

Scottish Left Review

Issue 91 January/February 2016 - £2.00

An illustration in shades of orange and brown shows several hands from different people placing white ballot papers into a brown ballot box. The ballot papers are shown as white rectangles with a small slot at the top, and the hands are positioned as if they are in the process of putting them into the box. The background is a light blue color.

election

countdown to 5 May 2016

The best re(a)d
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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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ScottishLeftReview

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comment

New year – same old struggle

Though it's customary to say 'Happy New Year', we know there'll be nothing particularly happy about 2016 unless there are major changes in society. Part of achieving that will be about what happens on 5 May 2016 so we lead on this. We asked members of the progressive parties and organs of civil society what they'd like to see in the party manifestos. But we also know that 5 May 2016 will not be the final matter. Hence, other articles cover wider politics in Britain, Europe and elsewhere.

But for the time being, we have to start somewhere - and so we asked contributors to concentrate a number of issue for the manifestos, namely, i) Trident; ii) austerity; iii) human rights; iv) Trade Union Bill; and v) taxation. Recalling our last issue, we also asked for two reflections upon analysis of Corbyn's victory and developments since then. We did similarly with Sturgeon's speech on the occasion of her delivering the third annual Jimmy Reid Foundation lecture.

Currently, three things stand out about i) Scottish politics, ii) Labour and iii) imperialism. First, the politics of the campaigns and manifestos of progressive parties must be more heavily focussed upon more than just stopping things getting worse. So much of current left politics from Scottish Labour and the SNP is about stopping the Tories doing 'x' or 'y'. We need to raise our sights and say we want that and more, much more. Take for example, the SNP Scottish Government's exclusion of blacklists from tendering for public contracts from April 2016 or its maintenance of the Scottish Agriculture Wages Board. Good but not good enough - because the Welsh Assembly Government has already excluded blacklists since 2013 and maintaining the wages board in itself does not end low pay.

Although, the SNP remains Teflon like in

the polls despite losing two of its MPs and being subject to mounting criticism on a range of issues, it does appear to show some signs of responding to progressive criticism (such as on income tax, tax credits compensation, the council tax, and Sunday shopping regulation). But again this is more in the vein of potentially stopping things getting worse than start making things better. This is because what passes for social democracy in both its Scottish Labour and SNP forms searches for social justice within the confines of existing power and interest structures. So social justice is never conceived in terms of wealth distribution from one class (the ruling class) to another (the working class) - and it is scarcely ever conceived in terms of stopping one class (the ruling class) exploiting the other class (the working class).

Second, Corbyn has still to find his mojo because the new way of doing the 'new politics' can only take him so far until it becomes obvious there's a lack of hard substance. This means taking the initiative overall and doing so must comprise taking many initiatives. Unfortunately, John McDonnell's 'socialism with an iPad' was nothing more than reheated Keynesianism (see *Guardian* 19 November 2015). Without measures to redistribute the wealth created by this particular state intervention, it will simply and mostly go to those that already have it - hence the phrase 'money begets money'. There was certainly no socialism involved in this policy launch. The decision by Jeremy and John to not countenance local council 'needs budgets' because of their unlawfulness is another disappointment. Both need to make the case for the state owning and controlling the commanding heights of the economy for the benefit of the majority. Without that, the prospects for winning in 2020 let alone building effective resistance now are not good. These are the very things to

undercut internal opposition to Jeremy and John.

Third, on Syria, many progressives commented the vote to start aerial bombardment showed politicians 'hadn't learnt the lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan'. They are right when they meant bombing 'does not work' because it creates more suffering, instability and hatred. But these well intentioned people were completely wrong in thinking politicians are capable of learning in a logical, dispassionate way.

The vote to bomb - Labour MPs included - reflects three things, namely, power, material interests and ideology (and their maintenance and extension). Ruling class politicians and their acolytes cannot be expected to learn anything other than what tactics are better or worse in advancing and defending their interests. That is why building a bigger and more influential anti-war movement is vital because only through pressure not logical argument will pro-war politicians change course. This will not be easy as it is only when body bags come home in sufficient numbers resultant from ground wars or fighting foreign wars which gravely affect living standards back home that anti-war movements become mass movements.

Finally, an *erratum* - the article in *SLR* 90 was by John, not Jim, Slaven. Apologies there.

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Why not try something different?

Chris Stephens says Scottish Labour has the chance to shed its skin

Being asked to draw up a manifesto for political opponents is the equivalent of entering into a fantasy football contest without being able to pick your favourite players and hoping to lose. The opportunities to make mischief are obvious. But I've decided give it a 'square go'.

The current context for determining or guessing what will be in the 2016 Scottish Labour manifesto is more of a challenge than previously, given the party's state of flux both north and south of the border. In times gone by, it would have been fairly easy to work out - a limited, retail politics based offer that would pass muster with London HQ and Scottish MPs.

There would have been an appearance of involving members and activists in drafting and agreeing policy forum documents. These would invariably be altered or ignored, depending on content and sign off from the ministers and advisers when in government in Scotland, and latterly from an ever decreasing circle of power brokers. However, as always, the dead hand of central command control would ensure nothing too different or radical was produced to disrupt the 'new' Labour message.

After this year's events, who knows what forces are now working to produce the 2016 manifesto? Despite all the announcements about a revived, refreshed, listening party and another declaration of autonomy for Scottish Labour, the opportunity to create a distinct 'Independent Scottish Labour Party' has not been taken - not least because many comrades on the party's left are suspiciously hostile to anything that smacks of pandering or moving towards independence in any shape or form.

If a truly separate sister party was created in Scotland, this would

have presented opportunities to present distinct Scottish messages, and step away from Labour's daily civil war that is much in evidence at Westminster. The behaviour I witness from some Progress MPs to their fellow party members is less than comradely. Discipline, message and respect for democratic mandates are alien concepts to those daily airing their views by attacking their leadership in mainstream and social media.

Preparing a Scottish Labour manifesto is a peculiarly difficult task because the daily mantra of 'SNP bad' seems a habit that cannot be broken. For years, Scottish Labour has defined itself vis-à-vis the SNP, and couching this in relentless negativity gives the impression Scottish Labour has nothing positive to say. It would be truly refreshing if Scottish Labour could manage to present its vision for the future without mentioning the SNP.

Given Robert Cunninghame Graham founded both Labour and SNP, the term competitive cousins should apply for the real class enemy in Scotland is the party which punishes the poor and protects wealth and privilege. So the starting point has to be exposing the brutal reality behind the Tories' claim to be the party of 'working people'.

Trident: For many years, Scottish Labour's position has been to oppose nuclear weapons. This was comprehensively ignored by 'new' Labour ministers but the recent Scottish conference decision delivered the correct outcome, reflecting grassroots opinion. Although not a devolved issue, it should be highlighted, being presented as part of a comprehensive review of manufacturing in Scotland to plan for and create jobs. This should include commitments to work closely with unions to ensure jobs

are protected and diversification is enacted. It can also demonstrate other areas that can be spent on defence, strengthening naval defence, and publicly insist Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) ships can be dealt with through the same procurement process as Ministry of Defence ships, and avoid the wasted opportunity whereby RFA ships being built in Korea when they can be built in Scotland. A skilled workforce isn't just required for shipbuilding but for supply chains in all manufacturing, building and infrastructure projects. Using union expertise to draw up policy and plans for implementation should be a priority.

Austerity: This is a political choice resulting in the sustained dismantling of the welfare state, dispensing with safety nets. It emanates from a false narrative about what is and isn't 'affordable', where public spending is presented as an evil rather than a necessity. There's more than something objectionable about Holyrood being forced to administer a sticking plaster on social security at the expense of funding to grow our economy and plan for the future.

Inviting Scottish governments to use regressive flat rate taxation - hitting the working poor disproportionately - if they wish to preserve services and benefits is a Tory trap that Labour shouldn't endorse. Rather than being drawn into the 'further powers' argument which has zero resonance with most voters (as the referendum has polarised opinion into those who want the status quo and no more discussion about devolution and those who believe only the full range of powers that come with independence will work), set out a vision and framework for support for the vulnerable and plans to grow the economy through trans-national solidarity that has a

positive focus on what can be done under the existing conditions. This will require a coherence of message and vision which the Westminster PLP shows no signs of endorsing (although ironically having only one Scottish MP in Scotland might help in this).

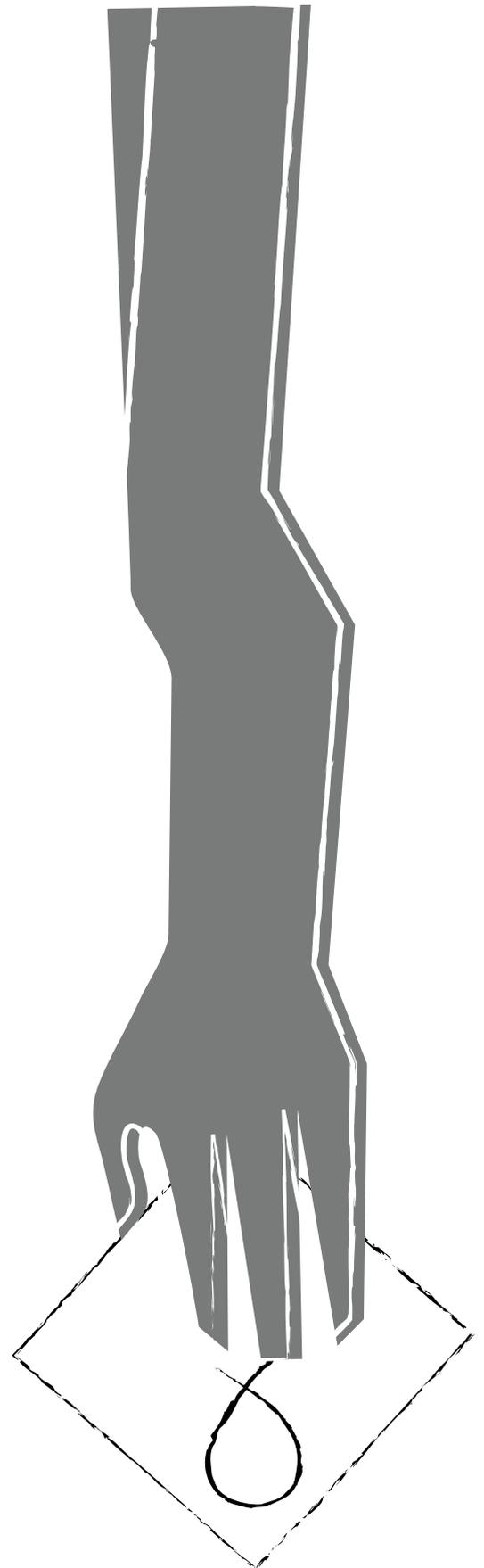
Clarity at local government level might be helpful as the choices Labour-led or coalition administrations make will impact on next year's elections. The public rarely differentiate between different levels of government and any poor choices about priorities at council level will undermine the 2016 Holyrood campaign. Scottish Labour lacks a coherent message about local government other than - you guessed it - 'SNP bad'. When you're so far down in the electoral gutter you might as well be bold and lay out a vision for restructuring of local government and taxation as a way of tackling austerity and protecting public services.

Taxation: There must be a willingness to work together across the party divide to have a cross-party approach to what progressive taxation policies should look like and how to implement them - not least because of the lack of public trust on this issue. There is also a lack of public trust about how finances are spent and scrutinised. That the major committees of the Scottish Parliament are chaired by the government party members is something Scottish Labour could challenge in the name of improving scrutiny. In fact, why not propose a comprehensive review of Holyrood procedures similar to the Westminster Wright Committee which resulted in departmental and select committee chairs being directly elected by a secret ballot of the House (using the alternative vote). Pledging to improve transparency and openness in scrutiny of public finances (and reminding people it was Labour that legislated for Freedom of Information) would be an obvious course of action.

Human rights: Actually there's not much to be added or suggested here, as credit where credit is due - there is a clear Labour position on opposing the Tory proposals for repealing the Human Rights Act, along with a campaign the Labour Campaign for Human Rights (<http://lchr.org.uk/>). What I suggest is the Scottish dimension here more front and centre and Labour should reach out to work with the SNP on this, especially Joanna Cherry MP who is leading on this.

Trade Union Bill: Many of these issues are human rights issues, and the purpose is undermining any organised opposition to austerity as well as further undermining the rights of working people to secure decent pay and working conditions. There should be a clear statement any Labour administration at national or local level would refuse to implement the restrictions the Bill will impose on employers that interfere with their ability to conduct negotiations and manage workplace relations sensibly. Although various motions have been passed at council level, it will be important to ensure this translates into action when the Bill becomes an Act. I say this because my union experience suggests the biggest obstacle for Scottish Labour credibility for many workers is experience of it as an employer.

Any Holyrood manifesto will have other issues to the fore (health, housing, education, transport) and local issues and perennial environmental issues. For some, pensions, crime and migration will feature large. However, the issues of austerity, taxation and human rights provide the context and funding for tackling those particular issues. How widely manifestos are read is a moot point, but they provide the context and vision guiding campaigns and should be more than shopping lists of pledges and partisan attacks on other parties. For some years, Scottish Labour has produced some of the most negative and dismal campaign



material in electoral history. Maybe, it's time to try something different.

Chris Stephens is Glasgow South West MP and SNP Westminster spokesperson on Trade Unions and Workers' Rights

Honesty goes a long way

Drew Smith says the SNP must drop the slogans and insert substance

It's been said part of the hostility between the SNP and Scottish Labour can be characterised as the narcissism of small difference. At the time of writing, the Scottish Government has just published its Draft Budget for 2016. Despite rows over its contents likely to dominate the next few weeks in the Scottish Parliament, the reality is that much of what the budget provides for is undisputed between the government and the major party of opposition. Indeed, since 1999, it has always been thus.

This Scottish Budget is, however, a pre-election budget and in its contents and omissions we see some of the potential dividing lines of the upcoming elections to the fifth Scottish Parliament. Asked to contemplate 'my asks' for the SNP's next manifesto, a number of thoughts come to mind. Not least the importance of manifestos themselves and the likely degrees of difference between Labour's and that of the SNP. Well-advertised manifesto commitments can take

on the status of solemn promises; unbreakable pacts with the people regardless of later policy consequences: recall maintaining 1,000 extra police officers or the council tax freeze. Alternatively, they can find themselves abandoned quickly and without ceremony: the local income tax, the homebuyers grant, writing off student debt are just a few examples of the less binding kind of SNP manifesto commitment.

So whilst manifestos contain specifics both to be championed, at least until the next election, or abandoned at the first sign of trouble, they are also, at their best, visions of our future and should help the voter to understand where a party and its candidates are coming from and rational reasons as to why we should place our crosses beside their names.

There will, no doubt, be policies contained in the SNP manifesto that I will celebrate, just as there will be ideas in my own party's to which I might be less enthusiastic.

'Carry a knife - go to jail' is an example from last time that I was glad enough to see fall by the wayside. Support for a single national police service was another that it became impossible to backtrack from despite the mounting evidence that it would not work in the manner first envisaged.

In May last year, the big issue, or at least so we were told, was austerity and Scotland's two big parties allegedly conflicting attitudes towards it. This May, the backdrop of austerity will loom large over the election, particularly the swingeing cuts which a Scottish Government intends to inflict upon Scottish local government. If the SNP

chooses to highlight its opposition to austerity in its Scottish manifesto, then I would have three asks of them. By all means lament the choices made by Westminster but stop pretending the approach of Scottish Ministers is not also a choice. Be brave, and defend why you have chosen to protect budgets for acute hospital care whilst still continuing the attack on the social care provision – the very care which prevents people ending up on the ward, and eases the return home.

Second of all, recognise cuts to local government result in local austerity. Low paid women workers bear the brunt of this, as do those most reliant upon council services. The cynicism of the current attitude does nothing to honour the best elements of the 2014 referendum, when many of our citizens became engaged because they believed their vote could make a difference and saw politics as the mechanism to change our society. Honesty might not always have been the hallmark of that campaign but it can still go a long way in fostering a more informed debate, which trusts people to understand the choices in front of them.

Third, let's talk about tax. Tax is the basis of our social solidarity; it allows us to provide for what are at heart some of the most basic civilising forces in our society. It can help to balance differentiating levels of power, but it is also the most easily misrepresented tool of government. So, let's stop pretending that the Scottish Rate of Income Tax, at least part-reformed in time for this May's election, is only a flat rate power. It isn't. Its variability may be in lock-step but it is also a power built on top of, an imperfect, but still ultimately progressive tax system. Only in Scotland could a party have proposed the 'Penny for Scotland' in the good times, and then when

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austerity is laying waste to our public services, the very same individuals angrily dismiss it as an unusable measure. So use it, don't use it, but be prepared to set out real arguments on why that choice has been made rather than relying upon the straw men of nationalism.

Post-Smith, the tax powers vary again, and from then it will be possible to vary rates differentially. This is a good thing. If you believe that, as a matter of fairness, the highest rate should not have been reduced from 50p to 45p, then make clear that it will be put back, put it in your manifesto and make clear that the next budget will be set for the long-term, not just for an election.

As an MSP since 2011, I have been struck more than anything else by how little time Scottish politics spends talking, or thinking, about jobs. So if town hall austerity is to be continued, spell out how workers will be protected from its consequences. I am currently a member of the Scottish Government's taskforce on the steel industry which is rightly concerned with the hundreds of jobs at risk. Yet, cuts to councils have and will result in potentially tens of thousands losing their livelihood. Why not take up UNISON's suggestion of taskforces for those people?

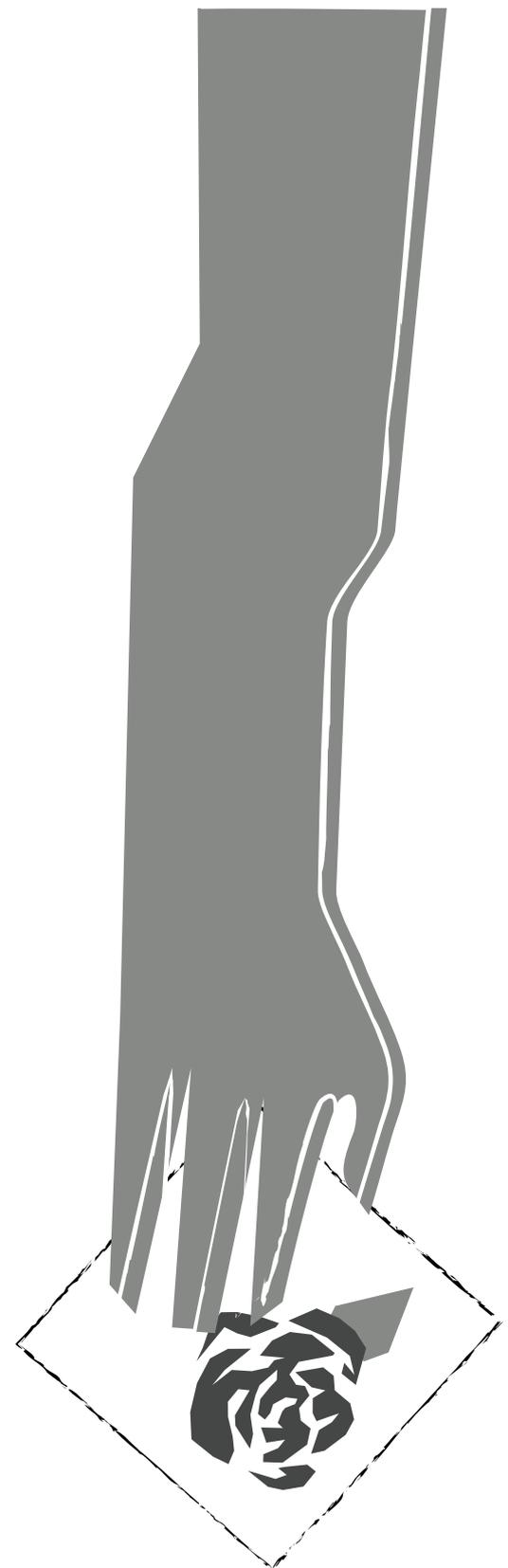
Similarly, Scottish Labour and SNP manifestos will reflect shared opposition to Trident renewal. So let's move beyond the rhetoric and actually see preparation and action on defence industry diversification. That requires a lead from government, not just a slogan. The Scottish Government used to claim that 16,000 jobs could be created in renewables, a target that has since been dropped apparently without a replacement. So let's see a joined up industrial strategy debated; and a real commitment to manufacturing as a provider of good quality jobs, decent wages and community stability, rather

than only another simplistic splurge on the so-called Small Business Bonus, a policy that has already cost £1 billion with no audit of its job creating impact.

On the environment, the road to sustainability cannot be a runway to a slashing Air Passenger Duty, at the expense of a quarter of a billion pounds to the public purse. Why not spend that money instead on real efforts to improve educational attainment and training the workers of tomorrow for a chance at a better working life. For those working in the care industry today, why not commit to the living wage that the councils who procure services and providers of them both claim to want. Go further and embed that approach, not just with certificates for living wage employers, but by bringing together purchasers, providers and employees within a meaningful collective bargaining framework which sees the role of government not just as a supporter of fair work, but as an enabler of it.

Finally, in the First Minister's Jimmy Reid lecture she rightly described workers' rights as human rights. Let's see that put into action with serious action against the blacklisting contractors, who are still benefiting from public projects. The Trade Union Bill is not just an illiberal and ideological attack on the rights of working people to organise, it is also a dog's breakfast of a law which can be made unworkable. So, follow the lead of local authorities and let's make clear that both Scottish Labour and SNP, manifestos will represent a mandate for concerted and united resistance to the implementation of draconian policy.

If it is true that last year's General Election manifestos from Labour and the SNP amounted to small difference, and if many Labour voices were right that the SNP has had a habit of simply copying many of Labour's policies, then the inclusion of some of the above



would, in my view, be very welcome indeed. Imitation will remain the sincerest form of flattery.

Drew Smith is Labour MSP for Glasgow, Chair of the Trades Union Group of Labour MSPs and former Shadow Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, writing here in a personal capacity.

Radicals can work together for radical outcomes

Green left activist, Anni Pues, offers fraternal suggestions to RISE

The 2016 elections are without doubt the most significant for the Scottish Parliament yet. In large part this reflects the success of radicals in driving the Scottish political agenda through the referendum period. Unfortunately, the Greens and the coalition that constitutes RISE weren't able to come to an agreement to run together. Many will be sad that the two main voices behind the radical resurgence of the left in Scottish politics will be running against one another. But there are significant opportunities beyond the obvious problems.

The decisive shift to the left by the SNP in recent years came on the back of the last election of a significant number of radical MSPs. From 2003-2007, the 13 Green and SSP MSPs pushed the agenda on issues from free school meals to social enterprise. The SNP's move to the left after 2004 has both transformed Scottish politics and left truly radical politics with a greatly diminished voice. It is important that we have those radical voices back in Parliament in greatly increased numbers.

It is good to have another left grouping pushing for an anti-capitalist agenda. We all now recognise that a just society is not possible without radical plans to protect the environment. Social and climate justice are inextricably linked. Naomi Klein has brilliantly explained how capitalism is based on the externalisation of environmental costs. We know that the structure of capitalism is deeply entwined with the burning of fossil fuels. The cause of the environment is the cause of socialism and the cause of socialism is the cause of the environment.

So as Greens and socialists move

close to one another, shared agendas emerge. And it is these that I, as a Green socialist, would like to see in the RISE manifesto.

We need to widen the debate about the environment from the liberal obsession with changing individual behaviour and regulation. Instead, we need to build a new collective and democratic economy with people and the environment at its heart. RISE is perfectly placed to make these arguments.



One policy that Greens haven't made the running on is free public transport. It is bold, points clearly to the world we want to see, and would help to obliterate the car culture that does so much to drive both climate change and capitalist atomisation of communities. Free public transport would help deliver a systemic change in society and would help stop climate change.

RISE also has the opportunity to make the case for transformed ownership of businesses, services and other important areas of the economy. For too long, we have worked on the basis of a presumption that privatisation, deregulation and low taxes are best. But Scotland can now shift ownership of land, its privatised

industries like steel, and its privatised companies like Scotrail into democratic and collective control. I hope RISE will be making the argument that we must remove the primacy of the profit motive in public services. We need a variety of renationalisation, worker control and new models of combined worker and public control.

The council tax freeze has pushed the debate around local taxation to the point where it is widely accepted that we must find a new form. This should be both redistributive and should ensure that assets are taxed. The SSP's proposal of a 'Scottish Service Tax' (SST) would be an effective redistributive tax, but would not have taxed assets. While we build public support for asset taxes, the SST may deliver the redistributive element of funding for public services that will help to mitigate the worst of Westminster's austerity.

With a real chance to elect radical MSPs in every Scottish region, from Green or RISE, it is vital that everyone uses their list vote to help transform Scottish politics. We all want to see a Scottish Parliament that delivers the aspirations of a transformed Scotland so many hoped independence would bring.

Anni Pues sits on the International Committee of the Scottish Green Party, and is a feminist and left activist

One policy that Greens haven't made the running on is free public transport.

How red can the greens be?

Cat Boyd offers fraternal advice to the left of the Scottish Greens

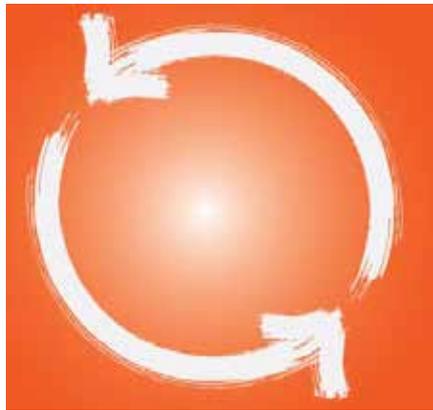
Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything* and Paul Mason's *Post-capitalism* capture the growing consensus capitalism will not solve the looming climate change crisis. Serious intellectual opinion is increasingly unanimous in this view. Even the world's wealthiest capitalist, Bill Gates, admits if we leave green investment to private enterprise the planet is destined to burn. The problem is that mainstream, short-term-oriented politicians haven't caught up with these obvious conclusions about the planet's future and capitalism's disastrous impact upon it.

It seems clear that green and socialist parties, sharing a common enemy and a longer term perspective on politics, should eventually seek a permanent alliance. Indeed, in some countries, Green-Left coalitions are long-established, and Greens are cheerily anti-capitalist. However, in other countries – usually, those where the Greens have come closest to power – they have become openly pro-establishment, even right-wing and pro-war, and have turned on their members and supporters. Generally, this happens because the temptations of 'pragmatic' coalition government become overwhelming. There are also sociological reasons for this – many green parties are very middle class – and ideological reasons - many greens share a small business outlook or even a 'deep Green' misanthropic view on progress.

So far, the Scottish party has been a consistent ally of the radical left. However, Scotland's green party – unlike, for example, Germany's – has been moulded by a long period on the margins. 2016's election could see it moving to the centre: it's not ridiculous to imagine it being offered the chance of coalition with the SNP. That would

really test its long-term view on political alliances.

Thus, it was revealing that when Patrick Harvie was asked at a BBC leaders' debate whether 'capitalism' would be a red-line for the Greens in coalition, his answer, as well as in subsequent articles, was ambiguous. This raises a question: how do the Greens foresee political change? Will it emerge from below, by an anti-establishment alliance of social movements and the organised working class, or from above, by entering coalitions as a minority? Is parliamentary influence a means or an ends?



I believe in making pragmatic reforms in the present where capitalism is overwhelmingly dominant. Socialists have achieved some of the most important of these in the Scottish Parliament, like free school meals and ending prescription charges. But if you're a serious Green or a serious socialist, you also need a strategy for the coming decades, not just the next parliamentary term.

On so many issues, we do agree, but on some strategic questions there are lingering doubts. Socialists aren't just anti-capitalist because they are worried about over-using the planet's resources. They are anti-capitalist because most of humanity is subordinated to capitalist work and exploitation for large parts of the day; we are anti-capitalist because of the class system. For that reason, socialists

have seen the union movement as a central part of changing society.

Labour's grip over the unions and over working class communities explains a great deal about the historical failings of the socialist movement in Britain. In Scotland, happily, its traditional heartlands are not now no-go territories. But for the sake of the independence movement, and the health of progressive movements in general, we must now end Labour's grasp on the Scottish unions' resources and, more importantly, their imaginations.

That's why a radical strategy for Scotland must address worklessness and bad jobs, not as afterthoughts, but as primary aims. Clean jobs, absolutely. But working class needs must be immediate priorities, and that does mean full employment, which the SNP can't provide due to its pro-business outlook.

That's also why I favour economic planning. But I favour planning for a second reason: because it's the only way to solve the climate crisis. Cooperatives are great, but our social movements must seek a clear mandate to impose strict controls on business activities, or, given current trends, the future is unthinkable.

Sooner or later, circumstances will force socialists and greens together. We need a permanent eco-socialist coalition in society, and yes, it must seek power. What it shouldn't do is become subservient to the power of capitalism – and that can happen to the best coalitions, as Syriza proves. For the twenty-first century to end more successfully than the last one, capitalism must be a red line.

Cat Boyd is a RISE (Respect, Independence, Socialism and Environmentalism) and union movement activist. She was also a co-founder of the Radical Independence Campaign.

Working for independence for women and workers



Sandra Mills outlines the policy positions of Women for Independence

Austerity and taxation: With so many leading economists having denounced the politics of austerity, it's hard to see how the Tories have a shred of credibility that their 'long term economic plan' is working. They continue to repeat the mantra, but the statistics for numbers of foodbanks, suicides of benefit claimants and the instability of the job market only highlights that their plan works only for the very rich.

Wfi has long highlighted austerity measures falling disproportionately on women, and redistribution of wealth reaches vulnerable women only as an afterthought, if at all. Increased childcare hours was a positive step, but the Scottish Government needs to go further – provision of out of school care is woefully inadequate in rural areas, and full-time childcare is too expensive for many low income earners. Rather than ploughing more money into child tax credit, or increased hours, we would like to see a commitment to encourage employers to be more creative. Many workplaces could provide crèche facilities without huge costs, and new technologies should allow more women to work from home, if only employers were ready to set up their systems to allow it.

Creative employment practice also leads to economic growth. The only way to counter austerity without having control of the benefits system is to promote economic growth. Conservative policy favours suppression of wages and employment instability to secure higher profits, only benefitting shareholders.

The Scottish Government over the next term will have to prove it can redistribute wealth fairly using new taxation powers. But the trap lies in

only able to raise taxes – platform poison in an election. We need more creative thinking around transport links, education policy, childcare policy and redistribution of taxation in order to combat austerity within the devolved powers and lift more women out of poverty.

Trident: It's clear we'll be hearing more about Trident over coming months but what is not clear is whether Corbyn will whip his MPs into voting against renewal. I'm not sure anyone needs a crystal ball to judge this unlikely. However, the vote by Scottish Labour to scrap Trident is significant. We can now truthfully say that Scotland as a whole does not want a nuclear deterrent and now we have a real test of Scotland's place in the so-called equal partnership of the UK.

Nothing will expose the powerlessness of Scotland within the Union more clearly than the vote on renewal – a united Scottish vote to scrap this abhorrent and expensive weapons system will be overruled by the significantly higher number of English MPs voting to renew. Although a reserved matter, Wfi would like to see the commitment to scrap Trident clearly stated in the main parties' manifestos. Scottish Labour, the SNP, the Greens, and RISE are all anti-Trident, but I think it's clear only a commitment from Labour as a whole to scrap it, or full Scottish independence will remove this dangerous waste of money from our shores.

Human rights: Tory desire to deport terrorists and ensure prisoners can't vote will allow far greater breaches of the freedoms enjoyed by the rest of us than we can yet anticipate. The Tories say innocent people who have nothing to hide shouldn't be

concerned if government chooses to hold information on their DNA, email communications and participation in protests. This is what is at stake – our very freedom to hold and publicly profess beliefs which may be contrary to official government policy. All main parties must clearly indicate they will oppose this Bill at Westminster, and Wfi will be at the forefront of any campaign to oppose it. However, this again highlights the difficulty with reserved matters – Scotland simply does not have the Westminster numbers to oppose legislation without all Labour MPs' support.

Trade Union Bill: Also a reserved matter, the main parties' manifestos must express how they intend to counter this legislation if it is passed. More than any other Tory legislation, this will impact hugely upon women. 76% of part-time workers in Scotland are women, and 57% of Scottish women earn the minimum wage. These groups will be particularly vulnerable if restrictions to strike are enacted.

Using union support, the Scottish Government must support workers in defying this draconian legislation. Assuming no agreement has yet been reached under the Smith Commission, all the main parties must make this a 'red line' – no government in Scotland will enforce these measures against Scottish workers.

Sandra Mills is an elected member of the Women for Independence National Committee. Qualified as an English teacher, she runs a tuition business, is active in the Back to School Bank and Hamilton Academical Homework Club, and has an interest in all things educational.

Further and higher education: under-loved and under-funded

Vonnie Sandlan says parties must address the crisis affecting students

Coming less than two years after a referendum that galvanised and invigorated democratic debate, with the historic decision to grant 16 and 17 year olds the vote, and at a time of greater devolution to Scotland, this election presents an opportunity to mould the fairer the society we want to see, and our place in it.

While it's right that we continue to protect the principle and practice of free education in Scotland, recognising the role higher education as a core public and social good, free education can't just be about the price tag. For NUS Scotland, the unifying theme of our election priorities is ensuring the necessary support is available to students. It's about securing a system that enables any student, regardless of background or circumstance, to access education, and enables them to complete their studies and achieve their full potential.

If we take some of our most in-need students – those in further education - they're also the ones most forced to get by on paltry amounts, if they receive anything at all. Currently, they don't have access to a guaranteed level of income like their higher education counterparts, instead relying on a discretionary, postcode lottery. This leaves students unsure whether they'll have money to live off, let alone how much, when they consider studying at college. Some arrive at college to find that the support level simply isn't enough, others arrive to find there's no money left in the pot, forcing them to either go without or drop out. This is a huge waste of talent for Scotland and an unnecessary hurdle at the very start of a potential



career or path to university.

If we really want to break down barriers to education, this needs to be our next target. We want to see parties committing to an entitlement for all further education students, guaranteeing a minimum level of income and ensuring that regardless of where you study in Scotland, you know you'll be supported, and you'll know how much support you'll receive before you even get there.

More fundamentally, we need to seriously look at the whole student system and what it provides for students right across the year. Not every student is in a position to be supported by family members in the summer, and many have their own dependents. As our fair access rates continue to improve, the range of backgrounds and needs of students will, rightly, diversify, but the financial support they receive still treats them as a single group. We want to see parties outlining how they'll ensure students, particularly those who have no 'safety net' over the summer, aren't hung out to dry.

But at the same time, we need looking beyond just financial support offered to students and start looking at other support provided, like welfare support. Students face significant pressures, both academically and personally, which can have a significant impact on their mental health, yet too often, the system lets students with

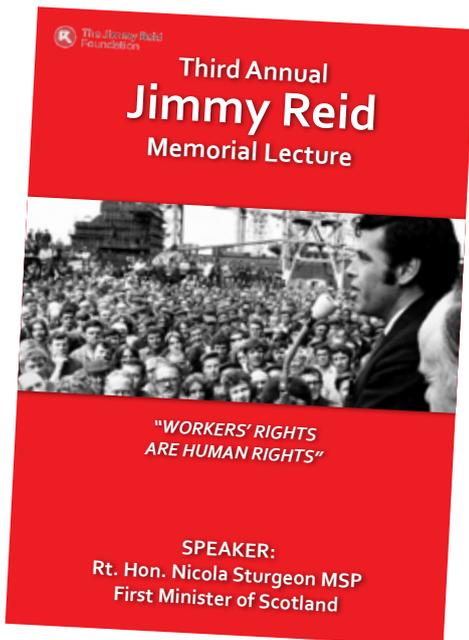
mental health problems down.

We see students having to organise support when they start a new academic year or new institution, students have to move between different NHS health boards at home and at their term time address, and sometimes institutions simply don't have the capacity to support a student. While these services are provided at a local level, we think that this national problem needs a national solution – and one that goes beyond individual universities and colleges. We need to see commitments to bring together a range of agencies and institutions to look at what provision is in place for students, and how this can be improved.

We can be proud of our education system in Scotland, but we can't be complacent. During the next parliament, we'll face challenges, but we also have a real chance to build on our achievements in areas like widening access, creating a system where anyone in Scotland can access college or university and is supported to stay there. That's an opportunity I'm excited about, and one that all of us – students, unions, community organisations, and more – shouldn't let slip away.

Vonnie Sandlan is NUS Scotland President for 2015/16, having previously served as NUS Scotland women's officer and President of Langside College Students' Association.

Reaction to Sturgeon's speech



On 24 November 2015, First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, gave the third Jimmy Reid Foundation annual lecture, entitled 'Workers' rights are human rights', in the same Bute Hall at the University of Glasgow where Jimmy Reid delivered his rectorial address in 1972. We asked for comment on it. Her lecture is available at <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/Speeches-Briefings/Jimmy-Reid-Memorial-Lecture-1fa2.aspx>

Carolyn Jones,
Director, Institute of Employment Rights
(<http://www.ier.org.uk/>)

It's always uplifting to hear a political leader state that 'unions are a force for good in modern society'. Nicola is right - unions empower people, providing a voice for those who might otherwise go unheard. Her emphasis on - and rejection of - the *Trade Union Bill* as a deeply regressive step, is very welcome and the speech ends on a determined note. The Bill will be vigorously opposed and the Act, if and when it comes, will be resisted, pledging never to employ agency workers in the event of industrial action. Great stuff! My concern is her emphasis on the concept of partnership and cooperation in industrial relations.

Where partnerships exist between employers and unions – great. But from the Upper Clyde Shipbuilding dispute to Ineos at Grangemouth more recently, conflict remains in the employment relationship and partnership exists as the gift of employers. Political leaders need to acknowledge the employment relationship is not one of equal partners and never will be. For real partnership and cooperation to develop unions need the proactive support of a sympathetic government determined to introduce structures that place unions at the heart of industrial and economic policy. As the chair and president of the institute argue, inequality, low pay and zero hour contracts will not be wished away. Politicians have a responsibility to provide the means by which they can be addressed. Pledging to improve recognition procedures and introduce sectoral collective bargaining would show the First Minister really meant business.

Neil Findlay,
Labour MSP for the Lothians

In reading her speech, I was struck by the complete absence of one word - class! Because it is class - the divide between those who own and control business and production and those who sell their labour working under the instruction of others that is, and always has been, the big divide in our society. As a nationalist, Nicola prefers to paint an image of us as 'all Scots together'. A society where Brian Soutar and call centre workers have the same rights and interests and will share the spoils of a society that will be fairer just because we are all Scots. The reality, of course, is quite different. Under Sturgeon, SNP policy remains unchanged serving the interests of middle class Scots at the expense of the low paid and working class. That is why it champions the discredited Council Tax freeze whilst bleeding local government and kicking 60,000 out of a job; failed to introduce the living wage through procurement; leaves our railway in private hands, selling off the sleeper and ferries; protects universities and decimate

colleges; refuses to hold inquiries into blacklisting, undercover policing and justice for miners; demands powers over taxes then fail to do anything with them; and has no redistributive policies. These and much more are issues affecting the very people Jimmy Reid identified with. They are class issues, they are union issues – they most certainly don't appear to be a priority issues for the Nicola Sturgeon's government.

Carole Ewart,
Human Rights Consultant

Nicola was direct in her condemnation of the UK Government's attack on worker's rights and in so doing she set out evidence on why the *Trade Union Bill* undermines Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) which gives everyone the equal right to 'freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his/her interests'. The ECHR states the right can be limited only in certain specific and justifiable circumstances which are 'prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others'. Asserting the devolved political powers of Scotland and our positive track record on industrial relations, she confirmed: 'The number of working days lost due to strikes has declined by 84% since 2007- that's the highest reduction anywhere in the UK. Last year, fewer days were lost in Scotland, relative to our working population, than in any other part of the UK'. So the Bill is unnecessary as it seeks to fix a problem that does not exist. In 2016, I hope the Scottish Government asserts its duties under the ECHR, under the *Scotland Act 1998* (s59) to proactively comply with the ECHR, and refuses to comply with the Bill. It would be rather exciting if the Scottish Government took the UK Government to the European Court of Human Rights to argue its case.

Corbyn: will he be captain of all he surveys?

John McAllion foresees more stormy waters ahead

The election of socialists to the leadership of the Labour party has turned the world of the Westminster bubble upside down. Previously, Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell scarcely impinged upon the British establishment's consciousness. Suddenly, they now command the two major offices of Her Majesty's Official Opposition as well as heading up an army of grassroots activists committed to radical political change well beyond the usual Westminster consensus.

The British establishment, still in recovery mode following an unexpectedly close run referendum result and an unforeseen SNP triumph in the general election, was again rocked to its core. Nowhere more so than among Labour parliamentarians most of whom had long since given up on socialism. Corbyn and McDonnell were never going to be acceptable to a parliamentary faction anchored to the conviction that Westminster elections are won from the political centre ground.

The open opposition from Labour MPs that followed culminated in the debacle of the new leadership being forced to accept a free vote on the bombing of Syria. Humiliation was then heaped upon the new leader as Labour rebels and the Tory benches united in cheering Hilary Benn's defiant trashing of his own party's opposition to the bombing of Syria. The 66 Labour rebels in the division that followed underlined the reality that here was a new Labour leader who commands neither his Shadow Cabinet nor his Parliamentary party.

The key consideration for the wider left is whether it is likely or even possible that this electorally calamitous situation

will be reversed before the next UK general election. Will the grassroots revolution that won such a convincing majority in the leadership election be enough to take control of the selection process that will decide the make-up of the prospective parliamentary party in 2020? Will Momentum be able to deliver not just a left leadership but a left parliamentary party that will go on to open up the Westminster road to socialism?

Corbyn's plans to democratise the party's policy-making process and to enfranchise ordinary party members clearly has the potential to shift Labour decisively leftwards. In doing so, it will also threaten the long-term survival of those centre-right MPs opposed to that direction of change. These MPs will neither roll over and accept the shift leftwards nor go quietly.

Labour, therefore, faces years of bitterly fought policy battles and selection contests that will divide its own membership, alienate many mainstream voters and significantly diminish their prospects of holding their existing seats and winning back from the Tories the 94 seats they need to form a government. The alternative is to remain split between a socialist party in the country and a moderate pro-market party in Parliament.

Meanwhile the Tories are busy moving the electoral goalposts by cutting the number of parliamentary seats to 600, redrawing constituency boundaries and introducing individual electoral registration, all of which will increase the Tories' and lessen Labour's electoral prospects. More ominously, the wider electorate remain underwhelmed by Labour's change of direction. Despite

divisions over Europe and the U-turn on tax credits, the Tories enjoy a double digit lead over Labour in the polls. In Scotland, the SNP lead the one-time people's party by 34 points.

However, Labour's problems run deeper than the state of the current polls. The Tories won their current majority with less than 37% of the votes cast and with the support of less than 25% of the UK electorate. The vast bulk of Tory seats are in southern England where Labour, Blair years apart, is traditionally weak. To win again in 2020, the Tories need only do as badly as they did in 2015. It is in the DNA of a British state built around the first-past-the-post electoral system to block radical change from the left and to bolster moderate continuity from the right.

The political times are changing. The days of the old Tory/Labour duopoly are over. Labour is no longer the only alternative to the Tories. New popular forces are stirring to the left of Labour and are demanding democratic and socialist change well beyond what might be achieved through a warped Westminster system. The age of the Palace of Westminster and of Her Majesty's Governments and Oppositions has passed.

John McAllion was a Tayside Regional Councillor (1984-1987), serving as Labour Convener of the Council (1986-87) and then Labour MP (1987-2001) and Labour MSP (1999-2003) for Dundee East. He left Labour in 2005, joining the SSP and remains a member. He is an executive member of both the Dundee Pensioners' Forum and Scottish Pensioners' Forum, and is a former member of the SLR editorial board.

Hope in hard times?

Stephen Smellie sees the foundation for future requiring hard work

Given the left's history of being schooled in oppositional politics without experience of leadership and, therefore, being unprepared for victory, there was danger Corbyn's victory would quickly descend into chaos, farce or both. That it has not is a testimony to his personality, political style and awareness of the thin ice he skates upon.

His first 100 days was marked the *Guardian* reporting 30% of Labour members don't think he'll be leader come 2020 and an interview with a Blairite advisor suggesting Labour might have to split. Nothing surprising: the 30% who didn't vote for him still are not convinced, Blairites hate him and the *Guardian* continues to promote his inevitable downfall.

Yet Corbyn has been largely successful in mobilising his support and extending the positive radicalism that inspired his campaign and won him the greatest membership mandate of any Labour leader. That this has not led to a huge surge in the polls at either British or Scottish levels is not surprising. Labour has a mountain to climb in the polls and that won't be turned around quickly. His leadership must be about establishing a base within the party and wider movement for his anti-austerity, anti-Trident, pro-public ownership manifesto and, therefore, giving confidence to thousands of party, community and union activists wishing to advocate them. Anyone who is active in unions will know whilst there has been support for them, most workers were persuaded austerity was necessary, nuclear weapons needed and the public sector had to shrink.

His election has created a situation where the alternative is not only seen as possible but possibly realisable. If all Corbyn had to do was to keep advocating these alternatives until 2020, the course would be set.

Unfortunately, Corbyn has to deal with party and parliamentary politics, the media and next year's elections.

In each, Corbyn has the difficult task of putting forward his policies through the actions of others (e.g., Shadow Cabinet members, election candidates). Inevitably, this doesn't always work out. Labour UK's refusal to discuss Trident, threatened revolt if there was not a 'free vote' on Syria and 'embarrassment' at John McDonnell's frontbench experience were setbacks. However, Corbyn came out well in each of these by being seen to be true to his values.

His successes have been his own. Using PMQs to highlight issues, success of anti-Trident vote at the Scottish conference, extremely successful speeches at rallies and demonstrations and his confident TV appearances have all been positive, helping continue building upon his election movement.

But successfully extending that movement to take Labour closer to winning office requires other people to play their part - to demonstrate in words and deeds the party has actually shifted towards Corbyn, enabling him to confidently take the ideas to the electorate and win votes back for Labour. Signs are not encouraging.

The Syrian bombing vote affirmed that the parliamentary party is not won over and is not yet under sufficient pressure to back Corbyn. In Scotland, there are other considerations. Party members that recently overwhelmingly elected Jim Murphy cannot be expected to suddenly re-discover their socialist soul. Cook and Kane's claim of 'a genuine sense of grassroots members regaining control of their party' (SLR 90) might actually not be quite as progressive as it sounds if the party members remain committed to supporting candidates whose allegiance to Corbyn is doubtful.

Huge increases in party members in England have not occurred in Scotland for large numbers of citizens switched off Labour before the referendum and since. It will take more than Corbyn to win Scotland back for Labour. Keneally (SLR 90) made the reasonable suggestion Labour should attack the SNP as 'being all style and no substance'. But this needs Labour positions that have themselves some substance.

The opportunity to demonstrate Labour anti-austerity substance presents itself now with John Swinney's Scottish budget. Scottish Labour's anti-austerity stance must be more than 'spin and deception in order to gain one over your opponent' to quote John McDonnell (SLR 90).

The SNP has correctly been denounced as simply passing on Tory Westminster austerity by proposing the biggest cuts in council funding ever. Refusing to raise income tax and continue freezing the Council Tax means services to the most vulnerable children in schools and older and disabled people being cared for in the community will be slashed.

However, Labour needs to do more than denounce this tartan-Tory government. It must demonstrate what it would do differently. On the Scottish shadow front bench, there was resolute refusal to put forward an anti-austerity alternative. Was Labour prepared to raise income tax? Are Labour councils to defy the Council Tax freeze so to save services?

Scottish workers watching decimation of local services and 15,000 council jobs will be asking 'What would Corbyn do?' However, it will be Dugdale and Labour councillors who will be doing the 'do'.

Stephen Smellie is a Labour member and UNISON Scotland Depute Convenor. He re-joined Labour after the 2010 general election recognising stopping the Tories was a priority. 'Disappointed socialist', therefore, is his position.

Enhancing domestic security without military intervention abroad

Bill Bonnar argues you can't bomb your way to peace and stability

For those who argue that domestic security is enhanced by military action abroad, their argument falls at the first hurdle. Can they point to one example where this assertion is actually true? In contrast, the modern history of Britain is littered by examples where the opposite is the case.

The best case is Northern Ireland. Between 1969, when British troops first went into the province to the signing of the Northern Ireland Peace Agreement in 1996, Britain was subjected to a ferocious IRA bombing campaign in direct response to Britain's military activities. As that action increased so did the IRA bombing campaign. That campaign ended with the signing of the Peace Agreement. Britain's attempt at destroying the IRA 'terror bases' in the province to 'keep Britain safe' was both disastrous and ineffectual. And a lie! The British military campaign was about putting down an insurgency in the province and maintaining British rule; the safety of British citizens in the mainland was never much of a priority. It certainly didn't extend to the safety of Irish citizens in Dublin given the British security forces role in a bombing campaign in that city.

The IRA bombing campaign in mainland Britain was extensive and at times spectacular. It included an attempt to blow up the British Government in a hotel at the Tory party annual conference and the destruction of Canary Wharf and was at a level far in excess of anything produced by Islamic extremists. The British people only became safe from IRA terrorism when the root cause of that terrorism in Northern Ireland ended.

The principle claim for taking part in the bombing campaign against ISIS

in Syria is that it will make Britain safe. The basis of this assertion is ludicrous. An ISIS sponsored terrorist attack in Britain will be organised and carried out by people in Britain; not from some bunker in an isolated part of Syria. Bombing that bunker would have no effect on what takes place in Britain in much the same way as bombing caves in the Bora Bora mountains in Afghanistan had any relevance to terror campaigns in Europe.

This brings us to ISIS. ISIS is two distinct things. The first is a military force operating mostly in Iraq and to a much lesser extent in Syria. It emerged in direct response to the collapse of Iraq following the western invasion and the partial collapse of Syria. Its declared ultimate aim is to re-establish a medieval Caliphate although this essentially utopian; if utopian is the right word. It's a bit like the Scottish Socialist Party arguing that its ultimate aim is the establishment of world socialism; true, but not likely to happen anytime soon.

In reality, ISIS is driven by much more immediate political and religious conflicts in the region and its primary enemies are other Islamic movements. In Iraq, the main conflict is between an unstable alliance of ISIS and disaffected Sunni elements from the former Iraqi army against the Baghdad government supported by Shia militias. The second is that ISIS is a franchise which any individual or group can claim allegiance to even if there is no formal connection. This latter point explodes the argument that Islamic terrorist groups can be stopped by attacking their command centre in the Middle East. These groups, operating in Europe, have no command centres.

In fact, western attacks in the Middle

East inflame Islamic fundamentalist groups in Europe making terrorist attacks more likely. Before the Western attack on Iraq, how many Islamic terrorist attacks took place in Britain?

We should also recognise the existence of a terrible double standard. Two weeks before the Paris attack a terrorist bomb planted by ISIS in Beirut killed scores of people; almost all of them Muslim. The attack barely registered in the western media allowing many to draw the conclusion that western lives are far more important than others - again something likely to inflame the thinking of a terrorist group.

All of this opens up a much wider debate around exactly what is terrorism. This isn't an abstract discussion but rather about the need to challenge some of the narrative which has been developed. The United Nations have a definition of terrorism. An act of terrorism is a 'military style assault on a defenceless civilian population for political ends'. The Paris attack would certainly qualify under this definition; but what else? The reality is that 99% of all acts of terrorism are carried out by governments. Was not Israeli bombing of Gaza a massive act of terrorism? How many governments currently carrying out their new 'war on terror' has themselves committed terrorist acts. This is particularly true of the United States; the biggest exporter of terrorism in the world.

The only solution to the crisis in Syria is a political settlement – a negotiated ceasefire which protects the integrity of the Syrian state. Part of that solution is the removal of Assad and his entourage. However, a word of caution is necessary. Syria is government by the Baathist Party which is rooted in the institutions of

the Syrian state. If the Baathist Party is overthrown the likely outcome will be the complete collapse of what is left of Syria with further appalling consequences for the Syrian people and wider region. The impact of this in neighbouring Turkey, Jordan and Iraq is beyond imagination. Most likely to emerge from the debris are groups like ISIS, hence, the need for a negotiated political solution.

The more Britain is involved in military attacks in the Middle East, the more Britain becomes a target. Each attack acts like a recruiting sergeant for domestic Islamic terror groups. While the British security forces can probably prevent most of these threats, it can never be 100% successful; and therefore it will fail. All that is required is that one attack be successful for the group to make its point. What's more the cost of alienating the Muslim community in Britain through mass surveillance, stigmatisation and the inevitable miscarriage of justice only acts to recruit the next generation.

Of course, the argument that Britain needs to bomb Syria to protect people in Britain is, and always has been, dishonest. The government has been under American pressure to bomb Syria for months. What Britain has been lacking is an excuse; something to tell the British people to justify it. It is a hard sell in a country made cynical by the British involvement in Iraq and with good reason. In that case, the British Government agreed a deal with the US administration to invade Iraq. It did so, not because Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator; the west has a long history of supporting brutal dictators as it once enthusiastically supported Saddam Hussein.

The object was to install a weak, dependent, pro-western government in Baghdad and gain strategic control over the Iraqi oilfields. What was lacking was an excuse that could be used to sell the invasion to the electorate. In America, the excuse was terrorism; a constant stream of misinformation linking the Iraqi regime to international terrorism - a

claim with absolutely no foundation. Yet it proved very successful with one opinion poll on the eve of the invasion showing a majority of American citizens believing that Saddam Hussein was responsible for the 9/11 attacks. In Britain, it was weapons of mass destruction capable of reaching British forces in Cyprus in 45 minutes - another deliberate lie. So making Britain safe by bombing ISIS in Syria falls into the same category.

The way to make Britain safe is not to become a target in the first place. The way to stop young Muslims being radicalised is to take away the main reason for that radicalisation. The way to help integration is to stop portraying Muslims as a kind of enemy within. The way to stop ISIS is for the British Government to actively engage in a peace process in Syria. Do these things and the safety of the British people will be secured.

Bill Bonnar is the National Secretary of the SSP and a member of the SLR Editorial Board

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Accounting for Trident? Lies and misinformation abound

Mike Danson reveals the spurious employment claims of those arguing for replacing Trident

Numbers feature as an essential descriptor of Trident. From the ever-increasing costs (the latest projected estimate is £167bn) to the codes for the final countdown to oblivion, they figure strongly. All the more surprising then there are such variations in some of the basic statistics – for example, over the numbers employed and location of firms in the supply chains. These are important in the debate and as drivers for estimating the wider multiplier impacts.

Jackie Baillie argued in the debate in the Scottish Parliament on 3 November 2015 that c.13,000 jobs were under threat in west central Scotland, while GMB (letter to members, 26 October 2015) recorded a long list of companies involved in defence in Scotland which, by association, are dependent on Trident. Linking all these jobs and firms necessarily to the replacement of Trident, thus, becomes a critical and elemental factor in considering the implications of not investing in a new generation of submarines and weapons systems. Let's look at their respective claims as they are the main and leading proponents of renewal, and so should be open to scrutiny as they stand against the accepted position of the majority of the population, the Scottish Government, Parliament and labour movement.

The joint Scottish CND and STUC study on *Cancelling Trident: The economic and employment consequences for Scotland* (2007) conducted forensic analysis and interrogation of the MoD responses to FOI and Parliamentary Questions in Westminster in 2012. These confirmed that only 520 civilians employed at HMNB Clyde were

'directly reliant on Trident'. Of these, 254 were employed by Babcock Marine and 107 by Lockheed Martin; the remaining 159 were employed by the MoD and, in 2013, 149 of these were moved to ABL Alliance in the private sector.

The 60 engineering and science Lockheed staff are mostly dedicated to working on Trident but have transferable skills which could be redeployed in the labour market and economy fairly readily. The 191 Babcock engineering and science workers are less dependent on Trident and again could find comparable work in other naval and civilian facilities. Similarly, logistics staff could secure and do socially useful work elsewhere in the economy; their skills and attributes are in demand and essential in the Scottish economy's future.

Analyses of their work (and others at the Clyde submarine bases) by the STUC and Scottish CND in 2015, calculated down to the hours expended on different tasks, shows the effort and skills required are very similar between Trident and other nuclear-powered (but not nuclear-armed) submarines and surface ships. Based on MoD and private sector companies' own analyses, data from Babcock and others offer a much more honest appraisal of Trident dependency than the exaggerated and obfuscated suggestions that Bailey and the GMB propagate.

So, of those 520 Scottish workers directly dependent on Trident, almost all have skills in demand locally and elsewhere in defence and the wider economy; with transferable attributes and experiences, they are not dependent on this unique weapons



system and the 13,000 figure is exposed as without foundation. But what of the future, with a potential build-up of new employment opportunities as Trident is replaced?

Well, there is no proposal the replacement will be a generator of new jobs. Instead, perhaps, standstill in the total private sector employment might be anticipated. The question then becomes what happens to those currently employed in the Clyde bases on maintaining submarines with armed nuclear weapons if plans for replacement are not pursued. As the current Trident submarines require servicing and decommissioning over the next

few years, there will be a need to continue to employ most of the existing staff anyway. The average age is currently about 50 and rising, with increasing proportions reaching 64 over the next decade. By 2028 half of existing workers will have reached retirement age so, with redeployment and voluntary exit from the sector, the problem of redundancy will have become largely 'redundant'.

This review of the actual dependency on Trident and its replacement reveals numbers of civilians directly employed is small, and there will be work for the next 12-15 years for those still at the bases if there was no investment. There appear to be no grounds for concern, therefore, for the existing workforce either on the Clyde Submarine bases or in the wider labour market. In fact, the wider defence sector in Scotland is poorly served and supplied by Trident. Rather than this being its anchor, it is a drain on the defence and public sector budgets.

The accelerating dominance of maintaining an independent deterrent with a replacement Trident inevitably means that other areas of the defence sector are threatened with cuts in jobs and orders. The *Financial Times* and others have noted the consequences for Clyde shipbuilding of privileging of Trident in a decreasing defence budget and 'it is clear that there will be major employment consequences for Scotland if Trident is not cancelled' with fewer orders of new Type-26 frigates. Failure to appreciate this by Trident promoters is exacerbated by their lack of understanding of the implications of importing technologies and weapons compared with producing and servicing them domestically. Buying from abroad necessarily means potential multiplier effects are reduced and so fewer jobs, supplies and incomes are retained within Scotland and the UK – reliance on US suppliers destroys employment,

innovation and enterprise here.

For west central Scotland, there is a question regarding the number of jobs locally and the ongoing need to address where new posts can be created for those entering the labour market. During the debates over the replacement of Poseidon with Trident in the 1980s, the Alternative Employment Study Group (AESG) in 1985 undertook detailed work on the supply chains for the bases, on the comparable position of such military complexes in the US, and on possible diversification strategies locally. When diversification of defence and of public expenditure generally was explored in the 2007 SCND/STUC and 2015 STUC/SCND reports, supported by many other studies and reports, similar arguments and conclusions were drawn.

Crucially, before any development could be started then in the US, its Department of Defense had to construct credible regeneration plans for any community where a military installation was being proposed – even if its working life was to be half a century or more. Since 1988, the *Base Realignment and Closure Act* has applied and this requires five years advance warning of any closure and the 'Defense Industry Adjustment' is tasked to redress the impact of reduced defence orders on manufacturing communities and creating alternative employment locally.

These efforts at regeneration have been successful as the case studies in 'Trident and Jobs' (STUC/ SCND 2015) have shown. Successive UK governments eschewed such socially responsible planning requirements. Nevertheless, the studies by AESG and STUC/SCND have identified better applications for the skills, experiences and expertise of the civilian personnel employed at Faslane and Coulport. Significant levels of cynicism and wilful miscalculation are required to suggest that 250 new jobs cannot be created in science,

engineering and technology over the next decade or so to replace any remaining Trident-based employment. Scotland has over 40 years of recognised experience of policies and strategies for economic regeneration, partnership working, development agencies, enterprise zones and enterprise areas.

The proposal for a Scottish Defence Diversification Agency was drawn on and informed by participation by the STUC, most unions and local authorities in such strategic economic interventions. The aims and objectives of such an agency are consistent with the economic development strategy for West Dunbartonshire, the wider labour market area and Scotland. Renewables and offshore engineering, logistics, creative industries, software and IT and sustainable tourism will all require skills offered by apprentices, graduates and residents of the region. A fraction of the recurring annual billions of annual expenditure on Trident will generate that employment.

Trident is a uniquely ineffective way to create work; it inevitably leaks very high proportions of expenditure out of the region, Scotland and the UK to multinational defence enterprises, exacerbating the negative effects on the economy and supply chain. Despite the negativity and criticisms offered by the supporters of replacing Trident, their arguments do not stand up to scrutiny and a disservice is being done to the workforce, those in manufacturing and bases across Scotland, and the new generations looking for meaningful work locally. The spurious figures on jobs and enterprises dependent upon Trident should be consigned to the dustbin of history along with these WMDs.

Mike Danson was involved in the AESG reports and 'Cancelling Trident: The economic and employment consequences for Scotland'.

Taking the temperature after the Paris talks

Eurig Scandrett and Matthew Crighton say we must remain defiant and active

World leaders in Paris in December congratulated themselves on signing a commitment to tackle climate change at the end of the 21st Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (CoP21). Started in 1992, its heyday was the Kyoto protocol, a seriously flawed agreement that collapsed in Copenhagen in 2009. Subsequent attempts to revive the process staggered towards Paris. That 195 states agreed about the importance of tackling climate change is remarkable and explains the celebrations but doesn't justify them. The agreement falls short of the legally-binding deal of Durban in 2011, spectacularly failing to meet the 'People's Test' demanded by the climate justice movement: immediate, urgent and drastic emission reductions; adequate support for transformation; justice for impacted people; and no false solutions. Although acknowledging the Earth's surface must stay 'well below' 2°C above pre-industrial temperatures (and even to 'pursue efforts' to achieve 1.5°C), the document recognises the combined commitments of signatories will lead to a rise nearer 3°C.

That would most likely result in unstoppable reactions from the frozen poles, tropical deserts and the deep oceans, resulting in widespread collapse of production, food insecurity, loss of life and livelihood. The union slogan 'no jobs on a dead planet' is not idle scaremongering - it's a predictable outcome of the Paris agreement.

Whilst increased reporting on progress is required, there are still no sanctions against defaulters. And the market-based 'false solutions' are still there, with plenty of scope for private profiteering from climate mitigation. Moreover, no sooner was the ink dry on the (still to be ratified) agreement, than business as usual resumed. India's Narendra Modi rushed back to launch a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan and Cameron wants to permit fracking under national parks (in England). Media attention turned back to oil's

low price.

All the same, there were signs of vigour and optimism from civil society. With Paris still under a state of emergency, the police banned marches and demonstrations. But thousands of protestors came from different parts of the world to demand climate justice. Friends of the Earth International had brought together campaigners against fracking, coal extraction and oil pipelines, as well as organisers of community renewable energy and small scale food producers.

Innovative protest comprised several hundred people in small groups dispersed throughout Paris, who when locating themselves online using smart phones, spelt the words CLIMATE JUSTICE PEACE (see www.foei.org). When 15,000 people gathered in front of the Arc de Triomphe for a red lines action, we had a *de facto* demonstration. When we moved *en masse* to the next action at the Eiffel Tower, we became a march.

The climate justice movement which emerged from frustrations with CoP includes indigenous peoples' organisations, unions, small farmers' movement and environmentalists among others. It spans the street protests outside and the lobbying NGOs inside CoP as well as a parallel process of building alternatives (including social forums between CoP meetings). There have even been some impacts on the agreement: inclusion of aspirational call for countries to 'pursue efforts' towards 1.5°C; and reference (in the non-binding preamble) to 'a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs'. Small concessions though these are, they are only there as a result of pressure from environmental, social justice and labour movement activists and they provide a tool to continue the battle for climate justice at home.

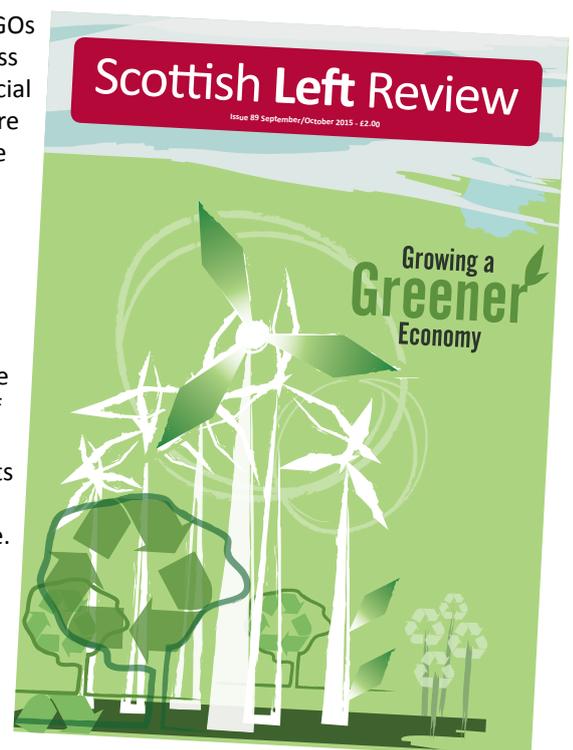
Despite the agreement falling far short of what is needed, campaigners left Paris with new energy to push harder for the just transition to a zero-carbon economy. The inadequacy of the outcome

was predictable bit popular pressure did influence the result. Friends of the Earth Scotland immediately launched its new campaign for a Fossil Free Scotland, raising the bar for campaigners and the government in Scotland. The campaign opposes dirty energy, promotes clean energy and works to get billions of public pension money out of the likes of BP and Shell and into socially-useful projects here in Scotland.

With Scotland's elections coming up, many are already demanding concrete proposals in party manifestos to move towards a zero-carbon future. The time is right for thinking practically about moving away from employment which relies on fossil fuels and opportunities to create climate jobs. So far the Scottish Government hasn't had the courage to do that. But with support building within the labour movement and civil society, Scotland could maybe show the way forward.

To ask Nicola Sturgeon to help deliver a fossil-free Scotland go to: <http://act.foe-scotland.org.uk/lobby/FossilFreeScotland>

Eurig Scandrett lectures in sociology at Queen Margaret University and is active in UCU and Friends of the Earth. He is a candidate for South of Scotland for the Scottish Green Party. Matthew Crighton is active in Friends of the Earth, Edinburgh World Justice Festival and Scottish Venezuela Solidarity Campaign.



Make education for agitating and organising start in schooling

John Daly argues that philosophical inquiry is good and necessary for a decent, fulfilling society

Early this year, the Jimmy Reid Foundation is planning an innovative project for primary schools. The aim is taking philosophical debate into the class and staff rooms to critically explore and develop ideas and issues. Philosophical Inquiry for children has been around for decades and is practised in some classrooms and schools that have realised the great benefit the practice brings to learning.

Better thinkers obviously make better learners. However, outside 5th and 6th grade, philosophy in schools is still the exception and usually left to a few wise teachers to introduce it. One project in Clackmannanshire a decade ago claimed to have raised the IQs of primary school pupils participating in Philosophical Inquiry by as much as 6%. Schools from all over Britain and elsewhere for years have reported similar transformative benefits for children and schools. Since all the evidence shows that young school children have the conceptual capacity to tackle the big questions and there's academic benefit from engaging in philosophical discussion, you would imagine it being given a central place in children's education.

Maybe the reason why it isn't lies in the fact that critical-thinking, along with creative-thinking, are notoriously difficult to test and measure as objective outcomes. But today, in these times of accelerating social changes, the skills to give children for managing that change are precisely critical and creative thinking.

Almost any topic or idea can be used as the subject of philosophical exploration. The aim is to have the school itself as the subject of

philosophical inquiry to explore and, in some cases, change the way children learn and teachers teach. It's generally called Philosophical Inquiry for children, but school staff and teachers shouldn't be denied the benefit of engaging in the process. If you're attempting to effectively change a culture, it will take all of the people within it to do so.

Jimmy Reid gave us some valuable insights into the important role education has in society. In his rectorial address in 1972, he said:

To unleash the latent potential of our people requires that we give them responsibility. The untapped resources of the North Sea are as nothing compared to the untapped resources of our people. I am convinced that the great mass of our people go through life without even a glimmer of what they could have contributed to their fellow human beings. This is a personal tragedy. It's a social crime. The flowering of each

individual's personality and talents is the pre-condition for everyone's development.

His speech on alienation, delivered to Scotland's academic elite, attacks the 'rat-race' culture and mentality produced by blinded pursuit and worship of profit. He appealed to students to reject the profit-driven forces of big corporations that devalue and minimise the worth of workers. Once he made clear the ethical and moral argument for an inclusive society where poverty is eradicated, he envisioned a future where people have to be educated not only for the work place but for hugely increased leisure time. Telling his audience of esteemed academics that the 'whole concept of education' will have to change if it is to equip people for life as well as work, he laid responsibility for unleashing Scotland's potential at their feet. Given how important learning is for shaping the future of our society, Jimmy warned education should be leading social changes not trailing behind them.



There is no doubt schools now offer a very different educational experience from last century when the main concern was to provide heavy industries with a suitably educated labour force. No one, apart from the odd exceptional teacher, would've then considered taking philosophy into the classroom. The requirements of such places like coal mines, factories and shipyards meant a lot of emphasis placed on instilling discipline and obedience. Questioning and critical-thinking were something that generally got you into trouble. Passive learning was the norm. At the end of this vessel filling process, in effect, as Billy Connolly tells it: 'The school opened its doors and the shipyard opened theirs, then we all flooded in' - ready and nearly willing. The teachers' role in industrial Scotland wasn't so complex. They had a clear idea what kind of world school leavers would inherit; one with a job, trade or career pretty much guaranteed and often for life. No space or need for philosophical thinking there.

In Jimmy's case, despite having an exceptionally high IQ, he left formal education at fourteen. Of his old school days, he once told a conference of Librarians; 'I have no recollection of my formal education, particularly at secondary school, stimulating or generating the slightest interest in any subject, any subject at all ...'.

Jimmy's striking erudition was of the DIY variety created in Govan's library and nurtured and honed in debate and discussion with fellow working-class intellectuals. From there, he read voraciously and studied numerous subjects including philosophy, not to pass exams or to improve job prospects, but purely in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. As a schoolboy, studying the great philosophers surely did Jimmy's intellect no harm in its development. In fact, it's yet more evidence of the potential benefits

gained by starting early on the subject.

But not everyone agrees philosophy is good for children. Plato for one would be horrified at the thought of primary school kids engaging in philosophical discussions. He believed education for the great mass of people should certainly avoid any philosophical learning or thinking whatsoever. Only the elite few should be tutored to deal in such matters and even then philosophical training begins only after age thirty. Children's instincts were not to be trusted, he felt, until education had formed them into useful citizens.

In Plato's *Republic* - maybe the world's first comprehensive theory of education - education of citizens was viewed principally for the state's benefit and requirements. This, he argued, serves the best interests of the people because each would find their natural place in the order of things. Once Plato's vision of the perfect city state is formed, a blue-print for educating the people to run it easily follows. Skills for trades, crafts, merchants, finance, guardians and rulers would be formed out of this education system. Regular testing and streaming would ensure the right people are taught the right skills.

Plato's *Republic* contained some stark contradictions. At one point, through Socrates, he is saying; 'anything in youth assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it' meaning education can mould children into anything that's required. Yet, elsewhere he argues the opposite with this line on child-centred learning that could easily have come from Rousseau or Dewey: 'Don't use force in training the children in the studies, but rather play. In that way you can better discern what each is naturally directed towards'.

Today in Scotland, our education system too appears to be pulling in two different directions. Recent

plans to introduce a national testing system have been strongly criticised as a step backwards after introducing the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) which was designed partially to get schools away from the endless testing and working-to-pass-tests learning styles. Introducing more testing ignores the growing evidence it does little but harm for pupil education, serving only governments' need to measure precisely what their policies and tinkering have achieved. Employers may like them too, but they certainly don't need all 14 years' worth to tell them who they're taking on.

In any case, an education system overly keen on measuring objective results will tend to marginalise subjects and activities that involve unknown outcomes. Any subject with definite pre-set answers that can be tested leaves no room for critical and creative thought and limits potential growth beyond clearly defined boundaries. By contrast, CfE is designed to offer a more flexible and enriched learning experience from 3-18 years old by focusing on the individual and creating 'successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors'. It's not clear yet how successful this approach will be, but, if in general, teachers are given more responsibility over how they teach and children have more responsibility over how and what they learn, it's reasonable to think the potential unleashed in this unbounded fashion shall exceed expectations. We see the philosophy for children programme we're introducing in schools enhancing all the elements and principles of CfE and we've even come up with a unique way of measuring any progress we make without testing. As my granny used to say: 'Weighing the pig disnae make it any fatter'.

John Daly works in the care industry and is a facilitator of philosophical inquiry

Open letter to Phil Gormley, new Police Scotland chief constable

Niall McCluskey says there much do to after Gormley takes up his post on 6 January

Dear Mr Gormley

The recent departure of your predecessor, Sir Stephen House, was welcomed by some both within Police Scotland and without. Certainly, Sir Stephen never seemed to be far from controversy during his tenure. There seemed to be constant public concern over police tactics and Sir Stephen's management style. The creation of Police Scotland was probably never going to be anything other than a baptism of fire but neither Sir Stephen nor Police Scotland as an institution bathed themselves in glory in endeavouring to establish the reputation of Scotland's first unified police force. In my view, Chief Constable you face a tough job in attempting to turn things around.

I am a supporter of the concept of a single police force in Scotland. Scotland after all is a small country. Criminal justice is the same in one part of Scotland as it is in another. However, most countries have local police as well as national organisations. While retaining the benefits of a national structure through Police Scotland, power and direction must be devolved to quasi-autonomous local police forces, each under the control of a chief constable and subject to local oversight. Police Scotland, in attempting to create national consistency, simply failed to take account of local differences and practices and was insensitive to the needs of local communities.

It is imperative the next chief constable addresses morale within the force. Police Scotland must operate openly but independently of political interference. It must anticipate continual examination and comment in the public interest



by our national press. Sadly, the performance of Police Scotland over its two-and-a-half years' infancy period has left many, public and police officers alike, somewhat bothered and bewildered.

Replacing the leader or trimming the leadership team will not resolve the fundamental weaknesses embodied in the structure of Police Scotland. The new leader needs to be more accountable, more transparent and far more consultative with the community and their staff. Police Scotland has been an organisation without proper oversight for too long and has had to endure cuts from the SNP Government which have left the force under-resourced and over-worked. It would be very dangerous if the Scottish Government now believe that the problems are resolved by the departure of the Chief Constable

The unified force has been embroiled in several scandals over the deployment of armed police on the streets, a stop-and-search policy that at one point saw police in Scotland stopping more than five times the number of people

stopped in London and the death of 88-year-old dementia sufferer, Janet McKay, who went missing. She was found dead several days after a novice police officer forgot to pass on details of a sighting.

Attacks on the force came to a head in August after officers took three days to respond to a motorway crash report. When they finally arrived at the scene, John Yuill was already dead and mother-of-two, Lamara Bell, 25, was conscious but she later died in hospital. That scandal led to Chief Constable Sir Stephen House resigning.

The problems in Police Scotland extend far beyond the chief constable. Officers and staff work round the clock to keep people safe. The controversy of Police Scotland's creation has dragged their reputation unfairly through the mud.

Police Scotland needs to review its management style, operational competence, ethical behaviour and policing priorities. The management style needs to be less top down and more based on positive example. Operational competence needs to demonstrate but humility needs to be shown when things go wrong. Ethical behaviour means critically examining why statistics such as stop and search are far higher in Scotland than elsewhere. Policing priorities need to focus more on safety rather than control.

I still believe Police Scotland can be a great institution but it has to learn from its mistakes and put in place procedures to review its activities honestly and have a willingness to change.

Yours sincerely

Niall McCluskey, advocate specialising in criminal law

Dangers posed by imminent fiscal trap

Current negotiations, Jim Cuthbert argues, represent a clear and present danger

Although negotiations on the fiscal settlement to underpin the Smith reforms are being conducted in secret between Scottish and Westminster governments, the broad scope of what is currently being considered has become clear. The picture emerging is disturbing indeed.

All of the options on the table involve Scotland having to participate in a fiscal race with the rest of the UK, (rUK). Here, Scotland would have to grow its income tax revenues at least as fast as rUK. If Scotland manages to keep up, it would get the same funding as under the Barnett formula. But if it doesn't, it'll be penalised. The penalties could be severe: public expenditure per head on devolved services in Scotland could well fall to 50% or less of comparable spending in England.

Scotland's chances of avoiding being penalised in the Smith fiscal race depend critically on whether the Scottish government has adequate powers to grow the economy. Given the Scottish government's lack of powers, our chances in the race don't look good.

A senior unionist negotiator argued Scotland will have the powers it needs, namely, to outcompete rUK on income tax by lowering the upper rates to below those in rUK. Thus, Scotland would become so attractive to wealthy individuals it would increase its tax revenues, winning the fiscal race. Therefore, while John Swinney affirmed his resolve to use the income tax powers under Smith to construct a more progressive tax regime, the other side let slip that the new fiscal arrangements

will only work if Scotland becomes more regressive than rUK, and a haven for the rich.

Let's look at why we are in this situation. The Smith report didn't spell out the detail of the fiscal settlement which should operate once its reforms were implemented, instead setting out broad principles, leaving detail to be determined by negotiations between the two governments.

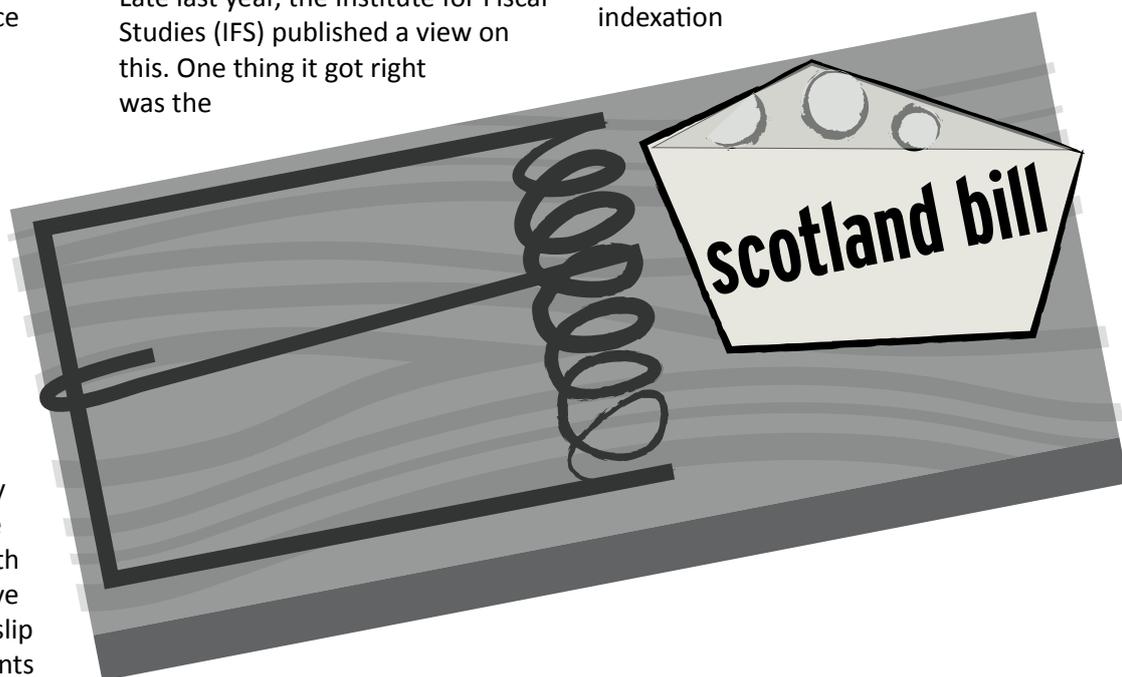
At their very core is a technical sounding, but vital, issue: how abatement to the Scottish government's block grant (BG) should be adjusted. Under Smith, the Scottish government will receive its funding from a) devolved or hypothecated tax like income tax (devolved), half of VAT (hypothecated) and b) Westminster BG. The starting point in calculating BG will be the existing Barnett formula with the formula BG reduced (i.e., abated) to allow for revenue the Scottish government will now receive directly. So how should abatement be adjusted?

Late last year, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) published a view on this. One thing it got right was the

impossibility of simultaneously satisfying all the guiding principles which Smith had laid down. This means the Smith principles will inevitably have to be modified by identifying which principles are vital, and which others can be relaxed, and by how much.

Yet the IFS report didn't do this in a judicious and even-handed fashion, instead giving certain principles primacy on arbitrary or ill-considered grounds while entirely neglecting others. For example, it concentrated on analysing three methods for indexing BG adjustment: indexed deduction (ID); per capita indexed deduction (PCID); and level deduction (LD).

All three assume growth in BG abatement is linked to the growth in income tax revenues in rUK. The decision to concentrate on methods related to growth in rUK tax revenues has crucial consequences. (Other indexation options are possible like growth of the tax base, i.e., aggregating taxable incomes: or use of an indexation factor fixed in real terms.) Tax revenue indexation



was not envisaged by the Smith report or the then Westminster coalition government, where indexation on tax base was taken as the starting points.

Growth in tax revenues depends not just on growth in the size of tax base but also on the richness of the tax base, i.e. whether more people are paying the higher bands. If BG is indexed on tax revenues, what this means is Scotland has to grow its tax revenues as fast as rUK if it to avoid being penalised: so Scotland is exposed to the risk not just that the size of its tax base might not grow as fast as rUK, but also that the tax richness of the tax base might not grow as fast either. So indexing on tax revenue, not tax base, exposes Scotland to new risk of adverse differential movement in the tax richness.

Additionally, the risks involved vary greatly between the three methods. To see how, considering under what conditions the different methods would be neutral is instructive, namely, what would Scotland have to do to obtain the same funding that it would have obtained if the Barnett formula remained in operation. Under PCID, Scotland would have to grow its income tax receipts per head at the same rate as rUK. Under ID, Scotland would have to grow its income tax receipts per head about 0.35% faster than rUK. Under LD, Scotland would have to manage to grow its income tax receipts a whopping 14% faster than rUK.

Moreover, penalties are severe if Scotland fails to keep up in this economic race with rUK. If Scotland's per capita tax receipts grow slower than in rUK, its public expenditure will ultimately turn negative under ID, and will be reduced to around half rUK levels under PCID and LD.

This then brings us to the arena of economic powers. If Scotland is forced to participate in an economic race, facing stringent penalties if it doesn't keep up, does it have

adequate economic powers to give it a sporting chance? Well, Scotland post-Smith will lack many of the most important economic powers like control over monetary policy, corporation tax, borrowing as well as competition policy, international trade development, licensing of North Sea oil, utility regulation and labour markets.

Operating under the IFS kind of indexation rules, the risks of Scotland falling behind, and being penalised would far outweigh the potential benefits if Scotland were to outperform rUK. It is a striking lapse of judgement that the IFS report concentrates on indexation arrangements which imply such grave risks for Scotland, without examining or acknowledging the resulting asymmetry between risk and potential reward given Scotland's limited economic powers.

What's become clear is the IFS options now define the grounds for current negotiations. From the unionist side, this is perfect because there are influential elements there who think Scotland has already done too well in public expenditure, and who want to squeeze public expenditure per head in Scotland down relative to rUK. Other elements clearly do not trust the Scots, wanting to see a firmly rule based system in place, where the Scots will suffer in silence and others would be delighted with a system which forces Scots to implement regressive tax policies to avoid fiscal collapse. This would be disastrous for majority of Scots who want to implement a programme of greater social justice, and a taxation system which is more, not less, progressive.

It looks as if Scottish negotiators are committing the classic mistake of letting the enemy choose the ground on which battle will be fought, especially as this lets the Treasury's preferred option, the LD method, onto the negotiating table. The Treasury cannot be serious

about trying to foist on us a system requiring growing our income tax revenues 14% faster than rUK. Therefore, it's clear it's pushing this option as a negotiating tool. The danger is, when it eventually gives up on the LD approach, this may be claimed by the Scots as a significant concession wrung from the Treasury: and the Scots may then be prepared to settle for one of the other, still disastrous, options involving revenue indexation.

Other viable options are available. There's no need to agree to any indexation arrangement which pitches Scotland, with its limited economic powers, into an economic race with rUK – whether this race involves matching rUK on tax revenues, or just on tax base. A perfectly viable alternative would involve indexation on a low, fixed real indexation factor, accompanied by regular reviews, under agreed ground rules which would provide adequate incentives for Scotland to develop its economy.

But the immediate requirement is to strip away the secrecy currently clouding the fiscal settlement negotiations. 'Trust me, I'm a politician' is not good enough justification for maintaining secrecy, especially when the indications are so clear Scotland has been manoeuvred into fighting on a disastrous part of the battlefield. This is not Flodden – yet. We can still march our troops back up the hill to fight for better.

Jim Cuthbert is an independent statistician and economist. He was formerly Scottish Office Chief Statistician. See his <http://reidfoundation.org/2015/12/scottish-fiscal-settlement-negotiations/> for further detail and the Jimmy Reid Foundation for a forthcoming paper on the credible options.

The battle over the bill continues ...

Mary Senior highlights the regressive forces opposing change in university governance

That we've witnessed such public divisions amongst stakeholders over the future of Scottish higher education (HE) last year is a matter of regret. Sadly, since the proposals to reform university governance were first mooted in the 2012 von Prondzynski review, we've seen the sector split into two camps. The University and College Union (UCU), staff, other education unions, and NUS and students on one side, with all but one of the principals and current, unelected chairs of universities on the other. As well as giving a bad impression to policy makers generally, the split has also been unhelpful at a time when all voices should be pulling together to ensure the HE budget does not suffer.

It's also worth recalling when the Governance Bill was first announced, Universities Scotland - the body lobbying for university principals - argued electing chairs of university governing bodies was undemocratic and union members nominated onto the governing body wouldn't be able to act without breaking the Nolan principles of standards in public life. For a sector you think would be able to debate its future on academic principles of collegiate debate and evidence-based argument, the last few months have sorely disappointed.

Principals - bizarrely joined by such odd bedfellows like whistleblower, Edward Snowden, and the Institute of Directors - argued the Bill - by increasing government control - could lead to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) reclassifying universities as public bodies with dramatic, detrimental consequences for finances.

UCU would not support any measures which either increased government control over universities - the autonomy of

institutions is an important safeguard alongside the academic freedom of staff - or which threatened the status of the institutions where our members work. But we accept Ministers' word that government does not want increased powers and that the bill will be amended during the parliamentary process to take out any clauses which threaten this.

When the Bill was first mooted, there was no consensus over the way for electing chairs of governing bodies would work in detail. Universities Scotland and current unelected chairs of court simply refused to countenance these measures becoming legislation. In the face of this, the Bill was drafted to allow space for the sector to come together, seek consensus and agree workable proposals - hence, the language in the Bill of saying that chairs will be elected, but in a manner later to be determined by ministers.

But allowing this space also provided opportunity for those opposing the Bill to raise their fears of ministerial powers and a raft of arguments on losing charitable status (which the Charity Regulator had already addressed) along possible ONS reclassification. Some commentators have called these arguments a 'smokescreen' designed to scare the government into dropping the Bill. Whether this was the intention or the concerns were genuine is immaterial. ONS doesn't provide running commentary on its thinking so if you were looking for a smokescreen then the ONS reclassification issue - based on knowing there can't be a definitive answer in advance of legislation being passed - would



certainly be an effective for consideration.

It is important though to focus on what the Bill actually seeks to do, and what the Scottish Government, Labour as main opposition party, STUC and education unions want from it - namely, to bring greater democracy, staff and student engagement, and transparency to HE decision making by providing for chairs elected by staff and students, and for unions and students to have nominees sitting on governing bodies. This surely has to be in the best interests of education, students, the wider community, the public purse, and the staff working in HE.

Universities in Scotland have a long tradition of democratic governance. To our collective shame that power has withered in recent years with the elected chair in ancient universities effectively being handed over to unelected senior governors. The Bill returns our ancient universities to a position of having an elected chair of court and brings that same democratic governance to our newer universities and institutions for the first time. Making our universities more democratic, accountable and transparent is a prize worth winning and can ensure the sector continues to be successful. It is an ambition which needs to remain at the forefront of the debate while the opponents of reform use every argument and tactic at their disposal to derail progress.

Mary Senior is the Scotland Official for UCU Scotland

Westminster trials and tribulations

Tommy Sheppard reflects on his new job so far

'Are you enjoying it?' is the most common question I get asked about being an MP. It's not the verb I'd choose. But I've been a political activist of one kind or another for 40 years so being able to do it full-time and get paid for it is certainly a privilege.

You get to meet an incredible array of people doing amazing things. You get the chance to learn about and be involved in issues that pass most people by, especially in the field of international policy. It's an honour to speak up for the people that elected you and prosecute the mandate given to you. And every so often you can really help people, making a difference to their life, which makes the job worth doing.

But, at times, it can be frustrating as hell. I spent eight hours bobbing up and down on those green benches trying to enter the Syria debate. I didn't get called but my calves got a good workout. Every month, we get to enter a draw to ask cabinet ministers a question – about 1 in 20 is successful. But even with a well-researched, well-crafted question and incisive follow up, ministers can just waffle and obfuscate knowing the next question will change the subject and the focus moves on. Holding the executive to account it certainly isn't.

Parliament is riven with procedures and practices from not just the last century but the one before that. Referring to other MPs in the third person and not addressing people by name is just one of the ways the debate gets rarefied and removed from the experience of ordinary people. But the worst things about parliament are the way in which it is set up rather than how it runs.

We are one of the few developed countries where only a minority of members of parliament are elected. The unelected Lords has 200 more members than the elected

Commons, and the Tories are hell-bent on creating even more. I'm amazed there's not more public outrage about this. Most of all, the governing party in the elected chamber can have a comfortable majority with just over a third of the popular vote thanks to the first-past-the-post system.

We play our part in running the UK for as long as the Scottish population chooses to be part of it.

These major structural inadequacies combined with the pantomime procedures are what maintain the gulf between governed and governors. In Scotland, that applies with knobs on as a single elected Tory confronts the will of the people like a 21st century Governor General. This is the greatest frustration of all. It was never part of the game plan to have a Tory majority facing us pushing through policies even Thatcher would have thought unacceptable. Had there been a (slightly) more balanced result this would have been so much more fun – and we'd have got a lot more done.

Still, you play the cards you're dealt. And that's what I and my colleagues have been trying to do. As the elected government in Scotland pushes London for more power or more money, it's our job to try to hold UK ministers to account. Being part of the one party allows co-

ordinated messages and actions.

We play our part in running the UK for as long as the Scottish population chooses to be part of it. For a long time it felt like we were the only vocal opposition to the Tories as Labour disarray resulted in inertia or worse. The SNP led the fight on the welfare cap, tax credit cuts, gerrymandering the EU referendum, Trident, air strikes and so much more.

With Labour in a more stable position I hope we can get down to the business of building a united opposition. There are signs of hope. New Labour and SNP MPs are forging closer personal and political relationships as they discover they agree on most things at British and international level. The new Labour front bench seems less sectarian than the old one. Indeed, it's interesting the most vicious attacks on Corbyn come from his own backbenches, i.e., the right wingers who most hate the SNP.

Despite the Tory majority being only 12, they've never won a vote on economic policy with anything less than 30 (even when Ulster Unionists oppose them - which isn't often) because some Labour MPs are simply not there. I hope that improves in 2016.

Tommy Sheppard is the SNP MP for Edinburgh East and a member of the SLR editorial board. His blog is at <http://tommysheppardmp.scot/>

No talking to the taxman as the taxman isn't listening

Joy Dunn exposes the madness of HMRC cuts

When the UK government announced plans to close all but 17 of HM Revenue and Customs' 170 UK offices, it was a variation on a now all too familiar theme: cut public sector jobs, cut services, roll back the state. While the ideology fits, it's impossible to reconcile on any impartial level the wholly illogical and counterproductive thinking. At a time when 'balancing the books' is the new political Holy Grail – providing the justification for austerity – it ought to be common sense to invest in the department collecting the taxes that fund our other public services.

Since 2010, hundreds of tax offices and 10,000 jobs have been cut from HMRC. Meanwhile, we estimate the amount of tax lost through evasion, avoidance and non-collection is more than £120bn – almost 10 times the annual budget of the NHS in Scotland. Yet instead of investment, HMRC blunders on with cuts, patching up delays and errors with ineffectual but expensive sticking plasters.

So as MPs and government auditors line up to criticise HMRC performance – from its 'woefully inadequate' efforts to tackle tax fraud to its 'staggeringly bad' customer service – HMRC is spending £45m recruiting extra people just months after 1,000 permanent and fixed term staff were made redundant. If this was an episode of the Apprentice, someone would be leaving the boardroom.

It should not need pointing out that to collect taxes, you need to employ staff. After staff costs, the average HMRC tax professional brings in £945,000 a year in revenue. During our campaign against the closure of

the Wick tax office, we showed the office collected £14.3m pa, costing less than £0.5m on staff and rent.

Not only do the cuts hit HMRC's ability to do its job, centralisation within 13 large regional centres and four specialist sites runs counter to the policies of previous administrations. From the early 1990s, there has been a strong push to move public sector jobs out of the main cities and into communities. Many Whitehall jobs have moved out of London, including HMRC policy jobs going to Salford.



In Scotland, successive administrations have overseen moves from Edinburgh, including crofting grants administration to Tiree, central enquiry unit to Kinlochbervie, the Scottish Public Pensions Agency to Galashiels and SNH to Inverness. Other agencies include the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator in Dundee and the Accountant in Bankruptcy in Kilwinning.

While we have had reservations about decentralising posts where it has led to job cuts or worse terms and conditions, we recognise there are advantages, with cheaper office costs and local communities gaining from employment.

It is questionable, however, what the intent of the UK government is in centralising HMRC work in Edinburgh and Glasgow. In East Kilbride alone up to 2,500 jobs will go from a community that cannot afford to lose one of its major employers. Those who relocate will

face higher commuting costs and put greater pressure on transport infrastructure.

As well as damaging local economies, we believe HMRC will become more remote from the individuals and businesses which have to pay their taxes. When HMRC consulted on closing the 281 face-to-face offices two years ago, it admitted a 'high proportion of respondents' opposed closure. The main beneficiaries of those offices – as well as just regular personal and business taxpayers wanting help – were pensioners, tax credit claimants and migrant workers, with the latter making up almost 25% of all users.

The threat to revenue collection, our communities and the public is severe. It's hard to understand the motivation behind the plans. It can't simply be outright hostility to maintaining a functioning and effective public sector - though it is difficult to read it any other way.

HMRC has refused to hold a proper public consultation and did not want its proposals to be subject to full parliamentary scrutiny. That is one of the reasons why we are supporting John McDonnell's review of HMRC's role and resources in order to analyse its needs and expose its shortcomings.

We are committed to opposing the closures, as we are all cuts across our civil and public services. This campaign goes to the heart of the fight against austerity, on our side of the border and across the UK.

Joy Dunn is a former President of the STUC and now the parliamentary and campaigns officer for PCS Scotland.

The beginning of the end for the Bolivarian revolution?

Francisco Dominguez argues the right can be pushed back but it requires huge effort

Venezuela's parliamentary elections on 6 December took place amid severe political and economic aggression, similar to that in Salvador Allende's Chile. It greatly impacted the results of the elections.

With the economic war, the country's distribution system of food and medicine was attacked by hoarding and smuggling, forcing ordinary Venezuelans to queue for hours.

World media, Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the Organization of American States, and spokespersons from various right-wing governments led by the US government falsely questioned the credibility of Venezuela's democratic government and the transparency of its electoral system. The National Electoral Council (CNE)'s impeccable behaviour, confirmed in 20 elections in 16 years, belied the flood of malicious falsehoods trying to discredit the electoral system's integrity and the democratic credentials of the Bolivarian political system. The CNE announced the results confirming a majority in the national assembly for the MUD: a coalition of thirteen centre and extreme right wing parties.

The CNE announced MUD obtained 7.7m votes, giving it a majority of two thirds in parliament with 112 deputies. Despite this, 5.6m (42%) voted for the socialist option, giving 55 Socialist deputies in the National Assembly. Undoubtedly, *chavismo* is still a formidable electoral force. Furthermore, the Bolivarian Revolution still has control over 20 out of 23 governorships and 76% of the municipalities.

It is also worth noting that Venezuela's Armed Forces have

expressed their unwavering support for the Bolivarian democratic system which rules out the possibility of a Chile-type coup. Besides, the right does not have a mass movement while *chavismo* has been in constant mobilisation before, during and after election. The *chavista's* parliamentary size is the result of 2m voters abstaining – deciding to punish the government but not choosing not to vote for the right.

A two-thirds majority gives the right immense possibilities to attack and dislocate the entire constitutional edifice of the Bolivarian process. For example, it will have the power to appoint both Supreme Court judges and CNE directors.

The ghosts of Chile (1973) and Nicaragua (1990) loom large on the continuity of the Bolivarian Revolution. For five years, the Venezuelan economy has been under attack both internally and externally through large-scale hoarding and shortages of basic commodities, smuggling in gigantic proportions to Colombia, and highly damaging speculation in the national currency. To top it all up, there's been the drastic fall in oil prices due to US fracking, from US\$148 to below US\$35 a barrel.

With the right's victory, the US and its Venezuelan accomplices have created a context in which they can attempt the liquidation of the revolution. Such a prospect puts in jeopardy all the socio-economic and political gains Venezuelans have obtained in 16 years of revolution.

Already FEDECAMARAS, Venezuela's CBI, has formally requested the new right-wing parliamentary majority to abolish the labour law, the law of fair prices and, authoritative spokespersons of the right-wing are

considering the privatization of key areas of the economy. No doubt, they and their US mentors have the privatization of oil in their sight. Venezuela has an estimated reserve of 298,353,000 barrels of oil, the largest on the planet.

To counter this neoliberal offensive, President Maduro has called upon the people and the Bolivarian Armed Forces to defend the gains obtained in 16 years of *Bolivarianismo*. As is well known, education and health care are free, illiteracy has been eradicated, historical poverty and extreme poverty have been drastically reduced, all forms of discrimination are banned, and social inclusion has made millions of hitherto impoverished, excluded and oppressed Venezuelans active citizens.

The US has never hesitated to use any means, legal or illegal, political or criminal, to carry out its plans. From the moment of the election of Hugo Chavez to the presidency in 1998, with the support of Venezuela's right, it has done virtually nothing else but to seek the violent overthrow of the Bolivarian government.

The revolution has entered a period of deep reflection in order to prepare its supporters to face the challenges posed by the new situation. We cannot allow the US to carry out a *pinochetazo* against Bolivarian Venezuela. We must redouble our efforts in solidarity with the revolution in danger.

Dr Francisco Dominguez is head of the Centre for Brazilian and Latin American Studies at Middlesex University, and secretary of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. He came to Britain in 1979 as a Chilean political refugee.

Fair trade coffee: unfairness comes as standard

Azeez Abiola Oyedele shows there little substance to the claims

Fairtrade is a trade deal based upon transparent negotiation with respect to producers' efforts in order to seek international trade equity. Established to assist producers in the developing countries achieve a better and sustainable trading environment, Fairtrade advocates for equitable pricing that guarantees improvement of the welfare, environment and social standards of the producers.

The trade deal gives consumers in the developed countries the impression the cost of coffee is fair while at the same time ensuring that producers in developing countries are earning fair income commensurate with their labour. This creates a psychological mind-set that consumers and producers are 'all winners'.

Progressive opinion believes producers need to earn a minimum price that is sustainable for their production activities and their cost of living. In addition, there should also be a social cost premium of between 5%- 10% of the minimum price for technical and development assistance for the producers. Furthermore, the trade deal should make it mandatory for traders to buy from the producers and their organisations directly by means of long term contracts in order to reduce middlemen, promote stability and encourage long-term planning.

However, current developments in countries like Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia are at odds with the intentions of both the founders of Fairtrade and progressive opinion. Oxfam research showed in 2002 one kilogram of coffee beans was traded by the farmers directly to the local middlemen in Uganda at the farmer-gate price of \$0.14.

This is what producers get for their 3-5 years of intensive labour to produce the coffee and does not allow for the aforementioned social cost premium. Local middlemen receive \$0.05 on each kilogram and there is a \$24 profit margin to coffee retailers. This profit margin on every 1kg of coffee produces for the retailers cannot be justified or explained by the Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO).

In 2007, the BBC investigated the situation in Ethiopia, finding

middlemen offered prices below the market rate. One farmer informed the BBC he sold one kilogram for \$0.33, highlighting most producers in developing countries face inequality and exploitation. Going by the impressive provisions and recommendations contained in Fairtrade, coffee retailers like Starbucks need to be asked whether there's any evidence of a fair deal in the current coffee trading system they use.

Table 1: Earnings per kilogramme at different stages of coffee trade

Production	Farmer's traded price	\$0.14
	Local middleman's margin	\$0.05
	Local mill transportation cost, milling and miller's margin	\$0.05
	Bagging cost and Kampala transportation cost	\$0.02
Export	Total price for Kampala exporter	\$0.26
	Processing, off-grade discarding taxes & margin	\$0.09
	Bagging, Indian ocean port insurance & transport	\$0.10
	FOB Standard price for Robusta	\$0.45
	Freight cost and insurance	\$0.07
	CIF price	\$0.52
	Importer landing charges, roaster's delivery facility & margin	\$0.11
	Factory delivered price	\$0.63
	Soluble weight loss adjustment (\$0.63*2.6)	\$1.638
Total so far	\$2.241	
UK Retailer's Price	UK retail soluble price for 1kg	\$26.40

Source: Oxfam (2002)

Azeez Abiola Oyedele is a researcher at the School of Business and Enterprise, University of the West of Scotland

Poets' page

We've carried some poems before and readers sent us this crop so we are glad to print them.

*Everything Must Go...**

by Rab Wilson

The Kaiser Biscuit American Bald Eagle
Realised almost half a million dollars;
More absurd and obscene lots soon followed;
A set of ten gilt miniature oil barrels...
Mencken's Dictionary of Quotations,
Hammered down for only fourteen grand;
An Emes and Barnard George IV inkstand;
Cinderella flounce and ostentation.
But now the room's abuzz, they look askance,
Blood drips from each hedgefund manager's maw,
As ravenously they surge and push and paw,
For surely now, the pièce de résistance;
Kellingley Colliery *and* its miners renowned,
Who'll start the bidding! Surely, come, a pound ...?

*On 15 December 2015, Christie's held a sale of property belonging to Margaret Thatcher, realising more than £4.5m. She waged war against the miners during the 1980s. Two days after the sale, the last deep coal mine in Britain, Kellingley, closed.

Wallace Street

by James Aitchison

'Wear your school blazer, school tie and white shirt,
speak properly and nobody will guess
246 Wallace Street was your fist address.
Not that there's anything wrong in good clean dirt.'

When I left my parents' You Are Here
I added colour to their pencil maps,
filled in their local, vocal, social gaps
with adolescent arrogance and fear.

A lichened boulder on the Isle of Coll
is a picture of the Earth from outer space,
and on a fair day bow-wave rainbows grace
the Calmac ferry through the Sound of Mull.

I forget my past when I'm at sea
but when I come ashore I have to greet
the foul-mouthed boy I was in Wallace Street.
I dress my nakedness in poetry.

I write another line, another page.
I know my mapmaking will never match
the plain truth of my parents' pencil sketch.
And now I'm almost twice my father's age.

A rising route

by David Betteridge

We gave our care, our voice, our leap of heart
and intellect, as jurors in the case of *Scotland Present*
versus Scotland Past.

The latter we found guilty of arrested hope.
Readied now, and rendered new,
we face the world before us with less trammelled scope.

To frame our own determined ends,
subject to no over-rule, then set the means thereto:
that is a good of governance, self-evident,
that the course of history has brought our nation closer to.

There is a way in politics,
akin to Neptune's Staircase or the Falkirk Wheel;
it can raise us from the place that we would leave
directly to a further state:

this way requires that we extend the best that time
bestows;
annul the worst; and the residue transmute.

An age-old longing powers us.
Ahead, what dizzying routes and quandaries
of direction open up, a rising route!

Estate

by James Aitchison

I couldn't find them when we cleared the house –
his birth, marriage or death certificates.
And he was too young to have made a will.
A will? He had no money, no property.

When he died sixty-five years ago
a bit of my boyhood brain was cauterized.
In a last sifting of family photographs
I found him smiling at me in black and white.

He's sitting with workmates at the open door
of a cabin in a logging camp
somewhere in 1930s' Canada.
Sixty-five years. Our lives seem far apart.

I write a poem; my father fells a tree.
But I have his genes. I inherit his estate.
By the time he died he had made his mind
in mine a dangerous, legendary place.

I'm writing this to certify his life.
I'll print out a hard copy of these lines.
He looks invulnerable in the photograph.

Kick up the Tabloids

As we enter a New Year, and as we look forward to 2016, it is inevitable that we also look back on the previous twelve months. While a New Year always offers hope for change, Hogmanay is often a time for reminiscence. This is ironic in itself, as by the time the bells have sounded midnight, many of us have difficulty in remembering our own names, and come New Year's Day itself, our memories of Hogmanay are sketchy at best.

Scots do revel in nostalgia at this time of year. Indeed, as 2015 drew to a close, many people's memories drifted back to more exciting times. Some cast their minds back to the inspiring events of May's SNP landslide, others further back to the heady days of September 2014. This is partly because by the end of 2015, many Scots had resorted to the old concerns of complaining about the weather, getting depressed about the state of the national football and looking for someone to blame for a bridge having to shut.

For the first time ever, people in Edinburgh were heard to complain that they could not get to Dundee. The irony of this was not lost on Dundonians either. Having overwhelmingly voted in the autumn of the previous year for Scotland to be independent from the UK, they suddenly found themselves in a situation fifteen months later where they were effectively independent from the rest of Scotland.

For me personally, coming as it did at the height of the festive season, the closure of the Forth Road Bridge was one of the best Christmas presents I have ever received. We normally are subjected to a visit from my church-going Better Together activist cousin, Lena, and

her Tory-voting husband, Norrie, who have established their own tradition on calling on us on the last Sunday before Christmas at the kind of time of the morning when only Christians are awake. Thankfully, they couldn't come this year because they live in Kinghorn.

Well done to the Scottish Government for taking away Trump's business ambassador status

However, a remarkable thing happened when they phoned to say they were not coming. I found myself agreeing with Norrie about politics. We were both disgusted by Donald Trump's comments about Muslims.. But for different reasons, of course! In my opinion, Trump's remarks were not only racist and inflammatory, but damaging to global peace given that they came from the mouth of a man who aspires to be President of the USA. Norrie was more worried that 'it might mean the Open Championship doesn't come to Turnberry'.

Well done to the Scottish Government for taking away Trump's business ambassador status, and withdrawing him from the Global Scot network, but it doesn't really go far enough. If it is serious about letting Trump know what it thinks about him, it should build a wind farm and a mosque on the nearest available land to his Turnberry golf complex!

Likewise, while one commends Robert Gordon University for stripping him of his honorary degree, it's hardly likely to alter

his behaviour. A few years ago, Edinburgh University took away an honorary degree they had conferred on Robert Mugabe, as if he would be less likely to commit genocide his own people, due to no longer holding some bogus academic qualification.

It's all very reminiscent of how Fred Goodwin's crimes were handled. The government, who by then owned RBS stripped him of his knighthood, but allowed him to keep all of his bonuses, which totalled in the region of forty million pounds. In effect, all he had to do to hang on to the money was to change his name very slightly, from Sir Fred Goodwin to Mr Fred Goodwin. There are few people alive who would turn down that kind of money if all that was required was a change of name. In fact, if anyone offered me as comparatively little as ten million quid on condition that I moved to Gloucester and changed my name to Fred West, I'd bite their hand off. However, I'd want a hell of a lot more dosh before I considered changing my name to Donald Trump.

Finally, hats off to a group of true Scottish heroes, those hardy souls who have set up camp outside Holyrood, and are not going to move until Scotland becomes independent. I suspect they may be there for quite some time. Let's hope it's a mild winter, and wish them all the best for 2016.

Vladimir McTavish, Keir McAllister and Mark Nelson will be appearing in The Stand Comedy Club's monthly satirical show TOPICAL STORM at the Edinburgh Stand on Wednesday 20 January and the Glasgow Stand on Monday 25 January, both shows start 8.30pm



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Facts on Trade and Development

'Growing the Scottish Economy' is Scotland well served on international trade and development? is a new paper which casts grave doubt upon the Scottish Government's ability to increase competitiveness and tackle inequality when the data needed to assess how well the Scottish economy is performing in trade and development is so woefully incomplete and inaccurate.

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News



In a carefully constructed but sharply critical assessment of the recent Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) report entitled, 'Adjusting Scotland's Block Grant for Tax and Welfare Powers; Assessing the Options', leading independent economist, Jim Cuthbert, warns any negotiations deploying the assumptions and reasoning of the IFS report will 'do ...

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