



# Scotland in Europe

Who cares about the Euro election?

## Contents

Comment .....	2	The missing election .....	12
A stateless nation in a union of states.....	4	Henry McCubbin	
Neil MacCormick		Unions work .....	14
New American century or progressive		Sandy Boyle	
globalisation?.....	6	Educated or indentured? .....	16
David Purdy		Jacqueline Kelly	
Connecting with the New Europe .....	8	Deep water for the Scottish Executive .....	18
George Blazysca		Jim and Margaret Cuthbert	
Another europe is possible, another left is		Telling us how it is .....	20
necessary .....	10	Derrick Whyte	
Francois Vercaammen		Scotland and the ethics of anomie .....	22
		Innes Kennedy	

## Comment

The European elections are approaching and yet no-one seems to care. You would expect that from the general public which has been trained to be disinterested in all political processes. However, even among those who are politically committed or who normally take a clear interest in politics the European elections somehow manage to be a complete turn-off.

And yet much of what left-wingers are worried about is one way or another tied up with Europe. There is a battle in Europe for the soul of a continent's foreign policy, and the balance between 'New Europe'/Little Americans and 'Old Europe' will be crucial in dictating whether Iraq is the start of the American Neo-Cons' global restructuring or the end. It is equally important in determining whether we are going to live with a capitalism which has at least some social face or whether we are going to move inexorably towards the gangster/mobster capitalism of Russia or America. Britain cannot contain its gloating about 'deregulated labour markets' and even German and French capitalisms look like they are turning away from public service towards unfettered market. Blair wants us force-fed on genetically modified foods and it is largely the EU which has saved us so far. The international development agenda will not be driven from Washington and so Europe is the best chance of pushing that forward. Equally, the excessive dominance of the international financial institutions (IMF, WTO, World Bank) will not be challenged by the US. And then there is everything from monetary policy to support for cultural development.

So why isn't interest greater? Well, the problem appears to stem from a fairly large disconnection between the continent and its political structures. If national governments are distant from the electorate then the EU institutions are barely visible. The Council of Ministers might as well be sealed in a lead box for all the chance of real European feeling influencing it. At the very time at which, under enormous pressure from corporate lobbyists, Europe is beginning to turn towards America's way

of economic thinking so civic Europe is turning in the opposite direction. It is much wider than the anti-globalisation protests; from a local to a continental level there are clear signs that people are becoming unhappy with the direction of government; the millions of people on the streets of Europe may not have stopped a war in Iraq but it left no doubt as to what people actually thought.

What the articles in this issue show again and again is that there is an unresolved problem between the left and the European project. How to engage with it, whether to engage with it, what to aim for; these are issues rarely discussed by those on the left, and so we end up with much more analysis than action. Does this matter? Well, the corporate lobbyists are all action in Brussels and seem to be getting their way. It ought to raise greater alarm than it does.;

Meanwhile, you will have noticed a few changes in the last issue of the Scottish Left Review and you will find a few more in this one. SLR is now well into its fourth year and it is now firmly established. We have produced what we believe is an impressive amount of quality writing about Scottish politics, Scottish culture and Scottish society. We are always keen to keep developing the magazine and, on the basis that every good revolution ought to have its own art, we have been commissioning some original illustrations from sympathetic Scottish artists. If you or anyone you know would be interested in contributing, please get in contact by emailing [editorial@scottishleftreview.org](mailto:editorial@scottishleftreview.org). Another element of the magazine that we have been eager to establish was a satirical look at the state of Scottish politics – often more effective at holding politicians to account than acres of statistics and arguments. So we have two new features in this issue; award-winning creators of cult cartoon Glasgow Fabulous D C Jackson and M J Collin bring you 44 Smug Street and the comedy team behind the satirical revue Kick up the Tabloids share their thoughts on the state of play. We hope you enjoy. ■

Reviews ..... 24  
 Web Review ..... 26  
 44 Smug Street ..... 26  
 Kick Up The Tabloids ..... 27

**Illustrations:**

**Tommy Perman (cover, page 18)**

E: tommyperman@surfacepressure.co.uk W: www.surfacepressure.co.uk

**Andy Weir (page 9)**

E: andy\_weir10@hotmail.com W: www.surfacepressure.co.uk/andyweir

**Sandy Wood (pages 5 & 17)**

E: novawood@hotmail.com

**Editorial Committee**

Aamer Anwar	John McAllion	Jimmy Reid (Convener)
Bill Bonnar	Robin McAlpine (Editor)	Tommy Sheppard
Moira Craig	Henry McCubbin	Alex Smith
Roseanna Cunningham	David Miller	Elaine Smith
John Kay	Tom Nairn	Bob Thomson
Isobel Lindsay	Andrew Noble	

Articles for publication: [editorial@scottishleftreview.org](mailto:editorial@scottishleftreview.org)

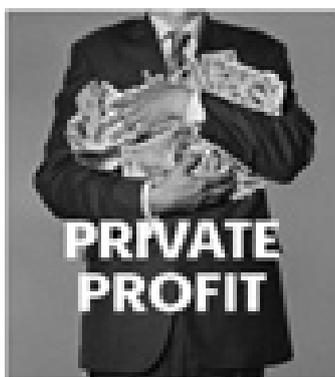
Letters and comments: [feedback@scottishleftreview.org](mailto:feedback@scottishleftreview.org)

Website: [www.scottishleftreview.org](http://www.scottishleftreview.org)

Tel/Fax 0141 424 0042

Scottish Left Review, 741 Shields Road, Pollokshields, Glasgow G41 4PL

Printed by Clydeside Press (TU)



*revitalise our*  
**public services**

When private companies run public services, cash can become more important than care.

**Keep public services out of private hands.**

UNISON is the voice of people who deliver the services - and stands up for those who depend on them.

**UNISON - all together a better union**



To join phone Freephone UNISONdirect 0845 355 0845

For more information on our campaign contact Matt Smith at UNISON, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow G2 6RX, Tel 0870 7777 006  
 Check out our website for the latest updates. [www.unison-scotland.org.uk](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk)

# stateless in a union of states

## Neil McCormick looks at Scotland's interests in developments in Europe

It is a fantastic opportunity and privilege to represent Scotland in the European Parliament. Whatever be the other merits or demerits of our present list system of proportional representation in European elections, it enables me, like the seven other Scottish MEPs, to say with perfect truth "I represent Scotland here". My own good luck in this respect was enhanced when in December 2001 I was elected as a representative of my Parliamentary Group (we in the SNP sit as part of the Greens/European Free Alliance Group) at the Convention on the Future of Europe. So I was able to speak for Scotland - and for the other stateless nations represented through EFA - in the debates drafting a constitution for Europe.

The Convention made democratic strides forward in drafting a constitution that would be more responsive to citizens' opinions. I was instrumental in achieving a stronger statement of subsidiarity, winning recognition for minority languages, and giving legal force to the Charter of Fundamental Rights. To my intense regret, though, I failed to achieve sufficient amendment of the Convention's draft constitution in relation to fisheries, in particular as respects the entrenchment of the Union's 'exclusive competence' in relation to marine biological resource conservation under the CFP. But I did persuade colleagues to amend slightly the text that lumps fisheries together with agriculture, so that now the draft recognises that the characteristics of the fishing industry differ in certain important respects from those of agriculture.

The draft constitution otherwise marks a great improvement in the constitutional framework of Europe, far preferable to the existing jumble of treaties. It substantially enhances democratic self-government in Europe, by establishing an ordinary legislative process of a two-chamber kind, involving the Council of Ministers as the representative of the states' governments, and the European Parliament as representing citizens directly.

The Council of Ministers fulfils the role of the second, revising chamber. The European Parliament, which is the first legislative Chamber, now has extended powers of co-decision with the Council on all matters within the legislative competence of the Union. The European Commission is confirmed as the bearer of executive power, under the strategic guidance of the European Council and answerable to the European Parliament. The draft constitution also enhances the Commission's answerability to Parliament, and gives the power of election of the Commission President to Parliament, following the five-yearly election. Thus the directly elected element of the EU now has greater powers, making the whole thing more democratic.

The power of nominating candidates for President would rest with the European Council, which comprises the (executive) heads of state and heads of government of the member states of the Union. In this and other functions, notably oversight of foreign and security policy, the European Council expresses the special character of the Union: not a state, and not a sovereign federal union, but still a confederation of states - perhaps the first ever democratic confederation, truly a union 'of its own kind'. It seems to me to be accurate to think of this as a confederation, not a federal Union.

Our policy in the SNP supports the European Union as a confederation that collectively exercises certain sovereign rights pooled by states, but in which each state retains its own residual sovereignty in respect of constitutional, fiscal and other matters. On this understanding, my party has supported the development of a European constitution, while flatly rejecting any idea of a centralised European super-state. Overall, my SNP colleagues and I found that the draft constitution fitted with our policy objectives, with one very important exception. The UK Government failed to take effective action either at the Convention or the subsequent Inter-Governmental Conference to delete the entrenchment of EU exclusive competence over fisheries. Because of this we resolved not to support ratification of any constitution containing these proposals. In any event we consider that the adoption of any EU constitution must give expression to the sovereignty of the people in a referendum, and my colleague Nicola Sturgeon MSP has published a draft bill in the Scottish Parliament calling for a consultative referendum.

This does not mean that the SNP is shifting to a Eurosceptic position - far from it. Rather, it illustrates why we believe it is necessary for Scotland to become an independent player in the EU, so that we can protect our national interests just like all the other member states protect theirs. If Scotland were independent we would be able to veto the provisions regarding fishing. It is because we have no political power that successive UK Governments have sacrificed Scotland's fishing rights. To reverse that situation we do not need to leave the EU - we need to leave the UK.

Since the failure of the December IGC to agree on adopting the constitution, the Irish Government is making it a priority of their Presidency of the EU to get negotiations back on track. However, it will be a labour of Hercules to get a constitution adopted before ten new states accede to the EU on 1st May. The enlargement of the EU to include states from central, eastern and southern Europe is to be welcomed. Many of the new states that have recently emerged from larger unions are comparable in size with Scotland, and quite a few are a good deal smaller. If Slovakia and Malta can sit at the top table of Europe as independent member states, then why not Scotland? Ireland, another small country on the periphery of Europe, currently holds the rotating Presidency of the EU. The Irish also chair the European Parliament through their MEP Pat Cox, the EP President. If ever an illustration were needed of how small countries can lead the way in Europe, this is it. There is no reason why an independent Scotland could not do exactly the same.

Enlargement offers many opportunities for Scotland, but also challenges. One effect will be to reorientate structural funding towards the comparatively poorer accession countries. The task will be to ensure that enlargement is not achieved at the cost of unfair withdrawal of appropriate support by the EU for disadvantaged and peripheral parts of the present EU, including parts of Scotland.

To face the increased competition of ten new member states joining the internal market, Scotland will need to address the fundamental problem of low economic growth. Small European countries (with an average population of six million) have been much more successful economically than large ones like the

UK. They are 35 per cent richer per person, have 40 per cent lower unemployment and their deficits average three times less. The key difference is that they are all independent in Europe, enjoying the benefits of the single market with the political power to make decisions in their own interests. Scotland must take on similar powers if we are to stem the economic decline.

The ability to take our own decisions would benefit business, too. Scotland presently has the highest business rates in the whole of Europe, meaning that our business sector is less able to compete. The level of fuel tax, too, means that it is cheaper to transport goods from Warsaw to London than from Aberdeen to London - a strong incentive for jobs to go east. I want to give Scottish businesses a competitive advantage in Europe, but to do that we need the same tax powers as every other small EU nation. Joining the Euro has the potential for significant economic benefits to Scotland, and in due course this should be decided in a referendum. Scotland's distinctive economic conditions require a distinctive assessment of the effects of Euro membership. Our economy is much more export-led than that of the UK as a whole, so the present overvaluation of the euro makes this the wrong moment to contemplate joining. The single currency would be particularly beneficial to Scotland because 69 per cent of Scottish exports go to continental Europe. This accounts for 286,628 jobs. Business would benefit from reduced charges on foreign exchange transactions, and eliminating the risk of currency fluctuations. Joining the Euro would almost halve Scotland's interest rates, helping the average homeowner as well as boosting our economic growth and giving our manufacturing and export industries the lift they deserve.

Overall, the EU must be animated by social and environmental ideals and by respect for subsidiarity. The EU creates a basis

both for enhanced prosperity and for greater fairness and sustainability throughout the continent. With full membership of the EU, a Scottish Government and Parliament would be able to promote and protect the legitimate interests of the Scottish people across the whole sweep of the policy domains on which competence has been granted to the European institutions.

I believe in a socially just Union, fully respectful of human rights internally and externally, and one that acknowledges obligations of the more developed toward the less developed countries and regions of the world. During this term of the Parliament I have raised the issue of human rights at the Dungavel Immigration Detention Centre with the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner, who has promised to look into the treatment of asylum seekers across Europe. An independent Scotland would be able to adopt more generous aid targets than the UK's present 0.4 per cent of GNP. The SNP would aim to meet the UN Millennium Development Target of 0.7 per cent and even increase it to 1 per cent, and I have pushed the EU to do the same.

For the present, and for the future after attaining independence, we in the SNP are strongly convinced of the virtues of decentralisation enshrined in the principle of subsidiarity. At present this relates to Scotland's position as an internal nation within a Member State, and a highly visible and respected European 'constitutional region' (that is, a constitutionally recognised country within a member state, enjoying internal powers of legislative and executive self-government). After independence, these values will continue to be of great importance in relation to Scotland's own regions and island communities. ■

*Neil MacCormick MEP with thanks to Sheena Cleland*



# new american century or progressive globalisation

David Purdy looks at the world's two competing capitalisms and asks which way for Britain in Europe?

Over the past two years, the tectonic plates of world politics have shifted. The decade that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall can now be seen, in retrospect, as an interregnum between the Cold War and the 'New American Century'. Both the elder Bush and Clinton administrations sought to preserve the transatlantic alliance and to maintain the multilateral approach to foreign policy that was devised in the late 1940s, when Soviet communism was the main enemy and the concept of the 'West', in its modern form, first emerged.

9/11 - or 11/9 as we say in Europe - changed all that. Caught off guard by what now looks like a lucky strike, the junior Bush administration was quick to exploit the attack on the twin towers for its own ends. Uninhibited by considerations of prudence and diplomacy - the old Soviet foe was vanquished and the new Russia was prostrate - the US government launched its own 'shock and awe' display of America-first' militarism. To justify its improvised campaign in Afghanistan and the stage-managed invasion of Iraq, it invoked a new doctrine of pre-emptive intervention and regime-change, reducing the UN Charter first to a fig-leaf and then to a "scrap of paper".

The advent of a new world order had been announced more than ten years earlier when the bipolar conflict underlying the old one came to an end. For various reasons, however, it failed to materialise: uncertainty about Russian intentions, reluctance to risk antagonising allies and the sheer inertia produced by forty years of East-West stand-off. (After all, no one predicted the collapse of communism - a failure of intelligence that puts more recent mistakes in the shade.) Now at last, however, the interregnum was over. Henceforth, the US proposed to rely on ad hoc 'coalitions of the willing', with or without UN blessing. Though serving no essential military purpose, the Blair government's loyal support has been vital in securing such international legitimacy as US policy enjoys and this, in turn, has had important consequences, for the UK's domestic politics and international alignment, on the one hand, and for the development of the European Union (EU) and its role in the world, on the other.

The impact of the Bush-Blair axis on relations between Britain and Europe can be gauged by going back to the successful launch of the Euro at the beginning of 2002. For a time, it seemed possible - even probable - that New Labour would screw up its courage, declare the Treasury's five tests passed and call the

long awaited referendum on the Euro. This prospect vanished during the Iraq crisis as a rift emerged between the US/UK and the other members of the UN Security Council - notably, France and Germany - a division that prompted Donald Rumsfeld - showing unexpected flair as a political strategist, whatever his shortcomings as an armchair general - to distinguish between the 'old Europe' and the 'new'. The countries he had in mind were not Italy and Spain, where the scale of anti-war protest belied the pro-war stance of their governments, but those in Central and Eastern Europe where government and people were at one in their admiration for America, no less than both were set on joining the EU.

Confirmation that there would be no referendum on the Euro until after the next Westminster election, and possibly not even then, came in June 2003 when the Treasury published its verdict on the five tests. In the circumstances, 'no, not yet' was probably

the wisest decision. The subsequent outcome of Sweden's referendum in September suggests that if the British government had recommended joining the single currency, it too would have been rebuffed by the voters and entry to the Euro-zone would still have been put back for years.

Of more immediate significance were the changing terms of the euro debate. The flexibility test provides a good illustration. By definition, if the UK joined the Euro-zone, the Bank of England would give up the freedom - more nominal than real in a globally integrated financial system - to vary the exchange rate and to set domestic interest rates. The original test had asked whether the UK could safely do without these macroeconomic tools. Over the past year, this question has been turned on its head. Highlighting the contrast between 'dynamic Britain' and 'sclerotic Europe', New Labour now asks whether the Euro-zone is sufficiently flexible for the UK to risk joining.

The implication is clear. France, Germany and Italy which between them account for 70 per cent of the Euro-zone's combined GDP, all continue to experience slow economic growth and high unemployment. They are, therefore, being urged to follow Britain's example by rescinding or scaling down the various forms of social protection and partnership that were built up in the post-war decades on the one hand, to safeguard workers and citizens against the vicissitudes of life under capitalism; on the other, to develop an inclusive framework of

policy-making which combines bargaining over questions of distribution with a shared approach to problem-solving.

New Labour's lessons in comparative economic policy are selective and misleading. They fail to mention the small successful EU countries: Austria, Finland, Holland and Ireland within the Euro-zone, Denmark and Sweden outside it; they confine attention to economic performance in the recent past rather than over a longer time period; and they ignore performance indicators that show the UK's record in a poor light: the level of output per worker, the duration of working time, the incidence of poverty, the degree of inequality, the quality of public services and the state of the economic infrastructure. What they do reveal, however, is the New Labour's neo-liberalism. A pivotal ally of Washington on the global stage, the British government has now become an evangelist for the American way in Europe.

In one respect, of course, the Euro-zone is too rigid: its monetary and fiscal rules, framed in the mid-1990s when governments were still fighting the thirty years' war against inflation - which even then was all but over - are an obstacle to responsible policy in the current situation, when low interest rates and deficit financing are needed to stave off deflation. The need, moreover, is urgent, for as Japan's experience shows, once prices start falling, even negative real interest rates and recurrent budget deficits may not suffice to rekindle growth. Meanwhile, the steep fall in the dollar in recent months has wiped out the competitive advantage previously enjoyed by producers in the Euro-zone, depriving the European economies of a useful stimulus to demand. Doubtless it will be hard to change the rules and establish a new monetary and fiscal regime, as the ongoing dispute over the French and German budget deficits shows. But hard is not impossible.

More generally, what prevents the EU from regaining internal momentum and becoming a force for good in the world is emphatically not the European model of social capitalism - in reality, a family of models, rather than a set of clones. On the contrary, only by celebrating and refurbishing their social heritage can EU member states hope to meet the four interconnected challenges that confront them: overcoming economic stagnation, managing the Union's enlargement, resolving its internal crisis of legitimacy and countering American global hegemony.

The present state of the Union is dire. In-fighting over plans for a new EU 'constitution' has been compounded by continued wrangling over the Stability and Growth Pact and the outbreak of a new row over the EU budget which, as ever, has revived long-standing conflicts over the Common Agricultural Policy and pits net contributors to EU funds - notably, Germany and Holland - against net beneficiaries. Henceforth, these will include not just the countries on Europe's southern and western littoral, which were once poor relative to those in the centre and north but have since caught up, but also the new member states in the East, which are very much poorer than any of the existing EU-15 and are determined to get rich, by fair means or foul. And beyond the bickering in Brussels lies the chasm that

separates Europe's political classes from the citizens in whose name they purport to speak.

A straw in the wind is the repositioning of the British Conservatives. Tory MEPs recently realigned themselves with the European People's Party, the dominant centre-right bloc in the European Parliament. Meanwhile, the party's new leadership at Westminster senses in the EU's current disarray a chance to heal its past divisions over Europe, to block the pursuit of "ever closer union" and perhaps - who knows - to reverse some of the progress that has been made over the past half century towards transnational co-operation and multi-levelled governance.

What is required to break the current impasse and lift the EU out of the doldrums is a new vision of its purpose, based on a clear-eyed understanding of the world we are in. Behind the Bushes, so to speak, lies the neo-liberal revolution which has encircled the globe in the past thirty years; and behind that, in turn, lie two centuries of divergent social development which have produced in America a feral form of capitalism quite unlike the more regulated and socialised forms that evolved on this side of the Atlantic. At root, these formations are incompatible. If the world were less unbalanced, they could probably co-exist. As it is, if free market individualism is not caged and tamed, it will destroy some of the finest achievements of European civilisation.

It could also spawn bloody conflicts within and between states. That, at any rate, is the lesson of history. In the early nineteenth century, under the banner of progress, free trade and the gold standard, the predecessors of today's neo-liberals set out to bring every corner of the world and every facet of social life under the sway of market forces. To be sure, what Karl Polanyi called "The Great Transformation" engendered prodigious material growth. But it also gave rise to environmental despoliation, imperial aggrandisement, inter-imperial rivalry, the First World War, the Russian Revolution, the rise of fascism, the Great Depression and the Second World War.

European social capitalism is the product of prolonged and widespread resistance to free market utopianism, involving all sections of society, including - on occasion - even capitalists. For all its many flaws, the EU is a valuable resource for those who oppose the neo-liberal project and the relentless march of the market. Its 'crooked timber' provides a unique **transnational** framework of social protection and partnership. Confined, for the moment, to one continent, the European model could, in time, be extended - outwards to other states and upwards to the global level. A useful shorthand name for this process is progressive globalisation. Its aim is not to create some global superstate - this would be neither desirable nor possible - but to socialise global capitalism. A formidable undertaking no doubt - but then, so too was the task of socialising capitalism on the terrain of the nation-state. ■

*David Purdy is a social economist and lives in Stirling. A member of Democratic Left Scotland, he is the author of Eurovision or American Dream? (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2003).*

# connecting with the new europe

George Blazyca asks how Scotland can reach out to the new accession states to build alliances in Europe and to help strengthen radical politics

The 'New Europe', the enlarged European Union of 25 members that will be created on 1 May, is coming into being in almost the messiest possible way - the Tory party leader, Michael Howard, and the tabloids have seen to that. Fears of a tidal wave of migration have been stoked, suspicions ignited, alarm generated. One unfortunate aspect of all this, especially for those of us on the left, is that we see clearly just how weak is commitment to any kind of internationalism in our society. 'Globalised' we might be, but 'internationalist'? The best that can be said is that its fragile roots are cruelly exposed.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. After all, there was precious little genuine enthusiasm, if we stick to existing powerful institutions for a moment, in most of the existing EU15 for further enlargement of the club. Where that half-hearted enthusiasm did exist - as in Thatcher's Britain - it was much to do with the Iron Lady's calculation that a bigger, wider EU would effectively kill off the French-German idea of 'ever deeper integration'. Of course, the EU and its 'participatory' organs, like the European Parliament, excite (occasionally) diverse emotions across the left. For some it is no more than an undemocratic capitalist club, its imperative driven by the market, steadily eroding local and national sovereignty. Steadfast non-engagement with the entire EU project might be one response as in the Norwegian case. Opting out is also sometimes a possibility as in the UK, Danish and Swedish attitudes to the Euro. Others argue the case for greater involvement and will, for example, be fighting in the European Parliament elections, trying against the odds, to get a vote, **any vote**, out on June 12.

One thing that is pretty clear however is that we are not making a great success, even in the EU of 15 (and no reason to stop there), of developing the international links and arguments to counter the European Commission's determined movement towards capitalism US-style and away from the traditional European 'social' model. True, the anti-globalisation movement is doing its bit and the European Social Forum is, as Gill Hubbard told readers of SLR's last issue, off to a good start. But much more needs to be done - especially in making connections across parts of Europe wrenched apart by the post-war deal made in Yalta in 1945 but soon to be blessed with EU membership and given the Brussels treatment.

Despite its messy origins Europe will change significantly from May 1 and we should take stock of what's happening. We certainly need to continue to look outwards, making the connections to ensure, at the very least, wider debate of alternatives to an EU that bends ever more towards an Anglo-Saxon capitalism, driven by the market, privileging the private over the public domain, celebrating narrow individualism over community.

It is especially clear that small countries, like Scotland, have to engage internationally and we can probably easily agree that this should be via a richer range of conduits than the business/economic linkages that attract (apart from sport of course) most mainstream media attention. So how should we in Scotland, on the political left, engage with European developments after May

1st? The first thing worth doing is to survey the landscape. Ten new EU members are about to come in. Seven are Baltic and central-European countries that until 1989 were part of the Soviet-bloc. Another, Slovenia, was the best-developed region in the former Yugoslavia, with its unique Tito-ist economic and political system. The last two are the Mediterranean, and thoroughly capitalist, Cyprus and Malta.

It has been widely noted that this EU enlargement has several distinctive features. One is the sheer number of new members joining at one moment - an administrative headache as well as creating problems for the future in voting, making decisions and such like. Another is that these countries are poor, their average GDP approaching 50 per cent of the average of the EU15, a feature that is testing to its limits the idea of solidarity that has underpinned EU aid flows from rich to poor regions over recent years. Crucially too, most of the new EU members were for over 40 years in a group routinely labelled, 'actually-existing socialism'. Despite the energy invested, especially here in the West, in the intense quasi-theological debate on what that label meant, by the late 1980s it was becoming clear that the underlying economic failure and social disappointment could not be overlooked. Yet another important feature is that for that group of 'post-communist economies' the 1990s was a traumatic time, societies endured an economic collapse the likes of which we had not seen in the West since the great depression of the 1930s. Inequalities across regions and groups also grew markedly, the inevitable consequence of the untrammelled market doing its business. With party politics in huge flux and trades unions on the run, society in the grip of an enormous economic experiment masterminded in Washington, ordinary people had little means of defending themselves against what was happening.

So much for 'hard facts'. What about the softer side of the shape of the 'New Europe'. Here the most compelling feature is that ideas around socialism hold limited attraction - nostalgia apart - either for the older generation whose perception of the word is forever coloured by the 'actually-existing' experience, or for the young, especially the articulate, educated, demanding young, who are eager to embrace market capitalism and whose loyalty is to Bill Gates, MacDonalds and Vespa scooters on Monday to Saturday with a genuflection to **higher authority** on Sunday. Another aspect we can hardly ignore is the Atlanticism that is the international relation of choice and was brought into sharp relief by the infamous public letter of the eight 'New European' prime ministers written (at the behest of Washington) a year ago in support of the US-UK inspired war in Iraq.

In society and in politics it is very hard to identify any prominent left of centre currents in the 'accession states' of central Europe. Where supposedly leftist parties govern, as in Poland through the post-communist Alliance of the Democratic Left (SLD), they are thoroughly imbued with a species of New Labourism, though generally even more committed to the market, ambivalent (though one really suspects hostile is the more accurate word) to

trade unions, keen on privatisation (especially through networks of oligarchs), eager to see US military bases relocate from Germany and willing even to lease from the Bush administration a zone of occupation in Iraq. The trades unions are usually weak, enfeebled by their own lack of tradition under 'actually-existing socialism' and worn down by recession, privatisation and the turn to the market in the 1990s.

The scene may by now look completely depressing - without hope. But such deep pessimism is not justified. There has been, especially in the case of the war in Iraq, a tendency in the UK to overlook the fact that letters of support from prime ministers, Rumsfeld's plucky 'New Europe', does not chime with popular feeling in those countries. Poland, much like Spain, is in Iraq but opinion poll evidence shows that the proportion of society OPPOSED to that deployment has never fallen below 50 per cent and after the first (and so far, only) Polish fatality in combat last November that opposition jumped to 67 per cent. A similar picture emerges in Hungary and the Czech Republic though neither has any real direct involvement in the conflict.

The scope for developing visions for the 'New Europe' that are not narrowly market-based may look limited at present but it does exist even if it is hard to know precisely how to do it. It is often argued that a key task in the post-communist economies is to rebuild a 'civil society' that had its stuffing knocked out of it by decades of Stalinism or post-Stalinism. That conventional argument insists that social institutions of all sorts need to be resuscitated - although it is curious that trade unions usually are

conspicuously overlooked - their presence, of course, an obstacle to the market-building objectives of the IMF and World Bank.

In a sense, though for quite different reasons, we also share a similar need here in Scotland to reinvigorate our own social institutions, our still young parliament, our political parties, trades union and other independent groups. Perhaps connections can be made here? Perhaps this is where we can find a commonality across our different parts of 'New Europe'? The Scottish Executive's formal, maybe worthy but certainly unexciting, **European Strategy**, published in January with its focus on 'positioning Scotland in Europe' and 'bringing effective influence on the UK government' also needs to be complemented by a much more lively Social and Political Strategy for Europe. As more people ask 'what will the 'New Europe' be like?' it becomes more and more important to make our own connections, people-to-people, through civic organisations, colleges and universities, our political parties and trades unions and shape, from the bottom-up, the kind of Europe we want to live in. ■

*George Blazyca teaches European Economic Studies at the University of Paisley and writes regularly on Poland*



# another europe is possible, another left is necessary

Belgian socialist Francois Vercammen asks if a radical Europe is possible and how it can be achieved

On the 10 and 11 November, the anti-capitalist European left held its 7th Conference. After Lisbon, Paris, Brussels, Madrid, Copenhagen and Athens, about fifteen parties and movements from ten or so different countries met in Paris for two days of intense discussions.

The first core of this political rally was set up in March 2000 by a group of the Portuguese Left Block (BE), the Scottish Socialist (SSP), the Danish Red-Green Alliance (RGA), and French Communist League (LCR). In a symbolic way, our 'anti-summit' was organised for the occasion of the EU's Business Summit. It was during this same summit that the social democracy which was, at that time, the dominant political force in the main EU countries and institutions (Minister's Council, European Commission) gave its approval to Big Capital's neo-liberal programme. According to this programme, the EU should become the most successful economy of the world!

- Our first meeting, which was still improvised, was the result of three factors:
- The triumphant offensive of the neo-liberalism and the EU
- The emergence of the 'anti-globalisation movement', which manifested itself in November 1999 in Seattle bringing forward new hope
- But above all the successful experience, in some countries, of 'new' radical left parties, that stand apart from the neo-liberal social-democracy and from the communist tradition.

Since then, this new European political movement hasn't stopped growing and gaining in political power, including on the electoral level. A similar programmatic sensibility has quickly emerged. It can be summarised as anti-capitalist and ecologist, anti-imperialist and anti-war, feminist and socially aware, anti-racist and internationalist.

As an alternative to the capitalism it proposes a socialist and democratic society self-governed from the bottom, alien to the exploitation of labour and to women's oppression, based on the principle of sustainable development.

As a strategy, we propose a social orientation concerned with the workers daily life: for all women and men a full and permanent job, a decent salary, a viable alternative income (in case of unemployment, sickness, disablement, retirement), housing rights, an education and a professional training and a quality health care.

Such a programme can't be carried through without a radical break with the neo-liberalism, in another words without a (re)development of public services, a reappraisal of the State's budget and a redistribution of wealth from Capital to Labour.

In order to achieve these social objectives all necessary anti-capitalist measures must be taken, including the substitution of public ownership for private property. This common political and cultural background explains the fact that these 'new' parties are getting quite spontaneously closer.

Furthermore, the majority of members of these parties have had a militant past in the revolutionary Left. During the '80s and the '90s (the 'lead' years) they have fought in very difficult conditions for the survival of their organisations. Those who were motivated by an ideological dogmatism and an inter-group sectarianism are unable to join today's unitarian-pluralist process. The others, those who have broken away from the sectarianism but not from the anti-capitalist radicalism and the activist commitment, have succeeded in participating in political reconstruction and practical collaboration with no precedent in Europe. The enlargement of this anti-capitalist Left goes on, step by step, developing itself by a political clarification based on the actual world's key issues and on the social and political experiences of the population. The 'anti-capitalist movement' differs from the Left reformist parties born out of the communist/post-Stalinist tradition (such as Rifondazione, Synaspismos, Izquierda Unida, and others). But we keep collaborating and discussing together, including public political debates on fundamental issues of tactics and strategy. In order to progress and to clarify our positions it is necessary to pay attention, not to ideological presuppositions, but to great social and political experiences of the working mass.

Inside the Conferences, the atmosphere is relaxed and stimulating. We don't strive to create a new (European) 'Internationale': each party or movement is free as regards its alliances. The GACE's Conferences form a network but a dense one as regards its

political core and its connections. GACE is a pluralist set because of its origins, traditions, ideologies and intervention methods, but also because of its internal functioning. This is rather an asset than an obstacle; it allows for channelling of disagreements and a rational debate. We have overcome the traditional social-democratic and Stalinist parties' practices of 'diplomacy' and a waffle. In this way we escape the flaws of the revolutionary tradition, which are sterile ideological confrontations and sectarian feuds.

Since Lisbon, through successive meetings, the Conference's circle has been notably widening. Its members are: Bloco de Esquerda (BE, Portugal), Red Green Alliance (RGA, Denmark), Scottish Socialist Party (SSP, Scotland), Socialist Alliance, Socialist Workers Party (SWP, England), Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR, France), Espacio Alternativo et Corriente Rojos (movement within the IU),

**Those who were motivated by an ideological dogmatism and an inter-group sectarianism are unable to join today's unitarian-pluralist process.**

Zutik (Basque Country), Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG, Galicia), Dei Linke/La Gauche (DL/LG, Luxembourg), Mouvement pour le Socialisme (MPS, Switzerland), SolidaritéS (S-S, Switzerland), Parti de la Solidarité et de la Révolution (ÖDP, Turkey). As Guests: Rifondazione Comunista (PRC, Italy), Socialist Party (SP, Ireland), Socialist Party (SP, England), Esquerra Unida i Alternativa (EUiA, Catalonia), Ezkar Batua-Izquierda Unida (EB-IU, Basque Country), Deutsche Kommunistische Partei (DKP, Germany), Synaspismos (Greece), Kommunistische Partei Österreichs (KPÖ, Austria).

The space occupied by the social and political Left is growing as the neo-liberal social-democratic Left becomes discredited. The traditional labour movement has been going through the most serious crisis of its history (apart from the two World Wars) since its birth and since its strengthening at the end of the 19th century. Since the '80s European social democracy has gone over almost entirely to the worst neo-liberal politics and to the EU's regressive trend. Having submitted itself entirely to the dominant class, it didn't hesitate to destroy the main social assets that had been obtained by ferocious fights, abandoning in this way the working class. It is how the social democracy has broken its and the trade-unions' social, ideological and personal links with the exploited and the oppressed.

Moreover, the anti-globalisation movement has broken through a 20-year-long dead-end and has reopened a new vista of emancipation. A new political generation is coming through. These last years, millions of workers and young people - in countries such as Italy, France, Great Britain, Greece and Spain - have joined forces, in particular against the American war, neo-liberal politics and capitalist globalisation. A new internationalist spirit has spread throughout the world.

The European Social Forum (the third meeting will take place in London, after the ones in Florence and Paris/Saint-Denis) straightaway symbolises this renewal on the European level. Being the place of rallying and of influence of the new activists' stratum, the Forum is a powerful focus for fighting spirit, organisation and intellectual debate. It's about to influence and to give a boost to the social and trade-union movement. But we are still a long way from recovering the power struggle, the organisational and programmatic cohesion of the '70s and the '80s. On the scale of our Europe, we are still far away from representing a new political force that would be able to impose the worker's demands and to fight for the 'other world'. So we can say: yes, another Europe is **possible**, but for that another Left is **necessary**.

The parties, which constitute the European Anti-Capitalist Left haven't the political arrogance to pretend to represent a Party. First they are forming the platform. It's to the tens of thousand of women and men, old and young people, workers and citizens who are engaged in the movements and their mobilisation to build such a new anti-capitalist force. Nobody will do it on their behalf. To give up is to give a free hand to the eternal return of disastrous social-liberalism and to others who, on the Left, are spreading demoralisation by collaborating with 'social democracy' in the name of the 'lesser evil'. That is why the European Anti Capitalist Left has to work here and now on new perspectives. ■

*Francois Vercammen is a member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International*

*Translated from the original French by Julia Maspero*

Andy Gilchrist  
General Secretary

## Fire Brigades Union

Ruth Winters  
President

# *Fraternal Greetings to Delegates to the STUC*

**SUPPORT QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES  
DFEEND YOUR LOCAL FIRE STATION**



[www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)

[office@fbu.org.uk](mailto:office@fbu.org.uk)

# the missing election

Henry McCubbin gives us a quick guide to the 2004 Euro elections

Ask anyone in the street what elections are being held this year and, blow me, do they not answer "the American presidential elections". Some can even tell you the names of candidates other than Bush. Other elections are to be held this year. Elections in which we in Britain actually have a vote and, whether some elements on the left like it or not, by voting as far to the left as you can in these elections a difference can be made. These are the elections that dare not speak their name and, for sure, the public certainly could not speak the names of any of the candidates - not even the sitting MEPs..

The UK will hold its next election to the European Parliament on 10 June 2004. The remainder of the EU will vote on the 11, 12 or 13 June according to local custom. But who on earth is standing and more importantly what do they stand for? Since 1999 the UK has used a proportional representation voting system for elections to the European Parliament, and the elections are held on a regional basis. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each form a region. England is divided into nine regions that are similar to the regions covered by the Government Offices for the Regions. It should come as no surprise that the PR system adopted in Britain actually reduces voter choice. All of the votes cast in Scotland are aggregated and the candidates are listed by the various parties' politburos in the order that the party would wish them elected. Sort of like the Iranian Guardian Council with a kilt on. It would of course be possible to have open lists and give the voters choice not only as to the party they supported but also their preferred candidate but New Labour could not possibly allow the electorate to make such a choice.

The establishment of a directly elected European Parliament was a key element for the 'founding fathers' of the European Community in the development of a democratic and federal European structure. The first direct elections were expected to take place soon after the Rome Treaties entered into force, but creeping intergovernmentalism effectively scuppered them for over twenty years. A German political scientist has argued that European elections should be seen as what he termed 'second-order national elections'. First-order elections, such as national presidential or parliamentary elections, are primarily concerned with government formation and have been characterised by high levels of electoral participation and high-profile campaigns. In first order elections political parties are well established and devote a large proportion of their resources to the struggle. Second-order national elections do not involve national power distribution or government formation. Turnout levels and popular interest are lower. Campaigns are much lower-key and

the national media are less interested. Smaller, less traditional, and more peripheral parties tend to benefit and, depending on the stage in the national electoral cycle, mid-term disaffection with governing parties may be exaggerated. In other words the vote is seen as expressive rather than instrumental.

All of these features have certainly been observable in past European elections and certainly some are already reappearing. Take, for instance, media interest. Apart from the Gaelic programme **Eoropa** our British media outlets have been providing us with non stop coverage from the US presidential elections and EU issues are only covered from the British national political perspective although it is our British national politicians who must carry the blame for this and for legitimising the repugnant views of the British National Party with regards to migrant workers. It must be remembered that it was at the Copenhagen summit in 1993 that the mouth

watering spread of cheap labour and the forced privatisation of public utilities in eastern and central Europe had the EU member states offering riches to these applicant states only for them to be denied them in one of the biggest international scams of recent times. Regional funding was promised then cut at the insistence of Blair and Brown and the promises of the four freedoms of movement of capital, services, goods and workers suddenly lost one of its components. It is no coincidence that the only freedom which provides some element of social solidarity should be the one that is ditched i.e. the freedom of movement of workers.

The weakening of the concept of European governance has always been a tactic deployed with varying degrees

of intensity by Member States but became suppressed when Jacques Delors was the president of the Commission and Kohl and Mitterand were driving the Council. The arrival of Margaret Thatcher and her little Englander baggage helped reawaken these atavistic urges, a state of affairs that has been pursued by her successors Major and Blair, egged on by Britain's populist tabloids and right-wing broadsheets. The whole point of the structure of the European institutions was to engage governments, instead of across arbitrary territorial boundaries, at departmental level; employment problems would be solved by employment ministers, health by health ministers and so on. Once a year a European Council of heads of states would be held and the overall direction of the Union would be discussed and given a new steer. Gradually, the need to feed the collective egos of national leaders increased the frequency of these meetings, first to two per year and now to four. This has led to a presumption by civil servants that big decisions will have to be held back for the big cheeses so much so that when big

**All of the votes cast in Scotland are aggregated and the candidates are listed by the various parties' politburos in the order that the party would wish them elected. Sort of like the Iranian Guardian Council with a kilt on.**

decisions have to be made, like a written European constitution, they fail to find agreement.

It has also to lead to the public being distrustful of the whole European decision making process as EU Councils are held behind closed doors. Hence the reason why the Lisbon Council is much referred to by Blair and Brown; this was the summit they gained a commitment by the EU for it to sign up to the Washington consensus of free trade, privatisation and an attack on labour laws and the public provision of services. With the ability to reach supranational agreements in private the need to consult within Member States and within parties on such sensitive issues is neatly dispensed with. It has the added bonus that you can always blame Europe!

It is for this reason most of all that we should look carefully at the upcoming European elections. The people who are closest to the scene and should be our watchdogs are our MEPs. Over the past parliamentary term they have truly been the dogs that have failed to bark. With regards to New Labour the hounds had no need to bark as the burglar was in fact their leader who could decide whether they remained as his pensioners or not. The other parties have much to answer for. One would be excused thinking that the EU dealt solely with fishing. A major battle has been fought within the EU institutions over the provision of services of general interest, which are now specifically referred to in the treaty. The neo-liberals such as Blair and Brown say privatise them and to this end have instructed our civil servants to pursue this at the UK Representatives delegation in Brussels and the New Labour MEPs to do likewise in the European Parliament. A policy I must say that is followed by the Liberals and Conservatives.

The only major groups opposing this are the two groups that have just formed themselves into two EU-wide political parties. The first was known as the GUE (European Unitarian Left) and is now to be known as the European Left Party. The other is the Greens to be known simply as the European Green Party. That bit of it is fairly straightforward but nothing is straightforward for long in left and green politics! The Scottish Greens already have links with their EU counterparts via the two Green MEPs elected from the south of England but the problem will come with their common manifesto. We may look no further than monetary union, the euro and the European Central Bank (ECB) to see that EU Greens have moved on in that debate to democratic control of monetary policy is the issue whether at global EU or national level whereas in the UK we are still more vexed over the lack of control over the ECB whilst at home ignoring the fact that Gordon Brown has already ceded control of monetary policy to our own Bank of England.

The European Left Party will have similar difficulties but an added one for them is that as yet they have no MEPs from the UK although the former Labour MEP Ken Coates was attached to that group after he was ejected from the Labour Party for objecting to cuts in single mothers benefits amongst other things. So which parties of the UK left are affiliated to them? Well in Scotland the SSP through its international alliance is part of the European Party of the Left grouping. This is in contrast to the Communist Party of Britain whose executive decided "the new party was established under the terms of the EU Regulation issued under Article of 191 of the European Treaty. This specifies that EU-funded parties should be a 'factor of integration', endorse common all-EU programmes and vote as a unified block in the EU parliament." CPB General Secretary

Robert Griffiths went on to say "The danger represented by this regulation is that it serves to further undermine the democratic institutions and sovereignty of members states. In particular, for parties of the Left, it represents a major obstacle to their ability to campaign in the conditions of each country for the development of popular sovereignty and to ensure that our existing democratic institutions are preserved and used in each country to fight against the dominance of imperialism and monopoly capital." Hmm! "Workers of the world unite to ensure that our existing democratic institutions are preserved and used in each country to fight against the dominance of imperialism and monopoly capital." It's not got that ring about it has it? Let us not forget the left in Britain argued that whilst Europe was divided into east and west, that there was more to Europe than the European Community and that left political solidarity should include the east.

In any case it's a quite wrong interpretation of Article 191. What it actually says is: "Political parties at European level are important as a factor for integration within the Union. They contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union. The Council, acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 251, shall lay down the regulations governing political parties at European level and in particular the rules regarding their funding." What this means is that as there is a juridical entity known as Europe and a democratic assembly to decide on its laws it would be prudent to aid the work of political movements within this massive area to formulate of that body of law. The laws on funding are there to prevent fraud and unfair advantage not to influence political orientation. The really bad news is that none of this will be available until after the EU elections in any case.

Where stands Scotland now? The pattern of voting in EU elections is clear from the following table.

	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999
Conservative	33.70%	25.80%	20.90%	14.50%	19.76%
Labour	33.00%	40.70%	41.90%	42.50%	28.69%
SNP	19.40%	17.90%	25.60%	32.60%	27.17%
Liberal	13.90%	15.60%	4.30%	7.20%	9.81%
Green Party			7.20%	1.60%	5.78%
SSP					4.02%

What we can see is a gradual squeeze on the votes of the three main parties along with a decline in the Liberal vote with the entry into the frame of the Greens and the SSP. With only seven seats in Scotland at this election it means that the hurdle that a smaller party will have to jump in order to win a seat will be considerable higher. It could be as high as 15 per cent depending on the spread of votes. The possibility of a red-green alliance in Scotland has therefore passed for this election. The Greens and the SSP are on their own and for my money are the only parties likely to act as watchdogs on our behalf against the onslaught of neo liberalism. But will they get the level of support to gain them a seat each? They had better shake out their policy contradictions and have good campaigns planned. On the other hand, Blair's uncontrollable ego could have Labour fight the election as a vote of confidence in him. Shades of Maggie in Euro 1989! ■

*Henry McCubbin is a former Labour MEP*

# unions work

## Sandy Boyle looks at the state of the trade unions in Scotland and argues that there is reason to believe that they are turning the corner

Exactly 40 years ago to the date of writing this article I started full-time work. I joined my appropriate union, the then Society of Civil Servants, on day one. The Branch membership stood at 97 per cent of potential; a factor I became well acquainted with when one month later I attended my first AGM and was elected Branch Treasurer. Check-off did not exist, Direct Debits were unheard of and subscriptions were collected by a dedicated core of local union representatives. It may not have been pretty but it worked. Of course I am not advocating the adoption of a '60s model today but sometimes we need to look back a little in order to move forward and engagement in the workplace is the key to our future growth and success.

Unions face real challenges in today's world of work. Eighteen years of Tory misrule has left us with a generation raised in a political environment which championed the cause of the individual against that of the collective. Industrial restructuring is a striking feature of the economic landscape of Scotland, the UK and Europe today. Downsizing, outsourcing and redundancies play a key role in the traditional employer response to the fragile global economic climate and uncertainties. Short-termism is killing innovation. Research and Development are grossly underfunded as multi-nationals strive to provide higher and higher profit to satisfy the short-term greed of City analysts. The impact on workers is dramatic. Stress-related illness in some sectors has reached epidemic proportions as a target-orientated culture, now prevalent in both public and private sectors, has become the mantra of unscrupulous employers who espouse the philosophy of Profit before People. At the heart of our agenda going forward must be an ethos of People and Profit. I believe trades unions must work to improve productivity and workplace performance, but our biggest challenge is to ensure that change is managed in a way that treats workers with respect and dignity and gives them a stake in the process. In recent times trades unions have developed more imaginative approaches by negotiating training breaks, sabbaticals, job sharing, remote working and reduced working hours. The ongoing challenge for us in all sectors is not to construct a shopping list for inclusion in the next Labour Party manifesto, which will simply be ignored, but to develop a way of working with the Government that promotes collective bargaining and legitimises the union role.

Unions must play a more strategic role. A policy of constructive engagement with Government, employers and our members must lie at the heart of our agenda. At Scottish level, the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Scottish Executive in 2002 has been an important step in ensuring that the STUC is kept in the loop on strategic initiatives, but it is a poor substitute for social and economic partnership which remains one of our key objectives. Realistically however such a policy requires a tripartite consensus and so far CBI Scotland has refused to come to the table, thereby making it easy for the Executive to adopt a lukewarm approach. The STUC is however intensifying its efforts in seeking to influence the Scottish Parliament agenda by working proactively with the Parliament and its various Committees in support of our key strategic campaigns for:

- The public sector delivery of public services and an extension of the employment principles contained in the recently negotiated agreement on the two tier workforce.
- An economic development strategy which promotes job security, productivity and fair employment practice
- The establishment of credible social and economic partnership arrangements
- Action to mainstream equality in the development and implementation of public policy in Scotland
- Improved provision of lifelong learning opportunities for working people.

Despite the onslaught of the Thatcher/ Major years our message is clear: **we are still here, we are still strong, we are still relevant and trades unions really do make a difference.** Organised workplaces have fewer low paid workers, narrower pay differentials, a smaller gender pay gap and a better record on the treatment of part-time workers, race equality disability and health and safety issues. Unionised workplaces are more likely to invest in training and skills. We are also better positioned to work with employers on questions of job design or job organisation to ensure that workers' jobs are more interesting and enjoyable. External evidence also demonstrates clearly that there is a direct correlation between union organised workplaces and higher productivity, better use of new technology and better overall workplace performance. But perhaps most important of all, we give people a voice and enable them to be active participants not spectators.

Unions help to bind organisations together, enable people to support each other and, wherever possible, create trust between workers and their employer. Most importantly, we build a sense of belonging in the workplace and society which is why we are so often the targets of abuse from the right wing who place so much value on a narrow introspective agenda motivated by wealth and greed. It is not a bad track record for a movement so infamously described as "the enemy within", but if we look at organisations like the BNP which are the real enemies in our society, it is trades unions that are the key to defeating fascism and racism. We are the only mass organisation of working people in Britain and are seven million strong (600,000 plus in Scotland) and have a huge power to educate, mobilise and influence communities and local mainstream political parties. Trades unions are also powerful because they represent the best of progressive forces standing for solidarity, democracy, decency, equality and internationalism. We are fighting to defend the vulnerable and powerless and are standing resolutely against racism and fascism, while uniting men and women, black and white around this progressive agenda. Traditionally, trades unions know how to work and organise at community level and crucially, in changing times, can adapt and learn new ways to defend communities, workplaces and workers. Within our movement, we must fight racism at all levels and in particular I welcome the STUC's success in accessing substantial funding from the Scottish Executive for our "Mainstreaming Equality and Tackling Racism in the Workplace"

project. The STUC sees this mainstreaming and capacity building work as fundamental to ensuring that we really are able to offer an effective level of support to black working people in Scotland by taking a strong anti-racism message right into the heart of the workplace. This initiative, coupled with the "Close the Gap" project on equal pay which has also attracted Executive funding, demonstrates our preparedness to tackle key equality issues and to take the arguments into workplaces throughout the country. These initiatives, together with the Scottish Union Learning Fund, show an important willingness by the Scottish Executive to engage with the STUC in areas of common interest. Projects like these together with the TUC Organising Academy, numerous youth initiatives and the greater involvement of women and black workers at all levels in our union structures convince me that we are out of the eighties and nineties trough and are now well positioned both in Scotland and the UK to drive forward a progressive and constructive agenda. **Unions work** and that is the clear message that the STUC will be taking forward as the main theme of Congress 2004. It seems unlikely that we will get any real help in our campaign from the UK Government's legislative programme. Of course things are far better than during the 1979/97 era but undoubtedly some of the last minute concessions to appease the CBI considerably weakened the 1999 Employment Relations Act. That they have become enduring features is a great disappointment. The most recent review of the act has given far too much credence to imaginary barriers erected by the CBI. On the plus side it is encouraging that the 2004 Bill contains a clause which makes it possible for unions legally to expel from their ranks known fascists and racists but by and large the review is an opportunity missed to address a currently skewed playing field. The Bill leaves people at work in the UK with less protection than enjoyed in the rest of Europe and this is nowhere more evident than the recent report on working time abuses. Other key areas of dissatisfaction include the fact that:

- There has been no progress on the promised sanction against unfair labour practices during union recognition campaigns. Without this protection anti-union companies like BSkyB will be able to continue to bully and frighten employees away from voting for union protection at work.
- People working in small firms are still to be denied the right to have their union recognised at work. It is often the smallest companies where workers are most in need of the help and support that a union provides. To continue to deny six million workers a voice is grossly unfair.
- People who do not vote in recognition campaigns are still to count as votes against - unlike in parliamentary elections or during shareholder meetings.
- People on strike can still be sacked once the dispute enters its ninth week.

As the STUC approaches its Glasgow Congress in April, I feel the movement is in good heart. There are obvious concerns about the deepening recession in Scotland's manufacturing industry. Outsourcing is threatening many of our call centre jobs and sadly tackling low pay for women and young people remains a necessary key part of our agenda. Other issues which feature large are pensions, health and safety, PPP/PFI,

transport policy, health education and lifelong learning. In some of these, particularly PPP/PFI we will find ourselves in direct conflict with Government policy where we will continue to expose the myths that:

- PPP/PFI increase investment
- We could not build schools and hospitals without PFI
- Only PFI can build hospitals and schools quickly
- PPP/PFI is not privatisation
- Risk is transferred to the private sector
- The private sector is only paid if they deliver

Our clear view is that the much needed rebuilding of Scotland's public services, and the creation of valuable construction jobs can be achieved without dodgy Tory finance schemes which leave future generations to face the true cost.

On many other policies we will of course seek to develop constructive dialogue and engagement with Government. We do not argue that we have a monopoly on being right but our track record over the years has been one of an honest perceptiveness which would befit the largest representative voice of Scottish public opinion. Last year we had a major disagreement with the Government on the illegal, unjustified and totally unnecessary war in Iraq. Our position then was correct and still is today. I am fully confident that this years Congress will maintain the

proud international record of the STUC by supporting fellow workers being suppressed in Columbia and opposing the UK Government's policy of giving military aid to Columbia's armed forces.

On 1 May this year we will celebrate International Worker's Day with the accession of ten new countries into the European Union. In many of

these countries the STUC has excellent links with established trades unions. It is important that these links are strengthened. Most of our social and employment policies now emanate from Europe and I firmly believe that one the greatest challenges facing our Movement is to achieve the European social model here in preference to the American one being trumpeted by many multinationals. The information and consultation regulations are particularly important in achieving this end because they establish a clear framework for discussions to take place. I certainly hope that the Government implements the directive quickly and with enthusiasm and provides support for unions and employers who want to make progress on key industrial relations aspects such as work, organisation, job design and productivity.

In conclusion, I believe that Trade Unions have turned the corner. At last years Congress the STUC posted its first overall membership increase for two decades. At long last Trades Unions have become IT literate. Communication and workplace organisation have improved dramatically. We are also getting far better at trumpeting our many successes in key areas like representation on discipline and grievance.

Unions really do work, unions really do make a difference and the youth who are our future are slowly but steadily getting the message. ■

*Sandy Boyle is current President of the STUC*

# educated or indentured?

Jacqueline Kelly argues that far from being a move designed to help our former colonies we are using education programmes to benefit only big business

The Commonwealth is something that we are occasionally reminded of; sometimes in a rude and unexpected fashion and at other times in an organised institutional way when people start talking about things like 'shared history' and 'common values'. The Commonwealth has become a bit like a distant relative who lives far enough away that they can appear only sporadically, turning up either to inflict extreme discomfort or to deliver an almost-forgotten sense of nostalgia for the happy time that never really was.

The Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe edged us closer to out discomfort in our consideration of the Commonwealth in December last year when he announced that he was withdrawing his country from the Commonwealth in protest against a further 18 months suspension. His complaints seemed to centre around his perception that the Commonwealth is little more than an imperialist club ruled by the white countries which apply pressure to the others to get what they want. While Mugabe can hardly be regarded as the voice of insight and reason, there was a resonance to some of his sentiments.

On the flip side, October saw the Scottish Parliament debate a motion welcoming the 15th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers. The debate raised a number of interesting issues about the role of the Commonwealth in the 21st century. The motion presented by the Minister was largely a self-congratulatory slap on Scottish backs, recognising contributions made by Scots to education in so-called 'Commonwealth' countries and identified the Commonwealth as being a worthy institution making a positive difference to lives of its members, particularly those in less well-off countries.

While many of the sentiments expressed in the debate were noble enough, a visit to the conference website elicited a deeper consideration of some of the wider issues. While web pages are adored with photos of a diverse mix of ethnic groups and the role of the Commonwealth is explained as being about "advancing human rights, democracy and sustainable economic development [and] celebrating the diversity within our populations and releasing the skills within our communities" even the most cursory examination of the economic policies of many countries belonging to the Commonwealth throws doubt on the statement.

In light of this the announcements from major UK companies to locate customer service call centres in Commonwealth countries casts doubt over the most recent claim that the UK has a positive impact on education in the Commonwealth. While the more enlightened among us may be accustomed to the argument that past British interference in the Commonwealth

is comparable with cultural rape, there has been little focus on the impact of UK companies in the Commonwealth at the present time.

It is standard to criticise such organisations for their shoddy treatment of British workers. Recent protests from trade unions such as Amicus have highlighted fears for the jobs of British workers after the decision of a number of companies to move their operations to India. In March this year British Telecom announced that it planned to open two call centres in Bangalore and Delhi with the intention of employing 2,200 people by 2004 raising concerns that this would lead to job losses among BT's 2,500 staff in Britain, many of whom are on temporary contracts. The point is a valid one.

While, on the one hand, there are repeated calls to improve the conditions of workers and firm up on employment laws, there is little consideration of the un-sexy but very real problems faced by agency workers and those on temporary contracts who

make up such a large proportion of the British workforce. It is no secret that the inward investment which is a substantial part of the UK economy relies heavily on access to such an unprotected but readily available source of labour.

This is not a problem confined to Brits working for large American or Japanese companies. The removal of labour to India is bad news for British workers but it is also, in many ways, bad news for those Indian workers employed by companies like British Telecom and Tesco in their call centres. It is usual

to greet such news as providing nice jobs in an impoverished nation. The word Commonwealth is bandied around as if it means exactly that - shared wealth between Britain and its former colony. However, Indian workers are paid a fraction of the salaries British counterparts receive. And senior executives at these cash rich FTSE 100 companies pocket the difference or hand it out to western shareholders. Furthermore, workers are given accent training, and taught about pubs, football and running story lines in **Eastenders** in order that they will be able to talk to their British customers in the required manner about all things British (for British, read good). This return to the gradual erosion of Indian culture comes, again, with the pretence that good is being done. Imperialists loved nothing more than to talk about their benevolence towards their colonial subjects. And they also liked to pretend that the act of 'civilizing' the Indian was good for the country's economy. Of course, they were lying on both counts. The act was good only for the British economy.

Even now there are examples of very real exploitation being carried out in other former colonies with foreign workers

**The drip effect of British culture into a country we suppose is viewed as acceptable by the Great White West because it isn't accompanied by the usual bloodshed and slavery**

being paid less than the Brits they work alongside. One such example can be seen on Ascension Island. Ascension Island is an overseas territory which forms part of a single territorial grouping under the sovereignty of the British Crown and, while the island has no indigenous population, workers from St Helena work for British companies on UK Government contracts, maintaining a British military presence on the island. Although workers from the UK performing supervisory roles and, contracted by Glasgow based company Turner, have employment rights under UK law, non-UK workers have no rights to the minimum wage, no holiday entitlement, sick pay or union representation. St Helenians are also, for the most part and due to the subordinate nature of their roles, required to share mealtimes with MoD workers from the lower ranks, while white workers from the UK eat in the Officers' Mess. Workers from St Helena leave behind their families and live on Ascension where they are provided with board and where they work non-stop. And the educational aspect of their lives is perhaps the most worthy of condemnation. While employees from the UK are provided with their own tools and trained at the cost of the UK tax payer, St Helenians are required to pay a bond of approximately £100 every month towards the cost of their training. The money is repaid to them at the end of their course, if they see it through to its conclusion, but for these workers, already on a paltry wage and depending on every penny they earn to send back to their families the cost of their education is a heavy burden to bear.

This in itself is, at best, shoddy practice and at worst, a sophisticated form of indentured labour to see us through the 21st Century. The situation on Ascension amounts to little more than the historically familiar scenario of the black worker

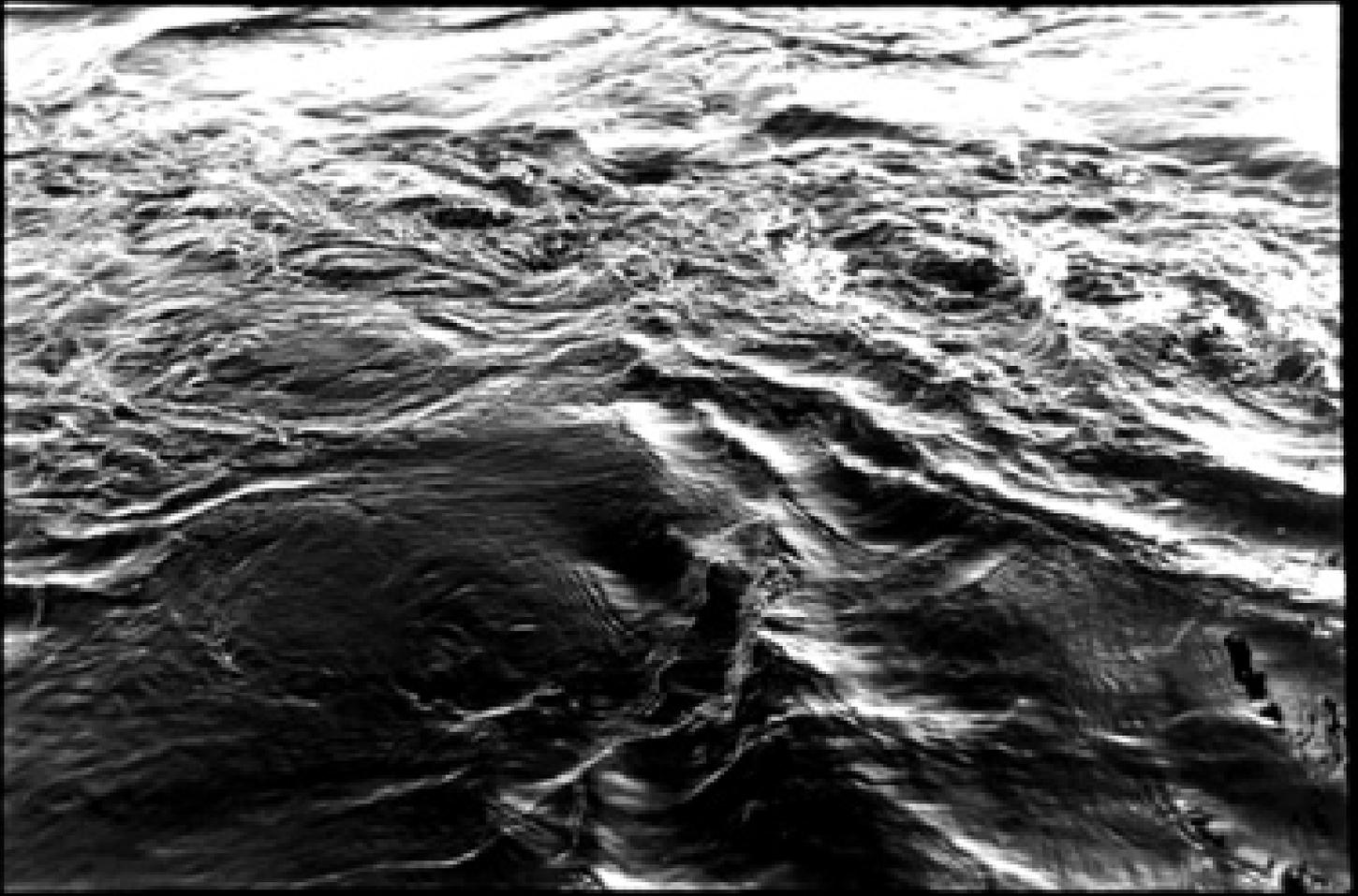
working for less pay and in far worse conditions than his or her white counterparts. The Labour Government's minimum wage is one of the most important pieces of legislation it has introduced since 1997. But unless it begins to hold (at least) all companies contracted to work for them to account on employment rights then it can never really claim to be tackling poverty and inequality.

Education in the Commonwealth may, to all intents and purposes, sound like a great thing. It's all well and good to wax lyrical about closing the gap in education and ironing out the inequalities created by factors such as disability, gender and race. But the drip effect of British culture into a country we supposedly 'freed' over fifty years ago signals a greater neo-colonial instinct which is viewed as acceptable by the Great White West because it isn't accompanied by the usual bloodshed and slavery. The outright abuse and lack of rights of black workers from St Helena highlights the extent to which our government depends on basic inequalities in order to carry out its dirty work.

Our colonial past is rarely touched upon in many of our schools and few people ever stop consider the harm that was done with the attempts of upper class men to satisfy their lusts for wealth and power at the expense of the rest of the world. It is perhaps for this reason that we are blind to our neo-colonial present. ■

*Jacq Kelly lives and works in Edinburgh and sporadically contributes to the Morning Star. She has been politically active since 1996 and has campaigned on tuition fees, equality issues and the Fire Fighters' pay dispute.*





# deep water for the executive

**Are people and businesses in Scotland paying too much for their water because of Scottish Executive incompetence? Jim and Margaret Cuthbert are failing to get answers to their questions.**

Perhaps surprisingly the seemingly mundane topic of water is currently one of the more contentious issues in Scottish economic and political life. A substantial proportion of the mail bags of MSPs consists of letters from constituents complaining about high water charges: business organisations are united in saying that the high level of water charges for businesses poses a real threat not just to Scotland's economic growth prospects, but to the very existence of some Scottish firms.

The key to understanding the present level of water charges in Scotland is the Strategic Review of Charges, carried out by the Water Industry Commissioner (WIC) in 2001. Reviews are carried out every four years and recommend the revenue caps (or maximum percentage increases in revenue) for the industry for the next four years. Effectively, the Review determines by how much water charges will rise. When we embarked last summer on an investigation of water charges, the best place to start was clearly the Review.

One of the important features in the Review is the level of borrowing planned for the industry. Borrowing is important because it is one of only two sources of finance available to the water industry: the other is revenue from charges. To fund

a given level of expenditure, charges must go up if borrowing goes down, and vice versa. But the industry cannot just borrow as much as it likes. First of all, the amount it borrows is controlled by the Scottish Executive. At the time of the Review, the Executive control was not directly on borrowing, but was through a new system called Resource Accounting and Budgeting (RAB): RAB, however, still involves control on borrowing, since a given RAB limit indirectly implies a maximum amount that can be borrowed. Secondly, the industry will also be constrained in determining its borrowing by a view on how much it is prudent to borrow. The normal principle is that it is only prudent to borrow to fund investment which will actually enhance the capital stock.

When we looked at the planned level of borrowing in the Review, what we found was very puzzling. In the Review, the cumulative borrowing target over the four years 2002-2006 was £293.3million. The WIC also stated in the Review that, after allowing a margin of £200m for flexibility, he had used up all of the available public expenditure. Yet according to figures published by the Scottish Executive after the Review, the amount of borrowing which the Scottish Executive was prepared to make available over the four-year period was apparently over £900m. The first puzzle,

therefore, was how planned borrowing of £293m plus a margin of £200m equated to the apparently available £900m. Further, the planned programme of investment in the Review was for a total of £1.8 billion over the four-year period: thus the amount of investment which it was planned to fund from borrowing was only 16 per cent. Elsewhere in the Review, it is stated that 45 per cent of the investment programme was for maintenance of the capital stock - and hence by implication 55 per cent would enhance stock. The second puzzle was why, when it would apparently have been prudent to fund up to 55 per cent of the investment programme by borrowing, the Review planned to borrow only 16 per cent. We should stress that these are not just abstract issues. If borrowing in the Review is too low, by potentially several hundred million pounds, then conversely charges are too high: and this is hitting the consumer and Scottish industry in the pocket.

The next question is how could all this have happened? Interestingly, we did find the probable answer. This relates to an apparent mistake in the letter sent by the Scottish Executive to the WIC in August 2001, commissioning the Review. There appear to be three mistakes in the commissioning letter, but the really important one for present purposes is the way the letter interpreted the new RAB control system. In RAB as properly applied, separate controls are set on capital expenditure, and on a concept linked to current expenditure, called resources. In fact, certain expenditure on maintenance of the capital stock counts against both limits. This doesn't matter, as long as the capital and resource limits are kept separate. But in the commissioning letter, both capital and resource limits were combined in a single limit, which meant the expenditure which is common to capital and resources was double counted. This depresses the amount of borrowing which is possible within a given RAB limit, which is almost certainly why the amount of borrowing the WIC could undertake in the Review was far less than the amount of borrowing the Scottish Executive had apparently made available.

A paper describing our findings was published in the Fraser of Allander Quarterly Economic Commentary in December 2003. We also wrote to the Scottish Executive in November, asking two simple, factual questions which should establish, once and for all, whether the root of the problem is double counting arising from a mistake in the commissioning letter, as we have suggested. The paper has been considered by the Finance Committee of the Scottish Parliament, which is currently conducting an enquiry into water charges. In connection with this enquiry, the WIC, Scottish Water, the Scottish Executive (and ourselves), have all given evidence to the Finance Committee. Where does the debate now stand, in the light of this evidence?

First of all, the Scottish Executive has attempted, but failed, to rebut our charge that there were fundamental errors in the application of RAB, which led to the amount of borrowing possible under the strategic review being squeezed. Despite repeated requests, it has failed to reconcile its published borrowing figures with the control limits on RAB in the strategic review. Even more significantly, the Scottish Executive has now confirmed for the first time exactly what formula it was using to link RAB to borrowing. It is absolutely clear that, using this formula, it is not possible to reconcile the Scottish Executive published borrowing figures with the RAB limits in the strategic review. Far from rebutting our argument, the Scottish Executive evidence in fact confirms it.

Secondly, the evidence given to the Finance Committee has revealed a significant degree of confusion about how the planned borrowing profile of the industry should be determined. To give just one example: in the Review, the WIC planned for the industry to move to substantial debt repayment in the medium term. However, in his evidence to the Finance Committee, he indicated there was no intention to move to substantial debt repayment.

Most interestingly, however, the evidence from the Scottish Executive indicates that its current position on the industry does not appear tenable. The latest evidence from the Scottish Executive indicates that it have now set a borrowing limit of £688 million for the period 2002-06: this is equivalent to 38 per cent of the planned capital programme. (Note that, as from 2003, RAB has been abandoned for bodies like Scottish Water, and control is directly on borrowing again - perhaps we can guess why.) The Scottish Executive also indicated in evidence that it felt the prudent level of borrowing would be around 33 per cent of the capital programme since they now say 66 per cent of the capital programme is actually for maintenance. There are two problems with this position. First of all, a prudent level of 33 per cent looks very low given, for example, that the Strategic Review itself states that 55 per cent or more of capital investment is to enhance the asset base. Secondly, if the borrowing limit equates to 38 per cent of capital investment, and allowing for the fact that Scottish Water will need to allow a flexibility margin within this limit, (let's say around £200 million as in the Review), it is unlikely that planned borrowing will exceed 25 per cent of the capital programme. In other words, the Scottish Executive prudent level of borrowing looks unjustifiably low, and even this level looks unachievable, given an inadequate buffer has been allowed between this level and the Scottish Executive limit.

Overall, far from allaying the concerns in our original paper, the evidence which has now emerged confirms our position, and re-affirms the need for an urgent and thorough review of the financing of the water industry in Scotland. As we argued in our paper published in December, such a review needs to go beyond the issue of borrowing. There are a number of other important issues which impact particularly on businesses in Scotland. These include the decision taken by the WIC to harmonise business charges, and the decision in the Strategic Review to implement very high fixed charges for businesses. Both of these issues, as explained in our December paper, have potentially severe adverse effects on businesses in Scotland, and hence on the Scottish economy.

The Finance Committee is still, (at time of writing), to report: so it is not clear whether or not it will recommend a fundamental and immediate review. If it does, it will have struck an important blow for devolution, and will have demonstrated that the committee system of the Parliament is capable of calling the Executive to account on an issue of the greatest importance. Let us be clear: the stakes involved here are very high. The issue of water charges in Scotland is potentially a disaster which dwarfs the Holyrood building fiasco - there is more money at stake, it impacts directly on people's livelihoods and the economy, and, unlike Holyrood, it has been 'made in Scotland', with the key decisions having been taken post devolution. Unless the industry is moved quickly onto a charging regime which commands general acceptance among consumers, the probable outcome is that there will be pressure to privatise the industry. ■

*Jim Cuthbert is a statistician, and Margaret Cuthbert is an economist. They work for Analytical Consulting Ltd.*

# telling us how it is

In the third of a guide to political personality types Derrick Whyte looks at what made dominant politicians like Margaret Thatcher or Winston Churchill tick

The third of the four primary personality types is, using Jungian terminology, the Extrovert Intuitive Thinker or ENT (the 'n' is used to avoid confusion with Introvert).

For simpler description, psychometricians use other terms such as Dominants, Drivers or Assertives. The latter terms are self-explanatory but need some amplification. Like the ENF (Feeler) the ENT is an extrovert but where the ENF is outgoing in a tactile, demonstrative, expressive and often garrulous way, the ENT is more contained, self-sufficient and less in need of approval and camaraderie.

ENTs are authoritative, decisive, direct and impatient of small talk. Their strengths are that they make decisions quickly, they like to get straight to the point and are not easily distracted with side issues or trivia. Weaknesses include impatience which may seem abrasive, rude or even hostile to others. Humour is not their strongest suit but when present it is often of an abrupt, hard and punchy style.

Two of the UKs most prominent politicians, Churchill and Thatcher, were ENTs. Others certainly will have had a large presence of the ENT quadrant but few have been so clear-cut in their personality preferences, particularly Mrs Thatcher. The Dominant archetype is more associated with the male so Mrs Thatcher's ENT trait was all the more striking. The TV puppet satire **Spitting Image** invariably dressed Mrs Thatcher in a man's suit, treating her cabinet with imperious disdain. In one sketch she ordered dinner with her ministers. She ordered the meat course. "And the vegetables?" asked the waiter. "They'll have what I'm having" replied the PM. As definitive a portrait of the ENT as one could ask for.

Both Churchill and Thatcher made speeches of a very similar pattern delivered very much in the ENT style. While the ENF Tony Blair constantly seeks reassurance and craves our approval, Mrs Thatcher was consistently assertive. Mr Blair leaves no noun or verb unqualified. **I believe** is not sufficient, it is **I passionately believe, I genuinely believe or I sincerely believe**. Never **that is untrue**, always **that is completely and utterly untrue**. Mr Blair, as an ENF, makes the mistake of believing that the adverbs strengthen a sentence. In fact they weaken it. After the Falklands War, Mrs Thatcher did not say **I passionately believe we did the right thing**. Nor did she even use the prefix **I believe**. She stated in her normal unequivocal way, **we did the right thing**. Semantically the **I believe** is superfluous anyway. Over emphasis, as Shakespeare noted, is counter-productive. Lies become blacker in ascending order when prefixed by **to tell you the truth; to tell you the God's honest truth** and **I swear on my bairn's life**.

ENFs are noted for their optimism, often viewing the world as they would like it to be. ENTs are realists and deal with situations, however unpleasant, as the requirements demand. ENFs like to reason and win hearts before minds. ENTs prefer to tell it like it is. Mr Blair likes to side-step the many questions arising from the invasion of Iraq and concentrate on 'moving forward' or 'drawing a line under it' and how much better the world is without Saddam. Churchill would never have claimed that he **passionately** believed that we should go to war with Hitler. His **we shall fight them on the beaches, we shall fight them on the landing grounds, we shall fight them in the**

**fields....but we shall never surrender** was a classic example of ENT certainty and realism Nor was there much optimism in Churchill's offering of **blood, sweat and tears**. No mention of bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover, just you wait and see.

Churchill had wit, as so many of his speeches confirm but it was very much the acerbic wit of the ENT. Thatcher was singularly humourless. Witness her oft-quoted compliment in praise of one of her favourites, Lord Whitelaw. Her famous line, "Everyone should have a Willie", quite unintentionally had them rolling in the aisles, made doubly funny by the look of complete incomprehension on the Iron Lady's face. Even when her speech-writer insisted on including one of her best lines "You turn if you want to, the lady's not for turning", the subtlety of it was not grasped by the PM and the laughter came as a surprise.

The only political figure more dominant than Thatcher and more firmly in the ENT quadrant is the unique Ian Paisley. While personalities may mellow with age (though never losing their predominant traits), the fiery cross of Mr Paisley, now approaching 80, has never flickered, let alone dimmed. Dr No as he is often called has said No to liberalising licensing laws, No to de-criminalising homosexuality, No to papal visits, No to talks with Sinn Fein, No to the fundamental democratic principle of power sharing and No to just about everything else not in keeping with his own special interpretation of the Christian message of loving one another. Nor has humour been a strong Paisley suit. When the laws on homosexuality were to be reviewed in Northern Ireland, Mr Paisley led a protest march through Belfast bearing banners which read "Save Northern Ireland from Buggery". Interestingly on the odd occasion when Downing Street had the courage to entertain Mr Paisley, the sparks flew with the greatest friction when the exchange was between John Major and Ian Paisley. Some observers believed the battle of the titans would be between Paisley and Thatcher. Not so, both being full strength ENTs, they tended to neutralise each other whereas Mr Major from the diametrically opposite quadrant, ISF, (to be

covered in final article) would conflict with any ENT, let alone the overbearing and abrasive Big Ian.

ENTs tend to lead while ENFs generally follow. Thatcher was "not for turning" while Blair had "no reverse gear". Alas, the reverse gear allusion is the language of the resolute and the implacable which is not the stuff ENFs are made of. Nor had it the ring of truth as all the justifications for the invasion of Iraq had to be reversed and reduced to doing Iraq a favour. The media intuitively know this and jack up the 'phoney Tony' sniping. Blair rather naively complains that he is taking flak from all directions. But these slings and arrows are not of outrageous fortune, they are very much of his own making. . Of all the criticisms directed at Thatcher no one ever even hinted she was phoney, despite her image and voice make-over. At the 97 General Election, it was Blair's wide-eyed **utterly sincere** appeals to trust him that won him the media's soubriquet of Bambi. Bush flew to Iraq to jolly along the GIs at Christmas. A gesture as artificial as the turkey he carried. Blair flew to Basra to address the troops in jeans and an open-neck shirt. Very

much the attire of the please-accept-me mentality of an ENF. Both Thatcher and Blair had a preference for the word "look". There the similarity ends while Blair uses it as an appeal for sweet reason, the fiery Mrs T sent shivers down the back of the BBC's and ITV's finest. No appeal for her, just a demand to sit up straight, pay attention and I shall only say this once. Very ENT. ■

*Derrick White is a psychometrician and training consultant. He is an erstwhile parliamentary candidate for both the SNP and the SSP. [www.personality-assessment.co.uk](http://www.personality-assessment.co.uk)*



# THOMPSONS SCOTLAND

SOLICITORS  
& SOLICITOR  
ADVOCATES

**Thompsons**  
285 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4HQ

**Thompsons**  
16-18 Castle Street, Edinburgh EH2 3AT

- ✦ Is the largest specialist injury practice in Scotland and also Solicitors to the Trade Union and Labour Movement
- ✦ Fighting to protect the interests of working men and women, securing damages in excess of £83 million over the last 3 years alone for Trade Union Members
- ✦ Advising Trade Unions on all aspects of Employment Law and assisting Union Members in protecting and enforcing their rights before Employment Tribunals
- ✦ Advising on proposed laws affecting Trade Unions and their members as we share the same fundamental beliefs and aims
- ✦ Promoting Health & Safety in prevention of accidents & diseases together with the STUC
- ✦ All our staff are members of a recognised Trade Union

# 0800 80 12 99

[www.thompsons-scotland.co.uk](http://www.thompsons-scotland.co.uk)

Associated Thompsons offices in England

# scotland and the ethics of anomie

Innes Kennedy argues that the Scottish democratic intellect may be little more than an embedded myth

A recent survey undertaken by Lindsay Paterson (concerning the divergent perceptions of the functions of the academic in England and Scotland) concludes in support of a continuity of ethical identity in the Scottish educational system. It observes incidentally that, despite claims to universality and objectivity, education systems since the nineteenth century have in effect been nationalist in tendency due to their inescapable social embeddedness.

Paterson notes that this continuity of Scottish ethical identity was originally given the name 'democratic intellectualism' by the philosopher George Elder Davie in the 1960s. It has since been the subject of controversy, with some commentators resisting the idea on the grounds that, where it purportedly related to a national system of education, there was little about it that could be described as democratic. The debate was prickly because part of what was at stake was the peculiar problem of the Scottish Enlightenment, whose intellectual achievements were supposed to have occurred as a consequence of the 1707 Treaty rather than the Reformation project.

Davie argued then that the unique ethical and institutional basis of the Scottish nation was in the tension between the humanism and calvinism of the Law and the Church, giving us intellect on the one hand, and democracy on the other. This was the ethical fabric, the **sittlichkeit**, of the Scottish nation, and Davie himself argued that even if Scottish sovereignty was so to speak 'traded up' onto the imperial stage in 1707, it was, in its insistence on national institutional continuity, also an agreement to unify in politics but diverge in ethics. Therefore in important sociological respects Scotland was able to extend its characteristically 'continental' tendency in law, or public education, or metaphysical inquiry, into the nineteenth century. But from 1833 on, an attempt to reconvene the Knoxite polity for a quasi-nationalist campaign against the Erastianism of the British State, caused the old brooding tension of democracy and intellect to flare and finally explode in the so-called Disruption of 1843. Grey provincial dust then settled on the wreckage of the ethical project, or so Davie argued, if not always consistently. Paterson argues that in fact the project survived and the evidence for it is the clear difference in civic commitment by academics working in Scotland, whether English or Scottish:

Academics in Scotland were more in favour of higher education's local and national economic role. They were more in favour of students being able to take on leading civic roles, whether nationally or locally, and more inclined to educate students to be critical of those in authority. They were more in favour of providing access courses. They were more in favour of higher education's role in maintaining national culture, whether that is conceived of as Scottish, English or British, and alongside this they were more in favour of commercialising research. [...] And academics in Scotland were more...attached to their institution's locality and nation.

The sum of these dispositions and doubtless a few others therefore constitute the survival of the ethical project of the

democratic intellect and the salvage of the memory of the European heritage of Scottish society in its institutions. And elsewhere Paterson makes the continuity of tradition explicit as a form of contemporary crisis, insofar as the 'leadership class' display no sign of having heard of it even in the moment of its imminent disintegration by the corrosive forces of exorbitant individualism. And so a specific case is made for a tradition of ethical difference between a carnivorous individualism in the intention of an education system, and one that is somewhat more self-consciously civic or responsible.

If this is indeed true, then what are its ramifications in respect of the incipient crisis in the tradition? Davie's view was that this social tradition of ethical inquiry needed to reflect and develop on a broad practical and consensual basis in order that there was cultural resistance to those de-moralisation and de-meaning effects of technocratic managerialism and atomism that inexorably generate systematic injustice, anomie and alienation. To put it differently again, there exists a crying need for an 'educated public' to resist the nihilism of instrumental rationalism and turbocapitalism that verges on devouring first humanity and thence the planet itself. Furthermore, the common sense tradition of Scottish philosophy provided the ground for this consensual basis.

With so much seemingly at issue it is therefore right to inquire whether in fact any of these postulates of extremity are relevant. Surely the lexicon of apocalypse has worn thin; and the truth is that human liberation from horror, squalor and misery is now self-evident, at least in developed societies. What is more, this has happened without a break in traditions despite claims to the contrary because if anything the Christian **desiderata** of dignity and individual worth have now been satisfied, even if only in a secular context. There has been merely a bleak fascination with the horrors of the world, when, after all, it is plain that horror will always be with us. In the interest of rational balance therefore, a neo-stoic approach that aims realistically for an eventual law-abiding cosmopolitanism is surely a better regulating ideal than the obsession with fallibilism. And again it violates no tradition because variants of stoicism have been clearly identifiable from the early modern period in Scotland and elsewhere.

This seemingly unobjectionable view may be verging on a caricature of the argument that the market will provide but nevertheless the intractable problems of neo-stoicism will inevitably resurface with it: even if a global political structure ensues, say, in an International Court of Human Rights, it remains a regulatory ideal, with a duty of public activism that simultaneously valorises a conservative quietism and withdrawal. Worse, it runs the risk of being a useful dupe for geo-political **realpolitiek**. The talk of global regulation of fairness and the rule of law on the basis of an essential rational humanity quickly loses interest, even as irony, after the death of tens of thousands of blameless Iraqi people and the bugging of the UN.

And in truth, the irony and ludic perspectivism recently urged upon the human condition as a benign existential ethic by

self-styled postmodernists such as the American philosopher Richard Rorty now looks otherworldly in its innocence when measured against the militant neoliberalism of the Republican leadership. And in the ideological context of the New Labour Project such antirealist irony has become another of its fundamentalisms, and certainly not benign in its characteristic aporetic form, which is to say in constant conjunction with emotivist melodrama. The preferred art-form of the demagogue is, after all, melodrama. Given that the ideal of the **kosmou politês** has proven only to be a useful fiction, at least as I have outlined it above, we are brought back to Paterson's question of a tradition in ethical inquiry. A tradition and an identity exist - but the question repeatedly arises as to **what for**, even under Semi-Independence qua Scottish devolution. Paterson is anxious about what is going to happen next because this ethical identity appears headed for a slowish death in the absence of a commonly agreed purpose for it other than conformity to the economic-ontological model of technical adaption to contingent market forces, with all the anti-humanism and anomie that is entailed by it.

This is a practical question. It asks the question what **good** is the tradition. Is there really 'no alternative' as is so often claimed? One possible answer is to return and reflect on the ethical basis once more. The tradition intended a commonality and a purpose. Whether it got it or not, the section doing the enquiring fragmented, split, and eventually by default became committed to a project of non-specific universalism that Paterson noted was in sociological terms mostly fictional, and philosophers in otherwise competing camps have commonly savaged.

Davie had claimed explicitly all along that the institutional identity was 'continental' in orientation, and the departure from this was to ally oneself to insular anti-intellectualism and pragmatism. At the same time Davie probed at how the tradition developed or ought to have developed in Scotland, and he arrived at two conclusions. In the first place he pointed towards the so-called 'Continental' tradition of philosophy that derived from the phenomenology of Husserl and developed into existential phenomenology, and hermeneutics in the works, above all, of Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur and Levinas.

In the second place he showed how Thomas Reid's philosophy of Common Sense was allied to this tradition, and that it needed further intellectual commitment to demonstrate its contemporary validity as a continuity of the democratic project originally mapped in outline in the work of the great humanist George Buchanan. This academic commitment is now truly up and running with important Reid scholars to be found all across the world. Nevertheless, its relationship to democratic intellectualism remains conspicuously absent from practical reality. Neither, as Paterson notes, is this evident in the formation of devolved or any other policy, which is indeed both crudely instrumental and coldly post-ironic its stated intention to do less and to place culture at the heart of doing less.

Yet at the same time, radical and influential work has been developing in the European tradition precisely on the questions of the foundations of ethics and identity, with inquiry into the construction and deconstruction of identity and difference. Paul

Ricoeur's Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh conclude its arguments in support of the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas by agreeing that the ethical is prior to the ontological, a conclusion supported (somewhat ecstatically) by probably the most inspired sociologist of the present time, Zygmunt Bauman, in his **Postmodern Ethics**. A great deal of this line of inquiry takes its impetus from Husserl and Heidegger, especially the latter's concept of **Mitsein**, or Being-with. Most interestingly for the possibility of Scottish institutional reflection on its tradition in ethics something analogous to a position that Davie himself worked constantly on in his studies of James Frederick Ferrier (the most recent being published in 2003) appears Frederick Olafson's work on **Mitsein**. So perhaps it is possible that some basis in politics can be derived from this aspect, the basis that establishes the priority of the ethical in recognition and responsibility, in self-hood, and in the genesis of action. Maybe there is a path for democratic intellectualism around the set of choices determined in advance by Paterson's 'ruling classes'. But there may be a completely different reason why Paterson's foreboding is well founded.

What if the image of a surviving democratic intellect so laboriously extrapolated from empirical evidence turns out to be a misrecognition? Paterson analysed the evidence of a responsible **civisme** and concluded that the ethical tradition had mysteriously survived. But what are or were the precise historical circumstances of this civic nationalism? The answer to this question potentially eviscerates his conclusion.

The later twentieth century saw confidence in the concept of Anglo-British identity radically shaken as a result of the apparent determination of the conservative government to weaken or destroy it. This concept of identity was itself not all that old, having been constructed with some alacrity in the 1940's and is usually described as British Corporatism because it valued state intervention, and the social institutions of the Welfare State.

As it tottered under the assault, a self-appointed coalition of Scottish interests attempted to defend their own legitimacy in the teeth of increasingly painful nationalist criticism by rallying beneath its standard and proclaiming it 'Scottish Identity' and campaigning for devolution, or semi-independence-within-the-UK. This was indeed a nationalist programme in its own right but thoroughly misleading because, while it was a **de facto** project of normative **étatiste** nationalism - and therefore more or less invisible - it both appeared and claimed to be Scottish, and, even more confusingly, coincided with a broader cultural nationalism which was in fact a genuinely creative project of inquiry. To be blunt, it was a Unionist-Nationalist project to rescue the Union rather than 'Scotch metaphysics'.

Paterson is not contemplating The Survival of the Democratic Intellect at all but the cauld kail of British Unionist Corporatism het up for the nineties as Scottish Virtue. The reason it feels uncomfortable is because - as Hegel might have said had he been born in Auchtermuchty - its function is completed and its contours are retrospectively clearer to discern, even in the descending night. ■

*Innes Kennedy is an academic at the UHI Millennium Institute*

# reviews

## Modern Scotland 1914-2000

Richard Finlay, Profile Books, 2004, pp 424. £??

As his earlier work has shown, especially his analyses of Scotland between the wars, Richard Finlay writes with the sort of fluent ease which is derived from an open-minded grasp of the main issues and the sort of erudition about his sources only derivable from hard archival work. While this new book is appropriately buttressed by relevant statistical information, Finlay is equally at home in his employment of Scottish intellectual and literary evidence for his study of our often deeply fraught twentieth-century in which viable political and economic solutions still largely elude us.

Thus the grace of Finlay's telling of our modern story never disguises the fact that not infrequently for all the Scottish people and almost constantly for a significant minority the experience has been more of troughs than peaks. Scotland's dominant industrial world leadership was brought to a peremptory end by the First World War. Scottish bravery caused much Scottish bloodshed. Also among some of our soldiers it induced psychotic violence that did not terminate with the war. Indeed, Finlay detects, both in judges and condemned, a pervasive streak of punitive cruelty in Scottish life some of which may have had some of its roots in the trenches. Finlay also lucidly shows the social change in gender and class the war caused but such progressive hopes for improved conditions have always been restrained by economic underperformance. The war also mortally wounded the British Empire, in which so much of Scottish identity and aspiration had become integrated but awareness of this, except for mavericks like MacDiarmid, was to be retarded, partly by the reintegration of Britain during the Second World War, till the 1970s. Is it perhaps the case that the Union could only be really successful when the Anglo-British Empire was dynamically expansive?

The degree of Scottish underperformance is perhaps most reliably expressed in the emigration figures, though perhaps the true national emblem should not be the rooted thistle but the centrifuge as over the centuries nothing so became Scotland for multitudes of Scots as the leaving of it (hence our chronic nostalgia). The figures Finlay quotes are astonishing. Even at the height of our industrial prowess between 1904-1913, 600,000 Scots emigrated. In the particularly troubled '20s, the draining away of highly skilled blue collar workers to America was particularly acute:

The United States was the most popular destination and, according to official US government figures, 129,193 Scots settled there between 1920 and 1928. This 20,000 more emigrants than came from England, meaning that in per capita terms Scottish emigration to the US was nine times higher than the English.

Nor as Finlay points out have we been successful at attracting emigrants. Of the period 1966-1976 he notes that Scotland "was almost unique among the modern Western economies in that it

had no widespread non-European emigration... Scotland was not widely believed to be a land of opportunity." Certainly the '20s and '30s provide the nadir of Scotland's twentieth-century marked by intellectual self-hatred, acute anti-Irish Catholicism and predictions of terminal economic decline.

What Finlay demonstrates, however, is that despite, or indeed because of, our quite extraordinary pre-1914 industrial and economic successes, Scotland has subsequently lived in its shadow since it has never been able to replicate that extraordinary success where education, research and production for the world market, albeit an imperially biased one, came together. Consequently our chronic economic weakness led us to absorb or perhaps have imposed upon us cures of quite disparate kinds which were arguably worse than the illness they sought to alleviate. In the '30s a philosophy of free enterprise ran disastrously unchecked. In the '60s and '70s the elixir of central state planning was, at best, a placebo. For Finlay, the success of Scots as individuals is in almost inverse proportion to a communal failure.

There is certainly an impression that Scots punch above their weight when it comes to getting on in the world. This stands in direct contrast to Scottish society, which in terms of its performance relative to the rest of the United Kingdom has historically underachieved - be it in terms of wages, health, housing, prosperity or the economy. In comparison to other modern Western European societies, Scotland's record is even more dismal. Overall, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that a nation that can produce so many individual success stories, but cannot channel this success back into society in general, is one that has let its people down.... One feature of the nation since 1914 is that it has largely been directionless. Although Scotland has possessed a leadership class, its achievements have been poor. As was mentioned above, part of the problem is that the best leaders could be siphoned off to elsewhere. Business leadership lost its nerve in the inter-war era, and in the post-war era it was too ready to avail itself of the services of the state. Politicians have either ducked off to play on the bigger British stage or have followed the lead set by their London masters.

John Smith's devolution policy was meant as an antidote to this leadership condition of partial political vacuum at the heart of Scottish affairs. Smith was not to know that New Labour's obsession with alleged modernisation (that inherently absurd practice of imposing market conditions by bureaucratic means) entailed a root-and-branch cull of candidates with socialist principles. Gordon Brown is the Henry Dundas of our times and the country has rarely danced more to a Westminster-controlled tune. The country is undergoing a sort of Texification to the degree of having been enlisted in an atavistic neo-colonial war. In total irony to Smith's intentions, the new parliament building is a perfect illustration of irresponsible chaos with the civil servants and politicians mutually contemptuous of each other while corporate raiders leave by the back door. More and more, macho New Labour Scottish politicians seem like extras from **Goodfellas**.

Dr. Finlay's Scottish casebook is not a feel-good diagnosis of the state of the nation. It is to my mind, however, eloquently realistic. It should not only prove indispensable for academic courses but for all readers interested in a mature, relevant assessment of the state of Scotland. ■

*Andrew Noble*

## Tell Me Lies - Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq

David Miller (ed.), Pluto Press 2004, pp293, £9.95

There seemed to be four categories of thought among the general public as last year's war in Iraq loomed. There were those who knew little about the details of the run up to war but felt instinctively that it was wrong. There were those who knew little about the details but who felt that removing Saddam was right. There was a very small group which wanted the war for their own reasons and were happy to overlook the facts of the situation. And then there were those who had at least a basic understanding of the situation who recognised the brazen, dangerous, self-serving injustice of it.

Now, by right it ought to be a bit too late to be choosing one of these categories for yourself; after all the war was more than a year ago now. Too late now, better luck next time is the message Blair would like to send out to those who knew what he was up to and tried to stop him. However, it is not working out that way and this is something which will be of little surprise to the informed objectors among us. You see, there were a bunch of inconvenient facts which were always lurking around this campaign. Firstly, for all the slack-jawed surprise of the liberal commentators in the UK, it is **not** a bolt from the blue that Saddam had no weapons of mass destruction. If the American right (both in the media and around the White House) had not pursued such a powerful campaign of vilification aimed at discrediting Scott Ritter (for one) then we might have listened to him. He is more or less the only person who was almost entirely correct about Iraq, and yet no-one would print it. There was a report from the United Nations weapons inspectors indicating that Saddam had 'fundamentally disarmed' which people chose just to forget, just as they chose to forget that those inspectors were not 'thrown out' of Iraq by Saddam but removed by America when they started concluding things the White House didn't like. And nor was it only outsiders and dissidents who were saying this perfectly plainly - Robin Cook (who has been a breath of fresh air in much of this but hardly a dangerous radical) pointed out in his resignation speech that there were no WDM as we understand them in Iraq.

At the time of writing Tony Blair has just presented one of the most intellectually bankrupt 'doctrines' in the history of UK politics. He has told us, well over a year too late, that he has decided that his suspicion of any world regime (irrespective of

'facts' or 'evidence') is sufficient for him to ignore the UN and international law. He tried once again to pretend that Saddam had links with terrorists which the informed objectors are perfectly well aware is completely without any basis in reality. This speech by Blair was too late because if he had made it in, say, October 2002 he would never have been given the easy ride he had in the run up to the war (and yes it was easy, given that there was the biggest demonstration in modern British history against it). If we had known that his policy was regime change and that he was not inclined to feel that he had any duties under international law, then people might have seen it differently.

And this is the reason that the David Miller-edited **Tell Me Lies - Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq** is not just a historical document but a source of reference for understanding the next year (at least). This book will only become a historical document when the current conspiracy which has captured the White House is defeated and possibly when Blair follows (although it is equally possible that Blair will quickly convert from Neo-Con to Kerryite and the last remnants of the regime will be exorcised by default). It is a selection of essays, reporting, media commentary and some humour which appeared in various forms in the run-up to and during the war. Some were essays on dissident websites, some appeared in the national press, some were the outputs of academic papers, some were specially commissioned. But whatever the source and however much you have followed events you will almost certainly have much to learn from this book.

Any collection of essays is inevitably variable. There are some well-kent writers here - Chomsky, Fisk, Pilger - but also a lot of specialist commentators. The best of the content is often that which is either written with anger and passionate contempt (Pilger, Fisk and Mark Curtis stand out) or with a calm forensic tone (Chomsky and much of the academic analysis). Its weaker parts are usually those which cover ground that need not be covered; like a twentieth speaker at last March's rally hollering 'Not In My Name' Yvonne Ridley (the Mail journalist who was captured by the Taliban and later became an anti war activist) really ought to have had something more to say than 'this is all a bad show really'. However, the weak points are pretty few and far between and you will barely notice them among the wealth of knowledge and outrage you will gain.

Some are suggesting that Blair's ongoing problems over Iraq are somehow the result of a vindictive media out to get him. This is quite untrue and in fact much of the media has grown weary of the war too. The reason Blair can't leave this behind is because the blanket of lies and manipulation that he wove to cover himself is inevitably falling apart and each tear brings more and more duplicity into the public eye. It was an out-and-out war crime and no amount of post-hoc doctrinairing will disguise that. Read this book and become one of the informed objectors; it is the key to ensuring that this doesn't happen again. ■

*Robin McAlpine*

# web review

Henry McCubbin

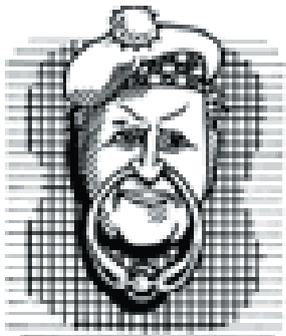
A little bit of help this edition to all those wishing to follow the run up to the European Parliamentary Elections. In this case it is best to start with the official sites. Following these elections the various national political parties will, if they wish to receive EU funding (call it federal funding if you really want to mischievous), have to affiliate to a political group which will carry the title of a European Political Party. Therefore we should hear more of such entities as the European Socialist Party, European Left Party and the European Green Party. We await the names of the others.

Already the political groups in the parliament are the putative formations of these parties and can all be found at [www.europarl.eu.int/groups/default.htm](http://www.europarl.eu.int/groups/default.htm). This site is particularly informative and carries position papers on existing legislation and soon the manifestos of the various groups. New Labour's position will be particularly interesting. Firstly if it has to fight as a **Socialist** Party and secondly if it has to include the position of the European socialists on enforcing the working time directive. This has never been a problem in the past as the Labour Party, under previous and present leaders, was known as the footnote party because the socialist manifesto always had footnotes explaining why the policies of Europe's social democrats was too socialist for it.

The next official place to look is the site of the Council of ministers where all the real decisions are taken behind closed doors: try [ue.eu.int/en/](http://ue.eu.int/en/). For other EU related sites the best links page is the EP's [www.europarl.eu.int/institutions/en/default.htm](http://www.europarl.eu.int/institutions/en/default.htm). If you want information from the Commission on any controversy the best place to look is in to the web pages of the actual department dealing with that issue. These are handily set out at [www.europarl.eu.int/institutions/en/default.htm](http://www.europarl.eu.int/institutions/en/default.htm) [www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs_en.htm). Daily press releases from the Commission are available from [europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh](http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh). Issues affecting other sectors in Europe appear on [www.eupolitix.com/EN/News](http://www.eupolitix.com/EN/News). This site is funded by big business but it at least treats EU politics serious unlike our own media that look on it as foreign affairs.

If however you want keep an eye on big business visit [www.corporateeurope.org](http://www.corporateeurope.org) to see the Corporate Europe Observatory. Otherwise previous results and official election information can be found at the European Parliament's UK election site [www.europarl.org.uk/guide/Gelectionsmain.html](http://www.europarl.org.uk/guide/Gelectionsmain.html) and at the Electoral Commission at [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/elections/EPE.cfm](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/elections/EPE.cfm). ■

## 44 Smug Street by Alexander McCall You'll have had your tea – a daily novel



### Part 1: New Neighbours

No-one moved out of 44 Smug Street. It wasn't that kind of tenement; the stairwell was so well kept, the flats so spacious and the neighbours so civilised. 44 Smug Street summed up all that was great about Scotland's capital. If a letter was placed through the wrong letter box it would be returned. If not in person then at least with a brief, cordial note written on the underside.

The Douglas-Hunters from flat 3-3 had recently scandalised their neighbours by putting their flat up for sale. They planned to move to Fife to retire. The Douglas-Hunters reached agreement on appropriate remuneration with a pleasant couple, academics, both

of whom were in their fifties and eminently stable. Everyone in the close awaited their arrival with polite indifference.

"Come on let's get the move finished before *Top of the Pops* starts" said Giles.

He and his three friends were to rent flat 3-3 from his parents for the duration of their studies. They had borrowed a friend's van for the move.

Mr Cook from flat 2-3 watched them from behind his net curtains. He watched the exuberant undergraduates as they moved in their 'boom boxes' and their 'television-o-grams'. He was a passionate advocate of education of course and loved young people. Mr Cook was sure everything would work out for the best at number 44 Smug Street, as it always had.

He was not alone in his love of young people. Amongst his colleagues in the residents' committee, Mrs Frazier-Dunbar had been one herself, and she openly admired their sunny disposition and lust for life. Whilst Mr Wylie-Gillies had been young too he could now remember next to nothing of it. Altogether however the committee was united in its public support for the next generation of its ancient city.

"What a bunch of wankers" said Samantha as she reloaded the van with her things.

"I'd like to stick their bloody multiple occupancy up their fucking arse!"

"Shhhh," said Giles, "Mr Cook said he'd get us all evicted if we made any noise after three in the afternoon. He says 44 Smug Street is his sanctuary."

"Does he live in the flat where they found the paedophile's corpse?" asked Samantha.

"No he's the one above," whispered Giles.

\*Next: The residents boast about how wonderful the Festival is non-stop for a whole bloody year until the Festival when they rent their flats for a small fortune to Irish stand-up comedians.



Giles: "come on let's get the move finished before *Top of the Pops* starts."

Copyright © 2004 by Alexander McCall

# a Kick up the Tabloids

## Holyrood Debacle “Ally McLeod’s fault”

Kick Up the Tabloids has been closely following events at the Fraser enquiry. The enquiry has not received the same levels of publicity as Hutton, partly because the key documents have not been disseminated in the same way (Apparently the Fraser enquiry was to have had a website but no-one could build one for less than £5 million). It emerged that David Steel was qualified to oversee the project because his surname was the same as a building material (which we used to make in Scotland by the way).

The fact that the architect’s design was based on capsized fishing boats was finally recognised not to have been the most optimistic symbol of the New Jerusalem. The SNP pointed out that Scottish fishing boats actually used to work, and whispered that it was more Spanish folk who had knackered that as well.

The other revelation was that Henry McLeish had originally offered to host the Scottish Parliament in his Glenrothes office, for a small rental fee of course. There are growing concerns that this enquiry will result in a whitewash (obviously the most deluxe whitewash that costs £10,000 a tin: only the best for the MSPs). These fears arise as the blame seems to be placed on those no longer with us, whether it be the architect or Donald Dewar. Expect the final outcome to be it was all Ally McLeod’s fault.

Henry McLeish, who had to resign as First Minister after the embarrassing revelation that he had once played ‘football’ for East Fife accused Jack McConnell of back-stabbing him. It’s good to see that Jack carries a knife like the rest of the population. Perhaps we need to tag ‘Ned’ McConnell: though obviously we’d have to use a different frequency to his one-way bleeper with T. Blair. It emerged that the said Prime Minister had bugged Kofi Annan. Really? Someone needs to tell Kofi that the PM has pissed the rest of us off for years.

If the costs of the Parliament continue to rise then they may be forced to sell off the furniture, prompting Colin Fox to say ‘Hud on, is this no a posh warrant sale? We’re against this!’ The Scottish Socialists were accused of disrupting Parliament after Tommy Sheridan was found to be standing in a vertical tanning machine during one of the debates in the main chamber. The Scottish Pensioners Party demanded the heating in the Parliament be turned up. The Greens pointed out this would add to the use of fossil fuels, to which the Pensioners Party responded ‘Who are you calling fossils you hippy bastards?’

The Liberal Democrats grounded their principles for the Airborne initiative by adopting the novel approach of being

opposed to something during a debate and then voting for it. Still, a ministerial motor is a ministerial motor (and the last thing you want to do is be walking the streets of Scotland with these released dangerous offenders on the loose). Apparently the Scottish Executive closed Airborne after it appeared embarrassing on a documentary programme. Following that logic, given that the Scottish Parliament is televised, how can continued funding be justified?

Jack McConnell made an impassioned (well, for him) speech about the need for Scotland to welcome new citizens to address vital skills shortages (such as being able to play football). As Berti Vogts tries to use the bloodline rule to get any living human being to play for the national team, hope for Scottish politics suddenly emerges. Couldn’t we use the same approach to sign up Mandela and Castro as MSPs for a season?

On the international front, confidence in the quality of intelligence used in the build up to the war in Iraq was further dented by the revelation that Aggie from the Channel Four programme ‘How Clean is Your House?’ was a former MI5 officer. We can only imagine her intelligence updates: ‘I’m in Bin Laden’s base camp and it’s pure minging.’ The US Presidential election was dominated by Bush’s Vietnam war record (otherwise known as I’m a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here). George W’s true heroism was revealed when it emerged he had run away from guarding Texas during the conflict! We don’t recall the Viet Gong attacking Houston, but we may be wrong. The dirty tricks have begun with the doctored photo showing Kerry with Jane Fonda. Here the Republicans use the same approach as Powell’s UN presentation where photos of Iraqi chemical weapons factories were found to be cleverly disguised as primary schools and hospitals (complete with patients, teachers, and children). ■

*Kick Up the Tabloids is The Stand Comedy Club’s monthly satirical comedy show. Totally live and interactive, it offers an irreverent take on who and what has been making the news in Scotland and beyond. The Kick up the Tabloids comedy team include regulars Bruce Devlin, John Flint, Susan Morrison, John Scott and Paul Sneddon, with surprise guest appearances. The show takes place on the third Wednesday each month at The Stand, Yorkhill Place, Edinburgh (Tel 0131 558 7373 or visit the website at [www.thestand.co.uk](http://www.thestand.co.uk)) The next show is on Wednesday 17 March, doors open at 7.30pm, with the show kicking off at 9pm.*

# What does EU enlargement really mean for Scotland?

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**22 - 23 April 2004**

A two day International Conference to discuss Scotland's place in the new Europe following EU enlargement on May 1st, with specially invited contributions from leading opinion-formers, politicians, policy-makers, academics and others both in Scotland and in the EU new member states.

**Speakers include:**

Andy Kerr MSP, Alex Salmond MP, Frances Curran MSP, Mark Ballard MSP, Alf Young (*The Herald*), Campbell Christie (*STUC*), Richard Demarco (*The Demarco European Art Foundation*) and Jack McLean (*The Herald*).

**For further information contact:**

**Jean Finn / Michelle Martin**  
Paisley Business School  
University of Paisley  
Paisley PA1 2BE

**Tel:** 0141 848 3933 / 3839  
**Fax:** 0141 848 3618  
**Email:** jean.finn@paisley.ac.uk  
michelle.martin@paisley.ac.uk

**<http://cces.paisley.ac.uk>**