

# Scottish Left Review

Issue 98 March/April 2017 - £2.00



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union  
issue

**FEATURING** articles on:

Deep union organising

Rights in the construction sector

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## Class wars either side of the pond

There is a class war going on. Sometimes open but mostly hidden, this class war has seen the proportion of total national income accounted for by wages fall from a high of 65% in the mid-1970s to 53% by mid-2010s. And given that the number of extremely high paid executives has rocketed, you can get a sense of what this means for the relative value of the wages of most citizens. Capital, the minority class in a capitalist society, is beating labour, the majority class in a capitalist society, with a rather big stick and winning to boot. Other indications of this class war are Britain ranking 103 out of 112 countries for wage growth in the post-financial crash period where the value of the average wage fell by 1% a year; the 5.3m workers working 2.1bn hours of work for free, amounting to a tax free gift to their bosses of £33.6bn; and the prevalence of bogus

'self-employment', zero hour contracts, people with two or three part-time jobs and the like.

Given the continuing problems Corbyn faces in turning Labour into an effective and credible left fighting force, the union movement remains working people's best defence as number of contributors like Lynn Henderson argue in our special edition. As she acknowledges, it will be no easy feat given the following: the extent of workers covered by collective bargaining coverage on their pay has fallen 37% in 1996 to 28% in 2015 while the percentage of workplaces with a union presence fell from 50% to 43% over the same period, and overall, union density fell from 32% in 1995 to 25% in 2015, with private sector density falling from 21% to 14%.

Unions cannot win on their own because they need supportive political parties.

So the question of Corbyn returns. As in Scotland and Britain, the Corbynistas have strengthened their influence on some of Labour's leading bodies but the sense is that time may be beginning to run out for them. It is not just unity and new developing attractive new policies, as Corbyn said after the spring 2017 Scottish Labour conference, that are needed. They are necessary but not sufficient because mobilisation is needed to assert and implement many of the policies, and that cannot be done within the confines of the Palace of Westminster. Mobilisation means extra-parliamentary activity in terms of mass campaigning, civil disobedience and direct action to stop closures and cuts and to support councils setting 'needs' budgets.

'Scottish Parliament 'infested with vermin'' was a headline in the Scottish

### ScottishLeftReview

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press in early February. It reminded me of the 'all Tories are vermin' dictum apropos of Aneurin Bevan in 1948 saying, 'So far as I am concerned they [the Tories] are lower than vermin'. It will be interesting so see how well the rats do in the local elections after a strong showing last May in the Scottish Parliament elections. The next test for Labour will come in May with the local elections, and so we continue our coverage of these elections from the last issue with two articles by two leading councillors, one Labour, one SNP.

Contrary to some opinion, Trump is not a fascist but a right-wing populist and opportunist who is racist, sexist, homophobic etcetera. Gerry Friedman looks at the roots of this populism while Colin Darroch reviews Bernie Sander's new book. Apropos of this, the beginning of the Trump presidency, and to coincide with this edition's focus upon unions, it's worth briefly crossing the proverbial pond to ponder the situation there. Union density figures are published every January by the US government, Bureau of Labor Statistics, for the previous year. They make for grim reading, with some parallels with Britain. In 2016, overall density was just 11% (with 14.6m members), down from 11.5% in 2015. In

1983, the first year for which comparable union data is available, union density was 20% with 17.7m members. The highest union density in the post-war period was 35%.

Within these overall figures, for 2016, public sector workers had a union density (34%, with 7.1m members) more than five times higher than that of private-sector workers (6%, with 7.4m members). Within the public sector, density was highest for local government (40.3%), which includes employees in heavily unionised occupations, such as teachers, police officers, and firefighters. In the private sector, industries with higher density included utilities (21%), transportation and warehousing (18%), telecommunications (15%), construction (14%), and educational services (12%). Low density occurred in finance (1%), agriculture and related industries (1%), food services and drinking places (2%), and professional and technical services (2%). Despite this, median weekly earnings of non-union workers (\$802) were 80% of earnings for workers who were union members (\$1,004) although this difference may not all be attributable to union influence. Among individual states, New York continued to have the highest density (24%) while South Carolina continued to have the lowest (2%). The

next lowest rates were in North Carolina (3%), Arkansas (4%), and Georgia (4%). New York was the only state with a union membership rate over 20%. Over half of all union members lived in just 7 states (California 2.6m; New York 1.9 m; Illinois, 0.8m; Pennsylvania, 0.7m; and Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio, 0.6m each), though these states accounted for only about one-third of wage and salary employment nationally.

In 2016, the union membership rate continued to be slightly higher for men (11%) than for women (10%) although the gap between their rates has narrowed considerably since 1983, when rates for men and women were 25% and 15% respectively. Among major race and ethnicity groups, black workers continued to have a higher membership rate in 2016 (13%) than workers who were white (10%), Asian (9%) or Hispanic (9%). By age, union membership rates continued to be highest among workers ages 45 to 64 (13%). Membership rate was 12% for full-time workers, twice the rate for part-time workers at 6%. It would seem a return to the 1930s of the revival of American unions with militant strikes and sit-downs will be needed to change this terrible state of affairs.

# FIGHT ANTI-UNION LAWS



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# Breaking bad: Brexit and bills of rights

Grahame Smith lays out the ramifications of a hard Brexit for our rights

When the 2017 STUC Congress opens in Aviemore on 24 April, it is likely to be in the aftermath of Theresa May's epistle to the European Council announcing, under Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, the UK's intention to withdraw from the EU. It will also come just weeks before the proposed state visit to the UK by US president, Donald Trump. These two events reflect domestic and international political developments and will mark 2016 out as a watershed year and be marbled throughout the Congress.

The debates and decisions of the 400 or so union delegates to the STUC Congress may appear to some of a cynical disposition to be largely irrelevant in the face of turbulent global events unfolding around us. On the contrary, in that they reflect the lived experiences of workers and the considered, evidence-based, policies of their unions, they are an essential contribution to the analysis of the manifest impact of these events and the responses required to them. The debates and decisions of this year's Congress are as important as they have been at any point in the STUC's 120 year history.

Amongst the most disturbing characteristics of recent political discourse has been the attempt by some, most notably rightwing Brexiters and Trump machinists, to disparage considered political debate of the sort that our Congress at its best displays and to demean the value of evidence to justify political decisions, particularly when they do not align with their ideological viewpoint.

During the EU referendum and Trump election campaigns, we witnessed the vilification of the so called 'liberal elite' as being out-of-touch with the concerns of 'ordinary people' - a charge, of course, made ironically by those whose wealth and power make them very much part of the privileged elite. We saw utter disregard for the truth or for evidence to underpin policy decisions and a desire to make a virtue out of ignorance.

It is a perennial tactic of the powerful to limit access to knowledge of those who might use it to challenge their power. Knowledge and education are

great liberators. That is why the union and labour movement is so passionate about the pursuit of them. To repress political debate and disparage those seeking educational advancement or dedicating themselves to enhancing our understanding through research and study and presentation of evidence because they threaten to expose the vacuous nature of one's arguments is contemptible.

It's not that all academic research is credible or not open to challenge. Much of it is, particularly when based on ideologically loaded assumptions. However, our policy decisions will be decidedly worse if we simply ignore or debase the properly researched and considered evidence with which we are presented.

Similarly, our media has a critical role to play expanding our common body of knowledge as well as in holding politicians to account. In Britain, it is a role it has largely abandoned in recent years. Much of the British media is populated with unfounded opinion passed off as fact, *vox pop* presented as perceived wisdom and superficial coverage of profoundly important events. While Trump's deprecation of the media as 'fake news' is part of a cynical and intentional strategy to neuter opposition, it is understandable his rantings about the media resonate with many.

This in no way reflects on the professional integrity of often hard pressed journalists, but on the nature of media ownership in the UK. While fault can be found with the BBC for one, we would certainly be a lot worse off without it.

During the EU referendum campaign, it was derelict of the media - broadcasters in particular - not to force 'leavers' to define what leaving meant. With only a few notable exceptions, the media simply wasn't geared up to hold 'leavers' to account. Consequently, their absurd, contradictory and dishonest arguments were not exposed. It is now patently clear that either they had no idea what the implications of a 'leave' vote were or were more stupid or dishonest than they appeared. If they had been properly scrutinised by the media, the outcome may well have been different.

The implications of Brexit will feature in Congress debates on the economy, union and employment rights, migration and anti-racism. They will undoubtedly reflect the uncertainty that abounds over what might emerge from the negotiations between the UK Government and the EU, including the response to the Scottish Government's differentiated (and compromise) option of Scotland remaining in the UK and the EU when the UK exits. It's difficult to envisage negotiations producing anything like a positive outcome and one that does not impose significant detriment on the Scottish economy.

The overwhelming consensus in the long-term is Brexit will be bad for jobs, growth, labour supply, trade, wages, household income (and its distribution), research, innovation and productivity. Nobody should be fooled by the apparently mild reaction so far. Brexit hasn't happened yet!

In line with a number of other commentators, the Fraser of Allander institute, commenting on the impact of different Brexit scenarios, predicted that 'the stronger the economic integration with the EU, the smaller the negative impact'. Given the tone and content of the UK Government's White Paper, strong economic integration does not look like a political objective it wishes to achieve this, principally as a consequence of its obsession with the issue of the free movement of people and the widespread disinformation that it and parts of the media have deliberately promoted.

The economic consequences of leaving the EU are likely to be severe and to have most impact upon working class communities. The consequences for our employment, union, consumer and environmental rights look similarly bleak.

The First Minister's Standing Council on Europe has proposed three principles to unpin the Scottish Government's approach to rights and social protections in the negotiations: non-regression - what we have we hold; that we do not fall behind progressive future developments in the EU or under the European Convention on Human Rights; and that Scotland continues to take a progressive approach and seeks to be a

leader in the field, working with others to address common challenges.

I'd like to say that I'm encouraged by the Brexit White Paper commitment that workers' rights will not just be protected but will be enhanced. I'm not. It is a commitment that comes from the same Government that introduced the *Trade Union Act* and has already pledged to pursue further deregulation if the EU plays hardball in the negotiations. We also know that some Tories would like to see a sunset clause inserted into the *Great Repeal Bill*, the effect of which would see all EU laws, including those that underpin many workplace rights and other social protections, automatically expire after five years.

It is a commitment that also comes from a Government whose leader, Theresa May, has signaled a desire to have the UK withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights. Although the UK's participation in the ECHR stems from its membership of the Council of Europe and not the EU, outside the EU and the membership requirement to ratify the ECHR, the UK Government will have a free hand to pursue the objective to withdraw and to free itself from the obligations of international conventions, courts and institutions.

Of course, Brexit does not necessarily mean that hard won employment and human rights will be lost. Unions, progressive employers, NGOs, civil society organisations and sensible

politicians will do all that they can to ensure that does not happen.

However, if we abandon the EHRC and the authority of the European Court of Human Rights, all our rights and fundamental freedoms will be subject only to the determinations of the UK Parliament and judiciary. Even if we have a UK Bill of Rights, who will protect the citizens of the UK from its own government – one elected on the votes of a minority - and from a class biased judiciary? That is the purpose served by international conventions and institutions which will be weakened as a result of Brexit along with our fundamental human rights.

We will also face a significant challenge in keeping up with new progressive developments as well as the enforcement of the exiting rights that we are assured the *Great Repeal Bill* will enshrine at least at the point of exit.

For the last forty years we have relied on the heavy lifting on these matters to be done by the EU. It would be naïve to think that a UK Government committed to shrinking the public sector and to deregulation will be willing to invest much of the resources repatriated from the EU into enhancing the civil service or regulatory capacity necessary to enforce the rights we have, let alone keep pace with progressive EU developments.

It would be similarly naïve to think that a trade deal with Trump's US would be based on anything other than lower

standards of consumer, environmental or employment protection than we currently enjoy. Trump might claim to have opposed TTIP. His objective for a UK trade deal will be TTIP turbo charged.

Does all of this make a second referendum on Scottish independence more likely? While this is not part of the formal Congress Agenda, it is inescapable background noise. The Scottish Government is right to attempt to ensure that the democratic wishes of the people of Scotland in relation to the EU are respected. Its differentiated option is a compromise which would see Scotland, in effect, abandon the cause of independence in favour of remaining in the EU. It's an approach not without economic, political, legal and diplomatic complications and would require substantial new powers, including over employment and union rights, to be devolved to Scotland.

If the UK Government is resistant to this option, another independence referendum is inevitable. And, if there is a majority in the Scottish Parliament in favour of such a vote, it should not be blocked by Westminster. It's likely to be an eventful year ahead. I expect the 2018 Congress to be equally interesting too!

*Grahame Smith is general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC)*

## ***A Declaration to Balfour 100 years on*** by Eurig Scandrett

Your epitaph in Whittingehame proclaims  
You planted peace in your collapsing world.  
Then who to hold responsible for lines  
That launched the crisis history unfurled

The letter which in government you signed  
Addressed to Baron Rothschild with your favour?  
Chaim Weizmann?  
Who composed the first design  
With sights on riding your colonial power

Expanding into lands as yet not won  
Which Sykes had carved from Ottoman frontiers  
As Allenby approached Jerusalem  
With troops enhanced with Arab volunteers

Still unaware they were to be betrayed?  
Or should we look for culprits closer to home?  
Your supercessionist mother, as a child  
Or anti-Semite wife who shared your love?

Whoever, thirty years on, in blood drenched lands,  
For vanguard thugs and desperate escapees  
Your text became a weapon in their hands,  
Legitimised a new catastrophe.

So now you have a thravn memorial  
Kibbutz that bears your name in Galilee  
Where scores of villages were razed, all  
Residents killed or refugees.

*Eurig is a longstanding and senior UCU activist who has campaigned for the rights of Palestinians.*

Note: The Balfour Declaration was a letter dated 2 November 1917 from Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, to Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community, for transmission to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. Tellingly, it stated: 'His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people ...'.

# Challenging the cuts consensus

Mike Kirby lays out what the problem are and how they should be tackled

There is much talk of 'crisis' in public services, particularly in local government and health, and with integration of health and social care. Budgets are cut, essential services for the more vulnerable in the community are adversely affected just when they need them most, staff morale is at an all-time low and valuable experience is being lost through workforce 're-modelling' and 'voluntary severance'.

Rather than bemoaning this undoubtedly serious situation, and believing there's little prospect of a change in government austerity economics and fiscal policies, we need to ask i) 'how can we mitigate the worst effects and offer some alternatives?'; and ii) 'are Scotland's public services following England's into crisis?'

Taxpayers across Scotland are facing further cuts to public services after councils were warned that they face a black hole of half a billion pounds. A stark report from Audit Scotland last year forecast a shortfall of more than £550m in only two years as the gap between what local authorities spend and what they generate continues to widen. The Accounts Commission says the gap is £87m in this financial year, 2016-17. But it is expected to rise to £367m next year and then again to £553m in 2018-19.

The NHS funding gap is 'just as real' in Scotland as other parts of the UK, the BMA has warned. The gap means Scotland will not have enough money over the next five years to provide all the services patients require without 'urgent and significant change', including targets 'skewing' clinical priorities, GP shortages, excessive workloads and recruitment problems.

The impact of a growing, ageing population, which requires more support from health services as they manage multiple complex healthcare needs, is compounded by

the pressure on health care teams to respond to these rising demands, with growing gaps in personnel and insufficient funding. The challenge for our politicians is to find a genuinely sustainable way forward for our NHS.

And, Scottish Government plans to shift healthcare from hospitals to the community, establish elective treatment centres and integrate health and social care, have come under criticism from Audit Scotland. However, Scotland's integrated health and social care authorities are to be investigated by Scottish Parliament's Health and Sport Committee, which will consult patients on whether integration authorities are doing enough to involve patients, carers, the third sector and other stakeholders in the design and future.

The new Integrated Joint Boards (IJBs) were launched last April to oversee smooth transitions between health and social care services. Official figures show a 5.1% reduction in bed days associated with people being unable to be discharged from hospital in 2016 compared with 2015, but how much of this is due to the IJBs is unclear. It's an open secret that there have been conflicts within the boards between NHS officials and local councillors over how funding - which is channelled through the NHS - is spent. The IJBs also have a duty to involve stakeholders, and the committee has opened a consultation to hear from them how progress is going.

The Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland have been hit with fresh criticism for failing to tackle budget pressures, as unions have criticised the balance of the workforce, as civilian staff are replaced by uniforms, taking cops of the streets.

Fewer houses are being built in Scotland than there used to

be. Builders, property firms and politicians say this is driving up prices, making things hard for both renters and first-time buyers and leaving tens of thousands of people on council waiting lists for a home.

Minority governments have to learn quickly the value of co-operation. For the SNP, it's been many years since it has had to make concessions in the Holyrood chamber to pass legislation. However, with the very serious threat of another election being called if the recent budget failed to pass, ministers had to get up to speed quickly. CoSLA, said reform of local government was 'vitally important'. The Scottish Government said: 'In this parliament we will introduce a bill that will refresh local democracy by giving more power to local communities. We will review the roles and responsibilities of local authorities with an aim to transform our democratic landscape, protect and renew public services and refresh the relationship between citizens, communities and councils'.

The Scottish Government promises more localism but drives towards more centralisation, evidenced by its reform agenda and through the re-emergence of ring-fencing of budgets. It gave councils the power to raise the basic rate of council tax by up to 3%. Bills have not gone up anywhere in Scotland since 2007. Now around a quarter of people will pay more regardless of their

## Editorial Committee

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local council's decisions, as bills in properties in Bands E to H will rise automatically through national changes to the way council tax is calculated which have been made by the Scottish Government.

But not all councils will opt to put up the basic rate of council tax by 3% costing a typical bill payer £3-4 a month. That councils raise currently only 15% of their expenditure contributes to the gearing effect and the relatively small amounts which can be raised, particularly in authorities with low asset base. We require a more fundamental cross-party review of general taxation and use of re-banding options available to the Scottish Government, rather than quick fix political slogans.

The Conservative Government's austerity programme will result in around a further £2bn of cuts to Scotland's public services. There is a broad consensus across Scotland that austerity is damaging to public services and the economy. As part of combating austerity, we should look at practical ways in which the Scottish Government, councils, health boards and other public

bodies can mitigate the worst of the cuts to come. Every sensible mitigation measure government and public authorities can take reduces the number of job losses and damage to vital public services and the economy.

Our Combating Austerity campaign offers signposts to measures that would help combat austerity including: i) contract buyouts and/or refinancing of expensive PPP/PFI projects; ii) refinancing of council and other public bodies debt; iii) Imaginative use of council prudential borrowing and bonds; and iv) more efficient and effective use of local authority pension funds. More specific workforce measures would include: a) a Scottish Living Wage of £8.25 (£8.45 from 1 May 2017); b) fair working conditions; c) an effective voice for staff when negotiating with employers; d) secure working arrangements; and e) opportunities to advance

your career, to develop knowledge and practice. This would lead to a competent, confident and valued workforce, delivering for our communities.

*Mike Kirby is the Scottish Secretary of UNISON Scotland*

## Scottish Left Review

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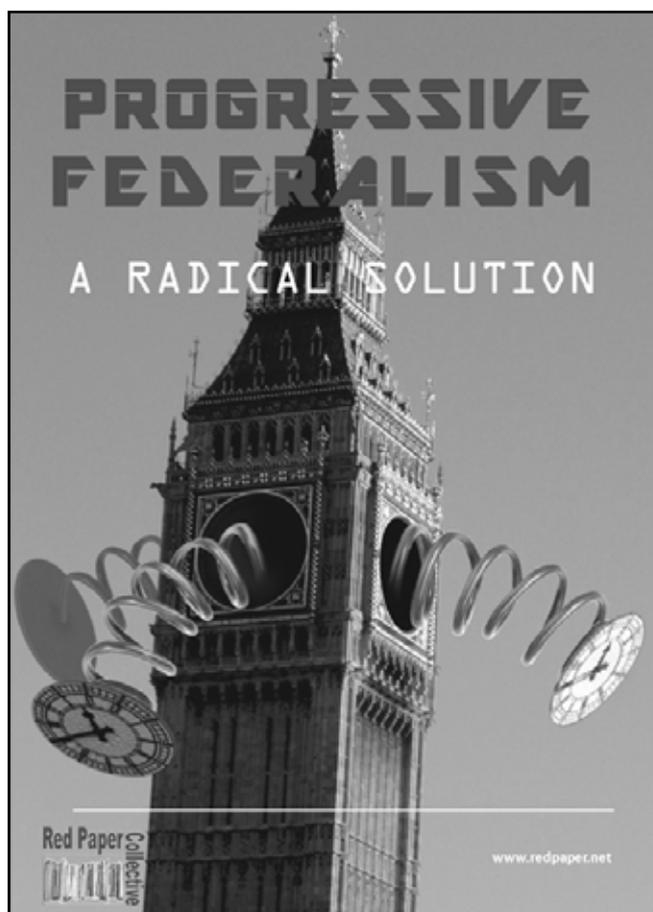
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Tuesday 25 April  
Refreshments  
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Pauline Bryan

## Demand fair funding for Scotland's councils

We all rely on the services delivered by local government. From childcare to care for our elderly and vulnerable; keeping our streets lit to emptying our bins; helping us to stay fit and our children to learn – local government is at the heart of Scottish society. So it is vital we ensure councils are properly resourced and capable of meeting the demands placed upon them.

Last year alone has seen 7,000 jobs lost across local government and further cuts to services will have a devastating effect on our communities and the economy. These cuts are unsustainable and UNISON is calling for councils to receive fair funding to deliver the services the people of Scotland rely on.

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# Constructing a charter in construction

*Pat Rafferty shows how bad employers can be dealt with*

In January this year, the UCATT construction union became part of the Unite family. I know the decision to merge was a difficult one for many UCATT members, but we are proud to now be the biggest construction union in Scotland. We are strong, united, and looking to the future. That future is one where construction workers get fair pay, decent working conditions, respect at work, and a safe working environment.

Too many employers are still failing to deliver that for their workers. There are still too many injuries and deaths in the construction industry. There are still too many workers who are being swindled out of their wages through umbrella companies and bogus self-employment.

And there are too many employers with managers who think they're still living in the days of the Victorian gangmaster. Many of those employers are known blacklisters - companies who went out of their way to ruin the lives of workers who had done nothing more than stand up for their legal rights, and the rights of their workmates and colleagues. Shamefully, many of those companies are still benefiting from Scottish Government contracts - being handed public money without giving any guarantee that their blacklisting days are over.

Laing O'Rourke is the main contractor for the construction of the new Dumfries and Galloway hospital. It has repeatedly blocked unions from getting full adequate access to the site to make sure workers are properly organised, represented and protected. When the First Minister visited the site in January, she publicly praised the company for exceeding its job creation targets, but said nothing about its anti-worker actions. That was incredibly disappointing.

It's also disappointing that the Scottish Government's flagship construction project - the building of the new Queensferry Crossing - has been marred by the use of umbrella companies to stop workers getting the proper rate for the job. There is evidence that foreign workers were being exploited on the project - brought in to work illegally for low wages. And when unions raised the matter with the Transport Minister, the

pay audit that was put in place alongside the conciliation service ACAS only looked at those workers who were still on the project - not bothering to look at the treatment of those workers who had already moved on to other jobs.

If this is what is happening on major government contracts - where companies are supposed to be operating along the principles of the Scottish Government's Fair Work Framework - it's a certainty that things will be even worse on other private sector sites.

So what can we do? Unite's officers, stewards and health and safety reps will continue to watch companies like a hawk. Where we find bad practice, we'll use every legal and industrial means at our disposal to stand up for our members. But we also want to stop bad practice before it starts. Last year, Renfrewshire Council and North Ayrshire Council signed up to a new Construction Charter. Construction firms who want to get work from these councils now have to agree to work to the Charter. It includes a pledge not to use bogus self-employment schemes, and a clause encouraging firms to become registered Living Wage Employers. Companies must also certify that they have not engaged in blacklisting workers for any reason.

The Charter will make sure that health and safety standards are rigorously implemented and adhered to. Companies will be expected to promote and improve opportunities in education and training, so that local people can help fill the construction skills gap and learn for the future. Companies should also promote and encourage full apprenticeships for local young people.

Any company found to be in breach of the Charter could have their contract taken off them, and not be eligible for new contracts in the future. This is a welcome step in the right direction. Now that the Charter has been agreed in Renfrewshire and in North Ayrshire, we will be pushing for other public bodies across Scotland to follow their example, including the Scottish Futures Trust - the Scottish Government agency that is bringing private finance into public construction projects.

Construction workers are the backbone of Scotland. They have created every road, bridge, tunnel, school, home, hospital and workplace. We owe them immense respect. And Unite will fight to make sure they get it.

*Pat Rafferty is the regional secretary for Unite in Scotland*



# Classroom battles coming

*Larry Flanagan says the EIS has lessons to teach the Scottish Government*

Education has moved centre stage politically over the past period in quite a dramatic manner. In one sense, this is welcome as it is right that such a key public service has a high profile. But it also has a serious downside in the fact that politicians across the spectrum seem keener to adopt adversarial approaches to every aspect of policy and implementation, rather than address the key issues in a way which supports schools, colleges, teachers and lecturers – and students.

For some, Scottish Government can do no wrong. For others, it can do nothing right. A manifest concern is that amid the politicking, the chance to coalesce around sensible and constructive support for our education system disappears beneath an avalanche of accusation and counter-claim.

The recent dust storm around PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) results is a case in point. Yes, it is disappointing that there was a dip in performance in this set of statistics but has anyone bothered to look and see why?

If they did, they would find, for example, the group of students who were tested back in 2015 was the very same group which had borne the brunt of the assessment overload associated with the new national qualifications and would have been exam weary at the point when they were tested. Additionally, the tests were, for the first time, online assessments – a mode which Scottish students are unused to and for which there was no preparation. Looking and seeing would have also found that, inexplicably it would seem, that this same cohort of students went on to produce the second-best set of SQA qualification passes ever!

Instead, we had an echoing of the narrative of failure around Scottish

education, which simply is not true. One political party even press released on the notion that 1 in 5 pupils left primary school unable to read or write. Untrue, and absolute nonsense! But if it gets a cheap headline, why not go for it?

In the midst of all this hot air, the EIS, as Scotland's largest education union, must find a way of maintaining a perspective on issues, leveraging advantage where we can in terms of our members and our students, and challenging poor policy where it emerges. There's no shortage of issues.



The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney's, governance review, whilst still very short on specifics, will certainly be a key area after the local government elections. Some commentators see the review process as entirely hostile to the interests of local government workers. The EIS has a more nuanced view. Certainly, we wish to defend key red line issues such as national bargaining and the role of councils as employers but there are areas of governance, such as the support provided to schools, where change could be beneficial.

A major question will be what role CoSLA seeks to play after the May local elections. The lack of political coherence it has displayed over the past period significantly reduced its impact but it may reassert itself after the elections, even if there is dominance by a single party.

One battle ground involving teachers, CoSLA and Scottish Government will be over pay. The stated adherence to public sector pay policy, i.e., 1% increases, does nothing to address the developing problems around teacher recruitment and retention which is already seeing classes sent home, professional learning curtailed, and vacancies remaining unfilled. The EIS has been campaigning on workload pressures – and achieved some success with our secondary members' action short of strike – but there are other deep issues to be addressed. Launching a recruitment campaign, as Scottish Government has done, will have a limited impact if students can see financially more rewarding opportunities elsewhere. The gaps in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and maths) recruitment is a portent of where we are heading, if the issue of salaries are not addressed.

In further education, the EIS (FELA) won a significant pay victory last year, through a commitment to industrial action in support of its objectives. A year on, however, college bosses are seeking to renege on the agreement, where the welcome return to national collective bargaining is being undermined by a management which is woeful in its understanding of public sector ethos. Currently the EIS is balloting members on action to defend the deal.

Across the board, public sector unions will be challenged similarly to defend members' conditions and living standards. Coordination of strategies and campaigns would be a welcome strengthening of our capacity to win these struggles.

*Larry Flanagan is the general secretary of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)*

# Deep organising can rebuild workers' power

*Lynn Henderson argues renewal out of adversity is possible*

Unions have weakened substantially since the 1970s, and this is a major contributor to the current crisis of social democracy and socialism. Most people would agree on this. But are these trends inevitable or can we reverse them?

This year, PCS tables a motion to STUC Congress calling for 'deep organising' in workplaces. If successful, the motion would represent a significant vote of confidence in union organising to rebuild our movement. Supporters of deep organising are certain we can reverse the decline in working class power, even once globalisation, anti-union laws and austerity are taken into account. They believe unions must undergo a healthy process of self-examination and self-criticism in order to combat the attacks suffered in recent decades.

This February, I met American union organiser and author, Jane McAlevey, who has done more than any other contemporary thinker to define, popularise and most importantly practice deep organising. She believes the way we do trade unionism has become part of the problem. Unions, she says, have been too focused on 'shortcuts'. Mergers, glossy membership perks, and collaboration with managers have come to substitute for workplace initiatives. The current PCS leadership moved away from the servicing model almost 15 years ago. Yet we have come through the Tories' attacks on our very right to exist and this has deepened our organising strategy.

What we have come to call 'organising' often means mobilising an already militant minority. For McAlevey, deep organising targets the seemingly apathetic or even hostile majority. It involves identifying and building up organic leaders, people who listen to others and who are, therefore, listened to, workers who know their work and their colleagues like nobody else but haven't learned to see themselves as 'spokespeople'. Unless these people are drawn into action, our current state of managed decline will continue.

Drawing on decades of frontline activism, McAlevey's two books detail the method behind this approach. They are full of practical cases where she's built workers' power and won industrial battles against seemingly massive odds. She stresses workers have agency and untapped potential even in parts of the economy where trade unionism never laid down roots.

Her model challenges the one-dimensional idea of a worker narrowly concerned with pay and conditions at work. For unions to survive, let alone rebuild, we need to focus on the 'whole worker', she argues. That means that unions cannot afford to leave the politics of public services, housing and discrimination to professional politicians. They have to be seen on the streets fighting on issues that matter.

Above all, we cannot assume that we have a right to people's respect. We have to fight for it, face-to-face, and win this respect over and over again by knowing the workplaces and communities we represent, as well as by winning victories wherever we can.

When I spoke to Jane, she was eager to learn about our work in PCS. She asked how, a union under such sustained political, industrial and organisational attack by the Tory government (its employer), turned the situation around and began to win again. I explained that austerity, layoffs and deepening anti-union laws threatened our very existence, and that we've decided to meet this challenge by deepening our organisational role in workplaces.

Paradoxically, we found that the severity of the cuts opened new opportunities. When our employer tried to destroy our leadership structures by ending 100% facility time, it put our most experienced leaders back onto the shopfloor. That attack helped renew grassroots leadership. Similarly, when employers refused on-site meetings, workers held shorter, sharper, angrier meetings in car parks.

Most recently, threatened job centre closures in Glasgow opened up links

with the community. Our campaign has drawn substantial community support in Bridgeton, Castlemilk, Maryhill and Easterhouse, gaining endorsement from all Glasgow MPs, the City Council Labour Group and the Green Party.

However, we also discovered conflict between perceived interests of workers and those of the community. Where government policies force PCS members to implement sanctions, they can become targeted for hostile protests by anti-poverty campaigners. This shows the need for a wider remit of trade unionism. Ultimately, the divisions are false. Job centre workers are active members of their communities through their friends, sports club, children's schools, faith organisations, and volunteering, political and social activities. However, we must work to mobilise all of this to make our protests effective.

There are two schools of thought on union decline. For some, we're simply managing decline, perhaps waiting for change to come like a bolt from the sky. For a growing number of us, though, we've got to take responsibility for our fate. We can reverse decline, but this requires examining the habits, rituals and routines we take for granted and asking: 'how are these contributing to our end goals?'

And, yes, a crucial part of that is debating end goals. Building workers' power is the means to an end, towards a society without poverty, discrimination and exploitation. But to build that goal, we need people to imagine it themselves. The workplace remains the main site of oppression in society. Rebuilding confidence in our collective power is the first condition for reversing the reactionary trends of four decades, and deep organising may be a crucial step forward in that process.

*Lynn Henderson is national officer for Public and Commercial Services Union and Head of Scotland and Ireland hub*

# Ending neo-liberalism in post and telecom

*John Brown says the regulator is doing the market's bidding*

**T**he CWU (Communication Workers' Union) represents members in Royal Mail (including Parcelforce), Post Office Ltd, BT, Virgin Media and many of the staff employed in call centres and shops for mobile telephone companies like O2, EE, Vodaphone and TalkTalk. Our members are in all of the grades and levels within these companies up to line managerial levels so as you can see we represent the majority of the workers who provide the services of these companies to the Scottish and UK public.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the regulatory regime run by Ofcom under which our two main employers (Royal Mail and BT) operate is neither serving the companies nor the users of the services provided by the companies appropriately or correctly. Ofcom as a regulator is continually interfering with the operations of these companies by setting goals and targets that are unachievable without seriously and deleteriously impacting upon the services provided by the companies.

The regulation laid down for Royal Mail to operate under requires access to the mail system for 'competitor' companies at prices and conditions that are never and will never be made available to the general public or even to SMEs that could use the mail service to grow their businesses greatly and thus increase employment (and tax take) across the whole spectrum of work and industry.

The regulator frequently criticises and tries to interfere with the agreements on terms and conditions reached by the CWU on behalf of its membership across the UK, while doing nothing to deal with the terms and conditions provided (or, in many cases not provided) by competitor companies whether in the letters or parcels markets.

The very same regulator oversees the telecoms industry and spends much of its time criticising and interfering in the operations of BT as the largest telecom service provider in the UK. In fact, the latest interference by Ofcom in the operation of BT is to demand that BT remove its wholly owned subsidiary company, Openreach (which provides, maintains and operates the telephone and broadband network),

from the overall BT Group and making it a separate company altogether. This is the latest example of Ofcom's failure to carry out the basic tenets of its existence which is to oversee the proper provision of services to the population of the UK and to ensure that those services are provided at an affordable and equitable level for its users and consumers.

From beginning as being a regulator set out by the UK parliament to oversee the postal and telecommunications industries, it has now become an organisation that focuses in on only one or two of the primary reasons laid out in the terms for its operation by the UK parliament. One of these is that Ofcom continues to 'home' in on is the duty to promote and stimulate competition within those industries in the neo-liberal belief that competition always leads to lowered prices and better and increased levels of provision across the market.

This worship of the market, much loved by the Conservative party and the right wing press and media of the UK, of course almost always leads to worsened service provision and increased prices for the consumer as companies which had previously been natural publicly owned utility service providers have been privatised and have now become private utilities who primarily only answer to shareholders and investors - who have no interest in anything other than financial gain from these companies who

still have to provide a public service. The pressure within these companies to provide shareholder dividends naturally leads to severe attacks on the terms and conditions of those who work within the companies and this, of course, generally leads to a worsening of the service provided to the public as the users of those services.

The lessons we need to learn from all this is that if we cannot renationalise these companies in the near future then we have to rework the terms of operation and objectives of the regulators like Ofcom to ensure that their primary responsibilities reflect the need to provide continuity of service to the service users and that they are in position to defend those services not to attack them and the companies that provide them.

*John Brown is the Scottish Regional Secretary of the CWU union*

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Demand fair pay for fair work**

**PCS send greetings to all delegates attending the 120th Annual Congress of the STUC**

**Mark Serwotka** General Secretary  
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# ABC in HE: austerity, Brexit and centralisation

*Mary Senior says there a perfect storm coming the way of universities*

Scotland's universities are in for a stormy time ahead. The Tory government's austerity squeeze at Westminster is being passed on once again to the higher education sector in Scotland in the latest Scottish Budget. We're feeling the impact of the UK government's *Higher Education and Research Bill* north of the border too. The seismic effect of last year's Brexit vote (along with the rejection of 'experts' and all that this entails) is already playing out negatively in higher education across the UK. It is certainly a challenging time to be working or studying at our universities.

The recent Scottish Budget did no favours for universities. A further cut to funding, on top of last year's 3.1% decrease at a time when universities are being quite rightly asked to do more to widen access to higher education, is tough. This, on top of increasing costs, overheads and pensions contributions, makes life even harder for those at the chalk face.

UCU warmly welcomed last year's Widening Access Commission report recommendations - a range of well thought out proposals to ensure that the playing field is levelled for everyone with ability to undertake university level study. However, supporting students from non-traditional backgrounds to enter and successfully complete their studies requires resources, time and support from academic and support staff. So the efficiencies that are already being made, on top of the increasing demands upon staff for research and teaching excellence, make the important widening access goals just that more difficult to achieve.

The challenging financial situation for Scottish higher education is underlined by the fact that we've seen UCU members fighting back against actual or threatened redundancies in over a quarter of universities in the past eighteen months. This doesn't bode well for the further cuts to budgets that are likely to be on the horizon before 2020.

Disappointingly, the Scottish Government and Parliament last year



supported a Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) which introduced some of the worst elements of the Westminster Government's *Higher Education and Research Bill* into Scotland. The main aim of this piece of legislation is to link tuition fee hikes in England to 'teaching quality'.

However, UCU has been critical of the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) which purports to do this, given the arbitrary metrics it plans to use do nothing to measure teaching quality, and it does not sit well with the typical four year undergraduate degree in Scotland. The Bill introduces more competition into the system, making students consumers not learners, and raises the prospect of new private providers and the threat of a 'Trump university' in the UK.

UCU is strongly opposing the Bill as it passes through Westminster, and gave oral evidence against the LCM to Holyrood's Education Committee. Sadly, the Committee felt compelled to allow Scottish universities to compete in the TEF. However, the good news is that campaigning by the National Union of Students and UCU on campuses has meant that only five Scottish universities have actually signalled their intention to go into the next round of the TEF.

The sector is reeling from the referendum decision last year to leave the European Union, and is still assessing the possible consequences for universities. Education does not have borders, and is a global community. Thousands of students from the EU study in Scotland and the UK and, indeed, international and European students provide essential academic, cultural, social and financial

contributions to our system here in Scotland. Around a quarter of academic researchers in Scotland's universities are from the EU, and international staff are vital to the reputation of our sector.

The 'leave' vote, and the manner in which the UK Government has failed to give any meaningful guarantees about EU staff and students continuing to work, live and study in the UK post-Brexit, is particularly damaging. Whilst it has been helpful that the Scottish Government was able to guarantee that students applying in 2017 to study in the next academic year will have their fees paid for the duration of their courses, there are still far too many uncertainties, barriers and negativity which is deeply alarming for higher education.

It was good to see universities' wholeheartedly supporting February's 'One Day Without Us' initiative, and UCU was pleased to get behind Universities Scotland's 'Scotland Welcomes the World' campaign, to challenge the populist racism and xenophobia narrative that seems to have emerged during and since the referendum campaign. A strong, independent, free and accessible public education system is going to be so important to enable us to face the challenges ahead. It is vital that we continue to make the case for Scotland's universities.

*Mary Senior is the Scotland official for the University and College Union (UCU)*

# Fighting the flames of austerity for fire and rescue

*Denise Christie asks what price is being put upon life*

The late Tony Benn commented: 'If we can find the money to kill people, we can find the money to help people.' And, no one needs help more than when they need to call on the Fire and Rescue Service. In April 2013, the Scottish Government merged the existing eight Fire and Rescue Services to create a single Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. This merger was to remove duplication in order to mitigate some of the funding reductions that would inevitably flow from the politically motivated austerity agenda. But these savings have now been exhausted.

The continued year-on-year cuts are now slashing the frontline, despite assurances from the Scottish Government that this would not happen. Since 2013, we have seen nearly 700 frontline firefighters' jobs lost and five out of the eight emergency fire control rooms have closed which has disproportionately impacted upon women. Staffing levels have depleted so much that there can be no guarantee that frontline appliances and control rooms are adequately maintained and crewed at all times.

When a helicopter crashed through the roof of the Clutha Vaults Bar in Glasgow on 29 November 2013, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service deployed 125 firefighters to the scene within minutes. They performed complex search and rescue techniques in very difficult circumstances; specialist firefighters shored up unstable areas and excavated other parts that had collapsed. Ten people tragically died as a result of the incident and over thirty people were injured.

These figures might be much worse were an incident like this to happen again at a time where resources are over stretched due to the continued cuts. This can compromise the ability to respond quickly, in the right numbers and with firefighters who have the appropriate skills.

Independent research by Greenstreet Bernam indicates there could be up to 200 more deaths across the UK by 2020 purely as a result of increasing response times to incidents.

Previously, there were mandated response times which the Fire and Rescue Service adhered to when mobilised to an incident. These have been scrapped. Now the public have no way of knowing when help will arrive when they dial 999. One day, it might be you on the end of a phone waiting and frightened.

This situation is totally unacceptable to the Fire Brigades' Union which is continually fighting the flames of austerity. The Scottish Government needs to provide future financial settlements for the Fire and Rescue Service that recognise the vital role firefighters play in keeping communities safe - not just by responding to emergencies but through education, fire safety checks and contingency planning - and protecting our economy. Firefighters must have the resources and tools to do the job.

The risks in our communities are always changing and the job of a firefighter changes with them. It's vital to nationally assess these risks to ensure the Fire and Rescue Service

remains suitably resourced with enough firefighters who have the skills, equipment, and infrastructure to deal with them.

Firefighters are there when you need them. Now is the time we need you. Think about the men and women who will come running when your house is on fire, when your workplace is threatened by a gas leak, when your son or daughter has a car accident and lend your support to the Fire Brigades' Union campaign by lobbying your MSP to provide future investment and to stop the cuts to the Fire and Rescue Service. As Chomsky said 'What is going on with austerity is really class war. Austerity under recession makes no sense. It just makes the situation worse.'

Firefighters, trades unionists and everyone in Scotland must unite against this attack. We must come together to preserve the principle that everyone, no matter where they live, is entitled to the protection and security afforded by the Fire and Rescue Service. Hear Tony's Benn's voice ringing in your ears, 'Don't just stand in the corner and disagree ... make demands from the Government to stop austerity.'

*Denise Christie is the Scottish Regional Treasurer for the Fire Brigades' Union*

## The FBU sends solidarity greetings to all delegates and visitors attending STUC Congress

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# We can't just play along any more

*Caroline Sewell explains why being a musician is a perilous undertaking*

It's a fact. People love to consume music and increasingly to have it at their fingertips via streaming sites such as Spotify and Youtube. For those gifted enough to become professional musicians, it is a labour of love to produce music. However, within this love affair - in addition to the fact that the very nature of undertaking this kind of work is both intermittent and incredibly low paid - lies a dichotomy from which stems so many of the issues facing working musicians today.

More than half of Musicians' Union members earn less than £20,000 a year and around 60% have been expected to - and have undertaken - work for free. Add to this the fact that life as a professional musician also requires a commitment to practice, fundraising and continued professional development which ensures that most musicians, although working, are not always *earning*. Therefore, the majority have to undertake more than one job. Earning a consistent level of income is unheard of for most and these financial pressures force many professional musicians to stop practicing as they are unable to claim benefits (such as unemployment and other associated benefits) to support them due to their professional status.

Music venues are closing at a rapid rate across the country, often as a result of planning legislation which fails to take into account the cultural needs of our towns and cities by protecting our grassroots live music venues. The results of this often manifest themselves in noise abatement orders and these hugely important cultural spaces, where artists develop new audiences and where audiences discover new music, being threatened with having their licenses revoked, or even closure in more extreme cases.

The Musicians' Union have been lobbying, along with partners at the Music Venues Alliance, for the introduction of protective legislation such as the Agent of Change principle, which would ensure that pre-existing venues do not have to fork out for expensive sound proofing in order to satisfy the new neighbours. Similarly, this kind of legislation would protect

established residents from any noise emanating from new music venues in the area by enforcing that the new venue mitigates the effects of the 'noise'.

Recently, legislation has been passed at Westminster which has made some positive steps towards achieving something along these lines. The new regulations mean developers are now required to seek prior approval on noise impacts before a change of use from an office to residential building can be carried out. While we remain hopeful that this is the beginning of a sea change, to date there have been no such developments from the Scottish Government.

Our five National Companies have faced steady cuts in recent years. These have levelled off to an extent this year. However, the Youth Music Initiative has seen a huge 10% cut, after enjoying some years being unaffected by cuts to budget spend in this area.

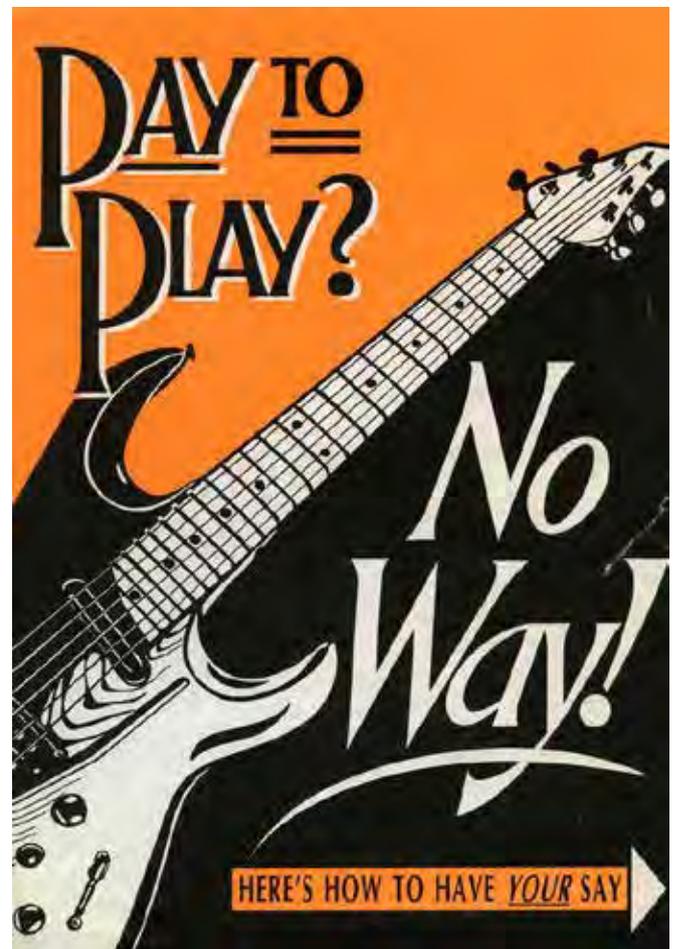
Local authorities continue to have autonomy over instrumental music provision in schools.

However, the disparity between the services provided has never been wider. We know that there is a correlation between music education budgets and participating individuals, which leaves music instructors in somewhat of a precarious situation. Subsequently, instrumental music instruction remains a non-statutory provision - despite the fact that all 32 local authorities choose to provide it. This is not all that surprising, as we know that studying music has a positive impact on other areas of academic learning and yet, we continue

to witness cuts to this provision, resulting in a reduction in opportunities at best, and redundancies at worst for instrumental music teachers.

Whilst the Musicians' Union welcomes the Creative Scotland's Arts Strategy, it would seem that there are far greater steps which are required to be taken in order to secure and deliver the ambitions which it sets out. Meanwhile, Scottish Labour pledged an end to the cuts to culture and to 'harness the creativity' in their 2016 election manifesto, which certainly seems to be in line with the British Labour Party's Charter for Culture and the Arts. Whilst there is recognition of the economic value of our creative industries and producers across much of the board, perhaps this requires to be taken more seriously as these industries and those who work within them remain vulnerable and their financial futures uncertain.

*Caroline Sewell is the Regional Organiser for Scotland and Northern Ireland for the Musicians' Union*



# Workers need a voice but Taylor can't provide it

*Sarah Glenister lays out an agenda for progressive reform*

**O**n 14 February, Matthew Taylor - heading up the government's review into employment law in the gig economy - began a tour of Britain to speak to workers and employers about their experiences in the workplace in order to develop recommendations for reform. Ahead of the tour, Taylor told the national press that the imbalance of power between workers and employers has led some workers to feel like 'slaves', and some employers to exploit the desperation of a powerless workforce. Workers, he said, must be given a voice in order to put paid to this destructive imbalance.

Indeed, the Institute of Employment Rights has long called for workers' voices to be strengthened in order that they can resist the abuses of unscrupulous employers and protect their own interests by negotiating for fair wages and conditions. Taylor's preliminary recommendations, however, are tokenistic in light of today's labour law landscape, which overwhelmingly stacks the odds in favour of businesses and leaves workers out in the cold.

Written terms and conditions; the right to request a permanent position; the ability to check if you are legitimately classified as 'self-employed' - armed with such knowledge and power, workers will pressure their employers into a fair wage and a decent job says Taylor.

He conveniently forgets those facing benefit sanctions if they do not accept any role they are offered; the estimated 3m precarious workers who do not even have the right to guaranteed hours; the 'employees' in so-called secure work who have no right to claim unfair dismissal until they have been in their job at least two years; and those who do have rights but are charged up to £1,200 to enforce them at

Employment Tribunal. No amount of 'empowerment' will encourage workers to risk their livelihoods by daring to speak out. The destructive imbalance of power is embedded within labour law itself.

But if today's employment law incubates exploitation, we believe tomorrow's can be used to reverse it. In our *Manifesto for Labour Law - 25 recommendations for the reform of employment law*, the principles of which have already been adopted by the Labour Party, a team of 15 leading labour lawyers and academics draw upon a wide evidence-base and international comparisons to call for comprehensive reforms. We believe these reforms will provide for a democratic workplace - and a democratic economy - in which workers truly can have a voice.

We call for a universal definition of 'worker', which would apply to anyone in employment and deem them eligible for the full suite of employment rights from day one. By such means, will we remove the temptation for employers to hire agency 'workers', who do not have the right to claim unfair dismissal, in place of permanent 'employees', who do.

We call for a shift in the focus of employment law away from statutory individual rights (which themselves would be strengthened) to collectively agreed wages and conditions. Legal minimums simply provide employers a floor to aim for (as Sports Direct CEO Mike Ashley said in defence of his company's poor pay: 'I don't set the minimum wage'). Unions, which allow workers to strengthen their voices by organising collectively, would negotiate at both sectoral and enterprise levels to provide for fair pay and conditions in the workplace.

We call for the establishment of a

labour inspectorate to ensure the enforcement of workers' rights - either in-house through collectively agreed dispute procedures, or at a free-at-the-point-of-use tribunal. We also call for a seat at the boardroom table for workers so that they may have a say on executive pay and so that they may advise bosses of problems on the frontline, thereby, increasing the productivity of their organisations.

And, we call for a voice for workers at a national level too, through the re-establishment of a Ministry of Labour with a cabinet seat, and through the creation of a National Economic Forum, at which workers' representatives would join other key stakeholders to assess the impact of policy on all sections of society.

Taylor has correctly identified that workers need a voice, but he will report to politicians who instituted the *Trade Union Act 2016* to weaken workers' bargaining power; who erected barriers to access to justice so that workers may not speak out; and who extended the qualifying period for unfair dismissal to two years so that employers cannot be held to account.

Strengthening workers' voices will take more than 'empowerment'; it will take substantial change. The Institute of Employment Rights is currently drafting legislation for this very purpose, but we cannot do it alone. To support our aims, please share our Manifesto page, purchase your own copy of the Manifesto for Labour Law, and consider donating to our Project Development Fund.

*Sarah Glenister is the National Development Officer at the Institute of Employment Rights (<http://www.ier.org.uk/>)*

# Partners for progressive change?

*Chris McEleny argues the forthcoming local elections can result in political progress*

**W**e are fast approaching the local authority elections, at which you will have the opportunity to decide who best to run your council for the next five years. It is important to reflect how more politically inspired the people of Scotland have become over the past three years and not take this for granted.

Since 2014, we have had a referendum on Scottish Independence, a UK General Election, a Scottish Parliament Election and an EU referendum. Since the EU referendum in June last year, our news has been dominated by what leaving the EU will look like. It looks now that we are faced with the prospect of a hard Brexit being imposed upon us to appease members of the Tory party. But just what does a hard Brexit look like?

Will it mean the end of the right for young people to study and work in Europe, the end of employment rights and protection for pregnant women in the workplace, and with all these issues now in the hands of the most right wing government in a generation?

Scottish businesses who export goods to Europe could face charges to do so. In total 80,000 jobs could be at risk by leaving the EU in such a reckless 'out at any cost' manner. Although I voted 'remain' in the EU referendum, the people I know that voted to 'leave' did not vote 'leave' for the above reasons and Theresa May's Tory Government should remember that when forcing Scotland out of Europe under such terms.

Out of the four elections and referendums mentioned, I voted in all four but only got the outcome I wanted in two of them. I was, of course, delighted to cast my vote to help elect an SNP MP and MSP but was heartbroken at the result of the Scottish independence referendum and the day after EU referendum defeat I think many people of my generation felt more European than they had at any other point in their life.

Therefore, as we go to the polls in May, it is understandable that a voting fatigue may be kicking in and this is the backdrop to the people who will be casting another of their votes. The results of the aforementioned elections

were not the most important aspect. Rather, it was the level of political debate, participation and the high level of voters that turned out to play their part in the democratic process.

Turnout in local council elections is historically low. However we have the opportunity to cast our vote to shape the future of the very place we live in. Education, roads, social care, mental health services and so – those are the kinds of things that are on the ballot paper. Empowering communities across Scotland, protecting public services, increasing child care provision – that is what we are voting about.

For too many years child poverty has been a blight on Inverclyde - the area I represent – and, indeed, across Scotland. It is time to be ambitious, it is time to be bold, and it is time to reach further than those that came before. It is time to put every resource possible into tackling poverty and by the end of the next decade eradicating child poverty across the country. A tough target, a target many will say is impossible but an ambition worth voting for.

Key to achieving any desired outcomes will be funding. Many people often ask what their money is spent on. In truth, the council delivers hundreds – if

not thousands of services: education; schools; health and social care; roads; street lighting; employability schemes. The list could literally fill the rest of this page and the next. Many of the services a council delivers are mandatory - so our councils must have schools, and our councils must protect expenditure in health and social care to protect the most in need in our area.

However, for many areas, how much we spend and where we spend it comes down to political priorities. In theory, we could have the best roads in the world if every available resource was spent on them but, this would mean no money would be left to spend on keeping libraries open across Inverclyde, or having first class leisure facilities or perhaps cutting back on bin collections would be required to pay for them.

For too long councils across Scotland have attacked the Scottish Government instead of seeking to work in partnership to achieve better outcomes for the people we are elected to serve. It is time for a new relationship that sees councils work with the Scottish Government to deliver our shared aspirations.

*Chris McEleny is an SNP councillor for Inverclyde*



## The Jimmy Reid Foundation

**In the last six months, the Jimmy Reid Foundation has issued a number of policy papers on public sector reform (by Dave Watson) and local government finance (by Jim Cuthbert), launched a report in the Scottish Parliament against the renewal of Trident (by Mike Danson and colleagues) which then led to a debate on the report itself in the Scottish Parliament, presented evidence to the Scottish Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and held a joint meeting on the human rights implications of Brexit with the Scottish Human Rights Commission.**

**All this takes times and resources – both of which add up to the expenditure of considerable amounts of money. We are extremely grateful to our individual supporters as well as the unions that affiliate to the Foundation.**

**However, to carry on at this level of activity – much less to do more – we need further financial support.**

**Please consider giving us your financial support by visiting <http://reidfoundation.org/> and then <http://reidfoundation.org/sustaining/> where you can take out a standing order or make a one off donation.**

**Yours sincerely, Professor Gregor Gall, director, Jimmy Reid Foundation**

# It's as simple as ABC: austerity budget cuts

Joe Cullinane argues councils can no longer manage the cuts – they must fight them

**O**n the 15 December 2016 I received, via the President of CoSLA's office, an 'offer' from Scotland's Finance Secretary, Derek Mackay. That 'offer' was to cut North Ayrshire Council's revenue budget by £9.2m and a flat cash settlement (i.e. no increase) in our capital budget. Mackay's 'offer' included the demand that all council leaders write to him by the 20 January 2017 to state whether they accepted his offer. It went on to state that any council failing to accept the offer will 'receive a worse settlement'.

Mackay proceeded to trail TV and radio studios to proclaim that his draft budget was not only a 'fair settlement for local government' but delivered increased funding for 'local services'. Our local papers ran the press release from the SNP opposition group, who resigned from administration back in August, 'warmly welcoming' a draft budget that was 'progressive'. Enough was enough.

Since May 2012, I had sat on the opposition benches in the council chamber and watched millions of pounds being cut from our budget. I had watched jobs go and public services be reduced or completely withdrawn. I watched how, with a majority in the Scottish Parliament, the SNP Scottish Government had threatened local councils with even deeper cuts if they refused to accept their deal and I watched an SNP administration that put up no fight against any of this.

I wasn't going to do the same. Our communities deserve better than councils managing austerity. I penned my letter to Mackay and made it clear that we would accept no offer of cuts, especially when MSPs had not been allowed to exercise their democratic mandate to scrutinise his minority Government's draft budget nor vote on it.

A number of other local authorities followed suit. The SNP Group on North Ayrshire Council told me to 'stop bickering and get to grips with managing the councils finances'. In other words, manage the cuts. As we now know the Greens did a budget deal. There is no denying that it is better than December's draft budget but, despite the spin applied, it is still a cut to council revenue budgets.

And it is non-recurring with only £29m coming from tax changes, the rest 'accounting changes'. The same SNP Group who welcomed the draft budget and told us to manage the cuts now said the budget deal was 'fair' and would 'protect public services'. Of course, they also had another attack on me because, to quote, 'working with the Scottish Government achieves more than challenging it'.



**NORTH AYRSHIRE**  
COUNCIL

That last quote is what is important for the future of local government in Scotland. Following the SNP/Green budget deal, the starting point for next year's local government settlement will be just £29m better than the £327m real terms cut proposed in the draft budget.

This year's Scottish Budget, which has increased by £418m in cash terms, is projected to be the best settlement over the coming years – so what sort of 'offer' can council's expect from the SNP in future years then?

What happens if, as the polls predict, the SNP win control of a majority of Scottish councils? Who will take the

fight to the Scottish Government to stop the cuts to communities? Who will call them out over their disdain for local democracy?

If our experience in North Ayrshire is anything to go by, there will be no fight from local government. SNP councils across the country will fall into line and manage the cuts. The impact on jobs and public services will be grave. The elderly will go without care packages. Young people will wait longer for Mental Health support. Our streets will be cleaned less and bin collections reduced. Education budgets will be cut, harming our young people's future whilst the governance will be taken out of local authority control as the SNP's centralising agenda goes unabated. More jobs will be lost, on top of the 40,000 already gone from Scottish councils, yet there will still be no taskforce to support the workers.

All this needs to be at forefront of voters' minds when they enter the polling booth this May. They are not voting for one flag or the other, they are voting for the very future of their local public services and the associated jobs. We need Labour councilors elected across the country to protect our public services.

*Joe Cullinane is a Labour councillor and the leader of North Ayrshire council*

**Update:** on Wednesday 1 March, North Ayrshire councillors became the first council to set a 'no-cuts' budget. This means using its reserves, its projected underspend and changes to council tax to invest an additional £12.3m in the local community and to stop Scottish government cuts. Joe Cullinane said: 'I have proposed the most radical, anti-austerity budget seen in North Ayrshire for many years and I am absolutely delighted that it has passed. It stops the cuts and invests in our future. *Source: Morning Star 4 March 2017.*

# A right danger!

*Carole Ewart surveys the challenges and task ahead in defending human rights*

The Jimmy Reid Foundation (JRF) and the Scottish Human Rights Commission's meeting 'Brexit: rights, risks and responsibilities: What's at stake for human rights in Scotland?' was held on 22 February to encourage informed debate and provided an opportunity for people to equally enjoy Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) which is the right to form an opinion by receiving and imparting information.

Human rights are supposed to be core to the operation of Europe: 'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail' (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Article 2).

The EU's delivery strategy promises an internal market that works for all, aiming at full employment and social progress whilst protecting and improving the quality of the environment', combatting social exclusion and discrimination, promoting social justice and 'solidarity between the generations' and protect the rights of the child' ((Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Article 3)

The ten speakers and contributors provided short presentations on the potential impact of Brexit on workers' rights, equality and discrimination including the four major directives on gender equality, protecting the environment and the opportunity for a Scottish Bill of Rights.

Grahame Smith of the STUC updated the audience on the First Minister's Standing Council on Europe and information was provided on the difference between rights in the EU and rights from the quite separate Council of Europe through which we can access the ECHR. There was a plea to maintain links with those other campaigners and activists across Europe post-Brexit who will continue to fight to ensure that the EU lives up to its ideals on human rights and

social justice.

A lot of information to take in but a consensus emerged from the audience that enforceable rights are too often invisible in communities, workplaces and services across Scotland - so the danger is we won't miss them if taken away by Brexit. Therefore, targeted action is needed to inform people of their rights, enable people to assert their rights including through advocacy services, and generate a culture and practice of rights across our 10,000 public services so people are served better and more fairly. An imminent opportunity is the local government elections in May 2017 when we can engage with people who have the resources and power to act.



The meeting examined other imminent threats to our human rights. Despite promises of a British *Bill of Rights* in 100 days following the UK Parliament elections in 2015, the Conservative Government has again postponed its development explaining the issue will be revisited after the UK leaves the EU. Of course, the promise is a threat as the Bill is tied to abolition of Labour's *Human Rights Act 1998* which the Conservatives condemned as 'damaging'.

Instead, the political chat is about 'reforming and modernising our human rights legal framework', 'restoring common sense to the application of human rights laws' and 'protecting existing rights, which are an essential part of a modern, democratic society, and better protect against abuse of the system and misuse of human rights

laws'. We can speculate as to which individuals and groups they don't want to assert their rights.

What is clear, though, is that the Conservative Government is hostile to people collectively asserting their economic and social rights so concocted and passed the *Trade Union Act 2016*. An undercurrent over the last few years from the Conservatives is that it is minded to withdraw from the ECHR, which would threaten our membership of the 47 State Council of Europe marking a further descent into isolationism.

Whilst the Jimmy Reid Foundation has no policy on Brexit because it does not take such positions, it did take the opportunity to restate that workers' rights have been under systematic attack for decades from successive UK Governments. There is a danger that by focusing on the uncertainty of Brexit, we get distracted from focusing on the powers which the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government can exercise, under the Scotland Acts, to make human rights concrete. For example, refusing to reward companies that blacklist workers with public sector contracts in the construction sector is but one instance of using such powers. There is also the opportunity to influence the detail of the 'Scottish National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights' which is targeted at the private sector including companies owned by the public sector and more generally move politicians from statements of principle, to commitments on action within specified timelines.

As our human rights are under attack at many levels, informed and co-ordinated action is, therefore, now essential.

*Carole Ewart is a human rights consultant and member of the Jimmy Reid Foundation project board*

## References

For the consolidated Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) Article 2 see <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12012M%2FTXT>

For more information on the Council of Europe, see <http://www.coe.int/en/web/about-us/who-we-are>

# Tam Dalyell – an appreciation

*Neil Findlay recalls a friend and mentor*

I was speaking at a miners' justice meeting in Edinburgh when they news came through of Tam's death. Poignant, as he had given his unwavering support to the Polkemmet miners during the 1984-1985 strike, naming the future head of MI5, Stella Rimington, as a regular attendee as a security services observer on the Whitburn pit picket line.

Tam was my greatest political friend and a mentor for almost 30 years. He was without doubt one of the greatest parliamentarians of the last 50 years. An old Etonian with a cut glass accent who lived in the historic family castle at the Binns, he may not have seemed to have much in common with his working class constituents in communities like Blackburn, Armadale, Fauldhouse and Whitburn. But Tam was genuinely loved by the people he represented and developed a tremendous relationship with them.

Whether it was car factory workers at British Leyland, the steel workers at Menzies or the women at Plessey, he represented them all. He had the memory of an elephant and had tremendous recall for names – a great political skill and made many lifelong friends amongst the thousands of constituents who benefited from his help.

On one occasion, my brother had to go to his surgery for help. On turning up, the smell in the small community centre office was horrendous. Tam took details of the case and had a ten minute chat, apparently oblivious to the foul smell – only on leaving did John notice that Tam had a very large peacock shit on the front on his shoe. He kept a number of the birds at the Binns.

Tam was completely committed to public service and along with his wife, Kathleen, they were a brilliant and dedicated team dealing diligently with tens of thousands of

cases in the days before computers and email. The ink pen and scrawled letter was Tam's preferred method of communication. He was a very kind and funny man who enjoyed laughing at the absurd, with great guffaws and heaving shoulders.

In Parliament, Tam was fearless and said that his public school education at Eton gave him 'the hide of a rhino'. It made him un-embarrassable, and with that he often found himself out on his own campaigning on issues that the Labour leadership or government of the day would rather he kept quiet about. But that never deterred Tam.

There was not a chance of him keeping quiet. He saw it as his absolute duty to speak up and on issues he felt strongly about and do his very best for the people he represented. On huge issues such as Iraq, Lockerbie, the Falklands, devolution and much, much more he spoke up. And when he did, people listened.

He pursued issues with 100% commitment and dogged determination. His work on the Falklands and the Belgrano almost brought about Thatcher's resignation. His work opposing devolution saw him tour the country debating the future of Scotland with Jim Sillars and, despite them being on opposite sides of a very passionate debate, they remained good friends. That was the way he did politics. He often said to me 'disagree with people politically but don't fall out personally.' I'm afraid I may not have totally lived up to his mantra.

He visited the Middle East many times and had an interest in the region because of his father's work there during and after the Second World War. Along with people like George Galloway, Alice Mahon and Tony Benn, he used every parliamentary device to try and

prevent British military action in Iraq. Tam had served in the army so could not be accused of being a cowardly pacifist but he consistently opposed military intervention abroad.

Tam had a contact book that was the envy of every MP and always fiercely protected his sources. This served him well over the years. In the 1970s and 1980s, he fought huge battles with the then SNP leader, William Wolfe, for the West Lothian seat. Wolfe at one point reduced Tam's majority to just a few thousand. However, his campaign against devolution the following election, saw him secure one of the largest majorities in Scotland.

As a parliamentarian he was the best of the best. If many of today's politicians had an ounce of Tam's independence of mind and were more willing to ignore the diktat from party managers our politics would be in much better shape. Tam was a school teacher, a scientist – writing a weekly column in the *New Scientist* - a bee keeper, an author, a socialist, a unionist, a parliamentarian, a father, a grandfather, a friend and a great, great man.

*Neil Findlay is a Labour MSP for the Lothians*

## An appeal and invitation

**Scottish Left Review is always seeking to expand and renew its range of contributors.**

**If you'd like to write an article or propose a theme for the magazine, please get in touch with the editor, Professor Gregor Gall at [g.gall@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:g.gall@bradford.ac.uk) to discuss either.**

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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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# Economics for the 99%

John McDonnell explains the background to his economic roadshows

**T**wenty first century Britain faces numerous difficulties and challenges. Organising our economy differently must be at the front and centre of providing solutions to these challenges. An economy is surely first and foremost about people and how they are treated within society. It is about their role and opportunities within society and whether the wider political and economic structures ensure people feel valued, secure and comfortable in their lives and interactions with others.

An economy should not be about shareholder dividend and about growing the wealth of the already super-rich. Rather, it should be about our people and whether the economy treats them with the respect, dignity and fairness they deserve. A good economy guarantees fair pay and security at work for everyone, tackles poverty and inequality, ensures public services are properly resourced, redistributes wealth, and mitigates against fast paced changes such as our growing concerns over climate change.

The current model is not working for far too many people. Nineteen million hard working people are close to or already at the poverty line, which is an indictment of our current economic model. At the other end of the wealth spectrum the super-rich and the top 1% have seen their wealth exponentially increase to eye watering, record breaking levels since the 2008 crash. Meanwhile, the rest of us have seen wages stagnate and living standards reduce. Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, has described the last 10 years as the 'lost decade' for living standards.

The manifestations of this economic polarisation for the many are stark: increasing homelessness; attacks on our welfare system; diminishing

social mobility; declining public services; rising inequality; uneven economic development dependent on class and geographical location; work that barely allows people to put food on their plates; and unprecedented levels of industrial decline. Yet at the same time, we've seen wealth coalesce round a tiny elite at the top who make deals in the City of London but do little, if anything to help the productive economy.

Jeremy Corbyn has put the need for an economy that works for all at the heart of his vision for Labour and over the next year we'll be helping to build on this vision by putting together more proposals for the next General Election.

As part of that conversation, I have asked a number of experts from the world of economics and beyond to join me in a series of one-day economic conferences to lay out the policies

Britain needs to ensure that no one and no community is left behind.

This will include a discussion of how a Labour Government can make a real difference to Scotland.

That is why in Glasgow on the 11 March, I am delighted to welcome an array of speakers that we have lined up. From Ann Pettifor to Andy Cumbers, to Alyson Pollock

through to Lesley Brennan, Richard Leonard MSP and David Conway and so many more we will be debating and discussing how we can transform our economy. We will be doing the same in Cardiff, Newcastle, Birmingham and Bristol in the coming months and have already done so in Liverpool and London.

It has never been clearer that we need to spread the fruits of our economy far more equitably. I would urge people to come along, to take part and to help us develop Labour's plans for a more prosperous economy, but even more crucially - for an economy where that prosperity is shared by all.

For more details of the event and how to sign up, go to: <http://www.labour.org.uk/blog/entry/the-new-economics>

*John McDonnell is the Shadow Chancellor and MP for Hayes and Harlington in London*



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# Holyrood or Hollywood?

Patrick Phillips recounts his surreal visit to our elected national chamber

**M**yself and my mother entered the new parliament building through a revolving door. Before leaving our concrete seat opposite the Queen's Gallery, we took one last glance at the immense broad and thick rock that reached for the sky called Arthur's Seat. Adjacent the parliament are a few triangular and oddly shaped pools. They call them 'ponds' but there is no life in them, no greenery, and not a frog in sight. Architect, Enric Miralles, wrote that 'the building should originate from the sloping base of Arthur's Seat and arrive into the city almost *out* of the rock.'

However, reflecting back and looking across glittering pools up towards the immeasurable beauty of that mountain it was apparent that somehow Miralles' intention had not worked. Surely, if the intention of Miralles' design was modern 'out of the rock', then why was the mountain more modern and monumental than the £414m crusade beside me?

There is, I must agree, a certain element of calmness on a hot day in the design of his external landscape. But this is Scotland, not Spain. There is no serious connection between the natural landscape and the so-called modern parliament building. Wildflowers instead of spreading across the earth look suffocated waving about unnaturally. Everything is out of place. Tourists are everywhere but nowhere.

At the revolving doors, we are not greeted but welcomed with security. Bags, belts and coats all must go into a single tray. We pass security. Disturbingly, I felt as though we were taken hostage. Think about it: like prisoners before we entered. We were now at the centre of not the universe but the building itself. Your eyes don't know where to look. Glass, metal and wood is criss-crossing you everywhere. You immediately yearn to find a different space than the one you're stepping into.

We felt insecure *and* caved in. Are we in the rock that has rolled away from Arthur's seat? Or, are we in the mountain itself? I don't know. I felt less of the desire to explore rather escape. At reception there is a long line of ushers. Popcorn, anyone?

Beside me, a photograph exhibition by Harry Benson called 'Seeing America'. The photos reveal everything about the horror of American tyranny. Yet we are inside a building that is almost like a bunker - a bomb proof one - and a building that is difficult to get in and out of. I ask a security guard where the debating chamber is. Everywhere are slabs of concrete. Was our environment seriously considered?

Finally, we entered the chamber. It wasn't what I expected, being a lot smaller. On TV, the chamber appeared larger with more space in-between the politicians. Our perspective, when seated of secular props (chairs, speakers and tables) became miniature. There is a long distance between *you* and politics.

There are lights everywhere and cameras, being equipped rather than prepared for the modern world. Like a movie-set maybe. It was finally time to watch. The Presiding Officer commenced with FMQs; a hammer was hit and immediately politicians stood up and sat down in their seats. It was a case of 'Lights. Camera. Action!' I noticed immediately that you can't really see the MSPs' facial or body expressions. The politics of politics, it appears, is being played down. Politics is now action-packed. Nothing from the 'visitors' perspective felt live or real.

A question is asked, the First Minister stands up abruptly, shouting at the opposition, whilst their party leader quickly leans back on her chair, holding up a look of terror. It is a pathetic and sad sight. Was I watching a rehearsal? If I was directing, I would be shouting: 'Cut, cut cut!'

Politics is not in the space we are sitting. We are projected out and separated. Men, women and teenagers arch their bodies over the rails, shockingly, I realised, being treated as animals. And so we behave like one. Monkey, not the man, was obedient and sat back in his seat. Everywhere there are now security guards, Press with their ridiculously long cameras lenses, taking a hundred shots. An awful lot of hysteria for just a thirty minute rehearsal!

Honestly, the whole experience and the space itself was - and still - is in my memory a surreal one. When we consider the importance of politics, such an element of surrealism is not essential to life or humanity. We must think harder about the principle of not just politics but parliament itself - we must approach democracy with serious intelligence and more attention to human essence than architectural drawings.

Today, we are forced to accept the extreme distance between humanity and politics. The appearance of progress has become more important than the actual progress. Democracy which is a power in itself has been removed from us, owned instead by capitalists shelved and packaged through branded parties. Words 'my party' must be excluded one day if we are to climb any mountain. I turned to the film director - sorry the security guard - and asked for the way out.

*Patrick Phillips is a revolutionary writer, lyricist, humanist and artist based in Perthshire.*



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# Remembering what the NHS is for

*Graham Watt explains why all is not well for general practice in the NHS*

When our parents and grandparents survived WW2, they were determined not to go back to the unfairness of pre-war society. Influenced also by their recent experience of social solidarity, they committed to a national health service based on the generous principle that illness is neither a crime for which people should be punished, nor an indulgence for which they should pay but a misfortune, the cost of which should be paid for by the community. Aneurin Bevan's book *In Place of Fear* captured the initial purpose of the NHS precisely.

The NHS still serves us well. In an independent review of eleven rich countries in 2012 by the Commonwealth Foundation in New York (nothing to do with the British Commonwealth), the NHS ranked first on almost every quality indicator, with the US coming last. Yet the NHS spent the second least on health care per head, while the US spent most, by a country mile. We could spend more on the NHS without being exorbitant or wasteful in international terms.

The gatekeeping role of general practice has been the main explanation of the efficiency of the NHS, by keeping most care in the community. What keeps patients in the community is satisfaction with the care they receive, and the avoidance of complications from the conditions they have. The NHS neglects this function at its peril, but that is what it has done. Politicians, NHS managers and civil servants, while claiming that 'the NHS is safe with us', have nevertheless presided over some calamitous trends.

The general practice share of the NHS budget has fallen by a sixth in the ten years from 2006. During the same period, workload increased substantially due to the ageing

population, increased patient expectations and transfer of work from secondary care. Many GPs have gone part-time, recuperating from 11-12 hour days. Older GPs are retiring early. Training posts lie vacant. Two thirds of the younger GP workforce is female, but the average age of female GPs leaving the profession is in their mid-40s. GP recruitment and retention have had to become government priorities. For the next decade, the GP landscape will be pitted with sink holes, as practices cannot fill vacancies and implode.

The consequences are already apparent. Patient care becomes less coordinated and complications occur earlier. Patients 'spill over' into unscheduled care, including out of hours, A&E and emergency admissions, often for problems which could be dealt with in primary care but also for more serious problems which could have been prevented or delayed. The solution to this problem is not more A&E or hospital investment.

A parallel trend has been a decade of preferential NHS investment in specialist services, in both hospital and community care, with the community health services budget (for mental health, alcohol misuse, addiction services etc) increasing by 42% and the hospital consultant establishment by 60%.

Specialist services have strict referral criteria, waiting lists to control demand and evidence-based protocols and targets to deliver, followed by discharge to general practice when they are done. They work to high standards, but leave a lot for general practice to do, helping patients who do not fit the criteria, who are not good at accessing services, who have other conditions at the same time (multi-morbidity) or who are not made better by specialist treatment.

Most professional people see their GP occasionally, usually for a single condition. Most are oblivious to the real work and value of general practice within the NHS, which is to provide unconditional, personalised continuity of care for patients with complex multi-morbidity, whatever combination of conditions they have. About a sixth of patients account for about a half of the work of general practice. The 10% of Scottish patients with four or more conditions account for a third of all emergency hospital admissions and a half of potentially preventable hospital admissions.

Such patients may need specialist care on occasion, but they mostly need a continuing relationship with a clinical generalist who can work through their problems, building knowledge and confidence in living with their conditions and making best use of services. The 'worried well' present their own demands and expectations but what the 'unworried unwell' need, at least to begin with, is a worried doctor, staying with the patient, steering the course, facilitating access and anticipating hazards. By definition, specialist services cannot do this and are an expensive way of dealing with only part of the problem. Nurses, pharmacists and link workers can help but are not an alternative to the generalist clinical role.

Over-investment in specialist services, with their associated management and backroom staffs, has robbed front line services of resource and threatened to capsize the NHS in the process (a la a 'machine that does the work of two people, but needs three people to work it'). And, it has also made life difficult for patients with multi-morbidity, especially patients in very deprived areas where multi-morbidity, typically combining physical, psychological and social problems, begins 10-15 years earlier.

People assume that because the NHS deals with emergencies in an equitable way, based on need and no other consideration, the same approach applies in all areas of the service. But that is not the case in two important respects – specialist treatment, which affluent groups are better at accessing, and general practice.

Although premature mortality and complex multi-morbidity both more than double in prevalence across the social spectrum, from most affluent to most deprived, the distribution of GP funding per Scottish patient is almost flat. The arrangement provides everyone with access to a doctor (horizontal equity), but not access to needs-based care (vertical equity). The consequences for patients in very deprived areas include shorter GP consultations despite higher levels of complex illness, lower expectations, poorer outcomes, greater GP stress and increased pressure on hospitals.

First described in 1971, the 'inverse care law' states that 'the availability of good medical care tends to vary inversely with the need for it in the population served'. It is not that medical care in deprived areas is bad. Quality indicators, such as the recently jettisoned Quality and Outcomes Framework, showed little difference between practices in affluent and deprived areas. A better understanding of the problem is the difference between what practices in deprived areas can do for their patients and what they could do if they were better resourced.

Neither the inverse care law nor inequalities in health are marginal issues affecting small numbers of people at the edge of Scottish society. They are a major feature of contemporary Scotland, mostly affecting, on a pro-rata basis, the most deprived 40% of the population. The most affected constituencies all have SNP MSPs.

Compared with 1948, there is now a collective of tools and resources of effective NHS interventions capable

of improving not only individual patient health but also, via mass delivery, the health of the public. The corollary is that if health care is delivered inequitably, with some social groups benefitting more than others, the NHS itself becomes a cause of widening health inequality. Almost every recent official Scottish report and policy on health inequalities has turned a blind eye to this new, important, social determinant of health.



Why don't people see the inverse care law as a problem requiring urgent attention? First, because it doesn't produce noise, from patients who have learned not to expect more (the Chief Medical Officer's call for 'Realistic Medicine' doesn't address this issue), professional bodies serving other interests, or politicians supposedly representing affected communities. Second, because despite much bluster and conceit to the contrary, we are a conservative society, most comfortable in how things are. Third, many people do not know or cannot imagine how general practice makes a difference.

The intrinsic features of general practice – patient contact, population coverage, continuity, flexibility, long term relationships and trust – make general practice the natural hub of local health systems. Cumulative knowledge of patients is the starting point for integrated care. No other part of public service has these characteristics in such large degree but although essential these features are not sufficient. Closer links (i.e. local, familiar, quick and flexible) are needed to a host of other resources and services.

The NHS will continue to provide

emergency care and access to specialists, while striving to give more children a better start in life and everyone a dignified end, but increasingly its task is to support people with multi-morbidity to live long and well in the community. General practice in its current plight needs to be rescued and supported so that it can lift its head and lead the building programme that is required, based not on bricks and mortar but on relationships, building strong patient narratives, on the one hand, and better relationships with local colleagues and services, on the other. This can only be done at a local level.

The health professions often call for politics to be kept out of the NHS but, as George Orwell observed, that is itself a political position. With no hands on the wheel, the NHS does not sail a straight course towards equity, but a crooked course reflecting the interests of the most powerful groups.

We need political involvement more than ever, not to micro-manage the NHS with targets, but to set and scrutinise the direction of travel, beginning by correcting the imbalances which have developed between backroom and frontline staff, between clinical generalists and specialists, and between care received by different social groups. Chiselled above the entrance to the Scottish Government Health Department and every Health Board HQ in Scotland should be the mantra: 'If the NHS is not at its best where it is needed most, inequalities will widen'.

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Deep End Report 30: A role for members of the Scottish parliament in addressing inequalities in health care in Scotland (see [www.gla.ac.uk/deepend](http://www.gla.ac.uk/deepend))

# Trump - populist, racist, sexist but not fascist

*Gerry Friedman shows the longstanding populism that Trump has picked up on*

Something is wrong in American politics when the candidate of the traditionally left party carries the country's richest locales but loses what were her party's working-class strongholds. While carrying the richest counties in the country with an average of 58% of the two-party vote, Hillary Clinton lost Macomb County, Michigan, home of unionised auto workers, every county in West Virginia, home of the United Mine Workers, and barely carried Pittsburgh, home of the United Steel Workers. Blue-collar workers, industrial workers, men without a college degree: voters who for a century have been the mainstay of *left* politics instead voted for a party pledged to destroy unions and whatever remains of the American welfare state.

Donald Trump won by mobilising working Americans against 'elites' with 'contempt for the people who thanklessly follow the rules.' 'Contempt' is the key word and Trump returns to it repeatedly. Hillary Clinton, he charged ran a campaign of 'conspiracy and contempt' for she represented an elite filled with contempt for the 'real Americans.' The elitists would deny America's white, Christian heritage. They would blame workers for their economic woes while ignoring the real problems caused by the elite's policies on trade, immigration, and Wall Street deregulation. Fortunately, with Trump, 'American nationalists' the 'forgotten men and women of our country' have reclaimed *their* country.

Trump attracted voters by uniting two distinct strands in American populism: an economic grievance against the rich, and a social complaint against immigrants and cosmopolitans who would challenge traditional American cultural norms. Both have been prominent throughout American protest movements. American leftists write fondly of the Populists of the 1890s who supported income taxes, unions, and the democratic regulation

of banks and railroads. They try to forget the Populists' xenophobic hostility to Asian immigrants, or the racist turn taken by prominent Populist leaders like Tom Watson, and by later economic populists like Father Coughlin and George Wallace.

Trump's success has forced some to rethink the nature of populism. Like Trump, would-be populists like France's Marine Le Pen, Hungary's Gabor Vona, and Britain's Nigel Farage present a nationalism of a united people, oppressed culturally by cosmopolitan snobs allied economically with venal bankers and foreigners stealing their jobs and wages. When Trump calls Mexicans 'killers and rapists' slanders Islam, or attacks China for undercutting American businesses, he joins a long tradition of populist nationalists who defended working Americans by insisting that because their values, including their respect for labour, were virtuous, their woes were caused by others.

Of course, some Trump supporters are racists and misogynists. Others, however, were disgusted by his language; they rejoice in their daughters' successes and are happy to eat *Pad Thai* while listening to Afro-Pop. What attracts them to Trump is that he speaks to their anger at declining income and lost jobs, at the declining status of working people. He has come to speak for those who get up in the morning and go to work each day only to be treated with contempt not only by their bosses but also by liberals who tell them that it is their own fault because they did not get enough education.

Indeed, self-blame is what Hillary Clinton, and before her Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, have offered working Americans. Just as Democrats and Republicans together imposed neo-liberal economic policies, liberals and conservatives agree that low wages and stagnant employment are the fault of the workers themselves.

Together, they lament that workers do not get college degrees and are too slow to leave depressed locales to move to Boston or San Francisco. Together, they bask in their deserved affluence, high incomes and prestigious employments that are their due because of their Ivy League educations and cosmopolitan social values.

In expressing the anger felt by working Americans left-behind by the neoliberal economy, Trump expressed populist anger as a negative nationalism: hurting, we unite against others. This is different from the left's populism which is a positive nationalism that says we are hurting and we will work together to fix things.

The left is built on the idea that labour has intrinsic value, that workers deserve respect, and their economic troubles are never only 'their own fault' but reflect oppressive economic conditions that can be fixed through collective action. On these values, left movements have always been truly cosmopolitan. Franklin Roosevelt (aka FDR) opened the Democratic Party to Jews and African Americans and opened American markets to the world. He built a coalition on the principle that all Americans deserve dignity, and that collective action, government and labour together, can help all Americans to flourish. His liberalism provided economic opportunity while recognizing that conditions can prevent some from seizing those opportunities and a decent society must provide for those left behind. That is still the path forward for the left in American and elsewhere, one that denies populist racism while accepting the populist idea that a nation has a responsibility to help all its people.

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# Kick up the Tabloids

**G**reetings from the other side of the world! I am writing this from Adelaide, where I'm working for two weeks as part of a six-week tour of the southern hemisphere. I always find it easier to observe UK politics when I am outside the country, particularly when I am on the totally opposite side of the planet, in a time zone that is ten-and-a-half hours ahead of Britain ... so think of this as a message from The Future. OK, not the very far Future, but The Future nonetheless.

Australia as a country is far from perfect. However, they do some things here that could well be copied back home. For example, you can actually buy ethic toilet paper in this country. One brand gives fifty percent of their profits towards building toilets in the Third World. In typically earthy Australian style, their slogan is 'Wiping Away Poverty' and the brand is called 'Who Gives A Crap. I shit you not.'

Another initiative here that impressed me was at Perth Airport where I was catching my flight to here. A polling station had been set up next to Departures, to allow early voting in Western Australia state elections, giving people no excuse not to vote because 'I was out of the country at the time'. Of course, as many of us will be aware, voting is compulsory in Australia, and failure to vote is a punishable offence. I am not sure exactly what the penalty is, but the most severe cases of serial non-voting should be punished by being sent back to England on a boat, not to rot in a prison cell but just to live in a small-minded isolationist country ruled by a non-elected Prime Minister.

2017 is actually proving to be a difficult time for writing comedy. But then, you'd already noticed that about two paragraphs ago. One would have thought that with Brexit, and particularly Donald Trump, the time would be ripe for satire, but actually it is the opposite.

With Theresa May there is not enough to satirise. With Donald Trump, there is far too much. While May is basically Margaret Thatcher without the personality or charisma, Trump is such a walking parody of himself so he is virtually impossible to exaggerate.

Basically, the President is incredibly difficult to satirise, given that his very presence in the White House is like some grotesque comedy sketch gone wrong. Indeed, as many of us will be aware, Trump's ascension to the White House was predicted as long as twenty years ago in an episode of 'The Simpsons' that everyone thought was ridiculously far-fetched. We have all been aware at times when events happen that resemble life imitating art. This is the first time in my political memory when I can remember life imitating a cartoon.

That's the thing about Trump. He is virtually a cartoon character. Indeed, I think there are a number of cartoon characters who would eminently better Presidents than Trump. Fred Flintstone would doubtless have a much more modern attitude to gays and women, Mr Magoo would have a clearer vision for the country's future and Foghorn Leghorn would have a much less aggressive foreign policy.

Trump's wife, on the other hand, appears to have walked straight out of a Gerry Anderson puppet show from the 1960s. She would not look at all out of place in *Thunderbirds*. In many regards, watching the current First Family is almost like a re-run of kids TV from my childhood. And we all now know how many unsavoury characters were involved in kids TV back in those days.

However, if one can take any positives from this car-wreck of a Presidency it is this: I actually believe that in a strange way, in the long term, the election of Donald Trump is going to restore people's faith in politicians. If he's done nothing else, he has proved

that being a professional politician is not as easy as it looks.

Politics is a bit like stand-up comedy. Everybody thinks it looks easy. Trump in the White House is increasingly looking like some bone-headed drunk heckler at a comedy gig who gets up on stage and proceeds to make a total arse of himself, having previously thought that he was funnier than all the comics at the gig. The irony of course is that Trump is a teetotaler. He's sober when he is talking all this utter nonsense and coming up with these hair-brained policies. At least Nigel Farage has the excuse - that he is pissed most of the time.

Trump's impending visit to the UK will not, we are told, include a visit to Scotland. Apparently, his advisors have just informed that a wall was built along the border a few thousand years ago. This means, alas, that the President will not be making a visit to his ancestral home town of Stornoway. While good news to the islanders of Lewis, it's bad news for all of us who like a good comedy new photo. And what better than watching his ridiculous haystack of a hairdo trying to cope with the ferry crossing from Ullapool, which even on a calm day must be one of the windiest journeys on earth. Perhaps, that is where his psychopathic hatred of wind stems from.

Back home, it appears that Indyref2 is becoming more likely by the day, which is good news for me. Not only was I a 'yes' voter in 2014, but it should cure my current writer's block, as I can simply re-cycle all my old gags from three years ago!

*Vladimir McTavish is currently on tour in Australia and New Zealand. On his return home, he will be appearing at Yes Bar in Glasgow on Saturday 25 March at 7.15 as part of the 2017 Glasgow International Comedy Festival*

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