

# Scottish **Left** Review

Issue 75 March/April 2013 £2.00



WHERE NOW  
FOR THE  
SCOTTISH  
TRADE UNION  
MOVEMENT?

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Issue 75 March/April 2013

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## Comment

Every year, to coincide with the STUC Congress, the **SLR** picks a theme of particular interest to trade unionists and also carries at least one article looking at the state of the trade unions and considering the challenges ahead.

This time the role of the trade unions in Scotland is perhaps under the spotlight even more than usual. In a landscape dominated by London austerity on one side and Scottish independence on the other, the path for the trade unions is going to be a hard one to find.

How we envisaged this issue was that we'd get a perspective from the UK, one from an independence-supporting trade unionist and one from the new generation of activists. To this we would add an 'open letter' from the **SLR** with some thoughts on what might be the contribution of the trade unions in the years ahead.

What we received was not quite what we expected. At the UK level, John McDonnell sees a failure in the role of the big trade unions to really tackle the Tory-led government and to put the Labour Party under enough pressure to move to the left.

At the Scotland level, Bill Ramsay speculates on whether trade unions will be able or willing to follow the views of their members in the constitutional debate, and suggests worry about what will happen if they play a major part in delivering a No vote. Sarah Collins then argues that the trade unions have to stop being scared of the young generation and to stop being so suspicious of the left.

All our writers stress the importance of the trade union movement. Indeed, they all identify the unions as being the most important force in the UK today able to oppose a right wing government. And they all want the unions to take a national lead in reshaping society. We also see evidence of important steps being taken, for example Unite's attempts to take trade union membership out of the workplace and into deprived communities.

What all these contributions ask, however, is whether unions are doing enough. Does the sum total of everything the unions are doing amount to a serious strategic attempt to get a grip on the politics of the nation? Scepticism is raised.

Given the content of the issue

This STUC Congress special edition of the SLR may have come out more critical of the trade union movement than we expected, but that is a message of hope

we will stop short of weighing in with our own thoughts on the way forward. However, the points raised in the articles do pick up two of the themes we would have liked to raise.

The first is where trade unions should fall in the tension between 'member

representative organisations' and 'big national political influencers'. Lately there have been lazy comments from some on the question 'what are the unions doing?'. Looking

after their members in one of the most hostile period to be an employee should be the obvious answer, one that a lot of commentators seem to miss. They assume that unions strike or lobby with little in between. That is of course silly.

But trade unions have always been more than representative organisations

and have always had a mission to change the nature of society. Since devolution in Scotland, it can be argued that trade unions influence over Scottish politics did not grow. That would have surprised many in the 1980s and 1990s. How and with what aim they do this is question

with many answer. If it was a slight nagging doubt for a while it has become a more central concern for many.

The second issue relates to this. If the trade unions in Scotland are to

seek a greater level of influence over the national debate, do they have the infrastructure and capacity to do it? Many of the unions, even the big ones, have only a limited research capacity in Scotland with much of it retained in London. No-one would now argue that London is capable of producing

the research needed for the Scottish political scene. And while the STUC itself has done some very high quality work indeed, it produces it without the kind of capacity dedicated to influencing the political agenda from the neoliberal commercial side. And few unions in Scotland would claim to have a strong influence on the media agenda.

None of this is written with any aim other than to strengthen and encourage the trade union sector in Scotland. A big section of the population is looking to them to really change the way politics is being done in Scotland. This is the case many times over at the UK level.

There are no simple prescriptions for this. On the one hand, those who believe that Britain is one general strike away from a 'people's revolution' are far too optimistic while those who think 'just a bit more of the same' will lead to major change are no less so.

It may seem unfair that so many have vested possibly unrealistic hopes in the trade unions. It probably is. But it is also a message of hope. ■

**All our writers stress the importance of the trade union movement. But what they all ask is whether unions are doing enough.**

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# Hard truths and hope

Labour MP John McDonnell looks at the momentum for radical transformation in Britain and finds it only among the smaller and more radical trade unions. It is time for the others to up their game, he argues.

Trade union members and their families are trying to survive in a blizzard of austerity. The constant fear of unemployment, cuts in wages and the withdrawal of the social security safety net, all combine to create a climate of insecurity in the present and an ever present fear for the future for the vast majority of working class people. Nobody, except the super rich, is safe from this recession which has entered its fifth year and looks set to match the decade long depression of the 1930s.

Where do people look to for protection against the cuts in their living standards and for some hope for the future? Naturally, for many, the first place to look is to the institutions that their parents and grandparents created out of their experience of previous economic crises. For day to day protection at work, the trade unions. For hope for the future, the Labour Party.

The hard truth that we need to face up to is that when people have looked to both of these sections of the working class movement they have largely found

them severely wanting. A group of Left unions are organising, mobilising and fighting a daily, almost hand to hand, pitched battle against this Government and against ruthless employers for every job and against every cut in wages and working conditions. Wherever they can they are co-ordinating their campaigns and taking action together in displays of solidarity that are in the finest traditions of our movement.

But where are the TUC and some of the larger unions in this struggle? We have to wake up to some harsh realities about the state our movement is in.

The TUC appears totally cut off from the reality of the threats and hardships that working people are facing in their daily lives. Almost frightened of its own shadow, the TUC bureaucracy has just wanted to keep its head down, longing for a return of the quiet life of producing reams of reports and comfy chats with Ministers. As a concession to demands for action from campaigning trade unions and rank and file trade unionists, the TUC will fretfully organise

a demonstration now and then but will make sure that the Government is reassured that this is as far as any opposition will go and that everything is under control.

It avoids and eventually kills off all attempts to get it to play its proper role in co-ordinating the action of its affiliated unions. Any talk of a general strike is derided and there is a defeatist acquiescence to this Government's cuts, privatisations and undermining of employment rights because the TUC was so heavily implicated in the acceptance of these measures under the last government.

Some of the larger trade unions have also become virtually completely bureaucratised. Led by trade union bureaucrats whose lifestyles reflect more the lifestyles of the employers than the life styles of the members they are supposed to represent, many are more interested in closing down demands for active campaigning and dissent within their unions than mobilising their members to protect their jobs and wages.





Internal democracy within some of these larger bureaucracies has been effectively closed down. Structures may exist, ballots may take place and conferences may be convened but they are so tightly controlled by the suits that they are looked upon as tokenistic, anachronisms from a long gone once democratic past.

The irony is that by failing to serve their members and respond to their pleas for support, these bureaucrats are destroying the very organisations that gives them their living. People see no point in being a member of a union that does nothing for them. Membership of these bureaucratised unions is therefore either stagnating or falling. Near panic is beginning to set in within the higher echelons of some of these bureaucracies as they wake up to the fact that less members means declining income from contributions and less money to pay their wages. For some of these unions the decline in membership density, organisation on the ground and the loss of experienced activists means that even if they want to mobilise their members, they have lost a great deal of the union's capacity to do so effectively.

The TUC and some of the large bureaucratised unions are leading the trade union movement in Britain into near extinction, reflecting the decline of the trade union movement in places like the United States where the movement became largely incorporated into the system.

The hope for the future of the trade union movement in this country lies with those unions that have recognised that they can't stand by and let this Government destroy the jobs, incomes and pensions of their members without a fight. It lies with those unions that have confidence in their members. Time and time again the members of these fighting unions have demonstrated their willingness and determination to fight back.

This doesn't mean that union leaderships blindly throw their members into unwinnable confrontations. Intelligent planning and strategic decision-making are always key elements in waging any effective campaign. The fighting unions are truly democratic and recognise that mobilising their members for a fight back involves the intensive engagement of members in discussion and persuasion followed by fully democratic decision making to determine the nature of the action to be taken.

Even though the TUC refuses to play its role in co-ordinating action, the fighting unions have come together within the Trade Union Co-ordinating Group specifically for the purpose of co-ordinating their campaigning activities and linking up with other unions and campaigning organisations that share a willingness to act.

Nobody within these unions thinks that mobilising for this fightback is easy. Nobody can be sure of the outcome of any of the campaigns being waged. But one thing that they can be certain of is that by doing nothing and simply rolling over in the face of this Government's austerity programme leads

to certain defeat and simply encourages the Government to come back for more.

The other lesson that is being learnt is that in the absence of anyone else with the resources or organisational experience, it is the trade union movement that now has to step up to the plate to mobilise and support a wider community campaign of resistance to austerity.

The time has now come for this mobilisation. Increasingly people are up for a fight. In the 1930s economic crisis there was an inevitable time delay between the initial shock of the crisis, the attempts by the existing institutions to tackle it, their failure, and the opportunity for alternatives to be mobilised and take serious hold in the

popular consciousness.

I believe that we are now reaching the same timing in this cycle of resistance that was reached in the mid- to late-1930s. The austerity measures are beginning to hurt more people within our society harder and more extensively. Austerity as a policy is being questioned across society and the credibility of austerity politicians is being shredded as their policies fail and the real world encroaches. The fear is that the right are waiting in the wings to capitalise on the crisis with a racist anti immigrant campaign.

Now is the time and now is the opportunity for a mass mobilisation against austerity from the Left. The problem is one of agency. The various resistance groups that have been formed lack the authority, the organisational ability and resources to mobilise a mass movement. Whereas in places like Greece political parties like Syriza have emerged connected to popular resistance movements, in Britain the Labour Party no longer sees itself as a mass mobiliser of protest. Although in opposition the Labour Party has moved to distance itself from some of the policy nightmares associated with New Labour, its credibility in mobilising resistance to austerity is hampered by its continuing advocacy of a self defeating austerity-lite programme itself.

The only feasible way in which an effective anti austerity movement can be got off the ground in this country is if the fighting unions come together to launch this campaign. Marx described trade unions as "organising centres for the working class". That is what they have to become again. There is nobody else available to play this role effectively.

Some of this work has already begun as local trade unions have come together to organise local campaigns and link up with local community groups campaigning on their particular issue. Now is the time for an initiative like this to be undertaken at the national level.

The prospect of the national co-ordination of trade union campaigns, industrial action and direct action would give people the hope that they need that we can resist and we can defeat austerity together. We have an overriding responsibility in the trade union movement to seize this opportunity now. ■

**John McDonnell is Labour MP for Hayes and Harlington and is Chair of the Labour Representation Committee**

Construction employers blacklisted 582 workers in Scotland.

Fewer than 10% of the total of the 3,213 in the UK on the blacklist, used by 40 companies and uncovered in 2009, know they are on it. This leaves nearly 3,000 not aware that they are on the list. GMB is seeking to identify these workers so that legal action can be taken for them to be compensated for the damage they suffered. *See the contact details below if you can help.*



GMB has instructed Leigh Day to seek compensation in the courts for the nearly 100 GMB members we know are on the blacklist.

**Please demand that Carillion and other construction employers apologise and compensate the workers they blacklisted.**

**See the GMB report  
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**If you can help us identify more names on the blacklist, please call Phil Read at GMB on 01603 742 877 or 07840 897 997, or email [p.read20@ntlworld.com](mailto:p.read20@ntlworld.com)**

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# Between Union and union

Any review of the Scottish trade union movement in the run up to the 2013 Congress must surely address two key issues, the implications of the 2014 referendum campaign.

There are other issues, such as the trade union movement's relationship with the Scottish Government that are of course important. However what I intend to do in this article is to focus upon how the Scottish trade unionists might choose to intervene, institutionally and individually, in the referendum campaign.

We live in a UK where there is no appetite within it's mainstream political community to fight the necessary battles, far less win the battles, to make the UK a fairer place to live and work. Every year UK political culture drifts further and further from the European "norm", taking on more and more US characteristics. The neoliberal agenda is of course everywhere, even in Scotland, but in the Northern hemisphere it dominates the United States and grows from strength to strength in the UK and almost all who describe themselves as Scottish progressives have had enough of it.

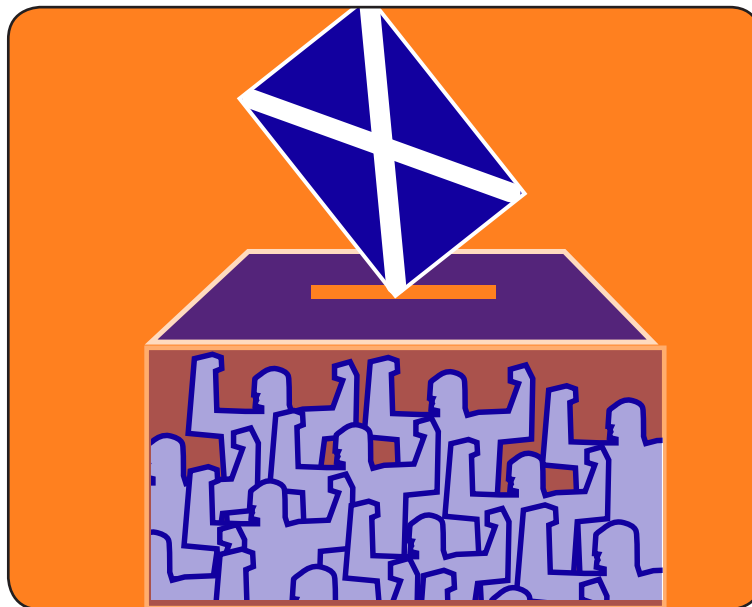
Despite institutional relationships with progressive British political centres, the British trade union movement has no effective allies amongst the British political class. What allies they have are on the fringes of influence and power even within these progressive institutions. In other words, the British trade union movement is politically isolated.

This is not the case in Scotland. Here the Scottish trade union movement is at the heart of Scottish civic life rather than on its fringes. It is treated with a degree of respect by Scottish Government both at national and local level.

So the basic question that the Scottish trade union movement is being asked from a Yes Scotland perspective is this; does the Scottish trade union movement join the Stalag UK escape

committee? Put another way, is it an interested bystander or does it even actively collaborate with the prison guards?

The answer of course is all of the above, depending on the union, sometimes even depending on the union branch. Where Scottish trade union's stand on the referendum is significantly, though not wholly, influenced by their relationship with the Labour Party. Clearly some unions have never had a formal link with Labour though in many cases most of their full time officials have been or are members of the Labour Party.



It is true that some unions have seen their link with Labour erode and even break, but more of this later.

However the union links to the Labour Party and the Labour Party link to Better Together, or as a Labour trade union activist put it to me recently, 'Better Together With The Tories', means that union funding may play a significant part in the financing of the No campaign. However this will itself be further complicated by the inconvenient truth of the recent voting behaviour of ordinary Scottish trade union members.

Of course the actual people who make up union memberships in Scotland already have a political view, they have a vote and they often use that vote. Gone are the days when the default position of Scottish trade unionists was to vote Labour. There is some evidence to suggest that in recent elections Scottish

trade unionists have voted for the SNP in very large numbers, moreover amongst this group of voters, although they have still to make up their minds on the referendum, the prospect of Independence does not fill them with horror. Some union leaderships are very well aware of this and seem to be factoring this into their thinking about the politics around the referendum campaign. Indeed, although Devo Max is no longer on the table, some union leadership are pretending it is.

In some instances scoping where unions stand is quite straightforward.

USDAW for instance, the Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers, because of the industry it operates in, has a large membership with a huge turnover in members. For USDAW's overall membership figures to stand still, its recruitment levels, compared to other unions is, in a relative sense, have to be huge. Inevitably, with such a churn in membership it will have a relatively low activist base. Inevitably therefore it is run politically as well as industrially by its full time officials. As it is affiliated to the Labour

Party its links, in terms of its political decision making processes with Labour, can be described as intimate.

Other, politically more high profile unions have a similar relationship with Labour. This is more likely to be the case where they organise out with the public sector. The classic example of this is in the engineering sections of Unite, particularly in former AMICUS branches, particularly branches in the arms industry. However because significant sections of Unite organise in the public sector the picture there is more complicated. In some sections of Unite, on the ground at least, loyalty to Labour and the UK cannot be taken for granted. Indeed in a poll of its own members Unite discovered more of its members voted for the SNP in the last Scottish Parliamentary elections than for Labour. However as is the case in many unions, formal political decisions



## Bill Ramsay explores the relationships between the trade unions and the constitutional debate. He suggests a leadership that may be growing apart from its own membership.

are made at a fairly high level where the influence of the union bureaucracies are strongest. A recent visitor to a UNITE office told me that No materials, everything from leaflets to tabards, was much in evidence. However whether or not UNITE can mobilise the members to distribute the leaflets and to wear the tabards is another matter.

As I suggest amongst unions that organise in the public sector the situation is quite different. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the members of these public sector unions have experience of the cuts, not only in relation to their own terms and conditions but also on the level of the services that they deliver to the public. Secondly many of these unions have a significant activist base who in recent years have developed a much more sophisticated relationship with political parties.

The PCS, the Public and Commercial Services Union is easily the Civil Service union with the highest political profile. It is a union that is squarely on the left and quite prepared to stand up to Government attacks whether they be Labour or the current Coalition Government attacks. As the Scottish Government has not sought to pick a fight with its civil servants, the way previous Labour and current Coalition Governments have and are doing, PCS has had, in a relative sense, a fairly positive relationship with the Scottish Government. Indeed in a Question Time event the PCS General Secretary made it crystal clear that the creation of a Scottish state would not be the end of the world. Culturally therefore PCS's activists and branches seem free to pursue positions as they see fit, as evinced by the presence of some prominent PCS activists on some Yes platforms.

Unison is in a very interesting position. It well understand's that its members get a much better deal from the Scottish Government than from Westminster Governments of whatever hue. Indeed a prominent Unison activist recently explained to me that sending Unison Health Sector Activists to UK wide Unison Health events was a very effective recruiter for the Yes campaign.

However it has its political funds, one non-party and the other linked to

Labour. Unison Labour Link people play an influential role within the Scottish Labour Party, both at national level and in many constituencies. The strains and tensions between the experiences and political views of Unison's rank and file will be, to say the least, interesting to watch. Given that some of its branches are large and influential with a degree of political autonomy it will be interesting to see how the politics of the referendum campaign play out in Unison.

As I have already stated, each union has its own distinctive culture and heritage and it would be a mistake to see the Scottish trade Union Movement as a monolithic pro-Labour, pro-No bloc. My own union, the EIS, is a good example of this. Although it is the oldest teachers trade union in the world, it only affiliated to the STUC in the nineteen seventies. It has political fund but has never affiliated to Labour; apparently an attempt to do this in the nineteen seventies was seen off, with many Labour members engaged in the seeing-off process. Needless to say however membership of the Labour Party was, and to some extent remains, common amongst full time officials though there are some very significant exceptions.

Amongst the laity of the Institute however, party affiliation of various types exist. However this does not feed through in any overt way in the Institute's deliberations. Although happy to be associated in STUC campaigns the Institute has not sought a high profile in a more general political sense outwith the area of Scottish education. Not surprisingly then it is only now that the Institute is starting to consider its role in any debates around the 2014 referendum.

As far as I am aware the only union with demonstrably overt positive links, though informal, with the SNP is the Fire Brigades Union in Scotland. In a sense its leadership in Scotland has been free to pursue political relationships that reflect the views of its members, unlike say Unite. Indeed the structures of the FBU allow a significant degree of political autonomy. What position the FBU will take in 2014, as with other STUC affiliates, remains to be seen. However unless there is some sort of political revolution within its Scottish

leadership I cannot imagine it developing a positive relationship with Better Together, or whatever union-friendly front Anas Sarwar, Johann Lamont's Deputy, eventually cobbles together.

Which brings me on to the role of the STUC in all of this. Since the advent of the Scottish Parliament the STUC has to some extent been cursed by its own success. It played a key role in the Scottish devolutionary movement in the eighties and nineties. It's pre-devolutionary General Secretaries were key spokespersons for progressive Scotland. But with the advent of the parliament this function is much diluted. However the STUC still plays an important facilitating role in important campaigns. Indeed at the time of writing it is hosting a meeting to try and coordinate the campaigning response to the Bedroom Tax which may, or may not, turn out to be as significant as the anti-poll tax campaigns of the eighties.

In relation to 2014 the STUC is in a very interesting position. Ideologically elements within the STUC are close to the CPGB (probably the only overtly pro-unionist institution on the Scottish left) and what I often describe as the CPGB wing within the Labour Party. The removal of a third question from the ballot paper is a real blow, not only to the STUC but many within the Scottish trade union movement. I remind you, it was not me who came up with the sobriquet "Better Together With The Tories" but a Labour trade union activist.

At the time of writing many within the trade union movement are still acting as if there is a Devo Max option on the ballot paper. I believe some STUC affiliates are even organising meetings inviting three speakers - I assume in the hope that the Better Together representative get held up in the traffic. This raises some interesting questions for Yes trade unionists. For how long will they be prepared to share platforms which will be in effect, whether by design or accident, two Better Together speakers. ■

*Bill Ramsay is Equality Convener of the Educational Institute of Scotland, a member of its National Executive and Secretary of the South Lanarkshire Local Association of the EIS. He writes in a personal capacity.*

# Our generation is your friend

Just over 25 per cent of the British workforce is in a trade union in the UK today. Proportionately, that's 20 per cent less than 30 years ago. At the last count, only five per cent of workers aged 16 to 20 were members of a trade union in Scotland, growing to just 11 per cent for 16-24 years olds. When asked how much they know about trade unions, 42 per cent of the young people responded that they knew nothing at all whilst a further 44 per cent said that they didn't know very much. Despite this, research demonstrates that 63 per cent of employees under 30 believe strong trade unions are needed to protect the working conditions and wages of employees and only nine per cent of young people have unfavourable attitudes towards trade unions.

Let's be honest about the unions. They are vitally important. If it weren't for trade unions we wouldn't have capped working hours, health and safety, pensions, pay increases, holidays, flexi-time, support through any disciplinary or grievance procedure... the list is almost endless. Furthermore, if trade unions disappeared tomorrow, the Government and employers would find it much easier to repeal these hard fought for and won 'benefits.' The Government's recent proposals on pensions, pay, and employment tribunals would be pushed through entirely on the Government's terms. That is why people should continue to join, and be active in, a trade union. More people are members of a trade union in the UK than all the political parties combined and they are still the biggest, and most democratic, vehicle for working class people to hold the Government to account – that's why the Government relishes in focusing on declining membership without analysing why. This is a simple argument which must be re-won.

However, although trade union officials are more trusted than business leaders, journalists, or politicians, the unions are facing a crisis of membership and confidence.

Since 1979, anti-trade union laws have become progressively harsher, regardless of which government is in Westminster. This indicates a negative trajectory for trade unions, which could prove fatal. Furthermore, the collective

bargaining power of unions that allowed the increase of wages across sectors was also crushed by Thatcher. But people tend to forget the economics at play here. The continual fall of the value in real wages in the 2008 economic crisis shows that without a decent wage, demand in the economy must be 'topped up' by credit. And we all know where that road leads - triple dip recession, growing inequality and a narrative of austerity.

Perhaps because of this anti-union legislation (amongst other things), inertia and 'pale, stale, male' bureaucracy has continued in the trade union movement. This, combined with a lack of efficacy in collective bargaining, can make the unions seem mouldy. Yes, there is the first female TUC Leader, and yes, most members of the public sector trade unions are women. But look at everything else in between. From young people who have been politicised through the Iraq invasion, tuition fees and cuts to further and higher education; to young people who don't know much about politics, how are the unions relating to them today?

I asked some young people I know who work in both unionised and non-unionised workplaces what their views on trade unions were. These quotes probably show the two opposite sides of the spectrum on the trade unions (if we ignore, for now, those who don't even know what a trade union is).

- Person works in un-unionised restaurant and is not a member of a union: "What difference would it make? If I start trying to unionise, they'll cut my hours. Even if we do become part of the union, we are so isolated in this one restaurant that I'm not sure what support we could get."
- Member of a union in public sector and active: "I joined the union as soon as I got a job with the Council. I've been brought up that you should always be a member of a trade union. As soon as I joined, the branch asked if I wanted to be youth officer. I am also a trained steward. I find it difficult to balance at times, because being a steward is a lot of work and there aren't enough active members to share out the workload. Some people

at work laugh at me for being so involved in the union, others say it's a thankless task. But most people don't talk about it at all. I hardly get any response to the members' newsletters I send out each month. It's a bit disheartening, but I know it would be worse if people weren't active in the union. And I like to think that because I am young, I can inspire other people to become more involved."

Most young people I know who are in a trade union work in the public sector. Indeed, 77 per cent of private sector workplaces have no union members at all. But, the changing nature of work, the employer/employee relationship and the decrease in union muscle over the past 25 years has particularly affected union membership in precarious workplaces. Problems in these workplaces include timing of toilet breaks, temporary, fixed term, and, increasingly, zero hour contracts, and little knowledge of employment rights or equality legislation.

The unions are floundering in these areas and the biggest challenge for a trade unionist is facility time. Many employers use ad-hoc excuses, and threats (clear or underlying) of unemployment, to stop young people getting their full facility time entitlement and young people feel intimidated to even ask in the first place. Without this facility time, they cannot begin to address the issues in these workplaces.

Most young people I know who are active in a trade union are active because they are politicised in some way. Political protest movements such as peace, women's liberation, ecology and human rights are a growing feature of life in the UK and can have a radicalising effect on participants. Evidence confirms that increasing numbers of people are taking part in 'unconventional' forms of political action, and that contrary to notions of 'youth apathy', young people are increasingly involved in protest. These people are more likely to be activists in protest movements than in trade unions and political parties (More than seven per cent of people say that they are active in some sort of politicised movement, compared to just over two per cent in the unions).

Between 2000 and 2005 over three

## The trade unions are in decline in terms of membership, days of action and political power. What does this mean for the next generation of trade unionists asks Sarah Collins?

million people took part in protests against the government. Over a third of these protestors were between 12 and 25, yet this group formed only 17 per cent of the UK population in 2005. This is far higher in terms of figures and percentages than the late 1960s and early 1970s.

However, over the same period there has been a sustained decline in trade union density, disputes and strike action, with the year to March 2011 registering the joint lowest number of strike days since the Office for National Statistics' records began in 1931.

Trade unions need to learn the importance of these statistics and be less sectarian towards other organisations fighting alongside them. For example, Coalition of Resistance comes under attack from some trade unions for trying to 'sabotage' union demonstrations. This is misplaced anger. Groups like Coalition of Resistance are full of young, politicised people who are also in trade unions, or one day will be. But these young people are demanding more than just a quiet march around the police-lined streets; and the trade unions are failing to provide this. They want a bit of direct action - the feeling that they can change something, even if only for a day.

Let's remember, it was not just the trade unions which fought and won in years gone by. Many things were also fought and won by direct action and illegal activity; trade unions must realise that they do not, and never have, had the monopoly on protests or on bettering the lives of the working class.

The active members at the base, who are passionate, dedicated and extremely generous with their time, are the ones who are demanding action and calling for the unions to move against austerity. And the trade union movement has demonstrated that it *is* able to mobilise its members in combination with other groups affected by the cuts.

Interestingly, the proportion of people who say that 'organising a nationwide strike of all workers against the government' should definitely or

probably be allowed has grown since the mid-1980s. Unison and other unions have recently passed a motion on co-ordinated industrial action. The TUC has been looking into the legality of a general strike in terms of the Human Rights Act and European case law. There is scope for this, but on the state's terms. Without revitalising the membership and giving the working class as a whole something

to fight for, the turn-out will be low, the mood will dissipate and we will be worse off than before.

As such, political protest is, and will continue to be, central to the movement against austerity. It can unite those that

depend on public services with those who work to provide them. But the unions need to start making these arguments. They need to become more coherent in opposing redundancies (all redundancies – even voluntary ones mean no job, or a job with worse terms and conditions, for young people); in pushing the government by not just taking industrial action against trade disputes but against austerity; in destroying the bedroom tax and the Tory's welfare reform agenda; and they need to know their real allies and their real enemies in order to do all of these things.

I think the priorities for the STUC over the coming years are four-fold:-

- 1) 1) Targeted, politicised recruitment of young people, including ones who know nothing about trade unions but may be involved in for example local community groups. This is getting a little better with the unions into schools initiative, trade union stalls in student unions etc, but they need to learn lessons from political protests and from the 'Facebook generation'. With the average age of a union activist being 47, if they don't start engaging with young people on young people's terms, they will be dead in ten years.
- 2) 2) Break with the Labour party. The unions in the public sector have huge *potential* political muscle. But, because of the relationship with Labour, they are hindered

– particularly when it comes to engaging with protest movements. The unions have gained very little from their support of the Labour Party. Tony Blair did nothing to relax the anti-union legislation. And Ed Miliband told the public sector workers that they were selfish for going on strike on 30 November. Where is the line which the Labour Party has apparently not yet crossed? I would estimate that only a small minority of young trade unionists (active and passive) are in the Labour Party. Certainly in the Unison youth committee nobody is a member of the Labour Party. The unions' relationship with Labour cannot continue.

- 3) 'Dance with the people that brung you.' Those on the Left are not the enemy of the trade unions. Statistics show that people, particularly young people, are increasingly identifying as on the Left and even the far Left. The unions simply must tap into this.
- 4) 4) Hold the Scottish Government to account in seeking assurances it is in full support of facility time - including for those on fixed term contracts etc - and send guidance out to all employers which young workers are made aware of. The independence referendum can provide the space for this debate. The rights of workers to organise freely must be at the core of progressive demands for independence.

Without the ability to relate to mass movements, be they in Greece, Egypt, Wall Street or Millbank, the trade unions will continue to suffer from their defeats. Without a 'win' they will suffer further inertia. Yes, the anti-union laws have meant that the trade unions have had to tread a thin line. But it's time to stop dancing to the tune of the government and start dancing to the tune of the next, politicised, generation. ■

*Sarah Collins is UNISON's representative on the STUC Youth Committee and is a member of the International Socialist Group. She is writing in a personal capacity.*



# Yes isn't good enough

Reading through the Yes Scotland response to the STUC's A Just Scotland report published in February, one might be mistaken for thinking that this group of keen positivists believe the STUC to have endless resources and that our movement should be charged to scribe the welfare, defence and taxation blueprints for a possible future independent government that our members, and the Scottish people at large, as of yet appear indifferent towards.

But, I do not wish to make a narrow partisan point, because at least the Yes campaign is engaging in A Just Scotland, unlike the other side. Better Together are once again silent and absent on anything that could be called debate. This dreary lack of engagement makes for a lacklustre political climate in Scotland, reflecting badly on us all.

A Just Scotland correctly identifies that the real debate on Scotland's future is not polarised by the Yes or No camps.

Personally, I remain sceptical about the value of the formal campaigns. Some notable exceptions aside, both are populated with hacks, harbingers and has-beens of the Scottish political establishment. The reality for the Left and progressive forces is that however Scotland votes, our future is tied in to monetary, fiscal, policy, services and structural transfers with the rest of the UK. Capital is concentrated in the City of London, the European super market and the international global forces of capitalism, militarism and repression remain intact. Therefore, the real debate for the labour and trade union movement is not *if* or *how* we may achieve a separate Scottish socialist nirvana or

rally to the defence of British collective social solidarity, but how we tackle class inequalities, poverty and exclusion *within* Scotland and how we deliver our society and services to a more socialistic model and in doing so, protect public services from the dominance of the market.

25 September 2012 will be remembered as a mile stone in Scottish politics. It was the day that Johann Lamont, Scottish Labour leader, abandoned support for universal provision and instead pinned her mast to means testing. Ironically, Labour's withdrawal from a fundamental principle of universalism drew light away from the fundamental issue of the low tax agenda of the SNP. Both parties have it wrong!

The day of dialectical debate being led by Scottish political parties, however has long since gone, if it were ever there. In Scotland today, there is no left-right division between Scottish Labour and the SNP at a leadership level. Both are firmly

embedded in the centrist social democrat politic. The emphasis may vary from time to time, but both would hold true that advanced market capitalist economics can co-exist with socially just objectives. As the STUC puts in A Just Scotland – Scandinavian style social justice with US style low taxation? It just doesn't add up.

The real debate, if it is to take off, must come from inside the workplaces and gathering places of Scotland, organised amongst those who are already organised and trusted - our own representative structures. The real debate must be open, inclusive and engaging to seek the genuine participation and contribution from members of our movement and community organisations. It must be educational and firmly challenging of the austerity defeatists, the narrow "something for nothing" welfare apologists and the flawed Left analysis that calls on the class to wait until after Independence Day before

any improvements to our conditions can be possible. The real alternative must be routed in a strong belief that Scotland can become a better collective, socialised society regardless of the constitution and that must be presented through a clear class analysis and a popular economic alternative.

The Scottish trade union movement is once again charged to take up its historic lead to make the demands for Home Rule in the interest of the workers, their communities, in support of those in need and in solidarity with those in struggle here and globally. For the Public and Commercial Services Union, engagement and education on the future of Scotland is part of our ongoing messages themed under

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

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



Mick Whelan  
General Secretary

Alan Donnelly  
President

Kevin Lindsay  
Scottish Officer

**ASLEF the train drivers union - [www.aslef.org.uk](http://www.aslef.org.uk)**

## Yes Scotland's response to the STUC's A Just Scotland report has not convinced the trade union movement but still manages to be better than Better Together's disinterest. Lynn Henderson asks when will the debate get real?

"Austerity Isn't Working: Tax Justice, the Economic Alternative, and the Welfare Alternative".

PCS is engaging members on what kind of Scotland we wish to live in; powers over how and where we live; how as civil and public servants our work contributes to that society and how it is valued and how we can receive a living wage and fair pay, terms and conditions in exchange for our labour; whether the services we deliver can be more publicly accountable, less market-driven and that internal industrial democracy can be developed in the workplace and throughout the structures of our employment; trade union freedoms, employment rights, health and safety regulation and equalities and human rights regulation with real protection and enforcement; how we seek to participate economically, as citizens and in our communities; how our children are educated as future citizens and how our dependents are cared for by society; what kind of social security and assistance we should expect in return for our national insurance contributions when we are ill, out of work, vulnerable or elderly; how justice can be accessible, fair and restorative; how our natural and carbon environment can be protected and secured for future generations; how our transport and technology can be improved; how we rid these waters of nuclear weapons; and on retirement from work; what sort of pensions and dignity we require to sustain us into old age.

And here is the beef that neither Yes Scotland, advocates for independence including late-comer to the debate, Steven Purcell (Sunday Herald 24.2.13) seem to get. An independent Scotland would require to transfer, retain or find new jobs for tens of thousands of *existing UK civil servants already working in Scotland* – before any new jobs can be created. The majority of civil servants in Scotland (and almost two thirds of PCS members) work for UK departments, delivering services from within Scotland to the public throughout the UK on welfare, taxation, defence, borders, immigration, passports, transport, tribunals, equalities, health and safety regulation, food standards and other public services. Competent, skilled, motivated and loyal public sector workers.

What are we to do with this cadre of civil servants at the heart of central government services in Scotland? How should they be incorporated into a more socialistic, egalitarian Scottish public service, along with their colleagues in local government, health and the emergency services?

Four sentences in Yes Scotland's response don't even consider that it is time to challenge the antiquated and outdated notion of these workers as "servants" to the Crown. Currently, Her Majesty's Home Civil Servants as employees of the Crown, are not accountable to the UK or Scottish Parliaments, but retain statutory responsibilities and protections to ensure their political neutrality. Their job is to implement the executive decisions of Ministers and elected administrations.

At the bottom of page 13 in the Yes Scotland response the few sentences on the civil service sweep across huge questions and assumptions of continuing need for services, political accountability and "shared services" between UK and Scottish Governments. This is concerning – our experience of shared services within the civil service is code for cuts; our experience of "political accountability" in the civil service is code for bringing in private sector managers to carry out the will of parties and Ministers.

Since Chancellor Gordon Brown's 2005 announcement that 100,000 civil service posts would be slashed, we have seen the haemorrhaging of hundreds of thousands of jobs, taxes going uncollected, benefits delays, IT failures and long queues at airports and ports. Devolved areas are not immune – although PCS campaigned for, negotiated and won a no compulsory redundancy guarantee with the SNP administration in 2008 – over a quarter

of jobs have been lost to the sector over that period, with many more to go this side of the 2016 Scottish Parliament election.

Yes Scotland could do well by dropping the shared service and accountability rhetoric and examine more

closely the PCS alternative vision of the civil service as an essential part of democratic society, not the economic orthodoxy of privatisation and marketisation and cost cutting equating to greater efficiency. Further devolved, delegated or post-independence transitional powers to Scotland will be subject to scrutiny, negotiation and may take years, if not decades in some cases to transfer.

What is clear though is that in the event of a Yes vote, the post-referendum period between 2014 and the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections, it would be the current SNP administration not the radical indy Left that would be laying down the terms of that engagement.

Post election 2016, SNP or Labour are likeliest to be running Scotland. Concerns over Labour's withdrawal from the principal of universal provision, and the SNP's obsession with low taxation, reducing corporation tax etc remain a central concern, and one which the Yes Scotland response to A Just Scotland doesn't begin to tackle.

Anyone interested in changing the constitutional make up of a country should pay more attention to the role of its civil service. Civil and public services must be placed in a more socialised democratic context – one which I would hope advocates of a future Indy Scotland will share. ■

**Lynn Henderson is Scottish Secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union**

**The Scottish trade union movement is once again charged to take up its historic lead to make the demands for Home Rule in the interest of the workers and their communities and solidarity with those in struggle here and globally.**



# The case for encouragement

Anas Sarwar MP, the Deputy Leader of the Scottish Labour Party, made a set piece speech in February setting out his pitch for the principles that should guide Scottish Labour's policy.

It's a speech that has been attacked from the left and the right. It has also been misquoted and misrepresented. So it's worth reading in full, on the Scottish Labour website, rather than relying on the commentary. I am reviewing the speech here because I blogged a reasonably supportive view. It was probably more generous after I read our comrade Editor's blog on the subject. It's not the first time one of Robin's somewhat excitable rants against Scottish Labour has inspired me to provide some balancing comment! Although in fairness he has also been critical of SNP economics.

The irony of course is that I am an unlikely candidate for a supportive review of anything Anas Sarwar might have to say. I didn't support Anas as Deputy Leader largely because he was

a Vice-Chair of Progress, although he has subsequently resigned that post. I am also not a great fan of professional politicians, although in fairness he did at least do a real world job. His strengths are presentational rather than ideological, so a policy speech on political values isn't his normal territory.

So what did he say? The introduction covered some common Miliband themes of social justice and inequality, broken politics, attacking the banks, energy companies and tax dodging. While not new, these are themes even the right recognises are dangerous for them. Even Cameron is at least talking tough on tax dodging and energy prices.

His pitch for Scottish Labour's principles of Community, Solidarity, Fairness, Equality and Social Justice won't find many opponents within the Scottish Labour Party. I would add a few more, but one step at a time, common ownership of the means of production is probably still a bit outside his radar!

Within these principles he included a number of lines that you would not have expected from what many on the left regard as a New Labour clone, including:

- "Our economy must be driven not by the value of our currency, but the values of social justice. So that it acts yes to create growth and wealth, but crucially uses that wealth to create a more equal and fairer society."
- "And when companies like Amazon avoid paying their share, how is that company rewarded. Not with scorn and public condemnation but with millions of pounds in Government grants. And not so much as would you please pay your workers the living wage or please pay your taxes?"
- "We must now promote the Living Wage throughout the public sector and into the private sector through both Local Authority and Government procurement."
- "We live in a country where today the only growth industry is inequality."

And there is more but you get the gist.

Now, I and many others on left have bitterly complained that Labour politicians don't use this sort of language enough. Peter Mandelson being, "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich" typifies the line. Politicians with Anas Sarwar's political background certainly don't normally use this language. So when they listen, and Anas to his credit has done a lot of that recently, and then articulate the language of social justice – it's not helpful to call him a liar. In fact it is not just unhelpful; it's the worst sort of politics.

Even if you think he is strong on rhetoric and light on action, so are those who attack him, as exemplified in the timid Yes Scotland response to the STUC's A Just Scotland initiative. As Professor John Kay, a former SNP advisor put it, pro-independence campaigners; need to "get beyond vague aspirational statements of a rather ludicrous kind". Talking of the need for powers to tackle poverty was not the same as identifying specific policies that could tackle poverty, he warned. Issuing wish-lists and making



**In seeking to restate Scottish Labour principles, Deputy Leader Anas Sarwar made a speech pitching the Party further to the left. Dave Watson argues that the left must give him some credit.**

promises while avoiding tough choices on tax, spending and debt placed people in “cloud cuckoo land”.

And on the subject of action.

While of course Labour in power could have done more in tackling poverty and certainly inequality, it is simply not true that they did ‘little’. Most policy analysts agree with the Joseph Rowntree Trust’s recent report on poverty in Scotland that concludes that the “Labour Government has taken poverty and social exclusion very seriously, marking a clear distinction from recent previous administrations”.

Gordon Brown’s budgets, 2001 in particular, invested heavily in children and poorer families. This is supported by Professor Jonathon Bradshaw who says that progress was due to cash transfers from rich to poor. As a result, 1.2 million children were lifted from poverty with about one million prevented from falling into poverty. I could go on, but my real concern over the ‘Labour did nothing’ line is that it plays into the Tory argument that money spent on anti-poverty work is wasted.

I would also give credit to Ed Miliband for not taking the advice from Progress on welfare cuts. They argued that public opinion supported cuts and that is where Labour should be. But Miliband rejected that cop out and decided to stand up for the millions, mostly in work, who will suffer. He picked our side of the argument and we should support, not condemn him, just because he doesn’t follow someone’s prescription down to the last letter.

Anas Sarwar’s speech wisely targeted the references to universal provision, learning lessons from the less well crafted Johann Lamont speech on the subject. However, this is an area that attracts much criticism and his speech does use the language of political priorities that can be portrayed as attacking universalism as a principle.

Now I believe very firmly in universal services funded through progressive taxation. The main advantage of universal services is that they can reach everyone on the same terms. The main objection to universal services is their cost. Targeting is often presented as being more efficient, less money is spent to better effect, or as Johann Lamont argued, the poor pay for the rich. However, there are problems with targeting because recipients have to be identified; administration is complex and expensive to run. There are often boundary problems caused by trying to include some people while excluding others. Targeting and means testing sometimes fail to reach people in need.

**When politicians like Anas Sarwar make the case for tackling poverty and inequality, try some modest encouragement, rather than simply dismissing them as liars**

I would also argue that there is a political trap in simply targeting public services on the poor and disadvantaged. The risk is that you lose middle class support for public services if they view the welfare state as irrelevant to them. This means Scottish Labour’s policy review needs to think through these issues and

leaders should be very careful about the language they use.

Having made the case for universalism we should also remember that we don’t have universal services at present. We have a mixed economy and political judgements are made about universal and targeted on a case by case basis. This means that political parties do have to make decisions on their priorities, even outwith the current spending cuts.

In this context, the suggestion that the Scottish Government is the champion of universalism is absurd. There is no universalism in slashing college budgets. The regressive Council Tax freeze that disproportionately rewards wealthy households, is not universalism. Particularly when councils are forced to increase charges for other aspects of what is claimed to be ‘free’ care

for the elderly. And Kenny MacAskill clearly wasn’t much bothered about universalism when he introduced plans to make workers contribute to criminal legal aid, when they are prosecuted by the fully funded state.

You simply can’t have Scandinavian levels of public service on US levels of taxation. John Swinney has clearly said that a post-independence Scottish Government would not increase personal taxation and would actually cut Corporation Tax. If you really believe in universalism then you have to make the tough political case for funding it.

For all the talk of priorities the most interesting part of the speech for me was when he, at least partially, tackled the issue Johann Lamont ignored – taxation. While his focus was on geographical redistribution he also pointed to a gap in Nicola Sturgeon’s speech, which he argued had, “No progressive argument in favour of those with the broadest shoulders sharing the biggest burden. How can you talk about social justice without talking about wealth redistribution?”

So overall it wasn’t the speech that I would have written and of course it doesn’t go far enough. But it was none the less a significant move in the right, or left, direction. For a former Vice-Chair of Progress to even talk about wealth redistribution is real progress with a small ‘p’. It is a recognition that faced with the most reactionary government for a generation; this is the territory Scottish Labour needs to occupy. Anas Sarwar may not be a conviction politician, but he appears to at least recognise that Scottish Labour needs more than managerialism to motivate members and capture the support of Scottish voters.

So finally, I have a radical suggestion to those on the left who share the aim of creating a fairer Scotland. When politicians like Anas Sarwar make the case for tackling poverty and inequality, try some modest encouragement, rather than simply dismissing them as liars. Achieving a fairer Scotland requires a broad based coalition that includes electable politicians to turn the ideals into action. ■

**Dave Watson is UNISON Scotland’s Head of Bargaining and Campaigns**

# The missing voices

Inequality is nothing new in Scottish life. Generations have suffered throughout our history because of deep rooted and structural poverty and even now in this second decade of our new millennia, austerity cleaves an ever deepening chasm in our social fabric. But even as we acknowledge the longevity of this issue, we should recognise that some progress in some areas has been made and, further, we can reaffirm that the need to continually challenge the manifestations of inequality remains paramount.

The Commission on Fair Access to Political Influence, which the Jimmy Reid Foundation, Scotland's left of centre think tank, has asked me to chair, is an attempt to drive at one of the sources on inequality in our society – the imbalance in political power which undoubtedly exists. Many people have become disillusioned in politics, viewing the whole arena as an unsavoury brew of self-interest, murky dealings and dishonourable activity. Cynicism about civic life is an easy retreat, however, and there is a need to consider how greater trust can be built in our institutions.

The simple premise of the

Commission is that one way of achieving this is through participation. If people are provided with the pathways towards being able to influence decision makers, being part of the decision making process, having a voice that is listened to – then perhaps a greater trust might emerge.

Scope for improving on our current arrangements is vast!

For example, we launched the Commission with a report, *Not By The People* (supported by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust), which showed that the people who are invited to influence government policy in Scotland are drawn from a very narrow section of the population, almost all in the top 10 per cent by income. Meanwhile, the 70 per cent of the population which earns average wage or below makes up only about three per cent of these 'influencers'. (Full data is available at

<http://reidfoundation.org/portfolio/not-by-the-people/>)

I can recall from back in the 70s the formation of the radical theatre group '7:84' so called to reflect the fact that seven per cent of the population of Scotland owned 84 per cent of the wealth – things haven't improved.

Even if we were to ascribe the best

of intentions to those who are successful players in the lobbying game, it surely cannot be right or acceptable that the overwhelming majority of our society stand outside the debate. Who is more likely to be able to express the impact of benefit cuts – a director of social work or a claimant losing that vital income?

Some might argue that the issue of social background is irrelevant and that when it comes to advising on policy decisions the key is to have the 'best minds and best experts to provide the best remedies for the issues that beset us'. In an analytical commentary on the Commission's launch report, Professor Steve Reicher develops a strong riposte to this position, writing; "There are many problematic assumptions in such an argument. But perhaps the most misguided are, firstly, that elites will provide better solutions and secondly that, even if they come up with good ideas, elites will be able to implement them."

He continues, "Leadership effectiveness does not derive from certain fixed qualities ('the right stuff') which a few possess but most people do not. Rather, the key to effectiveness is to be seen as 'one of us'. That is, the effective leader must be seen to share the perspective, the values and the priorities of his or her constituency. If that is not the case, then all the qualities in the world will not compensate."

Professor Reicher concludes his piece by stating, "The skewed composition of quangos and those giving evidence to committees is wrong in practice as well as principle. It is unfair, it diminishes the quality of proposals. It makes good ideas less likely to succeed. It has no defence."

**It surely cannot be right or acceptable that the overwhelming majority of our society stand outside the debate. Who is more likely to be able to express the impact of benefit cuts – a director of social work or a claimant losing that vital income?**





## Larry Flanagan was invited by the Jimmy Reid Foundation to Chair its Commission on Fair Access to Political Influence. Here he explains why this issue is one he feels so strongly about.

But what is the alternative? In a sense that is what the Commission is seeking to establish. Are there alternative mechanisms to ensure that more voices are heard and listened to? This is the key issue.

I have recently become a trade union official and as such, a large part of my job is advocating on behalf of our members, including at the type of Parliamentary Committee hearings referred to above. Prior to my election I spent 33 years as a lay activist attempting to do the same. Without being disrespectful to anyone, a course of constant amazement has been to witness how little the practitioner's voice, the teachers' voice, is heard at the top tables of policy decision making. And even when it is present, often in the welcome form of trade union representation, it is too often in the minority. What this leads to is a divergence between the theory of a proposal and its practical realisation – Curriculum for Excellence being a singular case in point where the somewhat rosy view from the top is often radically divergent from the more frazzled experience of the teachers, and pupils, in our classrooms.

'Acknowledging' problems and pressures such as workload and burn-out is infinitely easier than 'experiencing' them. Similar 'silent' or 'silenced' scenarios could be drawn across all our communities: tenants, young people, claimants, disability groups. Even some of the minor gains are being rolled back – the need for equality impact assessments, for example, is under attack from the UK Government as is the basic right to the provision of trade union facility time, particularly in the civil service, which allows the workforce to have a voice. People count, however.

My father was a shipwright in Govan and took part in the UCS work-in. As a teenager I followed with interest the whole campaign and I have an abiding memory of seeing a clip on television of a rally where Jimmy Reid made a comment along the lines of: "Some people see us as statistics. Numbers on a balance sheet. But we are not statistics, we are human beings, we are individuals, with families..." I've been unable to find the footage in any of the archive material and so I'm trusting

to memory with regard to the detail but as to the sentiment expressed I have a vivid recollection of the impact it had on my own political development as it seemed to express such a simple truth: people count!

If we start from that premise we should recognise the deficiencies in our current democratic models and seek solutions.

As we progress the work of the commission I hope that you might be able to make a contribution to our thinking on how we might help to take this issue forward.

We want to produce a set of proposals for how a much more diverse set of people can gain access to decision-making processes. We're calling for people to tell us about their experience of trying to influence politics without large PR budgets and to propose concrete solutions. The sorts of things we think might start to address the problem are:

- Alternative forms of decision-making which include more diverse groups of people making decision – for example Citizens' Juries
- Initiatives that bring decision-makers closer to those affected by their decisions – for example secondments to community groups
- Actions which can make existing decision-making processes more representative – for example an expectation that evidence will be taken in proportion to those affected by a decision
- Means of drawing people into debate about public policy – for example web-based participative democracy initiatives
- Ways to get a better picture of how decisions will affect different groups – for example by producing more detailed social impact studies
- Opportunities for ordinary people to

influence political agendas – for example, through additional powers for the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee

We'd very much like to hear your thoughts. We are particularly interested in suggestions of concrete actions which could be taken to tackle this problem. We will produce a final report which will collect the best proposals together and will present these to the Scottish Government and all the political parties in Scotland. The aim is not to produce a 'discussion document' but a call for action; we will follow up its publication with a coordinated push to get its recommendations implemented.

You can find out more about the Commission by going to the Foundation website. You can send your thoughts from there or by email to [influence@reidfoundation.org](mailto:influence@reidfoundation.org). The deadline for submissions is Friday 19 April 2013. ■

*Larry Flanagan is General Secretary of the Educational Institute of Scotland and Chair of the Jimmy Reid Foundation's Commission on Fair Access to Political Influence*

## Whatever Scotland's future



# NO CUTS

## PCS sends greetings to all delegates attending the 116th Annual Congress of the STUC

**Janice Godrich** National President  
**Mark Serwotka** General Secretary  
**Lynn Henderson** Scottish Secretary



# How to kick out the bomb

In 1984, New Zealand shocked its Western allies when its incoming Labour Government rejected nuclear deterrence and prohibited nuclear weapons from its territories and waters – effectively barring the visit of any more nuclear-armed and powered ships into its harbours. The new policy – enshrined in legislation in 1987 – was vehemently opposed by the US, Australia and the UK, leading to a break-down in ANZUS - a military alliance of Australia, New Zealand and the US - and intense political pressure on New Zealand to reverse its policy.

The Australian Labour Party, elected into office a few months prior to the New Zealand Labour government, had also campaigned on a nuclear-free policy. However, once in power, the Australian Labour Government, possibly persuaded by political pressure from the US, dropped its policy and reaffirmed its acceptance of US extended nuclear deterrence – a policy which continues to today.

With a referendum on Scottish independence on the horizon in 2014, and a strong policy against nuclear weapons already reflected in the Scottish Government and Parliament, a key question must be whether an independent Scotland would be able to emulate the New Zealand experience and kick out the nuclear UK weapons based in Faslane, or whether like Australia, the government would succumb to political ‘realism’ and pressure from the United Kingdom to allow the nuclear weapons to stay.

The Scottish role in the UK nuclear weapons infrastructure is, of course, not the same as that of New Zealand – which was not a home-port for US or UK nuclear-armed ships. However, the political significance – and thus the degree of political pressure that would likely be employed to prevent a nuclear-weapons ban in Scotland – is comparable. The New Zealand stand was a direct challenge to the legitimacy of

nuclear deterrence in the Western alliance during the last years of the Cold War in the 1980s and in the New World Order of the 1990s. A Scottish ban would be a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the UK nuclear deterrent – and to nuclear deterrence itself in the new 21st Century security environment.

New Zealand was not historically an anti-nuclear nation. At the birth of the nuclear age the New Zealand government and public were enthusiastic supporters of the bomb – even proud of the part they had played in its development. New Zealander Ernest Rutherford, the first person to split the atom, still features on the New Zealand \$100 bill. When the United States dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, New Zealanders celebrated in the streets. Japan’s war machine had moved down through Southeast Asia and was close to invading Australia and New Zealand. From New Zealand’s perspective, the nuclear bombs brought an end to

# Greetings to delegates and visitors to Annual Congress of STUC



COMMUNICATION  
WORKERS UNION

Beryl Shepherd  
President

Billy Hayes  
General Secretary



## If Scotland becomes independent it could follow New Zealand's example and get rid of nukes or follow Australia's and cave in. Alyn Ware explains how New Zealand did it, and how it benefited the country.

the horrific war and saved them from Japanese invasion.

With the emerging military power of the Soviet Union posing a similar expansionist threat following the Second World War, New Zealand readily supported the build-up of the Western nuclear deterrent — and sought protection from it. New Zealand sought and gained a security treaty with the United States and Australia (the ANZUS Treaty), signed in 1951. New Zealand also entered into a range of cooperative security and intelligence arrangements, primarily with Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, but also with some of the Southeast Asian countries under the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). As part of these security relationships, the New Zealand government and most New Zealanders welcomed the nuclear tests conducted during the 1950s and early 1960s by the United States in the Marshall Islands and by the United Kingdom in Australia and the Christmas Islands.

However, by the mid 1960s increasing evidence was emerging of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear testing on Pacific Peoples. The United States and UK discontinued nuclear testing in the Pacific following the adoption of the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963. However, the commencement by France, who had not signed the treaty, of nuclear testing in the Pacific in 1966 shifting its nuclear testing program from Algeria to the Pacific — generating considerable protest.

On 9 May 1973, Australia, New Zealand, and some other Pacific Island states instituted legal action in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the grounds that the radioactive fallout from the tests violated their territorial integrity. They achieved an interim injunction against the French tests while the case was being considered. In 1974, France announced an end to atmospheric testing, and that they instead would test underground.

The success of the 1974 case against nuclear testing was one of the factors that gave New Zealand confidence to challenge nuclear deterrence itself a decade later. But it was not the only factor that ensured success of the policy.

Civil society and parliamentary action were also crucial. Despite the mounting concern over nuclear tests, there remained strong political support for nuclear deterrence from the conservative party which was in government during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The Rt Hon Robert Muldoon (Prime Minister from 1975 – 1984) was unrepentantly pro-nuclear. He welcomed visits of nuclear-armed warships, and even argued that the United States was not bold enough in its nuclear doctrine, telling the United States that its defeat in Vietnam was the result of its unwillingness to use nuclear weapons. The public remained split between the right, which mostly supported the nuclear warship visits, and the left, which mostly opposed them.

In 1981, a new tactic of establishing cities as nuclear weapon-free zones (NWFZs) began to cut across the right-left divide, forcing mayors and councilors to consider the effects of nuclear-weapons-use on their cities, and their responsibility to protect their cities from such a crime. This built a legal and political norm against nuclear weapons, city by city. By the 1984 general election, over 66 percent of New Zealanders lived in NWFZs — providing strong constituent support for the Labour Party policy — a factor that was useful to the anti-nuclear Labour Government in deflecting some of the pressure to drop its anti-nuclear policy.

The pressure was indeed intense, including demotion from US ally to 'friend', curtailment of military cooperation, threats to trade from the US and UK (including a short-lived trade boycott from the US), attempts to destabilise the Labour government and diplomatic ostracism from the Western group.

However such pressure was countered by strong support from peace movements in the UK and the US (including a girl-cott campaign in the US to counter the trade boycott) and an endless stream of supportive letters from US and UK citizens in NZ papers — a number of which Prime Minister Lange tabled in parliament.

New Zealand's stand became one of national pride and international benefit. The publicity helped overseas

trade — especially following the Chernobyl disaster as New Zealand was known to be clean, green and nuclear-free. Trade with the United States doubled in the five years following the adoption of the anti-nuclear legislation in 1987. International admiration for the principled stand helped New Zealand in the United Nations, including in achieving a non-permanent seat on the Security Council in 1992.

And in walking away from the nuclear umbrella, New Zealand had to rethink its defence and security framework — thus reducing the emphasis on military security and coalition action, and increasing its reliance on cooperative security and international law through the United Nations. As such, New Zealand's military forces were restructured to phase out offensive capabilities such as strike aircraft and frigates, in favour of forces more suited to territorial defence, fisheries protection and UN peacekeeping roles.

Probably the most significant shift was in New Zealand public opinion and political support for the nuclear ban. When Labour entered government in 1984 public support for a nuclear ban was a slim majority. The conservative National Party (the former governing party and the main opposition) was adamantly opposed to the nuclear ban.

By 1990, the benefits of being nuclear-weapons-free had swung public opinion solidly in favour of the ban — and all political parties including National were supportive, despite the continued opposition to the ban by the United States.

It was not until Barack Obama became president that the US administration finally accepted New Zealand's nuclear ban. The fact that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made a specific point of this during her New Zealand visit in 2010 gave credence to the hope that President Obama's vision for a nuclear-weapons-free world will manifest in a collaborative multi-national effort to achieve a nuclear-weapons-free world. A nuclear-weapons-free Scotland could give further inspiration and support for such an endeavour. ■

**Alyn Ware is Global Coordinator  
Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-  
proliferation and Disarmament**

# Lessons from Latin America

"In Latin America we used to be considered naïve dreamers by the elites in power: We were told over and over that our ideals were not possible, because the problem was very simple: "if you want such policies in place, you need to win the elections, that is how democracy works". Today, those elites in LA face a significant more complex problem: We, the naïve dreamers, keep winning every election, over and over." – Fidel Narvaez

What can Scotland learn from Latin America? As the debate about the constitution picks up, that's probably not a question which many are asking. However those who attended the conference at the STUC on 2 December found that the answer is 'quite a lot' which is relevant to that debate and to discussions about social justice and inequality. Especially for those who believe a fundamental shift in the balance of power is more important than the formal question of independence.

The conference heard from top notch speakers from Ecuador and Venezuela as well as from Scottish politicians and academics. They ranged across many topics, with a particular attention to education. At the most general level, however, the key messages I took from the conference are: it's possible to take on neo-liberalism and austerity – and to win! and that the key to success is political determination to pursue popular objectives with all means available

Jacobo Torres from Venezuela was clear how important these lessons are. Reflecting on the meaning of Chavez's recent re-election as President he said that, having recovered rights lost under neo-liberalism, they were now in a position to contribute the great debate about how to save humanity, not just Venezuela. While in Europe the achievements of the welfare state are under attack, the opposite is the case there.

Jacobo was adamant that they are making a revolution in their own way and that each nation has to find its own way and shouldn't be wedded to one particular form of struggle. He said "in 1988 with the first election of Chavez we started a peaceful and democratic revolution". Yet the so-called democrats,

the old elite, launched their coup in 2002 and the media continue their hostility. "We should be in the Guinness Book of Records as the only terrorist country with an average of 1.4 elections a year!"

Sandra White MSP, who had been an observer of the recent elections, confirmed that they had been free and fair – in fact the Venezuelan system is much better than ours, with systems in place to identify voters and to prevent any possible fraud. Even though these may slow the process down, turn-out was a massive 85 per cent. She remarked also that this was a country with a different mindset – one of care for people who don't have as much.

She had found out that the majority of the media are hostile to Chavez, although reports in the British press have suggested that Chavez success is due to control of the media. Far from it. "They are terrified of the people" said Jacobo "so they make up lies - every Sunday we go out and eat children!". Guillame Long from Ecuador confirmed that their press is also "Fox-style racist and sexist" – of five TV channels, four are owned by banks.

First Cuba and then Venezuela inspired people and parties across the continent and the last decade has seen countries across Latin America elect socialist governments and adopt radical policies in the face of hostility and interference from the USA. One such is Ecuador and we heard from the consul Fidel Narvaez and Guillame Long about the policies of the government of Rafael Correa, who also experienced attempted coup and assassination. He is particularly unpopular with the US government for having expelled the its military bases, saying that of course they could stay if the USA would agree to having an Ecuadoran military base in Florida!

Fidel spoke of Ecuador experiencing real sovereignty for the first time. "The other element" he said "is social justice, achievable only by redistributing wealth, in favour of the most vulnerable. ....By changing economic policies and social policies, Ecuador has increased its social investment by four times compared with just six years ago".

President Correa often says that the best indicator of "who has the power" is perhaps how a country manages the social investment: how this expenditure

is allocated in the budget. If your priority is rescuing the banks, you have financial capital in power and running your economy. If you prioritise the needs of the majority over of the richest and more powerful in the society, as the progressive governments in LA are doing, then you have popular states and people in power.

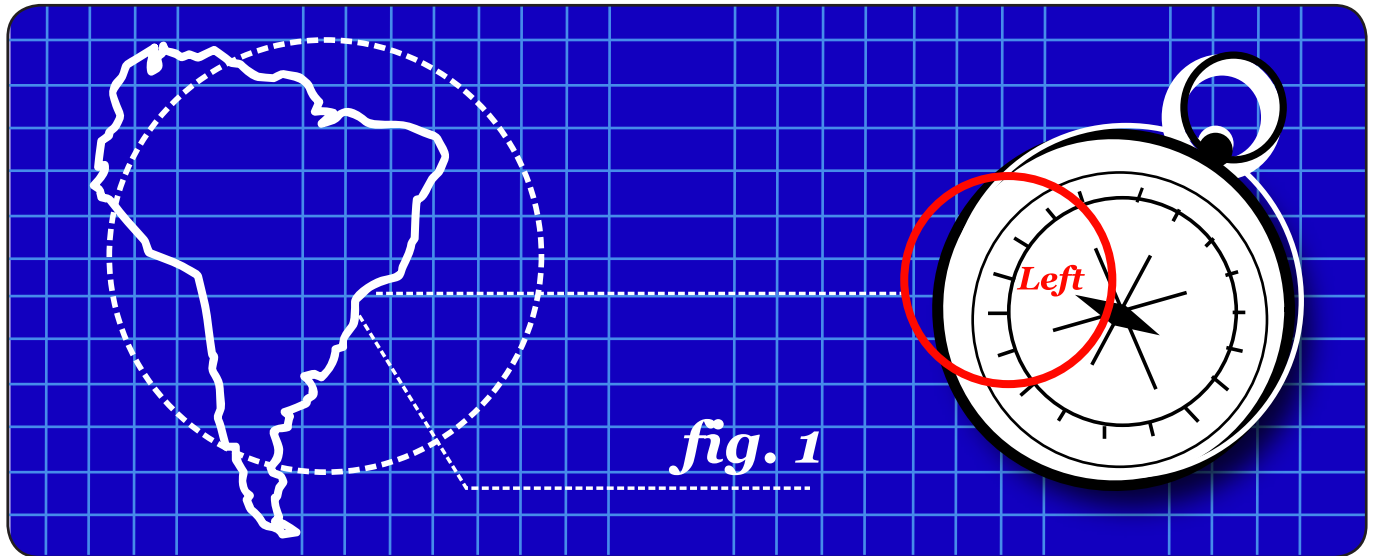
For all the Latin American speakers the 'long neo-liberal night' was a key reference point. Francisco Dominguez told us how 10,000 people were murdered by the regime in his country, Chile, in 17 years. Those who thought that Chile represented the worst learnt that it was just the first, as we listened to a catalogue of horror – 30,000 in Argentina, 60,000 in Peru, 80,000 in El Salvador and 120,000 in Guatemala. "Think also of those imprisoned and tortured; and of the impoverishment which left 50 per cent in poverty" he said, before listing some of the outstanding achievements which governments have achieved by turning their back on the USA's way, the Washington Consensus. 100 million have been taken out of poverty in a decade, taking the poverty rate down from 48 per cent to 30 per cent.

The creation of the Bank of the South aims to make the IMF and the World Bank redundant in the region. Bolivia has, for example, increased the taxation of multinationals in the extractive sector from one per cent to 85 per cent. Cuba's Operation Miracle has given sight back to two million people, for free. If a poor country under a US blockade can do that, what could a rich country like the UK or Scotland do?

Cuba's achievements were the topic chosen by Elaine Smith MSP. She compared life expectancy there, at 78, with 64 in parts of Glasgow. She praised the Cuban government response to Hurricane Sandy, the worst for 50 years, providing cheap materials and loans to those who had lost their homes. "No-one is starving or homeless in Cuba" she said. "compare that to Scotland where homelessness, begging and food parcels are prevalent".

Fidel Narvaez added "The revolutionary path taken by several Latin-American countries indeed follows the worst long term economic failure in the region over a century.

In December a conference at the STUC heard a wide range of speakers from both Latin America and Scotland discuss what we can learn from the other continent. Matthew Crighton summarises the discussion.



Most of those neo-liberal policies are familiar for you Europeans today: tough and pro-cyclical fiscal and monetary policies, the abandonment of a proper state-led development policies, massive privatizations, indiscriminate opening up to international trade and financial flows. This 'long neo-liberal night' also increased levels of poverty, social inequality, political instability, deterioration of the state institutions and provoked social unrest in the region".

Expanding on the experience in Ecuador, Guillelmo Long explained that the country had been in a crisis, with nine banks collapsing. Two million left the country out of a population of 14 million. There had been six presidents in 10 years. Rafael Correa's intent was to recuperate the state and the nation. As in Venezuela, a new constitution created by a Constituent Assembly with 70 per cent approval in a referendum had created a new social pact. The rights of the indigenous population had been recognised and protection of the environment is a high priority in the management of natural resources. Since then there has been a sixfold increase in health and education spending. Tax income rose from \$2.7 to \$9.5 billion through enforcing tax laws. "As well as minimum wage we have a 'dignity wage'. Employers don't have to pay this – but they are not allowed to pay dividends to their shareholder until they do."

The intention is to change Ecuador's role in the international division of labour through investment in science and education. There has been a 23 per

cent growth in university education for the poorest quintile of the population. Neo-liberalism had created 'garage universities' in which the standards were so poor that the government had to close 14; but it had reallocated the students (10 per cent of the student population) to public universities. And four new public universities are being created, one dedicated to training teachers, another to researching the bio-genetic resources of the Amazon, an necessary step to stopping bio-piracy by multinationals.

Education in Latin America was also the topic of Liam Kane of Glasgow University, in his case Popular Education, a continent-wide movement which has a political commitment in favour of the oppressed and the poor. "If you are not working to change things you are working to keep things as the are". The aim is to enable people to become agents of change, not having change done to them. The extent to which this movement had contributed to the success of the 'pink tide' of revolutionary governments in Latin America is one of the many topics which the conference did not have enough time to explore.

One of the benefits of this type of conference is that it helps see your own country in a wider perspective. From Latin America, Scotland can't look very much different from England and the rest of the UK. The differences which we value, though important, don't alter an overall assessment in which we share the same large and rising levels of inequality unemployment, mental illness and poor health for the worst off. The question

here is whether there is the political will to fix these problems, whether in the UK or in a devolved or independent Scotland. As Fidel Narvaez said of the actions of the government of Ecuador "How strange that in times of a world recession you can do exactly the opposite to the cuts!"

Actually it's not strange. Many of us knew that, but fewer believed it was happening now. Learning from Latin America, we can say with confidence:

- we can challenge neo-liberalism and win
- austerity doesn't work – and there is an alternative
- socialist policies do work and they can revitalise democracy
- the right-wing media can be taken on successfully
- even when threatened with violence from the right, tolerance is better than repression
- a better relation with our natural world can be built
- the amount of national income is irrelevant to our aspirations – it's a matter of political will

These are lessons worth treasuring. ■

**At the time of printing, it has just been announced that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has died. The tribute from SVSC can be read at [www.scottishvenezuelasolidarity.org.uk](http://www.scottishvenezuelasolidarity.org.uk)**

**Matthew Crighton is Secretary of Scottish Venezuela Solidarity Campaign and International Officer of City of Edinburgh UNISON**



# Another Road

Seven years ago, the Scottish Left Review Press (SLRP) published the original *Is There a Scottish Road to Socialism?* Its purpose was to examine how a road – maybe *the* road - forward to socialism in Scotland might be mapped out. Would it be a Scottish, British, European or global road? Or, a mixture of some or all four? The feeling at the time on the pro-independence left was that while the issue was still of importance, it was no nearer in reach given the implosion of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and a minority SNP government. But by 2011, the tectonic plates of Scottish politics had moved considerably. An unexpected SNP landslide in the May Scottish elections of that year began a process which we now know will lead to a referendum in late 2014 on ‘should we stay or should we go?’.

The tectonic plates of Scottish politics were also moved by developments elsewhere - most obviously, the return of the Tories to government in Westminster, the economic depression in the global north and the age of austerity. Such momentous events cannot but help shape how any road or roads to socialism come about even if the desired end point remains unchanged whatever one’s perspective. So in late 2012, the SLRP decided that it was more than high time to return to the question of ‘Is there a Scottish road to socialism?’ Again, we wanted to look at how a road can be mapped out and what obstacles are faced to doing so.

So when the contributors were approach in the summer of 2012, the main question posed to them was: ‘how do we move forward to a socialist Scotland?’ Those made contributions to address this question were John Aberdein, Cat Boyd and James Foley, Pauline Bryan, Maggie Chetty, Jim and Margaret Cuthbert, Neil Davidson,

Stuart Fairweather, Neil Findlay and Tommy Kane, John Foster, Colin Fox, Lynn Henderson, Bill Kidd, Richard Leonard, John McAllion, Mhairi McAlpine, Robin McAlpine, Conor McCabe, Peter McColl, Gordon Morgan, Mike Small and Dave Watson. Thus, contributors were sought across pro- or anti-independence divide.

The original *Is There a Scottish Road to Socialism?* contained chapters from

freedom and leeway to respond in his or her own way to these same, standard aforementioned questions.

It is obvious that all the contributors believe in a broad form of socialism that transcends existing and future national boundaries. If a schism exists at this meso-level, it is not one of simple ‘internationalism’ versus ‘nationalism’ then. Of course, what weight they give to the importance of various national

cultures and the like before and after the achievement of socialism varies. There is no sense of either competitive nationalism or aggressive nationalism, and very little that there are entirely national solutions to national problems, i.e., ‘socialism in one country’.

The debate is about where and how to start - or continue - the battle for socialism in the context of the approaching referendum and the existing hegemony of neo-liberalism and austerity. Can developments in Scotland kick start a wider process or must they merely be part of a wider flowering? How does the internal relate to the external? In this sense, it would be more accurate to see the common and major thread running the contributions as one of the search for social justice and social liberation as of a fraternal *trans*-national nature, that is across and over nations (as opposed to inter-

nations). It is for this reason that most contributions quite rightly focus upon the economic and social rather than political and constitutional.

Yet the danger is this is that the 2014/2016 dichotomy is underplayed. The referendum is entirely - at the formal level - about a constitutional relationship. In no political sense will Scotland be different the day before and after a ‘Yes’ vote (if that is what happens). However, to gain a ‘Yes’ vote or to substantially alter the social terms of the existing



14 contributors. We deliberately sought to widen the net and canvass more and wider opinion for this current version. We are grateful to those who again contributed a chapter as well as those that did so for the first time. As before, socialism was defined as the search for social justice, whether in its forms of social democracy or revolutionary socialism, or anything in between. Social justice is primarily concerned with fair and equitable economic and social outcomes for the vast majority of its citizens. Each contributor was given the

## The Scottish Left Review Press is about to publish Scotland's Road to Socialism: Time to Choose, a completely new version of a book first published seven years ago. Gregor Gall looks at the main themes it addresses.

union, political and other arguments will have to be used. For example, the SNP's heavily neo-liberal-influenced vision of independence does not – indeed, cannot – address pressing social questions in a way that will compel a majority of citizens to support independence. So for those favouring a radical vision of independence, radicalism needs to have influence not just in regard of the reasons of voting for independence but on the voting to determine the composition of the fifth parliament that begins in 2016.

Equally for those favouring the continuation of the union (albeit under different terms) requires that not only is a 'No' vote is successful but that the 2015 Westminster election provides for a Labour government which is considerably more radical than Miliband will allow for, and that promises for devo-max – and the use of those new powers for progressive ends – are kept. Again, radical political and other arguments will need to hold sway for this particular outcome to be realised. It becomes clear that both tasks are quite Herculean and that not only do the contending arguments of the left need to hold sway but that this means having a level of influence that is a complete step-change from where we are at the moment, a moment of the left labouring under the yoke of continued neo-liberalism. Thus, both sides of the left here must urgently address not just issues about the internal cogency of their arguments but critically how they will also gain credibility amongst the mass of citizens for these arguments. If you like, the battle is win hegemony inside their respective camps and then with the public at large outside these camps.

In these processes, the radicals for independence must set out what they want independence from as well as what they want independence for. Ironically, the radical Yes vision is actually a no vision – no to NATO, no to Trident, no to austerity, no to imperialism and no to neo-liberalism. But even that does not go far enough because there must also be a wholly positive version of the vision of what an independent, radical Scotland will look like under independence. Here the pounds and pence of the economic and social questions must be set out. For

the radicals for the union, the key task is to differentiate the type of union desired, otherwise – again ironically, they will be saying yes to NATO, yes to Trident, yes to austerity, yes to imperialism and yes to neo-liberalism.

There are important tactical matters to be considered along the way. The clamour of the 'cultural nationalists' just before the close of 2012 over the alleged domination of the English in the world of the administration of Scottish art and culture indicates that the debate has to be intelligent and cute enough to say that if there is an issue with English people managing Scottish arts, then it is an issue of what political values the managers from England hold and not that they are English per se. Otherwise, we will enter dark and dangerous territory.

More importantly, independence is not yet seen as the answer to solving poverty and inequality whereby it springs organically from the current struggles of working people and their families but it also has to be part of a transitional approach whereby struggling for one demand opens up and augments the desire for more fundamental change and the capacity to achieve it. A third matter concerns that of experience and memory. In living memory, Scotland has never been an independent nation, state or nation-state. To this extent, it is untried and untested. But that also may present opportunity to ask the 'what if' questions in an untainted way. By contrast, the British road to socialism has had a long

period of existence as a living project. Its highpoint was the period of the 1945-51 Labour governments. Is that a strong enough memory to cling on to – as well as to constitute a springboard to another and better chance to go down the British

road? Some may say it has had chance enough and new ways and means are now warranted.

If politics is the art of the possible, then it is incumbent upon those in favour of a Yes vote to presage a radical reconfiguration of society in Scotland to also work out the probabilities of such a change being able to occur. And, of course, to be open and honest when they do so. This is the key message from those who argue in this collection for a different type of union to that which currently exists. But the boot is on the other foot too because it is also incumbent upon those that argue

for a radical configuration of the union to also work out the probabilities and to stop talking about just the possibilities. Citizens will be better off with hard-nosed and realistic assessments rather than flights of fancy. All this is because what is desirable is not necessarily possible or probable because gaps exist between means and ends. ■

**It is incumbent upon those in favour of a Yes vote to presage a radical reconfiguration of society in Scotland to also work out the probabilities of such a change being able to occur. It is also incumbent upon those that argue for a radical reconfiguration of the union to also work out the probabilities and to stop talking about just the possibilities.**

*Scotland's Road to Socialism: Time to Choose is available from April from [www.scottishleftreview.org/shop](http://www.scottishleftreview.org/shop)*

*Gregor Gall is the editor of Scotland's Road to Socialism: Time to Choose and Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Bradford*



# Reviews

## So Much Wind – The Myth of Green Energy

Struan Stevenson (2013), Birlinn Books (£7.99)

The book's preface contains a favourably reference to Nigel Lawson's attack on the UK's 20 per cent renewable targets as a "fatuous obsession". It comes recommended by the Scientific Alliance, a supposedly independent climate change denying front for big energy and the pro-nuclear lobby. Chapter headings include "the Rape of Scotland", "the New Clearances", "the Myth of 'Green Jobs'". Oh and Struan speaks favourably of Donald Trump!

Yet the book and Struan himself appear to contain contradictions. Struan as well as being an anti-wind farm and anti-pylon campaigner is also President of the Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development Intergroup at the European Parliament. In the first chapter he endorses the 20 per cent by 2020 reduction goal and says "we need to aim for zero CO2 emissions and the technology is already here to achieve this goal". Yet most of the book is an unrelenting attack on virtually every initiative taken by particularly the SNP government to reduce carbon emissions. Only towards the end under Alternative Energy sources, does he look for other ways to tackle climate change – unfortunately most of these technologies are decades from implementation.

The early chapters are as expected; an attack on Wind farms. Stories of individuals blighted by badly sited turbines; local council objections overturned by the Scottish government; arbitrary changes to planning laws; dumbed down environmental teaching in primary schools "brainwashing our kids". Then follows "assessments" of the possible effect of badly sited windfarms on tourism, wildlife, humans, ecological systems and even national security e.g. interference with radar coverage. Every environmental group and indeed the Scottish Government opposes windfarms in inappropriate locations and accepts that individual mistakes have been made. None of these criticisms invalidates current policy on wind.

Of more concern are Struan's

assertions on the risk of supply disruption, who pays for wind and the lack of green jobs. There is some substance to these criticisms. However, the main culprit is not the Scottish Government, it is the UK regulatory system set up following the disastrous privatisation of energy under Thatcher. Unwittingly Struan makes an excellent argument for a completely new regime to be constructed in an independent Scotland.

Taking these in turn: "the lights will go out". At times wind doesn't blow, rain doesn't fall so power is required from backup power plants. The present regulatory regime does not pay for standby capacity so none have been built in recent years potentially leading to future grid instability. The Scottish Government is arguing for this to change in the new Climate Bill. I agree with Struan - we need many more combined power gas plants now for backup purposes. Not in opposition to wind, rather to use wind to produce hydrogen which will be stored and reproduce electricity when needed. We could start with the mothballed SSE gas plant in Fife which with minor modifications could test the technology.

"Robbing the poor to pay the rich". The Duke of Roxburghe will gain £1.5 million a year in Feed in Tariffs from the turbine farm in Lammermuir Hills paid for by poor households future fuel bills. Had investment been made by a nationalised industry through 30 year bonds, bills would be far lower.

"No green jobs". Most turbine manufactures are foreign, power companies are in effect on investment strike blackmailing the Tories on the energy bill subsidies, looking for 40 years of guaranteed profits. This can only really change through a completely new regulatory regime promoting local industries to take on this work. That can only be effectively done after independence.

Why is this book contradictory? Struan Stevenson is after all a Tory MEP on environmental committees, he dare not appear a climate denier. Yet that is the logic of his argument. Cut CO2 in a far future once the technologies are right, meanwhile let big oil, gas and nuclear pollute the environment. ■

■ Gordon Morgan

## Empire, Industry and Class: the Imperial Nexus of Jute 1840-1940

Anthony Cox (2013), Routledge Edinburgh South Asian Studies Series, pp. 270, £90

Writing in 1934 Hugh MacDiarmid described Dundee as "a grim monument to man's inhumanity to man". Comparing the city to the bustling, commercial Glasgow, he saw Dundee as having nothing "to mask its utter degradation". Dundee was almost totally dependent on the jute industry - and dependent in a very particular way.

Tony Cox's path-breaking study, *Empire, Industry and Class: the Imperial Nexus of Jute 1840-1940*, reveals the complex reality of this degradation and uses the city's special relationship to the Indian subcontinent to develop arguments about imperialism and working class politics that are of much wider importance.

Today globalisation is often presented as something quite new. In Scotland we should know better. Scotland's entire commercial and industrial development rested on global trade – often combined with colonial subjection and slavery. Tobacco, sugar and cotton, and, later, the many products of the Indian subcontinent, Africa and Latin America, provided the basis for this country's commercial wealth. Yet Dundee was special. Its employers were the first to export the manufacture of a major colonial product, jute textiles, back to a colony and then, from the 1880s, more or less run the home and the colonial industries in competition with one another.

The relationship was indeed somewhat more complicated. Only some of the Dundee firms did this. And some of the firms in Bengal were owned by Indian traders. South of the border also the manufacturers of cotton machinery had no scruples about selling their machinery to firms in Brazil or Bombay that locally competed with the Lancashire industry.

What made Dundee special was that jute was the city's only major industry, the Bengal factories competed against it globally and it was the

Dundee employers who provided the management and supervisory personnel for the Bengal industry for well over half a century. It is by examining the character of this 'exported' supervision that Cox develops some of his most interesting findings.

The management techniques and assumptions in Dundee and Bengal were very similar. What was learnt in Dundee was applied in Calcutta. And the responses of the two workforces were not dissimilar. Cox punctures myths about colonial mentalities responding to oriental psychologies. In both places the essence of the relationship was about class control and class resistance.

In Dundee, famous for the radicalism and militancy of its handloom weavers in the earlier nineteenth century, employers exploited the mechanisation of jute textile weaving in the 1840s and 50s to break the grip of male weavers and recruit a new and largely female workforce from the city's rural hinterland and subsequently from Ireland.

In Bengal in the 1870s and 1880s the new factories recruited a more mixed labour force in terms of gender. There were always somewhat more men. But, as in Dundee, they were also semi-proletarians from the rural hinterland. Later, in face of growing militancy, new workers were recruited from more distant

areas with differing ethnic and religious affiliations.

In both Dundee and Bengal the same Scottish supervisory cadre was employed, strongly differentiated and well-paid, using highly disciplinary management techniques to exploit divisions of gender and ethnicity. In both cases, however, the workforce resisted and developed trade union organisation – and, against all the stereotypes, somewhat more quickly and effectively in Bengal than in Dundee.

Also, against other stereotypes, Cox finds in both Bengal and Dundee significant levels of solidarity between (non-supervisory) male workers and their female colleagues. In both also juvenile workers sometimes took the lead – with other sections then coming out in support.

Similarities go even further. For a brief period in the 1880s Cox finds that staffing levels, wages and productivity in Dundee and Bengal were not dissimilar. Though in general Dundee wages were higher, they were pitiful by Scottish standards. The city's living standards were further depressed by long periods of heavy unemployment as the two industries competed for the same markets. Hence, the 'utter degradation' that MacDiarmid observed in 1934. Hence also the high profits syphoned

off by the Dundee jute barons. From the 1890s Dundee pioneered Britain's investment trust 'industry'.

Finally, Cox's research throws some light on the peculiarity of Dundee's politics – the strength of its revolutionary socialist element, the converse weakness of its Labour politics, especially in the interwar period, and the continuing mass vote for the Conservatives and Liberals into the 1950s.

Edwin Scrymgeour, who defeated Churchill in 1922, is best known as a prohibitionist. But he was also a socialist – of a somewhat messianic sort. This tradition of non-social democratic socialist politics was maintained by his erstwhile lieutenant Bob Stewart and also by Willie Gallacher, both of whom were able to achieve votes of over 10,000 for the Communist Party in the 1920s and 30s. Their base, like Scrymgeour's, was principally among the jute workers, particularly women.

At the same time, the supervisory layer of foremen, the nicknamed the 'Dundee School', provided consistent support for Conservative and Liberal parties. Alternating between Dundee and Calcutta, they suffused the aspirant layers of the skilled working class with strongly imperialist and authoritarian attitudes. ■

■ *John Foster*



**Say NO to ConDem cuts**  
**For all public transport in public hands**  
**For offshore safety**  
**For trade-union rights**

**Bob Crow, General Secretary**

**Alex Gordon, President**

# A Fairer Scotland

## UNISON's contribution to the constitutional debate

The debate on Scotland's constitutional future before the 2014 referendum is only likely to deliver concrete benefits for working people if we ensure that our concerns and priorities are placed at its very heart.

UNISON's approach to constitutional questions is driven by the interests of our members, by the sort of Scotland we want and deserve to live in.

This means that for us, precise constitutional arrangements are the end point and not the starting point of the debate.

We must first define the sort of Scotland we wish to see and then try and then examine the likelihood of differing constitutional arrangements on offer to deliver on that vision.

Our role is not to promote or condemn the politics of national identity, Scottish or British. We should not accept at face value any of the claims from any side of the constitutional debate.

Our role is to examine assertions made by all sides in the constitutional debate, to get them to spell out what their proposals mean for working people.

We also start from the reality of the Scotland we live in today. As the Christie Commission put it: 'This country is a paradoxical tapestry of rich resources, inventive humanity, gross inequalities, and persistent levels of poor health and deprivation.'

Our objective is tackling inequalities, poor health and deprivation.

Doing so is social change and unless it is explained how this is to be achieved, arguments for or against constitutional change mean very little.

More at our website  
[unionscotland.org.uk/scotlandsfuture](http://unionscotland.org.uk/scotlandsfuture)



### Fairer Scotland and devolution Feb 2013

UNISON Scotland's contribution to the debate on how the current devolution settlement can be strengthened

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~~Vladimir McTavish's~~

KEIR  
McALLISTER'S

# KICK UP THE TABLOIDS

## 24 BURGERS FOR 99P: 'LUCKY YOU GOT HORSE'

When Vladimir McTavish asked me to stand in for this column, he left no other instruction other than *make it topical and funny*. A straightforward brief, I naively thought, and started jotting down the stories of the day and the hilarious left-wing approach I might take on them. What then became rapidly apparent was that any kind of comical slant on the news these days, was going to require a whole lot more imagination than I had first anticipated. I had just not realised the degree to which the role of the satirical comedian had been gratuitously undermined by the level of sheer farce that has come to characterise our political landscape.

Take the horse meat scandal for example. The very idea that people in Scotland would be overly concerned to find minute traces of more than one animal in their burger seriously underestimates the constitution of the national stomach (NB *national stomach* not being a reference to Alex Salmond). If you're prepared to buy 24 burgers for 99p then I'm thinking you are pretty much up for the gamble. Similarly, if you're a regular consumer of *microwave lasagnes for one* then presumably your life has reached a point of such tragic proportion that, finding out that even your food is lying to you will come as no great surprise.

In-fact, the only *surprising* aspect about this whole tabloid scare-orgy has been the baffling efficiency by which government's crack food-testing teams have leapt into action at the first whiff of dead Dobbin. In what felt like mere seconds, they had found traces of pony in everything from a packet of beef Monster Munch to a ready-made trifle, leaving

you wondering, if the government is indeed capable of responding this quickly to public fears, why it hasn't done so before on all the other more pressing issues like bankers,...or the NHS.... or the bedroom tax... or any of the other major crisis that they are undeniably responsibly for?

It's not that I don't expect people to be upset about the mislabeling of food nor do I want to take away the right of vegetarians and vegans of looking that little bit smugger these days, (they don't often get the opportunity, other than at Morrissey concerts and haven't the energy levels to sustain it for that long anyway), it's that it all seems a tad redundant to be getting this upset over the odd sliver of horse when the current austerity measures mean that the day when families are forced into sizing up the family cat is not too far away.

But how do you even take pot shots at the government anymore? The coalition now looks like an overly long episode of *Yes Minister* written by a group of Dadaists on ketamine. Just when you thought the Lib Dems couldn't possibly do themselves more damage, they all but disintegrate under the type of grubby little scandal normally confined to the Catholic Church.

People have long since thought of the Lib Dem's as the self harming goth kid lurking at the back of the adult party. Now to make things worse, it appears he had a semi the whole time. Yet some sympathy has to be extended to Nick Clegg who, with every successive TV appearance looks like he's been locked in a wardrobe with a Dementor... (or to give it his full name, George Osbourne) which is why the Eastleigh by-election

came as some light relief, not just because the Tories didn't win but that they came third to a party whose previous candidate is probably going to jail and the BNP-lite... sorry... I mean UKIP...

In any other circumstances such a devastating defeat might hope to provoke a modicum of humility, but it's become harder to ignore the fact that it very much looks like the evil Jedward that is Cameron and Osborne are now on a personal vendetta to destroy everyone poorer than them. I suspect it might all stem from some incident in their childhood when rough boys from the estate stole their football but regardless of the motivation, there's now a disturbing megalomaniacal determination to their dogmatic adherence to these, obviously failing, draconian measures. Not even the loss of their precious triple AAA rating can dissuade them off course. It turns out it may as well have been a triple AAA battery.

So you see what I mean? The satirical comic has his work cut out for him these days. To parody a parody is a tall order. Perhaps the only way left to go for satirists is to follow the example of Italy's *second most famous comedian after Berlusconi*, comic Beppe Grillo, who this week won the majority of votes in the Italian election.... That does sound like a lot of work though. I might just sit and wait on Vlad to come back... ■

*Vladimir McTavish is away somewhere. Keir McAllister appears at the Gaiety Theatre in Ayr on Tue 12th April and has a comedy podcast called The Living Room Sessions which you can download from The Stand website ([www.thestand.co.uk](http://www.thestand.co.uk)) or from iTunes.*



A stylized flame graphic composed of three overlapping, wavy, upward-curving bands. The top band is orange, the middle is a darker orange, and the bottom is red. The bands have a gradient effect, appearing to flow upwards and to the right.

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