we have delivered something useful. From within our pages over the last five years you can glean a wide range of ideas for how to change Scotland, some evolutionary and some revolutionary. We have urged writers to give us not only prognoses but also cures. And this is what leads to our aim for the next five years. We will remain focussed on making sure the SLR is a magazine for anyone on the left and will fight to avoid any suggestion that we are in anyway partisan. We will also keep

focussed on providing prescient analysis and innovative ideas. But we have to reach out to a wider readership. It is frustrating to produce so many good ideas but to reach too few people. So in the coming years it will be our aim to continue to improve the magazine we are producing, but also to increase our readership base.

We need your help in all of this. We need you to tell us when you think our direction is wrong or when you think there are important issues we are insufficiently covering. We need you to bring your ideas to us (we have something like a 60-40 split between commissioned and uncommissioned articles). But we could also do with your help in spreading the word. The Scottish Left Review may not be perfect, but we do believe that Scotland would be the worse without it. ■

*Robin McAlpine is the editor of the Scottish Left Review and author of No Idea (SLR Press)*

# another constitution

## Henry McCubbin makes the case for why the left should not simply be glad to see the European Constitution rejected but should try to shape a better one

On 22 October last year Scottish Left Review supported a one day workshop at the STUC with the title 'An Alternative Economic Strategy for Scotland'. It turned out to be a stimulating event and the meeting was followed up by a series of articles in SLR issue 26 January/February 2005. Since then a major political upheaval has occurred in that the proposed European Constitution has been put to a referendum of the French and Dutch people and has been thoroughly defeated. That this should have happened has sorely perplexed the political classes who were responsible for this document.

Luxembourg's prime minister and then holder of the EU presidency, Jean-Claude Juncker, was the first to insist that the message was not a clear one. "I am still very much in doubt when I look at this very mixed response in France. If we were to add up all of the no votes of those who wanted 'more Europe' as a yes then I think that we would have had a yes vote", he claimed after the count. European Commission President José Manuel Barroso agreed - perhaps the French had not really said 'non' after all. "The messages are contradictory; some are saying they vote because they want more Europe, some are saying because they want less Europe. So it is very difficult to draw a conclusion", he suggested. "The no camp has several contradictory messages. There was no one clear voice coming." Denis MacShane, Britain's former minister for Europe, characterised opponents of the Constitution in France as the "reactionary forces of the left and right". Ex-European commissioner Lord Neil Kinnock, from the security of his EU pension said he was "utterly disgusted" with sections of the French left, for joining "fundamentally reactionary and disgusting elements" to form the No campaign. This arrogance on the part of EU technocrats means that some of them have simply discounted the significance of the French result. For example, former Belgian Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene claims that the Non vote does not represent a rejection of the EU Constitution since French voters were more concerned with rejecting their own president, Jacques Chirac, than making a statement on the Constitution. Dehaene's argument is plausible only if people are deemed incapable of properly behaving as democratic citizens.

European Commission vice-president Margot Wallström, charged with, and you can't make this up, "communicating Europe", writing on her website on 26 May acknowledged the power of the French debate and simultaneously expressed her concern over its straying from an agenda set by Europe's elites. "I was in France last week. At least we cannot say we do not have a proper debate on the Constitution." she conceded. "Finally we seem to be moving beyond national issues or domestic politics", she wrote contradicting Dehaene. "In both France and the Netherlands, the real choice voters face is between the progress made in the Constitution or the limitations imposed by the Treaty of Nice. I really hope that over the crucial next days, voters focus on this choice." But as the French vote showed, a range of political choices, not diktat, have a tendency to emerge from debate. For the left in France and the Netherlands, it was

the so-called Anglo-Saxon neo-liberalism being presented as the only choice on offer that persuaded them that a decision on weighted voting in the Council of Ministers could wait until we could clearly effect a choice over what sort of social and economic systems we wanted as the defining principles of the European Union, rather than the building of a bureaucratic fortress to prevent any foreseeable challenge to the free market as a dominant ideology under which all decision making would be subordinated.

Before looking at how we take this forward in Scotland I must first of all state that although the predominate world view from these island's political class may be 'Anglo-Saxon' we Scots do not in general belong or voluntarily associate ourselves with that particular tribe's political culture therefore it should come as no surprise that we rail at that view being argued on our behalf at European Councils. The problem for the European so-called elites, a meeting with them incidentally would quickly disabuse you any intellectual inferiority complex, is that the French did read the treaty. In preparation for this article I read over the carefully argued papers that were presented to our Alternative Economic Strategy conference, having also read the proposed EU Constitution, to discover that if the treaty was implemented and strictly adhered to we would be unable (indeed it would be illegal) to introduce any of the ideas proposed to make Scotland a more egalitarian and successful society. Britain's response to the failure of the French vote, through our Prime Minister, is to offer leadership. His speech to the European Parliament ended with "The people of Europe are speaking to us. They are posing the questions. They want our leadership. It is time we gave it to them." I have at last discovered a name for his palsy; Narcissistic Personality Disorder. He signed the EU Constitution on our behalf, then said that it was so insignificant that we didn't need to vote on it and then, with a general election looming, announced that we would be given a referendum on which he would campaign for a yes vote. However now that it's shown to be a bummer he's going to perform a few linguistic somersaults that would be appreciated by Eric Blair. Long live the Ministry of Truth.

I believe that we have no alternative on the left than to produce our own baseline Alternative European Constitution. Let me start by taking the proposed economic policy as an example of how serious a threat to our democratic institutions the constitution is. It calls for no less than the destruction of political pluralism. In Article I-3, references to economics read like a political tract; more like a manifesto for neo liberalism than a constitution. They in no way reflect the actual economies to be found within the EU today. The constitution calls for the surrender of economic power from the democratic to a totalitarian system of free markets which as yet does not exist but the authors of the constitution wish to bring into existence. Workers throughout the EU are aware that with its present penetration the free market adversely affects social, economic or territorial justice never mind if it should reach the idealised prescription posited within the constitution. The following examples are taken from

the Objectives and then the Policy section of the constitution. ([europa.eu.int/constitution/en/lstoc1\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/constitution/en/lstoc1_en.htm))

- Article I-3 The Union's objectives: The Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, and an internal market where competition is free and undistorted
- Economic Policy Article III-178: Member States shall conduct their economic policies in order to contribute to the achievement of the Union's objectives, as defined in Article I-3, and in the context of the broad guidelines referred to in Article III-179(2). The Member States and the Union shall act in accordance with the principle of an open market economy with free competition, favouring an efficient allocation of resources, and in compliance with the principles set out in Article III-177.

The Europe we live in would be better reflected if Article I-3 ran: "The Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, and an internal market **constrained to achieve the political objectives of the Union**. And Article III-178 was modified to read: "Member States shall conduct their economic policies in order to contribute to the achievement of the Union's objectives, as defined in Article I-3, and in the context of the broad guidelines referred to in Article III-179(2). The Member States and the Union shall act in accordance with the principle of **a mixed economy** favouring an efficient allocation of resources".

One further area of policy worthy of our scrutiny is that of common foreign and security. Article I-16 The common foreign and security policy currently reads "The Union's competence in matters of common foreign and security policy shall cover all areas of foreign policy and all questions relating to the Union's security, including the progressive framing of a common defence policy that might lead to a common defence". How much better if it read; "The Union's competence in matters of common foreign and security policy shall cover all areas of foreign policy and all questions relating to the Union's security, including the progressive framing of a common defence policy that might lead to a common defence **and the elimination of all Weapons of Mass Destruction at present under the control of Member States or on EU territory**."

The point is that the proposed constitution comes in handy bite sized segments called Titles which would lend itself to such modification by small informed groups and in using the language of political choice as in the term 'mixed economy' to expose the hypocrisy in a document proposing freedom by eliminating choice. On defence we would be using a phrase like the 'removal of WMD', which is universally seen as a good thing, to apply to us as well as to others. The Alternative Economic Strategy for Scotland was proposed to address an age old problem which confronts the left and the anti globalization movement and that is that we have been answering the question 'What are we against?' we must confront the much more demanding question of 'What are we for?'. I believe that we now have an opportunity to ambush Blair and his free marketers.

Roy Hattersley recently observed in the Guardian, "Only once since the treaty of accession was signed have the British people expressed any real enthusiasm for the EU. That was during the months immediately after Jacques Delors told the TUC of his vision of a community that met the real needs of its rank and file." This was the period immediately preceding the 1989 EU elections which saw Labour return its largest contingent of MEPs to the EU Parliament. My personal experience leads me to believe that this was no coincidence. Further an essay by Gunter Grass recently pointed to the following threat; "Lately, perhaps too late, we have come to recognise that the threat to the state — or what should be regarded as Public Enemy No 1 — comes not from right-wing radicalism but rather, from the impotence of politics, which leaves citizens exposed and unprotected from the dictates of the economy. Workers and employees are increasingly blackmailed by the corporate group. Not parliament but the pharmaceutical industry and the doctors' and chemists' associations dependent on it decide

who must profit and reap the benefit of health reform. Instead of the social obligation which derives from owning property, maximising profits has become the basic principle. Freely elected MPs submit to both the domestic and global pressure of high finance. So what is being destroyed is not the state, which survives, but democracy."

To me the above is pointing us towards a realisation that we have historic evidence of general support for the idea that the EU's political and economic mass can provide the social and socio-economic security which is what the majority of those who rejected the Constitution are looking for from the EU. That mass can be used as a force for good. Our first task should be to analyse these parts of the Constitution which offend us and provide our own constitution by organising cadres of likeminded specialists for this task. Our natural constituency for this task will include the active part of the trade union movement, academics and members of political

parties who support our objectives. These objectives would be best demonstrated through an alternative constitution first as a Scottish initiative and then to use our international links to encourage the participation of other like minded nationals in the production of a truly popular constitution. To this end we have set up an e-mail address - [euro@scottishleftreview.org](mailto:euro@scottishleftreview.org) - which is available for interested readers to contact us with their views on this topic and to indicate the contribution they could make in taking such a project forward. The process we have in mind is to form small e-mail groups or individuals to look at the existing constitutional proposal each taking responsibility for specific groups of Titles. They would then discuss and arrive at an amended form for their Titles and provide a commentary arguing for their reasoned amendments. For our part we would wish to publish salient articles and co-operate with left colleagues across the EU to prepare us for the establishment's attempt to return to this topic at a later stage. Our timetable for the first part of this exercise we would envisage to be from now until October thus preparing us with material for use at the end of the British Presidency of the European Council. ■

*Henry McCubbin is a former Labour MEP*

# the motor of neo-liberalism

**Bob Crow shows that in Scotland the Caledonian MacBrayne case is only the start of an EU-driven strategy of privatisation and insecurity**

It is widely recognised in the labour movement today that the EU Constitution is a privateers' charter that would massively centralise power to unelected, unknown and unaccountable corporate elites in Brussels. However, this recipe for corporate feudalism is not confined to the discredited Constitution; the drive for a single market, the single currency and the unaccountable European Central Bank have all enforced policies onto member states that enjoy no real mandate. These 'one-size-doesn't-fit-all' policies impose public spending cuts, the deregulation of entire sectors of industry and decisions over which industries deserve government assistance and which should be allowed to go to the wall.

RMT members working on Caledonian MacBrayne ferry services in Scotland recently experienced this when EU commissioners ordered the Scottish Executive to break up the publicly-run lifeline services or risk breaching EU law. This is despite the fact that the Scottish parliament had already voted to reject the privatisation of CalMac following a public outcry. EU procurement rules also prevented the Ferguson shipyard in Port Glasgow from winning the bid to build a new Scottish fisheries protection vessel. The work went to the Polish

Remontowa shipyard in Gdansk instead, amid evidence that it had been receiving 'illegal' state subsidies. The Polish yard was also awarded a contract to build a ferry for the Hebridean and Clyde CalMac route. Instead of fighting for Scottish interests, the Executive simply insisted that EU rules prevented it from giving preferential treatment to a Scottish shipyard. In contrast, France and Germany have never bought a single train unit not produced domestically, despite EU procurement rules. These double-standards clearly show that the rules are applied based on political patronage and expedience rather than the interests of working men and women in the member states.

All these experiences highlight the fact that the EU has a clear strategy of privatisation and regionalisation that is highly undemocratic and damaging to the interests of member states. Countless EU directives demand the 'deregulation' of industries and services, including the proposed 'services directive', which demands the "liberalisation and deregulation of all service activity in Europe". This nasty piece of work includes the so-called 'country of origin' principle whereby firms from other member states can operate in Britain without having to comply with British laws and standards. This would clearly provoke a 'race to the bottom' for staff pay and conditions in deregulated health and education sectors as offshore firms would be allowed to ignore even minimum standards. It is also a perfect example of how Eurocrats, operating in their undemocratic bubble, seek to promote corporate interests without the knowledge of many MPs, let alone their electorates.

In tandem with these diktats, drawn up in the main by corporate groups like the European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT), Brussels promotes the concept of a centrally-controlled 'Europe of the Regions', which divides the EU into competing zones. Under these plans, certain industries are concentrated in various regions, undermining a member states' ability to produce a variety of goods and services for its people. This in part explains the demise of British industries such as shipbuilding, fishing, textiles, steel and, of course, coal.

We have already seen what chaos and mayhem privatisation has brought on our privatised railways. Yet publicly-owned railways are being privatised across the EU through the implementation of various EU directives. In the UK, the first of these EU directives - 91/440 adopted on July 29 1991- formed the basis of the Railways Act 1993. This Tory Act included measures that privatised Britain's railways, introduced open access and separated ownership and control of infrastructure from train operations. A 'second package' of European Commission proposals for deregulating EU rail networks was imposed in January 2003, and a 'third package' was adopted in March 2004. At no time was there any meaningful public debate about these far-reaching neo-liberal measures. Yet, as a result, state-owned French railways SNCF has lost its freight and passenger monopoly and companies like Connex - which made such a mess of Kent's rail network - are seeking to break up the French network. The same is happening in Italy



where private rail operators have taken nearly 40 per cent of the freight market by undercutting publicly-owned train operator, Trenitalia, with lower wages and by employing fewer staff.

Despite this EU-led neoliberal offensive, we are being asked by an unrepresentative minority within the labour movement to continue giving Brussels support through thick and thin in order to defend something called the 'European social model'. Yet it is doubtful if this 'European social model' – a world where workers and employers live in harmony as 'social partners' – exists at all. The doctrine of social partnership promoted by the EU preaches that employers and workers share a common cause. This strategy claims that unions have no alternative but to collaborate with the employer in order to 'add value' to the firm (i.e. profits). Yet in reality, by incorporating union leaderships into partnership structures, employers are given a free hand to continually push the mantra of 'labour flexibility'. Such an approach undermines long-held rights to collective bargaining and independent trade unionism by subordinating trade union activities to the logic of the capitalist firm, allowing employers to boost profits at the expense of workers jobs and conditions.

These agreements also often entail pledges of job security for the workforce. However, there is a contradiction between the implied employment stability and the chronic instability of the markets in which companies operate. This rhetoric also implies that unions will have an influence over business strategies. Yet the reality is that key decisions are made by rival cliques of bosses locked in takeover battles, whilst workers are left out in the car park. This EU model of partnership, espoused by the TUC and the European TUC, also implies a degree of social and economic equality between labour and capital, which is clearly not the case. One of the fundamental contradictions of social partnership is highlighted by my union's policy within the transport industry. RMT calls for the renationalisation of the chaotic rail and bus sectors. As such, my union does not have common interests with the privateers that make money at the expense of decent wages levels, conditions of service and investment. And social partnership is not just about restricting wages. It stifles democratic involvement in the life of trade unions, making people passive in the wider social and political life of the country. As a result, the espousal of social partnership is usually accompanied by acceptance of 'labour flexibility', budget cuts, privatisation and the centralisation of power as part of the corporate blueprint for the EU and the disastrous eurozone.

While the 'European social model' may be a myth, a variety of social models do exist where trade unions, employers and elected governments have over the years found different ways to negotiate solutions to disputes. Yet these very models are being eroded by Brussels, which demands evermore 'labour flexibility' to deal with the results of policies that encourage social dumping, job cuts and mass privatisation. For instance, the pro-EU German government has slashed social security benefits and introduced a 'forced labour' programme. The new Hartz IV law offers so-called 'one euro jobs'; anyone who refuses them will have benefits withheld. Berlin plans to create 600,000

such 'jobs' where workers are paid an hourly wage of just one euro (60p) and are refused union representation. This vicious new law is all about creating a low-pay sector, something previously unknown in Germany. The impact of this is now being felt in the more highly paid unionised sectors. For instance, car manufacturers recently forced Germany's most powerful union IG Metall to swallow pay cuts or face the prospect of vehicles being built east of the German border.

The French government is imposing a law by decree, as opposed to traditional parliamentary procedures, to allow companies to ignore dismissal procedures and sack staff during their first two years in the job. French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin oddly described the decree as "the last chance to save the French social model". Greek unions recently launched a general strike against government plans to enable employers unilaterally to impose 'flexible' longer working hours. Presumably, all these anti-worker measures are designed within the remit of the mysterious 'European social model', which appears to mean whatever you want it to mean.

Any response from the labour movement to this neo-liberal agenda should not be simply to emulate it by imposing a similarly undemocratic blanket demands through unrepresentative institutions like the EU. Such a path would ultimately undermine progressive policies as they would also lack any real popular mandate and may even have a negative impact on sister unions in other member states. That is why the United Campaign for the Repeal of Anti-Trade Union Laws is demanding a change in domestic law as its starting point. As labour markets tighten and the clouds of recession gather trade unionists should be able to argue more persuasively than ever that

**As labour markets tighten and the clouds of recession gather trade unionists should be able to argue more persuasively than ever that social partnership and blind faith in the EU is a dead end for the labour movement and that there is an effective alternative**

social partnership and blind faith in the EU is a dead end for the labour movement and that there is an effective alternative. That means breaking away from the debilitating strategy of social partnership and developing a more democratic, independent and campaigning outlook.

The labour movement must wake up to the simple fact that the EU is the motor for anti-democratic neo-liberal 'globalisation' in Europe. EU Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen openly said as much recently when pushing the EU's 'Lisbon agenda' to promote 'competitiveness' in Europe. "Globalisation is not something China imposed on us, but something we have done ourselves. People must be told that globalisation is our policy," he said. In short, it is time for trade unionists to defend their own constituencies and fight for democracy and public services at home in the battle against Brussels neo-liberal diktats that seek to hand everything over to the private sector. ■

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# do we need europe anyway?

**Yes, argues André Brie, if we want to develop an economic system which works rather than one which is build only on ideology**

The Statue of Liberty in front of the old New York Harbour Entrance measures, together with its plinth, almost 100 metres in height. The Goddess stands on the broken chains of slavery and, with its right hand, raises the torch of liberty; in her left hand, she carries the American Declaration of Independence. Originally a present to the US by France, she is at the same time the expression for the mutual influences among the American War of Independence and French Revolution as well as of the two first great Declarations of Liberty and Human Rights, the 'Virginia Bill of Rights' (1776) and the 'Declaration of Human and Citizens' Rights' (1789). The symbolic power and iconography of the statue of liberty can hardly be topped. More than two-hundred years later, the idea (however, not necessarily the reality) of freedom and human rights has won the day.

In front of the European Parliament in Brussels, there also stands a statue, also representing a woman, who also raises an arm. The only difference is that she is, together with her plinth, only maybe three metres high, secludes herself in the shadow of the European Parliament buildings on either side of Rue Wiertz, so that her existence has not even come to the notice of a few Deputies of Parliament, and in her hand, she does not hold a symbol of a society-founding and identity-creating idea, but the Euro sign. It matters essentially to the European dilemma that the original great impulses and goals of European integration (peace, stability, overcoming of nationality) are being realised, but as a result are also spent as integration forces to a considerable extent. The constitutional draft submitted was, despite the Charter of Basic Rights and other advances, to a large degree unable to eliminate this deficit threatening the perspective of integration.

European integration and unity is, by its civilising and historical claim, doubtlessly comparable to the American Declaration of Independence and the Great French Revolution. From my point of view, the constitution should have given expression to this and have allowed a permanent, strong identification of European women and men, with the European Union. Peace and liberty remain permanent tasks of European integration; the European idea, however, could draw its new identity-founding impulse from the concept of social cohesion and solidarity. The European social state, with its many forms, has emerged from contradictory social and political conflicts in the 19th and 20th centuries. Its economic precondition was the transgression of the premodern local markets by the technological and economic developments new back then and the crystallisation of supra-regional national markets, economic circulation and national economies. The political consequence of these developments and the political framework for the realisation of social-state regulation was the modern (nation) state. Also where, as in the United States, the social state elements remained rudimentary or where social security was accorded primarily by way of the life-long workplace guarantee in the large enterprises (Japan), growing mass purchasing power and demand were the decisive bases of economic growth.

Ecological reason demands categorically an end to pure material resource growth and even to reverse it, but modern economies are not imaginable without growing mass consumption and public investment. This aspect is almost completely eclipsed in the prevalent current debates around economic, social and socio-political modernisation projects. Instead business economic thinking (decreasing costs, locational competition, deregulation, roll-back of the public sphere) as well as the quite real problems of demographical development (primarily as cost factor for the social security system) and of economic globalisation (as cost competition) are raised to the absolute. This policy has, mainly in the past one-and-a half decades, already led to a clear turn-around in primary distribution (falling back of wage share, increase in the economy-wide profit rate of businesses) without unleashing the promised new economic dynamic. Although the heralded positive results for growth, employment, public finances have failed to show, its continuation is considered the non-plus-ultra of contemporary economic policy. Also the 'Lisbon process' of the European Union is ruled by this conception. It is therefore only natural that five years after the Lisbon resolutions, despite all cost reductions in the public and social spheres, Europe is far removed from the goal to become, by the year 2010, the most dynamic economic region of the world. A lack of private and public purchasing and investment power nowadays can also not be compensated by export successes on the world market; all the less so, since by the progressive international division of labour, a large share of the economic value creation of export goods is realised outside the EU or its member countries. Economic reality has little to do with the Lisbon vision:

From the example of the USA, ever again used in the European debate, there are highlighted the lower public costs for social security, social-political deregulation, the insignificant role of the trade unions, a far-reaching flexibility of the employment relationships and their low social quality as reasons for success. A fundamentally different distinction between economic policy in the United States and in Europe, however, was not discussed, and in particular not taken into account in the Lisbon strategy. The German politician Oskar Lafontaine, pointed to this fundamental mistake in European economic philosophy already years ago: "It is strange that the Americans do not believe that they have to make their economy dependent on Europe. Foreign trade accounts for a mere 10 per cent of the USA, the EU and the Japanese economies respectively. That means, the music is still composed on the domestic market."

Important general conditions for decisive policy areas are defined today at the European level. Monetary policy is already Europeanised for 12 countries, the budgetary policy of the member states, despite some minor modifications, are to a large extent predetermined by the 'stability pact', and also the European domestic market is being fashioned by the policies of the Commission and the Council. Instead of simply waiting until competition in the USA starts up again pulling the EU economy along, Europe has to remember its own potentials. Under the

conditions of globalisation and other serious transformations, the national state (by itself) is really no longer an adequate political and economic space for action any longer. The EU, on the other hand, could be the framework for maintenance and continued development of the social state, and derive, from this claim, both a new, lasting legitimacy with its citizens as well as a renewed, effective goal of integration. A strong and direct social dimension of EU policy is, first of all, a decisive condition for its modernisation: the decisive condition for the deepening of integration and the defence against the present danger of disintegration (the replacement of integration by a free trade zone) and, second, for the economic success of the EU and its member countries. Put in another way: The increasing narrowing of European policy and of the economic policy in the European countries to neo-liberal, market-oriented concepts I not only deem antisocial, but I consider them to be a threat to integration and economically unreasonable, wrong and counterproductive. Their justification by the example of the US economy is only convincing from a business economic point of view, but from a macroeconomic standpoint it is foolish.

Economic policy in Euroland could concentrate much more strongly on the European domestic economy and domestic demand without having to fear negative consequences such as shrinking competitiveness on the world market or a growing inflow of 'foreign' exports. Demand by domestic businesses and private households can realise up to 92 per cent of products and services made in Europe. Europe could, therefore, with a domestically-oriented industrial, structural, environmental and employment policy, engage on an ecologically sound developmental path. At the centre, there stands in this respect a modern regional policy for the strengthening of regional economic circuits and of ecological management. Sustainable regionalisation policy aims at a higher regional contribution with energy, food, leisure, culture, tourism and transport etc. It establishes new cooperation and financing relationships between the public sector, private companies and a reinforced sector in between market and state.

The EU could harmonise the taxation of businesses and wealth, reinstate the capability for action of the welfare state and level out income and developmental differences. Euroland even supplies the potential for a synchronised, active budgetary policy of all of its member state as an alternative to the savings policy of the neo-liberal era. Each Euro reasonably well invested by the public authorities, due to the size of the European domestic market, stimulates approximately three Euros in private investment and consumption expenditures in its wake. Public investments would be, at an effective average tax rate of 30 per cent, to a large extent self-financing. The expansive budgetary policy can thus be designed, in the medium term, without incurring new debt. The EU urgently needs and an alternative economy-wide policy mix:

- cooperation on economic policy between the European Central Bank, the economic and fiscal policy of the member states and wage policy;

- a more relaxed monetary policy;
- a wage policy aligned with productivity;
- a domestic-policy oriented strategy for sustainability and
- a budgetary policy, which strengthens public investments, research and education as well as the development of human resources; and
- a common social dimension.

There are certainly points of departure for this in the European policy. The 'Lisbon strategy' of the EU, for instance, raises the claim of wanting to coherently coordinate economic, employment and social policy. Ever since the EU summit of Lisbon (2000), each spring session of the European Council is devoted to these economic and social questions and prepared by a 'synthetic report' by the European Commission. In this context, a whole variety of coordination processes at the EU level is integrated into the observation; they lack, however, a greater binding force in the sense of the earlier concepts by Delors. In that respect, I am not concerned with a European super state, but with the use of the opportunities for regaining political, economic and socio-political capability for action, which are no longer adequately given at the national level due to internationalisation. Also, the social, employment and environmental policy orientations are (in the constitutional treaty) subordinated to competition policy. The 'New European Social Model', which can be seen emerging, is thus not a renewal or continued development of the

(different) European welfare state models, but the European contribution to their demolition (which is euphemistically called restructuring). The already clearly shaken Keynesian welfare state is being wound down on the basis of the developments introduced by the neo-liberal revolution. Even though the guiding ideas of the 'modernisation of the social state' are the same on a European-wide scale, their realisation is likely to result not only in convergence, but also in further differentiation of the national 'social states'. Its 'implementation' by the nation states is mostly still coupled in a 'path-dependent way' to the national welfare state tradition, as it has historically developed. New 'systems logic' (capital coverage principle for pensions, liberalisation and competition in the health sector and in long-term care, private job referral etc.) are intertwined with the downsized remains of the old structures.

On the one hand, there asserts itself more and more of a hole-riddled social protection, as we know it already from the liberal welfare state. Yet, the 'modernisation of the social state' clearly goes beyond the known liberal model. Partial privatisation and individualisation of the pension system (capital-covered columns) turn the former 'solidarity-based system' into a vehicle for speculation and a toy for the financial markets. The health system is increasingly steered by competitive imperatives. While the social state (and even more so the extended Keynesian welfare states) formerly put reins on capitalism to protect it against itself, the film now runs backward: unleashing of the market forces, buttressed by the cut-down state social policy. Liberal modernisation, may I venture to say, thus threatens to become the way backward into the laissez-faire capitalism of

the 19th century. So as to nonetheless return to the thought of my introduction: many consider the confrontation over

the social state almost exclusively through the glasses of 'social justice'. This is, in my opinion, important of course. Nevertheless: it's the economy, stupid.

From economic and last but not least from the point of view of social policy, however, the following question poses itself: if both the state as well as the private households equally restrain their expenditures, and thus 'save', how then are the businesses (quite regardless of whom they belong to) to expand their sales and to invest more again? If some businesses now try to improve their situation by permanent 'cost reductions' (wages, supplementary wage costs etc.), they only worsen the position of other businesses and the demand potential of private households. In the respective next round, the state has less tax receipts and higher expenditures, because there are more unemployed. The strived-for budgetary consolidation and debt reduction again turns to naught – new holes must be filled. This cycle is known as the 'debt paradox'. From the point of view of the whole economy, this policy socially as well as economically only leads to a downward

spiral, by which in the end all lose. It is not only socially unjust, but wrong precisely from the economic policy point of view. Current national income in this way stays far below the possibilities, which might be given by another economic and finance policy. In the EU, social statehood, to start with, is only articulated at the national state level, and this in very different ways. The member states are constantly tempted to obtain competitive advantages by way of dismantling social advantages. Therefore, it is – at the European level – first of all a matter of preventing a reinforced social dumping in the enlarged European Union. To this end, there is the need to agree on a social stability pact. It would build on the simple fact that there exists a very close connection between the level of economic development of a country (measured by its gross domestic product per capita) and its social performance quota (the share of the overall social expenditures in the gross domestic product).

The EU can and must do more, however, than only prevent social dumping. It must, in the future, set binding quantitative and qualitative social political standards; for instance, for the improvement of health protection, for the minimal level of a social protection, for European minimal wage standards, for the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, for the elimination of homelessness and illiteracy. The member countries must, in the framework of this procedure, be obliged to concrete programmes of measures, whose implementation will be continuously evaluated and controlled. The EU can supplement these programmes of measures by way of European promotion. In this way, European social policy would begin to unfold as independent action, which would go beyond the mere collecting of information, the agreement on indicators, and the comparison of 'best practice cases'. In perspective, also in the area of social policy, the question needs to be asked for the 'finality of European integration' – to which end should it ultimately

converge? Should not there, in the framework of a federative or confederate European Union, also be created a European social union ('Social State European Union'), as the anti-fascist European movements demanded after the Second World War? Is it meaningful to stipulate, at the EU level, unified norms for

benefit qualification, limits on benefits, as well as rules for adaptation? This could be envisaged, for instance, for key elements of social security, for instance, for a social basic security, for old-age and invalidity pensions, for unemployment support, family allowances and health benefits. In this way, the various practical problems in the context of the 'coordination of social security systems' in the area of the free mobility and freedom of residence of persons would get settled by themselves.

The key to such a solution lies in choosing relative reference indicators; for example, in the area of a European social basic security, a benefit level of 60 per cent of the national average income of the member country, in which a person chooses to take up his or her residence. In this way, there would be no incentives for 'social tourism' – e.g. by way of 'taking along', for instance, the relatively generous social basic security of the Netherlands, when moving to regions with lower living costs, such as Apulia or Extremadura, if for example, the national state social basic security were to be made 'transportable' over the whole of Europe. The economic performance capability of the respective residential member country would be correspondingly taken into account by the choice of such relative standards for comparison.

Today, this debate maybe still sounds like far remote future music. Yet, if one wants to prevent, for instance, that by way of the currently discussed increased 'EU-wide patient mobility', the way towards a EU domestic market for health services is hewed free, which would then gradually withdraw the ground from under the national state solidarity-based social security systems, already heavily hit by the various countries' 'health reforms', then one has to think also of European solutions. European harmonisation in any case seems to me to be socially and economically much more constructive than the de-regulated pushing through of an absolute country of origin principle, as suggested in the directive proposal of the EU Commission concerning services.

In my opinion, it is the case of no more and no less but to understand that the ever-so-convincing business economic axiom of having to lower social and wage costs leads socially as well as economically into a dead end. The social state, its maintenance and further development (which includes quite libertarian aspects and must take into account individualisation and other social and cultural differentiation processes) is not a Keynesian anachronism overcome by new developments and dangerous from the economic point of view, but is modern and economically sensible. In this way, Europe could win a lasting economic dynamic as well as a community-founding identity for its women and men citizens. ■

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# THE CAMPAIGNING UNION

PROVING THAT  
"UNIONS WORK"

Derek Simpson,  
Amicus general secretary



John Guegley,  
Scottish regional secretary



# power/imbalance

Iain Davidson argues that the defeat of the European Constitution provides a valuable opportunity to rebalance the power of the nation states of Europe and the European Union itself

The priority for the left in Scotland, Britain and across Europe must be three fold. Firstly, we must fight to slow, and then stop, the flood of Thatcherite, centralising, directives and initiatives. Secondly, we must argue the case for reform, area by area, activity by activity, right across the range of the Commission's work. Thirdly, we must promote debate and discussion on the alternative Europe that we would wish to create. The provision of information, of argument and analysis, is vital as a first step in generating interest and awareness. We must then seek to build coalitions on an issue by issue basis, seeking our allies where we can, recognising that those who agree with us on some matters will not agree with us on others, but always seeking to set our arguments on individual areas of policy within the context of our alternative prospective.

When I spoke in Paris on the 27 May, at the French Left's eve-of-referendum rally, it was under the slogan 'Un Non de Gauche pour changer l'Europe'. Speakers from across Europe, and from across the French Democratic spectrum, argued against the creation of a European Superstate, against a Europe run for the benefit of big business, and for cooperation and collaboration in favour of working people and their families. Every speaker agreed that defeating the Constitution was necessary, but not sufficient, and that we had to promote debate about the alternatives to a neoliberal, militaristic, centralising Europe. Within days, with the French rejection of the Constitution being followed by the same result in Holland (with two thirds of both French Socialist and Dutch left voters saying no), with majorities in those countries still to have a referendum, like Britain and Denmark, building for rejection and with growing opposition in Germany and Sweden to the decision by their Governments to ratify the Constitution without consulting their people, it was immediately apparent to all objective commentators that the Constitution was effectively dead.

With the Constitution rejected, the Eurozone mired in economic difficulties and the European political elite shown to be even further removed from its peoples, we would have been entitled to expect a slowing in the momentum of integration. But no evidence of even a pause for reflection is visible. It is clear from actions that are being taken that most of the institutions that the Constitution would have authorised are being established anyway: the European Defence Agency, the External Borders Agency, the Human Rights Institute, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the European Public Prosecutor, the political/military structures, a collective security policy, a space policy, a diplomatic service. So much for the idea of a responsive Commission and for the notion that the Constitution was necessary to allow new entrants. It is clear that those in favour of 'ever closer union' have not gone away!

The expansionism of the Commission and the other Brussels institutions continues unabated; regulations, initiatives, proposals continue to flow forward in an unending stream, driven by a combination of bureaucratic momentum and vested interest. The European Court of Justice continues its appointed task of integration and harmonisation by stealth. Also unchanged is the firm commitment of the EU and its institutions to a right wing, neo-liberal, Thatcherite set of values. Right wing leaders in European countries contribute to the formulation of free market policy then use the EU's legal powers to drive it through in their own States, avoiding democratic debate, discussion and decision making on a national basis, where they would be held accountable. The latest initiative, the Services Directive, with its drive to competition and privatisation of public services, continues to be promoted by the Euro enthusiasts and in all of this New Labour, having sought alliances with Asnar and Berlusconi (one a protégé of fascists, the other their coalition partner) now seeks to ally with the most right wing of the coming generation: Merkel of Germany and Sarkozy of France.

Before we can propose achievable changes to the EU its necessary for us to understand its nature. Too many of the British left are locked in a time warp; their views coloured by their memories of Jacques Delors introducing some protection for workers and annoying Mrs Thatcher. Similarly, some on the left think back to the Second World War and seem to believe that Germany would invade Poland tomorrow were it not for Peter Mandelson and his allies in the Commission! Some on the left even seem to place their commitment to European integration above their support for the Labour Party. Lord Haskins, regularly in the media as a representative of Labour's Brussels Tendency, thought it was more important to fund a Liberal candidate who had worked beside him in 'Britain in Europe' than to support his party colleague, David Stewart in Inverness.

**Too many of the British left are locked in a time warp; their views coloured by their memories of Jacques Delors**

Our strategy in Scotland has to recognise the EU's own strategy – its policy, in theory, of subsidiarity and the reality of centralisation. In seeking to create a country called Europe, the founding fathers of the EU clearly had the French model in mind: a strong centre, surrounded by a large number of departments, relatively small in size and limited in power. The nation states pose an obstacle to the implementation of this vision, presenting as they do an intermediate, filtering layer, with the capacity to act as a buffer between the centre and the periphery. And since they are democratically accountable they are therefore subject to different pressures. Accordingly, the transfer of power in two directions has been pursued; to Brussels in a one way flow or downwards from the Nation States. No powers of any significance are subsequently devolved from Brussels, nor

do powers devolved to subsidiary units allow them to prevail in any disagreement with Brussels. In areas of regional and social policy Brussels has gained much control, under the guise of redistribution, and is able, not only to determine policy in these areas, in general and detail, but has created a dependency relationship amongst the recipients of support. Though the attempts to bypass or erode the Nation State may use the rhetoric of decentralisation or democracy, the power relationship is always clear; under the Common Fisheries Policy Scotland's fishing stocks are mismanaged with impunity, ferries have to be built in Poland irrespective of needs at home and ferry services are privatised if that is what the EU rules say. On both ferry issues, building and privatisation, there was little real room for manoeuvre by Liberal Ministers, even if they wished to resist the EU. The power imbalance was too great.

The range of weapons in the EU armoury includes the threat of withholding regional and social fund grants, as happened to Portugal until it agreed to cut public spending, and heavy fines and penalties from the European Court of Justice, which seldom misses an opportunity to pursue 'ever closer union', harmonisation and centralisation. In this context, the concept of 'Independence in Europe' is a cruel deception. Whatever its other merits, independence would not provide sufficient weight to resist Brussels, as Holland found out when it was forced to comply with the Growth and Stability pact. Yet France and Germany evaded sanctions in similar circumstances by getting the rules changed to suit – demonstrating that, in the EU, size is important. While I can understand why some Nationalists would be enthusiastic about identifying Brussels as an alternative to Westminster, particularly when it has free money to give away, it is clear that this would not provide the protection sought. Similarly, while the replacement of the pound sterling by the Euro might have been seen as a blow at London and the Bank of England, the consequent rise in unemployment would not, in my view, have been a price worth paying.

Doomed, doomed, we're all doomed? Is there nothing that can be done? Is the drive to a neo-liberal, centralising Superstate inevitable? I think not. In a democratic society we can influence policy by pressure of public opinion, if not by passing resolutions. Forcing a referendum on the European Constitution was a tremendous success for our campaigning, as was the creation of an anti-Constitution majority amongst Labour voters, the Trade Unions and the country as a whole. We must seek to build momentum behind an alternative vision for European development in two ways: theoretical and practical. There needs to be debate, discussion, seminars, papers and online exchanges, but all this is not enough on its own. There also needs to be a focus on the issues about which we feel strongly, where individual issues can be used to build campaigns. Here are five areas for starters:

- **Services Directive:** well covered elsewhere, it offers the possibility of an alliance with Public Sector unions against privatisation and with other unions in opposing the erosion of benefits and protections for working people as the EU promotes a race to the bottom.
- **Common Agricultural Policy:** now that Tony Blair has

called, however superficially, for the abolition of the CAP, the scope for widening our coalition has increased. A food policy which transfers wealth from consumers to producers, from the urban poor to the land owning wealthy cannot be supported. Now payments are made to farmers, unrelated to production, which are far more generous than to the sick, disabled or unemployed, creating welfare dependency and moral hazard for the rural prosperous. Food prices are kept high, costing the average family £25 per week, and the access for third world products is minimised, with numerous direct and indirect barriers to trade.

- **Fair trade, aid and debt relief:** this ties in with the CAP but also highlights the issue of fraud and corruption, waste and mismanagement in the EU budget. Britain hands over a substantial proportion of its aid budget to the EU, which then bends spending away from the poorest. Future aid should be taken back under UK control, with efforts being made to co-ordinate and cooperate with European allies where possible. Scope for linking with all those campaigning on trade, aid and debt issues is enormous.

- **EU budget:** the coming budget crisis allows us to campaign for a complete rethink of what the EU does, why it does it and whether these same objectives can be achieved more efficiently and economically in other ways. The EU consistently seeks to expand its role, without demonstration that value is added by its involvement. This needs to be questioned. We should argue for abolition of the CAP and

the ending of farmer's subsidies. Regional aid in individual countries should be dealt with by the government of those countries. Where there are solidarity payments, from richer to poorer states, they should be handled directly on a Treasury to Treasury basis, with the donors state then given a clear interest and responsibility for ensuring probity and effectiveness. The present system gives Britain some of our own money back, with criteria attached that often do not suit our needs, and with the balance of our contribution eroded by the costs of Brussels bureaucracy and often spent unwisely and inefficiently. If we feel the criminal gangs in Southern Europe should be supported then it would be more efficient for us to do it directly.

All of these proposals for reform would gain substantial support amongst sections of the British population and could serve as a platform from which our alternative vision can be projected. Of course, there will be those areas where supranational spending is desirable. Science policy and much research and development are simply too expensive to be dealt with on a state by state basis. A strategic perspective needs to be taken and money requires to be pooled. Here, though, Brussels must demonstrate that it does not destroy value or alternative methods of cooperation should be sought. The political elite in Europe have never been so distant from the peoples of Europe. The vacuum created by the defeat of the Constitution will soon be filled by the right and by big business unless we act quickly. The opportunity is there. ■

*Ian Davidson is the MP for Glasgow South West, Chair of Labour Against the Euro, Labour Against the Superstate and joint Chair of the cross-party 'Vote No' Campaign against the European Constitution*

# sanctuary in europe?

As The UK Government becomes more and more authoritarian, Bob Thomson asks whether Scottish human rights can be protected by Europe.

The attacks on New York on 9/11 and London on 7/7 were horrific and rightly caused great alarm. The killing and maiming of innocent civilians can never be justified. When these terrible events happen, people naturally want their governments to take action to protect them. However, such actions must be necessary, proportionate and likely to reduce risks, not inflame the situation. Also rushing through new legislations can often increase the feelings of panic. They should not be used as an excuse to give governments carte blanche to trample underfoot the very rights they are purporting to protect. You do not defend freedom by taking freedom away.

Whilst it is legitimate to take steps to combat terrorism, it is shortsighted and a disregard of history not to give the same priority to seeking political solutions to the underlying reasons for the conflict. Also many white Britons fail to appreciate or give the same level of concern to similar outrages that are happening elsewhere in the world. In the Middle East, bombings and shootings are almost daily events whether inflicted by internal factions, the state terrorism of Israel in Palestine or foreign invaders in Iraq. These have created a dangerous tide of hatred and desires for retribution by the indigenous peoples and their cousins settled in Britain and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, New Labour, a supine opposition and a mainly complacent Parliament, egged on

by the tabloid press have ignored all of the above. After the tragedy of 9/11 in New York, the government pushed through the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act. The UK had only the year before obtained wide-ranging powers in the Terrorism Act

2000. New Labour also started advocating the introduction of National Identity Cards, even though there is no evidence that it would have or will prevent terrorist acts, especially suicide bombings by our own citizens. The result was the increased expulsion and harassment of asylum seekers and the detention without trial of others at Belmarsh Prison. This latter action was declared in breach of the Human Rights Act by the House of Lords last year. The asylum seekers were released and then put under control orders subject to house arrest and tagging. If the government has evidence to justify such drastic actions, why are they not charged and brought before a court of law, the hallmark of a civilised society? Since 9/11

approximately 700 persons have been arrested under a fanfare of publicity as terrorists, the majority have been released without charge, some charged with non-related crimes and only three convicted under terrorist legislation.

Now the bombings in London on 7/7 have predictably led to a rushed and confused response by the government. Ignoring Parliament to which he should constitutionally have reported, Tony Blair announced at a press conference 12 measures to deal with 'new' dangers. Most worryingly he said the

government would override human rights legislation if they felt it were necessary. He then went on holiday. Other ministers vied to make further announcements, including reintroducing the crime of treason. (thankfully the Lord Chancellor quickly knocked this on the head). However he warned judges that he was about to change their centuries-old duty to interpret laws passed by Parliament. Lord Carlisle, the government appointed monitor of human rights legislation, repudiated this proposal, saying that it was like "teaching your grandmother to suck eggs". More worrying is the proposal to circumvent Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits deportation of foreign nationals to countries known to use torture. This would be achieved by obtaining undertakings from these countries on the proper treatment of returnees. This would put Britain in direct confrontation with the United Nations and the Council of Europe. If, heaven forbid, this was to succeed and deportees were subsequently abused by a repressive regime, possibly one which he or she was legitimately arguing should be overthrown, then this would

**Bad laws, public hysteria and the establishment's need for scapegoats lead to miscarriages of justice**



increase the likelihood of home and foreign terrorist activities in Britain.

Of equal concern is the proposal to introduce sedition laws criminalizing what people say and think. What does 'condoning, glorifying or justifying terrorism' mean? Who is a terrorist? It is a truism that one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter, and often one of history's heroes. It is less than 20 years since large sections of the British Press were describing Nelson Mandela as a terrorist. Britain imprisoned Gandhi and Nehru in India, Kenyatta in Kenya and Makarios in Cyprus only to release them to negotiate their countries' independence. We have just celebrated the 700th anniversary of the horrific execution of William Wallace for treason. To whom was he a traitor? Our present day politicians have learned nothing from our recent history. Britain of all the Western democracies has the most recent experience, over three decades of fighting internal insurrection in Northern Ireland and the British mainland. We tried the full range of oppressive laws and unfettered police and army power, with mass internment without trial and trials without juries. Bad laws, public hysteria and the establishment's need for scapegoats lead to miscarriages of justice such as the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four and the Maguire Sisters. The shoot to kill policy of the British Army on Bloody Sunday was the most significant event for the IRA gaining sympathy, support and increased membership. Ultimately we had to negotiate with the 'terrorists'. The 1999 Good Friday agreement sets out a political solution to the underlying causes of the troubles.

But hang on, hasn't Britain signed up to human rights legislation, which should stop the government further restricting our civil liberties? International human rights legislation has its recent origins in the universal declaration of human rights passed by the United Nations in 1950. The motivating factor was to prevent the kind of atrocities perpetrated during the Second World War. As titled, it only has declaratory status and cannot be directly enforced in domestic or international courts. However the European Convention on Human Rights was agreed by the Council of Europe in 1950 and ratified by member states in 1951. The Convention is based on the universal declaration, can be used in domestic courts and is enforceable at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The Council Of Europe is a separate body to the European Union, though most countries in Europe (including Britain) are members of both. The Convention and related information can be viewed on [www.pfc.org.uk/legal/echrttext.htm](http://www.pfc.org.uk/legal/echrttext.htm).

The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates most of the provisions of the Convention into UK law and enables human rights points to be argued in domestic courts. Prior to the Act individuals had to take human rights cases to the Strasbourg court, which often took many years. Judges can issue 'declaration of incompatibility' if they find that an Act Of Parliament is incapable of being interpreted to secure conformity with the Convention. As previously mentioned, the House of Lords did this last

December over the indefinite detention without trial of foreign national in Belmarsh Prison. However the government can derogate from sections of the Act/Convention in new legislation by a specific statement in the introduction to the legislation. As already stated the Prime Minister has threatened to do this with the proposed new anti terrorist legislation. In theory, the Council of Europe could refuse to accept these derogations, but how effective and timeous such references would be is problematic. In Scotland, the relationship between the Human Rights Act and the Scotland Act 1998 is more binding and there is a legal duty on the Parliament and the Executive to comply with the Convention. In practise most security/anti terrorism legislation is UK-wide and, shamefully, when it could have intervened the Scottish Parliament has voted for the new legislation to be decided by Westminster through a Sewell Motion. If Britain/Scotland had a written constitution like most democracies, the solution would be to entrench human rights legislation in the constitution. This would protect rights from panic repeal by simple parliamentary majorities at times of crisis.

Can we seek any protection from the European Union? The founding treaties of the European Common Market make no mention of human rights. Many member states are keen advocates of a human rights culture primarily because of their own recent experiences of dictatorship, particularly Germany, Spain and Greece. To remedy this deficiency the European Commission drew up the Charter of Fundamental Human Rights of the European Union. The Charter was 'solemnly proclaimed' by the European Parliament, Council and Commission in December 2000. It is in harmony with the Universal Declaration and the European Convention, but also adds widely accepted principles such as the 'right' to good administration, workers' social rights and bioethics. It is an excellent document, which

would protect and enhance human rights in Europe. You can view the Charter at [www.europarl.eu.int/charter/pdf/text\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.eu.int/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf).

The intention was that the Charter would be a European Union Treaty legally enforceable in domestic courts and the European Court of Justice. Shamefully the British Government vehemently opposed this, and the Charter now only has 'declaratory' status. The proposed EU Constitution contains a version of the Charter. However this would only be binding on EU institutions, not member states, though it can be quoted as 'advisory' in domestic courts, what is sometimes called 'soft law'. The reality is that current EU Law or adopting the proposed EU Constitution would not significantly protect or enhance human rights in Britain. Agreeing the Charter

as a legally binding treaty would.

In the meantime we must continue to campaign, individually and collectively against further infringements of our rights. President Woodrow Wilson who helped to found the League of Nations, forerunner of the United Nations said "The history of liberty is a history of limitation of government power, not the increase of it".

**Bob Thomson is Chairman of the Scottish Human Rights Trust**

# renewing economic democracy

Andy Cumbers argues that the economic and democratic implications of the European Constitution are so closely tied that both must be taken on at the same time

The French and Dutch no votes in the referendum on the European Constitution provided a wake up call to the continent's ruling elites. Portrayed by some commentators on the centre left as a victory for xenophobia and regressive nationalism, this result symbolised a far more awkward reality for those social democrats who had signed up to the neo-liberal free market project that underpins the Constitution.

An analysis of the voting patterns in France showed clear social and geographical fault-lines in the electorate. Around 80 per cent of those with an annual salary of less than 20,000 Euros voted no whilst 80 per cent of those with a salary above 20,000 voted yes. At the same time, whilst Paris voted yes in large numbers, most of the regions had large majorities against. The Constitution, in effect, reflected an old-fashioned class battle between wealthy urbanites in the professional, managerial and financial classes who have generally done well out of the process of European integration and those at the sharp end, particularly in poorer rural and old industrial regions, for whom it represents a continuing threat. Rather than reducing inequalities between its citizens, the last decade and a half of European market integration has seen a widening of the gap between rich and poor in almost every country across the EU.

But the No vote in France also has a broader resonance. A key element in the success of the no campaign has been the emergence in France of a strong coalition against neoliberal globalisation, composed of the organisation ATTAC – set up to argue for economic justice and a tax on financial speculation – alongside a plethora of trade unions, farmers movements and other social movements. For this coalition, the Constitution vote represented the first opportunity for political mobilisation against the neoliberal project that lies at the heart of the integration process. While the Constitution itself does not involve specific policy proposals but is more a tidying up of existing EU provisions in a single document, it did represent another step in the path towards a Europe dominated by market ideology and big business interests with an increasingly minimalist approach to social justice and cohesion. Of particular concern to French voters is the prospect of an EU services directive that opens up the public sector to increased competition and private sector involvement. We are ahead of the game in this respect in the UK and Scotland, where the Private Finance Initiative has been a cornerstone of New Labour policy to modernise the public sector and, despite growing concern about its failings, appears likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

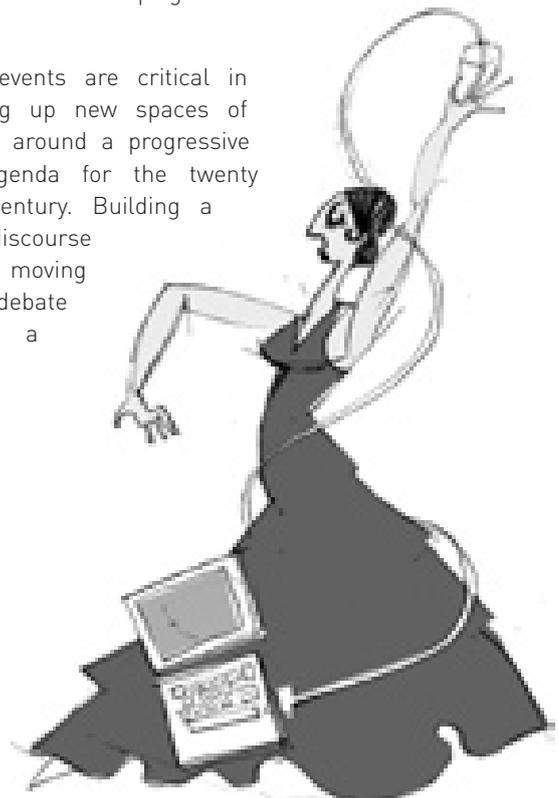
The bigger threat behind the process of European integration is to democracy and the public realm itself as market logic

## The bigger threat behind the process of European integration is to democracy and the public realm itself as market logic percolates into all areas of economic and social life

percolates into all areas of economic and social life. Already with the setting up of the single currency, the transfer of interest rate decisions to unelected central bankers, and the capping of government spending under the Maastricht rules, economic policy is the preserve of an unelected financial and inherently conservative oligarchy. The introduction of greater competition into the public sector is likely to enshrine the dominance of business interests as the profit motive sits uneasily with social needs.

In this respect, the French no vote should not be seen in isolation, but rather as part of a growing clamour around the world for an alternative to the free market agenda. That 200,000 people that marched in the Make Poverty History march in Edinburgh in July is indicative of a desire for a different type of politics and economics built around social solidarity and equality. The World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in January this year drew over 100,000 trade unionists, environmentalists, NGOs and left political activists, committed to resisting neoliberalism and exploring alternative futures under the slogan 'Another World is Possible'. Similar European Forums have been held over the past three years in Florence, Paris and London, radicalising new generations of activists to campaign for a fairer world.

Such events are critical in opening up new spaces of debate around a progressive left agenda for the twenty first century. Building a new discourse means moving the debate onto a



different terrain than that occupied by the Labour Party and other European social democratic parties who have meekly followed the free market agenda of the Right in recent decades, with a social policy tacked on, in sticking plaster fashion, to market driven policies. More fundamental questions need to be asked, such as, what is an economy for? And, how should it be organised for the benefit of the many and not the few? But it also means developing a new range of concrete proposals that resonate with the daily realities of people's lives and indeed that emerge from the experience of those at the sharp end of corporate restructuring, privatisation and the destruction of the public sector.

Framed in these terms, the development of an alternative economic strategy which has mass appeal is clearly not an easy task for it requires combining philosophical engagement with practical application. Such an approach was very much at the heart of the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci's, call for a counter-hegemonic project in the 1930s, in which socialist ideas connect with the material concerns of those at the sharp end of capitalism. Today, Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis', where an alternative politics emerges organically alongside material struggles against market pressures and capitalistic exploitation, is more evident in the Global South than in Europe's advanced economies, which, to some extent, remain (for the moment!) insulated from the pure effects of market forces by strong welfare states. In Latin America in particular, the devastating consequences of IMF-sponsored market reforms and liberalisation have given rise to radical and popular movements in countries as diverse as Bolivia, Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil. The development of more radical alternative economic agendas in some of these countries has led to policies such as land redistribution, re-nationalisation and the collectivisation of factories. The outcome of such developments remains uncertain and open-ended but they are a reminder of the importance of alternative imaginations in structuring day-to-day struggles.

This is a reality forgotten by much of the Left in the 'developed' north, both within political parties and in the trade union movement. The politics of TINA (there is no alternative to free market capitalism in an age of globalisation) has been fully absorbed by the Labour Party and other social democratic parties in Western Europe, who have given up on the urgent task of forging alternative strategies to the current dominant economic model. Forging an alternative strategy means returning to some older left economic themes such as controlling financial speculation and mobility (e.g. Tobin Tax); a macroeconomic policy underpinned by full employment rather than fighting inflation; redistribution of income through a more progressive system of taxation; a commitment to a shorter working week of thirty five hours as a stepping stone to a goal over five years of thirty hours; a campaign for a decent minimum wage; and fuller recognition of unions, employment rights and co-determination at work. But it also means renewing economic democracy at a more fundamental level.

In the original Maastricht Treat there was of course a social dimension to the integration project, though famously the subject of a British opt-out at the time under John Major. But over time, the economic has increasingly pushed the social and indeed environmental agendas into the background. Even with a stronger social dimension, as long as economic decision-making is dominated by business interests, there



will be little opportunity to tackle Europe's central problems of unemployment and inequality. One of the guiding philosophies of the European integration project, reflecting its (neo)liberal principles is that the economic sphere is separate from the social and the political. Whilst a rather nebulous 'civil society' and a restructured state are needed in the latter, this approach is one which sees the economic sphere as best left to businesses and the markets to achieve optimal solutions. Indeed, the ceding of power to Brussels institutions would make it very difficult – though not impossible – for future left governments to roll back privatisation. It is here that the Left needs to go on the offensive, developing new models and ideas for economic democracy and greater employee and consumer participation in economic decision-making. In particular, new forms of public ownership are needed that replace the centralised and rather tainted 'Morrisonian' model of the post-war nationalisation being replaced by a diversity of more localised cooperative and mutualist forms of organisation, depending upon particular sectoral and social contexts. A particular danger at present is that as privatisation becomes increasingly untenable, in areas such as public transport and energy, forms of re-regulation are constructed that re-impose state-managerialism, at the expense of more democratic and participatory structures.

There are signs of a growing debate in Scotland over an alternative economic agenda, witnessed by the emergence of publications such as Scottish Left Review and the recent electoral success of the Scottish Socialists and the Greens, but there remains too little open dialogue between the different parts of the Left. To foster greater communication and discussion, an Alternative Economic Strategy for Scotland network has recently been established and held its first workshop at the STUC in October 2004 (see [web.geog.gla.ac.uk/~acumbers/strategy.htm](http://web.geog.gla.ac.uk/~acumbers/strategy.htm) for the papers presented). A further workshop was held at the G8 Alternatives Summit in Edinburgh in July with another one-day conference planned for the end of the year. More of these events are required if the Left in Scotland is to play its part in the development of a broader response to neo-liberalism and the battle over the future of Europe. ■

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# uncle sam hasn't lost the plot...

...he never grasped it in the first place, argues Derrick White

In the world of Management Training there is a standard problem-solving formula which has several logical stages. The first four are a) Define the problem, b) List all possible causes, c) List all possible solutions and d) - Select the best solution. When George W Bush decided to wage war against what he called **Terror** after 9/11, he went straight to stage d). He never even paused at stage b). For people to be so incensed with fury and loathing as to plan and execute the most spectacular peacetime atrocity in history, shows a depth of passion beyond normal western understanding. Simultaneous attacks on the Twin Towers, the Pentagon and the White House, icons of US hegemony, demand a serious analysis of stage b) - all possible causes. Vague generalisations that **these people hate our way of life** or that **these people hate freedom** are products of intellectual laziness or, worse, intellectual vacuity. People do not kill others in great numbers at the same time sacrificing their own lives without some powerful force of zealousness eating at their very soul. No one leaves the womb with an innate sense of loathing for freedom or the life style of other people.

The clues were there. Several attacks had been carried out by suicide bombers against US embassies and commercial or military compounds in Africa and the Middle East. The term **The Great Satan** began to be used frequently by the more fundamentalist Muslims. Alas, the word Satan has lost its significance in the West. Calling someone a Devil is now mildly flattering and bears none of the fire and brimstone fear once engendered from the pulpits of Christian churches a century ago. The insult, Great Satan was looked upon with mild amusement. Anyway, said the US bible belt, how on earth could we be the great Satan, we are the good guys. Generations of American movies have portrayed the GI and the US Marine as decent home-loving boys happiest when eating mother's blueberry pie. Even the travesties that were Korea

and Vietnam were re-run on celluloid with a green-bereted John Wayne or an oiled Rambo twisting the facts to make them more palatable for the folks back home. Rusty Calley and massacres such as Mai Lai were not included nor was the devastation wreaked by Napalm and Agent Orange. Uncle Sam always wore the white hat and nasty 'gook's or 'commies' were invariably the evil ones. Decent Americans, 92 per cent of whom do not even own a passport, have been force fed a diet of movies, Dell comics, Saturday Evening Post folksiness and Fox news since the days of Senator Joe McCarthy and before. The loathing in the term The Great Satan went completely

over Uncle Sam's head. It made it easier for The White House to adopt such facile terminology as 'these people hate freedom, they are just terrorists and killers who hate our way of life'. We in the west shook our heads with incomprehension at these bearded fanatics and madmen. We overlooked stage b).

Tony Blair adopted Bush's phrase that these people 'hate our

way of life'. It is intrinsically dishonest and is intended to mislead. Our reaction is to believe how unreasonable and warped 'these people' are. Our way of life to us is double-decker buses, cricket, pub lunches, Coronation Street, football and a deckchair by the beach. Uncle Sam enjoys baseball, the big football game, drive-in burger bars, basketball and a turkey dinner at Thanksgiving. How could anyone be so mentally unbalanced as to hate our way of life? Tony Blair, from the safety of a bullet proof No. 10 or the concrete blocked parliament, defiantly tells the terrorists that they won't change us and we will go about our business as normal. Another sound-bite distortion. If normal means streets and public places patrolled by grim looking policemen armed with machine-guns; if normal means passengers avoiding carriages containing brown skinned people carrying rucksacks; if normal means an unparalleled surge in racist attacks and if normal means a young Brazilian man having no fewer than eight bullets being pumped into him by hyped-up policemen then it is not the normality we expect. To highlight the innate dishonesty in the weasel phrase about hating our way of life, compare it to the dark days of IRA attacks. No one ever tried that dismissive line with them and it was only through thorough analysis of stage b) that the Good Friday Agreement was made possible. Northern Irish Nationalists had endured rank discrimination since the foundation of Stormont in the nineteen-twenties, this hurt was compounded by centuries of oppression by John Bull. Memories of British rule such as The Famine period when the population dropped from eight million to fewer than four are not easily erased. Men like Bobby Sands and the 'blanket' protestors could not just be dismissed as fanatics. Only by grasping the pain, frustration and bitterness felt by the native Irish did Whitehall reach any semblance of a solution.

The collective Arab memory is long and the sense of identity among the followers of Islam, whether Arab or not, is strong.

George W Bush with the innocence of a limited IQ and an even more limited grasp of world history, chose the word 'crusade' to describe his 'war on terror'. In lands where Red Cross vehicles are unknown and only Red Crescent markings indicate first aid and ambulance services, the word crusade has an offensive ring. To the devout Muslim, Satan is a real force for evil and there is no schoolboy imagery in his mind when he calls the US The Great Satan. Both Bush and Blair must appreciate that our 'way of life' has nothing whatever to do with double-decker buses or Thanksgiving dinners. Blair already must know this but prefers to ape Mr Bush in an underhand attempt to disguise

the link between July 7 and his invasion of Iraq. What disgusts the devout Muslim is a whole range of insults perpetrated by the west and the perception of widespread decadence throughout the so-called Christian world. Ask any Christian where the Holy Land is and he will answer Jerusalem, Nazareth and Bethlehem. To the Muslim, though respectful of Palestine, it is Saudi Arabia with the pilgrim cities of Mecca, Medina and

**While we snigger at the archaic at the old-fashioned aspersion The Great Satan, it has a much deeper meaning to the Islamic fundamentalist**

Jidda. The Americans, motivated entirely by the pursuit of greater wealth, have had a presence in Saudi Arabia since oil was discovered in 1936. Greed on the part of both the ruling Aziz family and Uncle Sam created a symbiotic relationship, which generated deep resentment in the greater Muslim family. Americans and other westerners were allowed pursue their decadent ways in enclaves within the Arab holy lands. The artificial statelet Kuwait, without the sacrilegious overtone, similarly offended the Muslim conscience. Muslims have watched their co-religionists in Palestine suffer death, injury, pain and massive indignity by the hand of Israel, a client state of Uncle Sam. From the Crusades, to the British occupation of Afghanistan in 1879 along with Muslim India pre-1947, Aden and other colonial conquests down to overt and covert interferences in the governing of Arab states, a well of resentment has festered in the Middle East. Arabia has not forgotten the disgraceful action by Anthony Eden's government in 1956 when Britain tried to re-take the Suez Canal from the Egyptians by force of arms, supported by France and Israel. Even the avaricious Americans felt compelled to condemn the UK for this immoral and hopelessly inept action.

The Muslim code on modesty, particularly regarding women, is strict in the extreme yet satellite channels beam episodes of Baywatch around the world depicting pneumatic and near-naked young women frolicking on beaches with men other than their husbands. Our pre-watershed soap-operas treat adultery as a matter of course. Glossy magazines abound on every newsstand containing an infinite variety of naked flesh. Young men and women seem incapable of having a good time without the consumption of vast amounts of alcohol.

Residents in foreign holiday resorts have gone beyond the point of disgust at the behaviour of British youth as they stagger, vomit and copulate with no regard for their hosts. In the west, sex has developed from something we whispered about only a couple of generations ago into a standard recreational activity with the concomitant massive rise in unwanted pregnancies, abortions and sexually transmitted diseases. Our red-topped tabloid papers are incapable of printing an issue without their front pages being awash with buttocks and breasts or the much prized knickers-shot as some starlet steps inelegantly from a car. We have become so inured to this sea of downmarket sleaze that we no longer notice the decline in our own standards. To the devout Muslim who still prays five times a day and will not make eye-contact with a woman other than his wife our spiral into decadence is repellent. Devout Muslims still disapprove of the sin of usury while our media includes as a matter of course business pages on interest rates, big killings on the stock market and massive bonuses for unworthy CEOs. Muslim shopkeepers and restaurateurs are polite, helpful and attentive. They work for more hours and provide a better service than any comparable aboriginal British trader. Their children are more disciplined, industrious and ambitious. Their elderly are seldom placed in old people's homes but are cared for within the family.

While we snigger at the old-fashioned aspersion The

Great Satan, it has a much deeper meaning to the Islamic fundamentalist. Most Muslims were sympathetic to the removal of Saddam Hussein. What caused such deep anger was, firstly, the prelude to the invasion where sanctions deprived children of adequate food and medicine. Then there was the indiscriminate nature of the bombing. Even now debate rages on how many the US and British forces actually killed. A hundred thousand seems to be the generally recognised figure. Added to the casualties were the double standards of Blair-speak and Bush-speak. These people 'hate freedom, hate democracy, and are just terrorists and killers'. The condemnation of terrorists and killers from the people who gave us Hiroshima and Nagasaki

and a million Vietnamese corpses may seem at best somewhat blinkered, even to western ears. Lectures on freedom and justice did not go down too well from those responsible for Abu Graib or Guantanamo Bay or Belmarsh for that matter. The scenes of torture networked on the world's media were those recorded in photographic form; what else went on in these appalling places?

Until the west undertakes a comprehensive and totally open-minded view of Middle Eastern history and begins to understand the burning resentment that can motivate Islamic extremists, it cannot move on to a wholly satisfactory solution. Dismissing the suicide bombers as terrorists and killers who hate our way of life will not only solve nothing but is more likely to ratchet up the ferocity of their hatred. Blair's wholly dishonest attempt to evade the connection between the invasion of Iraq and July 7 is not only

shameful but counterproductive. In media broadcasts one can detect the Blair spin-machine at work. All his cabinet seems briefed with the same words when it comes to July 7. "9/11 happened long before Iraq" is a save-all line in constant use followed by "nowhere is safe - 36 countries (the number can vary) have been attacked". None of the Blair loyalists pauses to admit that in all the countries who suffered bombings it was not the nation itself that was the target, it was more typically, American or UK embassies, American or British institutions or businesses, or in the case of Bali, it was not the Balinese but Australian and British disco-goers who were the target. Madrid was the product of Aznar's craven support of Bush along with his vanity and self-aggrandisement. The Spanish people had the good sense to oust him. As a spokesman for Al Qaida put it, 'why haven't we attacked Sweden'?



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# reviews

## Radical Politics in Modern Ireland: The Irish Socialist Republican Party 1896-1904

David Lynch, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2005, £35

“The struggle for Irish freedom has two aspects. It is national and it is social. The national ideal can never be realised until Ireland stands before the world as a nation free and independent. It is social and economic because no matter what the form of government may be, as long as one class owns as private property the land and instruments of labour from which mankind derive their substance, that class will always have it in their power to plunder and enslave the remainder of their fellow creatures.”

It was with these words, which capture clearly the central tenets of his politics thereafter, that James Connolly launched the Irish Socialist Republican Party (ISRP) in May 1896. The ISRP was Connolly’s first political party in Ireland and one that he established after only a few weeks in the country. Despite the enduring interest in Connolly’s life and politics, an interest that has intensified of late, this is the first in-depth study of one of Connolly’s most important parties. In bringing to life this organisation and subjecting it to a close but fair examination, David Lynch has undoubtedly made a worthwhile contribution to both the biography of James Connolly and the historiography of Irish socialism.

There is much good material in this book. One of the real highlights is Lynch’s exploration of Connolly’s position on the Boer War of 1899-1902. Unlike most socialists of that time — and of 1914 also — Connolly grasped the connection between capitalism, imperialism and war and applied it to the situation in South Africa. For Connolly, the war was a result of the British bourgeoisie’s need to seek out new sources of profit and exploitation. As a result of this analysis, Connolly offered support to the Boer campaign. As Lynch points out, however, this was in no way an endorsement by Connolly of the racist and reactionary politics of the Boers, but a position based on the view that a defeat for British imperialism — the most powerful imperialism of that time — would precipitate a crisis within British capitalism and open up revolutionary socialist opportunities in Ireland and throughout the British Empire. It was an extremely advanced position for any socialist of that period to adopt and one that marked Connolly out as an innovative and ingenious Marxist theoretician. Equally valuable is Lynch’s treatment of the demise of the ISRP. Whereas many historians have put this down in large part to personality disputes and financial problems, exacerbated by Connolly’s absence — he was in the USA on a speaking tour for long periods during 1902-3 — Lynch adopts a different approach. He sees it in the context of the divisions that were opening up within the international socialist

movement during this period, between revolutionaries and reformists. Just as in Europe, so too in Ireland there was such a division and for Lynch, who details also the unkind objective conditions the party faced, it was one that proved destructive in the extreme to the ISRP.

Where Lynch is perhaps open to criticism is in his treatment of Connolly’s attitude towards Irish republicans. Lynch takes Connolly to task for adopting what he considers to be an uncritical attitude towards these elements. He argues that Connolly’s view that a native Irish capitalism would be unable to develop — which would dash the hopes of the small petty-bourgeois republican groupings who aspired towards an economically advanced Irish republic and push them towards socialism as the only means of achieving full independence and development — was both flawed and proved counter-productive for the party. Lynch argues that whilst Connolly was right to work with the republicans on certain issues, he

should have subjected their confused politics to a far more thorough critique. In Connolly’s defense, however, it should be noted that his main enemy, aside from the British, was the bourgeois nationalist Home Rule party, which dominated Irish politics completely in this period. Connolly despised this organisation. He considered that the Home Rulers were pro-imperialist toadies, who were itching for a compromise settlement with the British that would keep Ireland in the empire but allow them a share in the exploitation of the Irish working class. Understandably then, most of Connolly’s withering polemics were aimed in this direction, not towards the tiny advanced nationalist

groupings, which he clearly considered to be potential allies in the struggle against the Home Rule party and whose republican goals he believed could be only achieved through socialism. Moreover, it is also the case that the manner in which Ireland developed for a long period after 1922 — a six county colony in the north governed in the interests of a capitalist class totally dependent on British imperialism and a 26 county neo-colony in the south, governed by a comprador bourgeoisie that was both unwilling and unable to develop Ireland politically or economically — endorses rather than challenges the Connolly thesis concerning the weaknesses of Irish capitalism and its inability to deliver the republican ideal of the independent and economically advanced 32 county state. Connolly might not have won over large numbers of republicans to socialism, but his view that only through socialism could the republic be established is one that has been validated by history.

Overall, however, this is a fine book. The ISRP was an important party and one worthy of such close study. Its fusion of the national and social questions provided the ideological model adopted by all subsequent Irish socialist organizations. From James Connolly’s son Roddy’s Communist Party of Ireland in 1921 onwards, the politics first espoused by the ISRP have

**The lesson that only through socialism can small nations ever be free from the nightmare of imperialist occupation and exploitation has never been more needed**

been the politics of Irish socialism thereafter. And they are politics which have an even wider resonance today and a relevance that goes beyond Ireland. Because in a world where capitalist imperialism attempts to mask its destructive rapacity behind a phoney 'war on terror', the ideas of James Connolly, who understood the connection between the requirements of capitalism and the slaughter of war and who taught small nations that only through socialism could they ever be free from the nightmare of imperialist occupation and exploitation, have never been more needed. ■

*Charlie McGuire*

### **Scottish Nationalism and the Idea of Europe: Concepts of Europe and the Nation**

**Atsuko Ichijo; Routledge; Oxon, UK; 2004; £65; xv + 176 pp.**

Why have Scottish nationalists become keener to the idea of European integration in the last twenty years? In an integrated Europe, can a stateless nation achieve sovereignty? Is Scottish independence a goal for many Scots or just certain politicians? The person who understands the answers to these questions understands contemporary Scottish nationalism in today's Europe. Though these questions are not easy to answer, Atsuko Ichijo was not satisfied with the effortless answers her predecessors have tried to pass off as scholarly work and accepted the challenge to understand Scottish nationalism. In **Scottish Nationalism and the Idea of Europe**, Ichijo answers difficult questions regarding Scottish nationalism to fellow non-Scots by showing why Scottish nationalists have become pro-Europe, how Scotland can achieve independence in an integrated Europe, and that these ideas are gaining popularity in many aspects of Scottish society.

The most defining factor of Scottish nationalism, Ichijo says, is its history. Nationalism has existed in Scotland for centuries and this long history has benefited the nationalists. Ichijo shows that the number of historical events which have happened in Scotland has given nationalists a large amount of evidence to draw from to support their claims. Nationalists can use arguments that say that Scotland has historically been a moral nation, that Scotland has historically been closer to Europe than England has been, and that Scotland has always had goods and talents to offer to Europe. Nationalists can use these historic claims to help show both Scots and Europeans that Scotland is good for Europe. Yet Scottish history, as Ichijo explains, shows that Scottish nationalism has not always been pro-Europe. The Scottish National Party (SNP) and many other nationalist Scots opposed European integration up through the 1970s. However, Ichijo shows that Margaret Thatcher's government reminded Scotland of the differences between the two nations. Many Scots also began to equate being English with being anti-Europe. Since the Scots were definitely not English, it was only logical to be pro-Europe.

Ichijo then says that Scottish nationalists also grew fonder of Europe because they realised how it could benefit them. Regardless of a new, binding union with the European Union, Europe could act as the road for independence from an increasingly power-hungry UK. Europe would be a better replacement for England, and a place where Scotland, though small, could be respected and admired for its talents. 'Independence in Europe,' (a slogan of the SNP) regardless of the fact that a union would still bind Scotland in many ways, would at least provide Scotland with complete autonomy and a larger voice in contemporary Europe. Perhaps in order to keep her readers close to reality, Ichijo reminds them that the SNP, whose growth acts as an indicator of the rise or decline in separatist feelings, is still only the second-largest party in the Scottish Parliament. While many people feel that independence in Europe is necessary, there are others who do not feel it is and do not vote that way either. Ichijo's ability to notice this and stay relatively unbiased is one of her strongest qualifications. Being Japanese, Ichijo sees the subject without the same nationalistic passion a Brit or Scot would. While she makes it clear that not all Scots share the same political views regarding independence, she shows through statistics and surveys that the movement for Scottish sovereignty in Europe is gaining popularity with academicians, politicians, and the general public.

Ichijo does an excellent job while writing on a controversial topic; she is unbiased and informed. Her arguments are strongly supported, yet they are also interesting! Though some might consider it a challenge to write a boring book about Scottish nationalism and European integration, there are a few

who could complete that task. Yet her writing is engaging and thought-provoking. However, her book needs more length (and a discount from the price of £65). To argue anything based on at least eight hundred years of Scottish history in one book (let alone multiple volumes) is an impossible task, but at less than two hundred pages, the book oftentimes needs further explanation or background information.

Regardless of the length, Ichijo brings to life the evolution of Scottish nationalism and its relationship with contemporary Europe. She helps her reader understand Scottish nationalism by showing how history spawned nationalists' fonder sentiments for Europe,

how 'Independence in Europe' is possible, and how both of these arguments are gaining popularity in Scotland. Thanks to Ichijo's interest and effort to dig beneath the obvious answers, the person that reads this book, whether ignorant of Scotland's movement or not, understands much more about Scottish nationalism in today's Europe. ■

*Clinton R. Long*

# web review

Henry McCubbin

This edition of SLR is a tour around our relationships with the formal political institutions in Europe and an investigation through articles to find how much we have in common cause with radicals on the continent.

Handicapped, as always in the UK, by our inadequacies in languages we believe that there is a need for us to expand our contributions to reviewing other writings by those like minded. We are assisted in this by the availability of some amazing translation engines available via the web. Although machine translation can still be crude compared to the work of a skilled interpreter it does permit the rapid exchange of internet documents which, with some judicious editing, can contribute to the debate both here and in other countries. For instance the ongoing industrial conflict in Austria as its right wing governments attempts to break up their national railways in preparation for privatisation is a topic which our own RMT could both be informed by and also inform their Austrian colleagues.

This edition's list is of a group of networks, some with English pages some without but all providing intellectual fair to hasten demolition of the neo-liberal nostrums of the European Political elite. It's good to know that there are people out there on our side.

The network really started with Transform! Italy which is a network born for encouraging initiative within and between

cultural associations, publishing houses, groups and collectives, intellectuals and researchers, activists of workers organisations and movement, exponents of the academic world and individuals from different experiences of political, social and cultural organisations. From that beginning others, already active in their own countries, have joined in. A selection is given below, all of whom cascade the network through their own links. It can be the start of an interesting journey.

- Transform! Network [www.transform-network.org](http://www.transform-network.org)
- Transform! Italia (Italy) [www.transform.it](http://www.transform.it)
- Espaces Marx (France) [www.espaces-marx.org](http://www.espaces-marx.org)
- Fondation Copernic [www.fondation-copernic.org](http://www.fondation-copernic.org)
- Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (Germany) [www.rosalux.de/engl/home.htm](http://www.rosalux.de/engl/home.htm)
- Sozialismus [www.sozialismus.de/socialist](http://www.sozialismus.de/socialist)
- Fundación de Investigaciones Marxistas (Spain) [www.nodo50.org/fim](http://www.nodo50.org/fim)
- Nicos Poulantzas Society (Greece) [www.eppnp.gr](http://www.eppnp.gr)
- Centre for Social Marxist Studies (Sweden) [www.cmsmarx.org/indexeng.htm](http://www.cmsmarx.org/indexeng.htm)



**Campaigning for the return of rail to the public sector**

**Campaigning to keep Caledonian MacBrayne's lifeline ferry services in public hands**

**Let's put the public back in public transport**

**Bob Crow, General Secretary**

**Tony Donaghey, President**

# Kick Up The Tabloids

## Hoodie Statue Asbo Scandal

Industrial action has re-emerged to replace the lack of World Cup action to pass the long summer days. British Airways staff walked off the job (pretty tricky at thirty thousand feet above the Atlantic) over a dispute about airline meals. This led BA to cancel flights in order not to compromise quality. Quite how not having a BA meal would reduce the quality of a flight was not made clear. Meanwhile Scottish farmers blockaded dairy distributors and demanded a fair price for their milk. The farmers scored some success in disrupting supplies and claimed to be at the vanguard of a new wave of action on behalf of small food producers, although preventing Scottish people from eating vegetables may be expected to have slightly less of an impact.

In Angus controversy raged over the commissioning of the statue of a hood: not on this occasion Colin Fox, but rather a teenager wearing a hooded top. Now whilst a stoned teenager should not raise an eyebrow in Scotland, the fact that Angus Council had paid for the statue to be placed in a local square certainly has. Opponents were less concerned about the initial payment to the sculptor, but rather the escalating expenses incurred by the need to remove the statue each night after 9 PM to comply with the child curfew likely to be imposed. Surely the first statue with an ASBO would have to be a frontrunner in next year's Turner Prize. Meanwhile the Edinburgh Festival played host to a festival of politics, quite appropriate given the similarities of Fringe performing with political activism: handing out leaflets that nobody reads and playing to five pensioners in a community hall who are raging that the beetle drive has been cancelled. The Scottish Parliament played host to the event (see, the money was worth it) and previous opponent of non-elected second chambers, Lord Kinross's impassioned plea for integrity in civic life surely merited the Perrier Award for comedy.

George Galloway also attended the event and lamented the demise of Tommy Sheridan whom he described as a socialist leader in his own image (fake tan and smart suits). George showed his mastery of the historic need for solidarity in progressive politics by saying that if the SSP continued to perform badly it may force him to organise Respect in Scotland. Much of the mockery of the SSP has been targeted at Colin Fox, with the SNP in particular criticising him for dressing as Robin Hood and wearing green tights in street campaigning. Presumably red, white and blue or a summery orange would have been more appropriate. Continuing on this theme, for some hard to fathom reason, Peter Mandelson has taken a close personal interest in the bra wars with China.

A re-enactment of the burial of William Wallace's remains, strangely involving one rather than half a dozen coffins, sparked

debate amongst Scottish historians about his true role and led them to lament that a large number of Scottish people were under the misapprehension that the Stirling Bridge hero was not in fact a right wing Australian actor. Meanwhile everyone in Scottish schools passed all the exams, including the jannies. A new educational theory is to be piloted in our schools allowing pupils up to five swear words per lesson. What will happen in the last 59 minutes of a class has not been explained.

Kenneth Clark delighted Scottish Tories by his announcement to stand (with a walking aid) for the leadership. He dismissed as irrelevant concerns that his age would prevent him from the role. Quite right given the prospects of him actually assuming the stresses of being Prime Minister. As Scotland's world-conquerors Franz Ferdinand closed the Edinburgh Festival with 'Take Me Out', Pat Buchanan was suggesting this would be a very good idea for the US to take with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Whilst Nigel Griffiths wanted Buchanan banned under new incitement laws, Gordon Strachan pleaded with the Americans to take no action until Chavez ("Aye, he sounds like a good player") had been given a 12-month loan period at Parkhead. Griffiths was right however. There is no likelihood of foreigners being required to stir religious hatred given our overcrowded home market in this stuff. Pat Buchanan of course famously declared that Scotland was a dark place (he missed out the pishing rain) where homosexuals were too strong. Whether he meant this literally as the result of a personal experience was never stated.

Finally, our ever-vigilant corporate shenanigans watch has noticed that SERCO, who so successfully run Scotland's only private jail, are in the frame to run electronic tagging systems. This will involve SERCO in putting tags on teenagers in order that they cannot be shoplifted from stores. SERCO have already promised to tag the hooded statue in Angus, and will be receive a bonus payment, from the taxpayer, of £1,000 for every hour the statue remains in the same position. ■

*Kick Up the Tabloids is the Stand Comedy Club's monthly satirical comedy show. Totally live and interactive, it offers an irreverent take on who and what has been making the news in Scotland or beyond. The Kick Up the Tabloids team include regulars Bruce Devlin, Susan Morrison, Paul Sneddon, Frankie Boyle and Miles Jupp with surprise guest appearances. The show takes place on the third Wednesday each month at The Stand, Yorkhill Place, Edinburgh (Tel 0131 558 7373 or visit the website at [www.thestand.co.uk](http://www.thestand.co.uk)). Doors open at 7.30pm, with the show kicking off at 9pm.*

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## no idea

control, liberation and the social imagination

“The free market project has been as much about the contraction of hope as about the expansion of the economy. They didn’t want to defeat the Labour movement, they wanted to defeat the belief that there could be a Labour movement.”

Almost every change in the history of mankind has come from an idea or vision which was shared by a small group of people which grew bigger. This is the social imagination. Almost every one of those ideas was opposed and resisted and almost every one of those people was persecuted or marginalised. This is the control of the social imagination.

While we no longer burn our heretics, they are now caught up in a complex and powerful web of control which discredits and silences them. A sense of resignation – or even hopelessness – is encouraged in order to suppress new ideas at source. The result is that we live in a grossly unequal society in a grossly unequal world and yet we have no widely-shared persuasive ideas about how things should be changed for the better.

**No Idea** argues that if we can understand the ways in which the social imagination is controlled, we can recapture it. If we can recapture it, ideas will come and change will happen.

Available at [www.slrpress.org](http://www.slrpress.org)

