

Scottish **Left** Review

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A graphic element consisting of three overlapping, curved, flame-like shapes in shades of red and orange, positioned above the word 'unite'.

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Scottish Left Review

Issue 73 November/December 2012

In this issue of the Scottish Left Review the Editorial Board has handed over editorial control of the magazine to two groups on the Scottish left. The organisers of the Radical Independence Conference are convinced that independence is the best route to a socialist Scotland. The Red Paper Collective is not. We have divided the magazine in half which you can read from either direction (just flip it over and turn it upside down). We hope this will help to inform the constitutional debate in all parts of the Scottish left.

Please note that the placement of adverts in this issue does not in any way imply advertisers' association with the views expressed in either half.

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The Radical Independence Conference is a coalition of socialists, feminists, trade unionists, Greens, peace movement, poverty campaigners, anti-racists groups, community activists, civil liberty campaigners and more who believe independence offers Scotland its best hope of a progressive future. Join us in Glasgow on Saturday 24 November. www.radicalindependence.org.

This is the cause of our generation. This is where we must come together. This is when we stop hoping and start offering hope.

It is time for the Scottish left to stop hoping and to start offering hope.

For a generation the left has had to cross its fingers and hope that the British State would just once not behave like the British State. That Labour would change it, not the other way round. That it wouldn't start another war. That it would make poverty history. That it would deliver tax justice. That it would reform itself in the wake of the financial crash.

But this was hoping for a miracle and we all knew it. We have found it hard to maintain our optimism and enthusiasm in the face of what we knew was a futile struggle. The British State is and always will be a machine for

transferring power and wealth from the many to the few.

Now though, across the Scottish left there is suddenly a new vigour, a sense of enthusiasm and optimism we haven't seen in a generation. People are uncrossing their fingers and picking up their pens to write. They are writing about foreign policy, about economic reform, about strategies for inequality, about ownership, about the future of the welfare state.

Why? The prospect of independence. Many people who have never supported independence in the past are joining with many who have – and it is for one simple reason. For the first time in many of our lives we can see a path

from here to a better Scotland which is not blocked by the British Establishment. How much easier to imagine the future when you can imagine getting there.

You want a guarantee of utopia ahead? Well you can't have it. But what you can have is the knowledge that the British State too can imagine a different Scotland, one which is not a cog in its machine. If the British Establishment can fear an independent and independently-minded Scotland, we have sufficient real hope to fight for it.

We are living in the No Campaign's future. This is it. So we have three options. We can accept it. We can go back to hoping. Or we can start to offer

hope, to fight for it. We can build the case for a better future. And for the first time we can have real hope of achieving it. Think of your political life so far. Now think about it again as if all those things you have said for all those years were not just a moan but an option.

Few of us are happy about the drift of the SNP's badly-sown-together patchwork of a vision but for us the idea that this should drive us back into the arms of Tory-dominated Britain seems madness.

If we are to fight for a future, this is where we should do it. 'A plague on both their houses' will not do. These are our houses, our homes, our places of work, our communities. We have no option but to choose a side. We do not find it difficult to choose a side any more. Below we explain why.

On Saturday 24 November the Scottish left will gather in Glasgow to talk about a vision for a better Scotland. What is different this time is that we will also talk about a strategy for getting there. That strategy is all about telling the people of Scotland what is possible; it is about offering them hope. If we can inspire them to vote Yes, to take into their own hands the power to change Scotland, then we believe that we can take them forward from there. The belief that Scotland can be better cannot be expressed by voting No. But if it is expressed by voting Yes then the belief can flow through to that new, young Scotland. If we can persuade the Scottish people of the need for a new Scotland, they will not accept the old Scotland when the time comes to choose the details of their future.

The Radical Independence Campaign is not a simple Yes campaign, it is the start of a movement the goal of which is to remind Scotland that the politics of London are not the only option.

DOES THE NATION-STATE MATTER?

Let us begin with one important argument; this matters. It is a lazy argument of the mainstream media that nation states barely matter any more in the face of transnational corporations. Really? So why do TNCs expend so much energy and money

trying to influence and control national governments? The answer is simple; a state that chooses to be supine to international capitalism is powerless, but a state that chooses not to be is not. After all, what other force or entity

Think of your political life so far. Now think about it again as if all those things you have said for all those years were not just a moan but an option.

is there between global financial and military power and us? Far from being a weak and conservative the concept of the democratic nation state is still a radical ideal – that a people who share a place can collectively decide how they wish their society to be run and how it should behave. People sometimes cite the WTO, the EU and the IMF as evidence of the weakness of the nation state. In fact, these are institutions invented by global capital to circumvent the will of the nation state precisely because they recognise just how powerful it can be. An independent Scotland is our best hope of moderating global capitalism. Britain is one of its lairs.

How do we understand an independent Scotland?

An independent Scotland is a story, not a fact. It is a tale of possible things, an outcome yet to be decided. This more than anything else the No Campaign is desperate to disguise. It has resisted with fury any attempt to picture Scotland's future as anything other than a bastardised version of the SNP's muddled thinking. Of course it has; the No Campaign is scared first and foremost of the idea that Scotland could be better than it is. The No Campaign wants Scotland's future to be reduced to a series of unanswerable questions because it has no stories of its own, only nightmares. It is not an evasion to claim that an independent Scotland's future is its people's to choose. We present that self-evident truth not with a disinterested shrug of the shoulders but with a glint in our eyes. We believe that the fight for Scotland's future is one we can win. We do not believe the same about Britain. The best way to understand an independent Scotland is as a prize to fight for. We are not a campaign for independence, we are a campaign for a better Scotland that we believe begins with independence. Every stage of that battle is one we will contest, from the

negotiations for separation through the writing of a constitution and on into democratic elections. But if this is not concrete enough for you, we offer you this instead: if an independent Scotland is the worst of the SNP, then Britain is the worst of the Tory Party. Even this would be worth the fight

So what's wrong with Britain?

London is one of the world centres of wrongness. It is one of the great centres of destructive finance acting not only as a home for corruption but politically as one of its great global enforcers. It is one of the centres of arms dealing. It is the command and control centre for one of the world's more aggressive militaries with its weapons of indiscriminate civilian extermination. It is the beachhead for attacks on the European social model by (mainly US) corporations. It is a city-state dominated by new money and old, a club of private school boys who have built a haven for wealthy Russian criminals. Running under it is an underground railway and a secretive network of intelligence agencies who define and then pursue 'national security' with little or not reference to the nation's citizens. Above it is an umbrella of right-wing media shielding the population from news about what is raining down upon them. This is the British State.

We would like all the people of Britain to be independent of the British State, free from the manipulation of power and money that makes them poorer so the Establishment and its friends can become richer. We will rally at any time for the cause of independence for the people of England, or of Wales or Ireland. But that fight has not yet begun. Britain remains a state so afraid of the risk of democracy that it can't even countenance a voting system that might upset its cartel politics. It is a political system in which the election of one token Green Party candidate is briefly news then rapidly just a quirk. It is designed not to change. Only after massive horrors has Britain allowed even the smallest reform – it took the First World War to deliver universal suffrage and the Second World War to deliver a welfare state. That was ten years of progress; the rest of the last century has been a continuous process of reversing the gains of those ten years.

Can Scotland be better?

A lot of 'mainstream commentators' have cornered the market in 'Scotland

isn't different' semantics. 'Ignore democratic elections', they say, 'check out my clever analysis of the outcomes of an attitudes survey'. Everyone accepts that Scots tend to answer slightly more towards the left when asked about social attitudes. A lot is being made of the 'slightly' bit at the expense of the 'more towards the left' bit. What do these experts expect in a unitary state with a single national broadcaster and a largely UK-wide, largely right-wing media? Social attitudes don't vary all that much in a single country. So the two most important questions are 'what does this mean in practice?' and 'what might we expect to happen after independence?'. To the first we have a simple, clear answer; in practice it means that only parties advocating a universal welfare state have had any electoral impact for generations with the political right a bystander. This is not slightly different than the UK. Sure, some parts of the north of England vote more like Scotland than the south east of England, but some bits of Edinburgh vote more like the south east of England than like Scotland. So let us drop this desperate attempt to define away the politics of Scotland. Scotland votes well to the left of Britain. That is not in dispute. And there is every reason to hope that in a country with a media no longer dominated by a right-wing London agenda that the people can be further won over to a socially progressive agenda.

Can Scotland do better than England at building a good society? Yes – and we're already doing it. It is barely worth listing the things that the Scottish Parliament does differently from Westminster because you know them, and they're virtually all different and to the left. This is in part because Scotland has a fairer voting system. But above all, democracy in Scotland is not trapped in quite the same web of power as is democracy in London. We do not have the same commercial lobbyists, we do not have the same military establishment, nor quite the same privately educated elite. Of course some of these things would develop in an independent Scotland, but there is every reason to believe that we would never face the same web of power as London – without the financial markets of London and without its military ambitions, Scotland would be structurally different.

What about solidarity?

But what about solidarity with the working people of England? So goes the

standard left-critique of independence. We reject this completely. We do not believe solidarity is UK-shaped. We do not wish to stand in solidarity with London's bankers as they impose vicious cuts on the working people of Greece and Spain. We do not want to stand in solidarity with London's generals as they wage war on the working people of Afghanistan, Iraq and probably soon Iran. We do not want to stand in solidarity with the arms manufacturers of London as they create devices designed to maim and kill working people all over the world. Scotland will do more for the working people of Europe by weakening the British State than we ever will by sustaining it. And we will certainly do nothing for the working people of England if by staying all we do is join them in their choice of one of two corporate parties, neither of which has shown them any solidarity. An independent Scotland has the scope to show real solidarity with ordinary people all over the globe. And the best we can do for the working people of England is to show them that there is indeed a better way to organise a society.

But there is a solidarity that matters now. In Scotland the independence movement has become a left-wing movement. Anyone that doubts that should come to the Radical Independence Conference. It is the opportunity to achieve social change that a big majority of Scotland's left is concentrating on. What we need is solidarity on the Scottish left to work together to make independence work for the Scottish people. That is real and immediate, not a vague notion of connectedness which has done nothing but trap the working people of Scotland in a British right-wing revolution that is more than three decades old.

So what could Scotland be?

Much has been made of the lack of vision for what an independent Scotland could be. We reject this. We believe that much has been distorted to make sure that people can't hear about the real vision for an independent Scotland. Because there is one. Let's call it 'Nordic Plus'. This vision says 'let's look for the best bits of the best societies we can find and move Scotland quickly in that direction. From there we can see further still'. What we want is a Nordic-style universal welfare state with mixed economy model. We want policies designed to spread national wealth as evenly as possible. We want

an open, transparent society which puts human rights and civil liberties to the fore. And we want a benign and collegiate foreign policy which seeks to put Scotland in a global lead position on disarmament, conflict resolution, reducing climate change, tackling global inequality and making global trade and global institutions fairer. We all agree on this, we all know what it looks like. So why do people say there is no vision? This idea is the unifying idea of Scottish independence; it is what has brought us all together. It cannot be 'vanished' simply by making an oh-so-UK knowing quip about 'which would be nice if it wasn't for the tax you'll have to raise'. This is not a fantasy. It works. And it works *because* of the tax we'll have to raise. This is the goal. Don't find reasons not to see it.

So what could we do?

What could Scotland do if it was independent?

- Immediately reform tax to make sure that it is paid fairly by all and that it begins immediately to reverse the growing inequality of Britain
- Put in place pay policies to make equality grow even faster, supported by strong trade unions not persecuted by unfair legislation
- Regulate all economic activity to encourage growth in virtuous areas and diversification away from harmful activities, preventing economic abuse and diversifying ownership models (including nationalisation) to create a more participative and democratic economy
- Focus policies on changing the experience of work, the amount of time away from families, the debt traps of consumer borrowing and so on to make work subordinate to life, not the other way round
- Support and expand universal welfare provision, paid for by fair taxes
- Redesign education as a means of developing citizens and rounded human beings first, employees second
- Put in place a national energy, food and resource security strategy to ensure our society does not suffer from global speculative traders by doing things like encouraging more domestic food production, energy efficiency, renewable energy generation and so on.
- Reform the institutions of Scotland

to make them open and democratic. Everything from reformed local democracy to the governance of quangos must be taken out of the hands of a tiny elite.

- Media ownership must be diversified. The UK's lax 'whoever has the most money' attitude to media ownership must be reversed and a vibrant and robust national broadcaster put in place which has none of the caution and timidity of the post-Hutton BBC.
- Make 'recreation' a national priority so people can define their lives other than by which corporation markets most aggressively. Everything from participative sport to arts and culture, local activism, creative hobbies and much more can be encouraged and supported to reduce our bland consumer culture.
- Create a foreign policy agenda in which a non-aligned Scotland is taken seriously because it invests domestically in conflict resolution, nuclear disarmament, combatting climate change, reducing global inequality and other issues where the world is looking for leadership.

You will have your own list. Right now it might as well be folded up and wedged under a wobbly table leg for all the use it has been. Look it out. Make a better use of it.

What about the 'problems'?

As people of the left you will be familiar with the claim that everything you might want to do is somehow impossible. You may also have noticed that the same is true of the independence movement. We just wanted to create a small, democratic country that operates a mixed economy and has a strong universal welfare state. Who knew that was virtually impossible to achieve? After all, it's not like anyone else has managed it. Other than most of our neighbours. Some simple answers:

- We could adopt Sterling as a transitional currency from which we could migrate to a Scottish currency initially tied to Sterling but eventually under the complete control of Scotland's democracy. Like Denmark. Or Norway.
- We can get rid of the hereditary Monarchy and put in place an elected head of state.
- We can pull out of NATO at any point with only a year's notice.
- We could stay out of Europe but negotiate membership of

the European Economic Area or European Free Trade Area and harmonise laws where they make sense (such as human rights law)

- We don't need an offensive army and we should demilitarise Scotland
- We don't need a bank bailout fund – because we would regulate the banks and make clear that they will not be getting bailed out

Will the left winevevething? Perhaps not immediately. But more than we will ever win in Britain. Even the offer of a fighting chance is welcome. One leading advocate of the British State claims that voting for independence would be like voting for a blank sheet of paper. Amen to that.

There's no point trying to fight because we'll lose...

None of this will happen though because the left is fundamentally weak and divided and when the time comes the neoliberal bankers of Edinburgh will just shove us aside and run Scotland in their own interests. We're genetically programmed to lose and that is why independence is inevitably going to produce nothing more than London Lite.

Enough!

No more self-pitying resignation. No more expectation of failure. No more seeing what we failed to achieve while missing what we have achieved. No more searching for reasons to mistrust each other. We lose because we won't fight together. The comfort zone of throwing stones at pantomime Tory baddies in London in the certain knowledge that at best we replace them with more New Labour pantomime baddies is why we lose. Despite what we have come to believe, the SNP left is not the enemy of the Labour left, the Greens are not the enemies of socialists. We have a cause around which we can unite – the winning of Scotland for the people of Scotland.

It is time to stop believing in failure. That is the expectation that the British State has drilled into us all. There is every reason in the world to believe that Scotland will be more progressive than Britain, every reason to believe that its early years will be shaped more by our left-green coalition which believed in the

possibility of a better Scotland than by the forces of conservatism which said a better Scotland was impossible.

Every one of us must stop looking for reasons to stand on the sidelines. This movement for change is our movement. If we join together we can win not a referendum but a society.

What now?

We address this to those on the left who are not yet sure if they will join us in Glasgow to hear both what kind of Scotland we are fighting for and how we

plan to win it. If you come you will discover that we have no intention of voting Yes and then leaving Scotland's future to others. Independence is only the start. If you come we believe that we will persuade you that this is a pivotal moment, an opportunity to

achieve what we have never had a chance of achieving before. You will find that almost everyone with whom you agree is here. You will find a home that British nationalism will never offer you.

Don't walk away before listening. Don't turn your back with a closed mind. This is bigger than party politics or personal differences. No, this is not the left orthodoxy of the post-war years, the socialism mistrustful of nationalism. It is a new left orthodoxy for a specific place at a specific time. This is the radical cause of our generation. It has brought the left together as never before.

So make a choice. There are three. Choose Better Together's vision of Britain. Choose to hope that you can stay in Britain and win it for socialism. Or choose an independent Scotland for which we can offer hope that people can believe. Let us end by updating Marx's words for 21st century Scotland:

The unionists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the enforcement of all existing power relationships. Let the British ruling classes tremble at Scottish independence. The people of Scotland have nothing to lose but their neoliberal chains. They have a future to win. ■

The organisers of the Radical Independence Conference

LETTERS FROM THE LEFT

The Young Activist

My generation has been labelled 'lost', 'boomerang', 'doomed' as well as 'ipod', 'twitter' and, the more hip version, 'iGen'. These labels essentially reduce us to two common characteristics: (1) without purpose or means to integrate into society (2) the generation that embraced the internet revolution.

This isn't in and of itself inaccurate, but the wrong impression can be created if the political consequences aren't properly understood. Some commentators sum this up as the 'apathetic' generation; no beliefs, no interest in politics, just obsessive texting, Facebook pics and binge drinking. True, apathy towards 'politics' as presented by our political parties and institutions is great, and social alienation is even greater. But the number of people who have participated in a protest of any type is 16 per cent, double the figure of thirty years

ago. Of this, ten per cent have been against the government, five times the equivalent figure twenty years ago. And its overwhelmingly young people on these demonstrations - one-third of the protests were aged between 12 and 25, even though this only accounts for 17 per cent of the population.

Therefore I would prefer to call us the 'Not in our Name' Generation. We have known exactly what we're against. We were the millions who marched against the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, against a Labour government - 'Not in Our Name'. We are the hundreds of thousands who marched in Edinburgh and on Gleneagles against poverty and war against the G8 - 'Not in

our Name'. And, we're the people who charged on Westminster and occupied Tory HQ in our thousands against university tuition fee hikes and the cutting of EMA - 'Not in our name'.

This is because we have had little to believe in. For anyone under the age of 25 we have no memory of the creation of the NHS or council housing. Nor do we have any experience of old Labour, Keynesianism or the Soviet Union and their satellite parties. Rather we grew up under Blair's New Labour who championed the free-market, millionaires and PFI's for our hospitals and schools. To be a young trade unionist today you are consistently reminded of what Labour historically represents. However, the simple truth is that this history has no real relationship to our experience today. When the Conservatives were finally kicked out of office in 1997 people looked to the return of greater democracy and justice for working people but what they got instead was an emerging neoliberalism championed by the very core of New Labour. Young workers who have taken part in industrial action

have experienced the attack on our right to strike from all major political parties. With the privatisation of public services and the commercialisation

of university campuses the domination and pandering to big business is all too familiar.

For those who, like me, have become politically radicalised during this period the British State represents nothing more than an elite club of corporate greed and warmongering. Yes we hate the Tories more than Labour, but to most young people they look like much of a muchness: clichéd, unprincipled, middle to upper class, media whores. *The Thick of It* will be the satire of our generation because it sums up the corruption of neoliberal politics

There's zero confidence in the very institutions that govern our society. A recent poll said that over 95 per cent of young people have no trust in their

politicians. Is that really a surprise when you look to the expenses scandal that rocked the British establishment and saw leading politicians scurrying from Parliament? The warped relationship between government and media corporations like News International? And, most of all, Britain's imperialist aggression abroad which took us into a war in Iraq and Afghanistan based on lies on the coat tails of George Bush? The betrayal of Nick Clegg who spoke out against fees then raised them by £6000? When you add it all up its hardly surprising that there's no trust. 'Not in our name', our generations says loud and clearly.

If Britain is not in our name, how can our generation go further than being against the status quo, and forge something we can believe in?

Independence. This is a cause that can be something we are willing to put our name to. The fight for a new Independent Scotland which puts issues of social justice, equality, real democracy and peace at its core is our greatest task from now until 2014. We've got a chance to create something in our image, and show the world that we are against everything Britain represents. This a cause for our generation. ■

Suki Sangha is a member of the International Socialist Group and actively involved in building the Radical Independence Conference

The Veteran Leftie

I'll be voting for independence when I get the chance in two years' time. That's not a choice I would have made some years ago. So, what's changed?

Probably best to start with what's not changed. I've always believed that the people that live in Scotland should

be able to decide its future. That's not a nationalist sentiment but a democratic one. It underpinned the Claim of Right and the home rule campaign a generation ago and it's precisely why we're having a referendum in 2014. Clearly not everyone agrees and many would dispute that the sovereignty of the people should be exercised within Scotland's borders, but, for now, I'll leave that argument to one side.

So what has changed? Three things. Firstly, the world has changed. The continuing globalisation of capital through the turn of the century has underscored the need for the peoples of various countries to work together if they are to have any chance of tempering its excesses and creating a social infrastructure which can counter its effects. International action between governments is

vital – and the most hopeful and obvious place for the people of Scotland to build those alliances is in the continent of Europe. Scotland needs to work in concert with the other countries of Europe – small and large – to agree policies on social insurance, pensions, welfare and health. Quite simply, the UK is now hindering rather than helping that process, partly because the vestiges

of empire frustrate the ability of that nation state to engage in any meaningful pan-European action. Independence is now a means to a proper interdependence where Scotland can make its own alliances – probably often alongside England – with neighbouring nations who share a common interest.

Secondly, the politics of the UK has changed. Up until the late 1990s I believed that the Labour Party would be able to change the world in the way I wanted. Why else would I have spent so many years within it? I no longer believe that. The bitter experience of the new Labour years both at home and abroad has demonstrated that whilst there are many socialists and social democrats still in the party, as an institution the organisation has no appetite for real change. Even now, two years into

opposition, Labour hardly offers a radical alternative to a government actively engaged in transferring wealth from the poor to the rich.

So, in the second half of my life the question I ask myself is whether I am more likely to see government action to create the type of society I want if that government is anchored in London or in Edinburgh. And that, as they say, is something of a no-brainer. The real politik is quite simply that there is more chance of social democracy happening in an independent Scotland than in the United Kingdom – at least in what's left of my lifetime.

Thirdly, Scotland has changed. I've always believed devolution was a journey not a destination. A decade and a half after the re-establishment of the Scottish

I like the fact that I don't pay for medicine when I'm sick, that my step-daughter will be able to go to university without massive debts, that our health service is not being privatised. I like it so much I'd like some more.

Parliament it's clear that it works. I like the fact that I don't have to pay for medicine when I'm sick, that my step-daughter will be able to go to university without saddling herself with massive debts, that our health service is not being subjected to the privatisation of its English counterpart. I like it so much I'd like some more. And I know also these benefits will be short lived if the Scottish

government does not have the economic competence to underwrite them. Surely the case now needs to be made as to why a power should not be exercised in Scotland rather than why it should? The best way to do that is to vote Yes and give the Scottish government a mandate to negotiate the transfer of most spheres of public policy north of the border whilst agreeing to run things on a British level as and when that makes sense.

The last 20 years has seen the rise of a new contemporary support for independence which has little to do with its nationalist past. Looking forward and outward with a self-confidence and maturity that will see Scotland defined by what it is rather than by what it is against. ■

Tommy Sheppard is a former Deputy General Secretary of the Scottish Labour Party

The Green Activist

The Scottish Green Party is committed to a positive vision of an independent Scotland. We had a thorough discussion of this at our recent party conference, and what is below is drawn from the conclusions of that discussion.

At the heart of the debate about independence should be a discussion of how power can be dispersed. We are in favour of an autonomous and highly decentralised Scotland with a written constitution and Bill of Rights that will be in place before the transfer of powers from Westminster, and we advocate a participative and inclusive process for the development and democratic adoption of a constitution.

The Scottish Green Party believes that economies work best when control is located closest to people. Control over currency is a vital part of controlling the economy. An independent Scotland should seek to have as much control over its economy as possible, and therefore should aim to have its own currency. We recognise however that it is unrealistic that Scotland could move to a new currency immediately. We therefore want a pathway to the development of a Scottish currency, which may involve a period of continued use of Sterling but which should set an indicative timetable for ending this arrangement. We will also seek a supportive policy environment for local currencies, script and other local control over money.

The Scottish Green Party rejects the hereditary principle. We believe that there should be an elected head of state with a role to be defined in a written constitution. We recognise the value of creating this post on a ceremonial basis with ambassadorial functions, and we would welcome a broad public debate regarding any potential executive functions which the head of state might exercise.

One of the key benefits of an independent Scotland would be control of macroeconomic policy. This requires the development of a Scottish industrial strategy. This should focus on renewable

energy, jobs creation, research and development, manufacturing, and import substitution. We must focus on agricultural diversification and agrarian reform, and reform and redistribution of land and asset ownership.

Our economy should be based on social and environmental progress. This will place wellbeing ahead

of conventional GDP growth. The Scottish Green Party supports progressive personal taxation, progressive and targeted corporation tax and land value and resource taxes. We support the Robin Hood Tax. We will support consumption taxes to replace Value Added Tax. We will ensure that banking and financial services serve local economies not the forces of international capital.

We believe that there should be no weapons of mass destruction in Scotland or the world and that an independent Scotland should move immediately to remove all nuclear weapons capability from Scotland and promote a wider process of disarmament. We believe in a constitutional prohibition on the manufacture or possession of any weapon of mass destruction.

We believe in a just transition strategy to replace jobs lost through withdrawal of weapons of mass destruction and to diversify local economies. We believe in the withdrawal from NATO as soon as possible; deploying skills in mediation and reconciliation, non-violent conflict resolution, and civilian resistance. We would aim to repurpose the Scottish Regiments with new skills for new challenges, as standard bearers for Scotland's positive impact on the world.

The Scottish Green Party believes that membership of international bodies strengthens Scotland and strengthens the international community. We believe that an independent Scotland should seek to join the Nordic Union and should retain membership of the Commonwealth as a tool of international solidarity.

The Scottish Green Party is committed to internationalism, international cooperation and diminishing the significance of borders for people. We believe in freedom of

The Green vision for an independent Scotland for a democratic society with a fundamental redistribution and equalisation of power and wealth

movement for all people, and seek international cooperation to make this possible. We believe that citizenship in an independent Scotland should be inclusive and should be open to all those with Scottish birth, parentage or grand-parentage, and those who have lived in Scotland for more than five years, including an amnesty for all existing residents.

Scotland would allow citizens to continue their citizenship of the United Kingdom, or other countries. We support an open border with the United Kingdom for movement of people. There should be firm borders, though, for fiscal interactions. Greens believe there should be a European Passport, but there should be no requirement for these to be biometric or linked to ID Cards.

The Green vision for an independent Scotland is both radical and focused on a positive vision for a democratic society with a fundamental redistribution and equalisation of power and wealth. It could not be further from those visions of independence that emphasise continuity with the existing power structures and distribution of wealth. It is for a better, fairer and more socially just country. ■

Peter McColl is a Member of the Scottish Green Party

The Labour Activist

Scottish independence is the last boat out of the Titanic. Not just for Scotland, but for socialist politics.

I have spent my adult life supporting Labour, but also passionately supporting independence for Scotland. It is because of this duality that I founded the Labour for Independence movement. I truly believe that an independent, free, self-determining Scotland is not only what is best for the people of Scotland,

but also for the party I have supported for most of my life.

My earliest political memory was handing out leaflets at the 1992 General Election, and sharing the disappointment of my family at five more years of the Tories. I watched with hope at the New Labour tidal wave coming into power, only to be left with more disappointment. My convictions of a real Labour philosophy are strong, but so is the passion for what is best for my country. So much so that I have found both ideals entwined.

It's difficult to imagine what an independent Scotland would look like post 2014, but it's perhaps a little harder to envisage a Scottish Labour plan that would resonate with the Scottish people.

It is unfortunate for us Scots that we are such smart voters. In Scotland the SNP holds the majority in part due to public dissatisfaction of Scottish Labour. But in General Elections, Scots will vote for Labour in a straight choice between them and the Conservatives. It is hardly surprising then that the Westminster Labour Party see Scottish votes as safe ones and ultimately introduce policies that appeal to needed voters, mainly Middle England and London.

It therefore stands to reason that in order for the Scottish Labour Party to return to policies which are representative of the Scottish people we must strike away for the shackles of Westminster and get back to our core Labour principles. The permanent solution for this is independence.

The Better Together campaign has yet to launch any substantive reasons why we should remain together. Only that we will be worse apart. Indeed it is difficult for Yes campaigners to offer a vision of an independent Scotland until the 2016 elections. What we can promise is that it will be a Scotland based on fairer ideals of equality and social justice.

The opposition will ask us why we should take a risk, but with the UK economy in pieces, debt rising, employment falling, the cost of living increasing and further austerity measures ahead, our gamble becomes a safer bet. We need to show the people of Scotland that by having the ability to control our own economy and how we choose to spend our finances will be better for all and not the privileged few. This is an argument we can and must win.

I believe this argument alone should win out. But all pro-independence supporting groups and parties must set

out our vision for Scotland post 2014. That is why in the coming months Labour for Independence, working with willing party members and former leading Labour politicians, will set out our vision. An independent Scotland based on real Labour ideals and values. With equality, justice and fairness at the heart of what we do.

The Yes campaign reflects a rainbow of political opinion united in one common goal.

We recognise the interests of the Scottish people come before any political party. We only have an interest in representing what is right for Scotland. This takes precedence over any political institution or group.

The very notion of Scottishness is seen around the world. We are seen internationally as having different ideological values to the rest of the U.K. Speaking as someone who is not a nationalist, but rather an internationalist, the world's view of Scotland would be far greater as an independent nation. We can take a leading role in world institutions, not with guns or missiles but through our ideals, our values and our beliefs.

The referendum in 2014 is an incredible opportunity for Scotland. One in which our forefathers could only dream of. The chance of a Scotland, made by the people represented fully by a Scottish Parliament elected by the people of our nation. The chance to have a strong socialist Scotland, economically vibrant, a shining example of equality and justice on the world stage. This is chance well worth taking. It may be our last. ■

Allan Grogan is a Scottish Labour activist and founder of Labour for Independence

The Feminist

The decision we will all make in 2014 isn't a decision confined to process or procedures. It's about whether or not we believe that creating the kind of

Scotland we want to live in is best served by independence, or by staying as part of the union.

I firmly believe that for women, independence is our best bet. I haven't always believed an independent Scotland was the road we should go down. Economic fairness, equality, believing you could be whatever you wanted to be regardless of your background, your colour or your gender were the

beliefs that I held to and I thought that the only way to get closer to what I wanted was in the UK. In truth, I don't think I ever really questioned that – and maybe I too thought we couldn't do it for ourselves.

But here we are, in a country that the OECD says has the potential to be the sixth wealthiest in the world in terms of GDP but is the fourth most unequal in the western world. That gap between our potential and the reality is not new but it is one that has been growing year on year under successive Westminster governments, Labour as well as Tory.

We are also in a country that for the past 13 years has shown itself more than capable of making decisions that have charted a route profoundly in tune with who we are and what we believe.

Caring better for our older citizens, looking out for those who are more vulnerable – young and old, investing in education on the basis of a belief in its value for everyone. Protecting our health service and investing in our health. Reaching out to the world with trade and education and commerce. None of these were particularly easy decisions but they are good ones.

Our experience of 13 years of devolution shows us that we can make the move to close that gap between Scotland's potential and our current reality. And that matters to women for at

least two reasons.

Earlier this year, we learned that there are now more women in Scotland than men – 158,000 or so in fact. Women work in industry and education, in health and the arts, in the public sector and in the home. The 2010 Scottish Household Survey found that 69 per cent of men and 61 per cent of women are in some form of paid work – although the pay gap remained at 11.9 per cent.

Women are, by and large, the predominant group at the sharp end of that inequality. As carers, single parents, managers of homes and families, working in low paid jobs. Women's experience every day is of a country that is unequal. Unequal between those with power and money and those without. Unequal in health, in life span, in choices, in influence. We care deeply that our children's future lives are better than the ones we live.

But women are also educated, enterprising and entrepreneurial. We run schools and hospitals and offices. We have ideas and want to make them work in our own businesses. We want the opportunity to do that in an economy that fairly recognises our efforts.

The idea of standing on your own two feet, making your own decisions, working out how to manage competing demands, make ends meet and then stretching them a bit further, taking responsibility – all of that is the reality for most women in Scotland today.

That's independence and for women it's

not an alien idea.

We make those decisions, manage those competing demands and we take care – of family, children and neighbours and friends. We care about what happens to others. That's the 'social union' that matters.

Independence offers us a women the chance to act to change those

inequalities. But it's not a magic wand. In 1999 we were so proud of the number of women elected to our Parliament. And they made a difference. But over the years, in each successive four year term the number declined. We can take nothing for granted.

Independence offers women the chance to change the inequalities they face. It's way past time to accept the small moves that have been made and too often taken away again.

After 40 odd years, I've come to the conclusion that it's not enough to argue the rational, logical case. It's not enough to ask, nicely or otherwise. It's way past time to accept the small moves that have been made and too often, taken away again when those with power think it safe to do so. The possibility of independence can also offer us the possibility of a written constitution.

We don't have that, yet. But we could. We could have a constitution that enshrines equality and fairness. A constitution that promotes human rights with women's rights as central and sets out our responsibilities to each other.

So for me, the question now is – why not? We know we can do this. If we can improve the standards of health care, be amongst the top in world rankings for academic research and science, use our public investment wisely to become a leading country in renewable energy – then we can take one more step. Take charge of all the economic and social and fiscal powers and responsibilities of any other nation.

When we make the arguments, when we speak to the everyday experience of women in Scotland then I believe they will agree – it just makes sense. ■

Jean Freeman is a member of Women for Independence and a former Senior Adviser to Jack McConnell

The Trade Unionist

One of the questions asked of people who are supportive of Scottish independence is why? Now of course an obvious retort to that is, why not? But this is a very personal question and perhaps not one that can be easily defined. For many it's not a why, or a because; it just is. However if you take the time to get beyond the personal instinct and look at the question from a third perspective, then the answers move from being emotive, to being very much based in the real world lives of those that will be effected. A key group in the coming debate will be Scottish workers and of those, the ones that are members of trade unions will be an interesting indicator of what topics will

form the real debate.

Much of the last few months has seen a rather turgid, and uninspiring argument over process. The hope now is that perhaps with that out of the way, the real debate can take place. The referendum will clearly ask a question about sovereignty, of constitution and of institutions, but the sub-text is asking what kind of Scotland do we want? Of course on the surface that may be about who make the decisions that effect our lives, and where those decisions are made. What we actually need is to debate what Scotland will or could be like in the future. Having pictured the possibilities, the question then becomes, how best do we deliver that?

As far as the organised workforce is concerned, we have a pretty good idea of what their aspirations are. They tell us on a regular basis, including at their conferences, and in response to policies or proposals. On many topics the trade union movement is agreed. On things like the economy, on creating jobs and opportunities. On the protection of public services, on workers rights and on many international matter. Like the fact that austerity is exactly the wrong way to go about generating the sort of demand that will get the economy growing. The purpose of austerity - even superficially - is to reduce demand. If we want to grow our economy in a way that does not exacerbate the inequality that we already have, then we must create a different approach to economic growth. The construction sector know that they are a barometer for economic stability and even now despite the restrictions of devolution there is a clear difference in the outlook north and south of the border. The question is then, under which system is that different economic approach more likely; the UK or Scotland?

One of the highest profile campaigns over the last couple of years has been from those who collect the taxes that we already have in place. The PCS tell us that if they actually collected them, there would effectively be no debt crises. Most people understand that by making a contribution to a collective

body, be that a club, an association or a nation state, allows for members to be given a benefit in return. One of the problems we have as a UK is that there is a belief that it is right for those who can get away with it to pay more to their accountants than to the country. So if we

want to address the taxation system and to make it collect what is needed in a fair and progressive way, what we need to do is to change the taxation system. Which option will allow us to create a fairer taxation system; a Yes vote, or a No vote?

Trade unions in Scotland could

have a huge influence on the future ideals of the country. As a nation we seem far more comfortable with left-leaning politics. Social values still mean something and must be protected and nurtured. Each union must consider its own agenda and aspirations and then ask how best they can be delivered. For union members it may be as simple as will I have more chance of staying in work, for activist it may be more chance of achieving that change they have always campaigned for. And for union leaders it is the choice between continuing to fail to make any progress in the UK or the chance to have real influence in the future of Scotland.

The No campaign does not need a vision – we are living their future right now, with austerity, benefit cuts, unfair taxes, cuts, pensions under attack and all the rest. The Yes campaign need to emphasise that this is not about the SNP, it is about Scotland choosing Scotland's future and choosing it for the benefit of all of those who live here, not with guns or missiles but through our ideals, our values and our beliefs.

The referendum in 2014 is an incredible opportunity for Scotland. One in which our forefathers could only dream of. The chance of a Scotland, made by the people represented fully by a Scottish Parliament elected by the people of our nation. The chance to have a strong socialist Scotland, economically vibrant, a shining example of equality and justice on the world stage. This is chance well worth taking. It may be our last. ■

John Duffy is a trade union leader writing in a personal capacity

The No campaign does not need a vision – we are living their future right now, with austerity, unfair taxes, pensions under attack and all the rest



People of Scotland, vote with your heart.

Vote with your love for the Queen who nurtured you, cradle to grave,
Who protects you and cares, her most darling subjects, to whom you gave
the glens she adores to roam freely through, the stags her children so dearly enjoy
killing.

First into battle, loyal and true. The enemy's scared of you.

That's why we send you over the top with your och-aye-the-noo Mactivish there's
been a murrdderrr jings! crivvens! Deepfriedfuckinmarsbar wee wee dram of
whisky hoots mon there's a moose loose about this smackaddict

Vote, Jock. Vote, Sweaty Sock. Talk properly.

Vote with those notes we scrutinise in our shops.

(might be legal tender but looks dodgy to me)

Vote for the Highland Clearances. Baaaaaaaaaaa.

Vote for nuclear submarines in your water.

Vote for the Olympic Games you didn't vote for

(but you'll pay for it, you'll pay for it).

Vote Conservative. Vote Lib Dem. Vote Libservative. Vote Condabour.

Vote with the chip on your shoulder.

Vote Labour. New Labour. Old Labour. Scottish Labour.

(Get back in line, Scottish Labour, HQ in Solihull will issue their commands shortly,
Just keep the vote coming in from up there thanks goodbye,
Subsidy junkie).

Vote for any argument you construct in your defence being 'anti-English'.

Vote for Scots who make their career in Scotland being 'unambitious'.

Vote for enjoying your own culture being soooooooo parochial.

Vote God Save the Queen and that bit about us crushing you all.

Hush. There there.

Vote for Scotland being referred to as a 'region', like, say,
Yorkshire? Or East Anglia?

Vote for our voices dominating your media, but in no way telling
you what to think.

Take a drink. Go on, son, take a drink.

Vote for oil revenue, which we ensure flows directly from us
into you.

Vote for being told you're the only country in the world that
could not possibly survive and that without us you'd fall to
pieces like children abandoned in the wild, caked in faeces.

Vote Daily Mail and Rupert Murdoch and
illegalimmigrantskilledPrincessDiana and

London London London most exciting city in the world darling
(Glasgow **is** a very violent place, is it not. Do you have art?)

Vote with your heart. Vote Empire. Vote tradition.

Vote for our proud shared history of

enslaving other nations and stealing their natural resources

Bringing Wealth and Prosperity to the World!

being on the right side just **once** and that's only because it was against yer actual fucking Hitler

Vote for the #ScottishConspiracy at Westminster

(who really runs the show here eh – Blair, Brown – got your own in that time, we aren't allowed to vote in Holyrood but there's Archie McPhee pulling wee strings in our parliament when we wouldn't even **think** about interfering in how you run your own affairs but while we're at it, this referendum eh? A so-called referendum, is it Have it **now**, make sure it looks like **this**)

Vote for very, very, very rich people patronising you.

Vote for Glasgow having the highest knife-crime rate and lowest life expectancy in Europe

due to our generosity. You may thank us at your leisure.

Vote for the absence of your history in our schools.

All Brits together.

Vote for our shock at your ingratitude!

Vote for us saying 'Eh? Eh?' when you open up your porridge mooth.

Vote for bafflement about why you want the England football team to lose.

We always want the Scots to win (except in referenda).

Vote for psychopathic villains with your accent in a soap opera.

Vote for tuition fees and student loans, ensuring that the brightest of your working-class

(since you still insist upon the term, although Our Leaders had it banned)

will one day rise and take their place in this great land.

Vote for us deploying strategic references to Braveheart to dismiss you all.

Vote for Robert Burns being called by Paxman 'sentimental doggerel'.

Vote for The Iron Lady. Such a **strong** leader, gave this country **backbone**

(you didn't really want the unions, industries or council homes, just made the place look tatty)

Vote for a deregulated banking class, lionising of the hardworkingwealthgeneratingjobcreatingentrepreneurs

who you will in no way refer to as 'greedy, selfish bastards'. Give them your taxes.

Vote for foreign wars.

Yes, sadly, some of you will die. But you will return to a hero's welcome

Jock

the Union Jack, proud symbol of integrity and honour, draped across your coffin

while your mother, dabbing at her eyes, recalls the words she learned in school

in Kircudbright

'There is some corner of a foreign field that is forever England.'

Vote with your heart.

Alan Bissett

