

CHANGING THE POLITICS OF EUROPE:
A EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM SPECIAL

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

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POLICIA



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comment

“Write as if you are writing in the early days of a better world.” So said Scottish novelist Alisdair Gray. And perhaps, for the first time in a long time, it is possible to believe that these words are indeed being written in the early days of a better world. This issue of the Scottish Left Review goes on sale at the European Social Forum (ESF), which takes place in Paris from the 12 to the 19 November. The ESF is part of a new landscape emerging in the early years of this new century which offers hope of real change. It emerged from the World Social Forum (WSF) which began in Porto Allegre in Brazil in 2001, which in turn emerged from a range of movements around the world; the anti-globalisation protests in the north, the radicalisation of small farmers, indigenous peoples, women and many of the other dispossessed peoples of the south.

If you are reading this in Scotland and you don't know about the WSF, then you should find out about it. (Another World is Possible by William F Fisher and Thomas Ponniah, Zed Books 2003 would be a good starting point - you should be able to get a copy in Edinburgh's radical bookshop Word Power among other places. Alternatively, have a look at the report of last year's WSF at www.portoalegre2003.org or find details of next year's at www.wsfindia.org) You should find out about it partly because you should really be familiar with what is an enormously important development, but just as importantly because it is likely to fill you with some optimism that Bush, Blair and the people operating them are not the only voices in the world. Among the amazingly diverse activists who make up the WSF (from French radical economists to Latin American women's groups, from US trades unions to peasant farmers from India) you will find a great number of ideas for how to change the world for the better, and an even greater amount of enthusiasm to begin the task now.

If you are reading this in Paris and you aren't familiar with the political changes in our small country, let us introduce ourselves. For three hundred years Scotland had no Parliament of its own. It was governed by a UK-wide Parliament from London. Scotland has less than ten per cent of the population of the UK, so despite the fact that for at least forty years Scotland has consistently voted for the British Labour Party, it spent the majority of that time being governed by a Conservative government elected by England (or more specifically, the prosperous south of England). This ended in 1999. Two years earlier the Scottish people voted overwhelmingly in a referendum for a devolved Parliament in Scotland with limited tax-raising powers. It has no control over defence, macroeconomic or

foreign policy, but in most other areas of policy we are now able to make our own choices in Scotland.

The Scottish Parliament is elected by a proportional system, the first time an election in the UK has used this form of voting. Even though the possibilities of this system were not well understood by the people of Scotland, in the first election to the Parliament in 1999, a radical socialist, a Green and a strongly left-wing independent candidate were elected. This was more or less the first time in recent years that representatives from radical political parties were elected to a legislature in the UK. Earlier this year the second election to the Parliament took place, with people much better informed about the potential of the voting system. This time the Scottish people returned seven Greens, six socialists, three left-wing independents and a representative of a party campaigning for pensioners rights. Together they form a significant block of 17 in a Parliament of 129 members.

So Scotland is increasingly willing to do something different from the free-market model slavishly followed by London. Many in Scotland would like to align the country not with London, Madrid, Rome, Tel Aviv, Bogotá and Washington - the Axis of, well, America - but rather with the Scandinavian countries, the Baltic countries and other small countries in Europe who follow (or might follow) a different model.

Outside of Europe, Scotland has built good links with Cuba and there is a desire to build more such relationships. Large countries and countries in the control of the powerful Trans National Corporations (TNCs) are much harder to change. Financial centres protect themselves well and the interests of money are pursued where money is most concentrated. Just as much of the change across the world has come from outside the big centres of power (as the IMF was draining the last available profit from Buenos Aires, workers around Argentina were taking matters into their own hands) so global change may come as smaller and weaker countries decide to take matters into **their** own hands. It began in Cancun, where they stopped the TNCs getting another license to print money at the expense of the world's poor, and in the United Nations where smaller nations played an important role in sending Blair and Bush off to war without a fig leaf of legality.

The Scottish Left Review was set up in 1999 to provide a space and a voice for the left in Scotland. It is not linked to any political party but is open to any writer who is angry at the world we live in and wants to change it. We wanted to play a small part in reaching out from Scotland to others who are also angry and who also want change, and that is why we decided to produce this special issue. We have brought together a wide range of writers from across the new political landscape of the left in Scotland and asked them to write not about whether there should be change, but how it should be started. We wanted to do this to encourage our regular readers to think about what part they might play in the new politics of hope in Europe, but also to send out a message that very many people in Scotland want our small country to do what it can.

We wanted to play a small part in reaching out from Scotland to others who are also angry and who also want change

At the heart of the issue is our 'Ideas Project' in which we asked a number of people to put forward their ideas for change. Not a manifesto but (we hope) a source of inspiration. The idea seemed so valuable to us that we are also using this issue to extend the project. We

have registered the website www.ideasdirectory.org and hopefully you will soon be able to visit it and both enter your own ideas and browse ideas from many other people.

So, finally, if you **are** reading this in Paris, please get in contact with us. Drop us an email for publication to feedback@scottishleftreview.org, just send us a message to contact@scottishleftreview.org or simply keep up with events in Scotland by reading the magazine online at www.scottishleftreview.org.

It is our firm belief that change will only come if people who want to see change link together and work together. We have to communicate - talk as if we are talking in the early days of a better world. ■

new voices from small countries

Alex Salmond argues that small countries unburdened by imperialist aspirations have an important part to play in shaping a new world

The SNP seeks Scottish Independence not just for the good of Scotland - but also for the good that an independent Scotland can do in the world. That's because the Scottish National Party is also the Scottish **Internationalist** Party.

Inevitably, the bulk of the debate on Scottish Independence down the years has been concerned with its domestic implications, although the SNP always have engaged with the big international questions. For example, when Britain and America were falling over themselves to arm Saddam Hussein in the 1980s, the SNP championed the plight of the oppressed Kurdish nation, and their cause of freedom.

But the events since 11 September 2001 - not least the illegal and unnecessary war in Iraq waged by the US and UK - means that it is more important than ever to develop a distinctive Scottish approach to global affairs, and a vision for an independent Scotland's place in the world. The twentieth century witnessed the widespread application of the principle of self-determination, and the emergence of small nations exercising their independence within wider regional and global institutions. Totalitarian ideology and big state power politics snuffed out the early potential for small, independent nations to emerge fully from the shadows of their large neighbours, and argue for an alternative global agenda. But the momentous developments in Europe at the end of the Millennium - the creation and evolution of a regional economic union in the West, and the collapse of Soviet hegemony in the East - have created powerful opportunities for small states to play an autonomous, even leading, role in the world today.

The days are long gone when the route to national security and economic prosperity lay in maximising the amount of territory within a single political entity. In the past, small states with a limited domestic market were the most vulnerable to being shut out of markets by protectionism. The single - and expanding - European market means that small nations can now have all of the economic upsides of independence, and none of the downsides.

Similarly, in a world where the principal security threat no longer comes from inter-state war, but from international terrorism, global poverty and resulting insecurity, a large

landmass and vast expenditure on military hardware is no defence. The events of September 11 were the most graphic - and terrible - illustration of these new realities. The absurd irony of the Iraq conflict was that the US and UK went to war because of weapons of mass destruction that Saddam didn't have - while Bush and Blair have huge nuclear armouries from the 'Cold War' that are militarily unusable and useless in protecting people from the new threat that is international terrorism.

Scotland could and should establish itself as a world leader in the field of aiding and assisting conflict resolution.

Co-operating internationally to resolve the seeds of conflict and gather proper intelligence information - as opposed to the propaganda that was used to justify war in Iraq - are the only ways to build a stable and peaceful international community. The small nations can play an important role in building the kind of international relations that are needed for the 21st century. The Middle East peace process was kick-started by Norway ten years ago, leading to the breakthrough of the Oslo Accords and the establishment of an autonomous Palestinian Authority. A small country started the process - but tragically the biggest power, the United

States, was unable to close the deal before the end of the Clinton Presidency, and the situation has since spiralled out of control.

The lesson of Norway's contribution is that a small country can act as an honest broker for mutual foes, free from suspicion that their involvement is motivated by colonial legacies or the interests of regional power projection. Recently, tiny Lichtenstein hosted peace discussions to help resolve the conflict in Chechnya, based on a proposal for special status for Chechnya, backed up by international guarantees and complete demilitarisation.

As a nation in the process of self-government - and which has already secured significant constitutional change in a totally peaceful, democratic fashion - I believe that Scotland could and should establish itself as a world leader in the field of aiding and assisting conflict resolution. Already, the seeds of what is possible exist. Following a visit to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia this summer by my Westminster colleague Angus Robertson - under the auspices of an agency specialising in state-building in the Caucasus - senior parliamentarians from each of

these nations will be coming to Speyside in December to hold discussions aimed at resolving the conflict over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Most of the conflicts and inequality that bedevil the world are the legacy of big state interference and control. It's high time that the small nations started to think big about what WE can achieve for peace and justice in the world. In the new Europe, small nations have a more prominent and influential place than ever before. In the post-enlargement European Union of 25 sovereign member states, 19 of them will be small nations - from the Netherlands with a population of 15 million, down to Malta with fewer than 400,000 people. Eleven of these will be the same size or smaller than Scotland.

As well as having new political clout, the small nations are also the best performing economies in Europe. Our nearest neighbour, Ireland, has already overtaken the UK in terms of wealth per head. The key drivers of their success were heavy investment in education; a strong Irish presence in the EU; competitive business tax; and a consensus on key social policy objectives. But beyond Ireland, there is a much broader context for small nation success in Europe. In fact, if you divide the present members of European Union on population grounds between small and large countries, the findings are dramatic. Small EU states are on average \$7000 richer per person than large EU countries, and they are growing 64 per cent faster. Their deficits are three-and-a-half times lower, and their trade balances are seven times more favourable. Small countries have unemployment rates 40 per cent lower than large countries, and R&D spends one third higher.

With indicators like that it seems that the observable international economic phenomenon sometimes referred to as 'the power of the pygmies' is alive and well in the European Union. Small countries can determine their core problems and their key opportunities, and pursue strategies to address them with focused precision and rapid decision-making. And, as noted above, small economies internationally now have the advantage of having guaranteed access to large trading areas. The evidence suggests that the optimum size of an economic unit is under 10 million people - and the average size of an EU member post-enlargement will be seven million.

The question is - does Scotland have the ambition and vision to become such a nation? And if so, can we make a contribution to a wider humanity? I believe that we can

make a start. We can build:

- 1) A Scotland that fully meets our international aid obligations - at a time when even the World Bank finds that the richest 1 per cent of the world have as much wealth as the poorest 57 per cent. We seek a Scotland which gives something to those who have nothing. Whereas the UK meets barely half of the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of national wealth for overseas aid, an independent Scotland will aspire to the record of small nations such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden who all exceed it.
- 2) A Scotland free of nuclear weapons, with no Trident nuclear submarines. We don't need or want weapons of mass destruction on our soil or in our waters.
- 3) A Scotland that doesn't deal in arms sales for aggression or repression. We want clean hands and a clear conscience. Under New Labour, the UK carried on selling weapons to India and Pakistan as they stood on the brink of war; invited both sides in the Congo civil war to buy arms; and changed the rules to allow arms exports to Israel for aircraft used to attack Palestinians.
- 4) A Scotland which seeks to contribute to and build a European foreign and security policy.
- 5) A Scotland which places belief in the authority of the United Nations at the heart of its international policy.

In the 21st century we need some new voices saying new things about how this world should be run - saying and doing the right things and building alliances in Europe, the Commonwealth and the United Nations for a fairer and more equitable world order.

We would be a small voice, perhaps - but also a strong, passionate and independent one. We would carry none of the baggage of the imperial past, none of the pretensions to be a world power - and none of the hypocrisy that goes with it.

In international policy, Scotland could light a candle to illuminate the darkness. ■

In the 21st century we need some new voices saying new things about how this world should be run

Alex Salmond MP is Leader of the Scottish National Party Westminster Group

anatomy of a movement

Tommy Sheridan looks at some of the key strands of the anti-capitalist movement

The anti-globalisation movement and subsequent international social forums represent a political movement for change without modern parallels. It began in 1999 in Seattle, the richest city in the richest country in the world, where 50,000 people demonstrated against capitalism or the effects of capitalism on their lives. Since then it has developed into an international movement of truly mass proportions. It is a movement that has successfully mobilised hundreds of thousands of people and has profoundly shaken the ruling capitalist establishment.

The movement has a number of distinct features. It is an international movement with people travelling in large numbers from all over the world to take part; a movement which doesn't recognise boundaries. It is a grassroots movement with rank and file members of hundreds of different groups meeting each other rather than formal meetings between the leaders of these groups. It is non-prescriptive; anyone can take part and it is specifically anti-capitalist with people protesting either directly against capitalism or against specific aspects of the system.

Why has this movement emerged at this time? There are probably three reasons. One is the rise of globalisation. The capitalist economy has become increasingly internationalised to the extent that it is no longer meaningful to talk of British or French or German capitalism etc. Capitalism is leaving the nation-state behind and for the first time in its history has become a truly global system. The anti-globalisation movement is a direct response to this development and a clear example that the opposition to capitalism will largely be shaped by capitalism itself.

Another reason was the decline of many of the traditional working-class parties in the eighties and nineties. Many Communist, Socialist and Social Democratic Parties were truly mass parties with millions of members and tens of millions of voters. The decline in the industrial working class in all major capitalist countries, the crisis of authoritarian socialism caused by the collapse of the Soviet Bloc countries and the crisis of social-democracy caused by changes in the capitalist system had a knock-

on effect on all these parties. A vacuum has been created which is being filled by new formations of which the anti-globalisation movement is the most spectacular example.

A third reason is the vacuous nature of much of modern politics. Across Europe there has been a convergence in the policies, aims and culture of most mainstream political parties to create a kind of political mono-culture. Politicians from these parties look the same, dress the same, sound the same, say the same things and operate to the same narrow agenda. This has led to a growing cynicism with established politics reflected in declining turnouts at elections and a search by many people for a viable radical alternative. The development of the anti-globalisation movement and the growth of new parties of the Left reflect this. People are searching for a radical alternative.

What unites this bewilderingly broad movement is anti-capitalism. Some of the groups define themselves specifically in this manner; most of the others are organised around single issues.

Part and parcel of this process has been the emergence of a new Left within Europe. The 'crisis of communism' and the collapse of social democracy have created a space for new formations on the Left to emerge. This has taken different forms in different countries. In Italy the main force to emerge has been Comunista Refondazione. Rising from

the wreckage of the old PCI they marry the best traditions of that party to the new challenges of the 21st century. Scotland has seen the emergence of a completely new party on the Left, the Scottish Socialist Party. Its stated ambition is to unite all socialists in Scotland under one banner and win a whole new generation to the ideas of socialism. To this end it has achieved notable success. There has been similar examples elsewhere to the extent that the possibility exists for a common Left slate in the European parliamentary elections next year.

Among the multitude of issues thrown up by such a diverse creature as the anti-globalisation movement some key themes have gained prominence. One has been the marrying of the struggle against capitalism to environmental issues; in effect a Red/Green Alliance.

Advance on many Green issues cannot be achieved within the confines of capitalism; a root and branch restructuring of society is necessary

The belief that advance on many Green issues cannot be achieved within the confines of capitalism; a root and branch restructuring of society is necessary. Another is the almost total rejection of one of the core values of capitalism; that for something to have value it must first be turned into a commodity. 'The world is not for sale' is one of the most potent slogans to emerge from this movement. Allied to this is the need to shatter the cosy free market consensus which has infected 'normal' politics like a plague and to create an alternative agenda. Lastly and perhaps paradoxically for such an international movement, a complete rejection of globalisation. The movement recognises the need for global solutions to global problems but believes capitalism to be the source rather than the solution to these problems.

The anti-globalisation movement and social forums are developing apace with no sign that they have reached

any kind of peak. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case with such similar forums planned for Asia and Africa. The war against Iraq and an aggressive American imperialism has given the movement added impetus and a new focus. For socialists the key is to be part and parcel of the movement and to win the ideological battle to make socialism its central aim. ■

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approaching a peak?

Eleanor Scott argues that there are a fortuitous set of circumstances emerging in Europe and beyond which give reason to believe that now is a time when change is possible

What is it that makes us feel that the time is right for change? After all there are always things needing changed, issues urgently needing addressed. There are always people ready to identify them and urge immediate action. Usually these people are a minority – not necessarily because other people disagree with them, but because they have a particular interest, area of expertise, or bee in their bonnets. What is interesting is when, and how, these concerns become shared by the wider population – and it gets really interesting when collectively that population arrives at the point where action becomes inevitable.

Take climate change. This went through the process – first identification of the issue by a specialist (in this case scientific) group, then being taken up by pressure groups working within that area, then a lot of debate during which the validity of the concerns was questioned (particularly by those whose activities could be seen as contributing to the alleged problem and who felt threatened), then a general acceptance by experts, then a general acceptance by the public, followed by a growing feeling that something would have to be done (or at least a resignation to the fact that something would be done).

I would argue that this has allowed us to arrive at the point where congestion charging has been introduced in London and we never hear anything about it.

When the issue has a scientific basis the debate is easier, the self interested groups who oppose action are easily seen for what they are, and public opinion tends to be divided into those who believe and care, those who believe but don't care, and those who assume nothing could be done anyway. Fortunately the first group has the drive and can effect change, though often opposed by the aforementioned vested interests. When the issues are economic, or social, or moral it isn't so easy but does still happen. Take the example of child abuse. From being an unknown concept in the first half of the 20th century it went through the phases of the first scientific – in this case medical – description of 'battered baby syndrome', to public disbelief that parents could harm their children, to a recognition that abuse of a less obvious kind is not uncommon, to a move from public revulsion and a punitive attitude to a recognition that families in crisis

need help and that punishing the parent may not help the child. It's even less clear when the issues are 'political'. Are politicians the 'experts' here, or do they come in at the final stage of an issue, when it's quite clear that the public is ready for, or demanding, action? I believe that most elected politicians do just that, following not forming public opinion. Only radical groups get involved at the early stages of the process and try to drive it on.

Just as the explosion of ideas during the Renaissance was made possible by the printing press, so the renaissance of global awareness has been made possible by the internet

I believe that the take-off point has arrived for social and political change. There is just too much awareness around to stop it. This in part results from the one thing that has enabled almost instant sharing of information, knowledge and even wisdom, namely electronic communication. Just as the explosion of ideas during the Renaissance was made possible by the printing press, so the renaissance of global awareness has been made possible by the internet. No longer does our information have to be filtered through editorial policy or censorship – we get it direct. That has its dangers of course, and is as open to exploitation as any other medium, but can nonetheless be used to excellent effect. For parties like the Greens who are part of a global political movement it enables

us to follow our sister parties' electoral fortunes and campaigning progress closely.

The internet, then, gives us a major opportunity to share ideals, ideas and tactics. It doesn't however generate ideas – only people can do that. Clearly the different substrates that are different societies at different times will tend to produce different ideas. One could do a somewhat simplistic analysis of how this has happened in the UK, with the pendulum-swing of political and economic attitudes. Actually it is less of a pendulum than a series of uneven peaks and troughs. The 1950s was characterized by austerity, rationing and the need to work hard and rebuild after the war. Once people began to feel, quite reasonably at the time, that as the politicians said they had never had it so good they could relax and enjoy themselves. The hippy era of the '60s was essentially one of self indulgence, even though often benign and for some people spiritual. Responsibility – to society or the planet – wasn't high on the agenda. It was however fairly unmaterialistic in its aspirations. Once people emerged

from that period – perhaps you can only love everyone for a limited time – we descended into the trough of Thatcherism. One woman by herself didn't turn a nation into workaholic moneygrabbers – a fair proportion of us must have colluded. The substrate must have been there on which Thatcherism could grow.

But things can grow in parallel. Just as when the dinosaurs were at their biggest and most formidable, not realising they were less than a millennium away from extinction, small unnoticed mammals were evolving, so even during the Thatcher era Green and other radical parties were being formed. There is a certain natural law to this. Democratic, even flawed democratic, politics requires that there should be a political opposition. But also excess often breeds revulsion. It was inevitable that there would be a sort of moral backlash against the worst of right-wing political philosophy. Not perhaps to the extent of collectively deciding to stop trashing the planet – we're still doing that after all. More against the social aspect – people asserting that actually we do believe in society.

Did that get anywhere? After all it's six years since we had a Tory government. That's why I prefer the 'peaks and troughs' metaphor to that of a pendulum – the sides of their slopes can be either gradual or steep. I think we're gradually working our way up the slope out of the Thatcher legacy. I believe that there are opportunities for change now, in Scotland and in Europe. Remember however that in the SWOT analyses managers love 'Opportunities' always goes with 'Threats'. EU enlargement presents both. It is right and proper that enlargement takes place but there is no doubt that the former Soviet bloc countries are likely to wish to go through a phase of individual consumerism. They've seen it when we had it, they're bound to want it. Radical politics may take a while to flourish there – not all of the accession countries as yet have sizeable Green parties for example, although some do.

'Old Europe' presents perhaps the best opportunity, despite the apparent wish of the core EU countries for greater integration, tax harmonisation and a pan European fiscal policy – regarded by most Scottish Greens as a tool of global capitalism if ever there was one. Many of the enthusiastic integrationists of the Joschka Fischer generation are far from capitalists and have a strong radical history. I'm thinking of people like Daniel Cohn-Bendit, hero of the 1968 student demonstrations in Paris three decades before he was to become a respectable MEP. Some of these people's

federalist ideas would seem to stem from their having a greater loyalty to Europe as a whole than to the nation-states with which they were for so long in conflict.

The other opportunity comes at the opposite end of political scale. Increasingly communities are wishing to assume more control for what happens in their areas. 'Empowerment' is a fashionable term but is not one I am comfortable with. It's a transitive verb – it has a subject and an object. 'We' empower 'them'. I don't believe that's what's actually happening. I think power is being repossessed by its rightful owners. I think people are beginning to remember that power belongs to **them** and that politicians are entrusted with it by people, to exercise on those people's behalf. That's true subsidiarity – not something you choose to apply, like giving planning permission, but something that exists of itself, a sort of natural law, like gravity.

Just as in the Thatcherite years world movements like the Greens were growing and taking shape, so alongside globalisation and increasing supra-national legislation and action small groups of people are taking control of their own lives. By no means all of these are political groups – most are not, but their action has political significance. In Scotland we have multinational biotech companies trying to push GM crops and change our agriculture forever, but we have farmers' markets and a growing organics movement. We have a uniquely concentrated pattern of land ownership, but we have communities buying up their land and taking control of their own destinies. And we have a Scottish Executive with limited powers, dominated by London, but a rainbow Parliament holding it to account.

Once upon a time small local groups would be isolated. Not now; internet communication means ideas can be shared between peoples facing similar problems in different places. This comes back to my first point about the time for action. With the additionality of shared experiences across the world happening at the touch of a button, facts, ideas, feelings and attitudes can flow freely. The collective feeling that time is right for action can be arrived at very quickly.

There are lots of reasons why political and social change should happen. The reason I believe it will, is simply that the time is now and it's possible. ■

Eleanor Scott is the Leader of the Scottish Green Party and a List MSP for the Highlands and Islands

The pendulum-swing of political and economic attitudes is actually more like a series of uneven peaks and troughs

the left and nabokov's ape

Robin McAlpine asks why new ideas have been slow to emerge

Loaded trade agreements, broken treaties, war; in the last five years the neo-conservative, free-market ideologues have gone too far. Too far because, after almost three decades in which the active policy of the free-market governments of the west has been to disengage ordinary people from politics lest 1968 ever happens again, 1968 is beginning to happen again. In the '70s we started the political process of dismantling the post-1945 political consensus and the oil crisis was used to make us feel vulnerable and at risk. The '80s saw a concerted backlash against the liberal revolutions of the '60s and consumerism and individuality were pressed into actions as replacements for any other form of collective identity. The 'softer' '90s were about telling us that it was OK to be who we wanted to be so long as we worked hard during the day to achieve it, and that snowboarding (or what ever off-the-peg lifestyle we chose) was more important than politics. All this was an intentional distraction. The liberal chattering classes in the West are much preoccupied at the moment with 'voter apathy' and the disengagement of ordinary people from civic life. They seem unable to recognise that this has been a key aim and necessary goal of the neoconservative movement for at least three decades.

But this is all turning and there are signs of citizens reengaging. OK, the anti-globalisation protests in Seattle or Genoa were not particularly representative of ordinary people (although more so than the media would have us believe) but when something like one in 50 of the British population comes out to march against the war in Iraq (and for many of them this was a proxy for a more generalised unease with the drift of international politics) something is changing. In Scotland we have had an election this year which returned a block of socialists, greens and left wing independents which represents virtually the third biggest grouping in the Parliament (despite many of them existing for little over four years). Trade unions in France run political and cultural learning events in the summer which attract hundreds of thousands of people. Activists are emerging right across the globe, and they are more informed than ever before.

And yet this movement is still tagged as an 'anti' movement, a protest, a 'travelling circus' in the words of Downing Street. It has been successfully portrayed as having no 'big ideas'. Is this fair? Well, not entirely. Events such as the World and European Social Forums have seen many different kinds of organisation come forward with many different kinds of ideas. But there are two problems with what is happening. The first is that many of the ideas are of the form 'stop...'. So we have 'stop subsidising western agriculture and dumping it on developing countries', 'stop granting patents on biological

organisms', 'stop the international trade in arms' and so on. Every one of these is entirely necessary and unless action of this sort is taken change will not happen. But they do not have the psychological effect of suggesting to us that we have an alternative. They do not look like 'big ideas', like alternative suggestions for how to organise our society and our economy. They are too easily portrayed as a negative agenda, and in the West they do not speak loudly enough to people to explain how the injustices in their lives will be addressed. This is not the kind of agenda which on its own will generate a mass public support, and we all have to recognise that mass public support is necessary if there is to be change.

The second problem is one of momentum and critical mass. There **are** ideas out there which give the promise of a different and fairer way of organising things. Radical economic think tank ATTAC in France has a well developed manifesto for economic reform with well understood moves such as the introduction of a Tobin Tax. Radical moves affecting people's lives such as changes in working hours and pay ratio legislation (in which the best paid employee of a company, including the Chief Executive, can only be paid a limited multiple of the salary of the least well paid employee, including the cleaner) have been proposed. And there are many examples of innovative and transferable practice in social provision, law and education (among other things) which could form the basis of a radical alternative social agenda. Together, these do indeed give the impression that - in the catchphrase of the WSF - another world is possible. But the social justice movement has so far failed to generate the momentum behind these ideas which would put them on the table as a matter for political discussion, to bring them into mainstream political debate in such a manner that Tony Blair and his myopic counterparts around the world can no longer claim that they have no case to answer in their unswerving and uncritical support for the free market.

Why is this so? A conversation I had with a friend in an Edinburgh café seemed to highlight the problem. My friend is certainly from the left and is every bit as opposed to the corporate takeover of the world as the majority of anti-globalisation protesters. We were talking about traffic problems and the proposal to introduce 'congestion charging' (a flat-rate toll for entering Edinburgh city centre with a car). We began by agreeing that for a whole host of reasons - pollution and respiratory disease, congestion and road accidents, the social geography of a city and the underlying stress of constant traffic - there were simply too many cars on Edinburgh's roads. However, road tolls seem to be precisely the wrong answer. Their

real purpose is to clear the roads of lower earners to enable the wealthy to drive their most-polluting cars at faster average speeds. Road tolls have one key effect - to virtually ensure that the very traffic problems Edinburgh faces will be preserved in perpetuity. The 'solution' to cars on the roads will ensure that there are cars on the roads (albeit possibly a few less). Surely a better solution would be to remove all private cars from the roads of Edinburgh by providing proper out of town parking and a decent public transport system in the city (with the roads empty expensive solutions such as trams or underground systems would be unnecessary and an expanded fleet of modern comfortable busses would be sufficient in the short term). Subsidised car hire schemes and cheaper taxis could persuade residents of the city that they had no need to own a car. And the local economy could actually be boosted with shopping made much more attractive by free home (or to out of town parking) delivery.

My friend agreed with most of these arguments, but concluded that the solution was unworkable. When it comes to matters of science and technology we are willing to believe that anything is possible yet when it comes to matters social or economic even the committed left has reached a point where the default position is scepticism, pessimism and doubt.

How did we get to this position? Well, despite the ideologies of rampant individualism, imagining is more of a social act than an individual act. Our imagination is not a light-as-air emanation from our eternal souls but an act of rearranging the jigsaw pieces of what we know. When the Victorians dreamed of travelling to the moon, they imagined doing it in hot air balloons and petticoats. Before Galileo people did not dream of going to the moon. The problem we face is that new worlds emerge from the imagining of them and our imaginations have been ensnared by the socially defeatist ideology of the free market. One of the consistent threads in imagination, from the Bible to the counterculture '60s movements, has been Utopia. It is difficult to find a dream of a Utopia in the last 30 years, a period dominated by the dystopia. The uses of language, ownership and power in the last 30 years have been a specific attempt to end the hope of a utopia. The powerful and the vested interests realised that when people imagine a better world, they do not imagine it with the massive inequalities of wealth that we have now. They do not imagine it with the misuse of power, with the suffering and selfishness, with the blatant injustices which typify free market capitalism. Since 1968 (at least) 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.

So how has this been achieved? I spent some time looking at the existing political and social discourse - in politics,

in culture and the arts, in attitudes to science or law and order, in jokes and humour. In these you can identify more than 30 major techniques of control used to persuade us of one major 'truth' - that the free market is a natural order, that There Is No Alternative, that (in the words of Fukuyama) we have reached the End of History. Space is controlled to exclude alternative voices. Unpopular changes are brought in steps small enough to pass without rebellion. The 'spectrum' of what is considered mainstream is defined by one side and everything outside that spectrum is then dismissed. Fear is constantly used to undermine our hopes. Language is twisted and changed to make horror seem benign and compassion insidious. The interests of a tiny minority are projected as the interests of the majority. The maxims of the right are repeated incessantly until they come to seem like consensus. The decisions about what constitutes 'useful information' is so filtered to exclude anything which raises the 'wrong questions'. Matters which are clearly political and ideological are rebranded to seem entirely non-political and non-ideological. All social issues are pitted against all other social issues in a war of all against all, ensuring that views outside the free-market norms are used to undermine each other. And so on and so on.

The problem for the left is that this has been the constant state of affairs from the point at which many of us began to learn how to think. The extent to which this elevation of one choice as the only choice has been internalised by the West (this is a process needed primarily in democracies) means that even the left has a nagging doubt that alternatives are possible, and everyone has been trained in the means of discrediting hope ('socialism will never work - look at Russia' as almost any taxi driver will tell you, detailed knowledge of the development of state communism in the Soviet Union or not). Vladimir Nabakov became obsessed by an experiment in which scientists tried to get an ape to draw a picture, something an animal had never done before. When they succeeded what the ape drew was the bars of its own cage. For far too long the left has in effect done little more than draw the bars of **its** own cage.

So it is a hopeless case? Not at all. To return to where I began, the right has gone too far. The world is getting to a point where There Is No Alternative But To Change. It is up to the left to ensure that the change is the right change. A positive agenda for a better world has to be developed and it has to be shared. If a critical mass of people and organisations collectively get behind a number of strong proposals those proposals will begin to look possible. At the very least the right will have to start to engage with them. It is up to the left to paint a picture of a better world and to let as many people as possible see that picture. In this way is social imagination created, and from that comes real change. ■

Robin McAlpine is Editor of the Scottish Left Review

white heather on the future's lapel

John McAllion argues that while the momentum for political change may be outside mainstream politics, it can't afford to stay there

It's early October and one of those autumn nights that chill the bones and advise against venturing over the door. On this night a handful of student activists have booked a room in Glasgow Students Union to discuss fair trade and ethical investment issues. Not one of them really expects a lot of interest or a huge attendance. In the event more than 50 students pack into the room, taking up all of the seats, sitting on the floor and standing around the edges of the room. There is intent silence as visiting students from St Andrews and Edinburgh tell their tales of how they pressured their universities into adopting ethical investment policies. Originally treated with scarcely disguised contempt by university establishments that hid behind capitalism's Catch 22 of commercial confidentiality, the students simply refused to be brushed off and organised instead to shake the complacency of their elders.

By this stage of the meeting, questions, ideas and demands on how to organise direct student action are crackling across the room. How do you capture the students' union for political action? How do you organise a campus wide referendum? How do you mobilise and motivate students who until now had shown no obvious interest in the idea of ethical investment? There are quick and intelligent answers to all of these questions. The room hums with an atmosphere of serious and passionate commitment to tackle issues from the exploitation of child labour to controlling the arms trade. Yet it is a seriousness of purpose rather than a case of taking themselves too seriously. They want their campaigning to be fun as well. One student tells of the how the Yes to Ethical Investment campaign caught the attention and the mood of students on polling day by positioning a bed at the door of the main library and organising two students to disappear under the duvet on it while shouting "Yes! Yes!" at the top of their voices.

I had the privilege to be an observer at this meeting and I enjoyed it many times more than the hundreds of meetings I have been forced to endure in more than a quarter of a century of mainstream politics. The meeting also gave the lie to the calumny that younger people are apathetic and not interested in politics. These young people were passionate about the politics that had grabbed their imaginations and fired them with a determination to become involved in the fight for a fairer world. Indeed it seemed to me that the meeting echoed the political excitement of the meetings so vividly described by Hilary Wainwright in the opening to her new book "RECLAIM THE

STATE". Meetings that took place in scattered locations across the world and drew in trade unionists, students and social activists, all of them alienated to a greater or lesser degree from the formal political process, but all of them determined to take direct action for the causes that inspired them.

Not once in the meeting did a student mention formal party politics or give this observer any sense that they saw such politics as relevant to the struggle for the kind of political goals they wanted to fight for. If political action was required to make their world a better place, then they would take that action directly themselves. Their politics were of a very different kind from the representative politics that have dominated so much of the twentieth century. Yet there was no cause for concern here. Rather a sense that a new political generation was beginning to find a new way forward by learning from the failures and frustrations of an older and defeated generation of left activists.

Hugh MacDiarmid once described the Communist MP, Willie Gallagher, as a sprig of white heather on the future's lapel. Just as white heather stands out against acres of purple heather, so Gallagher shone out among the hosts of men "single of purpose, lovely in his integrity". No doubt this paean of praise owed more to MacDiarmid's own brand of politics than anything else. Yet he has undoubtedly conjured up a powerful and emotional image that captures the optimism and idealism of an earlier generation of socialists. It is at least arguable that the new political movements happening outside of mainstream western party politics could be likened to that same sprig of white heather on the future's lapel. Single of purpose and lovely in their integrity, they stand out from the self-serving, pro-business parties that appear to many to have sold their political jerseys for personal advancement and political office. The political brands pushed by Messrs Bush, Blair and Clinton may claim to be breaking new political ground for the new century. They are in reality giving up the political ground to capitalist forces that are centuries old and determined to crush any prospect of a new politics beyond the rule of capitalism. In the process they are literally shaking faith in representative democracy itself.

George Bush "won" an American Presidential election in which 154 million adult Americans did not vote and in which the majority of those who did vote voted for the losing candidate. In the key marginal state of Florida, ruled over by his Governor brother Jeb, 57,000 mostly

Black and Hispanic voters were removed from the electoral roll chiefly on the grounds that they were likely to vote Democratic. Some commentators have argued that Bush's victory was the equivalent of a corporate coup carried out by the big corporations that bankrolled his campaign. His election was not a good day for democracy. Here in Britain, our own Prime Minister won a second "landslide" in which three out of every four voters failed to give their support to his party. New Labour apologists tried to present this mass political absenteeism as an indication that voters are content with how they are being governed and therefore not motivated to get out and vote. The fact that the same apologists resolutely refuse to use ballot papers that allow voters the option of 'none of the above' speaks volumes about their own confidence in such self serving sophistry.

The elections to the Scottish Parliament could not muster 50 per cent of those entitled to vote. The turn out in the Welsh Assembly elections was even worse. The elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly were postponed for fear of the result. Next year's Euro elections are likely to set new lows for levels of engagement with the formal democratic process. On the continent, French socialists are forced to vote for a right wing Gaullist because the only alternative is far more right wing and dangerous for democracy itself. It is not an encouraging big picture.

The pro business brand of politics that is chiefly responsible for this demoralising retreat from representative democracy is increasingly failing to deliver at the policy level either. Workers in the west grow restless with the accelerating loss of manufacturing jobs to the developed world and increasingly blame elected governments that fail to stand up to the big business interests behind the jobs drain.

Meanwhile workers in the developed world find themselves ruthlessly exploited by western-based companies that squeeze their local labour and export the profits back to the west. The failure of the WTO to reach any kind of agreement on trade rules at Cancun left everyone dissatisfied and the world facing the prospect of a new age of trade anarchy that will threaten the security of all if it is not avoided through open negotiation and consensual agreement. Meanwhile, Iraq sucks in huge US resources while spewing out ever rising numbers of dead on all sides. The globalisation that was meant to enrich the whole world and secure the final triumph of liberal capitalism is slowly but steadily turning into a global nightmare.

It is in the face of these dangers that a new politics has begun to rise outside of the formal political mainstream.

Today's generation of political activists are elsewhere. Some are in the anti-capitalist movement or in the European and World Social Forums. Some are in the Stop the War Coalition. Many can now be found in the Greens or the SSP. Others belong to the environmental movement or, like the students mentioned above, have begun to campaign around fair trade and ethical investment issues. Increasingly, many are found in the ranks of militant trade unions, whether they are railway workers fighting PPP's or nursery nurses struggling for a living wage. The political scene has never been more alive outside of mainstream politics, or more dead within that mainstream.

Yet until these new forces come together to use democratic power to win control of states and thereby harness the legitimacy that such states confer, there is little prospect of their having a telling or a lasting impact on the way things are. This is not an appeal for everyone to give up what they are doing and to join one of the big mainstream parties that still win elections in

the west. These parties are part of the problem rather than the solution. It is an appeal for these new forces to recognise that winning democratic elections still matters. The answer is not to turn away from democratic politics but to recapture those politics for the progressive forces that are operating around the edges of the political mainstream.

George Monbiot has recently argued for a world government consisting of two chambers. The first would have 600 members who would be directly elected by constituencies of 10 million that cut across national boundaries. The second would be a democratised UN General Assembly with voting weighted by size of population. He argues that only a global democratic revolution of this kind can deal with the growing instability and authoritarianism

of capitalist globalisation. I am not convinced that today's politics are yet ripe enough for such a radical change. Nation states still matter. Cancun showed that when the Group of 20 developing nations came together to challenge the EU and the USA that the rich governments had no real response to their show of solidarity. We need to find ways of capturing the nation states of the north and the south for progressive forces around the world and for developing international solidarity as the means of challenging capitalist globalisation. The priority should be to unite forces in an electoral coalition that really can begin to challenge the bankrupt mainstream of our country's politics. ■

John McAllion is Director of Campaigns for Oxfam Scotland and a former MSP and MP

the new berlin wall

Margaret Lynch asks if the international institutions can be used to deliver a radical agenda

There is a pressing need to address the global democratic deficit which has arisen because the rich and powerful countries of the world are able to manipulate the complex and multi level institutions of global governance to pursue a neo liberal economic agenda and the US can use its dominant position to defend its self interest.

If you are in any doubt, consider that the G7 leaders who represent only four per cent of the world's population are driving the agendas behind decision making in the World Bank, IMF and WTO. The current rules at the WTO allow a flood of imports into poor countries which threatens the livelihoods of many poor people. At the same time as the US and EU heavily subsidise agricultural production - poor countries are prevented from doing likewise. Take cotton - the subsidies of \$3 billion US annually paid to its 25,000 cotton farmers have destroyed the livelihoods of 10 million small-scale farmers around the world who live on less than \$2 a day.

The refusal of the US to countenance a deal on cotton was perhaps the straw which broke the camels back in the recent WTO Ministerial negotiations at Cancun. The delegates from Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad - who were supported by 13 other African delegations - were incandescent with fury when the best that Cancun could offer was a promise to 'discuss' the impact of distortions which exist in the trade of cotton, man made fibres, textiles and clothing. More talk - no action.

The WTO was supposed to create a level playing field when it came to matters of international trade in a globalised world. No-one believes that this is remotely on the agenda. What is happening is Robin Hood economics in reverse. Poor countries are forced to open up their markets to competition from the North, denied the chance to protect or invest in industries which are crucial to their economic growth, forced to privatise health, education and water services which end up being owned and controlled by profit driven foreign corporations. Adding insult to injury rich countries are allowed to retain high import barriers and other restrictions against key exports from developing countries.

The degree to which the WTO is delivering for the strongest economy in the world was underscored by the Office of the

US Trade Representative to the WTO which estimated that the implementation of WTO agreements was boosting the US GDP by between \$125 - 250 billion a year.

What has been missed is that the WTO agreements present a fundamental shift in human history - never before have decisions made by so few people had global effect. The objective which actually underpins the WTO is that of corporate protectionism. In the words of one TNC Chief - Percy Barenik - it was all about "the freedom of my group of companies to invest where it wants when

it wants, to produce what it wants, to buy what it wants, to sell what it wants and support the fewest restrictions possible coming from labour laws and social conventions".

The WTO does not exist alone - it is part of a world wide web of institutions of global governance, too many to mention in this article - but the key institutions are the WTO, IMF, World Bank and UN Security Council (the world's fire brigade - except that if any of the veto-holding members deny there is a fire the brigade is stood down).

The WTO, World Bank and IMF have a Memorandum of Understanding not to undermine each other in the advice they give or conditions they impose. This means in practice that when World Bank staff know that the WTO agreements implementation will be deeply damaging to the economy of a poor developing country that they are prevented from delivering such a warning. It means that World Bank staff are forced to argue for the implementation of policies that they know will punish the poor.

Its not just in the field of international trade that the democratic deficit is evident. I am just back from Kenya. I have been twice this year - the first visit was memorable because of the outbreaking of public joy at the removal of the Moi regime by Kibaki's coalition government which was elected on a pro-poor, development and anti corruption ticket. I remember being surrounded by Kenyans who were jumping with joy the day their new Education Minister announced that henceforward primary education would be free for all.

Ten months later, the mood was a tad more sombre - the IMF delegation were in town. They were there to tell the Kibaki government what policies and economic strategies they could and could not adopt. No palace coup here,

Can any of it be put right? Well, the Berlin Wall fell and this is just a different form of totalitarianism

but democracy was being strangled all the same. If the IMF doesn't give you the thumbs up you lose IMF Loans, World Bank Loans and Grants and most of your bilateral aid. Few developing country governments feel able to run this gauntlet.

This is justified by 'paying the piper and calling the tune'. Fine - but one does wonder how the US Congress would react to being told by a bunch of faceless bureaucrats that in the interests of free trade and millions of poor small-scale rice farmers around the globe that the practice of paying out \$5bn US in subsidies to rice farmers would have to be axed. (And let's not forget that the US is the most indebted nation in the world today.)

Anyway, that's what's wrong. The big question is, can any of it be put right? I'm really tempted to say no, but then again the Berlin Wall fell and communism collapsed in Eastern Europe. This is just a different form of totalitarianism so I suppose anything is possible. However, to get there some things have to change.

Most European Governments and political parties have the rhetoric of concern for the global poor off pat - they signed up to the Millennium Development Goals to halve world poverty by 2015 (they just aren't **doing** very much about it). There are at present literally hundreds of proposals for reform being discussed by a plethora of organisations, academics, NGOs and others. There is a cacophony of agendas and voices. Much of the debate is highly technical and the discourse too easily slips into exclusive elitist babbling.

The politicians by and large are not to be trusted - too many of them owe their bread and butter to parties that have been 'bought and sold by corporate gold'. Those who do speak out tend to get crushed by the party machinery, marginalised and isolated.

The NGO-isation of the debate is not the answer either. Thousands of organisations, all with their own agendas, contribute greatly to this cacophony of voices - and effectively drown each other out. The expertise

and research materials they can provide should be put at the service of a wider, more democratically accountable movement. What is needed is the emergence of a social movement not connected to any one party or reliant on government for financial support. The Trade Justice Movement is a great step in the right direction, but to whom is it accountable and how impervious is it to pressure from governments which fund many of the constituent bodies?

A social movement is broader than any one interest group or section of the population - it has an energy of its own and in practice governments find it difficult to ignore.

My great hope is that the European leg of the World Social Forum will be the place where such a social movement takes root. Everyone looks to the examples provided by Latin America - and particularly Brazil where Lula, a radical democratic socialist President, is able to challenge the neo liberal agenda because he has the support of the largest social movement in the world. But we have our own European traditions to fall back on and many would argue that a Popular Front Against World Poverty were it to be the outcome of the European Social Forum meetings in Paris would be a good start.

Back to the question - are the international institutions capable of a radical agenda? Well, they are just structures. It's who's driving them and in whose interests that matters, and frankly that is what has to change.

I will personally not be opening the champagne bottles until the day that the cash raised from a Tobin Tax (on speculative currency transactions that has wrecked many an economy) pays the \$350 a head for Anti Retroviral Drugs for the 4.1 million sub Saharan Africans who will die quite soon if they don't get them. If the International Institutions cannot deliver something as conservative as this - perhaps we should think again.

Margaret Lynch works with the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund. She is writing in a personal capacity. ■

STATE PENSIONS CRISIS: CAUSES & SOLUTIONS

Friday 5 December 2003, 10am – 3.00pm

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being heard

Henry McCubbin offers some advice for getting noticed in the media

‘Full Spectrum Dominance’ is the key term in Joint Vision 2020, the blueprint the United States Department of Defence will follow in the future, from which these extracts are taken.

“The ultimate goal of our military force is to accomplish the objectives directed by the National Command Authorities. For the joint force of the future, this goal will be achieved through full spectrum dominance - the ability of US forces, operating unilaterally or in combination with multinational and inter-agency partners, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the full range of military operations.

The full range of operations includes maintaining a posture of strategic deterrence. It includes theatre engagement and presence activities. It includes conflict involving employment of strategic forces and weapons of mass destruction, major theatre wars, regional conflicts, and smaller-scale contingencies. It also includes those ambiguous situations residing between peace and war, such as peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations, as well as non-combat humanitarian relief operations and support to domestic authorities.

The label full spectrum dominance implies that US forces are able to conduct prompt, sustained, and synchronized operations with combinations of forces tailored to specific situations and with access to and freedom to operate in all domains - space, sea, land, air, and **information**(sic). Additionally, given the global nature of our interests and obligations, the United States must maintain its overseas presence forces and the ability to rapidly project power worldwide in order to achieve full spectrum dominance.”

How the post modernists have torn up the dictionaries of commonly held definitions of everyday words. British socialists once used to proudly proclaim themselves Internationalists by which they meant that they exhibited solidarity with the working classes and the labour movements worldwide. “Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains.” But not now, since the advent of New Labour, internationalism has been redefined as the meeting of elites to protect elites. Whereas previously international agreements usually resolved geographical and rights of passage disputes now they more and more impinge intimately on our daily work and living conditions. From European legislation to World Trade Organisation regulation more intrusion and less democratic control by ordinary citizens has been the rule of the day.

What guides Tony Blair when he attends a meeting of heads of state over the revision of the EU Treaties - an annual conference decision? Blair is forever referring to the Lisbon Summit. Why? Because at that summit he thought that he had managed to get agreement that Thatcher’s labour flexibility - i.e. making it easy to sack workers - should be generalised across the Union. But that is not all. He and his lieutenants have lead the charge to cut pensions, remove workers consultative machinery and cut regional funding. Imagine my surprise at a meeting held by the British Embassy in Brussels for UK Companies in Europe to be told in June 1997 that the new administration in the UK had instructed their servants in the EU that it was to be business as usual. And yet John Monks of the TUC still hung on to the hope that there was some good in Tony Blair.

No good will ever come from these meeting of heads of state unless they are held in public and televised. These are meetings of the political elites of European nation states or in the case of the G 7/8/9 or however many, of the wealthiest states of the world. And where these heads of states meet you find within the security cordon the same international lawyers and lobbyists that appear at the WTO, all wearing passes provided by national delegations grateful for their advice. Yet the only way other voices could be heard historically was through powerless citizens electing advocates at national level to argue their needs. This route has now been corrupted and blocked. We have returned to a pre-Hansard politics when the House of Commons had the right to talk about us and legislate on our behalf but to ensure that we did not hear what they were saying about us.

New Labour firmly has the enemy in its sights. It is the population of the UK that is its problem. It is time for Blunket to have his share of full spectrum dominance. Could the DDR ever have imagined holding files on all of citizens and tagging their every transaction through folder in a personal ID file. Could they ever have imagined files on every child including gossip on their parents. Like the tagging of the petty thief, all who have mobile phones will have their transactions kept for a year complete with a record of which area they were in when making calls. Alistair Darling is calling for satellite systems to track all road vehicles for road pricing. The cost of this including the fact that every vehicle will be required to fit a GPS receiver and a satellite transmitter could never be justified as a value for money tax raising method when the alternative of scrapping the road fund licence and raising all revenue from a fuel tax could be done at less

cost than the existing mixed system. The main reason for this change is once more to keep tabs on ordinary citizens and to tax them for the privilege. It must be time to stop this madness. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon had a fine rant at this in the 19th century as any self respecting anarchist would; "To be governed is to be watched, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, regulated, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, checked, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right nor the wisdom nor the virtue to do so." (General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century, 1851)

Control of nature is the control of you and me, for we are part of nature. Full spectrum dominance is the dominance of you and me, for we are not part of the National Command Authorities. Why, when we are so many and they are so few, should we let this situation continue. It was damned hard work in the run up to the invasion of Iraq to get any publicity for the opposite view except and until that demonstration. Two million people in the streets were just too many to ignore. The press gave it massive coverage but it was not too much for Tony and his cronies to ignore.

Perhaps it is time to rehearse some advice for people who want to re-democratise our economies. Why shouldn't we own our bridge to Skye, our railways and our ferry companies. It is only fundamentalist neo liberals who say that the law of mammon is the law of the world. News doesn't just happen; it is made to happen. News, in other words, is managed and manipulated. And if we don't manage it, someone else will. How can we do this?

Coordination

Media work tends to be tacked onto actions as an afterthought, with the result that there's almost always too little of it and too late. Invariably, far too much is left to chance, which means that actions often end up alienating more people than they reach or, even worse, get completely ignored. Reaching the media is time-consuming and demanding; if we don't start tackling this task with the efficiency and creativity that we bring to the rest of our work, we'll be worsted again and again by our opponents. This means that every action aimed at altering public opinion must have a dedicated media coordinator, whose job is to ensure that the activists' point of view reaches the wider world. She or he must be responsible for planning a press strategy, drawing up a hit-list of journalists, preparing press releases and briefing spokespeople. Ideally the coordinator will build up a small team, including someone who stays behind to write and despatch up-to-the-minute press releases and people who will meet and escort the journalists who come to an action. Not everyone is going to be good at handling the press. To do the job well, you need to be confident, sociable and pretty mouthy. At least one person on the

team should be able to write well. But media skills, like any others, can be learnt, and surprisingly quickly.

Timing

Is critical. You have to give journalists enough notice of your action or initiative, but not so much that they forget about it. A good time to put out a first, advance press release, for example, is about ten days beforehand, with a second one sent out two days beforehand. Journalists don't only have a three-second attention span, they also have a three-second memory, so you've got to keep on their case. The day of the week is also important. A great day for an action, from the point of view of publicity, is Sunday, as not a lot happens on Sundays, and journalists need something to put in Monday's papers and in Sunday afternoon's news programmes. If you can do it before lunch, so much the better. The later in the day something happens, the less likely the newspapers are to cover it, as they can't get it to press on time. If you really want your action to be ignored by the press, then do it on Budget Day. In other words, look out for what else is happening that day. If there's a huge story pending, you don't want to be competing with it. Nor do you want to be competing with another alternative event: they won't cover two protests on the same day.

Pre-publicity

Most journalists are also astoundingly unimaginative and cowardly: they don't want to touch an issue unless it's already been mentioned in the press. If you can pull it off (and it's not always possible), it's very useful to get a friendly and trustworthy journalist to flag the action up a week or two beforehand, without giving too much away. The best way to achieve this is:

First find your journalist. Invite her/him to your meetings, under what are called "Chatham House" rules. This means that they can't make use of anything they hear there without your permission. Create an atmosphere of secrecy, excitement and intrigue, which only that journalist (or, as a maximum, two or three journalists) is privy to. All journalists love to imagine they're in the Famous Five. Be very nice to them and make them think they're part of the gang. Once it's been mentioned in the press, you'll find that there's a lot more interest from other reporters. Pathetic really, but there you have it.

Press releases

Journalists speak only one language, and that's their own. If you're going to reach them you have to speak that language too. This means that your press release should mimic the format and style of a news story. It's a simple and straightforward formula and (sorry to be dictatorial) it **must** be applied. If it isn't, your press release won't work. Period. ■

Henry McCubbin is a former MEP and journalist.

scottish left review ideas project

While 'the left' may be a fairly disparate thing, it is united in at least one general aim - to bring about change. A momentum is building up around the world in support of change as events like the European Social Forum demonstrate. But if this momentum is to have a positive effect a question must be answered; what change is it that we want to see?

Even while the media and the 'world leaders' proclaim that the global justice movement has nothing positive to say it is meeting, discussing and developing ideas for changing the world. Those who have followed the World Social Forum and its related events will be familiar with many of the ideas that are emerging. They relate to trade, investment, food, international relations and democracy, among many other things. But running alongside these global debates are many local debates about what should be done in the different contexts of different countries, regions or even villages.

The Scottish Left Review was interested to find out what a variety of people in Scotland thought our priorities for change should be - in Scotland, in the UK, in Europe and looking out from Scotland to the rest of the world. To find out we set up a form on the Scottish Left Review website where people could enter up to three ideas for change and email them back to us. We didn't select people to respond, just passed the word around and waited to see what response we got. Despite having the webpage up for less than a month we got an interesting range of responses. Indeed, it seems such a valuable exercise that we have registered the web domain www.ideasdirectory.org and hope to have it live soon as a permanent means for people from around the world to put forward and collect their ideas.

The following are some responses that we received. They vary in their nature. Some are specific initiatives or

policy proposals which could be implemented. Some are suggestions of different approaches that could be taken to action rather than forms of action themselves. Some are about changing attitudes and many are about changing the aims and goals of global government, changing the rules of the game. They also vary between new ideas and ideas which have been around for a long time, sometimes because they have never been tried (a Tobin Tax) and sometimes because they have been reversed in the last three decades (national pension schemes, workers' rights). Education is, of course, a regular theme, although it is perhaps surprising that the focus is on educating people with skills to make a difference (social enterprise education) rather than altering education to make people more aware of (and therefore more able to engage with) the world around them. There is the core of an economic programme, similar to that which is emerging from the WSF meetings, and focused on reform of international institutions and systems and shifting aims and goals away from economic growth for its own sake. But the issue which seems to come through most strongly is the idea of cooperatives and other social enterprises. This theme returns again and again in different contexts and seems to be one of the major veins running through the radical political body in Scotland.

So a range of ideas, but equally a range of ideas which looks at least partially distinct from the agendas emerging elsewhere. There is a strong sense of the civic sector and communities as vehicles for change, but perhaps surprisingly less of an international outlook (war and peace, trade and development) than is common in discussion of this type.

Have a read, think about what you agree with or don't, and contribute yourself. After all, nothing will change without a pretty clear idea of what change should look like. ■

Dr Gregor Gall

Dr Gregor Gall is a reader in industrial relations

• A Legal Charter for Workers' Rights

Every worker has the right to full information and consultation from their employer on every aspect of their employment regardless of the size of the workforce. Every worker has the right to union representation and negotiation over their terms and conditions of employment, regardless of length or location of employment. Every worker has the (positive) right to engage in any form of collective industrial action to protect their or other workers economic, social and political interests without

committing a civil wrong (i.e. breaching contract) or a criminal wrong (e.g. trespass, breach of peace).

• A Legal Charter for Union Rights

Every union is free to operate by its democratically decided rulebook without interference from employers, the state or legislation. Every union is free to organise any type of collective industrial action for the protection of union members' interests without the existence of laws or regulations which remove immunity from tort for such action or which impose penalties on union office bearers for organising such action.

Murray Dickie

Murray is a resident of the City of Stirling, an active member of his local Community Council, the Stirling Assembly and the Stirling Area Community Waste Forum and a supporter of active public and community involvement.

- **Public and Community Engagement**

Encouraging agencies and bodies to move away from the traditional 'consultation' model (where most of the work and time is spent by paid officials) towards participative engagement (where individuals and groups have opportunities to be involved from the start of the process)

- **E-Democracy**

Using the internet as a means of enabling agencies to engage with individuals and groups. Facilitating: a) engagement at the earliest possible stage; b) fast, easy access to information (with plain language(s), summary versions and downloadable files); c) dialogue with and amongst groups through interactive on-line facilities; d) speedy responses from individuals and groups; and e) feedback to individuals and groups of progress and outcomes.

- **Public Accountability within the Scottish Justice System**

Without wishing to undermine the judiciary's right to impartiality, there is a wealth of anecdotal evidence to suggest that there are dramatic variations in practice across Scotland, the UK and Europe, particularly in sentencing. The first step in accountability is access to accurate data. I would propose setting up a publicly accessible database with summary details of the outcomes of proceedings, including sentences. This should be followed up by regular analysis.

Dr Kay Goodall

Lecturer in law at Glasgow University

- **Barter Schemes**

Funded advertising to promote local LETS schemes, with a particular focus on involving asylum-seekers. (In LETS schemes, local people trade goods and services with each other using an agreed LETS currency instead of money.) Administrative support (e.g. interpreting and translating) would be needed for the asylum-seeker section.

Mr Alex Prichard

Graduate student in International Politics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

- **Promote worker control and ownership of industry.**

Following Proudhon's anarcho-syndicalist ideas, I believe that the first priority for any body concerned with social transformation should be a focus on securing worker control of industry. This means an end to the dichotomisation between unions and bosses and a fuller democratic participation in the decision-making

procedures in all areas of the economy, for all workers. I believe that to actualise this idea it would be necessary to lobby government and big business and promote the dissemination of anarcho-syndicalist ideas in higher education where it is currently ignored.

Mr Charles Gilchrist Brodie

I am a business man with experience in Finance, Sales and Marketing who has been involved in operations across Europe and who has also been involved in the political scene in Scotland periodically over a period of 35 years.

- **Turn government on its head**

Basically the proposal is to change the paradigm where the major revenue-gathering medium is local as opposed to central government and that local government 'buys' services from national government. The proposition is that this brings real power to the local community and creates greater involvement at all levels of decision-making. The objective will reverse the decline of interest in the current political system.

- **A European Community Service**

The thought of conscriptive national army service is repulsive but the creation of a 'conscription' of a coordinated European community service of volunteers to address the major issues and problems facing the less fortunate, the deprived, the drug users etc on a European scale would integrate the community more quickly.

- **A Visual Europe**

Using new technologies to enhance the social environment in Europe.

Robin McAlpine

Robin McAlpine works in Public Affairs in Scotland and is Editor of the Scottish Left Review

- **Change all economic targets**

Drop economic growth as a target and replace it with socioeconomic targets to guide economic policy. These would include targets to reduce income disparity, shift the balance of financial transactions from speculation to trade or investment, reducing levels of shareholder profit distribution in favour of cooperative and mutual enterprises, set targets for the reduction of unsustainable debt and properly integrate poverty and environmental targets into economic policy formulation.

- **Police international law**

International legal norms, including human rights legislation, should be established with greater clarity and policed vigorously. It should be expected that elected leaders should have to defend themselves in an international court against charges of breaking international law. The international judiciary (the ICC or a successor) and the world legislature (UN, international institutions and nation states)

should be entirely separate and attempts of governments to interfere with ICC work should be illegal. All foreign policy should then be underpinned by a Hippocratic-style principle of 'First Do No Harm'.

- **End profit-making ownership of mass media**

A democracy without balanced and complete information is a dangerous thing. The interests of money are too partial for money to be allowed to control the main means of communicating information. Private ownership of mass news media should be removed and in turn a state-funded franchise system should be introduced to ensure much greater diversity and balance on the newsstands. Franchises would be awarded to non-profit trusts by an independent commission on a bid-for basis. The commission would be statutorily required to ensure fair representation of all political views.

Dr Andy Cumbers

Lecturer in Political and Economic Geography at the University of Glasgow. His research interests are in the local impacts of globalisation and neoliberalism and policy responses to them. He is also Energy Spokesperson for the Scottish Socialist Party and has written on public ownership.

- **Remaking Public Ownership**

Drawing upon a recent policy document - Remaking Public Ownership: a Strategy for the Democratic Control of Scotland's Energy Resources (see www.geog.gla.ac.uk/Online_Papers/acumbers003.pdf) - this idea is about redrafting a manifesto for public ownership in the twenty first century. Updating the case for public ownership in the light of globalisation, recent processes of economic restructuring and the experience of privatisation, the proposed article would set out a manifesto for new forms of public ownership. Through a critique of post-war nationalisation and the privatisation era that followed, the manifesto calls for forms of public ownership that are centred upon democratic rights, citizen participation and the local decentralisation of power. It argues that the dominant forms of public ownership in the post 1945 era (i.e. nationalisation) were tied up with capitalist modernity rather than democratic socialism. It also argues against centralising tendencies in socialism, calling for a diversity of solutions which reflects the different economic and technological requirements of particular sectors. It argues that the search for one universal economic model is anti-democratic and that a genuinely democratic socialism must retain a commitment to decentralisation.

- **Relocalising the economy**

This idea is concerned with developing forms of sustainable local economic development which short-circuit global commodity production. Recognising that a return to hermetically sealed local economies is neither practical nor desirable, it nevertheless explores policies

that could relocalise parts of the economy (e.g. organic food chains, public procurement markets, developing local energy systems) whilst at the same time contributing to an agenda of environmental sustainability. Drawing upon best practice from elsewhere, an agenda could be developed for the Scottish economy which relocalises the economy in a way that delivers greater decision-making power to producers and consumers.

- **Campaigning for a Living Wage**

Living Wage campaigns have recently developed in the United States, whereby unions and community groups campaign at the level of the city or district for a baseline set wages and conditions. Such campaigns are usually targeted at large public sector employers where unions are stronger and which if successful can provide the stimulus for changes in the private sector. In the US over 110 living wage campaigns have successfully been fought in cities right across the country. The proposal here would explore how the idea might be applied to Scotland, focusing in particular how a well orchestrated campaign in universities and local government could deliver real improvements to the pay and conditions of the poorest workers. A successful living wage campaign would be an important part of the fightback against privatisation and the public finance initiative.

Miss Kerry Santo

Kerry Santo used to be homeless and jobless and it has taken 20 years to find a sense of belonging, home and own business now in the process of stopping the rot for others.

- **Social Enterprise**

Make social enterprise free from restraints by giving social entrepreneurs the freedom to operate without forcing them into legal structures that don't suit.

- **Individuals Can Make a difference**

Stop the rules that say only organisations can make a difference. Set up a support group for individuals who are trying to make the world a better place and give them practical help rather than pay them lip service and give all the encouragement to organisations.

Peter Gunn

I am a middle-aged disabled man, living on the Southside of Glasgow who has just started the process of setting up a new social enterprise offering anger management training, including the training of long term unemployed people as instructors, then tender for local authority contracts.

- **Co-operatives**

To put social enterprise on to a National Agenda, thereby a European one. To encourage producers now 'benefiting' from CAP to engage in the setting up of truly community based social co-operation with goods and services taken straight to the consumer establishing/re-establishing the

links between producers and consumers e.g. farmers markets. This model could be used to help and inspire our rapidly dying fishing communities in Scotland where natural processing of foodstuffs could be re-established with fishermen returning to sea in much smaller vessels, with very low overhead, owned by the community with catches going straight to their own smokeries or other forms of natural processing. This would create opportunities in small boat-building and new apprenticeships, with subsequent spin-off work in the small leisure craft industry, i.e. transferable skilling. We already know of the large markets for such products already served by a number of Northern based private businesses.

- **Schools for Social Entrepreneurs in every community**

To set up a network of centres dedicated to the ideas of community based and run businesses. There has been a strong movement to bring 'enterprise' training and ideas in to our primary and secondary schooling system. We should be campaigning to make sure that social businesses receive the same discussion as any other form of trading, then establish a local School for Social Entrepreneurs, run by and operated by locals, using premises already in the State system, building on the teaching resources of those participating schools, run in the evenings and weekends. Lottery monies are there for such purposes so should be used to establish a network across Scotland, and be a model for the rest of Europe.

- **A National School for Social Entrepreneurs**

Strathclyde University has a Hunterien School for Entrepreneurs funded by a successful Scottish businessman. We need a similar operation set up to offer a service to the new network of local Schools. This also could be established using lottery monies. This could be a centre for research and in itself a lobbying organisation for social businesses which could not be high jacked by the self-interests of the massive lobby of the voluntary/charitable sector. This centre would also establish an accredited network of local Social Business Advisors completely outwith the control of any national organisation such as Scottish Enterprise.

Chris Thomson

Chris Thomson is a Scottish thinker and activist and is co-director of National Dialogue

- **Change our socioeconomic system to one based on the New Economics**

Virtually all the problems of our times are the direct and natural consequence of the dominant ideology, neoliberalism. Apart from the Greens, all the political parties subscribe to it in one way or another. Therefore, there is a need to propagate the idea that so long as we keep on subscribing to neoliberalism as the main ideology of our time, things will just get inexorably worse, regardless of any government policies. Therefore, we need a complete system

change, to a socioeconomic system best described by the New Economics. All aspects of our lives (and of government policy), e.g. health, education, fairness, business, and the use of the natural environment would change fundamentally if we changed the fundamental ideology

- **Address the deeper, underlying causes of all problems**

Most government policy and business strategy is short term and 'symptomatic' in nature. In this it resembles medical treatment. Therefore, the problems rarely go away, they simply get pushed to another part of the 'body' (i.e. society). Our approach to crime and health are classic examples of this. Unless and until we begin identifying and addressing the deeper, underlying causes of our many problems, they will remain with us, and may get worse. All of us - including governments and businesses - need to adopt the deeper causal approach.

- **Redefining 'progress'**

To an increasing number of people the conventional wisdom on what constitutes 'progress' and 'success' is quite at a variance with what they really want in life. This is not a new idea. There is an organisation in California with the same name. But they restrict themselves to an improved version of GDP (called the Genuine Progress Indicator, as well as the Ecological Footprint). While this is to be applauded, it does not go far enough. There is a real need for national dialogue on what people would regard as genuine progress (as distinct, for example, from economic growth).

Mr Declan Jones

Declan is the Director of the Social Enterprise Institute at Heriot Watt University.

- **Advancing the social enterprise sector**

Develop business opportunities for genuine social enterprises to trade in public AND private sector markets. This means real access to public sector procurement mechanisms as well as the removal of funding and other barriers to allow social enterprises to act independently rather than as low-cost downstream providers of local authority services operating solely in deprived communities. This means a move away from a grant culture to a profit making business culture but within a social enterprise philosophy of reinvesting profits, a lock on assets and member, worker or community control

- **Develop Social Enterprise Zones throughout Scotland**

Give tax credits and grants for social enterprises operating in specific areas throughout Scotland. This gives social enterprises business reasons as well as social reasons for citing their businesses in particular locations.

- **School Social Entrepreneurship Project**

Develop a programme of externally delivered modules on social enterprise to target school students from 14 years old

upwards. This will inform students about alternative business models and help them make choices about their future further and higher education. One result would be to raise awareness about the scale of the sector as well as convince students that the sector can offer worthwhile careers

Geoff Whittam

Senior Lecturer and union representative, Paisley Business School

- **Revert to a Progressive Fiscal System**

Reverse the situation were the poor pay proportionately more of their income in tax than the rich. Increasing tax levels will mean more public finance available to pay for the investment in the infrastructure to ensure first class hospitals, schools, transport, housing for all. Provision via public sector not PFI or PPP.

- **Nationalise Pension Funds**

The state to take charge of pension provision to ensure that everyone has a comfortable retirement and prevent the scandal of lost pensions

- **Abolish immigration controls**

Immigration controls do not work and they help to perpetuate a racist and xenophobic society. It does not make sense to maintain immigration controls from an economic or social sense. The scandal at the moment where asylum seekers cannot work yet they have skills which are in short supply means that they cannot play a full-part in society.

Denis Robertson Sullivan

Denis has been active in Scottish Politics for over 40 years. He runs a Communications and Media Awareness training company which helps people and businesses to be more effective in their communications.

- **Securing The Farming Industry**

Farmers have for years lived off of subsidies via the CAP. There has been a sensible move away from subsidising unwanted food to paying for land stewardship. With the growth of huge supermarkets and their world food purchasing, power has moved out of farmers' hands to the supermarkets. There are two unfortunate by-products of this approach to global food purchasing which needs addressing. Control of our own food resource is essential to national survival. Few would have predicted that more back up would be needed in the electricity supply industry. After New York/Canada, Italy etc the case for proper contingency verses costs were made. So it is with food. If we allow farmers to go out of business at the current rate then there will be no rural economy or farms with in a lifetime. Supermarkets are using their purchasing power to drive down prices to world prices. On the face of it this good for consumers. It is however very bad for farmers and ultimate consumers. If we do not accept the need to

pay the lowest UK price no British farmer will survive. It is our national interest to pay UK prices. We need to alter the current competition laws to allow farmers to form bigger cooperatives to allow them to negotiate better prices and to stand up to supermarket domination.

- **Support for sustaining employment**

The New Deal has been hugely successful at moving people from unemployment to work. What it has been less good at getting them to sustain these jobs. Those who find themselves on the roundabout of work/unemployment/work need different help usually with chaotic life styles to sustain themselves and fully develop their potential. More effort must now be made to deal with the issue of chaotic lifestyles to help people have more secure lives.

- **Rationalise public sector IT**

The computing systems of all local authorities should be put on one common platform and a common management process. This would allow for huge cost saving, greater system security. The opportunity to build more dynamic and flexible system and would make cross council cooperation easier.

William Dinan

- **Regulate Lobbying by TNCs in Scotland**

The Scottish Parliament are proposing to create a register of commercial consultant lobbyists. This is useful in so far as it goes, but it neglects the role of in-house corporate lobbyists, arguably the most influential class of business lobbyists in shaping the policy agenda. Putting information on the relations between government and big business in the public domain will increase the transparency of our political system and should help give the public some idea of the scale and scope of corporate political relationships.

- **Abolish 'Commercial Confidentiality' exemption from SFOI**

The Scottish Freedom of Information Act should be extended to provide full information on the way public money is spent in Scotland. In particular, the blanket exemption of commercial confidentiality needs to be abolished so important information on government spending and contracts is readily available in the public domain.

- **Substantial Scottish investment in renewable energy**

Scotland should be at the forefront of research and development of clean energy sources (especially wind and wave technology). Substantial resources are required to develop these technologies and link them to the national grid. Funding for such research (which will have both environmental and social/economic benefits) should be raised from energy corporations & utilities operating in Scotland.

Charles Gilchrist Brodie

Parliamentary candidate, former councillor and former

Vice Chair of the Liberal democrats and now a member of the National Council of the SNP

- Regulation of speculative currency flows
- Regulation of the Commission in relation to the new EU Constitution
- A European Defence Strategy

Henry McCubbin

Former Labour MEP and European economic advisor to Greater Manchester Council.

- **International Trade**

There is still time to put the brakes on most of these machines for creating inequalities between North and South as well as in the heart of the developed countries themselves. Too often, the argument of inevitability is reinforced by censorship of information about alternatives. Thus international financial institutions and the major media (whose owners are often beneficiaries of globalisation) have been silent about the proposal of the American economist and Nobel Laureate James Tobin, to tax speculative transactions on currency markets. Even at the particularly low rate of 0.1%, the Tobin Tax would bring in close to \$100 billion every year. Collected for the most part by industrialised countries, where the principal financial markets are located, this money could be used to help struggle against inequalities, to promote education and public health in poor countries, and for food security and sustainable development. Such a measure fits with a clearly anti-speculative perspective. It would sustain a logic of resistance, restore manoeuvring room to citizens and national governments, and, most of all, would mean that political, rather than financial considerations are returning to the fore

- **Against The Free Market**

Laissez-faire is also a form of State regulation, introduced and maintained by legislative and coercive means. It is a deliberate policy, conscious of its own ends and not the spontaneous, automatic expression of economic facts. Laissez-faire is now a form of globalised regulation sold on the exact opposite prospectus of de-regulation. Challenge this system and your skies may darken with the shadows of B-52s as you have challenged the freedom of American Capital to dictate your level of wealth or poverty. But challenges are happening in Venezuela and Bolivia. In these countries it is not Commies but the mass of their impoverished people. The assumptions of laissez-faire have to be continually challenged to show their falsity.

- **Europe and the Euro**

The lack of democratic accountability in the European Central Bank is usually the argument forwarded by the left in opposition to the Euro. Yet in Britain we have no overtly democratic control of our own Central Bank. The German example is that presidents of District Banks serve on the

Land (State) Bank board and the Presidents of the State banks serve on the Bundesbank board all in place following a political procedure. Hence the central bank, unlike ours in the UK which serves the City of London, serves all of Germany and not just Frankfurt. The whole system can only work if there is a level of transfer payments within the Euro zone large enough to compensate for shocks to the economies of the regions and states within the union. Thus protecting jobs, social and health services and education from a territorial decline in taxation revenue due to economic upheavals. This is neither Blair nor Brown's prescription for the Euro. Incidentally, capitalist USA uses huge transfer payments via the federal defence budget.

Bob Thomson

Former associate Scottish Secretary of Unison and member of the General Council of the STUC

- **Level Playing Field - Fundamental Rights for British Workers**

Tony Blair infamously boasted that British workers have less rights than anywhere else in the European Union. At the same time business has untrammelled power of hire and fire and closure and relocation. The International Labour Organisation's Declaration of Fundamental Rights of Workers should be incorporated into British law. This would stop workers from being sacked for taking lawful strike action and allow sympathetic support for other workers in connected industries.

- **International Workers Solidarity**

Globalisation has made it easier for business to pit workers in one country against workers in another country - usually at a cost to wages and conditions. Workers, especially those in developed nations should campaign for clauses in WTO and GATT trade agreements which penalises countries which do not implement the ILO declaration.

- **Protecting Jobs and Consideration**

With the European Parliament election next year there should be a campaign to ensure that any laws or commission policies must be scrutinised for their effect on jobs and conditions. The results of this scrutiny should be published and debated in the parliament.

Angela McCormick

Socialist, Globalise Resistance networker

- **Getting US and UK out of Middle East**

- **Privatisation of public services/health/ social services**

- **Resistance to multinational control of the food chain**

This includes issues about GM, safe food, hunger and malnutrition. ■

a reading list for radicals

A literature review by David Miller and Robin McAlpine

Along with the renewed activism which world politics has seen in recent years has come a renewed interest in radical political writing. The big publishing phenomena - Klein's **No Logo**, Moore's **Stupid White Men** and Palast's **The Best Democracy Money can Buy** - topped best seller lists and alerted publishers to the fact that there was a market for political writing. Increased disillusion with politicians may lead some to elect thuggish celebrity bodybuilders to run their state but it leads others to seek voices of sanity outside the cosy conversation between lawmakers and the rich which passes as mainstream politics now. As the Scottish Radical Book Fair showed again this year there is a wealth of writing out there of great interest to the left. Indeed, it is very difficult to attend the Radical Book Fair without leaving laden under a pile of books you simply don't have time to read. The following is therefore a fairly arbitrary run-through of a selection of the literature which is accompanying and informing the global justice movement.

It is of course inevitable that there is more writing explaining what is wrong than there is suggesting what should be done. Nonetheless, analysis of where we are is essential reading for anyone who wants to stimulate change. Without a clear understanding of the ways in which law and policy has become skewed towards the vested interests of wealth it is impossible to see the ways in which things could be different.

The book which seems to have caught the public imagination most in the anti-globalisation movement is Naomi Klein's **No Logo**. It is a fairly specific look at the way branding, control of space and image manipulation - along with the use of political power to support this process - have been used to coerce people into acquiescing with the free market. Klein also explores how this manifests itself in injustice, inequality and exploitation. Finally, she looks at some of the ways in which people are resisting the process and trying to reclaim space for purposes other than buying and selling. The first two sections are both insightful and enlightening, especially for someone approaching the subject for the first time. The thesis on the shift from manufacturing to branding as the key source of value in hypercapitalism - ownership of the means of perception rather than ownership of the means of production - is not entirely new, but Klein states it in a clear and approachable manner. But perhaps what is most impressive about the book is the effort it takes to illustrate the arguments, and many of the images in the book will stay with you well after you put it down - the 'life' of the women in virtual slavery in the sweatshops, the power of Wal-Mart to dictate the content of the music

produced by bands that want a mainstream audience, the student who was suspended for wearing a Pepsi T-shirt on Coke Day at his school. The last section is, however, largely unsuccessful, placing far too much weight on some relatively puerile attempts to 'buck the system'. Another big seller is Michael Moore's **Stupid White Men**. This is a good read, although the humour lacks subtlety for a European audience and much of the information will not be new to people interested in what is happening in the world. However, where Moore harnesses his genuine anger and indignation at what is happening and in some of his observations on the American political system, the book comes into its own. The same can be said of his new book, **Dude, Where's My Country**. Palast provides a harder edge and more penetrating investigative skills, exposing corporate domination of UK, US and global politics by means of political donations, lobbying and the 'cash-nexus'. His **The Best Democracy Money can Buy** combines sophisticated analysis with a keen news sense.

Of the other well-known works, Noreen Hertz's **Silent Takeover** is short and approachable but may be a little disappointing to anyone who has much of a level of knowledge on the subject. There are probably many people who began with **No Logo** and progressed to this, and while there is much in this book which is not strictly covered by Klein - notably issues of corporate governance - it is harder to be wholehearted in recommending it, particularly given Hertz's disavowal of anti-capitalism, and her immersion in corporate funded networks. While Hertz has posed as a critic of globalisation some of its high priests have detached themselves and moved in the opposite direction, Joseph Stiglitz being the most obvious example. His **Globalisation and its Discontents** is a useful critique of market fundamentalism from the former chief economist of the World Bank.

To understand where we have got to it is essential to understand the mindset that gave birth to it - the insane free-marketeering of the later '80s and the '90s. And to understand this Thomas Frank's **One Market Under God** is absolutely essential reading. Shot through with biting wry humour, this has a very wide sweep and covers everything from popular economics and lifestyle marketing to the neutering of academia and the 'dumbing down' of the media (a subject on which Frank rises above the crowd by actually understanding this complex and important issue). It is a delightful read and will leave you both gobsmacked as you remember when this craziness was taken seriously and horrified as you realise the stifling pervasiveness of it. This book cannot be recommended highly enough. If you acquire an appetite for Frank's writing you may also want to get hold

of his other work including **The Conquest of Cool** on the rise of hip consumerism and a collection of essays, **Commodify Your Dissent**, from The Baffler magazine which Frank edits.

It is also essential to get to grips with the nature of the international system we have got ourselves into. As always, John Pilger is a remarkably perceptive and humane writer and in **Hidden Agendas** and **The New Rulers of the World** (which cover very similar ground) you can't help but be caught up in his fiery anger at the state of things. **Hidden Agendas** in particular is as good an introduction to our world as you are likely to find, and even though it is fairly lengthy you will find it a pleasure to read. John Madley's **Hungry for Trade** looks at the global situation from the perspective of food. It is an incredibly knowledgeable work and contains vast amounts of fascinating information, even if it is a much drier read than most of these books. Nonetheless, without understanding the basic analysis contained in this book it is almost impossible to have a proper understanding of international trade - although some readers may prefer to glean this from the increasing amount of journalistic comment on the subject. To understand the politics of food you can turn to Eric Schlosser's bestselling **Fast Food Nation** which skilfully picks over the carcass of the fast food industry - only for those with a strong stomach. The corporate takeover of the food chain and the subversion of science in the UK is devastatingly exposed in Andy Rowell's new book **Don't Worry, it's Safe to Eat** which tells the true story of GM, BSE and foot and mouth.

Without understanding the school bully one can't understand the playground. To get a grip on America's relationship with the rest of the world you could do a lot worse than Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies' **Why Do People Hate America?** It is a temperate and well-argued analysis of the abstract relationships between America and the rest of the world. This means that it doesn't dwell on the detail of how America seeks to control institutions such as the UN but looks at the way the political and cultural impact of the country is felt by others. It is a very enlightening read, but you can't help but feel that it is almost designed to fail in reaching the audience which would benefit most from it - Americans themselves. Meanwhile to understand how the American people have been manipulated in recent years Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber's **Weapons of Mass Deception** provides a very good dissection of the American mindset by exploring the use of propaganda, misinformation and intimidation in the period between September 11 2001 and the end of the second Iraq war. It is also full of fascinating information which will set you in good stead for pub arguments about the war and its justification (or lack thereof). As with other radical books of late, Rampton and Stauber's has been virtually ignored by the mainstream in the US gaining reviews only in the San Francisco Chronicle and USA Today. Nevertheless it has spent the best part of the last three months in the New York Times bestseller

list. Rampton and Stauber run PR Watch in the US which monitors the misdeeds of the PR industry (sign up for their email bulletin: The Weekly Spin www.prwatch.org/cmd/subscribe_sotd.html).

Of course, globalisation has its local differences and George Monbiot's **Captive State** does a very good job of explaining the ways in which the international model of free-market-above-all-else has been tailored to the UK. Like the best of these writers, Monbiot writes with anger, humanity and no little dry humour. His survey of the corruption of the British political process is both valuable and interesting, particularly on subjects which might seem more arcane such as governmental processes (and the anonymous vested interests who shape them) and planning regulations, which he shows to be central to what is happening. And of course his dissection of the biotech industry and its lobbying is essential. The corporate take-over of the UK could not have been accomplished without a decisive shift in the political sphere. The rightward trajectory of the Labour Party is well known, perhaps especially by those activists who grit their teeth and hang on in the Party. No doubt emotional connections to the 'peoples party' run deep for many, but it is difficult to explain the point blank refusal of some labour supporters to see that the party has now become a neo-liberal fiefdom. Even if the rank and file wanted to, the party will not wake up from its infatuation with the market. If you have friends or relatives still hoping against hope for some hint of socialism from Tony or Gordon, the best Christmas present for them is undoubtedly the very short, incredibly well informed, politically sophisticated and immensely readable pocket book by Robin Ramsay: **The Rise of New Labour**. It may help to puncture a few wistful but damaging attachments. For a more in-depth account of the transformation of Labour into a party of big business read David Osler's **Labour Party PLC**.

The debate on Europe on the British left has tended not to seriously engage with the power and influence of the European institutions. In particular the role of the European Commission as the effective executive body for the interests of Transnational capital gains scant attention. Behind the mania for privatisation and PPP lies years of lobbying by the corporate elite in Brussels, while the left (including the 'internationalist' left) keeps its gaze firmly focused on 'national' issues which have already been decided at European level. One key activist research organisation - Corporate Europe Observatory (www.corporateeurope.org) - has been relentlessly pursuing the corporate capture of the EU from their offices in Amsterdam. If you want to understand how 'Scottish' and 'British' issues fit in to European questions and get a glimpse of the issues the European anti-capitalist left needs to unite on, you must read their **Europe Inc**, which has been sadly neglected in the anglophone world. And to counteract the rather smug anti-Americanism of some on the left, Mark Curtis's book **Web of**

Deceit (reviewed in SLR 18) searingly deconstructs British foreign policy arguing that the UK too is an 'outlaw' state. Even, perhaps especially, under Blair, Cook and Short.

For a deep understand the political and economic environment we're in you really need to spend some time reading Noam Chomsky. There are two of his books in particular which will help remove the scales from your eyes. **Rogue States** is an enormously insightful analysis of international relations - political, economic and military - and **Profit Over People** is probably the most important single explanation of how modern capitalism really works (as opposed to how its apologists claim it works). Chomsky is incredibly erudite and these books are not for the casual browser, but his arguments are so clearly stated and extensively evidenced that they are not difficult to follow. These are to be recommended to anyone who thinks they know how the world works, or who wants to.

All of the above books to some extent or another make suggestions about how the world ought to be, but that is not their main purpose. The range of literature on what global economic and global politics ought to look like is growing, but it remains a much smaller body of work.

The most difficult question - how do we imagine a different economic system - is one which is beginning to be addressed. Two books - Chris Hill's **Anti-Capitalism: The Social Market Alternative** and Michael Albert's **Parecon** - take a similar approach to reforming capitalism. Hill's book constructs an alternative model for corporate governance which would aim to balance the profit motive with the needs of other stakeholders - workers, consumers, the environment. His analysis of the problems of the current system is not only informative, it is extensively referenced and forms a virtual encyclopaedia of useful information. The prescriptions for change begin in a promising manner, but for most readers the level of complexity of check and counterbalance will become a bit overwhelming in the end. It may not feel like a workable alternative to many people, but it certainly opens up some interesting questions. Michael Albert's **Parecon** or 'participatory economics' is a well thought through attempt to show what a non-Stalinist alternative to capitalism might look like. Participation in social ownership, worker and consumer councils and participatory planning are all envisaged. The arguments in this book really need detailed discussion in the movement as part of a process of concrete planning for the future.

Perhaps the most important work in this area is **Another World is Possible**, edited by William F Fisher and Thomas Ponniah. This is a collection of papers and summaries of debates from the second World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in January 2001. As always with collections of essays there are large variations in the quality of what is in this book. But it nonetheless covers an immense amount of ground and is full of ideas for how things ought to be and of proposals for change.

Academic production on globalisation has been immense in recent years, as it has become the latest fad for want-to-be-hip scholars who fancy a bit of kudos on the seminar circuit. While much of this debate remains of marginal relevance - in the best traditions of privileged intellectuals everywhere - there is some work which does repay engagement. The place to start is definitely Leslie Sklair's book **Globalization**. Sklair has produced a synthesis of the best currents in left academia, bringing together work on the twin crises caused by capitalist-led globalisation: the crisis of class polarisation within and between nations and the crisis of ecological sustainability.

Sklair's book (and his 2001 volume, unambiguously titled, **The Transnational Capitalist Class**) is a necessary starting point for understanding the global system. 2003 has seen the publication of two major works attempting to produce a manifesto for the anti capitalist movement. George Monbiot's **Age of Consent** and Alex Callinicos's **An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto**. Both are worthwhile attempts to think through what the movement is **for** in addition to what it is against. Monbiot rejects both Marxism (understood by him as necessarily Stalinist and totalitarian) and anarchism (as necessarily ineffectual against oppression). Agree or disagree with his account, the real question that Monbiot poses is what kind of system is up to the demands of the movement. His answer is a kind of democratic global government and he provides a critique of some elements of the green movement who he sees as backwards looking localists. Callinicos, coming from a revolutionary socialist position, would agree with this, but the question this tends to ignore is the greens most powerful challenge to the left: sustainability. Monbiot's 'solution' to the problem of corporate power is largely held at the level of politics - a form of global bourgeois democracy and this may be its biggest problem. Nevertheless Monbiot opens up a range of questions which can once again be posed by virtue of the very existence of the movement. Callinicos meanwhile sets out what he calls a transitional programme of demands on which the movement can unite. His view is that the tendency of the movement is towards socialism - rather than global 'democracy' as outlined by Monbiot. The 'transitional' nature of the demands does leave the wider question of what sort of society might develop deliberately open. But a sketch of the transition and next steps is contained in Sklair's **Globalisation**.

The best thing about Sklair's book is the way that it marshals an immense range of evidence on the problems facing the world, in order not just that we understand them, but so that we can change them. He does not suggest a return to nation state control or the reversal of 'globalisation', but instead proposes a project of 'socialist globalisation' to replace the current domination of the power of capital. This is an exceptionally worthwhile and inspiring book and provides much food for thought - especially when read in conjunction with the books of Callinicos and Monbiot. ■

web review

Henry McCubbin

What is the European Social Forum and who runs it? A good question to which I am not going to provide an answer. Instead I will point you towards a variety of web sites run by organisations which are part of the European Branch of the World Social Forum and which have the important function of ensuring that the struggle for economic justice in the world is taken to the wealthy north and west European national and European seats of power.

One organisation which was early in to the action on Globalisation is ATTAC. ATTAC is the Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens. ATTAC was founded in France in 1998, and now has over 80,000 members worldwide. It is an international network of independent national and local groups in 33 countries. It promotes the idea of an international tax on currency speculation (the Tobin Tax) and campaigns to outlaw tax havens, replace pension funds with state pensions, cancel Third World debt, reform or abolish the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and, more generally, recapture the democratic space that has been lost to the financial world.

ATTAC combines activism with intellectual creativity. It promotes practical economic reforms meant to tame the devastating power of the financial markets, and to favour democratic, transparent economic structures that serve the needs of ordinary people. It looks for alternatives to the dogmatic ideology of neoliberalism. ATTAC is independent from all political parties, and brings together labour unions, associations, MPs, academics and citizens from all walks of life, in self-education and peaceful action.

ATTAC took part in the demonstrations at Seattle in 1999 against the WTO, and at Genoa in July 2001 against the G8. It is part of a diverse global movement that promotes democratic self-determination for local and regional economies. The idea to launch ATTAC in Britain came from the Friends of Le Monde diplomatique (www.monde-diplo-friends.org.uk) and the LSE ATTAC Society ([/attac/html/lse.vm](http://attac/html/lse.vm)) in autumn 2001. A public meeting was organised in London's Conway Hall on 17 November 2001, to introduce ATTAC to a British public, and to see whether there was sufficient interest to start forming local groups. About 200 people attended. The consensus seemed to be that ATTAC would be a good thing to have in this country, and that the best approach would be to create a network of local ATTAC groups; the first of these was ATTAC London.

EUpolitix.com runs a rolling news service, with a handy guide to all legislation in the pipeline, interviews and a

bank of regularly updated public affairs positions from NGOs, trade organisations and corporations. The site is in English and French, and completely free for anyone to access. A team of reporters provides impartial coverage of EU events. The news covers everything from the latest Blair-Chirac fracas, to the tiniest of changes in draft regulations as in to the one on emissions from paints and varnishes. Try www.eupolitix.com/EN but remember the semi-official nature of this site.

The European Social Forum (www.fse-esf.org) is a space for people from all over Europe to come together to discuss how to build another world, and to organise opposition to corporate globalisation and war. This site has been set up as a gateway to other national sites covering the actions of those opposed to undemocratic globalization.

After the spectacular success of the World Social Forum (www.wsfindia.org) in Porto Alegre, 60,000 activists, trade unionists, peace campaigners and ordinary people gathered in Florence last year for the first European Social Forum (ESF). This year the ESF takes place in Paris. In the aftermath of the fantastic global anti-war campaign, the continued success of the global justice movement and the mounting problems faced by politicians such as Blair, Bush and Berlusconi, the ESF promises to be a crucial event.

Groups are being organised across the country to get people to Paris, and a Eurostar train has been booked. There will be hundreds of forums, debates and meetings, cultural events and plenty more besides. Don't miss the next big event for the European movement. More information about the 2nd ESF will be put up on this site as it is decided. You can contact the mobilisation at mobilise_esf@hotmail.com or phone 020 7053 2072.

A review of Social Forum web sites would not be complete if it were not to look at the ownership of the media. An excellent port of call is www.mediachannel.org/ownership/. Here you will find some first class background material plus a diagram showing how media moguls extent their power across the globe. These same moguls benefit from globalising neo liberal fundamentalism.

I can't end without drawing attention to www.rosalux.de/engl/home.htm. It is the web site of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. Rosa will for ever be remembered for standing up to militarism and being assassinated for her troubles. The site fully communes with the anti globalization movement and provides some excellent intellectual writings worthy of her memory. ■

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ASLEF calls for the Government to introduce a charter of workers' rights that would include, the right to full employment, rights from day one of employment, the repeal of oppressive anti trade union legislation and positive laws encouraging trade unions to represent their members individually and collectively.

Shaun Brady, General Secretary. ASLEF, 9 Arkwright Road, Hampstead, LONDON NW3 6AB.