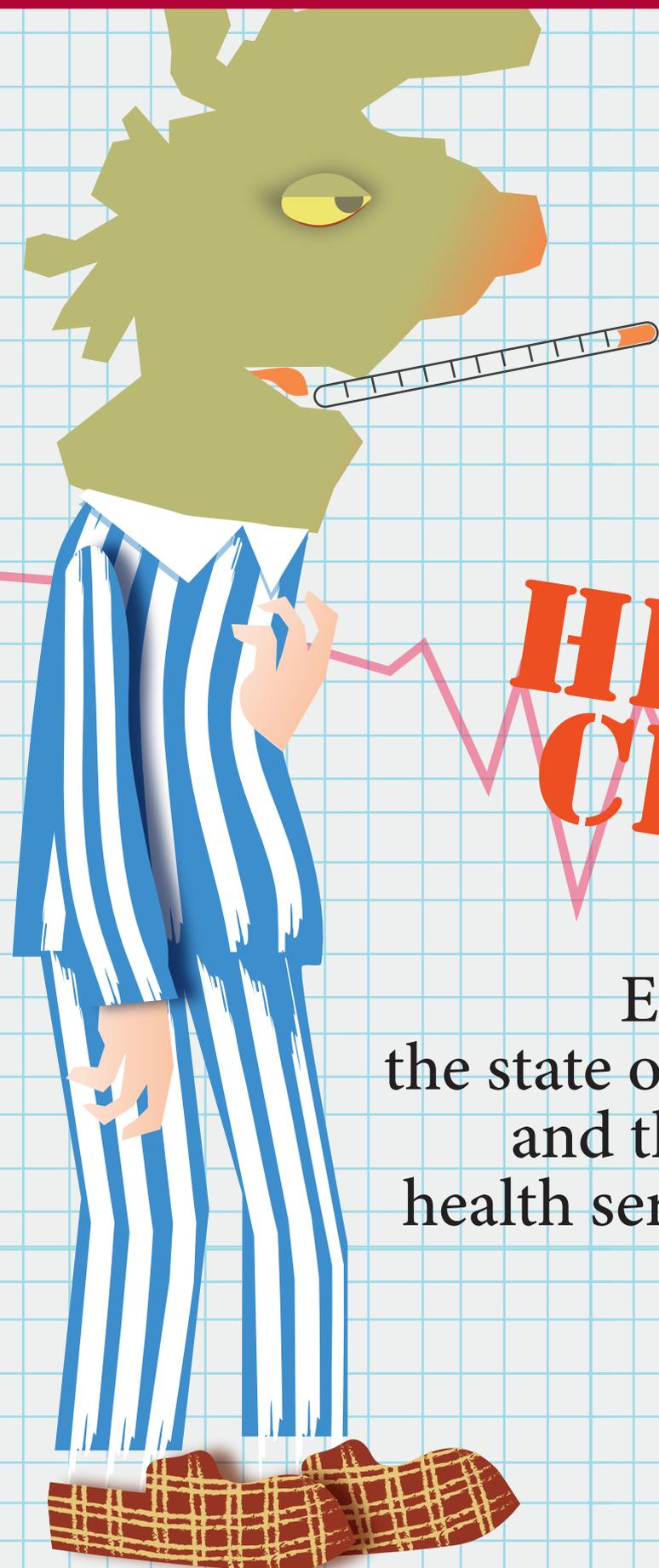


Scottish **Left** Review

Issue 85 January/February 2015 - £2.00



Examining
the state of Scotland's health
and the state of the
health service in Scotland.

Scottish Left Review

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Comment –

In time honoured fashion, we wish our readers, subscribers, contributors and supporters a heartfelt happy new year. But we also know that no mere well wishes will stop 2015 from becoming yet another *annus horribilis* for most of the populace as austerity and neo-liberalism continue to destroy lives, living standards and life chances. At the forthcoming Westminster general election, we face three different colours of austerity – blue (Tory), yellow (LibDem) and pink (Labour).

To stop another *annus horribilis* will take popular resistance and collective action based upon a radical left agenda. And nowhere more important a place for this to happen is over the issues of our public health. Consequently, the theme of this issue is the state of our health, most obviously centring upon our NHS.

The NHS in Scotland is approaching a critical juncture as a result of the merging of health and social care services due to legislation passed by the Parliament in 2014. Most welcome the 'theory' of merging of the services but many also question the 'practice' as a result of issues over the allocation of resources, clear lines of accountability and responsibility, and the conditions of care workers. Add to this is the introduction of 'personalisation' of care under the mantra of consumer or service user choice. Again, many welcome the 'theory' but many others also question the 'practice' as a result of issues over funding.

Our contributors reflect the full range of hopes and reservations involved in these issues. It is worth highlighting just a few of these. Paul Arkison highlights that too much time being spent on process and planning and not actual job of working directly with clients while Andrew Watterson *et al.* call for more publicity/resources/investigation into work place cancers and the more devolution of health and safety.

Finally, Chris Bartter argues that freedom of information could be extended without primary legislation while Dave Watson makes the same point concerning procurement – with both showing what the SNP government can do now with existing powers. It is to be hoped that this edition of *Scottish Left Review* can shed some light on the pros and cons and lead to some rounded betterment as a result.

Of course, the issues involved in defending

new year but not new times

the NHS cannot be separated from other issues. So we have five articles on the state of the left in Scotland and what it needs to do. The first on Scottish Labour prompts in this editorial comment congratulations to Neil Findlay and Katy Clark for putting up such a spirited fight and applying old principles to current challenges. It reminded me of the time when I was in the Labour Party nearly thirty years ago. Then, you could at least guarantee that you would hear the socialist case (even if it seldom won out).

'To the victor the spoils' is not exactly what Jim Murphy has been left with according to the clutch of polls on Labour's prospects in Scotland. Remembering my student days (in which he was both President of NUS Scotland and NUS (UK)), I recall that he is a tough, hardened operator with a flair for populist opportunism when needs must. Consequently, I'd be rather less quick to write him off as the political suicide note for Scottish Labour that some have.

In all of this, we should not forget that the 18,000 odd submissions of ordinary citizens to the Smith Commission counted for not one jot. Announcing its recommendations, it was patently clear that what was proposed was that the outcome of last minute talks between the main political parties (including the SNP). So much for the (re)birth of democracy in Scotland in the light of the referendum campaign when many said Scotland can and will never be the same!

So it is not hard to understand why the STUC and the Unite, Unison and PCS unions expressed their considerable disappointment at this political fix. Don't get too down heartened though – because whatever the main parties did or did not agree to, there's still the final hoop of the forthcoming general election to be jumped through. No one can know the result of it but it's a fair bet to presume that if the Tories do well then even the Smith Commission's limited proposals will be watered down further – especially at the behest of backbench Tory MPs in southern England. So much for the solemn vow from the son of the manse!

The other big event of recent months that now tends to be overlooked is the first legislative programme announced by the new First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, on 26 November 2014. The areas covered included land reform, poll tax debts,

secondary and higher education, and public health. Even with the inclusion of land reform, there is still nothing – if you don't mind the intended pun – to set the heather alight with. This is not social democracy, nor is it some very tiny steps towards it – which is why so many in the commentariat must have taken leave of their senses to claim that the SNP/Scottish Government is social democratic.

Social democracy is founded upon the intervention of the state to ameliorate market processes and outcomes. Hence, we would see regulation of prices, wages and profits as well as extending public ownership into the private sector. Nationalising Prestwick airport and the debt of the green wave energy company, Pelamis, hardly count here.

It was also disappointing – but not unexpected – to see Nicola Sturgeon announce her Miliband-esque political ideology of 'one Scotland'. In doing so, no account was taken – nor could it be taken – of class. Scotland is not a single homogenous social unit, and within Scotland there are contrasting and conflicting interests (political, economic, social) between classes. Questions need to be asked of 'one Scotland' – whose interests are best served by it, and who will benefit most from what it turns out to be?

Other ways in which Sturgeon disappoints are that she follows the time honoured practice of establishing commissions to look at issues and develops capacity for processes but not outcomes. In regard of the former, this is the case on alternatives to the council tax and further measures on land reform. So-called 'evidence based' policy has now become a political straight jacket that prevents political parties from quickly developing policy on pressing issues and legislating on them.

In regard of the latter, again illustrated by land reform, measures will be taken to allow government ministers to intervene where the scale of land ownership or the conduct of a landlord was acting as a barrier to sustainable development, to set up a Scottish Land Reform Commission, improve the transparency and accountability of land ownership and make information on land, its value and ownership more readily available in one place, and action to ensure charities holding large areas of land were under an obligation

to engage with local communities. So, what this means is that nothing will necessarily actually change. It all depends on 'if' and 'when'. It's a bit like the Scottish Parliament being able to vary income tax. Since 1999, it has chosen never to use this power.

Of much less importance, but still of some note is that two former SNP MSPs (John Finnie, John Wilson) have joined the Scottish Greens and intend to stand in 2016 as Green candidates. This adds a little extra spice to Peter McColls' article in this edition. And, how this plays out for the Scottish Left Project will be interesting given that Wilson was one of its initial signatories (see Cat Boyd's article in this edition).

Our next issue (March-April 2015) will be almost wholly dedicated to examining the issues surrounding the Westminster general election. Along with the referendum and the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections, the general election will be a key staging post in the how politics develop in Scotland over the next few years.

To end on, it should be noted that this is now the fifteenth year of *Scottish Left Review*. For the twelve years in which I have been on editorial board and now, as editor, I would like to pay tribute to Bob Thomson, the chair of our board.

He has been a thoughtful, steady and insightful guiding light throughout all these years from the inception of *Scottish Left Review*. His ability to remain unflappable and upbeat throughout all the travails of keeping the magazine afloat and heading in the **right** (left!) direction needs fulsome praise and recognition. I'm sure readers, subscribers, contributors and supporters will join with me in a heartfelt round of applause for him.

a poem suggested by Peter Lomas for our public health theme:

**'Eat more fruit!' the slogans say,
'More fish, more beef, more bread!'
But I'm on Unemployment pay
My third year now, and wed.
And so I wonder when I'll see
The slogan when I pass,
The only one that would suit me, -
'Eat More Bloody Grass!'**

Joe Corrie (Slamannan, Stirlingshire 1894 - Edinburgh 1968) From *The Penguin Book of Socialist Verse*, (ed.) Alan Bold, Penguin, 1970.

Keeping the NHS fit for purpose

Shona Robison reflects on the past, present and future of our NHS

Our NHS is a vital public institution, and is a key part of Scotland's national identity. For decades, it has been there whenever people need it – publicly-owned and publicly-run. The staff of the NHS, whether working as GPs, as nurses, as porters or consultants, stand ready to provide high quality care 365 days a year. And it is free at the point of use – a founding principle of Bevan's which we all should be incredibly proud is realised in Scotland.

This must be the starting point for any discussion of the NHS. We must never lose sight of how precious our health service is, and we must always protect its founding principles. No matter how rich or poor you are, you must always be able to get the treatment you need.

The SNP, and the overwhelming majority of the people of Scotland, are absolutely committed to those principles. We're clear the privatisation of the NHS that we are witnessing in England must never be allowed to happen here.

But if we are to retain the NHS as the fantastic public service it is today, then it needs to evolve. Among the challenges that we face is that, like most of the western world, our population is ageing. It's fantastic that people are living longer, healthier lives. But we also know our NHS is dealing with more people than ever before, and those people are sicker, with complex and, sometimes, multiple conditions.

That is why the NHS needs to progress and develop to ensure it meets the challenges of the future.

Not only does the Scottish Government want to ensure that people are living healthier long lives, but we want more older people to be supported to stay in their own home and local communities. We'll only achieve this by ensuring that our health and social care services work seamlessly together – something in which Scotland is already leading the way.

We're integrating health and social care services, to be delivered around the patient's needs. Our vision for the NHS is to see more people treated at home or in a community setting. Landmark legislation to bring the delivery of health and social care together was passed this year with cross-party support and will be fully

implemented across the country by April 2016. The full integration of these services is designed to get patients home or to a homely setting as quickly as possible and ease pressure across the system. It is truly pioneering work. I hope that people across Scotland should really begin seeing the benefits this year.

In practical terms, this strategy should provide the long-term solution to reducing delayed discharge – which is one of this government's key priorities. Currently, there are too many people waiting unnecessarily in hospital, when they are fit to be discharged, but the present system holds them up. This has knock on effects across the whole system, not least in A&E.

Currently, there are too many people waiting unnecessarily in hospital, when they are fit to be discharged

But by bringing local authorities and health boards together in a much more strategic way, we should be able to ensure the whole system works better and delayed discharge will become a thing of the past. As part of our focus to treat more people at home and in the community, we have also committed to investing £40m in GP and primary care services to support new ways of working that can help meet the changing demographics of our population.

This government is clear that health inequalities must be tackled, every child, regardless of their address or background, in Scotland should have the best start in life through better early years support and that every patient treated by our NHS receives safe care centred on their needs.

We're absolutely committed to supporting our NHS to deliver world-leading care. That is why we have clearly outlined the standards of care that Scottish people can be assured they will get from our NHS.

Scotland has some of the strongest health standards in Europe, with standards introduced by this Government reducing

waiting times to among the lowest levels on record. But none of this would be possible without the dedication and hard work of our staff. It makes such a difference to the experience patients and families receive. It is why our NHS is such a much loved and wonderful organisation.

And it is why the Scottish Government, unlike the Conservative-led UK Government or Labour-run Welsh Government, chose to accept the recommendation of the NHS Pay Review Body for a modest 1% uplift in staff pay. The Scottish Government is backing this up by increasing front line investment in the NHS, with an increase in the overall budget in 2015-2016 despite cuts to Scotland's fiscal budget under the current coalition Government of almost 10%, increasing in nursing and overall NHS staffing numbers to record numbers as well as extending the no compulsory redundancy guarantee.

Preventative measures are also critical to ensuring the sustainability of the health service in the future, and many of Scotland's public health policies are leading the way in the UK, and in Europe. The Scottish Government strongly supports minimum unit pricing, which we believe will be an effective and efficient way to tackle alcohol misuse in Scottish communities.

But there are threats to our NHS from outside Scotland. We have made clear to both the UK Government and the European Commission that, like the BMA, Unite and many others we have concerns about the possible impact of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) on the NHS and have pressed to ensure that the NHS is explicitly exempt from TTIP. The Scottish Government and the public must see the full legal text of any agreement before we can be fully assured that the NHS will continue to be safe in public hands.

That reflects our absolute commitment to a publicly-run NHS, free at the point of use. While our NHS simply can't stay the same, this unwavering principle will stand behind all of the decisions we take to ensure our wonderful health service is fit for generations to come.

Shona Robison MSP is Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport

Social care is the key to freeing up our NHS

Neil Findlay argues that well paid and resourced social care is vital

Scotland's NHS is under pressure like never before in its history. From the front door of the GP's surgery to the back door of the hospital, the system is bursting at the seams. We see growing demand and expectations, rising vacancies, shortages across a whole range of disciplines and an increasing reliance on bank and agency staff with the use of the private sector soaring.

Professional bodies and unions such as the BMA, RCN, UNISON, patients groups and royal colleges continually raise concerns about the pressures on the system and the impact on the people who work in it. In recent weeks, Audit Scotland has identified that nearly half a million bed days were lost last year because people were stuck in hospital when they could and should have been treated at home. In short, the social care system, the key to improving flow through the system and releasing resources within it is failing and failing badly.

This represents a massive waste of human and financial resource as well as being bad for patients. According to the Scottish Government, it costs around £4000 per week to keep someone in hospital but £300 per week to support someone to recover in their own home. We also know that for many patients supported recovery at home will mean a quicker recovery than in hospital.

So it would appear obvious what it is we have to do, so why is the Scottish government so slow to act? The crisis is not coming in a few years or decades – it is here now! And, of course, it will only get worse as Scotland experiences further demographic change with a rapidly growing elderly population.

Prior to entering parliament, I was a councillor in West Lothian from 2003-2012. During that time, I was proud to be part of a forward thinking modern local authority. We delivered high quality public services at a cost the tax payer was willing to support. The council was recognised nationally and internationally, being named UK council of the year in 2006.

Central to our achievement was innovation in social care. Without any need for legislation, NHS services and social care services began working together to deliver integrated care packages for the elderly and

vulnerable. Social workers, nurses, doctors and care staff coordinated the care packages to be delivered in the community.

In the home, alarm systems, flood monitors and new equipment were installed to ensure people could manage when they came home from hospital and services were put in to prevent hospital admission in the first place. Delayed discharge and bed blocking was reduced dramatically as people were no longer stuck in hospital beds waiting on a care package being put in place. This approach was very successful and, indeed, along with a few other councils in Scotland set the trail for how things can be done when the culture of service delivery changes.

Of course, the *Public Bodies (Joint Working) Act 2014* is an attempt to force change through legislation but change can and will only be achieved if social care is seen as a national priority. We will never create a caring, effective and responsive social care system based on a zero hours, poverty pay back to the bottom system.

The reality is that all elements of social care are based on a race to the bottom. As councils see their budgets slashed by the Scottish Government and are shackled by a centrally imposed and underfunded tax freeze they have been forced to outsource contracts and drive down the costs. This has resulted in social care providers competing to win contracts by cutting training budgets and reducing the biggest element of their operating bill even further - wages!

So social care is now a minimum or near minimum wage sector. Care visits to the elderly last 15 minutes - as one staff carer said to me: 'we stay long enough to hear the ping of the microwave'. Staff are more often than not denied travelling time between clients and some are forced to pay for their own phone calls back to their employer.

I spoke to one young carer recently who received four days training in an office, a day and a half shadowing another staff member then was given 30 clients to visit on her first day. For this she was paid the princely sum of £5.13 per hour. This is what we are doing to our older people not to mention the young carers of tomorrow.

Carers want to do their best and support our mums and dads, grannies and

granddads but the system won't allow this to happen. Indeed, for many carers the wages and conditions are so bad that I am told many work in the sector only long enough until they can get another job. Recently one care provider reported losing a large number of staff when a new supermarket opened up nearby offering better terms and conditions than his care company could offer.

And yet, knowing this dreadful situation prevails and how it is impacting on our elderly and vulnerable friends and relatives, we hear government ministers bragging about the council tax freeze and their settlement to local authorities as though it is some sort of political triumph. It is not - it is nothing short of a national scandal. So what should we be doing?

Well, we need to make social care a valued profession with a career structure to match. The living wage should be paid as a minimum to every carer. Many in the public sector receive the living wage but through procurement legislation this could have been extended to private contractors but the SNP government voted this down.

We have to end the 15 minute care visit culture – people need appropriate care not rushed flying visits with minimal contact. And, we need to end the zero hours exploitation that dominates the sector. Key to all of this is ending contracts being awarded on the basis of cost.

So, as we enter 2015, health and social care will be central to the political debate. In England, Labour is committed to reversing the pernicious *Health and Social Care Act* that is privatising the NHS there and the 'mansion tax' will put increased resources into the health and social care system. Andy Burnham rightly promotes the concept of 'whole person care' and shows a similar desire to Scottish Labour to see the social care system transformed.

In Europe, we see the threat to our NHS and wider public services from TTIP – we cannot allow this to happen. But it is at home, here in Scotland that we need change most – the denial strategy adopted by Alex Neil (the previous Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport) just won't cut it. We have to face up to the reality that unless we get the social care system right we will simply be stoking up further problems in our NHS.

Neil Findlay is a Labour MSP for the Lothians. Until late December 2014, he was Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport. He is now Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training. This article was written before his change of portfolio.

TTIP – threatening terrible, traumatic, invasive potential

Richard Doherty warns that TTIP will increase corporate power over government policy

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) – the trade deal being negotiated in secret between Europe and the USA - will give companies the power to control wide-ranging government policy. This is a corporate power grab, and at a time when people are said to be engaged with politics as never before, it is vital we have a high public awareness of the need for resistance.

In Scotland, we are reliant on the UK Government to negotiate the terms of the deal as an EU member state. With the NHS in England currently up for sale under the *Health and Social Care Act 2012*, it is under direct threat from TTIP, and there is concern that the Scottish NHS will come under pressure from corporate interests too, as public spending decisions in Westminster impact upon the Scottish budget.

Worries for the future of the health service are met with assurances that investment agreements will explicitly state government public policy decisions cannot be overridden, and that this would safeguard the NHS. However, under TTIP, transnational companies could use ISDS (Investor-State Dispute Settlement) – in other words: secret offshore corporate

courts – to sue a government if its policies affect their profit margins.

This raises the prospect of governments being open to legal action if, for example, they implement stricter controls on the quality of medicines, regulations on the quality of companies providing care within our borders, or order improvements to staff pay and conditions.

ISDS can only offer compensation and nobody claims it would change government policy directly, but it can award multi-million pound pay-outs in compensation after dragging governments through an expensive legal process, so the effect is chilling – massively influencing the government public policy decisions that get made.

Although the UK has not yet been sued under ISDS where it exists in other bilateral trade agreements, it has happened in other countries already. Phillip Morris sued the Australian Government over plain cigarette packaging, with the effect that New Zealand opted to await the outcome of that legal case before deciding whether to introduce plain packaging themselves.

Plain packaging has been shown to benefit public health, so for governments to be blocked from setting policy that's in the public interest by the very companies it is in the public's interest to safeguard us against is an appalling prospect. TTIP allows corporations to get in and influence the direction of public policy before anybody else, from charities to community groups and beyond, have had a chance to explain their views.

The Phillip Morris case is just one example of a public health initiative we would seemingly not be able to enact under TTIP, and whether or not the NHS itself was exempted from any deal (to whatever extent that is possible in isolation), the NHS would be left to pick up the pieces and the costs when it comes to the consequences for health care in the UK.

While statements from the Scottish Government that they want the health service to be exempted from TTIP are welcome progress, the concern remains ahead of the general election that, with the exception of the Greens in

Scotland and the rest of the UK, there is no meaningful political opposition to TTIP itself within our parliaments, or a recognition of the threat the deal poses more widely to our public services, as well as to the sovereignty of the governments we elect.

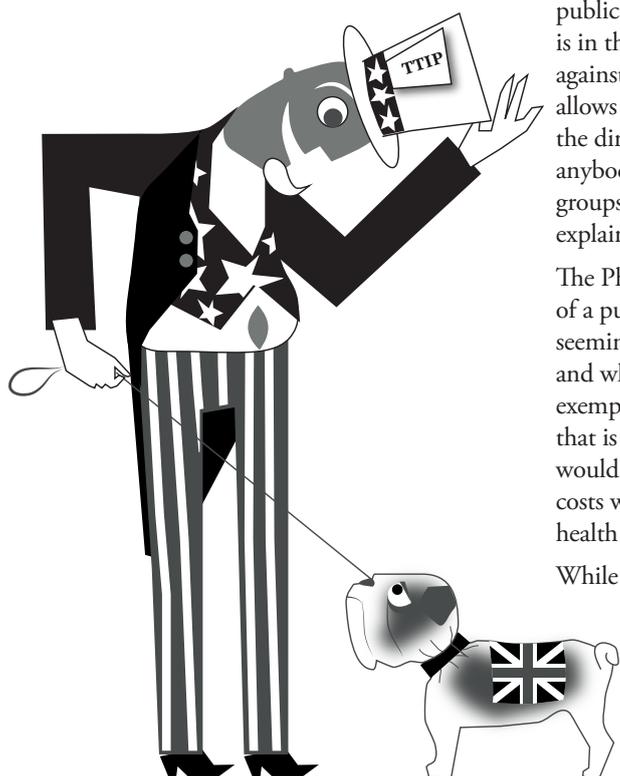
Fortunately, the NHS is an emotive hook, necessary to alert people to the threats facing us all. Not only would we continue to hand over billions of pounds of public money to private healthcare interests, but under TTIP it would be impossible to roll back any privatisation, no matter how strongly the public want to see it happen now or in the future.

However, TTIP is about far more than the NHS alone. The same concerns for public ownership of services, and the sovereignty or accountability of governments making public policy decisions apply right across the board. At a time when each Prime Ministerial contender is committed to public spending cuts far beyond those decimating service provision in local communities already, unambiguous opposition to TTIP from 2015's Westminster candidates is essential.

Under TTIP, our inability to reverse the reckless privatisation of key services will make permanent a variety of serious problems across the UK. Whether it is the Royal Mail, cuts to service provision for the most vulnerable in society, or changes to employment law that benefit corporate profits to the detriment of workers, TTIP would leave us unable to take responsibility and put the needs of our people ahead of corporate greed. The Greens' policy of renationalising rail is one of the most popular policies around, but TTIP would make it impossible for any government to achieve.

As Friends of the Earth Scotland point out, the deal is also a threat to decades of environmental progress in Europe, from restrictions on toxic chemicals to our own climate laws in Scotland. Again, the implications for public health and the burden on the NHS are clear.

It is suggested more than 80% of the gains from TTIP would come from the removal of regulatory barriers between the EU and USA, with the USA's regulatory approach



in many sectors being significantly weaker than current EU standards. In Scotland, anywhere our policy is more progressive than other countries, from climate change to alcohol and tobacco control, under TTIP ISDS claims could follow.

It is vital that we are not thrown into a race to the bottom in terms of regulating our

food, chemicals, agriculture, or anything else, in order to make life more profitable for US conglomerates.

People are seeing TTIP as a blueprint for how all the future trade and investment deals across the world will be done. It is clearly a corporate power grab that undermines democracy, with the rights,

and health, of individuals severely compromised. We do not want to further open government decision-making to corporate control, and massive financial penalties for putting the public interest ahead of corporate greed.

Richard Doherty works for the Green MSPs in the Scottish Parliament

Health and social care integration: equal access for all?

While welcoming the integration of health and social services, Tressa Burke sounds a note of caution

Integration is a timely line on the horizon since disabled people in Scotland are facing the worst ever crisis due to a perfect storm of cuts to services, reduced access to justice, welfare reform and increasing hate crime. This is on top of the usual disadvantage and discrimination they face which includes lack of equal access to education, learning, participation, transport, services, accessible information, housing and employability support amongst other things.

Specifically, disabled people experience many barriers accessing health and social work services, ranging from lack of accessible information and communication to draconian charges for community care services, stricter eligibility criteria for services and lack of advocacy amongst other things.

And then there are physical barriers including buildings, transport and organisational systems that prevent equal access for all such as the refusal of hospitals to let some disabled people keep their wheelchair beside them.

I was completely immobile and dependent for the duration of my stay. Then they made me feel like a nuisance for asking for assistance and I was told to just wet the bed and they'd change it later, even though I'm not incontinent – one Glasgow Disability Alliance (GDA) member

Many disabled people have also reported concerns to us about social care provision over the years.

Inflexible, unreliable, restrictive – on the odd occasions I do manage to get out socially, I've got to rush home or I miss my evening meal and support to get to bed – another GDA member

Greater access to and flexibility of Self Directed Support for flexible, support

services, lifting of age barriers in services, e.g., the transition from adult to older people's services, and a lack of joined up working have been frequently mentioned, with people giving specific examples of being 'stuck' in hospital because social care packages were delayed. People also report experience of multiple assessments from different agencies, where one holistic assessment should be sufficient. All of this supports the need for Integration.

Encarta UK Dictionary defines Integration as 'equal access for all' and if this is to be the outcome of health and social care integration for Scotland's million disabled people, and 2m people with long term conditions, then it's a welcome one!

Indeed, Glasgow Disability Alliance's disabled members welcome the principles behind integration which seek to place the service user at the heart of services, taking account of particular needs of the person including their participation in community life. This chimes with GDA's own vision of wanting disabled people to participate fully in their own lives, communities and wider society, with the support they need and with choices equal to others.

The move towards greater rights and dignity is also refreshing as for many disabled people choice and control over their life and being treated with dignity are not inevitable. Disabled people are frequently voiceless and powerless in decisions about their lives and lack the most basic choices about when they get up, how they wash or dress, what they get eat or to do or where they go on a daily basis and who they spend time with.

Self-determination, participation and – as importantly – the ability to make a contribution are not givens for disabled people. So we also welcome the opportunity for communities themselves – in this case disabled people- to plan

and lead services, improving quality and increasing preventative approaches which make best use of our strengths, skills and assets.

Again, this fits well with GDA's mission to act as the collective, representative voice of disabled people, promoting equality, rights and social justice. We know the pros of integration because our members have long championed better joined up services and have contributed their ideas about what needs to be done. Integration is bursting with positive potential.

Many ideas have emerged from GDA members during our involvement in Glasgow's programme to reshape care for older people (RCOP). RCOP has been a forerunner to integration of broader health and social care services for adults and children.

Over the last few years, learning from disabled people as part of RCOP includes the need for greater choice and control over what services are provided; being involved in service planning and design to ensure both better targeting of resources and more effective interventions; services to be more joined up, person centred, holistic, flexible and responsive; improved accessible communication and information about what's available; reduced waiting lists and local, self-referred access to low level preventative services such as eye tests, podiatry, physio and community based services and activities which improve wellbeing, connections and resilience.

The need for support for involvement is also well rehearsed. And of course, more cooperation between health and social work services is needed, particularly in relation to discharge from hospital and aids/adaptations to the home environment, including stair lifts, wet rooms, specialist furniture, etc.

Despite the call for reform, there

are some questions hanging over the Scottish Government's ambitious reform programme which seeks to improve services and offer seamless, joined up provision. For example, the fact that disabled people, older people and communities are assets in themselves and have strengths doesn't reduce their need for support and capacity building for involvement in all of this. That's where the role of DPOs- disabled people's organisations and Community Led Organisations- come in as well as the third sector.

GDA is itself an example of a DPO: a membership-led organisation, with almost 2,500 individual disabled people, aged 16-96, as well as groups led by disabled people. We provide accessible learning, programmes, events, coaching and activities with and for disabled people to raise aspirations, build skills, confidence and connections, to have their voices heard, to make choices and have greater control, to increase capacity for independent living and ultimately, to have more fulfilling lives.

Increased participation, enhanced connections, improved wellbeing and strengthened resilience are amongst positive outcomes reported (by both internal and external evaluations). GDA also works extensively through partnership and policy development in Glasgow and Scotland to ensure that services better understand and meet the need of disabled citizens. This fits perfectly with integration which is about making services more responsive to the needs of the people of Scotland in order to improve health and wellbeing across the country. And of course, the voices of service users are paramount in all of this.

Disabled people- and communities everywhere - are up for using our voices and this has never been as vital and apparent as in this post-referendum period where Scotland's people have come alive with renewed energy for having a say in decisions which affect them. People value being involved and being listened to, and enablers are required to facilitate disabled people and other communities to play their full part in the process. So it will be critical to direct resources to communities themselves rather than to larger organisations which are far removed from grassroots.

The threat to integration is not that disabled people or wider communities won't take part or take their responsible roles: more worryingly, the real threat is that we might never get the chance. Learning from RCOP in Glasgow suggests resources can be put to excellent use to develop community led services and

supports.

Building in evaluation from the outset is essential. So too is having honest discussions about the potential for disinvestment in a system where demand continues to increase whilst public funds are cut and budgets must be balanced. This has clear implications for the capacity to invest in prevention and early intervention - the very services which are being called for by disabled people cannot be afforded in real terms if services continue in their current form.

But diminishing resources, lack of capacity for disinvestment, fast paced work programmes and lack of time for proper involvement often lead to frustrations in partnership conversations about what is truly possible: it might be more honest to simply give the money to health and social work to help plug budget cuts than to set an agenda for transformational change that is not achievable.

Another very real challenge with reform and change programmes is the perennial focus on structures and processes. Often, the people who actually use the services can become lost in all of this whilst officers set about the compliance related tasks to set up systems.

So, on reflection, there is a potential for a smoke and mirrors approach to reform with the risk that the end user of services might be the last consideration - not deliberately but perhaps through pressures of time and compliance. This is despite the integration principles and national outcomes which are strongly focused around human rights.

So what would bring about the successful outcome of integration if we really put our minds to it?

- A human rights based approach i.e. PANEL: Participation, Accountability, Non Discrimination, Empowerment and access to legal rights.
- Leadership buy in to the principles and outcomes.
- Co-production- health and social work working together and working differently with communities, the third and independent sectors based on equality, reciprocity, trust and mutual respect. This could include joint multi-agency training, co-location of services within communities. This must include the voices of disabled people and communities.
- Culture change is required at different levels: health has previously operated from a medical model whilst social work traditionally recognised the social barriers model to disability. Exploration

and learning together will help with this. Workforce development, staff empowerment and some attention to process and relationships is needed. Giving up power in order to shift this to disabled people and wider communities is challenging for those who may have a vested interest in protecting services and jobs. A shared mission, vision and values statement might help.

- A clear and accessible communication strategy and plan for agencies and for the public
- Building in learning from RCOP (e.g., Glasgow's cutting edge Third Sector Transformation Fund) could inform Joint Strategic Commissioning and ensure the input of service users and communities. Learning of 'what works' (e.g., the Glasgow pilots) could result in a commissioned customised menu of community, neighbourhood and appropriate city-wide specialists services e.g. carers support, community food, community transport, confidence building, social connections and voice related work. These would significantly impact on preventative work.
- Joining up not just services but structures (e.g., Community Planning, Glasgow's Independent Living Strategy, Community Learning and Development)
- Capacity building and support for the involvement and voices of disabled people and wider communities in Scotland who are users of health and social care services.

Like many policy drivers, the success of health and social care integration will depend on all of these things and more. Belief and a commitment to make it work are the starting point and culture and behavioural changes are vital. This would separate integration from other change programmes where there are massive gaps between rhetoric and reality, between the good intentions of policy makers and the realistic challenges faced by those charged with delivering on the ground.

The recipe is set for a transformative shift which could make a difference to disabled people in Scotland and to all citizens. The trick will be to follow it and not to lose sight of the very people intended to benefit most. Integration has the potential to deliver equal access for all - even those who currently experience the worst inequalities and health and social outcomes in our communities - both geographical and thematic.

Tressa Burke is Chief Executive of Glasgow Disability Alliance and Chair of the Glasgow RCOP Capacity Building Workstream Group. She is also a disabled person herself.

When the political is highly personal

John Daly offers insights as a result of his own personal experience

Do you remember how the disabled, sick and vulnerable people in this country brought the world's banking system to its knees? Well, it's payback time. Or so it would seem. Since 2008, welfare payments for the poorest, oldest and disabled have been systematically squeezed. Real wages for carers are falling and conditions becoming much harder.

The bedroom tax unfairly targeted the disabled and sick which made up for two-thirds of those people penalised by it. Welfare budgets are shrinking, closing some services entirely and driving down wages of the lowest-paid. People being cared for in their homes are losing lots of vital support and care.

As George Osborne recently announced another £55bn of cuts to come, since 2008 there's been virtually uninterrupted growth in wealth for our richest citizens. This government's economic wizardry rewards the rich further with tax-cuts, tough legislation on workers' rights and light legislation for business. They stand alone in Europe fighting against the EU to defend bankers' bonuses.

While multi-millionaires Cameron and Osborne both claimed benefits, people working in and those relying upon the care industry are witnessing Osborne and his friends in the name of 'austerity' take a chainsaw to its legs while mocking it for not standing on its own two feet.

It wasn't that long ago our care industry was growing and thriving, creating thousands of jobs while changing the lives of people society had long ignored and mostly concealed. With personal interest, I'd watched it grow since the late 1990s into something that those working in it were very proud of.

My younger brother, who hasn't walked or talked properly since he was in a car accident 46 years ago, needs 24 hour support with everything from getting out of bed, washing, eating, the toilet, communicating, socialising and to going back to bed. With a good sized family, we were able to manage all of his care and needs right up to my parents were well into their seventies. Until the late 1990s, you didn't see much if any home support for the severely disabled.

The only safety net we ever heard of were state institutions like the notorious Lennox Castle. The terrible stories of abuse and overcrowding in there were common knowledge. Originally built to hold 1,200 patients, in the 1970s it housed 1,700 crammed into wards where privacy and dignity were replaced by abuse and inhumanity.

Records show that between 1930 and 1977 over 1400 attempts to escape were made. The idea of my brother ending up there gave my parents and all parents in similar circumstances nightmares, dreading the day they'd no longer be able to look after their child. In my family, the long term future was hardly ever discussed before Lennox Castle finally closed its doors in 2002. My mum never allowed it to come up.

My brother started receiving Home Care Support about 10 years ago. My parents had resisted as long as they could. Then, initially, all they would accept were 2 hours per week. This though - as they too became less able - has slowly built up to the 24 hour home care he receives now. My mum felt blessed that she got to see my brother being properly cared for at home before she died. All her fears from 30-40 years ago simply no longer existed

Now the game has changed again and we're heading back the way. For the last 7 years, I've worked as a carer for three different employers and witnessed many people's Care Packages being severely reduced. All kinds of social services over the last few years are being cut to the core and many are simply disappearing.

Good and well established care providers (like Quarriers) are cutting employees' wages and working conditions in order to survive in a fierce competition with the cheapest. They've lost many of their projects and clients to lower bids. The process is a stressful one and confusing for clients. In one project I'm involved with, service users' needs are being reassessed (blind tick box exercise) with about 75% of them having had their hours drastically cut. Some have gone from 120 hours per week to 65, some from 65 to 17. No one has had an increase.

Other areas in this post-code health and social care lottery are doing better than

some as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation uncovered: 'Deprived areas across England and Scotland are seeing larger cuts to budgets - of around £100 per head - compared to affluent ones.'

Most of us working in care know that austerity cuts on the disabled and vulnerable don't actually save a penny. Maybe on paper, but the real figures are only known when you add in the extra cost to the NHS, which has to pick up the mess left behind, the extra social work time as service users struggle to cope, the extra emergency call-outs on care staff, GPs, nurses and in some cases, more police time, not to mention the cost in jobs.

And it isn't just carers' jobs but the local places carers would visit with the service users which will lose business. The garages and car companies are taking back mobility cars as fewer can afford them. The list goes on, but that's just finance.

Try calculating the misery service users experience faced with fewer and fewer pillars of support for basics, like personal care and cleanliness, food and rent, and human contact. Cordia staffs speak of having to zoom in and out of people's homes like you're there to read the gas meter rather than provide care. Staff turnover is rocketing, staff moral plummeting.

How many parents are starting to have the nightmares again? It's a lose-lose scenario. As well as finding the job more difficult to do in these times of austerity, carers are having the pride ripped out of the job.

You don't have to study Keynesian economics to grasp that this is the time for wise investment not fiscal austerity. Those in the care world see the results and true costs and they know. Since the referendum, a much larger number of workers understand the economic and political mechanisms that govern their life. They see where all the money created in the UK is going and they, more than most, see the gap growing wider and wider between rich and poor.

Osborne refuses to listen to the leading international economists, economic historians, the Church of England, charity organisations like Oxfam, which all point out what's required is investment not more austerity. So what chance he'll listen to the people that work in care? He doesn't even acknowledge the financial figures that show austerity isn't working, History has shown that time and again Keynes is right; austerity in boom times, investment in bust times.

John Daly is a carer and member of the Jimmy Reid Foundation project board

Can good intentions lead to good results?

Paul Arkison raises questions about the transition to merging health and social services

GM B Scotland is spread right across all industrial sectors which means when representing the members' interest, our union has a vast amount of expertise and knowledge. Representation comes in various forms, whether it is supporting individual members, participating in consultation exercises or organising workplaces so that they have the ability to collectively bargain for themselves. We pride ourselves that at least someone within our broad church of an organisation will have some experience with any matter which may arise.

When it was mentioned to me by a local GMB workplace organiser (who has a considerable amount of responsibility within the care sector) that the forthcoming changes in relation to the integration of health and social care were the most significant since the creation of our NHS in 1948, it was then that I realised that for the safeguarding of our members' working conditions and the patients which they care for, the GMB had to become involved.

There will always be an element of suspicion when large organisations come together to create, in essence, what will be a new service and that is what is happening here when NHS Scotland and local authorities come together to provide an integrated care plan.

At times, there can be further complications as the NHS areas can encompass several local authorities. For example, in Ayrshire where I am based, NHS Ayrshire & Arran has three local authorities within its boundaries (North, South and East). From my experience, it would seem that the three separate local authorities are working at different levels of speed to get their structures in place.

Not for one moment am I suggesting that these authorities should merge, but there are concerns from our members that there are many in-depth meetings and discussions taking place about the process and planning of how these new working arrangements are going to be put in place, while the actual job of working directly with the patient is not as big a priority as it should be.

Additionally, as the scope and amount of services which are being transferred from local authorities into this new

working arrangement vary from authority to authority, it will be a very difficult balancing act to get the service exactly correct for that particular area.

While all this will be on the periphery of our priorities, nonetheless they are extremely important and there is a general concern from local authorities that they may become minor partners in this partnership in comparison to the vastly larger NHS organisations.

Where does this leave the workers who provide the actual care and what changes are they likely to see?

All that aside, where does this leave the workers who provide the actual care and what changes are they likely to see? One of the concerns that unions have is the move to 'personalisation' of care. These concerns are for our members and for the people that they provide care for and their families.

When speaking to our members on this, it's clear they already provide a personal level of care for their patients and have a huge amount of trust in the wider community. We must remember carers have access to homes, medication and they have to have a wide knowledge of their patients' needs and relate this in a personal manner when they are providing care to an individual.

This is true personalisation of care, which is having a dedicated carer or health care professional having the knowledge and expertise to deal with the needs of particular patients. At this moment, it is difficult to see where the move from transferring the financial responsibility of the personal budget to the individual, which will presumably mean that they have the purchasing power, in essence, to buy their care will be of benefit to the individual. In theory, it sounds extremely positive and it is being dressed up as the individual finally getting the opportunity to choose the care that they require.

However, given the many conditions that

we as humans can suffer from and which need to be cared for, in particular those with long-term complex needs or near end of life conditions, how are individuals and/or their families expected to take on the responsibility of arranging care and with all the bureaucracy that goes with dealing with local authorities and NHS Scotland?

Our members are clear their employment lies with either the local authority or NHS Scotland and are experienced in dealing with their policies in what is already a heavily regulated profession, and by and large most workers are comfortable with this approach.

Our members will always provide the best quality of care despite the circumstances that might be placed before them, and personalisation can occur in many ways and not just through the financing of care packages (e.g., in residential care homes it could stretch to the operation and design of the building or for people in their own homes it may just be a regular trustworthy care worker who is there to provide a kind personal touch).

While the merits of 'personalisation' have yet to be tested fully, what is being presented appears to be positive in giving the individual to choose the care package that best suits their needs, union members will need to aware that they will be expected by local authorities and the NHS Scotland to make sure this transition goes smoothly.

While all the motives for this significant change seem to be good, there are views coming from a variety of sources that are questioning what will be the actual changes that patients will receive and what changes will workers have to incorporate into their duties to provide these services, and that this may just be large organisations coming together and moving accountability for care to the individual, who may already be struggling with day-to-day living.

Union officer, Paul Arkison, works for GMB Scotland, is based in Ayrshire and deal with all sectors of employment and industry.

Potential problems aplenty - it doesn't have to be this way

Dave Watson reports on research which brings into doubt whether the potential of integration can be realised

The care of older people in Scotland is a national disgrace. Fairly paid, well-trained staff on proper contracts with time to care is the very least older people in our communities have a right to expect.

Over recent years, I have written reports highlighting staffing levels, budgets, structures and care strategies. Words have been written and numbers crunched – but that doesn't tell the whole story.

I participated in a couple of care worker focus groups last year and the messages from the workers who provide care were deeply disturbing. They painted a shocking picture of care in Scotland that nobody would want for their elderly relatives. Having experienced those messages first hand, I decided we would ask a much larger group of care workers and the outcome of that work is set out in UNISON Scotland's 'Scotland – It's Time to Care' Paper.

The majority of workers believe the service is not sufficient to meet the needs of the elderly and vulnerable people they care for – both from the amount of time they can spend and the quality of care they can provide. Almost half of carers said they had limited time to spend with their clients. One in two workers are not reimbursed for travelling between client visits, while three in four said they expected the situation to get worse over the coming year. They also revealed that one in ten is on zero hours' contracts, many more on nominal hour contracts that don't reflect their actual working patterns.

Time to do more than just deliver a few manual tasks was important to staff and the people they care for. As one worker put it: 'By doing the best that we can with the time given, I'll admit I sometimes miss out a job so that I can sit for two minutes with the person receiving care. That means more to them than the dishes needing dried'.

Adequate training is another concern, particularly for newly appointed younger staff. One said: 'Staff are not receiving the training they need to carry out their roles, only the training which is low cost or has been identified as core'. Many frankly told us they will leave the sector as soon as a better job comes up. Care has become the new retail.

The isolating impact of personalisation was often mentioned and the threat of losing contracts if they make a fuss. One worker said: 'Stop threatening charities indirectly that you will take the SDS (Self Directed Support) contracts away from them and move to another provider if workers challenge decisions ... Being told by management this is the case and we all must be quiet even though the workers sole concern is for the service user they care for and want the best for them'. Some staff told me that they wouldn't even report carer abuse for the same reason.

These are the stories of front line workers that illustrate, all too clearly, what we guessed from the hard evidence. This report should be a wake-up call for the Scottish Government and commissioning bodies to take action to end the race to the bottom in care provision. Sadly, there is little evidence that they are prepared to do so.



Courtesy of UNISON

The Scottish Government is dumping the largest share of the cuts onto local government. Protecting health spending is the easy political choice, but it is council cuts that contribute towards the bed blocking that is causing so many problems in our NHS. The number of patients in hospital when they shouldn't be is the equivalent of all the beds in the Southern General Hospital. In addition, despite assurances given during the progress of the *Procurement Act*, Scottish ministers have moved painfully slowly to develop new statutory guidance.

Despite the cuts, a few councils have taken action and adopted the approach set out in UNISON's Ethical Care Charter. However in Glasgow, staff and service users have been protesting at the decision of Glasgow City Council to cut mental health services in the city, currently provided by GAMH.

It is rank hypocrisy for the council leader to announce his council's commitment to promote the living wage through procurement on one day, when the next day his council is planning to shift a service from a good living wage employer to another that isn't. And that's quite apart from the blatant breach of the statutory requirements under s52 of the *Local Government in Scotland Act*.

From April, it will be the responsibility of the new health and care integration bodies to address this issue. We recently asked the workers who will have to deliver these integrated services what they thought of the new approach. While most staff believed care integration provides an opportunity to improve services, only 6% expect conditions to improve in the next year, 68% believe the situation will get worse and 63% felt that their professionalism is or has been compromised by budget and resource limitations.

Health workers have a concern that privatisation in the social care sector will expand into community health services through integration. The private sector now employs 41% of people working in social services in Scotland, the public sector employs 32% and the voluntary sector employs 27%. The fragmentation of service delivery is causing huge practical problems for staff that have to ensure that vulnerable clients receive a service.

It doesn't have to be this way. The Scottish Government should set out clear procurement rules for care provision that should mandate:

- The Scottish Living Wage: this will help the recruitment and retention of staff and support continuity of care;
- Improved training: to ensure that care is delivered by properly qualified staff;
- Proper employment standards: ending the abuse of zero and nominal hour contracts;
- Adequate time to care in every care visit.

All of this could be done within the existing procurement legislation, if there is the political will.

Dave Watson is UNISON Scotland's Head of Bargaining and Campaigns. The reports on this issue can be downloaded at <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/socialwork/index.html>

Knowledge is power?

Chris Bartter says in a confused world of merging services, how do we find what's going on?

The complex legislative procedures that surround the care service mergers promised under the *Public Bodies (Joint Working) Act 2014* (PBJWA) are already raising fears that a web of bureaucracy may make the services so many of us rely on (or plan to rely on) far more difficult to call to account.

The merger of NHS and local government care (primarily in the area of adult and community care) brings together two major service sectors with all the attendant issues of different funding priorities, staffing levels and governance, that this creates. And, while it is a generally accepted belief that closer working in these overlapping areas is 'a good thing', the threat is that any service benefits could be gobbled up in outsourcing, creating new empires and/or using the mergers as an excuse to implement cuts.

This being the case, it is clearly an area in which access to good quality information on the processes, progress and funding of the merger process and the services affected will be crucial. It is also an area where there are - to say the least - questions about how far the reach of the primary enforceable legislation that service users and the general public can utilise - the *Freedom of Information Scotland Act* (FOISA) - can be used. There has been scant discussion on safeguarding and improving access to information as the PBJWA has made its way through Holyrood.

It may well be that an (erroneous) assumption of blanket coverage is being made, here. However, as the Campaign for Freedom of Information in Scotland (CFIS) has repeatedly pointed out, where changes are made to the traditional provision of public services, especially those that can include non-public bodies providing public services, it is almost certain that there will be gaps in the coverage, and significantly, often at the sharp end of service delivery.

Of course, many voluntary and social bodies - like charities and housing associations - are quick to point out their commitment to openness and transparency. Unfortunately, this commitment all too often comes as they advance arguments why they should not be covered by FOISA!

So, is coverage important? The CFIS thinks so. It points out that it is only

coverage by FOISA that confers the right to information on us all - anything committed too by the voluntary, private or social (non-public) sector remains at the behest of those organisations, and importantly, any dispute over release of information would be decided by the body themselves. Only FOISA coverage gives the right of an enforceable decision provided after an investigation by an independent regulator.

This anomaly is made even starker when you realise that these bodies are almost certainly covered for environmental information - under the *Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations* (EISRs).

Of course, both the NHS in Scotland and local councils, are specifically covered by the FOISA, so it might be argued that surely any merged bodies would also be covered? Well, unfortunately that remains to be seen. Despite the lengthy debates that have already surrounded this process, commitments to ensuring the right of FOI have been lacking.

Indeed, the flexibility given to local councils and NHS boards to pick from a range of governance structures, has left open the possibility of devolving care services to outside partners who may well not be covered by FOISA.

The changing nature of public service provision has proved a minefield for information rights

The changing nature of public service provision has proved a minefield for information rights, and governments have been positively glacial in their attempts to catch up. The increase in outsourcing services to the voluntary sector and the private sector (via PFI and other contracts); the use of trusts, limited liability partnerships, and other arms-length bodies to deliver services have largely failed to be addressed by Parliament extending coverage to these bodies.

Under the PBJWA, councils and the NHS have largely opted for one of two options to deliver the merged services - the

establishment of integration joint boards (IJB) (the body corporate model), or the lead authority model. Both these bodies can devolve services to more local bodies. So far only Highland has opted for the latter,

While the 'body corporate' model is a joint body established by two public authorities, (and therefore covered by FOISA), the devil may well be in the detail. It is already the case that care services which have been contracted out to voluntary and (often subsequently) private sector providers by local councils, have 'slipped through the net' of FOISA, ceasing to be covered by the Act.

The prospect of this being extended to NHS provision, and the involvement of 'commercial providers of health care services' in the strategy committees of the lead authority model (and a statutory consultee under the IJB model) leads to the conclusion that this loss of information rights could extend very quickly.

Surely, however, this is an unintended consequence of positive legislation, and one that could be easily rectified? This may be theoretically the case, but the history of successive Scottish Governments in dealing with FOI anomalies by does not hold out much hope.

After all, the government that brought forward the original legislation in 2002 promised that early attention would be given to including Housing Associations in the Act. Twelve years, one Amendment Act, two consultation processes, numerous Amendment Orders, the combined arguments of the Campaign for FOI and the Scottish Information Commissioner, a public opinion poll and at least one petition later - and we're still waiting.

The provision exists to designate such bodies via Section 5 of FOISA. So far the only new types of bodies that have been added are local council arm's length trusts - and then only those that run leisure and cultural services!

It is long past the time that a better way is found to ensure that new and different ways of delivering the services that we rely on and pay for are subject to enforceable rights that the public can use to request information.

Chris Bartter deals with communications for the Campaign for Freedom of Information in Scotland. He was formerly Communications Officer for UNISON Scotland.

Prioritising workers' health and well-being

Andrew Watterson, Tommy Gorman and Jim McCourt paint a distressing picture of the state of occupational health and safety

Workplaces have a huge and sometimes detrimental effect on employee health and safety. Each of us, in a lifetime, spends over 85,000 hours at work. At least 20% of the biggest killers are either work-caused or work-related - heart, cancer and respiratory diseases with 50,000 estimated UK deaths a year (of which 4,000 are in Scotland).

Scotland officially lost an estimated 2.1m working days due to occupational ill-health and injury. Preventing just 100 occupational cancers in Scotland would save NHS Scotland many millions and cover the whole of the annual Health and Safety Executive (HSE) budget.

Currently, NHS Scotland picks up the substantial direct and indirect burdens of such human suffering and economic loss that hits communities, carers and others with the employers responsible for creating the damage going unpunished.

Scotland has been better able to protect its health service than England but for matters still reserved to Westminster like occupational health and safety, the picture is dismal. Yet Scotland has many hazardous industries, from fishing to forestry, from quarries to agriculture as well as off- and onshore oil, and possibly fracking, which present threat to workers and communities beyond the workplace.

Workplace risks vary enormously by class except perhaps with regard to occupational stress. Those most vulnerable to many workplace illnesses and injuries and exposed to carcinogens will be in unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled manual jobs, working long hours and shifts. They will have multiple other threats to health due to poverty and location.

The HSE estimated 2m working people suffered from a self-reported work-related or work-caused illness in 2013/14. Ill-health accounts for around 99% of work-related deaths each year. It estimated each year around 13,000 work-related deaths take place; 28.2m working days lost due to work-related illness and workplace injury; a £14.2bn estimated cost of injuries and ill-health from current working conditions (2012/13).

These figures under-estimate the true toll of work hazards but, taking them at face value, the human costs of such figures are still frightening and the economic damage is catastrophic. Scotland's share, with around 2.5m people at work (8% of the workforce) is significant. Even the Engineering Employers' Federation, in response to the triennial HSE review in 2014 considered prevention of work-related ill-health should be the primary focus of HSE.

These grim statistics are made far worse by harsh and inequitable welfare policies. For example capability procedures are currently rigidly enforced throughout the public and private sector effectively rendering sickness-related absence a disciplinary issue. In many cases, it is a favoured route of dismissal particularly in the public sector where there are no compulsory redundancy policies in place. Workers could be injured or made ill at work through no fault of their own and the resultant absences then lead to a potentially fair reason for dismissal.

But there are successes we should build on. Good information, advice and support are central to the wellbeing of the workforce in Scotland. If we take workplace cancers, for example, a number of organisations in Scotland have already pioneered advice, information and support for those at work with cancer. The causes of a cancer are irrelevant to medical, health and social support needs and requirements. Yet new ways of conceptualising and addressing the way that work-related cancers hit some of the most vulnerable groups in our society merit further investigation with a view to addressing cancer in a far more holistic way - linking causes with prevention, with recognition, with compensation and with support. This requires us to examine how socially discriminating cancers relating to work are addressed in the UK and to advocate change in Scotland.

None of the major Westminster parties have protected workplace health and safety. In 2010, the UK government announced the HSE was to achieve savings of at least 35% resulting in cuts in the government contribution towards the HSE of around £80m a year by 2014/15, compared to its 2010 budget.

Frontline HSE inspector numbers continue to drop - 1,241 in 2013 compared to 1,316 in 2011. In 2012, the Prospect union found only 3 occupational physicians left and 18 occupational health inspectors in the HSE, down from 60 of each in the early 1990s. HSE's Corporate Medical Unit was also so depleted that basic cover on occupational health advice and prevention could not be provided.

Scotland had 1 part-time occupational physician covering its workforce. A recruitment and retirement crisis also exists in UK occupational medicine. A General Medical Council survey in 2014 found the number of occupational physicians, one of the medical profession's smallest specialties, was in sharp decline with just 466 doctors in 2013, a decline of 4.7% since 2010. Only public health doctors reported a steeper decline. Public health was intended by some to pick up wider occupational health and safety issues but has failed to do so focusing instead on health promotion.

Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats have all slavishly followed - and continue to follow - a neo-liberal deregulatory agenda based upon 'smart regulation-better regulation' and 'soft regulation-responsive regulation'.

In 2014, the Coalition's Deregulation Bill was approved by the Lords exempting millions of self-employed 'low risk' workers, who have an average fatal injury rate of double that of employees, from health and safety legislation. Victim blaming, behavioural safety and lifestyle approaches to occupational health and safety dominate, being not dissimilar to the wider health agenda in Westminster where certain health-damaging industries are given free reign.

It appears that the Coalition government was responsible for moving occupational health and safety out of the proposed devolution powers list. Meanwhile, the SNP and Greens supported a Yes vote in the referendum when OHS would automatically have been dealt with independently.

Labour supported the continuation of the reserved status of health and safety laws but with some sort of separate Scottish

HSE. The SNP additionally wished to introduce independent structures for oil industry health and safety. Many NGOs and STUC also supported a devolved HSE in submissions to Smith.

Scotland needs a powerful Scottish Occupational Safety and Health Act and an independent Scottish OSH Agency with adequate resources and staff, including labour inspectors, able to cut the disease and injury toll and improve well-being and more general working conditions. This would replace the dysfunctional and cowed HSE in Scotland.

The agency would be able to co-ordinate its work with other Scottish ministries and especially with the NHS, apply key principles such as the precautionary principle, forms of toxics use reduction, sun setting hazards linked to just transition, and develop multi-disciplinary occupational health teams.

The delivery of critical resources to low-income households can be improved with the opportunities provided by the Smith Commission if the necessary political will is available. The ability to develop new individual benefits and compensation

schemes that properly acknowledge the risks faced by many workers in Scotland can make two important marks.

One is to act as an aid to the prevention of hazardous occupational situations and exposures. The other is to provide an opportunity to address the gender discrimination that has always existed in the areas of welfare and compensation.

The Agency should also press for far reaching powers to make capability dismissals much more difficult by greater use of the 2010 *Equalities Act* and mechanisms like Employment Tribunal interim relief procedures. A stand-alone legal procedure is needed aimed at prevention and applied at the earliest possible upstream point.

All this needs to be underpinned by stronger engagement with unionised and non-unionised workers – as well as employers – and their communities to address work environment and related wider environmental threats to health and safety. Currently concerned communities and non-unionised worker groups are cut out of formal representation on the HSE Board.

Union safety representatives should play a key role in their own workplaces and with a legally protected roaming brief where needed to ensure best practice applies and hazards and risks are controlled. Properly resourced health and safety advice centres across Scotland are needed to reach the many thousands of workers who are not unionized and may be employed in the most hazardous workplaces.

The STUC with its special position in Scottish civic society (compared with the UK-wide TUC) has a central role to play in securing positive change in health and safety for working people in Scotland, whether in unions, or not. This can be progressed by continuing the mature objectivity displayed by the STUC during the pre-referendum period through leading an all-inclusive and ambitious national discussion on improving the future working environment in Scotland and the type of regulatory framework that will assist this process.

Andrew Watterson is head of the Occupational and Environmental Health Research Group at the University of Stirling where Tommy Gorman and Jim McCourt are visiting researchers

A very Westminster coup

Bob Thomson provides diagnosis and prognosis on the state of Scottish Labour

There have now been six leaders of the Scottish Labour Party since the inauguration of Holyrood fifteen years ago. Donald Dewar was a victim of the grim reaper, Jack McConnell and Ian Gray the voters, and Henry McLeish and Wendy Alexander lack of support from ‘comrades’ in Westminster. Johann Lamont’s downfall was made and plotted at the Palace as was Jim Murphy’s successful campaign.

Henry’s downfall was due to his support for free personal care, the major policy difference of the Scottish Executive to what was happening in the rest of the UK – this showing up was resented by the Labour Government and the majority of Scottish Labour MPs who started briefing that he was not up to the job. Wendy’s calling for a referendum on independence to challenge the SNP was slapped down by Gordon Brown and she trounced off in the huff.

Johann’s efforts were constantly compromised by Labour’s UK policies, especially on austerity and welfare ‘reform’. Who can forget Jackie Baillie exhorting the SNP Government to do more to

alleviate the hardships from the ‘bedroom tax’ while being unable to say that Labour would abolish it – it took them nearly a year to say they would!

Johann’s own statements supporting targeted benefits and on a something for nothing society did not help her image. Her position was further undermined by Scottish MPs watering down Labour’s already weak further devolution proposals – the *Herald* described them as ‘a coor and timorous beastie’. To say that she was sidelined during the referendum campaign would be an understatement.

Most Scottish Labour MPs have little to do at Westminster but complain about being ignored and to plot. When, after the referendum, the polls showed Labour support plummeting the plotting went into overdrive, their sinecures were threatened as were the chances of Labour having an overall majority in forthcoming general election.

They blamed Johann’s performance rather than their own policies. They thought the ‘big beasts’ from Westminster had taken over the ‘no’ campaign from the

junior team at Holyrood and won the referendum. They did not realise the vote had been won on fear, denigrating Scotland’s economic performance, joining with the toxic ConDem Coalition in Better Together, announcing a solemn vow which would not be kept and not understanding the backlash which many of us warned would happen.

A letter of no confidence in Johann was circulated (I understand by one of the whips). The final straw was the sacking of the party’s Scottish General Secretary without Johann even being told far less consulted – this must have been agreed by Milliband.

With Murphy standing as leader it was necessary that the deputy was an MSP or it would be seen as a complete Westminster takeover. Co-incidentally, Anas Sarwar MP announced he was standing down as Deputy and was rewarded with a junior front bench position. The circumstances truly justified Johann’s description of Scottish Labour as a ‘branch office’.

Murphy and his gang thought there

would be a coronation, especially using the undemocratic electoral college system which meant that a single MP/MSP/MEP's vote was worth that of 160 members and a minimum of 10 parliamentary nominations were needed to stand. Again they miscalculated. There were still socialists in the party and others on the soft left and the centre that understood we needed radical policies and leaders with a left track record to win back our traditional working class support. The Labour Campaign for Socialism and the Red Paper Collective lead the fight to ensure a contest and choice for members and affiliates.

Neil Findlay MSP received 12 nominations. An ex-bricklayer and teacher, he has had life experience outwith politics and with a left track record supporting victimised miners and blacklisted building workers. He stated at the outset that he wanted to put clear 'red water' between Labour and the other parties. Katy Clark MP standing as deputy received 11 nominations. A former trade union lawyer she has an exemplary record voting against invading Iraq and opposing Trident.

Sarah Boyack MSP, the centrist candidate, an ex-planner and lecturer scraped in with 10 nominations. Jim Murphy MP, ex-student activist and then party organiser with no job outwith politics received 42 nominations.

Murphy epitomises everything that is wrong with the Labour Party in Scotland. He has been closely associated with the right-wing, pro-business group, Progress, which has been the torchbearer for Blairism.

He has backed foundation hospitals and market reforms in the NHS, voted for means-tested welfare reforms that have targeted the poor and the vulnerable and supported austerity and the renewal of Trident. He has backed the disastrous Iraq War, and made it clear he would have liked to see military action against Syria last year. He was a strong advocate of university tuition fees; although for reasons of political expediency he has now done a U-turn on this policy.

Kezia Dugdale MSP standing as deputy had been a parliamentary policy assistant with a New Labour history. Though with no formal alliance, she was Murphy's running mate and received 51 nominations mainly from the same parliamentarians who supported him.

The election campaign, with the candidate's policy statements and well

attended hustings energised and involved party members and affiliates. For the first time in over a decade Labour had a debate about its policies and direction. TV and radio debates, and newspaper interviews and articles also caught the interest of the general public - many of whom had written Labour off as a party representing the Scottish working class.

The election campaign also forced Murphy to perform more U-turns than a plumber on bonus. A number of commentators described his policies position as 'adaptable'. He received far the largest and most favourable media coverage especially from the unionist/Tory Daily Mail and Daily Telegraph. However, sadly 'facts are chieftains that winna ding'. The arithmetic was always against the left ticket. Murphy and Dugdale won comfortably by even a bigger majority than I anticipated.

	MPs/MSPs	Members	Affiliated	Total
Murphy	22.36	20.14	13.26	55.77
Findlay	6.75	10.89	17.34	34.99
Boyack	4.22	2.3	2.73	9.24

	MPs/MSPs	Members	Affiliated	Total
Dugdale	28.63	22.22	12.13	62.89
Clark	4.7	11.22	21.2	37.11

Since being elected Murphy has consolidated his position - Findlay and Boyack have been given low profile positions in a front bench dominated by right wingers. Also, he has 'appointed' Brian Roy, the son of Frank Roy MP and one of his nominees, as General Secretary of the Scottish Labour Party though under the existing constitution he does not have the power to do so. This is the constitution he revised 3 years ago with Sarah Boyack to give more power to the Scottish Party and now says is not fit for purpose.

In 1997, when I was Scottish party treasurer, in the run up to the first Holyrood Election, the Scottish Executive proposed a new constitution which gave the party in Scotland control over all devolved matters. The NEC agreed this in principle but when the new constitution appeared, London had kept control. Maybe Murphy will be third time lucky!

An analysis of the votes for the New Labour candidates are damming for Labour as a party of radical change and their chances of electoral success in the foreseeable future. The parliamentarians were predictable and highlights how out of touch they are with the majority of the Scottish electorate.

The members' section vote confirmed

that a substantial majority are now 'new' Labour, many job holders/seekers and their supporters. Most left wingers have left the party in disgust and despair. Those staying are mainly older.

To me as a lifelong trade unionist, the affiliates' vote was the most worrying. Despite getting the endorsement of majority of unions, Neil only narrowly beat Murphy. Polling showed that a majority of union members voted 'yes' in the referendum and some may have perversely voted for Murphy as they saw him as an electoral handicap for Labour.

My own assessment is that many trade unionists in Scotland sickened by Labour's record and continued support for more austerity cuts, attacks on welfare and anti-union laws have given up on Labour as a party to represent the interests of working people and their families and simply

decided it was not worth voting. Hence, the low turnout in the affiliates' vote.

Despite a well organised, well-argued campaign, the left in the Scottish Labour Party only managed a third of the vote. Murphy's election as Leader has not given the party the bounce on polling that some predicted - the electorate know a snake oil salesman when they see him!

The prospects at the General Election in May 2015, the Scottish elections the next year and council elections the following do not look good for Labour. The SNP has a reasonable record, especially on social justice issues but they are too centrist and remain committed to neo-liberal economic policies. It is also starting to show 'new' Labour tendencies in party control and choice of candidates.

There are dangers to democracy with one party having too much domination. Scotland needs a real socialist alternative, and if Labour won't step up to the mark, it faces terminal decline as a mainstream party in Scotland.

Bob Thomson is a member of Glasgow Southside Constituency Labour Party and a former Chairman and Treasurer of the Scottish Labour Party.

The Scottish Greens after the referendum

Peter McColl says it could be full steam ahead for a radicalised Green party

The referendum taught Greens a very important lesson. For the first time, we talked about the full breadth of our politics. And we were rewarded handsomely for this. While the received wisdom has been that Greens always had to talk about the environment to succeed, the referendum showed that there is huge appeal to core Green policies like citizens' income, participatory democracy and equality.

In England, where Greens have been talking about core Green values, like defending public services, renationalising the railways and opposing pro-corporate trade deals, there has been a surge in membership (leading to a doubling in 2014). Greens across the UK are now approaching UKIP's membership, and are beginning to receive some media attention. This is reflected in polling that regularly gives Greens 7-9% of the vote – the first time such a radical party has scored so highly in the UK.

The radical nature of Green politics has, for too long, been lost in a complex range of managerial politics. A set of politics that marries equality to environmentalism and empowerment of workers, communities and citizens is one that Scotland needs now. And, it must be the job of Greens to provide that politics. 'Green Yes' got that right.

We all know that it is our economic system that is wrecking people's lives, and wrecking the planet. To create a fair society and a future for our planet, we must stop this system and replace it. Green politics must be about replacing capitalism with a system that doesn't destroy lives and ecology in the pursuit of profit.

The context for the referendum campaign was set by the Greens European Campaign. Setting out to change the dynamic of the debate, Maggie Chapman, as lead candidate took a strong and unwavering line in favour of immigrants and immigration. The campaign also focused up on ensuring that public services stayed in public hands and on demanding a reverse to cuts. The result was the best election result ever for Greens in Scotland – against a backdrop of falling Green votes almost everywhere else in the

UK.

Having a socialist as lead European candidate and highlighting Greens' socialist policies was an unmitigated success. With Caroline Lucas championing rail renationalisation and ending austerity at Westminster, the chance of having the Greens as a substantial party of the left in Parliament is becoming real.

It wasn't always like this. At the height of the Ineos dispute in 2013, Greens were left unable to respond – caught between a desire to resist an oligarch and a lack of any policy response. Instead we talked about allotments. At our 2014 conference, we passed a policy that would deal with the Ineos dispute through a workers' right to buy. Adapting the Italian Marcora law to ensure that workers are entitled to buy their own businesses, with support from a state-capitalised Scottish Investment Bank would allow the Ineos workers to make a compulsory purchase of Ineos. The business would then run as a cooperative. This sort of intervention could have transformed the Ineos dispute.

Greens must ensure that we keep talking about the things that are vital to reclaiming our economy for people not profit. The success in the referendum was through clear communication of ideas that resonate. We talked about our desire for a republic, with an elected head of state. We pushed the idea of a written constitution to ensure human rights are at the heart of our society. We even introduced ideas like Citizens' Income and a Scottish currency, which attracted support as people became familiar with them.

For all that Greens have talked about energy, waste and transport over the past 15 years, it is clear that just a little bit of talk about our core social justice values goes a long way in persuading people of the relevance of Green politics. While other parties can mimic the environmental policies of Greens, none of those in the Scottish Parliament can match our profound critique of the social and economic system. It's time we learned the lesson of the referendum, which is that we have much more to offer than what we've given the electorate in the past.

There are vital issues to be fought for in

the Westminster election. We can stop the renewal of Trident – one of the issues Greens will be working with Plaid Cymru and the SNP to achieve in the next Parliament.

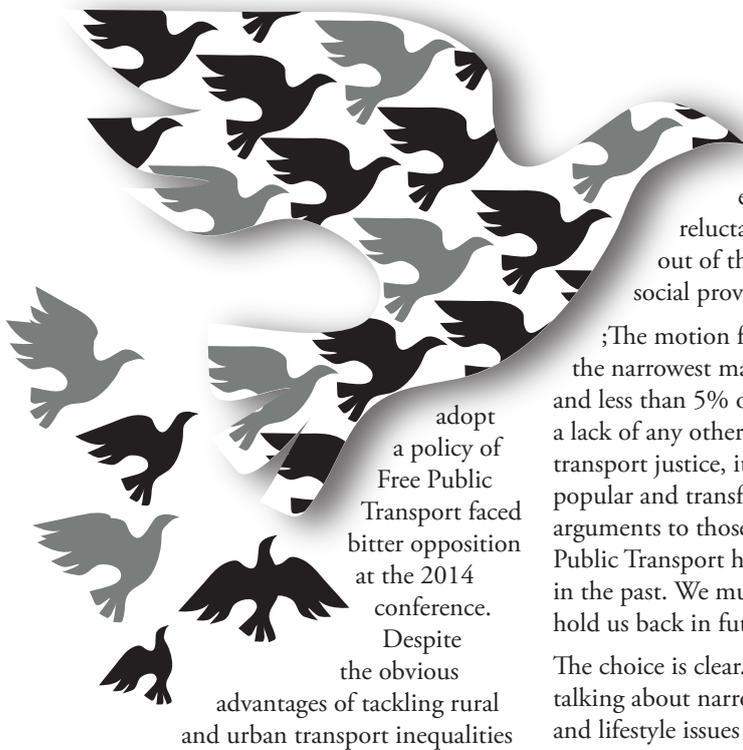
There are issues where we will use our position to transform the debate. At a time when the social security system is under unprecedented attack, we must pose the Citizens' Income as an alternative to welfare reform. This creates a different dynamic in the debate, undermines the dangerous reduction of entitlement to those who have contributed and restates the universalist principles of social security.

While the tabloid media screams about the sins of benefit claimants, it is clear that the biggest recipients of unwarranted state largesse are the big corporations. Housing benefit, income support and direct government subsidy all underwrite profits for big business. We are in the middle of a decade long period of wage stagnation. This follows a sustained period during which wages trailed the cost of living which stretches back to the 1970s. It is this reduction in the relative value of wages that has underpinned the growth in personal indebtedness. The growth in jobs has been almost entirely at the bottom end of the pay scale. Greens will be seeking to reverse this with a £10 per hour minimum wage.

At a time where Labour and other parties have fudged their commitment to social ownership of vital industries, Greens will be making the case for nationalisation of the railway companies and rolling stock. We will act to prevent further privatisation of the NHS, and Royal Mail. And we will nationalise the utilities, allowing them to focus on providing good services, rather than making profits.

We will oppose the TTIP with its compulsory privatisation clauses. We will promote renewables, defending the Scottish wave industry, not hugely destructive fracking. Greens will continue to make the case for the freedom of movement of people, and against the racist immigrant-bashing political culture that has become dominant in the UK.

Of course the move to relevant politics has not been uncomplicated. A motion to



and exclusion, creating good jobs and reducing pollution and carbon emissions, there was a reluctance to move transport out of the market, and into social provision.

The motion fell by just over 20 votes, the narrowest margin of the conference and less than 5% of those voting. With a lack of any other coherent approach to transport justice, it was a pity to lose this popular and transformative policy. Similar arguments to those used against Free Public Transport have held the party back in the past. We must not allow them to hold us back in future.

The choice is clear. Greens can continue talking about narrow environmental and lifestyle issues as a tactic to avoid

adopt a policy of Free Public Transport faced bitter opposition at the 2014 conference. Despite the obvious advantages of tackling rural and urban transport inequalities

offending people. We will then continue to bump along at 3-4%. Or, we can be true to ourselves and our politics and talk about radical democracy, equality and social justice. We can expect a raft of new seats and to make the radical changes that are so desperately needed.

The upcoming Westminster and Holyrood elections will be vital to Scotland's future. There is an urgent need for a significant radical voice at the forefront of Scottish politics. Greens have gone some way to becoming that voice. With an expanded, invigorated membership and the resources to make a serious impact in the Holyrood election the importance of putting the right policies in front of the electorate has never been greater.

Peter McColl is a leading Scottish Green Party member and a former Scottish Left Review editorial board member

For the left in Scotland, failure isn't an option

Cat Boyd sets out the case for the Scottish Left Project

The Scottish Labour Party under Jim Murphy can no longer represent its traditional working class base. Murphy is the personification of Labour's new alliances: Tories during the referendum and overall, big business across the UK. The growing strain on the union link typifies the problems of political representation of working class interests. Scottish Labour under his leadership cannot deliver a left-wing agenda.

The astounding surge in SNP membership was undeniably bolstered by their positioning as the 'social democratic' party in Scotland, having easily wrestled the mantle from a shambolic Scottish Labour. The truth, as many will know, is that the SNP is hesitant to challenge inequality on a structural and systemic level.

The idea that the current Scottish Government presents a resolute challenge to neo-liberalism against the backdrop of the influence of corporate interests is a pure fallacy. The reality is that Scotland needs a plurality of political ideologies to make the challenge to neo-liberalism effective.

For the 'yes' voters in the Labour heartlands who were motivated by the left-wing narrative of the independence campaign, rather than by nationalism, this represents an ongoing and deepening crisis

of political representation. Westminster's legacy of failure in particular areas of Scotland and a general election promising no alternative were crucial factors to the traditional Labour base during the referendum campaign.

Rejecting the tiresome low-corporation tax promises of the SNP's 2013 *White Paper*, the left-wing case for independence posed an alternative, radical and progressive programme for a newly independent Scotland. It was a vision which inspired thousands, and gave a home to trade unionists, traditional Labour voters and those who will be forever-reluctant to vote for the SNP. The Radical Independence Campaign (RIC) brought together various left-wing groupings in a spirit of cooperation, trust and mutual respect, and from this it grew.

Hundreds of thousands of 'yes' votes then represented a challenge to austerity, a demand for democracy and an opportunity for change. As socialists, we must continue to defy the Westminster logic which pronounces neo-liberalism as common sense. And, if Scotland is to change forever after the campaign for independence, the vibrancy and spirit of the left-wing of the 'yes' movement needs the power to shape our political institutions.

As the left in Scotland, we need to develop

a serious electoral challenge in this coming period. We have a responsibility to ensure that the future of Holyrood is not a Labour-versus-SNP battleground, with a gradual rightwards drift in the political narrative.

There has never been a greater need for political representation of the interests of ordinary people

There has never been a greater need for political representation of the interests of ordinary people. We need a Left in Scotland that can stand up to the British establishment, the interests of big business and rebuild a strong labour movement. Working-class people in Scotland deserve a credible, coherent, genuine left-wing voice that represents their interests.

This process of forming this left requires debate and discussion, and that is why I am a signatory to the Scottish Left Project. This is not a party, nor do those involved presume to have all the answers; but we want to begin the conversation with other socialists, community activists, trade

unions, and social justice campaigners about the best way to take left-wing and socialist principles forward into 2016. We want these conversations to be rooted in local communities.

The Scottish Left Project aims to present not just an effective socialist option on the ballot paper in 2016 but one that is broad, inclusive and accessible, as part of a project to democratise Scotland. As socialists, we desire a radical redistribution of wealth and power in society and we also need a strong voice in parliament for working-class people.

Once upon a time these could have been Labour's core beliefs, but Murphy's investiture has hollowed out that core for good. It is now our responsibility to give left-wing ideas a vehicle which can represent our desires and make the case for transforming Scotland in the interests of the many, not the few.

Our process for developing this work will be people led, rooted in dialogue and action. We want to hear what people want from a new politics. We want to have the widest possible discussion about how we can work together to ensure parliament represents the millions and not the millionaires.

This is a project that will learn from communities, engage with unions and develop from the grassroots. In 2015, we

want to embark on a tour across Scotland, where grassroots forums can be created to discuss how the Scottish left can present the best possible socialist challenge in the Holyrood elections in 2016.

Scotland is not too right wing for socialist ideas. The comparative polling for radical left parties in Europe puts us to shame and for comparable countries to our own, the radical Left polls around 10%.

If we are to accept that Scotland can be a fertile ground for socialist ideas, then we must question our current failings. The recent polling for 2016 presents a curious challenge for those radical views. The SNP is poised for victory. Scottish socialist parties sit on a combined less than 1% despite their positive impact on the referendum. The intended votes for the Greens and UKIP even outnumber declared Scottish socialists by significant margins. The party model and the vehicles we have are not working to get socialists into Holyrood.

Poor recent performances not only enforce the myth that socialism cannot flourish in Scotland - it lets down the very communities that we are supposed to represent. The portrayal of other socialists as scabs, or as traitors in the 2016 elections will cement our decay.

Throughout RIC, socialists have acted in the spirit of cooperation and trust and

have built new relationships from the ashes of old rivalries based on mutual respect - long may this continue. The legacy of socialism in Scotland in years to come will count upon what we do in the coming year. Several socialist options on the ballot paper for 2016 will come to signify our failure.

Scotland needs a new citizens' politics. The days of a professional political class running our lives are numbered. Hundreds of thousands of citizens in Scotland want radical change and their voices must be heard. Let's continue to talk, act, and work together to ensure that in 2016 there is a co-ordinated socialist challenge engrained in the communities and campaigns that are at the forefront of changing Scotland.

As socialists, we share the same aims, the same goals and the same vision for transforming society. When we acted together under the banner of Radical Independence, we proved what can be achieved with unity - rather than division. The changing political landscape in Scotland has opened up many exciting possibilities for socialists in Scotland: we must reach out and grab these opportunities and do so together.

Cat Boyd is a trade union activist, co-founder of the Radical Independence Campaign and signatory of the Scottish Left Project

Which way forward is left?

Gary Fraser surveys Scotland's radical left after the referendum

While there is no doubt that anyone who has ever lived finds their own times interesting, these are especially interesting times to be living in Scotland. The 'yes' campaign, which captured the imagination of so many, does not feel or act like it was on the losing side - witness the growth of the pro-independence parties, the recent rallies including Scotland's First Minister's tour of the country and the gathering of Scotland's Radical Independence Campaign at the tail end of a historic year.

Yet, I sense that the referendum dust is beginning to settle and we are now entering a new phase in Scottish politics. This article is concerned with how Scotland's radical left moves forward in 2015 and beyond.

Terminology is important here. By 'radical left' - and I do accept that the term 'radical' is somewhat nebulous - I am thinking of all those positioned outside the mainstream parties, including the SNP.

I regard myself, reluctantly sometimes, as a part of this broad constituency.

For what it's worth, I still consider myself a socialist, usually out of conviction, but sometimes, to paraphrase the late Christopher Hitchens, because no other label will do. Recently, an old Marxist friend bemoaned the fact that the Radical Independence Campaign had not defined its politics in ideological terms. This I believe, contrary to my Marxist friend, is one of RIC's strengths.

In an age which some political scientists refer to as 'post- ideological', ideological labels are without doubt problematic. For example, many of the people labelled 'left of centre' are quite often, complacently uncritical of the *status quo*. Rather than a genuine centre-left, they constitute more what Tariq Ali refers to as an 'extreme centre'.

The same can be said for much of what passes as 'social democracy',

once understood as re-distribution of wealth coupled with an interventionist state. Today, the most consistent social democrats I know are those who get labelled by others as being on the 'far left'.

The general point I am trying to make is that ideological pigeonholing is problematic. Moreover, I quite enjoy the fact that we live in a political world that evades capture by competing 'isms' and perhaps this is something that Scotland's new radicals ought to embrace.

The referendum has been good for the left. Just how good remains to be seen. There is an argument, and I have heard people prominent in the 'movement' make this point, that radical ideas are now a part of the mainstream. I can see why people say this, but I'm sceptical.

For me, despite the optimism generated, the 'yes' campaign represented what Ralph Miliband said, in describing another context, was a tactical difference within

a strategic consensus. That strategic consensus, if it is to have a label, can be broadly defined as neo-liberalism.

'We are not yet done with neo-liberalism' said the late Stuart Hall commenting on the financial crash of 2008. For me, as someone influenced by the Marxist tradition, I find it interesting how the dominant narrative of Scotland's radicals in the twenty first century is the narrative of Scottish nationhood.

Something significant is at work here. It is not the abandonment of socialism for nationalism as often crudely framed, but rather a response to the institutional failures and historic defeats of the traditional working class movement to change society.

Since the late 1980s politics in Scotland has been filtered through the prism of national identity. Of course, inherent in this discourse is some lazy thinking. For example, the tendency to see everything that 'Westminster' does as innately bad implies that there is something inherently good about Scotland. The fact that we Scots no longer vote Tory in significant numbers has led some of us to the conclusion that this is proof that neo-liberalism is an alien ideology imposed on 'us' from elsewhere.

I have heard key people on the left argue that Scottish independence would 'unleash the forces of social democracy', whilst others assert that the Scottish people are ready for socialism - all that is required is finding the correct vehicle. These assertions are problematic for a number of reasons.

Firstly, they ignore the extent to which neo-liberal ideas permeate the upper echelons of Scottish society, from the mainstream parties to our public sector institutions. In regards to the latter, I am thinking about the Scottish Government's obsession with managerialism in education, health and local government or the draconian cuts to budgets in Scotland's thirty two councils.

We also need to think carefully about the ways in which neo-liberal practices permeate public consciousness and behaviour, from mass home ownership to the rise of the consumer society. I often get the impression from listening to the left that neo-liberalism is something that is done to people, which forgets the fact that at root, neo-liberalism involves a complex set of internalised social relationships.

Strategic thinking about the way forward requires a broad discussion about what it

is Scotland's radicals stand for. The 2014 RIC conference spelt out clearly, and sometimes obviously, what we are against, and that list is endless.

But I can't help but think that the Scottish left is often trapped in the language and narratives of another era. For example, the constant need to talk about how much we hate Thatcher (I was 12 when she left office!) or 'new' Labour, or to construct our own politics cloaked in a romantic nostalgia for the post-war welfare state.

The 'we know what we are against narrative' can be found on many issues. It leads to a safe politics with a tendency to think in slogans. Take the issue of welfare reform for example. We know that the left is against the 'bedroom tax' or the scandal of ATOS yet the wider arguments around 'workfare' or what universalism means in a world of targeted provision are seldom discussed.

Neither have we spelled out a coherent strategy on job creation, shifting the narrative from employability, a current obsession with the Scottish Government, to decent employment and the role of the state. I am, of course, making a generalisation here, and I do accept that groups such as the Jimmy Reid Foundation and now Common Weal are starting to grapple with these issues.

Returning to more immediate priorities my own view is this: Scotland's radicals need to move beyond the national question and engage in a strategic discussion about how we best develop a radical policy agenda within the existing powers of the Scottish Parliament.

There is a sense that it's only a matter of time before Scotland becomes independent. As someone sceptical of any claims that history is pre-determined, I'm not sure I agree. But I do know this. When compared to history our own lifespans constitute the blink of an eye. The first phase of devolution lasted from 1997 until 2014 and who knows how long the second phase can last.

One way forward might be this – we need to park our current talk of 'yes alliances' and talking up spurious strategies on how we arrive at independence in five years' time. We need to get over Gordon Brown and the so-called Vow, the BBC, and the pre-

occupation with 'wiping out the unionists' at the next election. Our goal should be to develop a radical and realistic (the two are compatible) policy agenda which helps to increase the electoral representation of the radical left in the Scottish Parliament in 2016.

This strategy is problematic. My own view is that the constituencies of the Greens and especially the current crop of socialist groups are too narrow to achieve this aim to the full. The argument made by some in the SSP that socialists were excluded from the Smith Commission because the establishment was frightened of them is merely wishful thinking. The sad fact is that the SSP was not invited to Lord Smith's table because it has no parliamentary representation.

In conclusion, I came away from the RIC conference with the nagging thought that social movements are one thing, but they bring with them the danger of creating a lifestyle politics big on opposition but lacking in influence. Furthermore, social movements without democratic structures are always in danger of developing the characteristics of what Gerry Hassan calls a 'soft vanguardism'. The issue Scotland's radicals need to address is the organisational one. If we can resolve that, then I am hopeful that parliamentary representation can follow.

Gary Fraser is a PhD student at Edinburgh University

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Can capitalism really put 'All of us first'?

Philip Stott critiques the Common Weal launched by the Jimmy Reid Foundation

We are in complete agreement with the Common Weal (CW) that decisive action is needed to end 'inequality, poverty, declining infrastructure, powerless communities, closed politics, profiteering, low pay, overwork, anxiety, stress and unhappiness'. Indeed, the CW book provides quite a powerful indictment of the brutality and waste endemic under capitalism today. Its flawed approach is that it refuses to go beyond the limits of the very economic and social system that is responsible for these crimes. Instead, it ends proposing to carry through policies that would 'humanise' capitalism.

In essence, the CW hopes for a return to the era of the post-war economic 'consensus' which was underpinned by the long capitalist upswing between 1955 and the mid-1970s. During that time, at least in the advanced capitalist countries, the working class won important concessions on welfare, public services, full employment and, relatively speaking, improvements in wages and incomes.

The economic crisis in the mid-1970s brought this period to a crashing end. The capitalist class could no longer afford full employment and decent public services. How many times more so is the case today in the teeth of the worst economic crisis since the 1930s?

The CW does put forward reforms which socialists and trade unionists are involved in fighting for day-in and day-out and which form part of a socialist programme. These include a living wage and a shorter working week, tax increases on the rich and public ownership.

However, it believes that an agreement can be brokered between big business, on the one hand, and the majority of the working class, on the other, to allow a more equitable and fairer capitalism to emerge. In one telling passage, the view is expressed that: 'Success will come when we can 'coincide' the interests of different groups, seeking ways of doing things that help not one against the other but both at the same time'.

The CW argument that there are 'shared interests' of workers and big business is naïve in the extreme. It flies in the face of

the experience of hundreds of thousands of working class people in Scotland who are facing cuts and brutal austerity at the same time as the capitalists and the billionaire class get even richer at our expense.

The CW asserts that the laws of capitalism can be overcome through a consensus approach that reconciles the competing class interests of workers and the employers. One idea is the involvement of workers in the running of business through minority employee representation on boards (where the CW proposes the Danish and German models of one third worker participation on boards of management).

Socialists would counterpoise to this the demand for the nationalisation of the major companies to be put under the democratic control and management of the working class through elected committees.

The CW calls for 'All-Of-Us-First' economics where the profits of big business are shared out more evenly. Workers should be able to negotiate a fairer share 'so that more of that growth goes to wages and less to profits ... It's about helping workers to help enterprises be better.'

Socialist Party Scotland and our co-thinkers internationally fight tirelessly against austerity and for reforms that will benefit the working class. Whether it's helping to build mass campaigns to defeat the poll tax and the bedroom tax, the fight for a \$15 minimum wage in Seattle or the mass movement against water charges in Ireland.

At the same time, we consistently explain that under capitalism all steps forward for working class people are temporary. If forced to give concessions to a mass movement with one hand, the logic of capitalism is to seek to take it away with the other. This is not an argument for not fighting for improvements. In fact, Marxists are among the best fighters for reforms. What it does do is underline the need to link the fight for reforms with the struggle to break decisively with capitalism.

The Nordic countries are the ideal model

for the CW: 'Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway all exist in a Me-First world but have managed to put all of their people first in a way we can barely imagine'. This is to paint a vastly over-rosy picture of reality.

The economic crisis in 2008/2009 hit Denmark severely. Its property bubble burst, banks went under and billions were cut from public budgets. The Social Democratic-led government introduced an unprecedented austerity package in 2012/2013 that included the slashing of unemployment entitlement for workers from 4 years to 2. The result was that 3,000 unemployed workers every month lost their unemployment benefit. This was implemented alongside tax cuts for the richest.

Successive Swedish governments have been lauded by international journals of big business like the *Economist* for its cuts and privatisation programme. Sweden's 136 billionaires (more than in the UK) have almost half of the country's entire GDP. A record amount of company profits in Sweden were handed out to shareholders in 2014

The CW proposes to raise £1 billion by increasing the top rates of tax, although they don't propose any increases in corporation tax – despite the huge profits that are being made. Even this mild redistributive policy – and the other measures to increase wages for workers and to lower inequality – will be ferociously resisted by big business and the main capitalist political parties.

The elite are past masters at evading and avoiding tax and hiding their wealth in off-shore accounts and the like. This poses the need to take over the banks and the finance houses into public ownership and democratic control.

Anyone arguing for such encroachment into the wealth taken by the bosses will face howls of outrage from the billionaire class, threats to disinvest, to move abroad and even to sabotage the economy. This threat of a 'strike of capital' was precisely the one faced by the Wilson Labour government in the 1970s when it proposed to increase taxes on the rich. In response, the bosses revolted and the

Labour leaders capitulated.

Faced by this blackmail, the workers' movement needs to go further and to fight instead for the productive forces – the factories, machines, offices and resources – controlled by the capitalist elite to be brought into democratic public ownership. By owning and controlling the main economic levers – the major corporations that dominate the economy – it would immediately be possible to implement the policies outlined in the CW and much more besides.

Instead of this far-reaching but necessary policy, the CW only argues for extremely limited forms of public ownership. Public ownership of the electricity grid, Scotrail and an element of transport is about as far as the CW is prepared to go. This approach would leave the overwhelming majority of the economy in Scotland in private, capitalist hands.

The CW does not even go as far as the programme implemented by the Labour Government in 1945 that nationalised, on a capitalist basis, around 20% of the economy. Key sectors such as oil, energy, transport, manufacturing and finance should be publicly owned and controlled

and managed by the working class – with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.

This would need to be combined with full government control of incoming and outgoing foreign trade, enabling a democratically elected government – and the working class, not the market – to control imports and exports including capital. This would provide the possibility of developing a democratic socialist plan of production that could very quickly transform the lives of millions.

Instead of such a plan, the CW believes it's possible to cajole and encourage business through more regulation and tax regimes that would encourage it to move in a more progressive direction.

There is an old saying that Marxists often use: 'you can't control what you don't own'. If the majority of the economy is left in the hands of capitalist interests then planning production to protect the environment, to create full employment and a living income for all would be impossible.

Socialism would also be far more democratic than capitalism. A socialist government would draw up a plan

involving the whole of society. Through elected and accountable committees everybody would be able to participate in decision-making about how best to run society. In contrast, the CW puts forward cosmetic changes that would not deliver genuine democracy for the majority.

Ideas such as 'participatory budgets' where local communities vote on where and what to spend money on would in practice just now mean deciding where to make the cuts. No CW proposals would fundamentally impinge or alter the power of big capital and capitalist governments.

So to re-iterate, many CW policies are welcome but to deliver them and more besides needs a mass movement against austerity and the building of new mass working class parties with socialist policies both here in Scotland and internationally. Then the task of liberating humanity from degradation and the horrors of capitalism can truly begin.

Philip Stott is the national secretary of Socialist Party Scotland (the Scottish affiliate of the Committee for a Workers' International). A longer critique of the Common Weal was produced in June 2014 and can be read at www.socialistpartyScotland.org.uk

A very ferry failure?

Mick Cash asks whether the SNP will carry on privatising Scottish ferries

Ahead of the next two years of national elections, it is vital for the left to look at the Scottish Government's record in areas of transport where powers have been fully devolved for some time. Scottish Ferries is one example where the record since the 2011 Scottish parliament landslide is one of privatising a public service.

Lifeline ferry services are split into two contracts, one for the Northern Isles (north east coast to the Orkney and Shetland Isles) and the larger Clyde and Hebrides network along the west coast. In May 2012, then Transport Minister, Keith Brown, announced that the Northlink ferry services were to be privatised and Serco were to be awarded the 2012-2018 NorthLink contract and would receive over 27% (£53m) more than the public sector operator, CalMac, received for the previous 6 year contract.

And what has been the result for passengers and workers of this privatisation of Scottish ferry services? An instant attack on jobs and pensions, resulting in RMT taking the first

industrial action on Northern Isle ferry services for over 30 years. Whilst the jobs could not be saved, the action was successful in persuading Serco to honour seafarers existing pension rights.

For passengers, Serco's commitment not to raise fares before 2014 soon proved meaningless when a 2.8% increase for travellers between the mainland and the Orkney and Shetlands was announced, along with cuts to services without a whimper from the Scottish Government. Concessionary tickets for school parties and pensioners have also increased in price, along with a thoughtful interior re-design that prevents passengers from sleeping on sofas and charges them for using the toilet.

Private profiteers like Serco who have no record in maritime transport but are seeking to expand into all areas with guaranteed streams of taxpayer and passenger revenue, will currently be preparing their bids for the 27-route Clyde and Hebrides contract, operated at present in the public sector by CalMac.

Successful union pressure, led by the

late RMT General Secretary, Bob Crow, persuaded the Scottish Government not to 'un-bundle' routes and to delay the re-tendering of this locally and nationally vital network, although it was sure not to concede the point that constantly re-tendering these lifeline public services misinterprets EU law.

CalMac has a realistic chance of winning the Clyde and Hebrides contract from 2016 (yes, shock horror, the public sector can bid!) but the composition of the 'Expert Ferry Group' appointed by Keith Brown to advise the Scottish Government on ferries policy is a serious cause for concern. Not only is there no worker representation on this group, long term supporters of ferry privatisation, such as ex-SNP Councillor Roy Pedersen are well represented, along with the Chamber of Shipping.

The Scottish taxpayer has invested nearly £800m since 2000 in new vessels, repairs, maintenance and the ports and harbour infrastructure. New vessels are on order for the Clyde and Hebrides network and the Scottish Government's Ferries Plan

commits to expenditure of around £310m on specific projects to 2025. The private sector has no other motivation beyond profiting from these lifeline services and the decades of public investment in them.

Similarly, CalMac's record of investing in the next generation of seafarers puts private ferry operators, with illustrious international reputations, to shame.

The maritime skills base is under threat after years in which the shipping and financial services industries have enjoyed the bonanza from the Tonnage Tax but refused to recruit UK seafarers in the number required to avoid a deficit in

five years' time. Over 200 ratings and 100 officer cadets have been taken on by CalMac in the last five years, in effect making the Scottish public sector the only operator taking concrete steps to recruit the next generation of seafarers to operate, maintain and service the ferries relied upon by isolated communities all year round.

The recent SNP reshuffle has seen Keith Brown land the Cabinet post for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities, with Derek Mackay, widely regarded to be on the right of the party, replacing him as Transport and Islands Minister. Again,

this is not the action of a party convinced of the case for public ownership of lifeline public services in Scotland.

The SNP in Government has privatised every ferry and rail contract that has come up for renewal since 2011 and could be responsible for privatising the entire Scottish ferry network ahead of the 2016 Holyrood elections. Let's hope that the SNP government can charter a more progressive course and ensure a legacy of sound investment in ferry services and seafarers that remain in the public sector.

Mick Cash is the General Secretary of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) Workers

Who is watching the detectives who watch us?

Niall McCluskey argues there is a need for the police to be not just better policed but also better led

Police Scotland was founded on 1 April 2013 but the concept upon which it was based was discussed long before that. One of my late father's duties in his job at COSLA was the policing brief and he discussed with me the idea of a unitary force many years ago.

My father - an advocate of a unified force - argued that it made no sense that Scotland a country with a population lower than New York City had eight police forces when New York had one. There seemed an inexorable logic then and I believe there is now that Scotland should have only one police force.

However, we are less than two years into this brave new world of Scottish policing and already serious concerns have emerged about the manner in which the new force is going about its business. The U-turn reversing a policy of sending armed officers to routine incidents by Sir Stephen House was an embarrassing climbdown for the first ever Chief Constable of Police Scotland.

This fiasco raised serious questions about the way Police Scotland is operating. It appears Police Scotland lacks appropriate accountability. Sir Stephen appears to have been able to radically change police culture without any oversight from the then Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Kenny MacAskill.

I am not advocating political interference in police practice but an issue of this magnitude ought to have been at least discussed by politicians and explained to the public. The Scottish Police Authority

(SPA) appeared to have been asleep on the job whilst this debate has been raging. If Police Scotland is to regain public confidence then the SPA need to do its job and monitor Sir Stephen's decisions. Scotland does not have a gun culture. Therefore, Sir Stephen's original decision is utterly mystifying.

Also, Police Scotland thus far has produced an astronomic stop and search rate. The SPA discovered that the rate of searches carried out was nearly nine times higher than the rate in the New York Police Department. Again the SPA failed in its duties because this staggering comparison never made it into its final report.

Surely, the time has come for stop and search to be reviewed and placed entirely on a statutory footing. It is inconceivable that there is a justification for stop and search in Scotland on this scale. Nearly 85% of the 42,826 consensual searches carried out in August and September 2014 were unsuccessful. In the year to April, this policy cost the taxpayer £11.3m. This policy is expensive both in terms of money and public confidence.

Other concerns relate to issues such as the previous long term tolerance of sex workers in the Lothians, abandoned by Police Scotland which has created unnecessary tensions among officers and in local communities. The tolerant approach appeared to be working. No credible reason has been produced for changing it.

Furthermore, Police Scotland have

been accused of excessive surveillance apparently at times viewing about 1,000 emails, texts, phone calls and social media messages in just one month. Whilst accessing data on communications is a legitimate part of Police Scotland's work, one has to question surveillance of this magnitude. Again it is the scale of intrusion by Police Scotland without apparent justification that is a cause for concern.

These and other issues paint a picture that Police Scotland has asserted itself as a heavy handed and overbearing institution. I can understand the need for a new organisation to make its mark with the public but it needs to rethink their approach in order not to lose the faith of the people it purports to serve.

A colleague of mine told me recently that his 17 year old son had been stopped and searched by the the police for no reason. He had tried to bring his son up to respect the police. However, his son's respect had diminished due to this incident. The only outcome from Police Scotland's excessive authoritarianism is likely to be less and not more respect for the police. The integrity of Police Scotland is clearly vital to our criminal justice system in Scotland. Therefore, it is vital that Police Scotland focuses on serving the community - and not oppressing it.

Niall McCluskey is an advocate

Fatally flawed by inadequate attention to feasibility

Jim and Margaret Cuthbert analyse the Smith Commission report

The Smith Commission report had a mixed reception in Scotland and in the rest of the UK (rUK). There is a widespread view in Scotland that the proposals are far from enough: a view with which we concur. Meanwhile, in England, there is a concentration on Cameron's response of 'English votes for English laws'.

However, one fundamental flaw in the Smith report is its lack of attention to detail: this is despite Smith saying that the proposals were agreed on the basis of top expert advice. This failure to deal adequately with detail is in itself a result of the unsatisfactory and undemocratic nature of the process, in which a small group of politicians were given an inadequate timescale to come up with proposals. The result has been that some significant technical issues have either been glossed over, or entirely ignored. We argue this is likely to prove fatal.

Some of the issues which the Commission has skated over were pointed out in submissions made by the public or interested groups. Examples are the problems of exactly how to index the reduction to the Barnett Block Grant if the Scottish Government is given extended tax raising powers of its own: the problem of likely fluctuations in the tax base if income tax is used as a major source of funding for the Scottish Parliament: and the problems that would arise if the tax base for which the Scottish Parliament was given responsibility intrinsically grew less fast than the corresponding tax base in the rest of the UK.

Particularly disappointing, and of major importance, is the failure to give the Scottish Parliament adequate economic powers to grow the tax base on which it will have to rely: Smith signally fails to address the difficulties posed by giving the Scottish Parliament responsibility (for a given tax base), without power (to grow that tax base).

All of the above issues were identified, for example, in the submission which we made to the Smith Commission on behalf of the Jimmy Reid Foundation: and no doubt other submissions among the 407 from civic institutions and 18,381 from

members of the public raised similar points.

The specific problem we want address here, which we call the 'gearing problem', seems to have escaped general notice. It has the capability of blowing the Smith proposals, and indeed the union itself, apart – particularly in the light of Cameron's typically opportunistic response to restrict decisions on income tax rates in the rUK to rUK MPs.

So what is the 'gearing problem'? Suppose that the Scottish Government was given responsibility for funding devolved spending out of the income tax it raises itself (as well as out of other smaller taxes for which it has responsibility) and out of the reduced Block Grant determined by an adjusted Barnett formula.

Particularly disappointing, and of major importance, is the failure to give the Scottish Parliament adequate economic powers to grow the tax base on which it will have to rely

Income tax is going to be a major component of the Scottish government's funding: according to Government Expenditure and Revenues, it amounted to nearly £11bn in 2012-2013. Approximately 7.2% of this is income tax levied on savings and dividends. So the total expected income tax receipts from non-savings, non-dividend income tax in Scotland is around £10bn. Total expenditure within the control of the Scottish government and local authorities is nearly £39bn. Thus, if the Scottish Government set income tax rates at the current UK levels, then income tax is going to fund about 26% of that public expenditure in Scotland within the control

of the Scottish Government

For the rUK, income tax is one of the revenue streams which contribute to the funding of general public expenditure: that is, not only those services for the rUK like health and education which are devolved in Scotland, but reserved services for the whole of the UK like welfare, defence, and foreign affairs. Rest of UK income tax funds about 19% of all of this expenditure.

Also suppose that, under Cameron's law, it is only rUK MPs that are responsible for setting rUK income tax rates. Suppose, as is very plausible, that a right wing majority of those MPs decide to implement a significant cut in income tax rates, and have a corresponding reduction in public expenditure.

Suppose, for example, there is a 5% reduction in rUK income tax receipts as a result, and further suppose that the corresponding reduction in public expenditure is spread evenly over not just domestic 'devolved' services in rUK but also over 'reserved' services like defence, social security etc.

Since, as we have seen, income tax funds 19% of this expenditure, the result would be a $0.05 \times 19\%$ cut in this expenditure, that is a fall of 0.95% in expenditure, and hence, specifically in expenditure in devolved services in the rUK.

Now consider Scotland's position. If the Scottish government does not match the cut in income tax rates by the rUK, then the Scottish economy is likely to be at a chronic disadvantage: ultimately, any Scottish Government would have to follow suit if the rUK was pursuing an aggressive policy of cutting income tax rates.

But if the Scottish Government does adopt the same cut in tax rates as the rUK, and if that reduces Scottish income tax receipts by the same 5% as in the rUK, then since income tax accounts, as we have seen, for 26% of the funding of the public expenditure under the control of the Scottish Government, then the cut in Scottish Government public expenditure will be 1.3% – namely, a 37% larger cut than in similar expenditure in the rUK.

This is what we mean by the gearing effect. This kind of arrangement would put Scotland in an intolerable situation. The gearing effect would mean that an income tax cutting policy in the rUK would force upon Scotland either disproportionately higher tax rates or disproportionately greater cuts in public expenditure.

And in the situation where, English may wish to voters want to punish Scotland for the referendum result, the potential for doing precisely this through the gearing effect of income tax cuts, would not be lost on right wing English MPs.

Indeed, if the public expenditure cuts funding the reductions in rUK income tax rates were loaded disproportionately onto reserved functions such as defence or social security, Scotland could be penalised at little or no cost to rUK devolved services.

The Smith Commission report does not spell out this problem of gearing; but on the other hand, there is evidence to suggest that they are aware of the problem (see paragraph 95.4(b): 'Changes to taxes in the rest of the UK, for which responsibility in Scotland has been devolved, should only affect public spending in the rest of the UK. Changes to devolved taxes in Scotland should only affect public spending in Scotland').

The most obvious interpretation of this provision is that a change in rUK income tax rates should not be used to fund, or should not be funded by, changes in UK wide services like defence or social security. If implemented, it would mean that rUK income tax receipts, (or, more specifically, the non-savings/non-dividend element of these receipts), would be hypothecated to funding rUK only services – which effectively, are those services which are devolved to Scotland.

The result of implementing this provision would therefore be to solve the gearing problem. So although the Smith Commission did not specifically spell out the implications of the gearing problem, the circumstantial evidence of paragraph 95.4(b) suggests it was aware of it.

Given that the Smith Commission did not specifically identify the gearing problem, the critical importance of paragraph 95.4(b) is not at all then obvious, meaning there is every danger of this clause being overlooked when the Smith Commission findings are legislated upon. It is of fundamental importance for Scotland that this does not happen.

What Smith missed, however, are the

difficulties of implementing the provisions of paragraph 95.4(b). It is very difficult to see how the principle underlying paragraph 95.4(b) could be implemented without putting in place a fully federal system. Let's follow the chain of logic which points to this conclusion.

If 95.4(b) holds in any meaningful sense, then there would have to be a ring-fenced rUK budget for 'devolved' services in rUK, which (leaving items like council tax out of the equation for simplicity) would be funded from rUK Block Grant and rUK income tax revenues. This then raises a number of questions.

Who would make the decisions on how this budget is spent? Since one of the major sources of funding for this budget (namely rUK income tax) would be under the control of rUK MPs and since the services funded by this budget will be solely rUK devolved services, the only satisfactory answer would be that rUK MPs make the spending decisions.

Then, what would be the relationship between the rUK Block Grant and the Scottish Block Grant? One possibility that would be consistent with the vow to retain Barnett would be that changes in the Scottish Block Grant would be related to changes in the rUK Block Grant via the Barnett formula.

This, however, would operate in a significantly different way from the Barnett formula as envisaged by Smith. Since the relationship is now between rUK Block Grant, that is, (rUK public expenditure minus income tax), and the Scottish Block Grant, there would be no need for the kind of complicated abatement to Barnett envisaged by Smith.

Also who would set the rUK Block Grant? This could not be a decision that was left to rUK MPs. If this was the case, then Scotland would have no democratic influence on how the major part of its funding was delivered. So at the very minimum, decisions on the size of the rUK Block Grant would have to be made by the whole UK Parliament.

Yet this would be barely satisfactory – given the numerical preponderance of rUK in the union. Leaving this problem aside for the present, what we have as very minimum as a consequence of the paragraph 95.4(b) principle is a situation where the whole UK Parliament sets the Block Grant for rUK, (and via Barnett for Scotland), while the group of rUK MPs decides on a) the rUK rate of income tax, and b) how the rUK budget for devolved

services is spent.

This is, to all intents and purposes, a federal system. It appears to be the very minimum which is consistent with the principle so glibly enunciated by Smith in paragraph 95.4(b).

In terms of feasibility, this poses major problems. This type of federalism goes far beyond anything envisaged by Smith or the UK parties, and is unlikely to be acceptable to English MPs. Yet it is also unsatisfactory for Scotland.

In a federal system, the over-arching federal body has to be sufficiently wise and impartial, or has to be constituted of sufficiently balanced competing interests, that it can be trusted to make fair judgements about the transfers of resources among members, and other key decisions (like monetary policy) for which it will be responsible. Given the numerical preponderance of English MPs, Scotland could not trust the Westminster Parliament to fulfil this role.

Overall, therefore, the gearing issue is fatal for Smith. The bland wording of paragraph 95.4(b) conceals a veritable 'Catch 22' situation. If a solution to the gearing issue is not found (by implementing something like 95.4(b)), then giving Scotland control of income tax would put Scotland in a disastrous situation, where hostile rUK MPs could remorselessly drive down public expenditure in Scotland.

At the same time, it is impossible to see how paragraph 95.4(b) could be implemented without putting in place a genuinely federal structure for the UK as a whole and is unlikely given the disparity in size between Scotland and rUK. On this basis alone, the central plank of the Smith recommendations relating to income tax is unworkable. So while there are many good items in the Smith report, inadequate attention to detail fatally undermines its whole foundation.

Jim and Margaret Cuthbert are independent economists

Book Reviews

Restless Land: A Radical Journey Through Scotland's History

(Volume One, 500AD – 1914),
Alan McCombes and Roz
Paterson (9780992898311, £9.99)

Reviewed by Alex Miller

In 'The Future Results of the British Rule in India' (published in the *New York Daily Tribune* on 8 August 1853), Karl Marx makes the following assertion about the effect of Great Britain's conquest of India: 'Modern industry, resulting from the railway system, will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power'.

By introducing 'modern industry, the British thereby lay down the material basis for the development of India's productive powers and their eventual appropriation by the Indian people.

However, Marx asks: 'Has it [the bourgeoisie] ever affected a progress without dragging individuals and peoples through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation?' Capitalism, thus, generates progress, but does so at the expense of 'individuals and peoples' - misery and degradation are the price of historical progress within class society.

Although Marx is only mentioned a few times in this absorbing new book, his insight into the double-edged nature of historical progress in class society is never far away, and one of the book's great virtues is that it gives a compelling account of Scottish history from the perspective of those paying the price for progress in blood and dirt.

It covers a huge amount of ground – almost 1500 years – in under 300 pages, and that it does so with style, wit and limpid clarity sets it apart from the dry tomes that put many people off history before they are out of school.

Many pivotal moments in Scottish history prior to the incorporation of the country within Great Britain are covered: the

capture and execution of William Wallace, the defeat of Edward II by the armies of Robert the Bruce, the victory of 'fire and brimstone' Protestantism in the Scottish Reformation, and the Witchcraft Act of 1563 with the ensuing liquidation of some 5000 unfortunates suspected of being agents of Satan.

The book gets fully into its stride with the Union of the Crowns in 1603. James VI of Scotland (James I of the 'United Kingdom of Scotland and England') is the villain of the piece. A paedophile, misogynist, upholder of the divine right of kings and contemptuous of his homeland, 'he was a pioneering British nationalist before such a political entity existed'.

Indeed, 'From the outset, the idea of a united Britain was a monarchist project, driven by the king and his close disciples. His vision was not an equal union, but a greater England, with Scotland relegated to the status of a northern annex'.

The result was disaster: Scotland was dragged into England's war of conquest with Ireland, riven with internal cultural strife (James hated Gaelic), and driven to the brink of economic ruin. Following the disastrous reign of Charles I and the English Civil War came the 'Glorious Revolution' in which William III replaced the ousted (Catholic convert) James VII (II).

There was little glorious about it: it was 'intensely conservative and largely concerned with property rights and privileges that had little or no radical content'. In 1698, Scotland attempted to found a colony in Central America (the 'Darien Expedition'). Outraged, William 'ordered all English colonies in the Americas to resist and destroy the colony'. The failure of the Darien expedition was a disaster for the Scottish economy. In 1701, Westminster passed the Act of Settlement, banning Catholics from the throne. William had no Protestant heir, and the Act effectively ended the Stuart line in favour of the German House of Hanover – a decision affecting the Scottish crown that went over the head of the Scottish Parliament, which defiantly rejected the decision.

The Westminster Aliens Act of 1705 required that Scottish nationals in England were to be treated as aliens, causing anti-English riots in Scotland: 'Among the mass of the population, England was viewed in much the same way as the state of Israel is viewed in Gaza and the West Bank today'. It was in these unpropitious circumstances that the scene was set for the Treaty of Union in 1707.

How did it happen, given that 99% of the broad mass of the population and initially a majority of Scottish parliamentarians, were against it? The short answer is: by bribery, bullying and fear. (Sound familiar?). Members of the Scottish Parliament – Burns's original "Parcel of Rogues" – were showered with titles and riches: to avoid the incensed public, pro-union MPs had to be smuggled into the parliament via underground tunnels such as the unpopularity of the Treaty. When it was eventually passed, bells were rung throughout England. In contrast, 'In Scotland, there was no flag waving or cheering – only the mournful cry of the wind and rain'.

The received wisdom concerning Treaty of Union is that it was a pragmatic but nonetheless progressive move in which national sovereignty was sacrificed in return for a share of the loot from England's burgeoning empire. The authors reject this: 'Far from liberating Scotland from the middle ages, the union created a stalemate state which centuries later still has one foot mired in the fusty clay of feudalism'.

The book acknowledges the role that Scotland – and in particular Scottish soldiers – subsequently played in the blood-soaked British Empire and its war crimes. Nor does it ignore the fate of progressive movements in England (Peterloo and the Tolpuddle martyrs are featured), but the focus of the book from the Treaty of Union onwards is social resistance within Scotland to the hegemony of the Empire and its ruling class, especially where this resistance is fused with national consciousness.

Matters covered include the 1745 Jacobite uprising, the Highland clearances, Thomas Muir, the radical uprising of 1820, Irish immigration, Keir Hardie and the founding of the Labour Party, Womens' Suffrage, and much more. The book ends in 1914 with the outbreak of WW1 and the burgeoning resistance in Glasgow that was to flower into Red Clydeside.

The union brought progress to Scotland, but at an enormous price in human suffering: the genocidal aftermath of Culloden, the forced emigration of the clearances, the hell of unchecked industrialization in the central belt, environmental despoilation, depopulation, endemic poverty, religious sectarianism and the hundreds of thousands of men, women and children maimed, widowed, orphaned or killed in Britain's bloody wars of imperial conquest.

The book's message is that progress needn't have come at such a price and that it needn't do so in the future. Marx would agree. His article quoted above concludes:

When a great social revolution shall have mastered the results of the bourgeois epoch, the market of the world and the modern powers of production, and subjected them to the common control of the most advanced peoples, then only will human progress cease to resemble that hideous pagan idol, who would not drink the nectar but from the skulls of the slain.

You don't need to drink nectar out of a skull, and progress is possible beyond the monarchist UK. *Restless Land* is a riveting, expertly written work of popular history that deserves a very wide readership. Part II will cover 1914 and onwards, and will be eagerly awaited. It is available from <http://www.calton-books.co.uk>

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The Liberty Tree: The stirring story of Thomas Muir and Scotland's first fight for democracy

Murray Armstrong, Word Power Books (www.word-power.co.uk), 2014, £11.99

Reviewed by Stewart Maclennan

2015 marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Muir of Huntershill, a truly iconic figure of Scottish radicalism. A leader of the Friends of the People, Muir was an early victim of the ferocious and venal despotism of Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger and his Home Secretary and Scottish 'branch office manager', Henry Dundas.

Muir's advocacy of democracy and his identification with the causes of the French Revolution and Irish nationalism brought down upon him in 1793 the draconian punishment of transportation to the penal colony of Botany Bay for fourteen years. The same fate swiftly befell his fellow Scottish radicals, Rev. Thomas Fyssh Palmer and William Skirving, together with the fraternal delegates of the London Corresponding Society to the Friends' Scottish Convention, Joseph Gerrald and Maurice Margarot. Later would follow the United Scotsmen organiser, George Mealmaker.

The mastery exercised by Dundas over

power in Scotland was affected through two essential controls. The first was a franchise so restrictive as to scarcely merit the name, held by a fraction of a percent of male property owners. This created a complaisant bloc of government supporters among Scottish MPs, the beneficiaries in turn of a self-promoting network of oligarchies in the burgh corporations.

The second was a judiciary serviced by a coterie of similarly disposed sheriffs, over whom Dundas sensibly installed as Lord Advocate his nephew, Robert Dundas. The latter would become the prosecutor – and persecutor – of Muir, manipulated at all stages by his uncle. Surmounting the majesty of law in Scotland was the Lord Justice Clerk, the grotesque and capricious Robert MacQueen, Lord Braxfield, described by his adversary Henry Cockburn as 'coarse and illiterate', and by Robert Dundas himself as 'violent and intemperate'.

The purpose of the exile of Muir and his comrades is comparable to that attributed to Mussolini in jailing the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci: 'We must stop this brain functioning for twenty years'. Indeed, this and other shattering blows to the democratic spirit engendered by the American and French Revolutions would prove to have short-term effect. But the example of the Scottish Martyrs was held close by the nascent Scottish working class, and became a banner flourished in both the insurrectionary movements of 1820 and the mass reform and Chartist agitations of subsequent decades.

Muir himself was indomitable: defying the legality of his sentence from the outset, he escaped from his Australian prison to make landing on the west coast of America, seeking sanctuary with the Spanish rulers of what is now California. *En route* to Spain, Muir found his ship under attack by the British: facing recapture he took arms on the Spanish side and survived, though suffering a hideous facial injury which cost him his left eye. Received with honour in the France he had last seen in the year of his trial, he immediately immersed himself in Scots and Irish exile politics, only to die suddenly in 1799 aged only 33.

Such a life might seem to render fictional portrayal redundant, but Murray Armstrong has devised in *The Liberty Tree* 'a historical novel with scholarly apparatus attached' in the words of Scottish Marxist historian, Neil Davidson. This innovative approach enables the construction of an

integrated narrative of the life, times, movements and ideas of Thomas Muir, drawn from meticulous international research.

The circumstances of Muir's short but turbulent career necessitate Armstrong's use of '... a little imagination to drive the narrative along ...'. The author's hope that the historical record is not thus injured is vindicated. The occasional instance of stilted dialogue and discordant idiom should not detract from Armstrong's achievement in producing what is arguably the most substantial and comprehensive record of the life of Muir now available.

Christina Bewley's *Muir of Huntershill* (1981), provided Muir's biography while diminishing the historical significance of the man and the movements he represented. Hector MacMillan's *Handful of Rogues: Thomas Muir's Enemies of the People* (2005) sought to reinstate and amplify both. The *Liberty Tree* drives home MacMillan's riposte, and gives us not only the man, but also the cause memorialised in the Edinburgh artist, John Kay's, portrait of Thomas Muir: 'Illustrious Martyr in the glorious cause of truth, of freedom and of equal laws'.

Word Power Books (an enterprise of Edinburgh's radical bookshop) is to be commended, too, for making available this notable presentation of a key episode in Scotland's radical history in a sound, attractive format at a reasonable price – an example to be followed by other publishers in the field of popular history.

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VLADIMIR McTAVISH'S

Kick up the Tabloids

'This is our Clause 4 moment'. These are the words Jim Murphy uttered as he took over as leader of Scottish Labour. It's always a good way to get voters on-side, by evoking memories of the exact point in history when your party gave up on its founding principles.

But what has been the effect on those voters? Has there been a 'Murphy bounce' since Jim took office? Yes, there has. According to a recent opinion poll, two percent of more voters are now less likely to vote Labour.

I found it surprising to discover that Jim Murphy is a fanatical Celtic fan - especially as he strikes me as being the 'Ally McCoist' of Scottish politics: put in charge of a once-great Scottish institution, for decades the most powerful in the land but now on the skids because of years of successive mis-management, a lame-duck leader who inspires confidence in no-one.

Indeed, it's hard to say whose prospects for 2015 look bleaker: Labour or Rangers. Next May could be a painful time for both of them.

'We don't do walking away'. That was Super Ally's catchphrase back in the dark days of liquidation three years ago. He seems to have spent virtually all of December trying to walk away, but not quite managing to do so, doubtless uttering, 'We don't do walking away unless you've got a spare four-hundred grand to give us'.

McCoist is now, to quote the Rangers board 'on gardening leave'. How many businesses as cash-strapped as Rangers can afford to pay someone £ 800,000 a year to do his own gardening? How big is his garden for God's sake? Backroom staffs on the minimum wage are made redundant, yet one employee is paid £274 an hour (or roughly forty times the living wage) to do a bit of gardening.

'We don't do walking away. We do gardening' is doubtless Ally McCoist's new catchphrase, as we head into 2015. And, as we do so, here are some of the more memorable quotes of 2014. Prizes for those who can guess all of them correctly!

'The frustration is that we won'. That was Alastair Darling reflecting on how victory for 'no' in the referendum had led to Labour's slide in popularity. Although, having seen his performance throughout the referendum campaign, it could have been that he had been trying his best to lose all along.

'London runs Scotland like a branch office'. This was Johann Lamont complaining about being told what to do by London. If you don't like being ordered about by London, a simple solution would have been to vote 'yes'!

'There is within our friends in the Scottish Nationalist Party a suggestion that Londoners were culturally, politically and economically divorced from the rest of the country.' That was Boris Johnston at the Tory party conference.

We don't think that about all Londoners, Boris. Just the nasty, right-wing careerists who pretend to be loveable buffoons. Look out of the window, Boris, and you'll see plenty of people in London, who are culturally, economically and politically divorced from the London you inhabit.

'We're not genetically-programmed in Scotland to make political decisions'. Poor Johann Lamont again! Strange that someone not genetically-programmed to make decisions should object when other people make the decisions for them.

However, my favourite quote of 2014 has to be this from George Osborne, when he chose to paraphrase the opening lines from *Trainspotting*: 'Choose jobs, choose security, choose prosperity, choose investment, choose fairness, choose freedom, choose David Cameron, choose The Conservatives, choose the future'.

It isn't this quote itself which I find amusing, but Irvine Welsh's reaction to its use by Osborne at the Tory conference. When asked what he thought of his work being paraphrased, he was short and to the point: 'I'd rather leave Fred and Rose West in charge of my childcare than be plagiarised by that cunt'.

I can't really follow that! Happy New Year to you one and all!

Vladimir McTavish will be hosting a new political comedy show at The Stand Comedy Club, Edinburgh on Wednesday 21 January 2015. Further details on www.thestand.co.uk



Campaigners protest at Downing Street ahead of Osborne's Autumn statement
Photo credit: Jonathan Stead

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



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

Mick Cash, General Secretary

Peter Pinkney, President