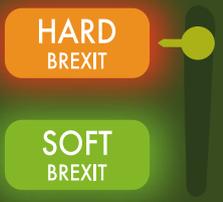


Scottish Left Review

Issue 101 September/October 2017 - £2.00

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Scottish Left Review

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comment

No silly season

According to the London-based media, August and September are routinely denoted as the ‘silly season’ because, with Parliament in recess from late July to early October, there are seemingly few serious political developments to cover. Consequently, stories of a far lesser stature make and dominate the headlines. But, equally routinely, manifest politics - and the importance of these to everyday lives - does not stop. Thus, it should be noted that Jeremy Corbyn has made a very timely tour of Labour marginals (some 90-100 seats) throughout the summer. This is to be welcomed because of the prospect of another general election given the Tory weakness in Parliament and because of Corbyn’s strength as a speaker at popular rallies. Moreover recent research from the London School of Economics and Political Science highlighted that in the constituencies where Corbyn conducted these rallies, the Labour vote was up much more than in constituencies where didn’t do such rallies.

Yet this is still not the kind of mobilization that is required of these times. Sure, we need and want the end of the Theresa May Tory government at Westminster – or one led by any other Tory like Philip Hammond or David Davies. And, we want their replacement by a Corbyn-led Labour government because Labour is by far the most politically progressive of all the major political parties – and that includes the SNP. Yet, Labour is unfortunately playing a waiting game of a parliamentary nature. While it may try to defeat the Tories in parliament with this vote and that, and John McDonnell says the government could collapse at any point, it would be much better if Labour also sought to mobilise all its voters and supporters in campaigns and other collective actions (like demonstrations) against the effects of Tory government policy *outside* the parliamentary orbit. So the People’s Assembly demonstration on 1 July could have been that much bigger – maybe one million strong – if Labour as an organisation had put a call to all its members to attend. There is also more to

be done. As *Scottish Left Review* called for in its last editorial, Dugdale needs to be removed by a leadership challenge. The Labour left in Scotland must quickly find a candidate to do this.

Then Ian McNicol, current general secretary of British Labour, needs to be removed as does Brian Roy, current general secretary of Scottish Labour. Control of Labour organization through these general secretaries prevents the Corbyn current washing through the rest of the Labour Party. We only need to recall the 1983 People’s March for Jobs to remember that Labour itself did – and could again – organize mass demonstrations. Only with control of the party machine can such initiatives be taken and be successful. And then there is the issue of mandatory re-selection of sitting MPs in order that the right is removed from the Parliamentary Labour Party so that parliamentary candidates and elected MPs reflect the new will of the mass of Labour Party members. Therefore, the issue of de-selection cannot be ducked. If it is, the Blairites will use Venezuela or any other forthcoming issue to keep trying to undermine Corbyn. To not act in these ways would be a tragedy because what Corbyn and Corbynism represent is not just the articulation of a deeply and long held revulsion at the market and neo-liberalisation but also giving that revulsion of a new found sense of credibility and vigour which can create an upward, virtuous spiral.

Moving out from this, the radical left in Scotland is now at another historic fork in its road. Wanting a major and radical reform of society ranging from social democracy (where the state ameliorates market outcomes) to socialism (where significant restrictions in the operation of the market exist), it faces a situation where the balance of political forces has tipped away from independence. For ideologues of either the pro- or anti-independence left in Scotland, this is either ‘good’ or ‘bad’.

For those supporting independence, the

ScottishLeftReview

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forward momentum has clearly ebbed away in the last eighteen months. This was evident from the Brexit vote and solidified by the 2017 general election result. In the former, the SNP over-estimated how Brexit would reinforce the demand for independence, and in the latter it lost considerable ground to the Tories. Indeed, the fortunes of the SNP, not a social democratic party as it claims, has been further dented as it becomes more evident that it has started running out of steam. Its recent re-launch of both the Scottish Government and the case for independence gives a stronger sense of political paralysis than renewed vigour and resilience. Typical of the SNP, the re-launches have been devoid of significant policy developments and more about influencing and managing perceptions. No one in the leadership of the SNP seem to appreciate that its 'don't scare the horses' approach to the referendum in 2014 was what prevented the adoption of a programme that would have appealed to working class voters – the majority in any capitalist society. And, there seems to be a strong possibility of that farce turning into tragedy if there is another referendum. The SNP continues to play the 'big boy did it and ran away' game over Brexit without taking any significant steps to start building a new society in Scotland. And, that's fundamentally because it eschews using state intervention to ameliorate and overturn market outcomes which is the *sine qua non* of social democracy. It has not used its existing powers and fetes business so that argument that it would show its social democratic colours after independence is not a very credible one. Indeed, the SNP response of the recent Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland (GERS) figures showing a £13.5bn deficit in Scottish state finances underlies this point.

So the ball of the radical left now seems to be returning to the court of the British road to socialism after many barren years under 'new' Labour and then the independence insurgency. The elation felt on 9 June could have been mistaken for an actual election victory. But not all is happy in this house of (British) Labour. It is not a case of whether Corbyn can last or is deficient in some personal respects (see previous *Scottish Left Review* editorials). Here, it is a matter of strategy and political perspective. Labour will not be in another 'Better Together' if there is another independence referendum and both Corbyn and McDonnell have shown the SNP what *bona fide* radicalism looks like (in words, if not yet deeds).

But what matters is that Corbynism has yet to be defined as anything more than social democracy rebooted or a version 2.0 of it. The term 'socialism' is used – though not often enough. But it has to be laid out and explained. Is Corbyn's yet unstated vision of socialism one of the parliamentary road to socialism as per the varieties of the Communist Party of Britain or the Socialist Party (formerly Militant)? And what is the strategy to get from where we are to where we want to be? All this is critical because any attempts to introduce radical reform will come up against the might of the British state and the massed forces of the right. We only need to recall what has been happening in Venezuela to see how the right can mobilise to kill off what it sees as a threat.

But matters are never that simple as the singularity of a step forward for the British road to socialism and a simultaneous step back for the Scottish road to socialism. This is because some support for independence was as conditional as it was instrumental. According to this perspective, the means to the ends are not as important as the ends itself. By way of illustration, support for independence is for some unconditional and even an article of dogmatic faith. Support which is conditional and instrumental reassesses what strategy is believed to be most appropriate and effective in the light of the current balance of forces. This means ebbs and flows in the support for British and Scottish roads to socialism. So for these people in Scotland, it does not terribly matter whether the gaining of a radically better society does is on a Scottish or British basis.

The fissures of this on-going realignment are evident in the spats that have broken out in recent months. Attacks on RIC co-founder, Cat Boyd, as a 'red Tory' (for voting for Corbyn by voting Labour) and Ross Greer, Green MSP (by questioning whether *The National* newspaper is now become something of a liability for the independence movement) indicate that there is a preponderance of unthinking dogmatic support for independence and the SNP amongst some on the left. They too have been none too chuffed with the likes of former SSP MSP, Carolyn Leckie, and former Group of '79 member, Kenny MacAskill, recognising the malaise in the SNP and proposing something should be done about it. In the case of Carolyn Leckie, this means separating the campaign for independence from SNP and moving to the left.

But there is also another reason why matters are not so simple. If the Tories continue to survive and Labour is seen as an ineffectual opposition (inside and outside Westminster), the demand for independence may well rise up again to the top of the political agenda. What opposition the Scottish Labour Party provides will be a key part of this equation, and this then relates to whether the SNP decides to move to the left or the right – or stay where it is – depending on its assessment of the Corbyn effect in Scotland and what it needs to do to regain ground from the Tories in the north east of Scotland. Consequently, the SNP will have to decide whether it can ride two differing horses – simply put, these are the workers in the Central Belt or the farming and fishing communities in the north-east.

Scottish Left Review has always tried to be constructive in its criticism. Therefore, Stuart MacLeod's article on renationalizing Scotrail is offered to help flesh out what often remains as just a demand or slogan. In this regard, we can recall the SSP's pamphlet of 2004 called *Reclaiming Our Railways* which advocated a third each split between the workforce, users and government for running the railways. The same is true of the articles on new forms of economic ownership by Richard Leonard MSP, how unions can respond to the Tory *Trade Union Act* by Stephen Smellie, and by what a modern republic could look like by Graham Smith. In the run up to Christmas, the traditional time for buying and then reading books, we have a bumper book review section for your delectation. In this regard and in light of the content of this editorial, copies of the second and third editions of *Is there a Scottish road to socialism?* are still available for purchase from our website – see <http://www.scottishleftreview.org/shop/>

- The editorial comment is the responsibility of the editor, in conjunction with the chair and vice chair of the editorial board.

STOP PRESS - *Scottish Left Review* was going to press as the news of Dugdale's resignation broke. Her resignation is, of course, welcome and now the challenge the Labour left faces can no longer be ducked - it has to put forward a credible candidate that can win the leadership. We wish the Labour left 'luck' here and we shall return to this issue in the next editorial.

Bouncing Brexit into being benign

Neil Findlay lays out his vision for post-Brexit

The recent general election was supposed to give Theresa May an increased majority which, in her mind - but no one else's - would deal her a stronger hand in negotiating Brexit. The result of this cunning plan dreamt up when she and her investment banker husband were on a walking holiday in Wales was a complete calamity. The worst Tory election campaign in living memory, a manifesto launch that looked like it took place in an abandoned bus garage and a candidate for Prime Minister who looked like she was allergic to the voters came unstuck when up against a genuinely radical Labour manifesto written in the image of a leader comfortable amongst people who thrived and grew as the campaign progressed. None of the pollsters or the 'clever' people of the political commentariat predicted the outcome.

Now May hobbles along 'a dead woman walking' as George Osborne gleefully called her during the post-election analysis. But let's be clear - for now this walking target for a Tory leadership challenge is the one who will be leading the country during Brexit negotiations. My oh my, how that should fill us with optimism, hope and ... nah, we all know it will be a complete disaster if we allow it to happen. But it doesn't have to be this way, it could be so different. Brexit poses huge challenges but also presents many opportunities. Britain could be leading the charge for progressive

change in Europe. Change that could ripple across the continent, eradicating some of the worst aspects of the EU and the conditions imposed on nation states by the single market, held up by some misguided people as an economic nirvana.

We could create a Europe where:

- People and communities are prioritised over competition and forced, artificial convergence;
- Fairness, cooperation and social and economic solidarity are central to the development of a social Europe;
- Democracy and human rights are deepened not eroded;
- Collective bargaining is engrained in a new and genuine social contract; and
- Workers are protected wherever in the world they come from by ensuring they have right to the same wages and conditions as any other worker who gives of their labour throughout Europe.

We could create a new non-discriminatory immigration policy so that all those who want to come and live and work here are treated the same and where there will be a zero tolerance approach to 'foreign only' recruitment which leads to undercutting and exploitation.

And, our history tells us very clearly, indeed, that for working people it is not the Tory party, nor the Liberals nor nationalists in the shape of SNP or the busted flush that is UKIP who will deliver positive and progressive change - it will be the labour movement. The labour movement with its proud history of campaigning and delivering for our class must set out very clearly our aims and objectives.

In or out of the single market, we have to have trading arrangements that end some of the nonsensical competition laws that inhibit progressive policies being implemented. Policies that, for example, would prevent Labour delivering its manifesto commitments on public ownership of key sectors like water, energy and rail.

We need agreements that allow Government's and public bodies to build in social and environmental protections to the public procurement process so that we can pay a living wage to all workers, and buy materials, goods and services from the local supply chain, securing jobs whilst protecting our natural environment.

And we must argue that intervention in the economy to support key sectors is not just desirable but essential if we are to promote manufacturing and new industries (ending the prohibitive nonsense of 'state aid' restrictions).

I believe such an approach would gain support from workers across the country and across Europe.

On the key issue of the free movement of Labour, I fully support giving EU citizens living here the right to remain. But this does not address the inherent problem within the EU - that is the economic failures that have caused mass youth unemployment across states forcing young people to up sticks and leave their homeland, their communities and their families to try and make a living elsewhere often in low skilled, temporary and low paid work.

Young people have been in the frontline of the austerity politics driven by the European Central Bank and the EU Commission. Where has been the outcry about the 46.6% unemployment rate in Greece or 38.6% rate in Spain? Is the single market delivering for our young Greek, Spanish, Italian, Croatian friends? I think not. The silence from European leaders on this has been deafening.

These issues and many more have to be at the forefront of the Labour Party's and the labour movement's priorities for Brexit. We should seek alliances across Europe around these common aims to build a genuinely social Europe. Leaving such vital matters to David Davis, Boris Johnson and Theresa May can only ever end very badly.

Table on youth unemployment in EU <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266228/youth-unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries/>

Neil Findlay is a Labour MSP for the Lothians



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Free movement of labour, the EU and Scotland's economy

John Foster explains why loss of 'free movement' would open up possibilities

Currently there is 'free movement' of labour into Scotland from the EU (though not from the rest of the world – a point to which will be returned to). What will be the consequences for the Scotland's economy and its people if this free movement from the EU ends?

Scottish government figures on immigration indicate that between 2001 and 2011 about half of Scotland's immigrants came from the EU. By 2015, the number of non-UK nationals in employment in Scotland was 166,000 of whom 115,000 came from the EU. The biggest numbers were from Poland, Ireland and Romania. Non-UK EU nationals made up 3.4% of the total population as against 4.9% for Britain.

In terms of occupation, non-UK nationals are over-represented in 'elementary occupations' like farm workers, cleaners, and process workers in food preparation (almost a third of all non-UK EU nationals). At the other end of the spectrum, 17% of non-UK EU nationals were in professional occupations (chemists, professional engineers, pharmacists). In terms of sectors, they are particularly under-represented in clerical and administrative posts and the civil service and over-represented in tourism (mainly distribution, hotels and restaurants), being 10.8% of the total. In public administration, education and health (but principally health,) it is non-EU non-UK nationals who tend to predominate (providing employment for almost a third of all non-EU nationals) while EU nationals make up only 2.6% of the health workforce.

So, what happens if migration from the EU is no longer on the basis of 'free movement'? Let us make the hopeful assumption that it is the Labour Party's policy that is implemented – the only party to

have advanced relatively detailed proposals for an immigration policy outside both the EU and the EU single market.

Its 2017 manifesto stressed three points. First, all existing non-British nationals have the right to remain. Second, immigration policy will not 'discriminate between people of different races or creeds and ... will be transparent and fair to everybody'. And, third, that the new policy would involve 'working with businesses, trade unions, devolved governments and others to identify specific labour and skill shortages to institute a new system which is based on our economic needs, balancing controls and existing entitlements'. It continues, saying Labour will 'take decisive actions to end the exploitation of migrant labour undercutting workers' pay and conditions ... crack down on unscrupulous employers ... stop overseas-only recruitment practices, strengthen safety-at-work inspections and increase prosecutions of employers evading the minimum wage'.

As a policy it matches, and is to some extent contingent upon, the manifesto's other pledges to transform the labour market and the economy itself through the introduction of sectoral collective bargaining and an active industrial policy.

The past year has seen plenty of warnings about the adverse consequences for Scotland of ending EU free movement. These concern particularly agriculture, fish processing, hotels and catering and health services - and, more generally, the need to offset the economic consequences of an ageing population.

In agriculture, there are roughly 26,000 employees of whom 6,000 are classed as casual and these

are concentrated overwhelmingly on Tayside. Though there is some regulation through the Agricultural Wages Board, wages are very low – set for 2016 at the same level as the legal minimum wage of £6.70 an hour for those over 24. Hospitality and construction tend to follow the same pattern – though currently with even less regulation. Information is lacking on how far EU migrants are paid less or suffer greater discrimination – though those from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds in Scotland do suffer somewhat higher levels of unemployment (particularly women). However, overall median gross hourly earnings for EU nationals in 2015 were £9.00 as against £12.20 for UK nationals. This reflects the degree to which EU nationals are disproportionately in low paid jobs – though interestingly the median for non-EU nationals from outside the UK was £15.40 reflecting the higher proportion in professional occupations, particularly in the health service.

On these figures, it would be difficult to claim that the Scottish economy is critically reliant on EU nationals - it is certainly less so than Britain as a whole - or to argue that the future viability of the Scottish economy is dependent on free movement as prescribed by the EU. On the contrary, there is a bigger, and much more worrying, picture which a narrow focus on free movement obscures. This is the wider crisis of the Scottish economy which stems – in part - from the current character of its labour market.

The latest edition of the Fraser of Allander *Economic Commentary* (41/2) describes the position of the Scottish economy as 'precarious': total growth over the past two years has been 1.2% as against 3.5% for Britain. Partially, this has been because of the decline in the oil and gas sector but to a greater degree it

stems from more fundamental and underlying factors.

Scotland is at the bottom of the league for business investment: thirtieth out of 31 OECD countries. Research and development expenditure is little more than half that for Britain and a quarter of that for Finland, Sweden and Germany. Productivity remains alarmingly poor with almost no increase for a decade, worse even than Britain's. And largely as a consequence Scotland's exports are equivalent to only 12% of its GDP as against 22% for Britain and over 40% for Germany.

Correspondingly Scotland's employment profile reveals a hollowing out of skilled employment and a greater reliance on unskilled and temporary labour. The Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) submission to the Scottish Parliament in 2015 outlined the detrimental consequences of Scotland's 'flexible labour market which permits and sometimes promotes the use of low tenure jobs'. Cheap, flexible employment provides a temporary, but only temporary, alternative to investment.

For the future, these trends are a matter of acute concern not just for international competitiveness but also for Scotland's workforce in a wider world where many routine and repetitive tasks will be automated. Scotland's 'labour intensive' employers will go to the wall.

It is precisely these problems which Labour's activist industrial policy seeks to address. It aims to use three main levers: public procurement, public ownership and public investment. All would, to a greater or lesser degree, be incompatible with the EU's competition rules which disallow state aid, state 'monopolies' and interference in the labour market. EU rules would equally prohibit the use of public procurement as a tool to require union recognition or local sourcing – steel for infrastructure or pharmaceuticals for the NHS.

Even mandatory sectoral collective

bargaining would run foul of the latest decision by the EU/EFTA Court of Justice in the Holship case (November 2016) in defence of freedom of establishment. This ruled that the Norwegian government's dock labour scheme was acting illegally in seeking to set uniform wage rates and that the LO union federation was acting illegally in seeking to enforce them.

It is for this reason that the Labour manifesto correctly notes the need for access to, but not membership of, the EU single market.

In terms of free movement, however, there is another and perhaps more compelling reason for ending with the EU's requirement for free movement. This is that enforces an immigration system that is institutionally racist. Those from the EU are 'free to come' – even though usually driven by economic compulsion. Those from anywhere else are not. The wives, husbands, children of those settled in Scotland from Africa and Asia are excluded.

Today, EU governments have a legal obligation to search for and deport 'illegals'. The number of such deportations run to tens of thousands annually. Under EU regulation 2016/1624 the EU Border and Coastguard Agency, FrontEx, is to take responsibility for uniform enforcement across the EU. Last year, it forcibly deported 10,000. This year the figure is likely to reach 20,000. If your skin is black or brown, you are suspect. Those who support the EU's free movement should reflect on this. It is in its application a 'whites only' policy and is today felt as such by the one in ten of existing Scots who came to this country from Asia and Africa.

This is why the Labour Party is correct to stress that its policy will not discriminate on the basis of race. Outside the EU's single market, there will be the opportunity to establish non-discriminatory labour market regulation integrated with sectoral collective bargaining to redress current power imbalances. Equally, there will be the freedom to develop an industrial strategy that

will invest in high quality jobs and stop the haemorrhaging of industrial employment. It is precisely the result of *not* having such a policy that so many of these manufacturing jobs have been lost.

We should remember the neo-liberal principles of EU law - well expressed by the European Trades Union Congress in 2012:

Running as a red line through the programme of Economic Governance is the idea of turning wages into the main instrument of adjustment: currency devaluations (which are no longer possible inside the Euro Area) are to be replaced by a devaluation of pay in the form of deflationary wage cuts. To achieve this wage 'flexibility', labour market institutions which prevent wages from falling are perceived as being a 'rigidity' which should be eliminated.

This is the real logic for the EU's free movement. We need a non-racist immigration policy instead – one in which the trade union movement has a say and which matches our economic needs.

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Breaking bad Brexit

Mike Danson sees dangers ahead in any kind of Brexit

In April this year, the Policy Forum panel of the Scottish Economic Society addressed the implications of Brexit for Scotland. The consensus across the hundred international participants was that withdrawal from the European Union, and the single market especially, would overwhelmingly have negative consequences for the economy. There were no voices of dissent either publicly or privately in this regard, with all views across the spectrum of political economy clear about the impacts on workers, businesses, migrants and communities. A later conference of academics, politicians, policymakers, and business and civic society leaders at Heriot-Watt University in mid-May reached the same conclusions, spotlighting the imminent and ongoing problems for agriculture, education, financial services, rural communities and export companies especially. These meetings were informed by in-depth and intelligent analyses of labour markets, international trade, public finance and investment in particular and of the economy generally.

Presentations by trade unionists, farmers, employers and entrepreneurs complemented the modelling and commentaries on Scotland's future from leading economists and were consistent with the approach of the Scottish Government as outlined by Michael Russell, the Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe. The issues identified highlight that 180,000 EU nationals – most of them workers – are living in Scotland; 115,000 workers here are employed in EU firms; half of all international exports are dependent on EU markets; and many more jobs are in international companies attracted here to access the EU single market. Beyond this, many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as branch plants are intrinsically embedded into

supply chains that stretch across the continent, able to realise economies of scale within the single market. Also, the Scottish economy has seen advantages from access to mobile workers from the enlarged EU in the period after 2004 which has allowed a change in the labour processes employed in food and drink, hospitality and agriculture industries in particular, benefiting rural Scotland and areas of sustained out-migration by offering the opportunity to retain and enhance value added here.

Against this background, all estimates of the implications of leaving the EU – as measured in terms of GDP, employment, and real wages – are of adverse effects on the Scottish economy. There is no avoiding a continuation of the initial negative results of the Brexit vote with increased inflation, falling real wages, job losses and postponed investment. In the longer term, even with standard remedial measures, GDP would fall under a Norwegian-style ('soft Brexit') relationship with the EU by between 2.0% and 3.1%, real wages by between 2.9% and 4.3%, and jobs by 1.2-1.8%; none of these is a trivial figure. A 'hard Brexit' would see GDP declining by about 5.3%, real wages by 7.2% and employment by 3.2% on average. There are no forecasts from any credible agency that do not offer similarly pessimistic scenarios, even on optimistic assumptions. The Norway model would mean continued membership of the four single markets – goods, services, capital and labour – but with no opportunity to shape EU rules and regulations, though contributions to the EU budget would be reduced by about 20%. The 'hard Brexit' or WTO (World Trade Organisation) model would mean a prolonged period of complex trade negotiations, reducing EU budget contributions and 'freedom' from the single market restrictions.

Considering standard measures of labour market flexibility shows that national, rather than EU, regulation dominates working conditions across developed countries. Therefore, Britain, with one of the most flexible labour markets in the OECD and the least regulated in the EU, itself has decided over the last 40 years to adopt such a neoliberal regime. This confirms both that workers are better protected everywhere else in the European Union that we are leaving, and that our current competitive advantages in securing inward investment and competitiveness are apparently reliant on being at the extremes of European labour market flexibility. The out-of-work benefits for those who retire or lose their jobs in Britain are poorer than any of our neighbours in the west and north of Europe and poverty for workers higher, again pointing to the EU as not being the constraint on better conditions for the working class of Scotland and Britain but something more nationally driven. Leaving the EU is indeed no guarantee of improved conditions for workers.

A major element in the Brexit debate and vote was around the impact of immigration on the wages of UK workers; reviews of the evidence (see footnote 2) show these are relatively small in aggregate. However, the analysis hints that low-wage workers may tend to lose out while medium and higher paid workers gain overall because of the segmented structure of Britain economy and labour market. While there may be substitution for low skilled 'native' workers, Bell and Elliott in a recent paper for the Royal Society of Edinburgh concluded that: '... the effects of EU immigration on employment and unemployment among UK natives do not seem to be significant'. Any demands on the public purse are also small from EU migrants with an expectation that they contribute in net terms in the

short term and markedly positively over the years.

In summary, membership of the EU and especially of the single market for labour has been benefiting Britain's economy allowing GDP and real wages to grow – other things being equal, the reason for stagnating and falling living standards for most being down to the austerity policies of the Westminster governments and establishment. If anything, the EU has offered some protection and lower limits to what Britain could do to its own. Going forward, we are asked to put faith in these national institutions to seek trade deals that will enhance workers' rights and impose minimum labour market conditions?

So, is it just a matter of comparing the Norway model losses of a soft Brexit against the opportunities offered by the WTO model where the negative effects can be balanced by '... the benefits of international trade whilst simultaneously making sure that the workers share in the benefits from trading and are not exploited ... reject[ing] any involvement in trade deals that threaten our public services like the NHS opening them up to competition from US and threatening them with legal action as would happen with TTIP' as Neil Findlay and Alex Neil MSPs asserted in the November/December 2016 edition of *Scottish Left Review*? This appears to be the promise held out by those on the left who favour Brexit, of whatever form, including Labour under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn who, according to the director of the Scottish Centre on European Relations, 'shares the delusion that there is a 'softer' Brexit that gives full single market access while not respecting free movement of people'.

In brief, there are three basic scenarios facing Scotland and Britain: remaining in the EU, a 'soft' or a 'hard' Brexit. The former is the current position with all its flaws and needs for reform but,

as revealed above, most of the economic issues impacting on workers – natives and migrants here – should be laid at the door of successive UK governments and their neoliberal approaches rather than as inherent to the EU itself. A 'soft' Brexit will lead to Britain continuing in much the same way as now but with reduced support to regions and industries and a reduction in inward investment. The scope to pursue renationalisation of the utilities, railways, ferries etc., to improve workers' rights and introduce minimum requirements into public contracts would not be changed under a Norwegian or Swiss model of Brexit. Already we can find nationalised industries across the EU, much better employment and trades unions rights, innovative and inclusive forms of public procurement across the EU; the constraints on development and redistribution are to be found in Westminster and the City, not Brussels and Berlin.

That leads onto the apparent model that Labour and some commentators in the *Scottish Left Review* believe can be achieved with a 'hard Brexit' – an economy with trade deals negotiated where Britain is free to impose conditions that would not be possible within the EU umbrella. The reality would be somewhat different: without the tariff-free European Economic Area and without the weight of the powerful EU negotiators and market area to secure preferential deals, Britain would be disadvantaged from the outset. Without economies of scale and scope offered by membership of integrated supply chains, with further devaluation against major currencies meaning imported higher input costs, and excluded from access to funding and participation in networks and collaborations of innovation – funded by billions of R&D euros from the EU – Britain would be deficient in securing trade deals and markets on our terms. These would not be the conditions that strengthen the bargaining position to demand more favourable

deals, where we set the standards and rights. Rather they would suggest a weakened and desperate economy trying to persuade trading partners across the world that they could overcome the higher costs of production created by withdrawal from the single market by identifying economies of scale and somehow quickly initiating a new industrial revolution; alternatively, the option is to pursue autarky or economic self-sufficiency, in a mass self-delusion that the country can achieve a reborn manufacturing sector alongside retaining its current expenditure on maintaining its post-colonial and imperialist world position. Given the legacy of low levels of workplace innovation and investment, ongoing low rates of productivity, high levels of poverty and inequality contrasting with offshored wealth, this is not the position to start making promises of jam tomorrow.

Brexit will hurt women, the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged communities the most, according to a recent Scottish Women's Convention report, and any debate must recognise this before suggesting a hard line, though even a soft leaving will damage all. Aberdeen will be the hardest hit city in Britain, and all Scottish cities will suffer. Working with progressives across the continent to reform the EU offers socialism, not a retreat into isolationism.

Mike Danson is professor of Enterprise Policy at Heriot Watt University

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Where stands the cause of independence now?

John Bratton argues the independence movement can learn from Corbyn

The summer recess is a time for reflection. Jeremy Corbyn is using the break to campaign in Scotland in constituencies where the SNP hold wafer-thin majorities. Nicola Sturgeon is rebooting the SNP's approach to independence. In doing so, she should reflect on the real story of the general election: the ideological shift in British politics. For three decades Tory and Labour administrations have peddled the falsehood that 'there is no alternative' (TINA) to the Anglo-neoliberal model. Labour's manifesto 'for the many, not the few' demonstrates that a progressive left-of-centre agenda can resonate with working class voters.

Although the June results should not be interpreted as majority opposition to independence, the SNP hierarchy and the wider pro-independence movement must learn from Corbyn's policies, which, in contrast to the SNP's, addressed many working class concerns and connected to young voters. As Carolyn Leckie observed in the last *Scottish Left Review*, in the general election 64% of voters in Scotland voted for progressive manifestos offered by the British Labour Party, the SNP and the Greens. The campaign to deliver a majority 'yes' vote must build on those 1.7m plus voters. In this context, the case for independence has to be advanced around four central arguments.

The first is economic. The broad left politics of the 1970s campaigned for an alternative economic strategy as a counter to corporate capitalism. By comparison, Corbyn's raft of policies is not that 'radical' but they are a welcomed alternative to further privatisation. The Scottish Parliament needs additional fiscal tools - corporation, dividend and wealth taxes - to mitigate the impact of neo-liberalism on the social fabric of society. It needs its own currency

and central bank, and a National Investment Bank (NIB) to fund investment in social housing, public transport and renewable energy. A NIB would also fund an industrial strategy that helps SMEs innovate and improve productivity. The onus is on the pro-independence movement to provide a convincing economic strategy that is environmentally sustainable, socially just, and can deliver high quality public services: a vision of democratic socialism fit for the twenty first century.

The second argument relates to social justice. Neo-liberalism is more than just an economic system. It has a political and ideological agenda: a minimalist state and the privatisation of the self. The Grenfell Tower disaster is a totemic testimony of deregulation and a culture that stigmatises and marginalises the poor. Social class continues to determine life chances. Disclosure of the BBC's pay scales exposed gender pay inequality, but it also revealed class and race inequality. Few top earners at the BBC are working class or Black or Asian. Class dictates children's futures and, at the other end of the age spectrum, it accounts for decades-long inequalities in areas such as health and life expectancy between rich and poor pensioners.

The broken neo-liberal model has created a largely deregulated, non-union and atomised labour market. The SNP hierarchy needs to acknowledge the connection between reduced levels of union membership, collective bargaining and growing social inequalities. The left case for independence must espouse policies that will strengthen workplace unionism, fix a dysfunctional labour market and help redistribute wealth through pay bargaining, and progressive taxation.

The third argument concerns Brexit. The British Labour Party and the

'yes' movement are divided. The pro-independence movement needs clarity and unity on Scotland's position within, or outwith the European Union. Membership of the single market and the customs union – the Norwegian model – is a desirable option if coupled with a promise to hold a plebiscite for full EU membership once Scotland is a sovereign state.

Finally, there is the democratic argument. A cacophonous chorus of voices have pronounced that indyref2 be taken 'off the table'. But, however the unionists parties spin it, the 2016 Scottish parliamentary election, the council elections and the June result has given the Scottish Government a 'triple-lock' democratic mandate to hold a referendum. Post-Brexit, there is another good reason for a second referendum before 2020. The British state is facing an unprecedented crisis. Naomi Klein has written that neo-conservatives wield power through 'the shock doctrine': using people's disorientation following a major crisis to push through right-wing measures. While the Tories are in disarray, the SNP leadership and the wider pro-independence movement should capitalise on the political crisis to advance the argument that independence is the road to a progressive, democratic Scottish state.

We need a manifesto 'for the many' that sets out a radical programme, just as audacious and transformative as the reforms undertaken by Atlee's (1945-1951) Labour Government. A manifesto that addresses multiple crisis, that meets the needs of Scotland's working-class majority, and that can inspire and win a majority for independence.

John Bratton is emeritus professor, co-author of 'Capitalism and Classical Social Theory', convenor of Yes Stockbridge and a member of Unite.

Reclaiming our economy

Richard Leonard outlines bold plans to reconfigure economic relations in Scotland

A radical industrial strategy for Scotland has been launched by the Scottish Labour Party which aims to address some of the long term and underlying weaknesses of the Scottish economy. The strategy identifies the production gap as well as the productivity gap and so the case for a properly resourced Scottish Investment Bank, a new approach to pension funds and a managed reduction in working time.

It points to the crisis in business research and development funding and the overly narrow manufacturing and so export base: ten companies in Scotland account for 45% of all business R&D with fifteen companies account for 30% of all international exports. And, it signals the manifest and immediate challenge of automation, climate change and Brexit while advocating a new era of regional policy, of economic planning for full employment with unions playing a full part, and practical steps to open up the corridors of economic power to women.

One recurring theme is the need to tackle the growing centralisation and the over concentration of economic ownership. Scotland increasingly looks like a vulnerable branch plant economy, with 35% of our economic and industrial base overseas owned. Economic ownership matters, not least because with ownership comes power. If we are to achieve a redistribution of wealth and power to the many from the few, it will require decisive action to back it up.

So, it is time we had a Scottish Investment Bank worthy of the name, working as a pro-active agent of economic change, investing patient capital and taking strategic public interest stakes. It is time we had a public procurement policy which was properly planned in order to maximise the benefit to local

supply chains and good quality local jobs. Most immediately, if there is to be a major house building programme, redoubled investment in non-carbon technologies or significant public transport upgrades, then we need to educate, train, invest, and critically, plan to lock in the economic benefits.

And, it is time we looked at different frameworks and ownership structures in order to build up resilience to takeovers and build in greater democracy and accountability to the economic system.

One example, featured in the strategy, is the forceful case for promoting direct worker ownership. It is proposed that in the event of a change in ownership, or redundancy and closure, workers should have a statutory and preferential right to buy the business they are working in. Thus, not the conversion of public ownership to cooperative ownership, but the transfer of private to cooperative ownership.

In Italy, such a provision was established as far back as 1985 with the 'Marcora Law'. Here state funding matches a contribution from the workers themselves. Over the last three decades, over 250 employee-owned businesses have been established this way, most as worker co-operatives, and over 9,000 jobs have been saved. The co-operative economy in Emilia Romagna in Northern Italy alone gives 80,000 workers an ownership stake

In France, the Social and Solidarity Economy Law passed in 2014 gives legal recognition and incentives to workers to buy their business when it is to be sold off. The social economy in France in which cooperatives play a part is well established. And, in the Basque country in Spain, Mondragon has been a shining beacon of

co-operative ownership for six decades. Over 83,000 workers are employed in over 250 worker-owned enterprises, where surpluses are reinvested rather than redistributed to short-term speculative shareholders. As a result, during the current economic slump jobs have been retained and wage solidarity has been safeguarded.

So why shouldn't this part of the world - which was home to the Fenwick weavers, where Robert Owen wrote 'A New View of Society' and established New Lanark - set itself the vision of becoming 'the Mondragon of the North', a northern European beacon of cooperation?

If we can have a community right to buy land, why can't we have workers' rights to buy business? It will mean a better resourced and a more powerful Cooperative Development Scotland. But why shouldn't those who create the wealth have a right to own the wealth they create? There are sound industrial and economic reasons to promote worker ownership to boost employment and to forge an alternative to footloose capitalism. But there are underlying political and social reasons too.

A century ago GDH Cole declared that if democracy 'is good in the State and local government, it is good ... in industry also. Indeed, only in an industrial democracy can a truly democratic society be built'. We need economic as well as political democracy, with labour hiring capital instead of capital simply hiring labour. A future based on equality and common ownership is something worth striving for, and it is a future which working people all too often encountering drudgery, alienation and exploitation at work - will campaign and vote for.

Richard Leonard is Scottish Labour's Economy Spokesperson and Central Scotland MSP

For a people's ScotRail

Stuart MacLeod sets out a plan for better rail transport in Scotland

ScotRail hasn't had a particularly good press these last few months though there is a positive story to tell. The franchise, managed by Transport Scotland (part of Scottish Government) specified a lot of positive improvements expected from the new operators, including better passenger facilities, new rolling stock, staff and wider community benefits. The successful bidders, Dutch Railways-owned, Abellio, came in with high expectations among many rail lobby groups. Over two years on, it seems to have gone sour with calls to strip Abellio of the franchise. Last autumn, in response to poor reliability, thousands signed a petition calling for that. The new managing director is a well-respected figure in the industry but has a major job on his hands in turning round ScotRail's fortunes.

Scottish Government's transport minister, Humza Yousaf, announced he is looking at radical alternatives when the franchise comes up for renewal. Speaking to *The Sunday Herald* in early July this year, he said: 'We have narrowed down the possible vehicles that could potentially take forward a public sector bid. Transport Scotland are now working on gathering further evidence and I will narrow down the options further once that exercise is complete. The Scottish Government is committed to creating a level playing field for rail franchising in the future'.

Previous campaigns for public ownership of rail have come up against difficulties with EU legislation, which makes full public ownership of rail difficult, as well as UK law which enforces franchising of the rail network. So one option which the Scottish Government has been looking at is creating a public sector body, or using an existing one such as CalMac Ferries, to mount a bid for the franchise. This is fraught with difficulty. For one thing, the typical cost of mounting a franchise bid is around £10m, quite apart from the preparatory costs of creating or adapting a public sector body equipped to prepare a bid. A second issue would be potential legal challenges from other bidders, who would inevitably claim unfair advantage was being given to the

public sector bidder.

The option of simply taking back the franchise into public ownership when the franchise expires - there is a break clause which allows for termination half way through the contract, but again it is a legal minefield - could be seen as contravening both EU and British laws. However, the Tyne and Wear Metro and the West Midlands trams (Midland Metro) were both recently taken back into public ownership, without so much of a murmur from government or EU. Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) commented: 'the move will enable TfWM, which is the transport arm of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), to plough millions of pounds of future profits back into expanding the network'.

There are two new factors at work which may help the prospects of a publicly-owned ScotRail. One, ironically, is Brexit. If Britain leaves, clearly the directives on competitive procurement need no longer apply. There would, of course, be the not insignificant issue of British government policy. Whilst managing the ScotRail franchise has been devolved to Scotland, franchising policy hasn't and as things stand the Scottish Government would require Westminster approval, by changes to the 1993 Railways Act, to be able to run ScotRail without having to put the contract out to tender. A few months ago that might have seemed unlikely. But now, with the distinct possibility of Labour forming the next government - with a strong commitment to rail public ownership - it starts to seem possible. Whilst the Tories will do everything possible to avoid what could well be - for them - a catastrophic election, it doesn't need many by-election losses for them to lose their tenuous hold on power, even with DUP support. A Westminster Labour government within the next three years is far from being a pipe dream

Labour's stated policy has been to take franchises back into public ownership upon expiry. The responsible body could be Network Rail, which is government-owned and responsible for Britain's railway infrastructure. If the

current government was forced to call an early general election, franchises such as Great Western could be among the first to return to the public sector. Others could include CrossCountry, which operates to Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen.

If the Scottish Government was able to take up the option to end the franchise (at the half-way stage in 2020) that would allow time to prepare for the transition assuming Labour wins in the next two to three years. Even with a Tory government in Westminster, particularly with a slender majority, allowing Scotland to secede from the 1993 Railways Act could be possible, but infinitely more difficult.

If Labour is in power, committed to public ownership of rail, a lot of careful thought is going to be needed to ensure that this does not mark a retreat to the old British Rail (BR). This is particularly an issue for Scotland. It is hard to imagine the Scottish Government being happy with its existing powers over rail being handed back to what would in effect be a London-based BR. Currently, ScotRail works in alliance with Network Rail, which is still a Britain-wide organisation ultimately responsible to the London-based Department for Transport, overseen by a Tory secretary of state and subject to the whims of HM Treasury.

It's easy for the left to see 'public ownership' as self-evidently a good thing, though some might argue that a tightly-specified franchise (such as the current ScotRail) delivers much of what you'd want to see. The reality is that a publicly-owned railway, if done properly, could re-invest any surplus into the railway and develop a much stronger ethos of social and economic responsibility. Potentially, it could empower both workers and users of ScotRail, offering real control instead of mere 'consultative' power.

A starting point for a 'People's ScotRail' should be full devolution of both ScotRail - the train operator - and Network Rail, as infrastructure operator - to the Scottish Government. That, in effect, means one organisation responsible for both train operations

and infrastructure, taking the current 'alliance' – in which there is one managing director for both ScotRail and Network Rail – much further. Again, under current EU law this is difficult to achieve in full. But potentially, post-Brexit and with Corbyn in No10, it could become a distinct possibility.

Going beyond the traditional approach of state ownership will be a challenge facing a People's ScotRail. Integrating existing train operations with Network Rail will be challenging but not impossible. Retaining good relationships with Network Rail south of the border will be important, with access to some of Network Rail's expertise and resources when needed.

But what sort of public enterprise will the new ScotRail be? Scotland has a tradition of public ownership in the transport sector. Lothian Buses is owned by four local authorities with Edinburgh having a 91% share. It runs a fleet of 650 buses and employs over 2000 staff. Last year, it made a profit before tax of nearly £12m, £6.6m of which went to its owning local authorities. Not a penny went to individual shareholders. Its vision is 'to be an integral part of the future success of Edinburgh and the Lothians by providing world-class, environmentally-friendly and socially-inclusive transport'. Strathclyde Passenger Transport owns the Glasgow Subway, a unique example of a non-franchised vertically-integrated and publicly-owned railway. CalMac ferries operate 29 vessels providing essential services to the Highland and Island communities and is owned by the Scottish Government. It returns an annual sum back to its owners. So the idea of public ownership of transport services is ingrained in Scotland's politics. Buses, ferries and the subway – as well as water - are all examples of successful, socially-responsible businesses providing essential services and contributing to the wider good.

A People's ScotRail would have the opportunity to create a new kind of railway which is part of the fabric of Scotland's economy, culture and communities. It could build on the positive work already being done with communities, supported by both ScotRail and Transport Scotland. Adapting, Lothian Buses' 'vision statement' it could be the pioneer for a

'world-class, environmentally-friendly and socially-inclusive railway' which is fully integrated with buses and ferry operations. But it needs to go beyond nice words and become something which both workers and passengers can feel proud of, something that they are part of.

Structure and governance will be crucial. There are models worth looking at within Britain such as Glas Cymru, the publicly-owned water company for Wales. Within Scotland, Lothian Buses has many useful lessons to offer. But finding a model which incorporates both worker and user involvement within a framework set by the Scottish Government is a big but exciting challenge. There are a number of options.

One approach is for ScotRail to become an arms-length company owned by the Scottish Government, enjoying a close and positive relationship with Transport Scotland, which would set its overall objectives. However, it must have commercial and operational freedom within an agreed framework. Railways can sometimes suffer from being too narrowly-focused, stressing operational over wider social and economic outcomes. ScotRail could have a strategic board, accountable to the Scottish transport minister, with a carefully selected (by open recruitment) board which reflects the nation's diversity and brings high-level skills and expertise to ScotRail. Not only should these include transport, engineering, financial and commercial skills but also backgrounds in sustainability, community development, strategic planning and culture. Above all, both users and workers should have representation. Employee representatives could be elected by their colleagues. The ScotRail managing director should be a member of the strategic board and carry out its' instructions.

Below that, an executive board comprising executive directors should be responsible for the general management, implementing government and strategic board objectives. Key roles should include Operations, Infrastructure, Customer, Commercial, Sustainability, and Safety. A strong national focus will be essential, with close relationships with other train operators that also serve Scotland as

well as Network Rail and Department for Transport south of the border, a strong focus within Scotland is equally important. There are specific needs within the central belt, the Highlands and other parts of Scotland which require a regionalised management supported by stakeholder boards which include both staff and community representation as well as local authorities and business interests.

There is a more radical model which could embed real worker and user participation in ScotRail through a co-operative approach. This could be seen as a more risky strategy for the Scottish Government as it involves ceding day-to-day responsibility to an outside body. However, a co-operative ScotRail operating within a broad framework laid down by Government and reviewed on a regular basis, could provide the right balance between public accountability and an entrepreneurial approach in which workers and users are the owners. This would be a challenge for the unions who would have to change their own adversarial culture and sit down as, effectively, part owners of the business. Employees could automatically have shares in the co-operative while users – anyone who lives or works in Scotland – could again buy shares in the business. But, being a co-op, you still only get one vote no matter how many shares you own. Both workers and employees would have a very direct stake in the success of ScotRail.

A People's ScotRail is within our grasp. By bringing the railways of Scotland back together again with clear management focus, there is potential for cost savings and avoidance of duplication. Social ownership will ensure that any profits are kept within Scotland and used to re-invest in creating a modern, accessible railway that meets the nation's needs. By developing new forms of democratic social ownership, rail will not be for the few, but the many. The trick will be finding the right way forward to achieve what could be a new form of public enterprise.

Stuart Macleod is a pseudonym of an experienced writer, researcher and commentator on the railway industry in Britain.

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More than no monarchy

Graham Smith sketches out what a modern republic would look like

Republicanism is a principled objection to hereditary power that stems from a clear belief in equality and in good government – government that is good for all of us and which must mean representative of, and accountable to, all of us. Yes, the royals are up to no good and the monarchy is secretive and corrupt – yet that’s a symptom of a rotten system and it is the system that is at the core of the republican message.

The monarchy is a source of considerable prime ministerial power, power that – Theresa May’s predicament notwithstanding – makes the PM one of the most powerful leaders in the democratic world. It is this centralisation of power that the left and right should be equally concerned about. When power is exercised by so few, too few people are represented by the decision makers and so the interests of many are ignored. The power of those who are unrepresented in Downing Street is limited and their voices muted. And, at the heart of this centralisation of power lies the Crown: the source of political power and authority. The Crown’s powers are in the hands of the prime minister, and the whole system is skewed toward government being in full control of the political agenda.

What’s the alternative? Well, it’s not that difficult to work out: a parliamentary democracy that is genuine in its democratic credentials in practice as much as on paper. If we go back to basics, re-think parliament not as sovereign but as the representative body of a sovereign people, then we can imagine some simple ways to radically improve how our politics works.

The essence of democracy is that we are equal citizens with the right to govern our own lives. So we elect representatives who are relied upon to work in the best interests of

their community and the nation as a whole. And, they’re accountable through regular elections.

Parliament then is the starting point, the cornerstone and the foundation of our democracy. In the family of institutions that make up our constitution, it should be paramount, deferring only to the will of the people. Rather than taking on an air of pomposity and grandeur, we should cast our parliament as a simple assembly of representatives, there to do a job.

So it is time we renegotiated the contract between the people and our representatives. That contract, in the form of a written constitution, should be clear about who has what power, how they got it and how we get rid of them. And a new written constitution can set limits on the power of politicians, government and parliament alike, such as saying they can’t change the constitution without a referendum, can’t call a referendum on the whim of a prime minister and can’t rob us of our hard won rights.

Let’s take a step back and look at the system as a whole: a written constitution, a contract between people and parliament; a fully elected parliament; a government without Crown powers but with limited power – enough power to govern effectively but not to govern unchallenged; a shift in power from government to parliament, underscored by an elected upper house the government doesn’t rely on for its majority and can’t rely on for support.

Here, I would emphasise that a government has a mandate to govern – but it is the whole of parliament that has a mandate to legislate. So if government wants to pass a law it must persuade and convince MPs, not instruct them.

And then we come to the role of head of state. The job of head of

state is important and it needs to be done by someone who is genuinely independent of the government and above day-to-day party politics. That can’t be the Queen, because all she can do is what she’s told by the Prime Minister. And it can’t be the Speaker of the House of Commons either, because he’s already got an important job, but one that’s not independent of MPs.

This role is one of defending the constitution by acting as a non-partisan check on the power of government and parliament, as the president does in Ireland and elsewhere. The president can also steer a country through political crises and deadlocks, as we’ve seen across Europe over the past decade. An elected head of state can do all this independently, and also represent the nation as we truly are, speaking for us and to us at times of celebration and tragedy, in a way the Queen never can.

Republicanism leaves no room for a secretive and corrupt monarchy, but a republic is so much more than an absence of a royal house. The democratic republican cause is the cause of democratic reform taken to its final and logical conclusion: a fully reform constitution founded on the simple idea that we are an equal, sovereign people.

Graham Smith is head of Republic, the UK’s national republican campaign. Republic is fast growing into a serious campaign for change. Republic is routinely in the press, supports local campaigns and holds national events around the country. In November, Joan Smith will be delivering the annual John Campbell Lecture on the threat King Charles poses to our democracy (see www.republic.org.uk)

Make Britain part of the non-nuclear club

Arthur West surveys the possibilities after the signing of a new treaty

On 7 July 2017, negotiators representing 122 countries agreed a treaty which seeks to lead to the destruction of all nuclear weapons and the permanent prohibition of their use. The treaty is called the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and it has now been formally adopted at the United Nations. It will now be open for signature by any United Nations member state from 20 September, and it will go into international law when it is officially signed by 50 countries. In the words of Elaine G. Whyte Gomez, the Costa Rican Ambassador to the United Nations who chaired the conference which agreed the treaty: 'The world has been waiting for this legal norm for 70 years'.

The vote on 7 July was 122 countries in favour of the treaty and only one against -the Netherlands. Unfortunately, there was no participation in the negotiations by the world's nine nuclear armed states including Britain. Within Scottish CND and the wider Scottish peace movement, there is no surprise that Britain and other nuclear weapon states have not backed the treaty. However, what the British government and the other nuclear weapon states cannot ignore is that there is a widespread acceptance and support for the treaty across the world. Scottish CND and our partner organisations will be using this international support for the treaty to increase public pressure on the Government to review its position.

As Beatrice Finn, executive director of the Geneva-based International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), said: 'This treaty is a strong categorical prohibition of nuclear weapons and is really rooted in humanitarian law. It provides a path for nuclear-armed states to join. We are not necessarily expecting them to sign the treaty right now, but it is a good starting

point for changing perceptions'.

Within Scottish CND, we also take heart from other treaties such as those that banned biological and chemical weapons, land mines and cluster bombs. There is now clear evidence that that shows how these types of weapons once regarded as acceptable are now widely reviled. Scottish CND is of the firm view that whilst the treaty will not immediately eliminate nuclear weapons, it can over time further de-legitimise nuclear weapons and strengthen political and legal norms against their use. The treaty is also very timely and relevant given present day tensions between the US and North Korea.

Supporters of nuclear weapons often use the idea of deterrence to support their position. Deterrence is based on the idea that the only way to prevent an attack is to assure the destruction of the attacker. However, again as Beatrice Finn from ICAN has said: 'Deterrence theory only works if you are ready to use nuclear weapons otherwise the other side will call your bluff. Deterrence is also based on a perception that leaders are rational and sane'.

It is time to applaud those countries who have voted for this important treaty. It is also time to use the treaty as a further mechanism to rid our country and our world of the scourge of nuclear weapons. The force and power of any modern day nuclear weapons exchange would not only affect the attacking country and the country being attacked.

Organisations such as Medact, an NGO of medics against war, weapons and environmental destruction, have pointed out nuclear weapons explosions anywhere in the world will have extreme and long lasting environmental consequences as well as damaging agricultural productivity.

Scottish CND and the wider peace

movement in Scotland will be working hard to pressurise individual politicians and political parties to support this very important Nuclear Weapons Global Ban Treaty. A small team of activists from Scotland attended the negotiations as civic society representatives and they are currently reporting back at various meetings which are taking place in different parts of the country. Scottish CND has also set up a special working group so that work on the treaty is given sufficient focus within our overall activities. It is also to be hoped that those who claim to take a multi-lateralist view in relation to the abolition of nuclear weapons will find themselves able to support the treaty.

The treaty is truly ground breaking as it has the potential not only to outlaw nuclear weapons use but would also outlaw the testing, production, possession and transport of them. Additionally the very important message to nuclear armed nations is that the treaty outlines a process for destroying stockpiles and enforcing commitments made to remain free of nuclear weapons. It is sad that the current British Government remains disengaged from such a positive development which is supported by so many countries. However, political pressure and the speed of events can mean that things change very rapidly in today's world.

Arthur West is chair of Scottish CND

Making of a mess: orange and green, and red, white and blue

Brian Campfield examines the underlying forces of Northern Ireland's political impasse

The current political fall-out in Northern Ireland, triggered by Martin McGuinness' resignation as Deputy First Minister in January 2017, is the result of a deterioration in relationships caused primarily by the DUP stubbornness on a number of important issues which Sinn Fein claimed related to previously agreed elements of the Good Friday and subsequent agreements involving the North's political parties and the British and Irish Governments. These issues included dealing with the legacy of the past, a Bill of Rights and an Irish Language Act.

The issue precipitating McGuinness' resignation was the scandal of the Renewable Heating Incentive (RHI) scheme and 'the arrogance of the DUP' was cited as the last straw. Both British and Irish Governments also bear a significant responsibility for the crisis and should not be permitted to wash their hands of the problem by categorising the impasse as a result of a 'failure to agree' on the part of local parties.

In the period leading up to McGuinness' resignation, Sinn Fein was under pressure within its heartlands about what nationalists regarded as the DUP's contempt for both Sinn Fein and its constituency. It needs to be remembered there is a small but vociferous Republican opposition to Sinn Fein and Sinn Fein's inability to deliver its full agenda has rendered it increasingly vulnerable to attacks from a variety of political groups within the Republican community.

In addition, the problems created for the devolved administration by the Westminster austerity has compounded the problems. While the Northern Ireland devolved administration had no say in the level of the Block Grant, Sinn Fein

did engage in cliff edge negotiations over a number of years, part of which involved challenging the austerity impact on the North. However the British Government made no real concessions.

In some respects, Sinn Fein's capacity to stand up to the Tory austerity was undermined by its 'power' sharing colleagues in the DUP. The DUP, voted against much, but not all, of the austerity measures in Westminster, but once these were adapted, they argued for the application of austerity to Northern Ireland on the basis that it was part of Britain.

The pro- and anti-austerity political fault lines in the North were effectively drawn along unionist/nationalist lines with Sinn Fein and the SDLP taking a more anti-austerity stance and the various unionist parties not prepared to take a stand against the British Government. On a number of occasions, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, in cooperation with the Scottish and Wales TUCs, had some initial success in forging an alliance of the three devolved governments in opposition to the financial settlements for the devolved regions.

Sinn Fein's association with implementing the Tory austerity agenda also left it vulnerable to oversimplistic criticism by some on the left that they were pro- austerity in the North and anti -austerity in the Republic of Ireland (RoI). Sinn Fein weathered these storms, using the argument that a return to Direct Rule would hand all decision making over to a right-wing Tory government and it was able to demonstrate that some mitigation of the effects of austerity, especially in the case of welfare reform and the bedroom tax had been secured.

In the Northern Ireland Assembly

election in March 2017, Sinn Fein made major advances and the DUP emerged much weakened and with less power. The DUP response to the RHI scandal and its initially contemptuous dismissal of the case for an Irish Language Act mobilised voters in the nationalist communities to come out in large numbers to vote.

The next test was the snap Westminster election called by Theresa May in June. The DUP topped the poll increasing their seats to 10 in an election which witnessed the further demise of the SDLP and the Ulster Unionist Party. The DUP advance in this election was, in many respects, the result of the unionist community's reaction to the Sinn Fein success in the March Assembly election.

And, thus it goes. The DUP, staggering after the results in March, were on their feet with renewed confidence - something they would parade in full view as May now depended on the 10 DUP Westminster MPs for her survival. The problem with the Tory/DUP deal is not the financial concessions in Northern Ireland's favour but that the DUP is now central to maintaining the austerity agenda across all of Britain.

These complications have been compounded by the Brexit referendum outcome. The Sinn Fein narrative on the Good Friday Agreement pointed its supporters towards an eventual united Ireland, within the European Union, with the disappearance of all manifestations of the 'border'. However, the position of the British government on the single market and the customs union raised the prospect of border controls on both people and goods. This is seen as a major set-back to the goal of a united Ireland and the greater integration

of the two economies in Ireland and the development of an all island economy.

The position of the DUP, always opposed to membership of the EU, has further exacerbated the divisions between it and Sinn Fein. Sinn Fein's main demand now is for special status for Northern Ireland, within the EU, while the region remains part of Britain. However, Brexit issue will not be the main obstacle to a return to the power sharing devolved administration.

Brexit has also created a narrative within mainstream politics in the RoI which has elevated the border question to a higher plane with even Fine Gael, the main government party, talking about a united Ireland, something which is extremely unusual and virtually unprecedented. But the primary concern within the RoI political establishment is not the peace process, given its *laissez faire* approach to resolving recent political stalemates in the North, but the potential impact on the economy in the South arising from Brexit. A significant percentage of RoI trade is with Britain (especially agricultural exports). The prospect of the imposition of trade barriers and tariffs on Irish exports to Britain and the potential loss of jobs is exercising the minds of everyone in the Republic, including the union movement.

If Brexit does result in a negative impact on jobs then the RoI Government will be forced to seek assistance or special measures from the EU, given its special position relating to it being the only EU country with a land border with Britain and a comparatively high dependence on British markets for its trade vis-à-vis other EU countries. The EU response to any difficulties caused by Brexit could reopen a long dead debate on the EU within the RoI.

Despite expectations that the RoI will benefit in some ways from Brexit through relocation of financial services and other business to

Dublin, the additional jobs are not likely to match the number of jobs lost and these jobs will not be of much benefit to the workers and communities dependent on agriculture and food processing businesses which are negatively impacted by Brexit. This will lead to a further skewing of the Republic's economy, with an increased dependence on transnational corporations and the financial sector, and in a country which already suffers from a serious over-reliance on Foreign Direct Investment.

The conflict in the North has been regarded by some on the left as a problem solely of sectarianism and by others, also on the left, as a problem arising primarily from Britain's presence in the North. There is also the temptation to treat both unionist and nationalist/republican as two sides of the one coin and all that is required is for working class communities and political interests to overcome sectarianism and build a society based on equality and social and economic justice.

But such an approach disregards the reality of Britain's historical role in Ireland. It ignores the imperial project and the historic democratic injustice caused by the partition of Ireland in 1920. It fails to recognise that the underlying political fault lines that exist today have not shifted in real terms since the early part of the twentieth century. The recurrent crises in the North stem directly from the distorted political system created by British imperialism in the early 1920s. It has all the hallmarks of a political maze whose entrance and exit have been blocked.

Essentially, the Unionists still - for the main part - exist within the psyche of Empire and are fighting a rear-guard action to maintain some semblance of the dominance that was granted to them with the establishment of the Northern Ireland 'state'. It would be a mistake to view the pro-union and nationalist/republican interests in Northern Ireland in terms of

political equivalence.

The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement was effectively forced on the DUP, who opposed it in 1998, and the current logjams are symptomatic of its unease and distaste for the political historic compromise the Agreement represents. The DUP is a reluctant partner in power sharing and it is difficult to envisage how, of its own accord, it will escape this contradiction. It is likely to require more forceful intervention by a British Government, which in turn will only act in a more decisive way if the Irish Government takes its responsibilities seriously.

Fifty years ago in 1967 the Northern Ireland Civil Rights' Association was founded in Belfast. The civil rights movement was forced off the streets by the military campaign to secure a British Declaration of Withdrawal. That campaign contributed, in its own way, to the community divisions becoming more entrenched than they had ever been before. Now we are experiencing political deadlock again.

The historic compromise that the Good Friday Agreement represents was necessary at the time but twenty years later it is becoming clear that it is in danger of becoming an historic *cul- de-sac*.

There is renewed talk about advancing negotiations to find a resolution to the current impasse. Something will have to give or another form of words on the contentious issues will have to be found to allow all parties to extricate themselves from the hooks, on which all parties caught themselves. A critical discussion within the left is needed to consider how the *cul- de-sac* can be overcome and in a way that transcends the usual polarised political discourse. That essentially is today's primary challenge.

Brian Campfield is the former General Secretary of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance, NIPSA and the immediate past President of Irish Congress of Trades Unions (ICTU).

Grenfell and housing: putting profit before people

Dave Sherry says neo-liberalism is at the root of the housing safety disaster

The Grenfell fire and the appalling loss of life was a disaster waiting to happen. It sums up everything rotten in Tory Britain - gross inequality, social cleansing and a political elite for whom the working class is both feared and ridiculed. A week after, a rattled Theresa May promised those forced to move would be rehoused in 3 weeks. There are over 1600 empty properties in the area, most owned by the super rich, yet over 2 months on survivors are left struggling in temporary accommodation or in hotel rooms. At a Grenfell Action Group campaign meeting last week, one of the survivors called May's promise, 'a lie to the newspapers'.

Overcladding was chosen at Grenfell partly to make the tower more pleasing to the eyes of the local rich. Kensington and Chelsea council - the wealthiest patch in Europe - saved £5,000 by choosing inferior cladding that is banned far and wide because it is so highly flammable. Yet the present set-up encourages this kind of cost cutting. Indeed, £369m will be spent refurbishing Buckingham Palace, yet there was no money to put sprinklers in flats a stone's throw away. Many who died in Grenfell would be alive for the sake of the cost of a sprinkler system -£200,000.

The authorities estimated the dead at 80 but the real figure may never be known. Undocumented migrants will not come forward and report deaths if they fear resulting deportation. It is probable that more people died in Grenfell than in all the terror incidents in Britain in the last 15 years yet nobody responsible for Grenfell is dragged off for questioning. On the Sunday following the fire, Tory chancellor, Philip Hammond, admitted the cladding used was illegal on a building as high as Grenfell. To date, there have been no arrests.

Grenfell is about more than the shortcomings of Kensington's Tory council. The cladding fitted there

was used on 30,000 buildings across Britain. Lack of adequate fire safety is another deadly symptom of how council housing has been neglected for decades. Mismanagement and decline is the result of deliberate underinvestment by successive governments.

The week after Grenfell, the *Washington Post* ran a story about the Trump Organisation's activities in India. Under the headline, 'Where corruption is a building material', it described how Trump's company is buying up tracts of land in India's booming cities where bribing officials is the way to get building regulations relaxed.

The next day *CBS News* reported the firm that supplied the cladding for Grenfell Tower is New York-based and knew the materials were unsafe for a high rise. They claimed it wasn't their responsibility to enforce UK building standards.

Scotland's devolved housing policy is not exempt from such chicanery. The SNP government is happy to privatise services and tender public works to construction companies implicated in blacklisting. While it's true Scottish building regulations are generally tighter than their English counterparts, Grenfell could have happened here. There are 3 occasions in the recent past when it nearly did.

Concerns about cladding were highlighted in a parliamentary report into the Garnock Court tower block fire in Irvine in 1999. Prompt action by fire crews meant people were rescued from the twelfth floor. The report called for a tougher testing regime, the use of non-combustible materials and contained a stark warning. In 2009, a fire at Waddell Court in the Gorbals saw an elderly man killed. The subsequent investigation called for improvements to fire stopping measures. Two years ago a fire spread across 8 storeys at a GHA tower block in Springburn, just two years after

cladding and balcony enclosure work was completed. Again further fire-stopping measures were carried out afterwards.

From the 1950s on, 1,000 high-rise blocks were built in Scotland. Despite recent demolitions Glasgow still has the highest concentration in Britain, with 96 of them scheduled for refurbishment in the coming years. This work will be done through 'a business partnership' with the construction firm, Wates and at a contract value of over £83m. Since 2005, any new high-rise built in Scotland must be fitted with a suitable sprinkler system. But there is no law compelling landlords - private or public - to retrofit pre-2005 high-rise blocks with such a system. There should be.

In 2010, when the SNP government accepted a savage Tory cut to the Scottish Block Grant from Westminster and responded by cutting the Scottish social housing budget by an unprecedented 35%, Alex Salmond responded to the outcry, saying it was not as bad as what had happened in England and Wales, where Cameron had cut the housing budget by 65%.

Despite SNP promises to the contrary nothing has changed for the better since. But health and safety may be the rock upon which the neo-liberal consensus founders. For years the Tory media loved to bang on about how 'health and safety and red tape had gone mad - a needless burden on business'. After Grenfell, their gas is at a peep. The ideology that puts profit before people is failing. Our side needs to push home the advantage and topple this weak, hated government.

Dave Sherry is a retired Unite member who until recently worked in housing maintenance and development and was secretary of the Unite Scottish Housing Associations Branch.

Firefighters demand justice over Grenfell

Denise Christie shows that the Grenfell disaster is part of a wider systemic failure

The morning of 14 June is one that no firefighter in Britain will ever forget, with the images we all saw showing the horrific events unfolding being unprecedented. Watching our brothers and sisters going into that building time after time to rescue people in desperate situations made us proud, but also concerned that there would still be a huge loss of life despite their efforts and, tragically, this was the case. In over 20 years working in the fire and rescue service, I have never seen a fire pose such a huge threat to life.

The Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) watched the developments with a mixture of horror, anger and pride. This appalling tragedy is already the worst fire disaster of recent times in Britain – and the full death toll is not yet known. It is appalling to think that a fire on this scale and with this loss of life can take place in the richest borough in the capital city of one of the richest nations in the world. A key task for the FBU now is to identify how this was able to happen.

The firefighters' bravery and professionalism, including those that took the calls in the operational fire control rooms, has rightfully been recognised by most. What also must be recognised is that these women and men are also trade unionists – trade unionists who have previously been demonised as militant and anti-establishment for standing up for fair pay, fair pensions, workers' rights and against cuts to their profession. The night of Grenfell will have been the toughest shift of their lives with the memory running deep for a long time.

The Grenfell disaster may be at the heart of the political debate today, but it has been the FBU which has consistently raised concerns on public service cuts that impact on fire safety, fire protection and fire resources for many years.

Grenfell has to be – must be – a moment for a major change of direction. The war on public safety has to end. The relentless attack on public

services and those who deliver them has to end and the best tribute we can pay to those who lost their lives is to fight for justice and ensure a disaster like this never happens again. The FBU stands in solidarity with the tenants and residents of Grenfell and we will work with them to uncover why this terrible fire occurred and what could have been done to prevent it.

The FBU has already started to pull together the key facts and issues surrounding this incident. As in all such cases, the FBU will make a thorough investigation as to what happened and why. Our investigation will address all factors which will have impacted on this incident. This includes the issue of the building itself (including any alteration made to it), fire safety issues and the operational planning and response.

It will not have been lost on anyone that, within days of the Grenfell disaster, government ministers were re-emphasising their determination to stick to their 1% pay policy. Pay restraint has left firefighters more than £2,000pa worse off. What was even more galling was the cheered reaction from the Tories after they had won the vote to block a pay rise for firefighter's only days after praising them for their bravery during Grenfell.

Questions have been asked if the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) could respond adequately to an incident on the scale of Grenfell. At its height, there were 250 firefighters and 40 fire engines.

Since 2013, Scotland has seen over 700 frontline firefighters' jobs lost and five out of the eight emergency fire control rooms have closed which has disproportionately impacted on women. The year on year cuts to the fire budget is now impacting on the frontline, despite assurances from the Scottish government. Staffing levels have depleted so much that there can be no guarantee that frontline appliances and operational control rooms are adequately maintained and crewed at all times.

It's vital that fire appliances respond quickly and in numbers to incidents. This is known as the 'speed of response' and the 'weight of response'. This would have been critical for an incident such as Grenfell. There is grave concern that the continuing austerity driven cuts are having a detrimental effect on 999 response times and the vital lifesaving service firefighters provide.

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

The continuation of budget cuts to the SFRS is unsustainable. The SFRS needs long-term, strategic investment to recruit firefighters and ensure the safety of the public.

The FBU's priority has always been firefighter and public safety. We have a long history of campaigning on these issues and will continue to do so. These campaigns also include the strengthening up of fire, building and housing regulations. The fire statistics for fire deaths for 2015-2016 have increased from previous years. In the last decade, Scotland has had a higher rate than England and Wales for fires, fatalities and casualties. The increase in these fire statistics at a time where fire budgets and firefighter numbers are being cut is concerning.

It is time to end the continued cuts to the SFRS. Year on year budget cuts are impacting on the frontline and staff morale is at rock bottom. If we want a world class fire and rescue service, then the onslaught of cuts must cease immediately and investment provided. Cuts really do cost lives.

Denise Christie is the regional treasurer of the Fire Brigades' Union in Scotland

Is strike action over?

Stephen Smellie argues unions have to be smart in the new circumstances

UNISON members in Scottish councils voted by 62% for industrial action on pay this year. However strike action did not take place due to the turnout being less than the 50% required under the Tories' recently implemented *Trade Union Act*. This was the first big test of unions' ability to deliver industrial action under the new laws and UNISON failed. A ballot of Unite members in the North Sea industry similarly failed to get the turnout required for action. All unions are recognising that the new law is a major hurdle for getting a positive vote for strike action.

Unions are considering their response to this Tory law which is designed to further weaken the power of unions. None of them should be considering giving up on industrial action as a way of taking forward workers' interests. However, responses have to recognise that strikes were not the be-all and end-all of union campaigns. Pay campaigns which are an annual round of claim/offer/reject/ballot-for-strikes have spectacularly failed over many years. Regardless of the new anti-union laws, it has been clear for some time that union campaigns needed refreshed and revitalised with some new, or maybe some old, ideas.

Nye Bevan wrote in *In Place of Fear* that after the defeat of the miners in 1926 that 'from then on the pendulum swung sharply to political action. It seemed to us that we must try to regain in Parliament what we had lost on the industrial battlefield'.

The hope placed in a Corbyn-led Labour Party coming to power reflects a similar view and, thus, is part of a strategy to achieve ends that are beyond us on an industrial level and repeal the laws that weaken us. Unions will, and should, continue and increase support for Labour in the hope that laws can be changed in the future to swing the

balance of industrial power back towards workers. However, the prospect of a Labour Government is some distance in the future.

Union campaigns and lobbying are successful. The UNISON victory to abolish Employment Tribunal fees and decisions on Equal Pay show that legal campaigns can be successful. The Living Wage was won for council, NHS and social care workers in Scotland through lobbying and campaigning, not strikes. This involved winning arguments and building alliances to pressure politicians to adopt and implement the policy.

In launching its 'Pay Up Now' campaign, UNISON aims to involve members in building support for an end to the public sector pay cap, including targeting Tory MPs in marginal constituencies in the run up to the Chancellor's autumn statement. If such a campaign, taking advantage of the relative weakness of the Tory government, is to be successful, it will require thousands of members to be involved.

However successful political actions and campaigning cannot be relied upon to achieve improved pay, stop attacks on jobs and end austerity policies. Not on their own. Therefore, unions must find ways to engage with members in campaigns that will lead to more of them taking part in ballots for industrial action. This will involve many things and consideration of different tactics in different situations.

PCS recently successfully balloted a small group of members in Sheffield DWP over the closure of a Job Centre. These members were concentrated in the one workplace, could talk issues through and engage directly with union leaders, before the decision to ballot was taken.

This illustrates an option for unions to consider. Rather than consulting thousands of workers spread over many workplaces, they could focus

on identifying small groups who could take effective action on behalf of the wider membership who would support them through financial means.

There are risks in a selective or smart strike strategy such as this with employers seeking to threaten the selected group of members and members feeling isolated. However, these are issues which unions should be able to overcome.

The UNISON ballot was preceded by an online consultation where members received emails and texts, and social media was utilised to raise awareness on top of the traditional material produced by the union and branches. Many unions hold consultative ballots and these will become more frequent with unions having to find ways of engaging with members, visiting workplaces, having more face-to-face conversations, and organising more workplace discussions. Such intense member engagement exercises are more difficult with restrictions on facility time and a decrease in the number of shop stewards. Therefore, union staff will need to be deployed in a targeted way building support for strike action.

The in-depth organising campaigns which unions talk about but seldom manage to sustain will need to be delivered in order to turn around member disengagement and re-discover the industrial action tool. The issue we have to face up to is that members are not engaged and participating in union activities. All of the strategies referred to above must be about developing better organised unions and involving members more who will then be more ready to take part in union action, from signing the online petition to voting for strike action.

Stephen Smellie is deputy convenor of UNISON Scotland and a NEC member of UNISON

Trying to make sense of ‘October’

Ian Gasse highlights a weekend of film in Dumfries reconsidering the October Revolution of 1917

In *What's Left?* – a review of new books about the Russian Revolution in the *London Review of Books* in March – the historian Sheila Fitzpatrick, reflecting on the status of the October Revolution, suggests that: '[w]ith the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the revolution shrivelled as a historical subject'. 'By 2117,' she asks, 'who knows what people will think?'

For those of us born between the Second World War and about 1980, the influence of the October Revolution was part of everyday life. Because, as Eric Hobsbawm noted in *Age of Extremes*: '[a] mere thirty to forty years after Lenin's arrival at the Finland Station in Petrograd, one third of humanity found itself living under regimes directly derived from the *Ten Days That Shook the World*', world politics came to be dominated by the confrontation of the two opposing systems of capitalism, and what was represented as – and believed by many on both left and right to be – a form of communism, and of their respective 'superpowers', the USA and the USSR.

Despite the success of the American-British-Soviet alliance of World War II, from Churchill's notorious Fulton speech of March 1946 onwards, 'Cold War' and 'Arms Race' became part of the new international political vocabulary, and a regular feature of our daily 'news', augmented by various crises that might have provoked all-out war, such as Berlin (1948-1949, 1961), Korea (1950-1953), Iran (1953), Hungary and Suez (1956), Cuba (1959 and 1962), Vietnam (1965-1975), Czechoslovakia (1968) and Afghanistan (1980-1989).

The 'Cold War' mentality, fear of communism and fear of nuclear war that were encouraged by western governments and media, penetrated deep into our lives. As Dylan sang in 1964: 'I've learnt to hate Russians

all through my whole life. If another war starts it's them we must fight' and, closer to home, in 1967, Liverpool poet Roger McGough imagined:

***A little bit of heaven fell from out the sky one day
It landed in the ocean, not so very far away
The General at the radar screen,
rubbed his hands with glee
And grinning pressed the button that started World War Three.***

I make these points about the impact of the October Revolution in the middle decades of the twentieth century (and this is to ignore the renaissance of Marxism in the west from the late 1960s) because some may feel, as Fitzpatrick's review suggests, that the centenary of the October Revolution has lost much of its significance as it actually arrives, for Russia has become a capitalist society and economy, and the international enemy of western society is now apparently an extreme form of Islam. But the centenary *has* arrived, so how *should* we mark it?

The answer, for some of us in Dumfries (with support from Dumfries TUC and Dumfries & Galloway Council) and, via the Scottish Labour History Society and the Scottish Morning Star Campaign Committee, elsewhere in Scotland, is by considering the representation of the revolution in film.

Over the weekend of Friday-Sunday, 27-29 October, the Robert Burns Centre Film Theatre (RBCFT) in Dumfries will be screening *Representing Revolution*, a series of films from several countries – Britain, France and the US, as well as the former Soviet Union – which present different views of the October Revolution, from the David Lean 'blockbuster' *Doctor Zhivago* (1966), based on the Boris Pasternak novel, to Warren Beatty's

Reds (1981), co-written by British playwright Trevor Griffiths, to two of the films commissioned for the Revolution's tenth anniversary, Sergei Eisenstein's *October* (1928) and Vsevolod Pudovkin's *The End of St Petersburg* (1927). Completing the programme are a Soviet film from the Brezhnev years, Nikita Mikhalkov's *At Home Among Strangers* (1974), a political thriller-cum-western, and a documentary by French film-maker Chris Marker, *The Last Bolshevik* (1993), which views the short history of the Soviet Union through the career of Soviet film director Alexander Medvedkin (1900-1989).

Each of the films will be introduced by a film/history/politics/cultural scholar, with Dr David Archibald, of Glasgow University's Film & Media Studies, presenting an overview of the full weekend, *October in Film*, on the Friday evening, prior to the screening of *At Home Among Strangers*. Emeritus Professor John Foster of Glasgow University will introduce the Eisenstein and Pudovkin films on Saturday afternoon, and Dr Ben Franks, also of Glasgow University, will introduce *Reds* on Saturday evening. On Sunday afternoon, Emeritus Professor Lesley Milne of Nottingham University will introduce *Doctor Zhivago* and Dumfries TUC's Ian Gasse will introduce *The Last Bolshevik* on Sunday evening.

Full details of *Representing Revolution*, which has been supported by Film Hub Scotland through the BFI's Film Audience Network, are available from the RBCFT box office on 01387 264808 and website (www.rbcft.co.uk) or via russia1917@phonecoop.coop Tickets are from £7.00 per screening (£5.30 concessions).

Ian Gasse is active on Dumfries Trades Union Council and a member of the National Union of Journalists.



Dave Sherry, *Russia 1917: Workers' Revolution and the Festival of the Oppressed, 2017,*

Bookmarks, pp274, £12.99, 9781910885420

Reviewed by Stewart MacLennan

Writing in the *Guardian*, Paul Mason warned recently this year's centenary of the Russian Revolution would bring with it 'an avalanche of reactionary bullshit'. This dismal prospect has already come to pass in the form of at least one 'new history', much fanfared by the likes of Niall Ferguson. Fortunately, writers on the left have not been slow to counter the threatened 'avalanche', with books varying in focus and format from Tariq Ali, Neil Faulkner, China Mieville and John Newsinger, among others. To these may be added the present volume from Dave Sherry, a veteran activist and prolific writer for the Socialist Workers Party, and published by the SWP imprint, *Bookmarks*. All have undertaken, in the words of American geo-historian Mike Davis, 'a singularly daunting task'.

Early accounts of the revolution come direct from the field of action. Leon Trotsky's *The History of the Russian Revolution to Brest-Litovsk* was written during breaks in the peace negotiations with Germany and was circulated in Britain in editions published by the British Socialist Party and the Socialist Labour Party. The American Communist, John

Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World*, charged with the immediacy of committed reportage, has remained a classic since publication in 1919. Much subsequent study has been processed as a Cold War cottage industry, continuing through to the fall of the Soviet Union and the opening of the Kremlin archives. Radical historians, too, have brought crucial aspects of the revolution to new light.

Following his earlier *Empire and Revolution: A Socialist History of the First World War*, Dave Sherry has set the Russian Revolution within the contexts of the war and a domestic background of tsarist absolutism. Each episode of a tumultuous year receives intimate depiction and scrutiny, portraying both the congenital inability of the ruling class to retain power by means other than draconian repression, and the development and occasional vacillation of the revolutionary forces. This impressive synthesis is particularly effective in restoring to their central roles in the narrative such eclipsed Bolshevik organisers as Alexandra Kollontai and Alexander Shlyapnikov.

Similar prominence is given to the words and actions of both named and anonymous figures from the ranks of the popular, working class and military organisations which comprised the motor forces of the revolution, while the urgent writings of Lenin, seeking always to focus and direct their forces, are examined in terms of their critical reception by both his fellow Bolsheviks and other socialists in Russia and beyond.

Crucially, the story as told by Sherry sustains the dynamism of the greatest social movement the world had yet seen. A couple of errors in this copiously referenced text (the constructivist artist Malevich is mis-named, and the origins of the concept of 'The Servile State' are mis-attributed) do not materially detract from the overall achievement of Mike Davis's exacting brief.

As its title implies, Dave Sherry's book is a celebration of the Russian Revolution and a defence of its ideals. Here in Scotland, the Scottish Labour History Society has organised a special conference to commemorate the revolution and explore related themes. 'Scotland and the Russian Revolution: Impact and Legacy' takes place on Saturday 4 November 2017, Stewart MacLennan is chair of the Scottish Labour History Society stewart_macLennan@btinternet.com

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Bonni Cohen and Jon Shenk, *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power*, 2016

Reviewed by Jackie Bergson

Vegan, committed leader, campaigner and influencer, Nobel Laureate and antidote to climate change denial; Al Gore personally presented *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power* to a 300-cinema-strong audience in Britain on 11 August 2017.

From at least 2006, the man has occupied a strong position for climate change leadership. *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) reached and influenced hearts and minds on a global scale, energising scientific facts formerly regarded as ‘crank’ theories, to broadcast new, powerful norms of communication. The question now in the balance is how and why humankind maintains climate change impacts beyond Al Gore’s lifetime.

Using analogies, simple physics explanations and statistical reasoning during his pre-film interview, he conveyed a context for learning and doing. For those with commercial interests, he quoted figures about solar jobs’ 17 times growth compared with other industry sectors, reflecting results from climate change industry buy-in to date.

A pre-feature short conveys the beauty and fragility of our planet alongside catastrophic events which relate to cause and effect within the global warming and climate change discussion. The main film again has Al Gore as its undoubted star, engaging in activism, political and commercial influence and discussion with national and international leaders, and teaching his very own growing number of Climate Change Leaders. The much bigger player, according to Gore, is ‘Mother Earth [who] is the new participant in the discussion’.

He explains that he does his ‘best’ while emphasising that scientific argument for man-made global warming impacts needs ‘grass roots voices to activate and sustain the empowerments afforded by the Paris Accord’. Thus, film footage includes Gore meeting political heads in Japan in 1997 in relation to the Kyoto Protocol, which ostensibly expired in 2012; also Europe’s central involvement in sustaining Japan’s original momentum, further documenting Gore’s contribution to driving solar energy costs down for less developed countries and confirming his role as instrumental in respect of Paris Accord ratification to the tune of 150 Nations, including India and Chile, in 2016.

Whereas the Democrat-Republican political platform may no longer be active for him in terms of equal seats of power, press interviews during the film’s release show his willingness to lock horns. Gore’s focus upon relevant technologies is wide-ranging within his films and currently his unique involvement with the less developed countries reveals his eschewing of ‘land-line’ technology. He fails, however, to mention that server technologies have long been the subject of criticism for their use of toxic coolants. Gore has, thus, possibly weighed in as seriously as he is politically able at this stage.

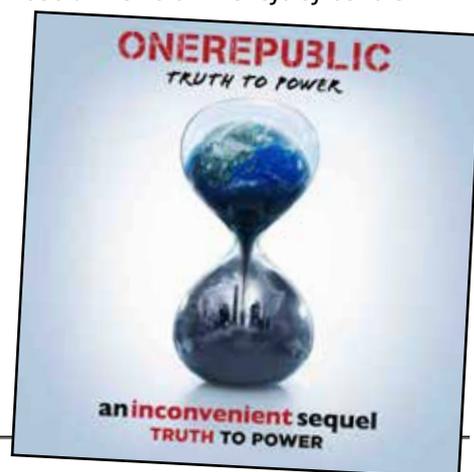
In spite of being faced with climate change deniers who are in equally if not much more powerful positions of influence, Gore successfully conveys that he is not taking on the political world alone: he has broadcasters and film crews, credible scientists, Climate Change Leaders, captive book and film audiences and accumulating grassroots support from younger generations in tow. In politically correct and humble style, respectively, he moreover co-credits both the female director and producer of this sequel and the Oscar-winning director of the first documentary.

Gore also certainly delivers impactful sound bites: ‘Using the sky as an

open sewer’; ‘Our atmosphere is not limitless’; ‘Humanity is at risk’; ‘Mother Nature is the new participant in the discussion’. ‘Unprecedented’ being the buzz word of the past decade in relation to global finance, he brings it in to describe phenomena which he links with global warming effects, such as the Zika virus and survivalist migration. He emphasises throughout that true power in sustaining arguments and support for climate change will continue if clear, consistent messages get through to governments, businesses and investors capable in enacting relevant laws and policies. In more prosaic terms, his words to the Mayor of Texas ‘money talks’ ring very true.

The power of *An Inconvenient Sequel* may be that its audiences will consider the possibility of imagining a world without climate change believers; where development and use of energy and technologies ignore impacts upon earth’s atmosphere; where depletion of fossil fuels meets with alternatives which allow toxins and pollutants to pour into the air and sea; where sight of the bigger picture in relation to global warming, climate change and all of the resultant impacts is lost. We, therefore, understand Gore’s obvious sadness when filmed talking about recent USA election results. Admirably, he fights on.

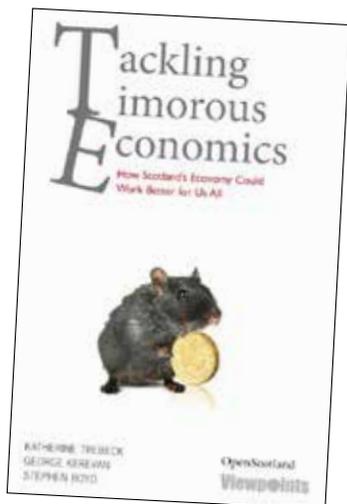
Jackie Bergson has worked in the voluntary sector and commercial business development in technology and creative sectors. Educated in and living in Glasgow, her political and social views chime left-of-centre.



**Katherine Trebeck,
George Kerevan and
Stephen Boyd, Tackling
Timorous Economics –
How Scotland's Economy
Could Work Better for Us
All,**

Luath Press, £9.99, pp126,
1910021377

Reviewed by Gordon Morgan



This book outlines a critique of conventional economics. It suggests that post-Brexit, Scotland is at a crossroads where it can continue to ignore what 'people and planet need' or really engage with communities and create a new economics for Scotland. The three authors address different aspects of this failure to address people and planet's needs. Trebeck addresses the inequalities that underlie our society and the extreme poverty prevalent and asks why we tolerate poverty and environmental damage? Why not deliver a more equal, more humane and more sustainable society in the first place by making the economy circular and shared?

Boyd looks at the roots of inequality and the differences between this and poverty. He looks at how tax is ignored in addressing poverty and how it could be used to mitigate it. He also examines the role of financialisation in creating an economy at odds with the people. He ends by examining the

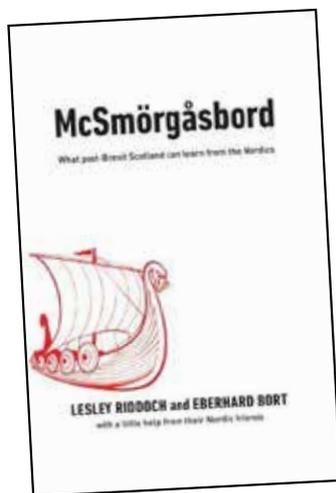
failure of the Scottish Parliament to address these issues. Kerevan looks at the nature of twenty first century capitalism, the problems of too much capital, too low wages and too few jobs. He suggests how tax, shorter hours and socialised investment could begin to address this. This is very much an introduction to the issues addressed and includes widespread references. It claims to be only an opening gambit in creating a new Scottish political economy and encourages further discussion and debate using the Brexit discussions as a pretext for such discussions.

Gordon Morgan is a member of the Scottish Left Review editorial committee

**Lesley Riddoch and
Eberhard Bort,
McSmorgasbord: What
post-Brexit Scotland can
learn from the Nordics,**

Luath Press, £7.99, pp196,
1912147009

Reviewed by Tommy Sheppard



McSmorgasbord is in essence a conference report. In October 2016, the policy group Nordic – with Lesley Riddoch and the late Paddy Bort at the helm – convened a conference in Edinburgh, bringing together over 300 people including senior policy-makers to consider options for Scotland post-Brexit. It focused on what relationship Scotland should pursue with other European nations,

whether as a devolved country within a multi-national Britain, or as a future independent state. This book collates the main papers, together with a brief appreciation of the authors and an intro and outro from the editors. As an introductory guide to terms and history, *McSmorgasbord* provides the reader with a Europe 1.01 primer and is useful for anyone needing to know their EFTA from the EEA.

The Nordic region, or Norden, comprises five countries: Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Each is focused on in turn. Although the countries have much in common in terms of shared demography, religion and history providing a regional identity, they are also very different. Each of the five have a different relationship with the institutions of Europe ranging from Finland's enthusiastic participation in the EU and Euro to a more sceptical approach of Norway and Iceland (which are in the EEA but not the EU). The historical and political factors at work in each case are examined and throughout the question posed is: what can Scotland learn from these diverse experiences?

Is Finland's position of living in the shadow of the Russian bear analogous to Scotland sitting atop a much more powerful nation? Might the breakdown in that relationship catapult a newly independent country into the heart of Europe? Just how important is the fishing sector? In Iceland, it's undoubtedly the prime determinant in that country's decision not to keep its distance from the EU.

A concluding chapter by Riddoch pulls the diverse contributions together and considers options for Scotland. She opens by noting how fast moving the politics of this is. Indeed, her piece proves the point. Writing earlier this year, she rules out the possibility of a differentiated single market solution for Scotland within Britain, citing the Westminster government's negative

response to Holyrood overtures. She was right at the time. But the election has changed things again and this might well come back on the agenda now.;

But what if Scotland was to become independent – what would be the best option then? And perhaps more importantly, how does advocacy of a particular relationship with Europe build support for the proposition of independence in the first place? Two broad options would be on the table, join EFTA or join the EU. Riddoch notes the changing attitudes towards the latter from the Euro body politic with Scotland now seen as the good guys and independence no longer the bogeyman it was when partners were anxious not to upset Britain.

If you didn't know it before, however, the main point here is the variety of bespoke arrangements that individual countries can achieve in relationships with the gang of European nations, and the willingness of the continental institutions to embrace them. It might even, as Riddoch concludes, be well possible for Scotland to have its own relationship with the EU, Scandinavia and Britain which no-one has yet charted – a dash of haggis on the Smorgasbord indeed.

Tommy Sheppard is the (SNP) MP for Edinburgh East

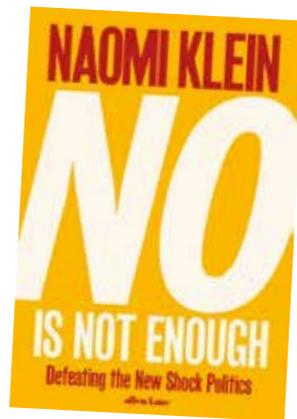
Naomi Klein, No is Not Enough: defeating the new shock politics, Allen Lane, £12.99, pp288, 0241320887

Reviewed by Colin Darroch

Naomi Klein has produced a useful analysis of Donald Trump's domestic shock doctrine - where the goal is an all-out war on the public interest and the transfer of even more power to the super rich 1% and their corporations. Within hours of taking office, Trump announced his intention to slash corporate tax rates from 35% to 15% and corporate regulations by 75%.

The Donald became a national figure

in the 1980s when he followed his father into real estate development. He splashed the Trump name across casinos, hotels, and office blocks. His big break came when he was asked to host *The Apprentice* which featured his own developments all bearing the Trump brand name. This exposure attracted a number of licensing agreements to use the Trump logo on leisurewear, perfumes and furniture. The Trump brand quickly became a super-brand thanks to this exposure. Trump realised he could make more money from licensing the Trump super-brand name to other developers than he could from owning the real estate himself. For example he received over \$50m for licensing the Trump name for an hotel project in Panama for no outlay. Every single minute he is President, his super-brand value increases with over 150 trademark applications pending in 36 countries. His daughter, Ivanka, who has brand interests in clothing and jewellery, gets a boost as well.



Trump realised that election campaigns were a form of reality television where the best contestant (not necessarily the best candidate) would win. The Trump Show is now broadcasting live from the Oval Office. His blueprint is the battle plan of Paul Bremer appointed by George W Bush to lead the Coalition Provisional Authority following the 2003 invasion of Iraq. From within the highly protected Green Zone, Bremer issued decree after decree transforming Iraq into a free market economy with a 15% tax rate. State owned assets were sold off to US corporations and billions of dollars

disappeared into offshore bank accounts.

To achieve his goals, Trump has surrounded himself with fellow members of the 1% club. His Cabinet has a cumulative net worth of over \$14bn. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was the former Exxon Mobil chief executive. It made a fortune exploiting Iraqi oil. Despite having internal data on the catastrophic effects of climate change, it ran a disinformation campaign claiming it was all junk science. Patrick Shanahan, a top Boeing executive, was appointed as Deputy Defence Secretary. At least 15 officials with financial ties to the defence industry are on the Trump team just as the homeland security budget is being boosted. Five former Goldman Sachs executives have important roles in the Trump administration. Steve Munchin is Treasury Secretary and James Donovan is his deputy. Gary Cohn is Director of the White House Economic Council, Dina Powell is White House senior counselor for economic initiatives, and Jay Clayton heads the Securities and Exchange Commission. These appointments were all made after the Justice Department fined Goldman Sachs \$5bn for malpractices in the sub-prime mortgage scandal. Vice President Mike Pence was Chairman of the Republican Study Committee tasked to deal with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. It designated the whole area as a tax free enterprise zone and \$40bn was cut from the federal food stamp, medicaid, and student loan budget to pay the private contractors carrying out reinstatement work. Now Trump, Pence, and their pals can apply their shock doctrine throughout the USA.

Klein maintains that it is not enough to just say No to Trump and she is a signatory to the Leap Manifesto which can be downloaded from:

<https://leapmanifesto.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Manifesto-en.pdf>

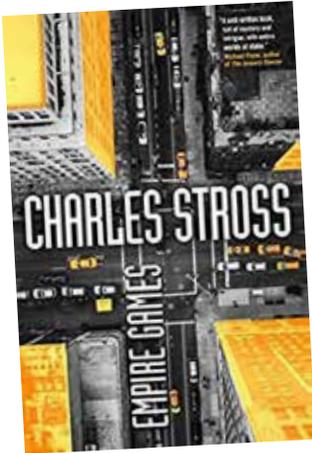
Colin Darroch is a former Glasgow District councillor

Charles Stross, *Empire Games*,

Tor Books, £7.99, pp331,
0765337568

Reviewed by Sean Sheehan

For devotees of science fiction, the publication of another novel by long-term Edinburgh resident, Charles Stross, is welcome news and *Empire Games* will not disappoint. It is the first part of a projected trilogy and while it builds on his earlier Merchant Princes series, it is a novel that stands in its own right. Anyone reading him for the first time will have no difficulty getting into the groove but tighten your seatbelts for a tale that shifts between different time lines and alternate histories.



In Time Line One, history diverged from our own some two millennia ago and was home to a group of world-walkers who could travel and profit by transiting into Time Line Two which is basically our world up until 2003. A major event then changed its history but readers will find it uncomfortably familiar – an intrusive surveillance state we're all travelling towards at the speed of light – even if its Department of Homeland Security is kept busy intercepting world-walkers rather than denying visas to ordinary travelers. In Time Line Three, England was invaded by the French in 1760 and republicans are now governing a democratic Commonwealth.

The pacey plot mixes science fiction with espionage and politics. Its heroine is a likeable character

who has to cope with conflicting loyalties and uncertainties about who are, to use Trump's delicate phrasing, the 'bad dudes': the government who entrap her in Time Line One or the people of Time Line Three who just might be offering a democratic alternative. There is the usual pseudo-scientific babble that characterises much science fiction – tales of dimensional parameters, Q-machines and the like – but the basics are easy to follow.

Empire Games is a good read and an enjoyable way of passing the time on a train or plane journey. Science fiction addicts will devour it but I suspect that this kind of fiction is formulaic. But Charles Stross is hugely popular and is tapping into a need for fantasy adventures. Read at your peril for it may turn you into the kind of geek who will anxiously wait for the second part of the trilogy that is due out in January 2018.

Carl MacDougall, *Someone Always Robs the Poor*,

Freight Books, £9.99, pp176,
1911332139

Reviewed by Sean Sheehan

Carl MacDougall's return to short stories, after an absence of ten years, will bring little cheer for readers who need a feel-good shot to mitigate the harshness of life; the fiction is too close to non-fiction for comfort. Tales of lost aspirations, broken dreams, relationships gone awry, dysfunctional families, bereavement, alcoholism – all the messiness that warps the soul and oppress the characters who struggle, and sometimes fail, to keep themselves together.

But there are the cracks in everything where, Leonard Cohen bleakly assures us, the light gets in and some photons of hopefulness frame the beginning and the end of this collection. In the opening story, 'Is this the place you now call

home?', past events are gleaned as a narrative about a young man returning home from London adeptly unfolds. Happiness is a step too far for the central character but the concluding paragraphs are so finely nuanced as to leave you feeling something worthwhile has been attained.



The final story, 'And turn the water', tells of a heartbroken couple trying to cope with a terrible loss. The prose is pared but precise and becomes a parable about losing faith in the possibility of there being a God but finding a splintered redemption that comes from the struggle to go on living responsibly and acknowledging the sufferings of others.

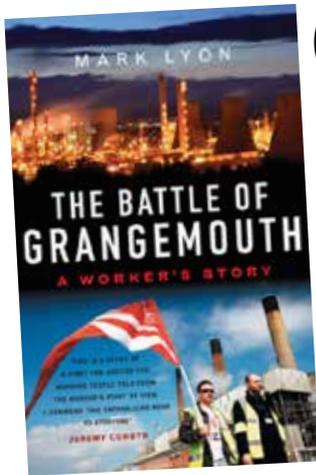
James Joyce described his short stories as a chapter on the moral history of his country and MacDougall is doing something similar here. Both writers share insights into stupidities of male egos and the title story of this collection, 'Someone always robs the poor', illuminates the theme as the reader pieces together the grim tribulations of a resourceful woman who leaves pre-EU Poland with her husband in the hope of a better life in America. She ends up as an illegal immigrant in Scotland, her experiences narrated by her daughter, and she comes to embody the unrecognised heroism that is needed to overcome the slings and arrows of misfortune that come at those who least deserve it.

Sean Sheehan is author of 'Žižek: A Guide for the Perplexed' (Continuum, 2012) and a forthcoming guide to Herodotus' Histories.

Mark Lyon, *The Battle of Grangemouth: a worker's story*, Lawrence

& Wishart, 2017, 9781912064007, pp240, £12.99

Reviewed by Jim Phillips



Grangemouth and its large petro-chemicals complex was the scene of a major political and industrial crisis in October 2013. Ineos, the Swiss-headquartered owner and employer, threatened the immediate closure of the entire site, with the loss of just under one thousand directly-employed workers and upwards of 2,000 contract workers. Ineos claimed that the site's already weak economic and productive position was being made impossible by unacceptably high labour costs. Under enormously heavy pressure, the workforce and Unite, the largest union on the site, accepted a highly unpalatable cocktail of employer 'takebacks', the most important elements of which were the end of a final salary pension scheme, a three year pay freeze, and eroded redundancy terms. Ineos then victimised Unite's local leadership: the established rights of workplace representatives were summarily withdrawn, including office space and paid time for union business; and key stewards were dismissed from employment on a variety of fairly transparent pretexts, one of which related to the Falkirk Labour Party's selection process for a Westminster candidate to succeed Eric Joyce, who in 2012 announced his decision not to contest the next general election. This element of the controversy was emphasised by the firm in advance of the October 2013 crisis as well as exploited in its aftermath.

A former workplace representative

at Grangemouth is the author of this book. Lyon is now an industrial organiser of the International Transport Workers' Federation. Lyon grew up in Grangemouth and was a long-term employee on the site, starting there for the first time in 1980. Various criticisms of the book have been made and are mainly exaggerated or frankly unwarranted. There was a Battle at Grangemouth. Lyon's book makes it clear that historically this was fought on several fronts, and over at least a decade prior to the crisis in 2013. Unions seeking accommodation with employers, to protect jobs in periods of economic uncertainty, are behaving pragmatically. Acknowledging the realistic balance of forces on a battlefield, and seeking to retreat, is not tantamount to surrender. Nor is it an acceptance that the interests of management and workers are synonymous. The battle in any case was a struggle for public policy and resources as well as worker rights. Like many other buccaneering free enterprises, Ineos has no apparent compunction about taking public subsidy in a number of forms: government grants and loans, or loans from banks supported by public money since 2008, or in kind, through tax relief and other benefits. Lyon's account shows how the company made functional business use of the union-Labour party link to secure these public goods. Union stewards and officials were routinely asked by Ineos to mobilise Labour MPs and MSPs to lobby UK and Scottish governments for policy initiatives that would benefit the firm or the petro-chemicals industry more broadly. Thinking about this in moral economy terms, in accepting these public goods the firm acquired social obligations which its behaviour in threatening plant closure in 2013 plainly transgressed. What is equally transparent is the hypocrisy of Ineos managers in harassing and then victimising the union representatives who in good faith had sought to help the company, in order to defend the employment and incomes of

their members.

The Ineos treatment of Lyon, Stevie Deans, who was Lyon's predecessor as plant convenor, and other workplace stewards, was deeply repugnant. It was also highly personal. Lyon's emphasis on the misbehaviour of Ratcliffe and others might be a little repetitious, but it reflects his everyday experience. These were the individuals who made his working life a daily misery; their actions were unpredictable, even volatile, and resulted in severe downward pressure on the working conditions and living standards of Grangemouth employees. The personalised nature of the account from this perspective is one of the book's strengths. Lyon grew up in the community and began work at the site when Grangemouth was owned by British Petroleum. From the 1950s until the Thatcher privatisations of the 1980s BP operated with a large degree of UK government involvement, hovering around 50 per cent of share ownership. In these decades BP was a good employer in Grangemouth, with a broad sense of community responsibility and social obligation. More than 5,000 workers were employed full-time. There were few if any contract workers. The company built, owned and maintained housing, a social club and other facilities. Lyon writes movingly about this secure and confident industrial community. There is humour too, in the stories of the women and men who built this community, with optimism, resilience and love. The moral economy theme comes to mind once more: workers in Grangemouth and Falkirk came to regard the site's facilities and jobs as community resources and not the property of the firm. The sense of loss articulated by Lyon in assessing the abandonment of these resources by Ineos is keen. Some of Lyon's critics claim that he makes too much of the distance between BP and Ineos, which acquired the site in 2005, but there is evidently a moral and qualitative chasm between the employment and business cultures of

these two highly-distinct enterprises as well as the contrasting political economies of the 1970s and 2010s.

Dr Jim Phillips works at the University of Glasgow. A longer version of this review appears in the 2017 annual volume, Scottish Labour History.

Richard Murphy, Dirty Secrets: How Tax Havens Destroy the Economy,

Verso, £12.99, 9781786631671

Reviewed by Robin Jones

Earlier this year, Jeremy Corbyn released the following statement regarding his personal finances: 'I am publishing the detail of my tax return here, on my constituency website. I have made it clear that I think it is right for party leaders to be open and transparent about their tax arrangements. As you can see, my total income for 2015-16 was £114,342 and I paid £35,298 in tax'. His tax return was subject to considerable media scrutiny – the question of his £21,192 leadership pay being classified as 'benefits' was particularly confusing to his critics. Others were less cynical: here was a frank and honest attempt to pay the correct taxes, to disclose that which was earned, and to promote financial transparency in the process.

Corbyn is, of course, not the first politician to release his tax returns. During her leadership campaign in 2016, Theresa May did likewise, stating: 'It is clearly important for all leadership candidates to be open and transparent about their tax affairs. I was very happy to publish mine today, and hope others will follow suit'. Her statement and actions then were laudable. It is to her discredit that she failed to publish her tax returns again this year.

Media and public interest in the tax arrangements of our political leaders is a familiar story, though it is no less important for its familiarity. Donald Trump's refusal to publish his tax affairs dogged him during the election campaign and dogs him still. Here in Britain, in April of 2016,

the Panama Paper revelations that David Cameron had profited from an offshore trust set up by his father required significant political repair. 'I obviously can't point to every bit of money,' he said in an interview to ITV, 'and dad's not around for me to ask the questions now'. Setting aside the moral difficulties involved in the then PM profiting from an offshore trust, Cameron's confession that he was unable to track all his father's investments should not be viewed merely as a political convenience but, rather, as a simple statement of fact. As Richard Murphy points out in his book *Dirty Secrets: How Tax Havens Destroy the Economy*, it is precisely this opacity that makes tax havens attractive.

Quoting the Tax Justice Network's submission to a House of Commons Select Committee in 2008, Murphy points out that 'secrecy is key to most tax haven operations. Without it many of those using tax haven structures would not do so.' One reason for this, as David Cameron discovered, is the damage that discovery does to reputations. 'It is very hard,' Murphy notes, 'for anyone using a tax haven to be tax compliant.'

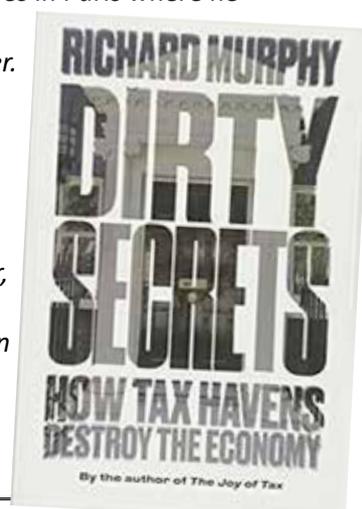
This lack of compliance has a significant cost, and nowhere is that cost felt more keenly than in the developing world. Murphy quotes a 2008 report undertaken by Christian Aid that suggested 'corporate tax losses to the developing world might be as much as \$160 billion a year, which was somewhat more than the combined aid budgets of the whole rich world.' One predictable consequence of such losses is continuing aid dependency. For developing countries: '[t]his dependency removes their autonomy, leaving them exposed to the political will of other countries. At the same time, it denies their elective representatives some of the real choices that would be available if such aid funding could be eliminated and replaced by taxes. The cost of tax havens to these places is thus seen in

the degradation of both their democratic processes and their identity as nation states'.

Unfortunately for those disenfranchised by tax havens, the battle against financial secrecy is one in which the business world has a considerable advantage. Quoting the UK's House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, Murphy notes that of the big accounting firms that were operating in the UK in 2013, the top four alone employed nearly 9,000 people to provide tax advice to companies and wealthy individuals. Much of this work was, naturally, aimed at minimising tax paid. Particularly telling is the example Murphy gives of transfer specialists: 250 employed by the big four compared to 65 working for HMRC: '[T]he number of transfer pricing specialist employed by the HMRC has increased since (2013), but the odds remain stacked in favour of the companies undertaking the trades.'

There is little evidence that the odds are going to sway away from the corporations any time soon, though Murphy proposes a number of ways in which those odds could be improved: public country-by-country reporting is one, full registers of beneficial ownership of companies and trusts is another. In other words, before we can collect tax we must first collect reliable information. It is a persuasive argument, for as Thomas Piketty showed in his *Capital in the 21st Century*, 'truly democratic debate cannot proceed without reliable statistics'.

Robin Jones lives in Paris where he works as an English teacher. His fiction, articles and reviews have appeared in the Edinburgh Review, Gutter, Jacobin, the Dark Mountain Project and Huffington Post.



Kick up the Tabloids

September has always signalled to me a return to normality from the madness of midsummer. For the past twenty-odd years, it has marked the end of the Edinburgh Fringe, and the return to a life of gigging on the road, and living out of a suitcase. By the way, the surprise hit of Edinburgh 2017 was Fat Eck's chat show 'Alex Salmond Unleashed', which was a strange title. Can anyone recall a time when Alex Salmond could ever be described as 'leashed'?

September in politics also marks the official end of the 'silly season'. For much of July and August, there is traditionally no news of any note. That seems to have changed in 2017.

OK, there were such silly season stories as the President of the USA staring at the sun without wearing shades, against all medical advice. Indeed, Fox News claimed this to be the most impressive feat of any US President in history. I suppose Washington's delivery of independence and Lincoln's emancipation of the slaves do pale into insignificance when compared to a luminous ball of gas being staring down by another luminous ball of gas. His place on Mount Rushmore is now surely guaranteed, doubtless staring straight into the sun.

However, very seldom can the silly season's headlines have been concerned with an imminent nuclear war. There is a slight time gap between the writing of this column and its eventual publication, so hopefully any readers of the *Scottish Left Review* in Japan or the South Pacific are still able to read this and find it amusing. Indeed, hopefully they are still able to read it full stop.

I guess if World War Three is to be declared any time soon, it will not be done in the manner of Neville Chamberlain's doom-laden, sombre radio announcement but in a tweet of no more than one-hundred and

forty characters. Expect it to read along these lines: 'North Korea are so so SAD. We bomb these BAD BAD guys now. So long folks'. This should be accompanied by any vaguely appropriate emojis, although Trump does not appear to have discovered these icons yet. This is bizarre as he himself resembles the emoji for a steaming pile of shit.

Trump managed to take time out from his demanding schedule of staring at the sun and posting rubbish on social media to visit Houston, Texas, to witness first-hand the devastation left by Hurricane Harvey. No doubt he took the opportunity, as he surveyed the rising waters caused by such unseasonal severe weather, to deny that climate change is actually happening.

The silly season does, of course, exist for a reason. It gives us the chance to reflect on the serious stuff that has happened over the previous ten or eleven months. In Scotland this year, it gives us the opportunity to get over the shock of suddenly living in a country that now has thirteen Tory MPs. Many of us still cannot believe it. Who knew there so many angry Rangers fans out there?

This year's silly season also gives everyone in Britain a chance to take in the truly appalling prospect of a Conservative government propped up by the DUP. During the Fringe, I frequently had to explain the DUP to Americans in my audience. I found the easiest shorthand was to say that they make Donald Trump look left-wing.

Trump and the DUP do have a lot in common. Both of them are orange, and neither of them believe in climate change. The DUP go further in also refusing to believe in evolution. It has to be said, of course, that many of their members do make a compelling case for that argument.

The silly season in Scotland officially ended a day or so early, at the end of August when there was some genuine news to report, namely the resignation of Kezia Dugdale as leader of Scottish Labour. I, for one, will miss her enormously. Not because she did much to enhance political dialogue in this country, but because I write jokes for a living and she was quite frequently pure comedy gold. Fair enough, she was not quite such a gift to satirists as her predecessor, Jim Murphy. However, he had set the bar for pantomime buffoonery so ridiculously high, it is highly unlikely that any of his achievements will ever be bettered. He was like the Usain Bolt of gaffs and embarrassing photo opportunities.

Kezia, despite her keen school prefect demeanour did prove a worthy successor, but I am once again conscious of the time delay between me writing this and you reading it. She may well have changed her mind by the time this article is actually in print. Having changed her mind on both Trident and Indyref 2, she has changed her mind so often on Jeremy Corbyn that no-one is ever able to keep up-to-date on whether she supports him or not.

By the time you read this, she may well have decided she wants to be the next leader of Scottish Labour, jumped ship to the Tories or joined the SNP. In fact, it's highly possible she could have done all three. Or launched herself into a new career as a chat show host. Kezia Dugdale Unleashed? Now there's three words that really don't go together.

Vladimir McTavish will be performing his 2017 Edinburgh Fringe show 'Scotland 'The State Of The Nation' at The Aberdeen Comedy Festival on 7 Saturday October.

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