

# Scottish **Left** Review

Issue 87 June 2015 - £2.00

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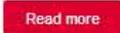
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# Comment – Dark, difficult days ahead

We are entering a period of dark, dark days. There will be storms ahead and maybe some chinks of light, even a little bit of sunshine. But the forecast is a not a good one, make no doubt of that. The outcome that almost no one thought possible – a majority Tory government – gives us not just five more years of austerity in the public

sector, five more years of wealth inequality and more and deeper attacks on worker's rights, repeal of the Human Rights Act etcetera but also something worse, namely, the Tories' ability to go even further and faster than before in implementing their neo-liberal agenda. Get ready for bigger and faster cuts, bigger and faster wealth

redistribution from the poor to the rich and so on.

Yet it will not be all entirely plain sailing for the Tories. While Labour and Liberal Democrats are unlikely to provide much opposition over the coming months on account of not just their meltdowns but also their leadership contests and similar policies to the Tories, the clamour for independence will go up another notch as a means to evade this rampant neo-liberalism. It will go up a few further notches as next May approaches, with the SNP's dominance in Holyrood likely to be solidified and, probably, extended too. A little further down the line, the Tories will have to deal with their by far most contentious issue – membership of the EU – when the in/out referendum takes place. Despite the failure to breakthrough at Westminster, UKIP still gained nearly 4m votes so this will give confidence to the Tory 'little Englander' brigade to their work.

What has happened in Scotland will renew the long running Edinburgh Zoo panda joke. Now, it's not just applicable to the Tories but also the LibDems and especially to Labour (given Ian Murray's constituency is Edinburgh South). Hats off to the SNP's formidable party machine for not being disorganised and disillusioned by the referendum result as well as to Nicola Sturgeon for proving that she did not have a poisoned chalice in her hands courtesy of Alex Salmond and his over-exuberance. She's gone from the portrayal of the rather cold, austere 'wee Scottish wife' you would not wish to have a 'stairheid rammy' with to a minor cult leader and celebrity of 'I'm with Nicola' fame.

But far greater political acumen has been shown by Sturgeon and the SNP in stealing the clothes of 'old' Labour which Labour left lying around while simultaneously not providing a genuine, full anti-austerity agenda. Not so much a case of the Emperor's new clothes as austerity would have been slower and lesser under SNP plans but still a form of austerity nonetheless. And certainly not social democracy nor socialism either.

Of course, Labour gave the SNP the helping hand and ability to do this. The manifesto Labour fought the election on was a relatively progressive one (no matter what was also not in it) when compared to what the Tories had on offer. Thus, Labour would repeal Health and Social Care Act, establish a public inquiry into blacklisting, freeze energy bills for two years, build 200,000 homes every year by 2020, scrap

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the non-dom status, abolish employment tribunal fees, give zero-hours workers a contract after three months, cap rent rises, introduce a mansion tax and re-introduce 50p top rate of income tax.

The problem is that there were loads of other and bigger things in Labour's manifesto that undermined all this, most obviously, fiscal prudence so that virtually no new spending would be incurred. Any increases in budgets in one area would come from cuts in others. 'Austerity with a red rosette', 'Red Tories' and 'austerity-lite' were among the various epithets given to this. A political party cannot expect to win voters to its cause with this small array of progressive measures in the six months running up to May 7 when for the last five years its message has been austerity via fiscal prudence.

Recalling an elementary marketing nostrum: Labour's brand or product was not clearly enough differentiated in the marketplace from its main rival, the Tories. In other words, Labour lost the campaign well before it really kicked off in January 2015. Labour should have been miles ahead of the Tories and stayed there had it offered a social democratic programme (never mind a socialist one). In doing so, Labour managed to undo a time honoured tradition of basking in anti-Tory anger.

The foreseeable and still important role of the overwhelmingly Tory press should have been factored into Labour's strategy. It abetted Cameron's fear tactics of SNP MPs controlling a Labour minority government which cost Labour votes in middle and south England.

Back in Scotland, Jim Murphy suffered much the same fate. No matter how radical the recent words coming out of his mouth were – and they were quite radical and much more so than those from Miliband – he was simply not believed. Scottish Labour had become so corrupted by its adherence and accommodation to neo-liberalism, this being so splendidly personified in the figure of Murphy himself, that hundreds of thousands deserted Labour.

The challenges for the SNP are many and varied. Its strategy was based upon being able to support and shape a Labour minority government in terms of some broad political agreement and on a 'confidence and supply' basis. Even though it did better than it expected, the SNP now has to deal with a majority (albeit small) Tory government. It is thus unlikely to be able to deliver much in the way of solid-cum-material gains in the Westminster system (especially on any anti-austerity

basis), and it is this which may explain Nicola Sturgeon's emphasis on making 'Scotland's voice being heard'. Here having one's voice being heard is necessary but not sufficient to affect change – indeed, sometimes having one's voice being heard comes to be a (very poor) substitute for affecting actual change.

But politics is never that straightforward. The above expression of voice without affecting change could lead to the accusation of the 'feeble fifty six' but in the short-term it is more likely that the SNP will be seen as the Scotland's 'doughty defender' as not only has Labour in Scotland been all but wiped out but also because the SNP's definitions of 'Scotland's voice' and 'Scotland's interest' will be couched in terms of claiming to be socially progressive against the nasty, neo-liberal Tories. This is at least going to protect the SNP in the short-term from a serious backlash by being castigated for being noisy but largely ineffective. Indeed, the SNP is wise enough to be able to use this situation to create an opportunity to increase its majority in the Scottish Parliament come the May 2016 elections as well as in a second referendum.

But the SNP will face two pressures. Firstly, to make clear its intentions -and any attendant timescale - on a second referendum. Salmond and Sillars are already leading the charge here but will it be in the SNP's 2016 Holyrood manifesto? Secondly, to outline how material conditions will improve upon enhanced devolution. Any steps toward some kind of full(er) fiscal autonomy to raise all taxes and to spend all taxes will inevitably raise questions about how to stop austerity. Will the SNP be prepared to raise taxes, used progressive taxation, end the subsidies to the rich, employers and so on? Here, a left in the SNP has a critical role to play. Some of the left has either departed the SNP (John Finnie, John Wilson, Jean Urquhart) or been marginalised within it. Others nominally on the left toe the party line. Among the new crop of MPs, it will be interesting to see how the likes of Tommy Sheppard and Chris Stephens organise themselves and what demands they raise. Beyond these, it is unclear what the left in the SNP is or looks like.

Crisis and failure do not just abound for Labour – they are there too for the radical left and the social movements. After the worst economic, financial and political crisis for generations – aka the crisis of neo-liberalism – and followed by five years of austerity courtesy of the ConDem coalition, the showing of the radical left at the polls was worse than abysmal. It is

simply not good enough to talk about how the results for 2015 help the lay the groundwork for the coming battles because this merely absolves the radical left for taking responsibility for the mess it's in right now. Yes, there are certain objective factors like the strength of the media, the power of employers and the hegemony of neo-liberal ideas. But politics is a two-sided coin because there is also the subjective, namely, how lacking in credibility the radical left is and how self-inflicted many of its wounds are. If the prospects for resistance and radical were as good as the radical left made out in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014, how come there was no sign of this in 2015?

The biggest social movement is still the union movement. It remains something of a sleeping giant - or a giant with feet of clay depending on your viewpoint. The defeats suffered over pensions, job cuts and pay freezes since 2010 (especially in the public sector) did not lay out the basis for providing an assertive challenge to the political parties and the political system. Neither did the lowest level of strikes for generations between 2010 and 2015 either. This was all the more true for the various initiatives and proto-social movements that the various unions supported like the Peoples' Charter, Coalition of Resistance, National Shop Stewards' Network and Peoples' Assembly against Austerity. They have all failed to become what they wanted to be and what they needed to be – mass, vibrant, popular and, critically, effective, anti-austerity movements.

And the majority of the unions (by membership) are affiliated to the Labour Party. They failed to get (policy) value for money with their funding of Labour's election campaign, indicating the iron grip that exists at the top of the Labour tree. Conference policy is still routinely ignored, National Policy Forums account for little and even the Parliamentary Labour Party has been usurped by the leader's office. Of course, many moons ago this happened to the National Executive Committee. Democracy is not a Labour strength.

There is no sign that much is likely to change with the replacement for Ed Miliband. A party so dominated by the right (Blairites, social liberals etcetera) is not suddenly going to vote for a left candidate (even if one could be found and get onto the ballot paper in the first instance). A new 'new' Labour is on the cards led by any of the current declared and undeclared contenders, unless things really do change.

So will the unions make sure someone like John McDonnell gets on the ballot paper this time round? Will they learn from their mistake in 2010 in voting for Ed Miliband, and naively convincing themselves he was a break from 'new' Labour even when McDonnell espoused the very policies union supported themselves? Or will Unite decide to disaffiliate after not only giving Labour millions in what Len McCluskey often called 'the fight of our lives' but also McCluskey promising that if Labour lost disaffiliation would be up for serious discussion.

In Scotland, can Labour listen and learn in the way in promised to but did not after 2007 and 2011? Will it also move to become a new 'new' Labour Party? Or could an independent Scottish Labour Party emerge which reconstitutes itself as social democratic (aka 'old' Labour) and in time for May 2016?

Murphy thinking he can remain Scottish leader, being supported by the right wing, and many on the left thinking the annihilation in the election was an aberration by traditional supporters who have been conned by the SNP rhetoric and will more or less return to the fold when SNP fail to deliver highlights the denial of reality within Scottish Labour.

The following articles on the outcome and

implications of the election touch on these issues and more. We hope the breadth and depth of treatment allows readers to be stimulated and informed. But before turning to them, this editorial makes three specific appeals in this new political era we are now in.

The first is for content – what are the issues you would like to see Scottish Left Review cover, who would you like to see write them and how would you like to see the issues approached? Suggestions not on a postcard - but instead by email (g.gall@bradford.ac.uk).

The second is that we want more interaction with our readers and subscribers – so please email us your thoughts and reflections - your diagnosis and prognosis – in the form of a letter of up to 400 words on what challenges the left faces in getting back on the saddle. Email g.gall@bradford.ac.uk

The third is as you might expect is a plea for money. We have expanded to a regular 32 page format to provide the space for discussing and debating what needs to be done and what the left needs to do in the coming months and years ahead. This always comes as a cost in terms of production outlays. Please donate to the magazine at <http://www.scottishleftreview.org/join-us/> (at the bottom left hand of our front page on the web).

## Looking at things from a different angle

In my editorial, I made the correct - but standard – left wing case for why Labour lost. But we can also try to get at the answer about why Labour lost by asking the question: 'Why nearly 11.5m people in Britain voted Tory?' Was it because they support the austerity agenda? Was it because they are not affected by the austerity? Or was it because they benefit from the growing wealth inequality that austerity brings and are experiencing the fruits of what economic growth that there is? These questions are important because we can only get so far in understanding what happened south of the border by saying that if Labour had been more like the SNP down south then it would have triumphed. Recognising that the Tories have a parliamentary mandate – albeit not a popular mandate – is important in trying to judge what level and success of resistance we can anticipate in the months and years to come in the 'belly of the beast'.

## Scotland at a train station of choice

Chris Stephens argues Labour's train wreck was a long time coming but out of it can come hope

Weather metaphors have been considerably overused by those analysing the SNP's general election landslide. In seeking to understand the events of the past two weeks, the metaphor of the juggernaut seems more appropriate. Tsunamis and earthquakes are difficult to predict, create massive damage and involve lengthy rebuilding processes. Only that last element of a freak weather disaster applies, particularly for Scottish Labour, with internal self-destruction adding to external pressures.

Juggernauts are powerful vehicles that represent people's hopes and prayers, literally pulled along by thousands of people as a symbol of collective hope. Not to take this metaphor too far, of course, but mass participation in the political process during the independence referendum produced engagement on a scale redolent of the birth of the labour movement and that led to the SNP landslide. No wonder many professional pundits and Labour 'strategists' failed to grasp the new political

dynamic in Scotland, rooted as they are in the narrow machine politics of the 1980s and 1990s.

What many observers outwith Scotland did not appreciate is the long slow process that produced 56 SNP MPs elected on massive swings on a scale unprecedented in British political history. It's arguable that the decline of Labour and the rise of SNP has its roots in the 1970s – the point at which political change became inevitable in a rapidly shifting post-industrial landscape.

The problem for Labour arose when the party became led by fixers, not visionaries, whose paramount concern has been controlling the party machine and agenda. The party became closed to all possibilities other than what serves the needs of the leadership and hostile to any other views or alternative visions.

No wonder civic Scotland looked askance upon being informed that Labour 'delivered' the Scottish parliament. This rather overlooked the role anyone else played.

Devolution created new opportunities for dialogue, a space outside the Westminster bubble where alternative views could be heard and proportional representation delivered diversity in party dynamics in Holyrood and local government.

All this time the sands were shifting under Labour and the 2011 result is testament to their failure to engage and realise there was a disconnect with the people that was more fundamental than results in electoral cycles. Then came the indyref. The mobilisation of previously disengaged people by the 'Yes' campaign uncovered a hunger for change and the campaign effectively used social media and more conventional meetings to reach many who previously had no idea that other people shared their views to question the *status quo*.

Bypassing the mainstream media which was largely hostile to independence was a necessity that enabled a profoundly empowering process as small groups of people started to interact with one another

without being guided by power brokers. It was nothing less than a collective self-generating movement of political education and organisation via Twitter and Facebook.

The reality of the 'No' vote meant many woke up on the morning of September 19 disappointed, but not defeated. What many in the political class and commentariat failed to grasp was that 'Yes' energy and activism was now looking for an outlet. There was a surge in membership of all parties who campaigned for 'Yes', and the unions experienced mass requests for opt-outs from Labour at the same time as the SNP trade union group membership exploded.

Many people made a conscious choice in the lead up and on May 7 to join and/or vote SNP to send a message to Labour and the political elites that they didn't believe the *status quo* was good enough. We know that many have 'lent' us their vote and support and are looking for us to deliver, and reserve their right to exercise different choices in the future.

This is the challenge we face, to stay grounded and remember that people have placed their trust in us as the party that can redress inequality and injustice at a time when the most ideological Conservative government is preparing an all out assault on the rights and freedoms won by the labour movement.

The SNP trade union group now has more members than Scottish Labour and next month will convene to decide how to move forward both in organisational and political terms. It is not a union but a network of SNP members who are in unions and do not believe that the historical Labour link is working.

This is an argument which some of us have been making for a long time, and is increasingly shared across the spectrum on the left in Scotland. I would also add that there are those in other parts of the UK that question the validity and relevance of the link – my comrades in Plaid and non-Labour party activists in England for

example. The FBU and RMT have already concluded that their campaigning and negotiating is best done independently.

We are poised to see a historical realignment of union structures and funding change to reflect their views of their members who no longer trust in Labour *per se*. Where I believe there is a constructive way forward is if all who wish to resist the attacks on working people and their rights are able to come together and seek that common ground to fight the austerity agenda.

Scottish Labour's greatest failure is to deny the possibility that other parties, especially the SNP, have something to offer in that struggle. Tribalism is destroying Labour in Scotland, but in order to be an effective opposition to the Tories in Westminster, I hope it recognises it has an opportunity to work with us to seek that common ground for common good.

*Chris Stephens is the (SNP) MP for Glasgow South West. He was previously a senior UNISON lay official in Glasgow City Council.*

## Producing a progressive alliance

Shona Robison argues the SNP can be a central force in forming an anti-Tory alliance

During the election we spoke about our desire to build a progressive alliance at Westminster to lock the Tories out of office. While Scotland voted for that change, Labour failed to win sufficient support in England – which is a matter of regret.

Those now arguing that Labour needs to be more Blairite to return to power are deeply misguided - they need only look at the huge success of the SNP in standing on a platform which was unequivocally anti-austerity.

Indeed, I note that Diane Abbott, in the days after the election, said that Blairite critics of Labour's election campaign 'dismiss the fact that the majority of the Scottish electorate voted emphatically for a party with clear left wing policies on, among other things, austerity and scrapping Trident. We are asked to believe that Labour voters in the west of Scotland voted SNP because of a mysterious mystic nationalism'.

We are disappointed with the Tories' return to power, but our determination to work with others of progressive opinion across the political spectrum, in and out of parliament, remains undiminished.

Over this Westminster Parliamentary term, we will build alliances to argue for the protection of the vulnerable against deeper welfare cuts, we will seek to defend our human rights protections, to halt further privatisation of the NHS and to safeguard the UK's place in Europe.

We will be a constructive, principled, determined and effective opposition to the majority Tory government - and we will seek to be so on behalf of people, not just in Scotland, but right across the UK.

We have wasted little time in this. Within a week of the election result, the First Minister had held her first bi-annual meeting with the STUC. A new Memorandum of Understanding was agreed which reflected our commitment to work together to make Scotland's opposition to further austerity heard.

The STUC also agreed to join with us in calling for powers over the minimum wage, trade union and employment law, health and safety law, equalities legislation and for greater responsibility on welfare to be devolved as a matter of priority to this Parliament.

For Scottish Labour to want to leave these powers in the hands of a UK Labour government was perhaps understandable – albeit not a position I agreed with – but for Labour to argue that these powers should remain in the hands of a majority Tory government with no mandate in Scotland would be inexplicable to most people across Scotland.

Yes, we can try to mitigate the worst excesses of the Tory governments attacks on the poorest in our society as we have done

with the bedroom tax, but surely it is better instead to have the powers over welfare here in Scotland so we can abolish the bedroom tax once and for all.

Scottish Labour needs to decide whether it will put aside the tribal politics of the past and join with us in demanding these key powers are transferred to the Scottish Parliament, so we can build a successful and fair economy that benefits the many, continue to invest in our public services and protect the vulnerable by providing the support they need, which is the hallmark of a socially just society.

*Shona Robison is Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport. She is the MSP for Dundee East.*



# Stopping the fallen idol falling further

Ian Davidson says by only returning to its past can Labour reclaim the future

Labour in Scotland owes an apology to the party and the labour movement throughout the rest of Britain for its abject failure in the general election. Not only did its incompetence lose Labour forty seats in Scotland but it also cost Labour seats in England and Wales as the Murdoch coalition of the SNP in Scotland and the Tories in England, working in a symbiotic relationship, was able to create and capitalise on two opposing nationalisms to benefit the rich and powerful throughout Britain.

Of course, too much cannot be made of a single election. The disaster of May 2015 cannot be laid at the door of any single leader or any single campaign – it has been a long time coming. The puzzle is: why were the warning signs not heeded? For a long time, Labour in Scotland has been blighted by the four C's: complacency, conservatism, cronyism and careerism.

In addition, the left throughout these islands has failed to adequately respond to our local manifestations of the tide of nationalism which has been sweeping Europe for many years now. At a time when the collectives of community, church and shared experience are being swept aside by atomisation, we have not adequately recognised or responded to the need for an alternative form of collective identity which has often expressed itself in the politics of place and race.

Labour in Scotland had decayed to the point where it was unclear what it stands for. It lacked what George Bush called 'the vision thing'. It fell back on a combination of a cobbled together shopping list, some of which was progressive and excellent, but lacked coherence, and a reliance on policy by focus group. Together, they lacked both consistency and direction.

Thus, we started our campaign aiming to attract back the 190,000 or so Scots who had previously voted Labour but voted 'Yes', and ended up begging 'No' voting Tories to vote for us tactically. This mechanistic, patronising approach led to us having as our flagship policy the proposal to allow alcohol into football grounds. On the basis that the 190,000 were overwhelmingly men, between the ages of 25-55, from the West coast, who liked football, we needed a football issue to run with. Allowing alcohol at football grounds was a football issue – thus it would be our policy.

Similarly, our desperation in the closing days, when we were seen to be sinking fast, to attract tactical anti-SNP Tories and Liberals led us to identify fear of a second referendum as a concern of this group and led us to highlight this as one of our big ideas.

Apart from being entirely negative (vote for us to stop something), it also led to the absurdity of a poster denouncing a second referendum on independence being launched in the most strongly 'Yes' voting ward of a strongly 'Yes' voting constituency, without any discussion or consultation as to whether this would be helpful.

Which is why I didn't attend – but my presence wasn't required anyway – it wasn't designed to help me. I wasn't one of the chosen few candidates who were being provided with an abundance of resources while others struggled. Labour's campaign must be one of the most blatant examples of cronyism ever seen in politics.

Ed Miliband and Harriet Harman resigned as leader and deputy leader despite having increased Labour's seats and share of the vote in England and Wales. Similarly, Jim Murphy was right to go, eventually, since the first step in getting Labour in Scotland going in the right direction is to stop it going in the wrong direction. We have to start re-building, whilst recognising the emphasis that we have had for years on organisation rather than ideas is misplaced.

While I understand the Blairite obsession with valuing what can be counted and of targets, it is no use being on the doorstep without a clear set of policies to propose. Anyway, it is extremely arrogant to assume that voters can be 'turned' by a brief conversation with a Labour canvasser on their doorstep, as if they were a previously blank sheet, simply waiting for us to arrive with the correct lines.

The reality is that we lost the air war, because we were short of ideas, as well as being out gunned by a far, far superior SNP propaganda machine, which managed to

create its own facts, never mind opinions. We do not even have the numbers to mount substantial doorstep campaigns. No wonder party membership figures are a secret – so low as to be embarrassing, even including the bogus members recruited under the 'buy a branch' scheme, who are essentially sleepers, only activated for selection conferences.

Labour needs to be much clearer as to what it is for. This will require debate and discussion at a local branch level. We have to go back to having political discussion and the passing of resolutions, which are then not simply discarded into the bin marked 'Policy Forum' but circulated in order to try and genuinely involve members in developing policy proposals.

We need to engage more with the community – when I first became a councillor, Labour had members in all the tenants' associations, residents' groups, local unions and every other organisation where local people were to be found. Not in a mechanistic, artificial way, but as a real and vibrant part of these organisations. People saw Labour membership, membership of a tenants' association and membership of a union as being different facets of the same struggle to improve the lives of ordinary working people.

The road back for Labour will not be easy – but we have to start by recognising just how far we have fallen.

*Ian Davidson is the former (Labour) MP for Glasgow South West*



# The road back to radicalism

Katy Clark calls for democratic reforms to return Labour to its radical roots

As the dust settles on the general election results, Scottish Labour has some serious thinking to do. The results in Scotland were devastating for Labour not just in Scotland but also at a British level.

For those of us who believe that the focus of politics must be class, and not nation, and that the lessons of history show us the importance of solidarity, we also need to have a serious debate about how we reclaim Scottish Labour to be a radical party with a serious thought through agenda to redistribute wealth and power and to work with all those engaged in building a strong and effective labour movement.

Scottish Labour needs to reflect on why the electorate in Scotland was largely not prepared to listen to anything that Labour. In many ways, Labour's manifesto lacked coherence with a strong enough economic narrative but it was more left wing that it had been for many years and had much in it which should have been easy to get support for.

But people were not interested. They didn't want to talk about whether the policy offer was better than the SNP's or not. Nor did they care that the SNP copied selective bits of Labour's redistributive manifesto which they thought might be popular - such as the 50p tax rate. Many had already given up on Labour and moved on.

South of the border, the vilification of the SNP by the Tories and their poster campaign - of Miliband firstly in Salmond's and then Sturgeon's pockets - in the marginal seats Labour needed to take to form a government seems to have been effective. Labour colleagues reported this fear of the SNP as a reason people who had been identified as saying they would vote Labour did not. Of course, the Tories also used this threat as a way of whipping up English nationalism to get votes back from UKIP.

Many on the left in Scotland clearly found the SNP's offer attractive. For some who supported 'Yes', presumably they saw the SNP as a vehicle to continue to make the case for independence and for a second referendum in the hope of a pro-independence outcome - as well as a way to have a go at Labour.

However any serious analysis of the SNP shows it is far from an anti-austerity party for it has also bought into the neo-liberal economic model. But there is no

serious analysis or consideration on basic issues such as redistribution and class. For wherever you stand on the national question and however you voted in May this does not bode well.

The immediate reason for Scottish Labour's appalling results may be the handling of the referendum campaign, the decision to take part in Better Together and the legacy of 'new' Labour. The erosion of trust in Labour since the Iraq war weakened the reservoir of support.

Labour needed to focus on the positive case for voting Labour to have any hope of winning over those who we needed to vote for us to keep the seats we had held in 2010 and maximise what could be done to achieve a Labour government.

The negative campaigning against the SNP with the rehash of the independence referendum arguments (like the falling oil price and full fiscal autonomy) must have pushed some who had felt they had 'voted SNP' by voting 'Yes' in the referendum into voting SNP at the election. Labour would have been far better on focusing on why we needed a Labour government and why that would make a difference to people's lives.

The Westminster leadership took for granted a repeat of the strong showing for Scottish Labour in 2010. Over the last 5 years, it focused on marginal seats in England, failing to recognise there was an alternative in Scotland which people saw as social democratic.

The perception was that the SNP was more left wing than Labour. I don't accept this but voting alongside the Tories on the welfare cap, the charter of budget responsibility and Trident did little to dispel this impression.

Scottish Labour needs not just to focus on getting not just the right messengers but also the right message. We need to re-equip ourselves politically. We need members and trade unionists democratically

involved in that process and to do that we need to see the return of regular wide ranging policy making conferences. In our internal structure, we need a focus on political education to arm people for the fight ahead.

We must be free to pursue the policies decided at Holyrood and Westminster. As a start, we need a recall conference which gives our members the power to determine policy and ensure that the party leadership acts upon it.

Whether it is how we bring the energy sector into public ownership and under proper accountability; how we start a massive council house building programme; how we regenerate our communities with policies for jobs and growth or how we stand up to an austerity agenda wherever it comes from, the debate needs to start now.

We need to focus on what is politically required to be done. That means a return to our socialist roots and the vision of a very different world.

*Katy Clark is the former (Labour) MP for Ayrshire and Arran (2005-2015)*

## Scottish Left Review

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# Reflecting on Westminster 2015

Maggie Chapman sees hope amidst the calamity of Tory rule

Election night is always a strange, somewhat surreal experience, watching the future of a country unfold in the midst of bleary eyed, tired campaigners, anxious candidates, and earnest counting agents. As the results unfolded in the early hours of Friday 8 May, it felt like there were two elections happening: one in Scotland, which was a changing of old order for new, and one in (most of) the rest of the UK where the old order was being strengthened, reinforced, and seemingly further entrenched.

Neither result was supposed to happen. Both results were shocks of a kind not seen in British politics for a very long time: the Scottish election because of the scale of change, and the English election because of its outcome. The different political landscapes between Scotland and the rest of the UK create a uniquely dynamic political environment - one I think no one really knows how will play out over the next months and years. In some ways, that is up to us on the left. It is a challenge but also an opportunity.

I am still reeling somewhat from the English result. I am very, very angry because I know the Tory majority will result in people dying. And, I am angry because of the failure of all of us on the left not to be able to convince enough people that our anti-austerity message had to win. The polls got it wrong in England because they misunderstood how differently Labour and Tory voters would act: overestimating the Labour turnout and underestimating the Tory turnout. In seats the Tories won, turnout went up. In seats Labour should have won, turnout went down.

It is clear that Labour voters didn't vote because Labour had comprehensively failed to give people anything to vote for. Austerity-lite is not an attractive option to those who oppose austerity, nor is it desired by those who see the cuts as vital to securing an economy for the wealthy. Conversely, the Tory voters turned out in their droves, because they are terrified of us Scots, wanting to break up Britain. So the context of the general election across the UK was clearly last year's independence referendum. This gave unionists a scare - 55% was less than they wanted. It was not a clear enough victory to put the question of Scottish independence to bed for a generation. It kept alive the hope in many of us that, although we had lost the battle, we might yet win the war.

This is partly because of the diabolical way in which senior unionist politicians acted: before the referendum, promising us the world and, after the referendum, reneging on those promises. We only have to look at the ways in which Labour and the Conservatives collaborated in the Smith Commission process to understand just how little stock they held in any of the grand promises and gestures made.

And we, the radical movement of the independence campaign, changed the framework within which the referendum was fought: from discussions of Scotland retaining NATO membership and cutting corporation tax of 2011 and 2012 to a Scotland fighting to save the NHS, introducing free childcare, and creating a new politics and a new Scotland.

**It was not a clear enough victory to put the question of Scottish independence to bed for a generation. It kept alive the hope in many of us that, although we had lost the battle, we might yet win the war.**

This gave the SNP the platform it needed to do so well. Labour was powerless in the face of such a vision of hope. In many ways, the election proved Ralph - father of Ed - Miliband right when he said that the left could never win through Labour because it has so bought into the Westminster way of doing politics. Ed Miliband became utterly incapable of offering the case for change: neither the economic nor constitutional change we all seek fits in with what Westminster wants. The SNP showed that, because it isn't tied into the broken beast of Westminster, it could not only make the case for economic and constitutional change in the direction we all wish to see (even if it does not go as far as we might

wish) it can do well and win.

It is tempting to say the election results prove that England and Scotland are different. In some ways, some of us might wish that to be the case. But I'm not sure it does. Social attitudes surveys and the like indicate that people north and south of the border share some of the same values and ideals. Remember that Scotland elected a UKIP MEP last year. Sure, there will be some distinctions, but they aren't great enough to deliver the yellow-blue divided world that we now inhabit. What matters is the freedom that the SNP has by not being bought into the Westminster system. This gives me some cause for hope. There is common ground that we must build with our comrades and friends south of the border, and of course in Wales, and perhaps even in Northern Ireland. We must use this to resist the devastation that is heading our way.

With the new cabinet, the moves to abolish the *Human Rights Act* and abandon any semblance of union legitimacy, and so on, the prospects are terrifying. We have to mobilise against these neo-liberal attacks on citizens across Britain. And we, the left in Scotland, can show the same leadership that we showed in the run-up to the referendum, now on a much greater scale, working with others who share our aspirations for the creation of a just alternative.

Greens must be central to this. We are the only ones to the radical left of the SNP in both the Westminster and Holyrood parliament. We have electoral legitimacy and policy positions to promote a strong, people-focused and democratically accountable economy in Scotland and the rest of Britain. And, we will work hard to build the movement for radical change over the coming weeks and months.

*Maggie Chapman is the co-convenor of the Scottish Green Party and a councillor in Edinburgh. She also sat on the Smith Commission.*



# Organise against Tory austerity now

Jim McFarlane calls for an enlarged anti-austerity political party

The stunning realisation of another planned five years of savage Tory austerity is quickly giving way to an upsurge of anger. We need to build a movement of the organised and the unorganised that can defeat the attacks the working class collectively face.

Despite their electoral victory, the Tories have little or no mandate for their policy of 'planned poverty'. With a single seat in Scotland and the lowest share of the vote since 1865, the Cameron government will be seen as illegitimate.

Across the UK, only 24.2% of the registered electorate voted Tory - the lowest share ever for a Conservative government. Moreover, it will be a weak administration prone to splits and divisions over issues like Europe. As well as the inherent likelihood of 'overreach'; launching one attack too many and repeating the fatal mistake of Thatcher who was brought down by mass non-payment of the poll tax.

The twin arms of our movement, the political and the industrial, must be organised to their full capacity to ensure this government of millionaires is defeated. First and foremost this means calling a 'council of war' of the unions to prepare mass, coordinated strike action.

The union movement must meet the threat of a new round of brutal anti-union legislation - which includes an anti-democratic onslaught on the right to strike - with urgent preparations for a 24-hour general strike. Its collective power should be mobilised to the full. That means the type of coordinated ballots and then strike action we saw on November 30 2011.

Except this time, the action cannot be called off after firing the first shot. We need a sustained campaign of ongoing and escalating action until the austerity onslaught and attacks on the right to strike are defeated. There will also be struggles on a range of other issues, in particular over benefit sanctions and the new round of savage welfare cuts. It's vitally important the union movement makes common cause with all those fighting back, both employed and unemployed.

The SNP has emerged from the election with a colossal mandate to oppose all further cuts. Its historic victory was driven by a huge anti-austerity mood and a determination to hit back at the political establishment. It was indeed, for many,

round 2 following the indyref of last year.

However, what will the SNP leadership do now? Will it continue with the grotesque game of pass-the-parcel and impose the Westminster cuts in Scotland for the next five years, or will it refuse to implement a penny more of Tory austerity? By using its majority at Holyrood to set a 'no cuts' budget in the autumn and helping to build a mass campaign of defiance, it would fulfil its mandate.

Socialist Party Scotland and the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) are demanding that this is exactly what the SNP must do. If it fails to do so, and this is likely, the need for an alternative to the left of the pro-capitalist SNP leadership will grow even further.

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Scotland and  
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The decimation of Scottish Labour, an event long in the preparation, is an historic turning point. It marks the culmination of decades of Blairite, anti-working class and pro-war policies. With the cracks and fissures clearly visible, the indyref shattered what was left of Scottish Labour. It will not be possible to remake what has been broken. Labour no longer has a social base of support among the working class in Scotland that can sustain it, even in the medium term.

There will now be a period of debate and discussion in the affiliated unions on the way forward. But underpinning all of these discussions must be the unavoidable need for the unions and the wider anti-austerity movement to build a new 100% anti-austerity political party to represent their interests and fight for a socialist solution.

This idea lies at the heart of the strategy

of the TUSC. It stood the largest block of socialist candidates in Scotland and received the highest votes on the left - albeit modest given the electoral tsunami towards the SNP. TUSC, supported by the RMT, also stood in 127 seats in England and Wales on a platform of opposition to all cuts and privatisation and for public ownership and socialism.

We have called a conference for Saturday June 27 in Glasgow to begin discussions and preparation for a 100% anti-austerity and socialist challenge for the 2016 Scottish election. We invite all organisations, trade unionists and individuals who are interested in such a platform to attend the conference. It will be taking place from 1pm in the Blythwood Hall, Renfield St Stephens Centre on Bath Street.

*Jim McFarlane is a member of Socialist Party Scotland and is also the branch secretary of Dundee City Union. Jim was the Scottish TUSC candidate for Dundee West at the general election.*

**TUSC  
AGAINST  
CUTS**

**Socialist Party  
Scotland**

# Standing up for Scotland's working class majority

Colin Fox says the left must be the SNP's sternest critic

The Scottish Socialist Party's (SSP) token appearance on the BBC during the General Election was a three-minute interview on the 'Daily Politics' programme on 24 April 2015. Andrew Neil wanted me to knock lumps out of Arthur Scargill's party. I declined. Instead, I urged him and 'the London metropolitan media to acknowledge the 'political revolution' underway in Scotland'. I awaited his sneering dismissal of this but to my surprise he entirely accepted my description of the change engulfing Scotland.

When the results emerged two weeks later, Scotland's representation at Westminster was, indeed, transformed. We now have fewer Labour MPs than giant pandas. But for 250 votes in Berwickshire, we might have had twice as many Tory MPs as Labour ones. How the comedians at the Edinburgh Festival this summer will feast on these results!

Scotland's 'political revolution' saw the SNP take 95% of the seats as Labour, Tory and Liberal-Democrat MPs sank under a 'tsunami' driven by economic insecurity as voters saw their living standards plunge. Allied to the sense of alienation from Westminster, the SNP's campaign was able to reflect Scotland's social democratic 'centre of gravity'. It triumphed because it promised to fight austerity in favour of a living wage, an end to zero hour contracts, building affordable housing and economic growth.

It also benefited from the huge momentum the 'Yes' campaign provided and which the independence supporting left did so much to build. We are, therefore, entitled to remind the SNP what we contributed and, notwithstanding their stunning success on May 7, the fact remains it cannot achieve independence without the support of the rest of us.

The political mood in Scotland reminded me of 1997 when the Scottish Socialist Alliance, as we were then, stood against New Labour. Back then the overriding priority for voters was 'to get rid of the Tories'. After twenty years of Conservative governments nothing else mattered. No criticism of 'new' Labour was permitted. No other votes were considered. 'Things could only get better'. Illusions in Tony Blair were widespread.

The same can be said about Nicola Sturgeon's party today. For if 'Standing up for Scotland' was the SNP election slogan, few were prepared to ask 'which Scotland' did the SNP mean? Working class voters covered their ears when any criticism of the SNP was voiced. They buried their heads in the sand when the SNP's privatisation of Edinburgh's Sick Children's Hospital was highlighted for example, from a party apparently committed 'to protecting the NHS'.

**Scotland's 'political revolution' saw the SNP take 95% of the seats as Labour, Tory and Liberal-Democrat MP's sank under a 'tsunami' driven by economic insecurity as voters saw their living standards plunge.**

They turned a blind eye to the £30m cuts made by the 'anti-austerity' party in running Edinburgh City Council. They wanted to believe a mere 0.5% increase in public spending proposed would be adequate to turn around the 14% cuts made since 2010. The ambiguities at the heart of the SNP's manifesto were ignored (for now).

SSP canvassers were met with sympathy and respect for the work we did in the referendum but we invariably went away with the message "This is not your turn. We need to get rid of XXX [the local Labour MP]. Your turn will come next year with the Holyrood elections".

Writing about the UK result Will Hutton in *The Observer* (10 May 2015) rightly concluded: 'This election will solve nothing. Inequality will grow in Britain. Low wages

and insecure jobs will proliferate. The housing crisis will deepen. Public services will become even more threadbare.'

The Tories plan to cut another £30bn from government spending, promote further casualisation of the workforce, oversee widening inequality and curtail what's left of union rights. The SNP, however, promised to fight all this. But will it? Will it oppose the economic policies of the Tories wholeheartedly when as economists Jim and Margaret Cuthbert have pointed out the SNP's own programme is essentially 'neo-liberalism with a heart'.

And perhaps the biggest mixed message from Nicola Sturgeon was that 'Voting SNP is not a vote for independence'. In arguing this point, she acknowledged defeat last September but risked demobilising the 'Yes' movement by insisting there can be no referendum until after the 2017 EU vote and then only if England votes to leave and Scotland to stay. The SSP, by contrast, will continue to argue for independence as soon as possible. The timing of *IndyRef2* depends on winning a majority of those who did not vote for it last time.

The left's role must be to expose ambiguities in the SNP's programme and force it to keep the promises made on May 7. Moreover, the 2016 Holyrood elections now loom and are a crucial contest for the left. We need to get MSPs elected to confront the illusions in the SNP effectively and show that social democracy and socialism are not the same thing. The SSP will consider proposals to participate in a left alliance for Holyrood at our annual conference before the end of May.

*Colin Fox is the Scottish Socialist Party joint national spokesman*



# Rekindling the roots of radicalism

Sarah Collins says there is a space opening up for the radical left

Since the referendum all eyes have been on Scotland. Anti-austerity and anti-Trident rhetoric has won over *Project Fear* because pro-independence social movements and political parties managed to create a successful counter-narrative to the neo-liberal Westminster consensus. This was evidenced not only in the incredible voter registration and turnout of the referendum, but also in the results of the election.

The next five years are going to be defining for Scottish politics. In order to ensure a left-wing agenda, the vehicles we need are: a social movement, a strong union movement, and an electoral alternative that can challenge the SNP from the left.

After the ConDem government seized power in 2010, there was a rise in anti-austerity, anti-cuts campaigning but, for various reasons, this waned. In 2012, the pro-independence framework was created in Scotland which became the most successful anti-austerity social movement in Britain. Along with the official 'Yes' campaign, groups like the Radical Independence Campaign, Women for Independence, and Common Weal generated a politicisation of Scottish society and historic levels of political engagement, pushing the SNP to formulate a generally anti-austerity, anti-Trident narrative.

We are now facing a Tory government which will strengthen the anti-union laws; yet the TUC and affiliated British unions have not made a coherent plan of counter-attack. On the other hand, the STUC, which has a much more open relationship with the Scottish Government than the TUC has with Westminster, has advocated breaking Tory anti-union laws.

The union movement in Scotland has the potential to call upon the support of a pre-existing, and growing in confidence, social movement which the TUC does not have. This has borne out in the organising of the 20 June anti-austerity demonstration. In England, this is organised by the anti-cuts campaign group, Peoples Assembly. In Scotland, it is being organised by the STUC with the support, resources, and people coming from the social movements, including Peoples Assembly and the Radical Independence Campaign.

In the next five years, we need to link action and strategy in order to ensure that the labour movement has a future.

Everything from direct action and strikes, to breaking anti-strike laws, to preparing a consistent strategy focussed on young workers, women and migrant workers needs to be done by the union leadership in conjunction with the social movement.

In the months between the referendum and the election, Scottish Labour simply failed to recognise any errors it had made in the past – particularly throughout the referendum campaign. That is why it returned only one MP and its vote was down by almost 18% on the previous five years. That is why there wasn't a social movement to save Labour. That is why it was predicted that up to 70% of all young voters in Scotland would be voting SNP on 7 May.

**We are now facing a Tory government which will strengthen the anti-union laws; yet the TUC and affiliated British unions have not made a coherent plan of counter-attack.**

The terminal decline of Scottish Labour brings with it huge challenges for the unions. The labour movement's resources (including people, money, and values) need somewhere to go in terms of electoral representation. It is up to the labour movement to ensure that those resources are properly directed, through open, honest, democratic debate and decision-making, but that does not mean Labour is the entitled keepers of these resources. That sense of entitlement was the single biggest error Scottish Labour made in the past few years.

Neither the SNP nor the Greens can fully articulate and represent the workers' movement. Neither have roots in the labour movement in terms of labour/working class history. Despite the SNP trade union group having more members than Scottish

Labour, the unions cannot disaffiliate from Labour simply to jump into affiliation with the SNP. Scotland needs a 'third estate' that can form a permanent political force representing working people and socialism.

We know the socialist left polls extremely poorly in general elections and partly that results from the first-past-the-post. However, across Europe 'the left' polls an average of 15% - even in social democratic countries. It's not that left-wing, socialist politics don't resonate with people in Scotland, but we need a combined and long-term approach and strategy to articulate that sentiment successfully in elections. It is possible that, despite a real squeeze from the SNP, socialists can mount a big electoral challenge and become a part of the political mainstream.

In Scotland, the independence movement has changed the context we are operating in and there is only one direction of travel: independence. It is likely that the Holyrood elections next year will reflect this. The stakes could not be higher, and there is an urgent need to keep driving politics in Scotland leftwards. Not only because the SNP is currently in a hegemonic position, but also as a leftwards pull to the movement in the rest of Britain.

The Scottish Left Project is meeting with activists, campaigners and political organisations with the aim of making the space for this to happen. We want to become a hub of ideas and debate for taking the left forward, and play a role in developing a big radical left challenge in 2016. If you want to ensure that the labour movement is not left without political representation; or if you want play a part in developing a vibrant and diverse left in Scotland, then please get involved and stay tuned for further developments.

*Sarah Collins is supporter of the Scottish Left Project, a UNISON activist and former Chair of the STUC youth committee (2013-2014)*



# No sword of Damocles hanging over England's head

Down south, Christine Shawcroft was not afraid of the SNP doing well

There is a certain type of English socialist, clearly suffering from a surfeit of sour grapes, who is inclined to blame the Scots for the Labour disaster on May 7. They believe that the SNP actively wanted a Tory government, in order to progress the independence agenda, and behaved accordingly. Social media is awash with comments like: 'Well the Jocks got what they wanted, anyway'. I fear that this 'us and them' attitude may be, at least partly, what got us into this mess in the first place.

It is certainly true that the Tories made great play, in the closing couple of weeks of the campaign, of their assertion that an incoming minority Labour government could be held to ransom by a large contingent of SNP MPs. This seems to have had some traction in English Tory/Labour marginals.

One wonders what the inhabitants of these seats were so afraid of. Were they having nightmares about hordes of woad-painted Picts scaling Hadrian's Wall and forcing us to wear kilts and eat haggis? More to the point, did they think that Nicola Sturgeon would hold Ed Miliband's feet to the fire and force him to axe the bedroom tax, abolish zero hours contracts and bring back the 50p tax band? How terrible!

I think it's much more likely that the SNP got exactly what it wanted when Ed Miliband took pains to get Jim Murphy elected as the leader of Scottish Labour. To fight a general election in England on a pro-austerity (or austerity-lite) and pro-Trident programme is extremely foolish; to do so in Scotland is political suicide. It's not as if the Labour hierarchy were unaware of what

a political liability its support for Trident would be in Scotland.

We had a Kafka-esque time of it at last summer's National Policy Forum meeting in Milton Keynes, when the sponsors of various anti-Trident amendments were told to drop them or risk the SNP winning the independence referendum, therefore, preventing the election of a majority Labour government ever again.

When the puzzled delegates pointed out that opinion polls in Scotland (and England, come to that) showed large majorities against replacing Trident, they were told that, if there was a row about Trident at the NPF, Scottish voters would notice Labour's support for it and vote accordingly.

However, if there wasn't a row, they might not notice so we wouldn't suffer electorally. When you consider that the people who came up with this strategy were the brains behind the Labour general election campaign, the scale of our defeat can more easily be explained.

Not having set foot in Scotland since the day I spent in Glasgow on the phone bank for the anti-independence campaign (sorry), I'm not well qualified to judge whether or not the SNP are socialists, or even particularly radical. However, Sturgeon's appearances during the TV debates certainly electrified large numbers of voters in England. After the first one, Google was swamped by people asking questions such as 'I live in England, can I vote for the SNP?' and 'Are the SNP standing candidates in London?'

It has been said that Miliband's campaign

was too right wing for Scotland, but too left wing for England. While the first is certainly true, the second is more debateable. Large numbers of people voted Green, or simply didn't vote at all. On the doorstep, voters say that the two main political parties are both the same as each other.

Whenever Miliband did have a more radical moment, for example pledging to bring back the 50p tax band, his poll ratings improved. When he went back to assuring everyone that an incoming Labour government would be making cuts, his ratings dipped again.

Not being silly, unlike some Leaders we could mention, Sturgeon saw her opportunity and went for it. Having spotted the space (a very large space) to the left of Labour, she homed in on it with the speed and precision of an, erm, Trident missile – and with very similar destructive power. Whilst Labour struggled to explain how their cuts would be much fairer and nicer than nasty Tory cuts, the SNP sliced through the waffle with a clear and unequivocal anti-austerity message. One can only wonder what might have happened if the SNP *had* stood candidates in England.

Will Labour learn the appropriate lessons from this disaster? To lose the 2010 election with a pro-cuts agenda was unfortunate. To lose the 2015 election the same way looks like carelessness.

*Christine Shawcroft has been a member of the Labour Party for 39 years. She was a member of the National Executive Committee for 16 years, but is currently suspended from holding office in the Party whilst she is investigated over her support for democracy in Tower Hamlets.*



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# Taking inspiration from Scotland

Leanne Wood argues Wales needs its own grassroots movement to sweep aside the old order

Commentators and others are still pondering the general election results that few expected. What occurred on May 7 will leave a lasting impression not just on the governance of the UK. It also sets the context for next year's Welsh general election that poses challenges for parties here in Wales.

Scotland's results, whilst anticipated by many, constituted a political earthquake. The SNP now has a strong mandate to secure for Scotland an alternative to punitive austerity and significant national empowerment. For Plaid Cymru, it was disappointing that we did not increase our number of MPs.

There are, however, positives to take from the campaign. Despite being expected to lose ground, for the first election in many years we held it. In areas where the party has not traditionally been strong electorally, there were encouraging signs of new support. In those constituencies where there were effective and continuous local campaigns, Plaid Cymru did well.

And our inclusion on UK-wide televised leaders' debates as well as an increase in the general exposure for the party has given us an unprecedented foundation for the Welsh general election next year. As is the case after every election campaign, there will be competing and sometimes contradictory reasons for individual campaigns not fulfilling expectations.

I am grateful for the feedback from so many candidates and campaigners as well as well-wishers – all of whom want to see Plaid Cymru at its best so that Wales can be at its best. It's worth now reflecting on how we build on what we have achieved so that Wales can have a change of government next year.

I am Plaid Cymru's candidate for First Minister. Next year, Plaid Cymru will be presenting an alternative programme for

government and we will seek a mandate for its implementation. Pundits and commentators will look at current polling and suggest that – eleven months out – the election is already decided. That inevitably Wales is destined to another term of Labour rule. As the UK election has just demonstrated, anyone taking anything for granted a week before an election, let alone almost a year out, should think again.

It is perfectly legitimate for people to ask what Plaid Cymru will do now to put itself in the best possible position as an alternative to the *status quo*. We will demonstrate our competence as a team; my shadow cabinet includes the personnel who have what it takes to lead our nation's government.

Our plans will centre on building a successful nation; closing divisions and building the national infrastructure so that our country can be the success we know that it can be. Our alternative will be all about people. I want to work with others so that we have a decent constitutional framework for Wales agreed well ahead of the Welsh general election next year.

Not just so that we can go some way to get the tools we need as a country but because I want the next Welsh general election to be the first that is a contest of ideas between parties on matters like the NHS, reversing our poor educational attainment, releasing the business potential, boosting people's quality of life and maximising prospects for individuals, families and communities.

If Welsh politics continues to be dominated by debates on institutions then our election won't be a dialogue about people, their hopes and their expectations. That does a disservice to everyone who looks to political parties for a vibrant and challenging competition for votes.

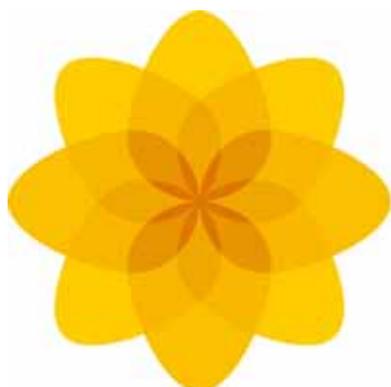
The next Welsh general election must be about what direction and priorities the next government of Wales will pursue and

people should have the opportunity to vote on that basis. Wales is in need of a new beginning. I want to lead a party that is engaging with people in every part of our nation over the coming year to deliver that new beginning.

Many people in Wales look to Scotland as the beacon of possibility. The greatest inspiration I take from what has occurred is the unparalleled grassroots movement that has swept every community in Scotland. People – not politicians – are the custodians of the national movement. Ours is a bottom-up movement that has reshaped and reframed politics forever.

Over the coming weeks and months, as Wales' general election approaches, I will visit towns and cities throughout the country to listen and speak with people so that we can build our own movement for Wales – a grassroots national movement that can sweep the old politics to one side and begin again the process of rebuilding our nation. A new government and a new beginning is possible in Wales. It is needed now more than ever.

*Leanne Wood is the Member of the Welsh Assembly for South Wales Central and has been leader of Plaid Cymru since 2012*



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# Something ended and something begun

Michael Keating says the old system is over but it's not clear what the new one will be

There is no more British party system. It is true that almost half the Scottish electorate voted for British parties and that Labour's defeat in England was exaggerated by the electoral system, but if Labour is to make a comeback in Scotland it will be as a different, less British Party.

Its infrastructure in Scotland was always weak, with historically low membership levels compensated by a strong institutional presence, whether in unions, tenants' associations and a web of influence and patronage in local government and civil society. These institutional supports have been weakening for decades, even while a rare generation of talented politicians was making a big mark at Westminster.

The referendum campaign and the disastrous decision to ally with the Conservatives (who had very little to contribute) shook Labour's already precarious support in working class communities and large sections of the professional middle classes as well. The SNP has taken over both their roles: as the main centre-left force in Scotland committed to social welfare; and now as the brokerage party that goes to Westminster to shout for Scotland and bring back the goods.

Whatever the popular vote, the parliamentary arithmetic dictates that the SNP will speak for Scotland and the Conservatives for England. Welfare unionism, the idea that a British social democratic party can unite the people of this island on a programme of solidarity and sharing of resources, has lost its voice.

Similarly, the main actors in the next phase of constitutional debate will be the Conservatives and the SNP while Labour, which was at the centre of the referendum campaign, is consigned to the margins. The Smith Commission proposals had been widely criticized before the election as too little, too late. The process, a closed-doors inter-party deal, defied the spirit of the referendum campaign or the earlier experience of the Scottish Constitutional Convention.

The proposals were piecemeal, an untidy mix of tax powers that in practice would be difficult to use, and bits of welfare, such as a complex clause allowing Scotland to opt out of the 'bedroom' tax but not to forge a coherent policy on social and affordable housing across the public and private sectors.

The new circumstances make its implementation even more difficult. Cameron is committed to English Votes for English Laws (EVEL) and its equivalent in taxation (which we might call EVET). I have never had any problems with this in principle but, under Smith, it is difficult to see which matters would really be England - or England and Wales - only.

Income tax would not be, given Westminster control over the base, the definition of income, and unearned income. Nor would most of welfare. Smith promises to continue with the Barnett formula, although it is not at all clear what Barnett would mean under the new dispensation - key questions about indexation are unresolved. Under whatever form, Barnett would entail a Scottish interest across a range of English spending programmes, since it is they that generate the Barnett consequential for Scotland. Moreover, Barnett is the target of English Conservatives, in whose cloudy understanding it is Barnett that finances free university tuition and medical prescriptions in Scotland.

A majority Conservative government gives free rein to the party's ambition to radically reduce the size and scope of the state, going well beyond the Thatcher revolution. Within Labour, it was the Blairites that were first out of the stall on 8 May, calling for a tack to the right. It was the SNP that was unafraid to deploy anti-austerity rhetoric during the election, even if in practice its fiscal plans were not that different from those of Labour (which felt obliged to pretend to be more pro-austerity than it really was).

If this is the way our politics is heading, then Scotland may need as much autonomy as would allow it to arrive at its own social compromise and balance between taxation and spending. With more tax and welfare powers and control over labour market policy, it might have the tools to start building something like the 'Nordic' social and economic model to which there has been so much reference in recent years. This is not an easy path and entails difficult choices which were largely avoided in the SNP's independence prospectus last year. But the experience of Quebec shows that a strong non-independent jurisdiction can avoid the massive inequalities which the application of pure market liberalism has entailed in the rest of the state.

There has been some talk since the

election of a grand bargain between the Conservatives and the SNP. Scotland would gain full fiscal autonomy in return for EVEL. The Conservatives would govern England (and, at least for now, Wales), while Scotland could follow a high-spending road including universal public services on condition that it paid for itself. The Labour Party would be brushed aside. There seems little indication that the Conservatives are ready for such a deal.

There is a residual British unionism that holds them back and the Treasury would be aghast at surrendering fiscal powers. Conservatism is not inherently centralist but the modern Conservative Party is. Grand talk about 'northern powerhouses' and 'devo-Manc' (for Greater Manchester) masks a new strategy for central control and a bargain with Labour Party elites in the north of England rather than popular empowerment. There are voices in the party calling for federalism but they remain on the margins.

Along with all this, we are in for a debate about Europe. Cameron is obliged to deliver on his promise of re-negotiation and a referendum by the end of 2017 but must now decide on what it is that he wants to negotiate. A massive and expensive Review of Competences by the UK Government during the last Parliament produced nothing whatever of substance that might usefully be repatriated. Freedom of movement of workers, which Cameron tried on, is a pillar of the internal market and untouchable. The idea that eastern Europeans are flocking to the UK to take advantage of our meagre welfare benefits does not accord with the facts. So Cameron will have difficulty satisfying his Eurosceptic backbenchers, many of whom are the same people who complain about Scotland.

There is a familiar scenario in which England votes 'no' to Europe while Scotland votes 'yes'. Before we get there, however, there is the forthcoming negotiation and what say Scotland will have in it. The Scottish Government needs to set out its priorities here and, above all, we need a debate in Scotland about what sort of Europe the nation wants and what Scotland could contribute to it.

*Michael Keating is Professor of Politics at the University of Aberdeen*

# What future for the left in Scotland?

Bob Fotheringham says an opening is there to be had if the cards are played well

The Conservative Party's victory in the general election will certainly lead to an intensification of austerity in Scotland (despite the rejection of its policies at the polls in Scotland). Having swept all before it in Scotland, the SNP now has a clear mandate to lead fight against any cuts imposed from Westminster.

The question is will it do so? This fact, and what seems now to be the terminal decline of Scottish Labour as a relevant political force in Scotland, poses the question of how the left can play a constructive role and win support. This is an issue which needs to be urgently considered by all involved in socialist politics. Before doing so two issues need to be borne in mind.

The first is that the enormous vote for the SNP was a largely working class one and a massive rejection of the neo-liberal and free market economic policies that have done so much damage to working class families and communities, not just in Scotland but throughout Europe and beyond. Nicola Sturgeon hammered home an anti-austerity, anti-Tory message during the campaign and it was a message which people in Scotland responded too.

The second point, and a more difficult one to confront given the spectacular growth of the SNP membership and its apparent move to the left, is the fact that at its root the SNP is a bourgeois nationalist party committed to making Scotland an attractive place for business investment. It calls for lower business taxes, SNP controlled councils have implemented cuts just as vicious as any by Labour and recently the SNP has told the RMT that if it does not accept cuts to the railway pension scheme in Scotland it will be privatised and ended.

It is this contradiction which makes it possible for the left in Scotland to navigate a way forward. Most of the new members of the SNP will support the campaigns that the left is involved with. It is vital we engage with and work alongside them. Anti-racism, the removal of Trident and the closure of the Dungavel immigration detention centre are good examples.

There are two strikes taking place in Scotland at the moment which we can also unite around. These are of the Dundee Ninewells hospital porters and the Glasgow homeless case workers. Both strikes are over pay after years of underpayment.

Given the fact that health is a devolved matter, the SNP can involve itself directly in the porter's dispute and meet the workers' demands. In the case of Glasgow, it can tell the Glasgow Council that it no longer has a mandate and they should immediately settle the strike by meeting the claim in full. These examples show areas where the left can play a constructive role in maintaining pressure on the SNP to deliver on its promises.

Scotland remains part of the British State with a Tory government in London and as a consequence the battle against austerity continues. Nicola Sturgeon is pushing hard for increased powers for the Scottish Parliament. The Smith Commission proposals fall well short of providing people in Scotland with real power to manage the economy and our own affairs.

Any devolved powers to Scotland which leave control over the Scottish budget in the hands of Westminster are ultimately a delusion and can only lead to the Scottish Government managing austerity. Because of this, the question of a second referendum

supporters will agree, the leadership of the SNP remain cautious about proposing such a move.

Resisting austerity by all means necessary, including demonstrations, strikes and civil disobedience should be our immediate priority. However, this can also become the focus for a second vote on independence at some point in the near future.

An issue of major importance is how can the radical left in Scotland move forward on the electoral front? Given the popularity of the SNP and the move to punish Labour, it was always going to be difficult for the left to pick up votes in the general campaign. The Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) ran a positive campaign and gained a large amount of verbal support and sympathy but was badly squeezed by the SNP's electoral tsunami. However, the Scottish election in 2016 should provide more favourable conditions for the left to stand.

The mechanism for voting MSPs to the Scottish Parliament contains a degree of proportional representation and makes it possible for smaller parties to enjoy a degree of success. The last time the left in Scotland had electoral success was in 2003 when the Scottish Socialist Party won six MSPs.

An important aspect of this was the fact that the Scottish left was largely united in supporting the SSP challenge. In 2016, there could be at least four different groups looking for support. If such a scenario were to happen then it would be disaster. Precisely because we can have success it is essential that left puts aside its differences and presents a united challenge.

On the 27 June, the Scottish TUSC is hosting a conference in Glasgow to discuss how the left in Scotland can unite and offer a unified electoral challenge in 2016. The resignation of Jim Murphy after the disastrous Labour election campaign shows the total disarray of Scottish Labour. If the left can get its act together then it possible to win union support, and support from wider working class for a radical socialist alternative to the SNP.

*Bob Fotheringham is a member of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) and the TUSC Scottish Steering Committee*



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on independence will at some point need to be confronted. Again, this is an area where socialists in Scotland can take the lead. At some point in the next few years the question of a second referendum will have to be confronted. While many SNP members and

# The SNP: neo-liberalism with a heart?

Gregor Gall argues social liberalism and not social democracy is the best way to characterise the SNP

On its website, the SNP describes itself as a 'social democratic political party' and, upon the change in its leadership last year, sympathetic but not uncritical commentator, George Kerevan, then more of a journalist but now an SNP MP, heartily agreed in the *Scotsman* (18 November 2014): 'The SNP under Nicola Sturgeon is a genuine social democratic party'.

Indeed, Nicola Sturgeon said of herself: 'I'd describe myself as a social democrat' (*Guardian* 2 May 2015) and 'My role is to build a Scotland that all those who live and work here can be proud of, a nation both social democratic and socially just' to the SNP annual conference in November 2014 while former First Minister, Jack McConnell told the *Times* (18 October 2014): 'Alex Salmond was essentially a right-wing populist, posing as social democrat [but] Nicola Sturgeon is a social democrat'.

Many joining SNP - as membership grew from 25,000 just prior to the referendum to over 100,000 prior to the general election in May 2015 - would have no doubt concurred. And there are others (see box 'Perceptions of the SNP').

Could they all be wrong? The depressing answer is a solid, definite 'yes' because looking at not just the words but also the deeds, the SNP is very far from being - or even becoming - a social democratic party.

There is no doubt that the SNP has moved a long, long way from the time when it could accurately be described as 'Tartan Tories', a predominant alliance of farmers and fishermen, and that Sturgeon is to the left of previous leader, Alex Salmond. But this does not make the SNP social democratic.

The essence of social democracy is a political party in both words and deeds that is prepared to use the state to intervene in the economy to ameliorate the processes and outcomes of free market capitalism - and to do so in order to make them fairer for most citizens. This is not socialism for the market still exists and is merely regulated - neither heavily curtailed nor abolished. The outcome is to make society more 'sociable' in terms of economic justice and social equality.

The evidence to show that any political party - when in office - is social democratic comprises statutory intervention leading to the regulation of wages and prices, progressive taxation (where those with

## Perceptions of the SNP

Former UCS leader, Jimmy Cloughley: 'I've been hoping for a situation like this all my life. The progressive elements in Scotland are on the move. Rather than opportunists and careerists, and hatred and aggression filling politics, the SNP showed they could do social justice, whether they're to the left, right or upside down. Labour has a chance now to come back realigned. With two social democrat parties working for people, the population would be the winners' (*Observer* 10 May 2015).

Author and journalist, Lesley Riddoch: 'Nicola Sturgeon is now unquestionably Britain's most trusted social democrat and Scotland's most popular political leader' (*Guardian* 8 May 2015).

Now new SNP MP, Tommy Sheppard: 'The effect of [English Labour MPs] being confronted not by people waving Claymores but by a bunch of social democrats who want the same reforms as they do could be quite seismic' (*Guardian* 7 May 2015).

Other like the *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *Independent* and the *Times* have all frequently echoed this sentiment.

Meanwhile, there are even some who believe the SNP to have socialist leanings and undertones. For example, Vonnay Moyes, activist within the now defunct independence supporting National Collective, believed the SNP was characterised by 'centralism with a soupcon of socialism - just enough to win over the floating left' (*Guardian* 24 March 2015) while Sean Clerkin, of Scottish Labour heckling fame and Citizens United, proclaimed: 'I say to you working-class people: don't be fooled, vote against Labour, vote against the red Tories, vote for the Scottish National Party come the election and vote for socialism' (*Herald* 21 February 2015).

more pay more), measures to achieve wealth redistribution, support for unions to level the playing field with employers and so on. One of the most obvious forms social democracy takes is public ownership. Notwithstanding the recent populist opportunism of the Scottish Labour leader, Jim Murphy, it is a measure of the political

disorientation brought about by Labour's endorsement of neo-liberalism - the belief the market knows best - that leads many like Kerevan and Riddoch to mistakenly believe any party that is critical of Labour from a slightly left-of-centre perspective is then social democratic.

The SNP, having been in government in Holyrood since 2007, has legitimately been able to claim that there has been a limit to what it could do under devolution. In other words, SNP supporters claim that while some things have been done - like introducing free prescriptions, building the first publicly funded hospital and introducing the living wage for Scottish government employees - issues reserved to Westminster have constrained what further can be done.

This does not hold up to serious examination. Privateers still abound in public services (especially in the NHS), and though to be welcomed, the legislative programme announced by Sturgeon last November did not amount to much more than tinkering around the edges and talking about the *possibility* of *limited* state intervention despite enhanced devolved powers. Taking Prestwick airport into public ownership and nationalising the debt of Pelamis Wave Power are but mere drops in the ocean - indeed, the two exceptions that prove the rule, especially when added to the wasted opportunity of not bringing Scotrail back into public ownership and the possible privatisation of CalMac.

Moreover, there are growing concerns about the SNP government's tendencies towards centralisation and managerialism so that the democratic part of any alleged social *democracy* is very much being called into question.

Now a major player at Westminster after May 7, the SNP will no longer be able to hide so easily behind its limitations of power argument whilst simultaneously proclaiming its social democratic credentials.

The SNP will be sorely tested by its attitude towards renationalising all forms of public transport and former public utilities, introducing rent and other price controls, bringing banks and other key economic activities into public ownership, providing statutory means for unions to engage in sectoral collective bargaining and the like.

This is because so much of what the SNP

is about in regard of the critical private sector is encouragement and cajoling of a voluntary nature with the result that this *voluntary* method is neither forceful nor effective. If employers do not want to do 'x' or 'y' and there is no compulsion (especially financial) upon them to do so, they will not do it unless it benefits them financially.

A good example of this is the Scottish Government's recent launching of the Fair Work Convention – it is to be welcomed but it is not a return to corporatism or tripartism because it seeks to lead by example and through best practice without any financial or legal compulsion on capital and employers.

But behind the issue of *modus operandi* lurks a much bigger and more important one – that of ideology. Whether seen as its difficulty in - or its aversion to - becoming social democratic, the SNP's problem is that it does not recognise the existence of social classes and the conflict between them.

One class owns the means of production, distribution and exchange while the other does not. Sturgeon's talk of 'one Scotland' and 'Scotland's interests' means that this root cause of social inequality within Scotland is not recognised and cannot be recognised. And, if it is not recognised, it cannot be addressed either.

Consequently, the SNP can best be characterised as social liberal, not social democratic. While neo-liberalism means letting the market rip, social liberalism is a variant of it with an added touch of social conscience. Indeed, was recognised some time ago by renown independent economists, Jim and Margaret Cuthbert, when in 2009 they analysed the SNP as 'neo-liberalism with a heart' in a chapter for an edited book on the SNP called *The Modern SNP – from protest to power*.

Social liberalism welcomes free market capitalism so long as it operates efficiently in terms of creating jobs. Indeed, its efficient

operation can, social liberalism believes, be aided by state guidance - hence, SNP policy of now selectively cutting corporation tax to encourage specific investment to create jobs or tax breaks for oil companies to save jobs (with nationalisation not considered). The SNP is then rather less interested in whether the jobs are well-paid, decent, unionised ones or not. This is to remain the prerogative of employers and that is not a hallmark of social democracy. But it is up to the unions and the left to contest this as strongly and as successfully as they can.

*Gregor Gall is professor of industrial relations at the University of Bradford and author of 'The Political Economy of Scotland: Red Scotland? Radical Scotland?' (University of Wales Press, 2005)*

### Sturgeon speaks to Scottish business

Nicola Sturgeon speaking to business leaders said business has nothing to fear from her government, adding 'I am a social democrat ... I believe in pursuing greater equality and tackling social justice. You can't do that unless you have got a strong economy, unless you have got a vibrant business base earning the wealth that makes that possible. Your success underpins the prosperity and wellbeing of every community in Scotland. It is vital for me and my Government to work closely with you to help you succeed, and I intend to do that. My government will be enthusiastic in our support for business' (from the *Express* 2 December 2014).

### Sturgeon speaks to the SNP conference (15 November 2014)

My job, as First Minister, will be to champion the interests of Scottish business at home and around the globe. That is a task I embrace with relish. Scotland must always be an environment where ideas flourish, businesses locate and jobs are created. Because then and only then do we have the tools to do what should matter to all of us - and that is to eradicate the poverty that scars the lives of too many of our fellow citizens. Over the next few weeks, I will set out directly to Scottish business the support they can expect from my government to help them innovate, export, be more competitive and create more jobs. (Excerpt from her speech)



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# Collegiately is fine in theory but not in practice

Mary Senior argues the SNP will be tested by what it does over university governance

The current debate around university governance and plans – proposed by the Scottish Government and supported by the Scottish Labour Party – to reform the sector is one that can reverse the increasing prevalence of managerialism in Scottish higher education. It is also an important bellwether of how employers and the Scottish government regard unions.

At the moment how universities are governed varies from institution to institution. In some, the chair of the governing body is elected and in others they are appointed by committees themselves made up in part of appointees. Governing bodies are important both because they make the decisions that affect UCU members' work and lives but also because universities have a key role to play in society and the economy.

In 2012, an independent review carried out by a university principal, current chair of court, and STUC and student representatives recommended, amongst other proposals, that all chairs be elected and that union and student nominees have places on the new more democratic governing bodies. The Scottish Government has promised legislation and recently ran a consultation on these proposals. So far so uncontroversial you would think – elections, democracy and union nominees on the board of institutions that receive over one billion pounds of public money each year.

Apparently - not so. Universities Scotland

- the body that represents university principals - described proposals to include union nominees onto governing bodies as undemocratic and worse also described the inclusion of union nominees as being contrary to the Nolan Principles of Public Life - selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. That principals believe trade unionists on university courts would not be able to act in a way conducive to those standards betrays a mind-set that is stuck in the 1980s rather than one which recognises the positive role of unions.

Those who argue against reform say there is no evidence of a problem and that, put simply, 'if it ain't broke don't fix it'. Since the start of 2015, however, we've seen countless examples of exactly how the Scottish higher education sector is, if not broke, then certainly in need of both some honest appraisal and a change in tack on governance.

Many UCU members sit on their university governing bodies as staff members. A common complaint from them is that the refrain amongst many of the other court members (who will often come from an almost homogeneous professional or executive background, will often be male, often retired and most often be middle class) of the need to take 'difficult decisions'.

In reality, taking 'difficult decisions' is a badge of honour taken to show how tough and business savvy you can be. The problem is though, that universities aren't businesses.

And, any analysis of press clippings relating to the higher education sector since the turn of the year would demonstrate that the problem isn't a lack of willingness to take tough decisions. Rather, the problem is how to challenge and interrogate some of the nonsensical decisions senior managers in our institutions take on a depressingly regular basis.

From the partner of the principal of UWS being reportedly appointed as a consultant on £500 per day to university principals being awarded up to 13% pay rises and expenses of £27,000 for airline flights with little or no transparency, then if there is not a crisis in the sector, then it would be fair to argue that there is a lack of accountability in the way universities are led.

Governance is about ensuring the decisions taken about the running of universities are properly scrutinised and challenged. It may be that a university principal appointing his/her partner as a consultant or being awarded an inflation busting pay rise with no reason being given in the minutes of the remuneration committee could be a correct and justifiable decision. But until those decisions are made in the open and following challenge, discussion and debate, then we can't know for sure.

On one side of the debate you have the staff in our universities represented by the unions on campuses and the students under the leadership of NUS Scotland. On the other, university principals who believe that things are just fine (at least for them) as they stand at present.

The question is who will ministers listen to? With the consultation over and a draft bill imminent, the sector is waiting with keen anticipation. How ministers proceed is an important indicator for the SNP government under the new leadership of Nicola Sturgeon and an early test for her new education secretary, Angela Constance. She can choose either to make our universities more democratic, representative and transparent, or, on the other hand, listen to principals who attack unions and our right to be involved in universities' governance.

*Mary Senior is the University & College Union's Scotland Official*



# Further education: not so different up here from down south

Larry Flanagan says that the record of the Scottish Government in FE wouldn't get top marks

Scotland's college sector has been under significant pressure over the past period, on a number of fronts. In straightforward financial terms, the cuts endured are stark. From a peak in 2010-2011 of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) provision of £580m, approximately 15,000 staff, and 314,585 students enrolled students, we now see SFC funding of only £526m (a cut of £54 million), approximately 11,000 staff (a cut of 4,000), and only 245,000 students enrolled.

The Scottish Government's focus on employability and, in particular, on young people whilst understandable at one level has led to a 41% cut since 2008-2009 in the number of over 25s accessing college courses – this in a sector which is crucial in supporting lifelong learning and second opportunities. Perhaps of even greater concern is the impact of policy decisions on students with additional support needs where the figures have dropped from 19,622 in 2009-2010 to 14,887 only three years later.

As this short summary indicates, the cuts in FE have been manifest and damaging. The level of cuts, and the shift in emphasis in age profile and mode of attendance has firmly slammed the door shut on opportunity for many, particularly those in employment seeking part-time courses, those over 24 years old and those with learning disabilities.

At the same time, the sector has undergone significant restructuring (called 'regionalisation') which has added to the sense of unease. The regionalisation process was not necessarily unwelcome in itself as it could have led to better run colleges with fewer managers and better governance, particularly given the weak college governance and evident managerialism which existed before the *Post-16 Education Act*.

However, whilst the Scottish Government's stated intention in the *Post-16 Education Act* was to deliver more transparent and accountable governance, it was also clear that for the Scottish Government efficiency savings from college mergers in the regionalisation process was a significant driver. And, a huge question mark remains as to the extent to which these aims have been realised.

Put simply, there is no evidence that college governance or management has



been improved by mergers. According to the Audit Scotland report, there is evidence that some colleges merged too quickly and that their merged systems created additional problems for students.

One way in which accountability and transparency was to be improved in the new governance structure was for the government to nominate the chair of each region's FE regional body or college, and for that person to be accountable to ministers – and hence to parliament. The new chairs were to counter the managerialism of the principals and their senior management teams dominating college boards. Thus far, the new Chairs do not seem to be reining in the principals – who seem to be fewer in number but more powerful since they run bigger colleges.

Regionalisation – together with outcome agreements and other aspects of the *Post-16 Education Act* such as direct nomination of government of regional college chairs – has certainly brought the FE sector into the closer control of the Scottish Government. But that simply begs the question as to how that greater control is to be exercised and for what purposes. The recent movement of nearly £100m of college reserves into arms-length foundations at a time of cuts is a case in point.

Mergers, while not necessarily a bad thing in themselves, have been used as a cloak to cover the cuts in provision across the sector. A fundamental flaw has been the absence of any real educational rationale underpinning the mergers. Most colleges pre-merger declared themselves to be 'community' colleges or at least colleges which served their local communities. The larger organisations are finding this more difficult to achieve due to detachment from those communities. Unfortunately, the

restructuring of the sector seems to have led to added layers of bureaucracy and, in many cases, a less responsive approach to local needs coupled with a management-style focussed upon delivery and organisation rather than a more collegiate approach.

A particular concern is the faltering progress with regard to a return to national bargaining. Whilst early developments were promising, and a National Recognition and Procedure Agreement developed, the process now seems to be bogged down in a stand-off between colleges and government on funding. Scottish Government pressure on colleges to deliver national bargaining needs to increase or the single shining light of the past few years may be extinguished. Political intervention is required and urgently.

The Scottish Government also needs to secure increased funding for the sector. It needs to recognise the value of FE, not only in terms of employability, but also in terms of lifelong learning. The sector has to be used to provide opportunity for those in employment and those with learning difficulties, for example. And in terms of governance, colleges have to engage in partnership with their staff, and unions have to be recognised and valued in this process. A more collegiate approach to teaching and organisation has to be recovered from the past.

In many areas of education, Scotland's approach compares positively with that of England but in relation to colleges the commonality of concern across all of Britain about cuts, jobs, access and governance is an indication that improvements are still required.

*Larry Flanagan is the general secretary of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) union. Until becoming general secretary in 2012, he was a Principal Teacher of English in Glasgow.*

# All change? It's certainly time for a change!

Mick Whelan on the state of the railways in Scotland

When John Major privatised Britain's railways twenty years ago he promised it would deliver three things – competition, innovation, and investment. Competition, he said, would drive innovation and investment. But there is no competition as the privatised train operating companies all have protected routes, private monopolies. And, there is precious little innovation – the privatised train companies were against the introduction of Oyster cards – and all the investment in the rail industry comes from central government.

Fares have gone up, not down – we now have the highest rail fares in Europe – while trains have got ever more crowded – to the point where passengers, even commuters in south-east England who vote Conservative, are calling for a return of the railways to public ownership.

I know why the train operating companies like privatisation – when they talk about 'risk and reward' what they mean is there is no risk, it's all reward. But the model is clearly broken. It doesn't work. It's no way to run a railway in the twenty first century.

The full madness of privatisation hit Scotland's railways with a vengeance this year. East Coast, which returned £1bn to the Treasury while in public ownership, was taken over by Stagecoach (even though they call themselves Virgin East Coast, and use Virgin livery, they are 90% owned by Stagecoach). This is the fifth private company to try running this franchise. The only successful company was publicly

owned, a directly operated railway, but the political dogma of the Tories and Liberal Democrats meant this public asset was sold to a private company. Again.

On ScotRail, we have seen our railway split in two with the Caledonian sleepers being handed over to Serco. This decision had a major impact on our members who worked for ScotRail and DB Schenker. As Serco had no drivers, they subcontracted the work to GB Railfreight.

Abellio were awarded the rest of the ScotRail franchise (and they subcontracted work to Direct Rail Services due to a lack of diesel units). What a missed opportunity! I find it astonishing that the Dutch government was given the keys to Scotland's railways when the Scottish government could have delayed the decision on awarding the franchise until after the Smith commission reports back with its recommendations on further powers for the Scottish parliament.

It's high time that the railways of this country were put into the hands of the people of this country. Regardless of anyone's political leanings, it does not make any sense to hand the contract to another European government to run our railway. As a union, we have campaigned long and hard to bring the railways back under public ownership because we know that is the best way to run a properly, vertically, integrated railway in the twenty first century and we will work to bring Scotland's railways back under public ownership.

Sometimes, it seems that every time we take a step forward to ensure there are robust measures in place to deal adequately with issues that affect our members as well as the travelling public – such as suicide and trespass – some short-sighted person impacts on all the good work. This time it was Michael Matheson, Justice Secretary in the Scottish government, who announced that British Transport Police (BTP) will be subsumed into Police Scotland. This after the Smith commission devolved powers over railway policing to Holyrood.

The BTP possesses specialist skills in a world where the first priority is

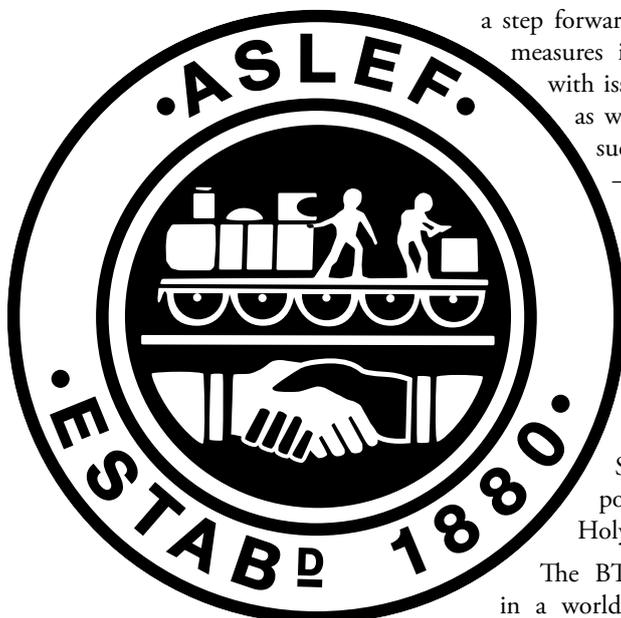
generally safety, rather than criminality, and the specialist knowledge that needs. Every one of the stakeholders I have spoken to feels this is another mistake, and the first stage in the dissolution of a body that everyone in the industry thinks should remain operating independently in the interests not just of those of who work in the industry, but the travelling public, and the taxpayer, too.

The premature closure of Longannet power station will devastate a region which still bears the scars of the pit closures in the 1980s. It's a bitter blow, not just to the workers who will lose their jobs, but to the whole area of west Fife. And, all this at a time when we need more, and not less, energy security.

The aims of my union are clear and enshrined in our rule book. ASLEF exists to secure the best terms and conditions for train drivers, to negotiate on behalf of our members with the train and freight operating companies, to promote a pride in the job we do, to champion equality in our industry, to provide education services for our members, and to work for a fairer, more just, and more equitable society – a socialist society.

That's what we want. A government committed to socialist values. And that includes bringing back into public ownership the key parts of the economy which belong to the people.

*Mick Whelan is general secretary of ASLEF, the train drivers' union*



# Participation and the hacker ethic: a model for social change

Jen Hunter and Sue Smith delve into new ways of organising

Much was said and written about engaging with young people during this General Election, most of it predictably patronising. The reality for most is a lack of participation that stretches far beyond the polling booth. With secure, well paid jobs in scarce supply, many young adults feel a sense of isolation and powerlessness that another Tory government can only multiply. Now more than ever, we need to explore new models of engagement between our young people and the organisations, social structures and networks that can connect them to opportunity and influence - we hope the Hack Aye project will play a part in that process.

Participation is a central theme for us. Not having enough work, secure work or well enough paid work prevents you from fully participating in your community and the wider society, from family life to your career and education pathways, if you're fortunate enough to have any. Hack Aye started from the belief that everyone has a right to this participation.

Our response is an experimental approach we're developing with various partners, beginning with Scottish trade union organisations. We're taking much inspiration from global movements in politics and technology, from the US Fast Food Campaign, Occupy and Hacktivism, to the community-organising principles of open source projects such as those piloted by the Mozilla Foundation.

A program of creative events and activities will bring young participants together with artists, technologists, activists and others. They'll collaborate to learn, "make" and drive the change they want to see. Key principles will include openly documenting and sharing what we discover. We'll support decentralised interaction, with participants connecting as much or as little as they like, even anonymously. Achievements and contributions will be recognised using emerging standards such as Open Badges. We'll engage participants on their interests, putting them in control over direction and outcomes.

Existing initiatives using these practices include Hive Learning Networks - communities around the world collaborating to change the way learning works in their city. These networks are hacking social change

locally by making meaningful, productive learning experiences available to those kids who have the fewest opportunities in life.

As inequality continues its relentless increase, poverty and underemployment have started to seem like an inescapable norm. Remember last year's outbreak of hope? Young people threw themselves into the independence debate in unprecedented numbers, with groups such as Radical Independence Campaign, Common Weal and others making the Yes movement a model of grassroots power in action. In spite of everything, the tide of activism is continuing to rise.

In 2014 the V&A's Disobedient Objects exhibition showcased innovations generated by activist movements throughout history. Something similarly creative happened last year in Scotland that was more fundamental than an increase in the voting turnout. Young people imagined the kind of country they wanted to live in. Scoff if you like at what they and others imagined, but it was a significant moment. Every social movement starts with a creative act - visualising a different reality from the one you find yourself in.

We asked a group of young people if they were interested in politics. The response was a resounding "no". They went on to express a range of articulate, well-informed views about a variety of issues. After the referendum surely no-one can deny the desire of many young adults to have a stake in the future of their country - the "politics" that they reject is a system whose failure and irrelevance has been highlighted by this General Election in the results both north and south of the border. It's not just the language that they don't relate to.

Young Scots feel little to no affiliation with traditional democratic movements, as Scottish Labour must at last understand. "Ah, but they know nothing about the history of the trade union movement, they just need educated." Not quite. The problem for trade unions runs deeper, and it isn't a problem, it's part of the solution. Young people have less tolerance for tribal, hierarchical organising channels - together with the chronic failure of representation in Westminster politics, the Internet has changed all that. Developing social movements are inherently more

decentralised and ultimately speak to a more democratic future.

Hack Aye will of course seek to tick a range of CV-friendly boxes: helping school-leavers to learn skills valued in the workplace, gain confidence and experience the benefit of working within a team. However, we also hope to stimulate a more meaningful shift - learning to see the world as changeable. This is the hacker ethic: break things open, see how they work, change them. Exploring and supporting a variety of ways to express dissent will be vital as new anti-union laws kick in.

In one of our first substantial projects, we organised an event as part of the *Better than Zero* (>ZERO) campaign against low pay and insecure work. On 14th May 2015 we brought contributors from music, visual art, comedy, technology and activism together with young people to hack zero culture. In a bold departure from the old-school approach, the STUC aims to provide the support for young people to drive this campaign, forging new connections outside the trade union movement. We used various creative techniques to capture experiences of work, draw inspiration from global movements and challenge a load of young people, new to activism, to design a movement that will truly represent them. As the election results testify, for meaningful change we must look beyond mainstream politics.

*The team behind Hack Aye is Jen Hunter and Sue Smith, who have worked variously in the arts, the union movement and technology. Go to <http://hackaye.com>*



# One hundred days of SYRIZA

Myrto Tsakatika surveys Greece's radical experiment in resisting austerity

SYRIZA's victory in January 2015 was greeted with relief by the Greek people, hostility by Europe's political establishment and enthusiasm by the international Left. It gave out a strong signal that hope can beat fear and that a people can reject the dogma of austerity and democratically chose an alternative path. It also demonstrated that the deep structural crisis of so-called 'third way' social democracy can lead it to its annihilation provided a serious contender is in place, willing and able to explore new avenues towards democratic socialism in the twenty first century.

Of course, SYRIZA's victory took place in the most difficult of circumstances. How then, is it coping? Over the last three and a half months both mainstream and friendly media have predicted either that 'Grexit' is only a matter of time, or that SYRIZA has no choice but to give in to the creditors' demands. Neither of these dooming predictions has materialised.

It is a mistake to think of the negotiation between SYRIZA and Greece's creditors (European Commission, European Central bank and the IMF) as a sprint. Rather, one should approach it as a marathon that started before the elections and is unlikely to end any time soon. The outcome will only be assessed at the end of the road, that is, when the new settlement between Greece and the European Union is finalised.

That settlement will involve a new agreement on the question of the country's unsustainable debt that after five years of extreme austerity has skyrocketed to 175% of GDP, or a third 'bail-out' loan attached to a new set of conditions that will need to be agreed between the two parties. SYRIZA has made it clear that the first option is what the Greek negotiators are aiming for. Failure to agree is also a possibility, in which case – as Alexis Tsipras has recently clarified – a referendum would be called to let the Greeks decide what comes next.

In the meantime, there have been smaller scale victories and defeats. Clearly, the creditors have allowed for a loosening of austerity measures to the extent that the previous requirements for further cuts in pensions and salaries have been either withdrawn or successfully resisted. The outrageous requirement for a 4.5% primary surplus that had been agreed for the current fiscal year has given way to more realistic expectations.

SYRIZA's core red lines that involve restoring labour market legislation and reinstating collective bargaining have not been crossed. On the other hand, the last tranche of the bail-out loan has not been disbursed to Greece while the ECB has tightened the noose on Greek banks. Negotiations are held at the level of technical groups in Brussels behind closed doors which means that SYRIZA must constantly put effort into re-politicising the talks. These are, of course, hard facts that strengthen the creditors' hand. Hence, there are indications that on matters such as privatisations and VAT where the creditors have demanded tax rises for instance SYRIZA may not be holding out as well.

On the domestic front, SYRIZA's legislative programme has been picking up pace. The focus has been on addressing the humanitarian crisis by giving 300.000 households that live under the poverty line access to food, electricity, housing, heating and public transport; extending free access to public healthcare to the uninsured; making it easier for individuals and small businesses to repay their debts; regulating the media landscape (dominated by the Greek oligarchs) and restoring the public broadcaster that had been shut down by the previous government; abolishing high security prisons and closing down immigrant detention centres.

On the other hand, the government has not been able to live up to its promise to raise the minimum wage to 750 euros, relegating the measure to next year. And, how could it be otherwise given the dire economic situation in the country (which is exacerbated by continued uncertainty)?

Questions have arisen about the relationship between SYRIZA in government, the party and the movement. This is an unprecedented situation where a plural party of the radical left whose vote share did not go beyond 4% within the space of a few years finds itself leading a government. Inevitably, most leading cadres and activists including the youth wing are now engaged in parliamentary or government work. This has left the party in a state of weakness and in search of a new role.

Internal pluralism, including disagreements on the question of strategy vis-à-vis the European Union, is both very poorly understood and instrumentalised against SYRIZA by its opponents and the media. However, it does not represent a real threat



## The logo of Syriza Scotland

to SYRIZA's unity. A more significant threat to the broader project of social and economic transformation that SYRIZA stands for is that with few remarkable exceptions (such as the protests against the Eldorado Gold mines in northern Greece), the movement has been at a low point since 2012. Active participation, mobilisation and pressure exercised by the labour movement and the great multitude of movements that underwrote SYRIZA's rise to power are badly needed for the long term success of SYRIZA's brand of democratic socialism.

Remarkably, the SYRIZA government and Alexis Tsipras himself continue to command unprecedented levels of consensus by the Greeks, with around 70% stating they trust the government to do an honest job in the negotiations. Over 36% would vote for SYRIZA were elections to take place now. The opposition is divided and weakened with the second party, the centre right New Democracy trailing 20 points behind SYRIZA in the polls. Is then SYRIZA living up to its promise? The jury is out and the record is mixed. But there is no turning back. The die has been cast and the SYRIZA leadership is fully aware of the enormity of its responsibility.

*Dr Myrto Tsakatika, Senior Lecturer in Politics at Glasgow University, is co-ordinator of SYRIZA Scotland*

# Human Rights in Colombia

Davy Brockett visited the most dangerous place to be a union activist

In July 2014, I visited Colombia as part of a delegation of fellow trade unionists, MPs, lawyers from Britain and Ireland organised by the NGO, Justice for Colombia. On my visit, I heard testimonies directly from trade unionists, human rights activists and community and political representatives. The harrowing evidence of human rights abuses were beyond belief.

Colombia is a country rich in natural resources and exports: petroleum (where BP is the second largest foreign investor in the country), coal (the country has the largest open cast mine in the world), emeralds (over half the worlds' emeralds are Colombian), nickel, copper, gold, iron ore and natural gas. Agriculture, in which over 25% of the workforce is employed, is also crucial to the country's economy.

Unfortunately, for the vast majority of Colombians, access to its vast wealth is not within their reach. Those who protest and campaign for political change and a fairer society are faced with imprisonment, assassination and kidnap. So Colombia is a country where the impact of bad governance, and unbridled capitalism, cause misery for the many.

There are hundreds of political prisoners in Colombia, including union and student activists, community and indigenous leaders, and human rights defenders and academics - all interned for their opposition to the government and most are interned without trial.

Colombia has by far the worst human rights record in the western hemisphere. Numerous and serious violations occur on a daily basis. Every year, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expresses deep concern about this with the UN having permanent offices in several regions of the country to monitor human rights. Additionally, Colombia is the only South American country to appear on the major countries of concern human rights list, maintained by the UK Foreign Office.

Notwithstanding this, successive UK governments have failed to openly condemn the Colombian government and the ongoing human rights abuses. And, the lack of transparency surrounding British military cooperation to support the Colombian army poses serious questions to the UK government. Colombia is also Washington's closest ally in Latin America,

being the third largest recipient of US military and security aid in the world. The interests are both strategic and economic (as the resource rich country opens its economy to privatisation and foreign investment).

The port of Buenaventura is one of the largest transnational projects within Colombia today, where several European multinational companies are involved in the development of the port, and which will be receiving trade through the EU free trade agreements.

We visited the Humanitarian Space within Buenaventura for an event organised by CONPAZ (broad community peace coalition) and the Inter Church Commission for Justice and Peace. We heard testimonies of widespread displacement, murders by state and paramilitary forces, forced disappearances, paramilitary control of the area and the horrific violence of the 'chop houses' where live victims were dismembered by chainsaws with the bodies being thrown into the ocean.

This humanitarian zone was created by the local people with the support of human rights organisations and Catholic Church in response to the extortion and murders carried out by drug traffickers and paramilitary organisations within the area. The threats and murders have continued in spite of the zone's creation, as was witnessed during our visit where a worker for the human rights organisation had to leave for Bogotá due to a death threat. One told us: 'The government insists the rightwing paramilitary groups that have terrorised Colombia's opposition have been dissolved. But in Buenaventura, they can be seen openly fraternising with soldiers on the streets, and they even publish their own newspaper'.

We also visited Putumayo which is in a region close to Ecuador and Peru. The area has a large indigenous population. The economy is mostly oil and agricultural production. The oil industry along with the government's drug war fumigation programme of the coca plantations has caused serious environmental damage to the farmlands which has resulted in displacement of rural people. The region now has tens of thousands of displaced persons living in precarious conditions around the main towns. Recently, graves of unidentified bodies have also been discovered.

In February 2012, a human rights hearing was held in the region to highlight military abuses of human rights. The same day there was a massacre; victims included a five year old girl who had her hands chopped off. Prior to our visit, in May 2014, four members of the agricultural union FENSUAGRO (a sister union of Unite and United Steel Workers) were killed in another massacre by the army. To hear the peasant activists' testimonies of the atrocities by government forces was hard to comprehend.

According to the data base of the CUT union federation, nearly 2,800 union activists have been assassinated since the CUT was established in 1986. All of these men and women were killed as a direct consequence of their union activities. In addition to the assassinations, nearly 200 trade unionists have disappeared while others have been subjected to arbitrary imprisonment or physical attacks. Many union members receive regular death threats leading to thousands fleeing their homes and jobs, sometimes to exile abroad.

One of those falsely jailed is union and opposition leader, Huber Ballesteros, FENSUAGRO vice-president. Arrested in 2013, Ballesteros told our delegation in La Picota prison: 'there is no democracy in Colombia, and we are confronting a dictatorship with a democratic face'.

Colombia is infamous for being the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists. Murder and intimidation is such that union affiliation has reduced to fewer than 3% of the working population from 12% twenty years ago.

The oil workers' union, USO, one of the most threatened in Colombia, has revealed that in recent weeks that 13 of its activists have received threats or have been attacked. The union's treasurer, David Mauricio Gomez, was threatened by the paramilitary group, the Gaitanist Self-Defence Forces, whilst ten more were sent threats from unknown sources.

Carlos Alberto Pedraza Salcedo, a leading human rights activist was found murdered in a village outside Bogota in January 2015, two days after disappearing in the capital on his way to a meeting. He was a member of Congreso de los Pueblos – a civil society movement which was involved in the mass strikes in the summer of 2013.

The Movement for Victims of State Crimes

(MOVICE), a close partner of Justice for Colombia, has denounced the recent death threats made against one of its regional leaders, Martha Diaz. On 8 February 2015, Martha received a funeral wreath sent to her home with the words, 'Rest in peace'.

According to latest figures for 2014, Colombia continues to be the country with the second highest number of internally displaced. Over 6m people have been forced from their homes in Colombia, a total of 13% of the Colombian population. In 2014, a further 137,000 were added to the total as a result of both the ongoing war and the actions of paramilitary groups who continue to act with relative impunity

throughout Colombia.

The figures were released in a report published by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Syria is the country with the highest internally displaced population with over 7m, 40% of its population, and Iraq saw the largest growth in internally displaced population in 2014. Those three countries - Syria, Colombia and Iraq - lead the world in displaced populations.

The resolve and determination of the Colombians in their struggle for justice and peace is inspiring. Many are critical of President Santos but gave him support in

the elections last year in the hope he will deliver on the peace process which began between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas in November 2012.

The recent announcement in 2015 that the government is prepared to enter a bilateral ceasefire, which would give protection to trade unionists, civil society activists and opposition politicians, is to be welcomed. It could open up the possibility for change in Colombia, but there is still a long way to go before this forty five year war is brought to an end, and these proud people achieve Justice for Colombia.

*Davy Brockett is an Executive Council member of the Unite union*

## The Blockade of Cuba in 2015: Are Relations 'Normalised' Now?

Vicky Grandon documents the terrible effect of the continuing blockade

News of the release of the remaining 'Miami 5' reached Scottish Cuba Solidarity Campaign in December 2014. We learned that Presidents Obama and Castro had been in talks for 18 months with involvement of the Pope leading up to the momentous announcements. During those negotiations, prisoner releases were agreed, the classification of Cuba as a terrorist threat was lifted and some trade sanctions changed. But the blockade and occupation of Guantanamo continues.

For over half a century, the US government has tried to isolate Cuba economically in an effort to undermine its government and deprive it of resources. This directly contradicts international as well as internal US government reports concluding that Cuba poses no threat to the US, and that the blockade has been ineffectual in influencing sovereignty and Cuban policy.

The hostile actions of the US have never diminished the strength or achievements of the Cuban Revolution. Our Scottish solidarity is inspired by the progressive policies that Cuba has developed and

practiced in relation to health, education, employment and equality issues. How has the embargo impacted on Cuba and why are we determined to support the call to end it?

In 2007, the UN High Commission of Human Rights reported that restrictions imposed by the embargo deprived Cuba of vital access to medicines, new scientific and medical technology, food, chemical water treatment and electricity.

UNICEF reported that Cuba was unable to import nutritional products destined for children and for consumption at schools, hospitals and day care centres. This had an adverse effect on the health and nutritional status of the population and is believed to be a contributing factor in the high prevalence of iron deficiency anaemia which in 2007 affected 37.5% of children under three.

Children's health was also put at risk by a decision from syringe suppliers to cancel an order for 3m disposable syringes by UNICEF's Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization when it became known that the units were destined for the implementation of the programme in Cuba. The World Health Organization reported that 'lack of access to products manufactured by United States companies prevents the provision of proper care to seriously ill patients who need a pacemaker, St. Jude prosthetic valves or septal occluders, forcing their treatment with alternative, riskier surgical techniques'.

UN Programmes to prevent and fight HIV/AIDS suffered from the embargo.

The US Treasury Department refused to renew a licence to health organization, Population Services International (PSI), to export condoms to Cuba for distribution to groups at high risk of contracting HIV infection.

These are symbolic of the many examples of inhumane consequences of the embargo, illustrated vividly by Aleida Guevara during her 2013 visit to Scotland when she described the challenge of sourcing basic health supplies and powdered milk for newborns with medical complications. Aleida was speaking both as the daughter of Che Guevara and a consultant paediatrician working in Havana today.

In 2009, Amnesty International reported that the blockade breached human rights and international protocols and that it could be lifted by the Obama administration within the current legislative framework.

The positive developments in USA-Cuba relations announced 17 December 2014 led many to think that the blockade in place since 1960 would be lifted quickly.

The US Government website updates of 17 April 2015 explain the current restrictions and spell out the true intentions of the paltry concessions:

*The Cuba embargo remains in place. Most transactions between the United States, or persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction, and Cuba continue to be prohibited, and Office of Foreign Assets Control continues to enforce the prohibitions of the Cuban Assets Control Regulations.*

*Travel to Cuba for tourism is not allowed.*



*The traveller's schedule of activities must not include free time or recreation in excess of that consistent with a full-time schedule.*

*Activities of human rights organisations designed to promote a rapid, peaceful transition to democracy may be supported.*

*Construction projects intended to benefit legitimately independent civil society groups; ... projects suitable to the development of small-scale private enterprise; projects that promote independent activity; ... microfinancing projects, except for loans, extensions of credit, or other financing [are] prohibited.*

The emphasis from these extracts is not on what Cuba needs or wants as an equal partner, but what the US is conditionally

willing to permit in order to transform Cuba and open up private enterprise under the name of 'democratization'.

Scottish Cuba Solidarity Campaign continues to work robustly to end the blockade. It is good news that the US has finally taken Cuba off its list of nations that pose a terrorist threat and released the 3 remaining 'Miami 5' prisoners after 16 long years of mistreatment, injustice and abuse of process. Cuba has celebrated their return and welcomed them as heroes.

Local elections have just taken place in Cuba that have indicated the confidence and hope the current political system offers. Candidates of the right have been defeated and strong clear voting majorities won by

all government supporting representatives.

President Raul Castro clearly stated: 'The re-establishment of diplomatic relations is the start of a process of normalising bilateral relations, but this will not be possible while the blockade still exists, while they don't give back the territory illegally occupied by the Guantánamo naval base'.

May Day in Havana 2015 saw over a million Cubans hear the president of its TUC reiterate the same clear position that upholds the right of Cuba to determine its future.

*Vicky Grandon is Chair of the Scottish Cuba Solidarity Campaign and Vice-Chair, UNITE Scotland Political Committee*

## A phoenix is trying to rise from the ashes

Stephen Smellie visited Kobane to see the hope amid the devastation

The town of Suruc in Kurdistan sits on Turkish territory close to the border with Syria. Its nearest neighbour sits across the border. This is Kobane. This Kurdish town and its surrounding villages had a population of around 400,000.

In Suruc town centre, there is an art installation around 5 metres high of an arm and hand holding aloft a pomegranate, symbolising the fertility of this region which for thousands of years has produced fruits and foods in abundance. The people of the region recognised no borders separating their two towns until the creation of the modern states of Turkey and Syria by the French and British imperialists who had emerged victorious over the Ottoman Empire. The border followed the route of the railway the French built to exploit the produce of the region, oil as well as fruit.

From that point, the Kurds of Suruc were denied the right to call themselves Kurds, to speak their mother tongue on official business, in school, courts and hospitals. Their brothers and sisters across the border in Kobane suffered the same national oppression. In the years around the break-up of the old empire, many Kurds moved across the artificial border and settled in Kobane and other parts of Rojava, Western Kurdistan.

The Syrian government used this fact to declare that millions of the residents of this region were not eligible to be citizens of Syria, denying them the right to state services. A situation that only changed in recent years as the Assad regime sought to

gain support from a population they had for years scorned.

In Kobane and other parts of Rojava in the past three years a remarkable development took place when the Assad regime withdrew its forces. Suddenly, the people of the region were left to run their own towns and communities. In a short space of time, guided by a political leadership which had developed through years of struggle across Kurdistan, they created democratic, secular and gender equal institutions to run society.

The autonomous cantons of Kobane, Afrin and Cezire took over the running of schools and health services, building new ones and holding people's assemblies to determine priorities. Kurds, Arabs, Muslims, Christians, Alevis and others participated freely. Gender awareness classes were ran for all public servants and those joining the armed protection units. A democratic revolution was underway in a region blighted by religious sectarianism and undemocratic regimes.

In November 2014, I visited Suruc. The town and surrounding area had now become the home for around 200,000 refugees from the forces of ISIS who had attacked the town in August. The Turkish government had supported those groups who had taken up arms against Assad and had established, with substantial European Union aid, many refugee camps for the Syrian people who had fled the civil war that Turkey had done much to promote and finance allowing resources, arms and fighters, to get to the anti-Assad rebels.

However when Kobane came under attack from ISIS, which had become the biggest, best armed and most successful of the anti-Assad forces, and the mainly Kurdish refugees had flooded over the border to Suruc, no material support was offered. Instead, the local council in Suruc was faced with the task of looking after them with their own resources and what the local people could provide.

Its young co-Mayor (Kurdish politics ensures that each senior position is shared by two people, one of whom has to be a woman) told me 'we have a humanitarian crisis here but the world ignores it and hides behind the Turkish state who support ISIS'.

In the refugee camp a woman lay with her baby on a camp bed. She had lost both legs when she stood on a mine planted by ISIS. She had been unable to get crutches. The volunteer doctor who was running a field clinic explained they had no incubators for premature babies, no wheelchairs for the wounded and few pain control medicines.

I travelled to within a mile of Kobane and could hear gunfire and explosions and could see the ISIS black flag flying over one of the buildings. The world expected ISIS to crush the resistance of the Kurdish fighters in the Peoples Protection Units (YPG) and the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) in the coming weeks.

However, with the support of Peshmerga forces from the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq, who were allowed to

travel across Turkish territory after mass demonstrations in all the main Kurdish cities and towns as well as in Istanbul, and aerial bombardment of ISIS positions by American war planes, the defenders of Kobane drove ISIS out of the city in January.

Suruc is now the centre of a re-building effort by the people of Kobane. Many refugees have returned to their homes to find them completely destroyed. The water supply has been cut off, electricity generation destroyed, schools flattened and all 4 hospitals, 86 clinics, 51 pharmacies and 9 medical laboratories either destroyed or severely damaged.

The re-building effort faces huge obstacles. The war against ISIS continues and much of the resources available to the people have to be devoted to ensuring that Kobane

does not fall again. Kobane, and the other democratically run cantons in Rojava, continue facing an embargo by both Turkey and Iraq which limits the ability to get aid and resources through.

Therefore, an appeal to the international community has been launched by the Administration of Kobane Canton. They state: 'We call on all governments and international organisations to immediately help facilitate the rebuilding of Kobane by providing us with essential support'.

Our government and the EU have not responded to this appeal and so we must demand that they do.

The Kobani people need a 'humanitarian corridor' to allow aid and materials to pass through Turkey. They require materials for housing, electricity generation and water supplies. In an initiative to offer practical

support, UNISON has launched an appeal for cash and equipment to help re-build the health services. Donations can be made at [www.justgiving.com/Kobane-Health-Appeal](http://www.justgiving.com/Kobane-Health-Appeal)

The world must not ignore the plight of Kobane. Progressive people in the world cannot ignore the political movement in Kobane and Rojava to build a secular society based on equality and democratic principles.

For further information, see *Report on urgent and essential needs in Kobane* (Feb 2015) available at <http://peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/2015/02/27/report-on-urgent-and-essential-needs-in-kobane/>

*Stephen Smellie is Depute Convenor UNISON Scotland and Trade Union Officer for Peace in Kurdistan*

## The Common Weal and the Nordic Model

Peter Lomas argues some compromises are worth making

In *Scottish Left Review* 85 (Jan/Feb 20105), Philip Stott critiqued the Common Weal (CW), alleging that it stands for a 'Nordic model' that, despite having some original aspects, is soft on capitalism and potentially collaborative with big business – and not left-leaning or progressive like the Socialist Party Scotland to which he belongs.

The CW, that antique expression, to me means two things: society as a whole, and the well-being of society; and a body of people and their common good. So it can apply equally to a nation and all humankind. We can aspire to make a better Scottish nation, for its own sake and as an example and a help to other striving nations in the world. Both people and principle are enshrined in this phrase. Nobody goes against the CW.

As for the 'Nordic model' - the core source of that idea, and its key interest for us in Scotland, is surely Sweden. Swedish twentieth century experience was that of a resource-poor country (with one exception, iron) with a fragile natural environment and a land and climate unwelcoming to agriculture; and an impoverished, isolated society of a few million people, continually drained by emigration from North to South and to other continents. And yet through the sustained leadership of one (social-democratic) party, it developed one of the richest and most advanced economies in the world.

After 1945, Sweden became not only

the locus of essential heavy industry in Scandinavia, but its economic powerhouse - the heartland of high-technology multinationals like IKEA, Electrolux, SAAB and Volvo, which in time were cloned into neighbouring countries. This was also an unusually stable and harmonious society: a clean, well-governed place where well-dressed people went to work (but not too hard) and wandered freely at weekends among the woods and lakes in exercise of their *allmänsrätt*, or universal right to roam.

Swedish egalitarianism is rooted in the historic memory of countless frozen winters - of families imprisoned with the animals in the byre with little alternative future in view. 'Vi har det så bra': people used to admit to me when I lived in Stockholm in the 1980s: 'We've never had it so good.'

That also meant 'no-one else has it so good', because from the 1960s onwards, Swedish governments, adopting the internationalism of Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, pioneered the causes of nuclear disarmament, East-West reconciliation and economic development in Africa and Asia. Scandinavian societies, following the Swedish example, continue to exceed four- or five-fold the UN-set level of aid to former-colonial countries (though there was never a Swedish Empire).

But we should also see Sweden in a wider context, both historically and internationally. Swedish neutrality was

declared in the eighteenth century when the monarchical regime was a European great power, recently victorious over Russia; it was presented then as a unilaterally-peaceful, quietist position. The international background changed, however, with the Cold War, when Swedish diplomats noted that, like Cuba, their country lay within the immediate death-zone of a superpower nuclear exchange.

Swedish neutrality came to represent national self-interest, as armed neutrality. It meant universal conscription, an ambiguous stance towards liberal-democratic societies in NATO, and a significant home-grown military industry: the dynamism and profits of SAAB and Bofors flowing from the development - and export - of fighter aircraft and guns. Swedish ecologists, pacifists and socialists inspired by the Myrdals fought with the industrial lobby, who argued that Sweden must be strong to stay distinctive; with the nuclear lobby, who insisted that there was no alternative source of reliable bulk energy; with the bosses, who pointed to Bofors and SAAB and said they would support the ruling consensus so long as the unions were part of it and compliant with them.

To a considerable extent these politico-ethical divisions persist today in Sweden, though the value of international neutrality, as in the case of Switzerland, has shrunk

drastically since the end of the Cold War and the rise of the EU. Similarly, the Social-Democratic Party has lost its pre-eminence with the built-in preferentialism towards private enterprise progressively instituted in EU member-states.

These parallels for Scotland, and the same EU-related complications (including those which face a dominant social-democratic party), are worth pondering whenever the 'Nordic model' is evoked. Philip Stott attacked as incoherent the template for an independent Scotland - the first tentative 'ideology' of CW - put together by Robin McAlpine in *All of Us First* in 2014.

But apart from the fact that his book was a compilation, an attempted fusion of many disparate reports on all aspects of a future independent Scottish society, the 'Nordic model' itself, at least in Sweden, was always a compromise between socialism and capitalism, even in its heyday.

Multinational bosses, like the unions, compromised with the leading party. They also, above all others, compromised with the regime of high taxation. (They must have

done, or they would have left the country.) Swedes in general, like their counterparts in Switzerland, were compromised by their own official neutrality, since they always counted themselves part of the open, liberal-democratic Western tradition which prevailed in the Cold War.

In Scandinavian society in general, both outside NATO and within it (Norway, Denmark), this 'model' held because people understood and worked within these compromises. In addition, I would add, and because of a strong localism, upright political leaders regularly emerged and maintained their integrity. Perhaps, the most valuable impression (certainly on my mind) of modern Scandinavia is one of societies without political corruption.

CW, it seems to me, is another kind of compromise: one forged in the name of a better future, which is opened up by the prospect of Scottish independence. 'We can have a more ethical country,' said Isobel Lindsay in the run-up to last year's referendum. A consensus of hope brings together, in CW, members from the left

and right of the SNP, Greens, feminists, trade unionists, and socialists but members of no party (like myself). In this way, it mirrors the independence movement as a whole since the start of the referendum campaign, which has been generally non-sectarian, co-operative, a forum for mutual instruction - which in itself suggests some principle for a post-independence parliament at Holyrood.

The 'Nordic model' provides both positive and negative lessons for Scottish society. Now, together with Scandinavians, we face the challenge of reforming European society, where capitalism has become favoured, through the laws and institutions of the EU, in a more insidious and tenacious way than ever before. Beyond that we face the challenge of improving the lot of all our fellow human beings. That is how I view the prospect of Scottish independence. Scottish nationalists must be internationalists too. The CW is the weal of the world as a whole.

*Peter Lomas was a researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 1984-1987*



**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

# Book Reviews

## Wee White

### Blossom:

what post-referendum Scotland needs to flourish,

*Lesley Riddoch, Luath Press, 9781908373991, £5.99*

*Reviewed by Carole Ewart*

I worried *Wee White Blossom* (WWB) was out of date by the time I read it, having been written by journalist, public thinker and community activist, Lesley Riddoch, in the distance between the 'No' vote and the general election. No chance.

I will return to this book many times to remind me of an evolving world for Scotland which navigates social, economic and political change.

WWB updates the original *Blossom* (2013) and sets out the evidence on how Scotland can flourish, equally, post-referendum. It is just like having a chat with an informed friend who wants to share with you what she has found out and her conclusions. The style of writing engages the reader rather than making them feel ignorant, and that is the point because the author assumes that if we know more about our cultural, social and economic past we would understand how skewed our view of normality actually is.

Peppered with facts and analysis that alarm, intrigue and inspire WWB provokes us to reflect on the here and now as well as change how we think about the future. Rightly WWB reminds us that 'there has been personal empowerment through political activity from the referendum' whereas 'all too often the flow of energy has been the other way round – with individuals feeling disappointed or crushed by their brush of the political world'. Labour's process of choosing candidates for the new Scottish Parliament elections in May 1999 may have been one of those latter experiences for far too many people.

Consistently the impact rather than the details of policies are analysed such as the Smith Commission with one economist and tax expert quoted as saying 'there is no opportunity to create economic growth, no opportunity to create re-distribution, no opportunity to create the outcomes

in Scottish society that any Scottish Government would reasonably want to see'. And, of course, that would surely include any future Labour-LibDem coalition in the Scottish Parliament too.

Riddoch's analysis of Smith is entertaining despite the misery - 'Scots haven't gone through two years of soul searching to come up with a clutch of reheated offers, a dangerously limited range of tax powers and a hard to entrench promise that Westminster cannot abolish Holyrood. Voters want a meaningful and memorable deal'. Not everyone will share her politics but it is almost impossible to disagree with her analysis.

Land reform is a longstanding interest of the author and her knowledge is shared bite sized to make you feel confident in having a go at a chat with someone else. The right to buy is exposed as a narrow concept based on the owner of the property rather than as a right of the tenant - the Tory 'right to buy' did not extend to agricultural tenants e.g., what happens to the tenants when they retire? The Land Reform Review Group's report of May 2014 called for the re-introduction of business rates on sporting estates as they currently pay nothing (really and why not?) and an 'end to the distinction between inheriting land where spouses and children have no legal rights and moveable property ... where they do'. Inheritance will therefore be 'democratised'.

Local democracy is analysed with a robust argument that councils should be smaller and more powerful. I had not known that in 1930, 871 parish councils had been axed as democratic structures although they still exist for census purposes. I also did not know 'meaningful town control went in 1975' and the ratio of councillors to citizens is 1:4,270 in Scotland but 1:125 in France. Knowing now, I wonder how we got into this fix in the first place.

Reforms which don't deliver are highlighted. The new *Community Empowerment Bill* misses the mark in respect of community councils - failing to address the power vacuum 'it neither turns community councils into dynamic new delivery level authorities nor does it knock them on the head and put them out of their misery'.

Changes in our perceptions are encouraged by sharing practices elsewhere. Rather than focusing on the detail, Riddoch urges us to reflect on the narrative. In respect of welfare, how we are conditioned to think that we are paying for other people's welfare and get nothing in return. We need to change perceptions. She cites the 'Danes who see welfare as a way of

redistributing income across the lifetime of each individual making deposits during working years, and withdrawals during child rearing, illness, retraining and old age'. The outcome is 'social solidarity that keeps the rich paying taxes with relatively few complaints'. Scotland needs the confidence and authority to carve out its own road though as she acknowledges that neither Denmark nor Sweden are 'nirvana'. A good read that leaves you wanting to learn and chat more.

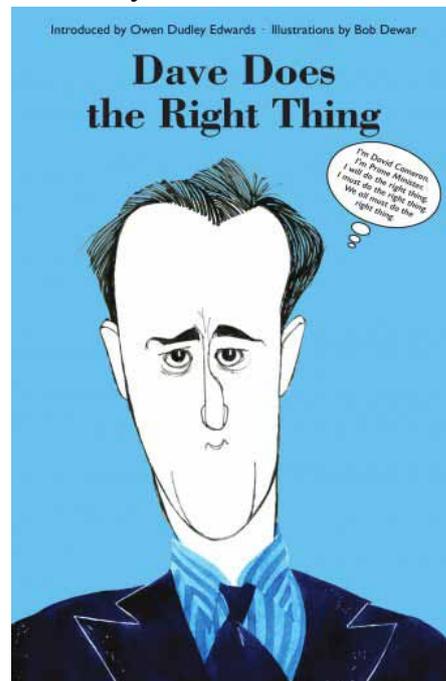
*Carole Ewart is a public policy and human rights consultant.*

## Dave Does the Right Thing: I'm David Cameron. I'm Prime Minister. I will do the right thing. I must do the right thing. We all must do the right thing.

*Introduced by Owen Dudley Edwards, Luath Press,*

*9781910021637, £6.99*

*Reviewed by Donald McCormick*



At the time of writing this review, a week after a universally predicted indecisive general election, it would seem that the title *Dave Does The Right Thing* is in the wrong tense. This is because Dave must have done the right thing for enough people south

of the Border to win a majority in the Commons despite a higher voter turnout and a promise of a further twelve billion quid in unspecified cuts in public spending (though no doubt some day we will laugh about how those tricky pollsters had us fooled).

You will have deduced that it's pumped up Dave Cameron that is being referred to and can rest assured that wherever the axe falls Dave will assure us all that it is 'the right thing'. Incidentally, why did Michael Gove not tell him that 'pump' has a more malodorous inference in Scotland? Whether the next five years sees the unfolding of such likely policies as the NHS making wheels an optional extra on wheelchairs or discovering that four Trident nuclear subs is a pitifully small number for a nation that sits at the top table, Dave will make a case that these things are not simply expedient and necessary but morally unquestionable. Owen Dudley Edwards has compiled a comprehensive series of snippets from Hansard (2010 onwards) in which our continuing prime minister claims to be doing the right thing ranging from 'Dave Does the Right Thing For Britain/ Abroad/ Welfare' through to 'The Path of Righteous Dave is Beset on All Sides' and 'Dave is Doing the Right Thing, Right?' Dave says nothing sufficiently profound that challenges my view of him as ... well, less than profound.

Here are a couple of sample gnomisms. On wealth inequality: 'I am absolutely determined that everyone who wants to work hard and do the right thing can benefit from the economic recovery now under way'. On proposed changes to UK extradition treaties: 'We will ensure that we do the right thing for our country, but people should not think that it is a very simple issue, because it is not'. And that's the problem - many of the utterances listed are no easier to disagree with than are motherhood and apple pie. Out of wider context, they are overwhelmingly bland, innocuous and on a par with 'Something must be done', the pronouncement that turned the late Duke of Windsor into a Marxist agitator in the eyes of *Daily Mail* types. Our most relaxed prime minister since Baldwin, bland and innocuous is the look that Dave has gone for, occasionally shifting to a wide-eyed innocence that evokes the image of Prince George in *Blackadder 3*, while Osborne is the scheming Edmund.

We can imagine Dave/George having a light bulb moment, opining that 'helping the less fortunate in society is the right thing to do' countered by Osmond/Edmund asking what the less fortunate have ever

done for us? Baldrick is missing and that is probably why we have heard so much about encouraging Blue Collar Conservatism in recent weeks. If you lower expectations to owning your own turnip, the present government will ensure that you live the dream. I don't doubt that Dave is sincere in his self-view as a decent hearted One Nation Tory - even though an Old Etonian, Bullingdon Club chap who has never had a real job has as much knowledge of what that nation is as has Bertie Wooster. Maybe he really did believe that 'We're all in this together' as he kept claiming in the early days of his stewardship though that particular reassurance fell to the wayside pretty quickly. I also don't doubt that he is unaware that he is the smooth skinned, frown-free frontman for a bunch who have used the recession to further their ideological beliefs that even the workhouse was step too far left. Still, Dave has ticked off Being Prime Minister from his bucket list and will surely hand over to his successor in a couple of years. Can't wait for Owen Dudley Edwards's 2020 sequel, *Boris Does the Shafting*.

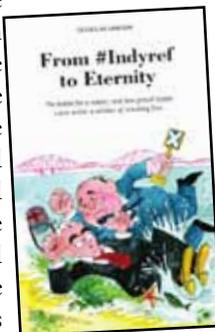
*Donald McCormick is a retired history teacher, anti-ideologue and a grumpy optimist*

## From #Indyref to Eternity - the battle for a nation, and how proud Scotia came within a whisker of breaking free,

*Douglas Lindsay, Luath Press,*

9781910021835, £7.99

*Reviewed by Carole Ewart*



*From #Indyref to Eternity* is a masterclass in laff as you learn. Lindsay's imagination has inspired the text and Bob Dewar's illustrations bring Dr Ian Shackleton, of the Glasgow School of Politics and Football, to life with a few other illustrations

on the cover to entertain. The book assembles the 'Shackleton Report' which appeared every Monday morning in the Herald, for the six months prior to the referendum. Clearly this insightful genius,

who combines the two popular pub issues in Scotland in his day job, has opinions worth listening to.

In addition, the opinions and actions of a variety of characters are respectfully described but it is their pet names which helpfully introduce the reader to what they are likely to say and do. For example Alastair Darling is both the 'High Commissioner for Better Together' and 'Chief Doomsayer Pursuivant of All Scotland'. When David Cameron addressed a "cheering group of foreign exchange students at Stirling University on the first day of their Beginner's English course" the PM made a number of promises including 'free Tunnocks Teacakes for everyone'. Dr Shackleton reflects that this rousing speech is just what the 'No campaign has been waiting for'. Brevity cannot do Dr Shackleton's insightfulness justice so here is a big quote from 5 September 2014:

*While there is an unmistakable whiff of the Ally McLeod about the Yes campaign, you can't argue that it's captured the imagination of voters. Better Together thought they could rely on a message of Its Not Completely Shit, So Why Change Anything? and they have been found wanting ... Now, however they're faced with loosing oil revenue, they're looking at a long and bitter border war, and then there's the likelihood of world leaders mocking them openly on Twitter. They've had to face up to the need to think strategically about Britain's future.*

Independent sources are also quoted. When Prime Minister, David Cameron, threatens to agree on action with his European counterparts about Alex Salmond's behaviour at the Commonwealth Games, we are helpfully advised that 'statisticians have calculated that Britain has never been in agreement with its European partners'. However, the behaviour being complained about was during the opening speech at the Commonwealth Games when Mr Salmond 'declared war on England' but as we know that is just not true. The stories do merge fact with fiction and mostly it is easy to tell them apart.

The book cements the notion that Scotland's history is now divided into BC, AC and PR and this book is evidence that the referendum inspired people in all sorts of ways. This book is unlikely to be the first point of reference for future historians but it is an entertaining read for those occupying the here and now.

*Carole Ewart is a public policy and human rights consultant.*

# Kick up the Tabloids

So the opinion polls got it wrong again. We were led to believe there was no way the Tories would get a majority. We were tempted by the tantalising prospect of the SNP holding the balance of power at Westminster.

Perhaps, this is what dissuaded English floating voters - the idea of being governed by a neighbouring nation. Well, now they know how it feels to be Scottish! We've had to put up with that situation for three centuries, and they ran scared at the prospect of a mere five years. What is more likely is that voters turned away from Labour precisely because Ed Miliband was so vociferous in ruling out a deal with the SNP. People obviously thought 'we don't want this idiot running the country on his own.'

It was undoubtedly a bad night for Labour. This, however, was not like 1983, when Michael Foot's laudably ambitious manifesto was rubbished by the right as being 'the longest suicide note in history'. Nor was it like 1992 when Neil Kinnock thought he had the election was in the bag at a celebrated a week too soon with the infamous Sheffield rally. This was the election where Labour stood on the platform of not really knowing what the platform was.

If one moment was to sum up Labour's campaign, it was when Ed Miliband's posed in front of a 'plinth', that is, a lump of concrete, with his pledges to the nation chiselled out. It was like looking at a bad actor with his lines written on an enormous idiot board. Worse than that, he was standing in front of the idiot board, so that he couldn't even read the lines!

He promised to keep the plinth in the back garden of Downing Street when elected. That said a lot. He had no intention of sticking the pledge outside Number 10 for the entire world's press to see, but in the back garden

where it could be conveniently forgotten, dumped up at the back wall next to the compost heap.

Furthermore, I reckon a lot of voters looked at the photo and decided they would rather vote for the lump of concrete than for Ed Miliband. At least the concrete looked slightly animated, and at least we knew what the lump of concrete stood for. Perhaps, Labour's 2015 pledges will become known as the 'longest gravestone in history'.

It says everything about how much Miliband had rated his own chances that on the Tuesday after polling day, he was photographed flying off to Ibiza. He was so confident of not winning that he'd already gone ahead and booked a holiday.

Up here in Scotland, there is little doubt that the highlight was the moment when 20-year-old Mhairi Black beat Labour's campaign chief, Douglas Alexander, in Paisley. For a student barely out of her teens to so comprehensively defeat one of New Labour's big guns was remarkable. Furthermore, looking at them both at the count, you got the feeling that if they'd had to settle it with a square-go, she'd have one that hands down too.

UKIP were left with only one MP, rather than the bucketload they had predicted. I think one explanation for this is that thousands of racists, bigots, and mentally-deranged xenophobes went back to doing what they've done for decades, namely, voting Conservative.

So how did the opinion polls get it so wrong in underestimating the Tory vote? The simple answer is that people lie to opinion polls, especially if they are

planning to vote Conservative. Voting Tory is a bit like domestic abuse. No-one would ever own up to doing it, but statistics show it happens with disturbing regularity.

In the lead up to the election, Cameron warned voters not to vote Lib Dem, claiming 'you never know what you're going to get when you vote Liberal'. 'Dead right' thought all the people who voted Li-Dem in 2010 and ended up with a Tory government.

So, now we have five more years of Cameron on his own, without any restraint on unleashing his evil side. I find Cameron more sinister than Thatcher. At least you knew where you stood with Thatcher. She made no secret of the fact that she hated the working class, hated the unions, and hated Scotland. Cameron's re-branding of the Tories saw him 'hugging hoodies' and claiming he listened to Radiohead. You'd never have seen Thatcher kissing a punk, and claiming she was a fan of the Sex Pistols.

Yet, it was Cameron who brought in the bedroom tax, a law more draconian than anything Thatcher did - not that she wouldn't have approved of feckless old people with too many rooms being forced out of their homes. How ironic that she herself had to move out of her nine-bedroomed mansion in Belgravia to spend the last few months of her life in the squalor of the Ritz Hotel.

Vladimir McTavish will be appearing in 'So That's How We Voted?' at The Stand Comedy Club (proprietor Tommy Sheppard MP) in Edinburgh Wednesday 17th June and Glasgow on Monday 22nd June, see [www.thestand.co.uk](http://www.thestand.co.uk)





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

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



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General Secretary

**Tosh McDonald**  
President

**Kevin Lindsay**  
Scottish Officer

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