



how to spend it

Is the Scottish Executive putting its money where its mouth is?

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Comment

It makes no sense whatsoever to evaluate a car on the basis of its nutritional value just as it is pointless to measure a sandwich according to its fuel consumption. In the same way, there is no point in trying to assess Jack McConnell as a national leader on the basis of how successfully he has transformed Scotland into a better country; Jack simply isn't in the transformation business. He came to power with the aim of taking a firm grip of the wheel of a vessel which he felt had been blown off course by events. The mantra was 'do less, better' – an attitude which would presumably have failed him the entrepreneurship exams he is intent on imposing on a generation of schoolchildren, but let us set that aside. It is possible to argue that there are times when the best course a government can take is to be steady, resolute and competent. So we have a twin-track approach – ultra-cautious on public sector management and expenditure and to counterbalance it a carefree recklessness on any matter of policy which might rouse the populist press (crime, faith and 'reform' right now).

So if no-one thinks that electronically tagging young tearaways while making them say the Lord's Prayer at school is going to make any real difference (and nobody does), how do you measure Jack's success on Jack's terms? Given that the current Scottish Executive is mimicking the managerialist obsession of the first Blair administration (before he got into full stride as a neo-con ideologue) one would automatically assume that the answer is 'targets'. Micromanagement usually works on the basis of targets – if we reduce the amount of waste in our process by X then we will save £Y. Which means that if you have only saved half of Y then you ain't done enough of X. And so it was that we spent five years trying to work out if the world was a better place by watching numbers creep towards targets or fall away again like a statistical horse race. The problem is that targets are simple (they are by definition the simplest distillation of a goal or aim) and the problems of the world are complicated. A target might be helpful if your target and your goal is the same thing, but when it comes to social policy they aren't.

And so after a while people realised that while chasing after one arbitrary target in any given public service all sorts of other

things were happening which hadn't been predicted. This is a process which is usually known as 'side effects'. The problem is that there is no such thing as a side effect, only effects. A pill which cures baldness but kills you kills you just as surely as a pill which is designed to kill you but accidentally also prevents baldness. And so if Blair's NHS targets meant that waiting lists dropped but waiting times increased then the target failed. Equally, asking the public if the government is doing well is pointless. It is the one credit that the Blair government can be given that things actually are getting a bit better in the public services and crime is static or going down. Unfortunately the Daily Mail has persuaded everyone that the opposite is true. That is why people think they have just fluked it by not catching a flesh-eating bug at their GPs (where otherwise they were treated effectively and efficiently) and are convinced it is a matter of time before a rabid terrorist targets them personally.

So what's left? Well, on Jack's terms we can't even consider ideology. After all, Reliance are letting prisoners go on our behalf not because of an obsession with giving as much money as possible to the private sector but purely because they are better at it. And because it frees up valuable police time which they can spend on the beat. Which is just as well, obviously, with all those criminals on the run. So let us see if the Scottish Executive is putting its money where its mouth is, one of the few indicators we might all be able to agree on.

It is easy to get started with this. The Executive's number one priority in everything is 'growing the economy'. However, they are doing this without a strategy. Subsidy is illegal, targeting inward investment has been shown to fail, economic intervention is ruled out of modern politics and the Executive has no power over most of the major economic levers. Spending on higher education and research and development is talked about but little done. And in any case, nobody seems to recognise the difference between economic development and industry support. Economic development is about preparing the ground for the economy of the future while industry support is just helping to increase the profits of existing companies. All

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in all, the Executive's ****real**** first priority is getting the CBI and the business press off its back.

So what else? Well, we've had major speeches about the importance of culture to Scotland. This would be welcome – the vastly important role of the arts is completely missed by most politicians and commentators – if it didn't coincide with a mutilation of the arts community through perpetual budget freezes. Meanwhile social inclusion is a sprawling mess which is now wholly a project-based tinkering at the edges of a giant problem while social justice has disappeared altogether. So interventionist moves such as proper childcare options, provision of healthy eating, interventionist education policies and improvements in social housing don't get a look in but 'community visioning' initiatives run by the middle classes in other people's housing estates have never had it so good.

Then there was 'knowledge economy', a policy which was supposed to make us smart and successful. And yet the bias is very much towards skills and training and not education. The universities fall down the priority list while we hear endless lectures about the need for what are really very basic skills which have little to do with 'knowledge'. And for all of Jack's evangelism about the environment, spending is still on roads with public transport a distant second.

All of which is exactly why it is strange that the Spending Review slips by with barely a mention for anyone who is not in an organisation which relies on public funding. Once every two years the Executive decides what it is going to spend its money on over the successive three years (the processes overlap). A pot of money is fought over by the ministers responsible for all the spending departments and at the end of it everyone gets their slice. But who in Scotland really knows about this, how it works, what it means and – crucially – why the decisions are made the way they are. Did you know that there is a giant slush fund for special projects which has been greatly increasing and yet it is hard to work out what it is all spent on? (Look for the 'modernisation fund'.) Is that your priority? Is that how you would want your money spent? It might

very well be – some of the things the fund is used for seem like good causes – but don't you want to know? We moan about our taxes being badly used but we are in the middle of the very process which makes the decisions and who knows?

Well, you ought to know more after reading this issue of the Scottish Left Review. ■

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feedback

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For me, choosing where to start in responding to Alan McCombes' pro-Scottish nationalist article ("Choosing to Make a Start", SLR Issue 20) has proved troublesome due to the many areas of contention and methods of argument that Mr McCombes has chosen to employ. Firstly, he enslaves the notion of the straw man by saying "Such a [Socialist] world may well be built in the distant future by generations who are yet unborn. But how do we begin to move from there to there?"

This not only defines a timescale that he cannot possibly know, it also implies that we have to somehow kick off socialist thought by one single event. The event in question is Scottish Nationalism. This is not dialectical materialism. We are part of a process, a movement, of the contradiction of use value and exchange value, there is no 'beginning', there is no 'event'.

He also poses the question "Are we aiming to build gigantic socialist mega-states?". Of course we are not aiming to build gigantic mega-states, socialist or otherwise, we are planning on eradicating the concept of states, countries and division. This will come from giving the working class a feeling of unity, and cannot be born from any form of division, Scottish nationalist or otherwise.

Set against nationalism, of course, is the fact that globalisation, or abstract capital in the form of finance capital, has already turned the world in to one large village. We, as the working class, are already being exploited the world over by the same methods; we are already feeling the same pain and experiencing the same issues.

My main gripe with the idea that nationalism and division breeds socialism and unity is the fact that we don't have to

enforce an old idea on the current system to affect a wakening of consciousness amongst the working class. We have to educate ourselves to the fact that we are part of a global community. Without those folk in China planting the tea plant, tending the tea plant, picking the tea plant, drying the tea plant, packaging the tea plant, transporting the tea bags or stacking the shelves in the local supermarket, we'd not have had our cups of tea this morning. That is a direct dependence on a lot of folk, throughout the world, even just for a cuppa.

Mr McCombes argument against the 'Bigger is Better' theory only highlights that he is missing the point regarding the historical development of our species. It is irrelevant if workers are grouped into single states or a collection of states, as they are all being worked by the same master. Hence, Scottish Nationalism is irrelevant. The missing element is not more fragmentation; on the contrary, it will be the direct addressing of the fundamental facts of life, of capitalist exploitation, the discussion of the Marxist categories and an awakening of the collective consciousness of the working class –education on the first principles of capitalist production. When the masses are willing to listen, this information will be crucial, and independence will not precipitate that. That job is being done by the disintegrating capitalist mode of production.

Final question; given the huge media coverage that they get, and the branches that they run, when will the SSP start an education program about the true nature of society, instead of spouting nationalistic, separatist, jingoistic language? ■

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briefing

What does the Executive spend its money on?

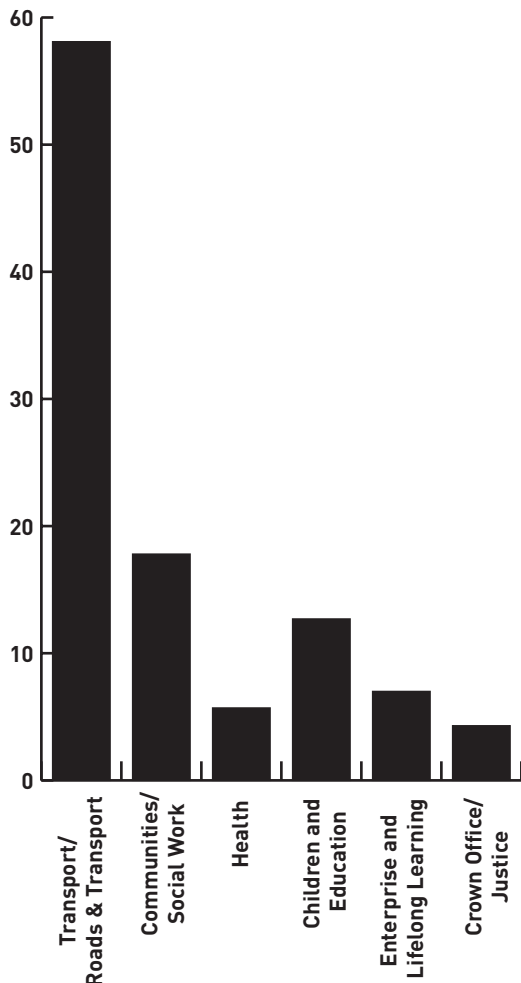
	1999 -00	2002 -03	Increase £m	Increase %
Local Government	5945.8	6465	519.2	8.7
Children and Education	200.1	311.2	111.1	55.5
Communities	549.5	715.7	166.2	30.2
Crown Office	55.8	54.6	-1.2	-2.2
Enterprise and Lifelong Learning	1872.9	2004.4	131.5	7
Transport and Environment	535.1	813	277.9	51.9
Health	5079.1	5878.2	799.1	15.7
Justice	588.7	584.3	-4.4	0.7
Scottish Budget Total	16302.7	18417.3	2114.6	12.9

What did we get for the money?

	1999	2002	% change
New Housing Completed	4992	5171	3.6
Teaching Staff	53599	52802	-1.5
Police Staff	14784	15225	3
NHS Staff	135847	143074	5.3
Social Work Staff	33828	34683	2.5
Road Mileage	53523	54592	2
Local Bus Services	434	441	1.6
Air Journeys	16144	19890	23.2
Water Journeys	4803	4874	1.5
Rail Journeys	67.5m	62.2m	-7.9

Who are the winners?

(% increase, includes local government expenditure)



“Excluding income transfers (ie social security), almost half of all tax revenues now go directly to profit-making companies (up from just over a quarter in the mid-1970s); a growing proportion of this is irrevocably committed for decades into the future. Our public services are increasingly managed and planned by company directors, not public servants, and - naturally - in ways that aim to maximise profits, not meet needs.”

Colin Leys, *Missed Connections* (Red Pepper, April 2001)
www.redpepper.org.uk/natarch/x-april-keynote.html

pre-selective memories

Isobel Lindsay argues that any debate about how public money is spent should start by taking on the anti-universalist trend in current politics

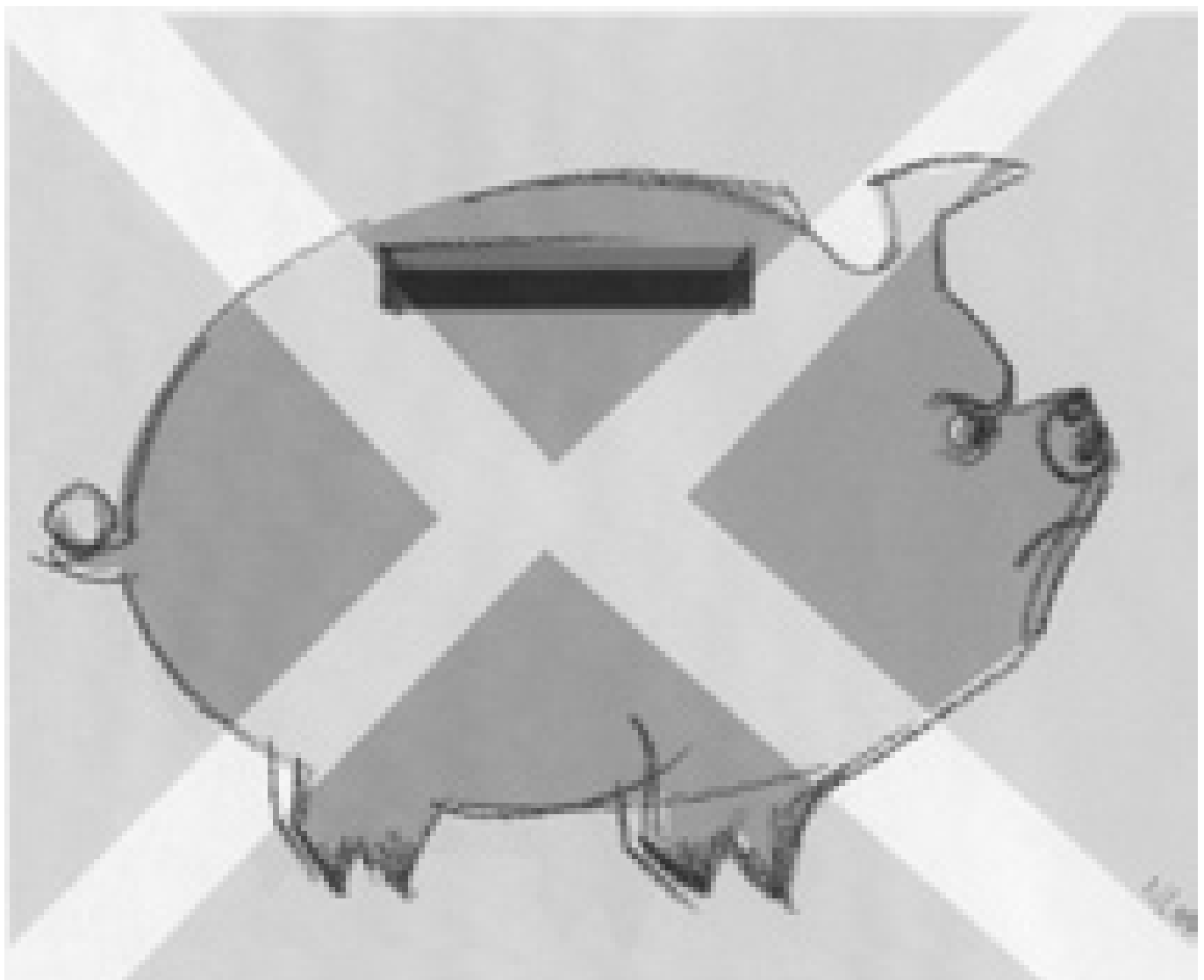
The 25th anniversary of Thatcher's accession to power is an appropriate time to look at the almost seamless continuity of those neo-con policies in the context of welfare services and benefits. The difference is that similar approaches have been repackaged with an occasional cosmetic overlay of left imagery to make them palatable.

When we read claims that charges for personal care for the elderly, variable tuition fees and means-tested pensions should be supported by the left because they are policies for the poor, this is certainly a sign that we need some intellectual clarity. Although these claims are primarily expedient justifications by party hacks to cover their leaders' policies or post-hoc justifications (see Sam Galbraith) to excuse performance in office, they have gained some superficial credibility that makes them acceptable to a wider audience. The absence of rigorous analysis allows an inegalitarian agenda to take on an egalitarian disguise.

There is a common logic running through all of these trends in social policy. It is the promotion of individualistic and competitive behaviour and values. Benefits are to be primarily a safety-net for society's failures or a subsidy for low-paying

employers. Others are to be pushed into making individual, private provision. Services and access to them are to be dominated increasingly by competition, equating public services and benefits with private market systems.

Closely interlinked with this is the vigorously promoted assumption that goods and services bought jointly with others are a punishment – i.e. paid for by taxes – while goods and services we buy as individuals are a reward although frequently paid for by borrowed money. These two big public expenditure issues – the universalist welfare state and shared as opposed to lone purchases – have deliberately and increasingly been misrepresented. The left needs to clarify the issues and change the language. 'As soon as you lose sight of what the concept of the 'welfare state' was about (and why it was and continues to be popular), you have created the essential conditions for its disintegration. This is currently the situation in England but to a lesser extent Scotland and Wales. Even in the English situation, changes are being driven from above not below. The understanding of the importance of the whole package of enabling and protective measures is even stronger in Western



Europe and has been defended by mass demonstrations, political and industrial action in Germany, Italy and France.

To understand the strength of the universal welfare state concept, you have to understand the weakness of what it replaced. Access to many services – medical, some education, unemployment, sickness, retirement benefits, housing – had been absent for the majority or had been at the discretion of others who had the power to give or to deny. Even if you gained access it was often accompanied by some badge of shame as a handout given selectively by superiors to those who had failed. At various stages political battles to secure some guaranteed support were fought and won but it was not until the post-Second World War settlements that there was a significant shift in ethos. This was partially won by political action and partially conceded by a ruling class frightened by possible revolution. Services and benefits were not a hand-out but an entitlement and they were not just an entitlement for the poor or the inadequate but for all members of a society. They were a badge of citizenship not of shame and provided benefits across social classes. These were financed partly through a progressive tax system and partly a national insurance system. The middle-class may have contributed more through tax but they also gained substantially as high users of education services and because on average they lived longer. Also even the high-skilled knew they might be vulnerable to unemployment because of illness or unexpected changes in the economy.

The strength of the welfare state concept was that it promoted social cohesion and encouraged feelings of security. Social stability requires some balance between communal and individual action, group cohesion and personal enterprise. The German sociologist, Ferdinand Tönnies, writing around a century ago looked back, perhaps rather sentimentally, at the lost 'community' of pre-industrial society but recognised that the competitive, individualistic institutions and values of industrial capitalism required some of those community values introduced in a new form to modify its harshness. Trade unions, co-operatives, state welfare services were formal institutions but he considered they had some of the elements of the traditional community relationships and could significantly modify large-scale industrial society.

Until the 1980s this was the direction in which it was widely assumed non-communist societies had moved and would continue to move. The considerable consensus around universalist provision was both because it was popular with voters and because for the capitalist system there was still the threat in the background of an alternative model and this imposed some restraint. There was an incentive to modify the inherent inequalities of capitalism and maintain structures that encourage some social cohesion. The advent of the US/UK neo-conservative approach and the collapse of the Soviet model marked a shift – a new confidence that capital could dictate the terms of engagement in the workplace and in the relationship between individual and state. Constraint and accommodation were no longer necessary and unemployment was a valuable disciplinary tool.

Why should a predominance of the universal in services be an egalitarian force in a society and the selective be a route to greater inequality? Theoretically that outcome might not seem to be the most likely. But introduce selection/market systems into services like education and health and the outcome will be an increase in polarisation. It is useful to review the reasons why this is prone to happen.

1. It will be those already advantaged who will be most efficient at using the systems to further that advantage. They have the confidence, the networks, the information, the resources to travel to gain access. The grossest example of this is education in London. The Foundation hospital policy in England is likely to move in the same direction.
2. A service that caters only or primarily for the poor is more likely to produce standards set at a lower level of expectations.
3. The more the system of means-testing is used, the more difficult it becomes to resist its further use. If we have fees for higher education, why not fees for all non-compulsory education – i.e. post-16? The principle is the same. Let those people who can pay do so and exempt those on very low incomes. Why not the same logic for non-emergency healthcare? If charges for personal care for the elderly are imposed, why not charges for an increasing range of other services? The logic is the same. Incrementally universal provision is dismantled. As we can see from dental services, the outcome is that those who can afford private provision or the fees for public provision still have an adequate service, sometimes an improved one, but the rest get a sparse service difficult to access.
4. The take-up of selective benefits is much lower because of the greater complexity in claiming them and the 'shame' element associated. The working family tax credits have only had around a 50 per cent take-up.
5. The more prosperous become more hostile to paying through taxation for services/benefits to which they do not have free access. The outcome is a negative cycle. The political justification for moving from general taxation to direct charging is that the former has too high a political price. But the less people gain from a system, the less receptive they are likely to be to general taxation. Many in the lower middle class/upper working class find themselves at the margin – incomes over the limit for exemption from payments but paying substantial amounts in taxation.
6. We lose the insurance principle in relation to benefits and services. We may be fortunate in not requiring elderly care or expensive medical attention or unemployment benefit; but we may not. We may be fortunate in gaining access to higher education and living longer thus requiring more pension but we may not. Sharing our risks across the widest population with a secure provider makes sense. So taxation and state provision makes sense.

These are some of the factors that should be prominent in any debate but are so often absent. They are absent because there has been an ideological drive over the past twenty-five years to undermine shared provision in the public sector and to shift the 'taken for granted' assumptions to individual, private and competitive provision as the only viable trend. What we need from the left is to change what is taken for granted and to develop new language. We need to talk not just about public provision versus private but about shared purchasing versus lone purchasing, co-operative versus competing service organisation, security versus insecurity, shared risks rather than isolated risks. If we cannot turn around these debates, then we will lose the integrative effect of sharing services and benefits – the equality of experience. We will also lose the argument for a progressive tax system which enables all to access similar benefits and those who can afford it, to pay more through tax. ■

Isobel Lindsay is a lecturer at Strathclyde University

spending for now and the future

Mark Ballard explains what a green budget would look like

Jack McConnell really stirred things up two years ago. Environmentalists and progressive political thinkers were amazed. His first policy speech since becoming First Minister, and he chose to make it on the environment and sustainable development. He said he was going to the World Summit in Johannesburg, he was to chair the Cabinet Sub-committee on sustainable development previously led by a rural affairs Minister and he was going to use his position to champion environmental justice. Friends of the Earth described it as perhaps the most significant speech of any political leader in a decade. Environmental Justice, a concept pushed in Scotland by Friends of the Earth Scotland, offers a way of uniting the social and environmental agendas of the left. By endorsing the idea that the people of Scotland require 'no less than a decent environment for all, and no more than a fair share of the Earth's resources' Jack McConnell appeared to be breaking free of the timidity that had characterised New Labour.

One of the commitments he made at the time was that the Executive's Spending Review would be assessed against sustainable development. Every government department would have to justify their spending in terms of sustainable development. This was a first, and was perhaps the most significant announcement of them all. Greens have long argued that government spending often serves to undermine communities and the environment, moving us away from sustainable development. So, with sustainable development as new benchmark we could hope for massive investment in public transport, not roads, in rural communities not big farmers, in support for local production rather than footloose multinationals and so on. But oh dear, two years on and what a disappointment. Instead of marked change, contradiction and inaction are still the order of the day. Take transport. We are still seeing more spent on roads every year than on public transport. Traffic growth is still being prepared for rather than tackled. The Executive is pressing ahead with the five mile M74 extension at a cost of up to £1bn, whilst plans for a £400m upgrade and expansion of Edinburgh's Waverley Station to act as a major hub for Scotland's rail network struggles for cash.

Common Agricultural Policy funds have been revised but not a shift that adds up to much change as most funds still go into intensive farming. And we even had the recent sorry affair where the Executive refused to use its legal powers to reject GM crops which threaten any investment in promoting organic markets. The recent debate about outsourcing and the growing roll-call of closures in 'Silicon Glen' shows the flaws in successive Scottish enterprise strategies to attract inward investment, rather than supporting indigenous growth.

Meanwhile, the Executive target for its budget as well as other policies is 'to grow the Scottish economy'. This ambition is to be achieved through an increase in the Scottish Gross Domestic Product. GDP is a widely discredited way of measuring the wellbeing of an economy, the equivalent of measuring an individual's health only using a set of scales. GDP growth may be beneficial, but it may also have negative effects on communities and the environment, or store up problems for

the future which vastly outweigh current benefits. The UK Sustainable Development Commission recently called for a distinction between "smart growth" that generates prosperity and social benefits without harming the environment, and the current unsustainable growth that focuses on GDP.

Incredibly, the Scottish Parliament's Finance Committee when assessing the most recent Executive budget was 'unable' to assess its impact on sustainable development. Unfortunately, as the Finance Committee report made clear, the lack of information required to scrutinise the past performance of these initiatives or to examine the future budget allocations makes it impossible to assess the true effectiveness of these proposals. It is not only the Finance Committee that has made these criticisms: the report mentions that the Education, Health and the Environment and Rural Development Committees all made similar points.

So what's to be done? Clearly a proper sustainable development strategy needs to be put in place. We need to make sure that the spending review really does what it says on the tin. The Scottish Parliament's Committee scrutiny has to be a key factor in driving change and they must reject the budget if it is not good enough. We need to make sure that words are matched by action. What would be in the difference between current budget and one that put sustainable development first? In order to address this question, and give a flavour of what a green budget would look like, the following are some suggestions for change.

Firstly transport. The sustainable transport lobby thought it had won the argument in the 1990s, demonstrating that new road developments only add to congestion. The Executive's current emphasis on new road construction hits hardest those, like the 40 per cent of households in my own region of Lothian, who do not have access to a car. By continuing to channel investment into roads we make it increasingly difficult not to have a car. Major investment is needed to bring Scotland's rail networks up to scratch, including support for local transport improvements such as trams. However, this approach must not be over egged as the tendency of politicians of all parties is to spend on new mega-projects, whether railways or motorways. The UK gives among lowest subsidy levels in Europe and Scotland is among lowest in UK to travel by bus. This is particularly important as walking and taking the bus are the most common modes of transport among socially excluded people and communities. It should be a priority to try to maintain and develop the current systems, making buses better, rather than always looking for new mega projects to build. This will make the budget and the work of the transport minister less glamorous but will actually deliver improved transport.

A Green health and education budget would put resources into preventative medicine, new 'healthy' hospitals initiatives, community-based treatment centres and complementary treatments (including updating training and increasing awareness). Greens would put money into improving pay and conditions for health professionals – the current budget links pay modernisation for NHS staff to new, less favourable

working conditions, something a Green budget would oppose. More money for health promotion and mental wellbeing will produce both long and short term savings in curative care and hospitalisation.

Similarly, in schools, money would be directed at creating a low material resource knowledge economy that has the potential to make Scotland an even more worthwhile place to live. To do this, schooling would focus not on performance indicators but on the process of learning, ensuring that education equips children well for life as well as promoting basic skills. The Scottish Executive's current addiction to private finance would be abandoned in favour of adequate state funding, and schools, colleges and universities would be encouraged to become true community resources, increasing stakeholder valuation of public services as a whole, and education in particular.

In rural policy greens would support rural development as a holistic measure, as well as supporting farmers. Scotland needs to follow countries such as Norway in having a proper 'rural policy'. Greens would shift funding out of subsidising production and into rural development, so that whole communities benefit, not just certain sectors of those communities. Greens have already argued in favour of decoupling subsidy from production, a policy which the Executive has adopted.

The mid term review of the CAP offered the chance to do exactly this through the process of "modulation" or shifting money from subsidy to rural development. Greens in February argued for a higher rate of modulation than the "combined rate of at least 10 per cent by the end of 2007" that the Executive adopted. This would allow the reallocation of existing agriculture and rural development money rather than seeking new resources. This would mean the taxpayer would no longer have to subsidise the production of surpluses that then have to be stored or disposed of at further taxpayers expense, instead public money could go into projects which improve the rural environment and create jobs. Greens would promote organic agriculture as a way of meeting the Scottish consumer's unmet demand for organic produce while creating more employment than conventional agriculture. This is of particular importance given that under the current regime the largest 350 farm businesses in Scotland share out £50.5 million of the CAP each year between them, while the 8600 smallest farms in Scotland share out only £13 million.

The most pressing challenge for sustainable development in Scotland is the continuing problem of poverty. Around a third of Scotland's young people are still growing up in poverty – a figure that has not significantly changed since Labour came to power



in 1999. We face an increasingly divided society, where two thirds of the population are in work, while one third are on one form of benefit or another, or in casual work. Moving from the economically in-active sector to becoming economically active remains very difficult. Government social security policy is still tied to a Beveridge era paradigm of rigid demarcation between employed and unemployed. The marginal costs of employment in terms of withdrawal of benefit remain high. New ways of entering work, such as volunteering and part-time work, are still resisted in the social security system, as not being 'looking for work'.

To tackle these problems within the framework of the powers of the Scottish Parliament is very difficult, because we lack the powers over taxation and social security. However, Greens argue that the Parliament requires further powers to address these problems, and given those powers would address such problems through a Citizens' Income Scheme (CIS). The CIS is an effective way of simplifying the current tax and benefit system, while helping to move society to a more sustainable notion of work. Under this scheme every person would receive a basic income from the state. It would be set at a level high enough to allow people to provide their basic needs of shelter, food, clothing and heating from this source alone. This income is non-taxable, and would replace the personal tax allowance and most welfare benefits (other than those for special needs). Further income would then be taxed on a progressive scale. Students in further and higher education would receive the basic income, which would effectively restore student maintenance grants. ■

Mark Ballard is Green MSP for the Lothians



ending poverty means paying

William Bonnar asks if tackling poverty should be a spending priority and if so how it might be started

Should some public spending be specifically targeted at reducing poverty? For socialists and indeed most people the answer would be an unequivocal yes and puzzlement at why the question needed to be asked in the first place. Yet successive governments since 1979 have resolutely set their faces against such an idea. Their argument has been that the aim should be to increase wealth generally in society which will ultimately benefit everyone including the poor; the trickle down effect. It is not too difficult to demolish this line of reasoning both in theory and in practice. Since 1979 this approach in Britain has left the wealthy considerably wealthier in absolute and relative terms while every indicator suggests that the poor are considerably poorer.

That poverty is an enormous problem in Scotland cannot be understated. By most reasonable measures it is estimated that a quarter of Scotland's people live in poverty. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation the figure is 23 per cent. The same organisation estimates that 30 per cent of children live in poor families and that 25 per cent of pensioners live on the breadline. Among the poor a minority are extremely poor, having to regularly go without some of the basic necessities of life.

What, if anything, should government do about this? Under the last Conservative Government, not only did they do nothing to tackle poverty they refused even to recognise that the problem existed. To famously quote Government Minister John Moore, 'in Britain there is no such thing as poverty only different levels of affluence'.

At least New Labour recognises that there is an issue and that government has a responsibility to deal with it. This, however, is where the problem begins. For New Labour, there are some roads down which they are simply not prepared to travel. They will not countenance any measures aimed at a re-distribution of wealth despite the fact that Britain is now one of the most inequitable societies on the planet or the fact that a colossal redistribution of wealth has actually occurred since 1979 from the poor to the rich. On the contrary almost all fiscal measures by this government since 1997 have either consolidated or increased this inequality. Related to this the government refuses to contemplate any changes to existing tax laws in terms of increasing the tax burden on the rich as a way of increasing public expenditure. Whether by closing the myriad of legal tax loopholes, chasing up on non-payment of tax or changing our highly regressive tax laws in a more progressive direction the government will simply not consider 'a tax on wealth and enterprise'. Yet by closing these loopholes or through a more aggressive tax collection system or even by simply returning to the tax rates which existed prior to 1979, tens of billions of pounds could be generated for the public purse. This in turn could be channelled into tackling poverty. Governments on both sides of the border are also extremely reluctant to use public expenditure to tackle specific pockets of poverty preferring instead to direct expenditure to 'wealth creation and enterprise'.

If New Labour say they want to tackle poverty yet rule out the redistribution of wealth, changes to the tax system or more targeted public expenditure there really isn't much left. Instead they end up trying to tackle the problem at the margins.

There are no shortage of suggestions about ways in which public expenditure could be used to tackle poverty. The following two have been proposed by the Scottish Socialist Party specifically with this in mind although the list could be considerably extended.

Both proposals have been specifically costed in terms of public expenditure and both could be implemented by the Scottish Executive straight away.

If New Labour say they want to tackle poverty yet rule out the redistribution of wealth, changes to the tax system or more targeted public expenditure there really isn't much left. Instead they end up trying to tackle the problem at the margins

Free nutritious school meals for every state school pupil in Scotland. Linking the issue of child poverty and ill-health and borrowing on the practice of some Scandinavian countries this measure would cost £174 million pounds per year (as 2002). It would lift the burden of providing at least one nutritious meal a day from the poorest families and represent an investment in the future health of the nation.

Introduction of a £7.32 Minimum Wage for all Scottish public sector workers. In Scotland several hundred thousand workers in the Health Service, Civil Service, Local Government etc earn considerably less than the European Decency Threshold. Scores of thousands are so poorly paid they rely on Income Support to make up their wages. This proposal would lift a whole section of Scottish Workers out of poverty wages and provide pressure on the private sector to do the same. The cost in terms of public expenditure would be £350 million pounds per year (as 2002).

There would be no shortage of similar suggestions, what is lacking is the political will and consensus to go down this particular road.

Central to the above is the belief that the eradication of poverty is the biggest single challenge facing Scottish society. Directing public expenditure to finance the kind of policies and approach outlined above would be the way to meet that challenge.

Of course this flies in the face of a government whose principle concern is defending and promoting the interests of the wealthy and big business. A government whose economic, political and ideological commitment to this is as single-minded as any Thatcherite Government. A government determined to prove that capitalism and the rich are safe in their hands.

What is needed is a government which defends and promotes the interests of working class people at the expense of big business and the rich. For such a government the eradication of poverty would be one of its central aims. ■

William Bonnar is an active member of the SSP

spender bias

The Scottish Women's Budget Group argue that it is time for the Executive to end gender bias in spending

Composite Motion L, Scottish Trades Union Annual Congress 2004, states that 'Congress is deeply concerned about age and gender discrimination in the Government's existing national minimum wage policy', 'Congress hopes the Low Pay Commission consultation will result in an extension, by the Government, of full National Minimum Wage protection to younger workers, including those on Modern Apprenticeships which will lift the base salary for young women and begin the important process of revaluing women's work, helping to close the gender pay gap'.

The Scottish Women's Budget Group (SWBG), like the STUC, supports the government's national minimum wage policy. However, as illustrated above, the government has failed to consider that the experiences of women differ to those of men and how this will impact on the outcomes of the policy; hence the gender pay gap is sustained.

The SWBG aim to encourage the Scottish Parliament and the Executive to change the way decisions are made about how money is spent. We believe that analysing how Government Spending Plans affect girls and women – gender analysis – can influence spending plans and improve policymaking and outcomes as a result. The SWBG is not arguing for a separate budget for women or for increased funding for women-specific programmes. Rather, the group promotes gender analysis of spending plans to highlight any gaps between policy statements and the resources committed to their implementation. This supports the improvement of overall economic efficiency. It also ensures that any evidence of gender-bias in the promotion of social justice is accounted for and, where appropriate, offset.

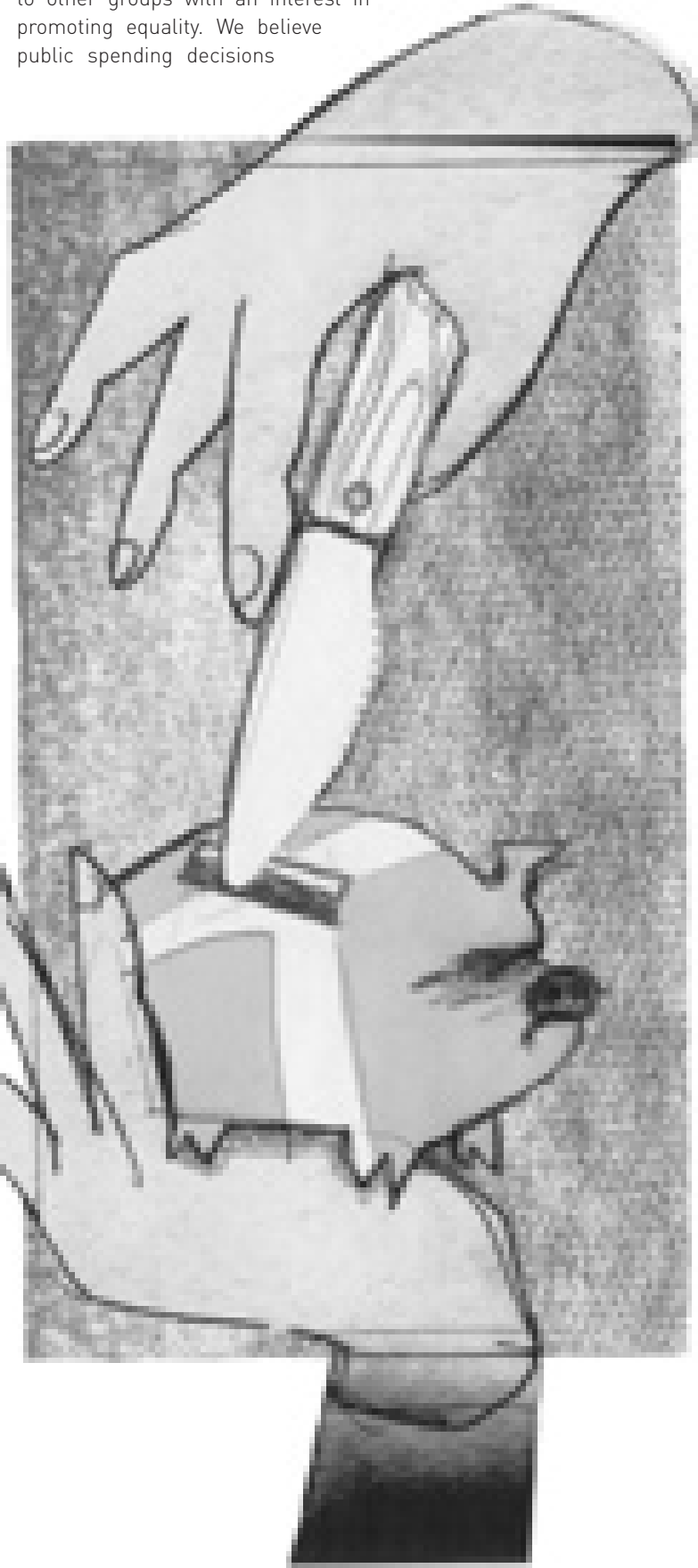
Combating the gender bias in the way governments raise and spend money is also being used in initiatives to address gender inequality in many other countries e.g. Wales, Ireland, England, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and South Africa.

Why does gender matter in public spending?

The budget reflects the social and economic priorities of a government. It represents the spending needed to put policy into practice. Budget decisions that do not take account of how the lives of girls and women differ to those of boys and men are often described as 'gender neutral'. However, such an approach can more accurately be described as 'gender blind' since it does not acknowledge that women and men do have different needs and resources. These can affect the way women and men access everything from jobs, to public services such as housing, transport, education and training. By taking account of these differences, policy-makers can ensure better policy targeting, more effective delivery and greater equality.

Our achievements - Opening up the budget process

The work of SWBG has been instrumental in making the budget process more accessible to other groups with an interest in promoting equality. We believe public spending decisions



are not only the preserve of politicians, economists and political commentators but that they affect the lives of everyone. This belief combined with the new Scottish Parliament's stated commitment to transparency, civic participation and equal opportunity inspired members of the women's movement in Scotland to form the Scottish Women's Budget Group. Since its formation the group has worked to secure a more open and accessible budget process and to ensure gender equality is considered at every stage of that process. Our early work saw the establishment of an advisory group that looks at ways of ensuring equality is promoted through the budget process. The group consists of representatives from the Equality Unit, Finance Department and representatives from the Scottish Women's Budget Group and other equality bodies. Lobbying by SWBG and other equality groups has contributed to improvements in the presentation of budget documents, which we have welcomed.

Our recent concerns regarding the Executive's commitment to the gender equality agenda

Over the past four years we have worked to ensure addressing the present gender bias in public spending in Scotland remains high on the Executive's equality agenda. The Equal Opportunities Committee has supported us in Parliament and in particular the committee's Gender Reporter Elaine Smith.

The early work of the group brought the following commitment from the present First Minister, then Minister for Finance: 'Equality proofing will be embedded in the detailed processes of departmental spending and the secondment of research help' (2000). The Executive continues to express its commitment to tackling inequality between women and men through the budget process:

*'The ability to gender proof the budget is linked intrinsically with the Executive's work on mainstreaming equality', Tavish Scott, Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services, Oct 2003.

*'We must create the means to obtain the necessary information to deliver a properly gender proofed budget.... We are committed to ensuring that a gender-proofed budget is achieved' Margaret Curran, Minister for Communities, Oct 2003

However, after four years of lobbying and sharing our expertise, we are becoming increasingly concerned that promoting equality, and particularly gender equality, through the budget process is being de-prioritised by the Executive. For example, the Executive's commitment to Equality receives a markedly lower profile in the recently published Annual Evaluation Report, the budget document which sets out the Executive's views on its priorities for the next few years, than in did in the previous budget document, the Draft Budget 2004-05.

Further, the evidence – clearly illustrated in recent spending plans – confirms that the Executive is failing to invest in measures we have recommended to address the current gender bias in public expenditure. For example, by failing to invest in measures to address the differential impact of Modern Apprenticeships on young women and men the Executive is missing an opportunity to address the gender pay gap that is sustaining gender inequality.

We support the Executive's investment in Modern Apprenticeships as a means to enhance workforce development. However recent

research illustrates that as of the end of January 2004 under 35 per cent of those 'in training' in Modern Apprenticeships were female. The research further illustrates that women continue to be concentrated in the non-traditional apprenticeship frameworks such as Business Administration, Hairdressing and Childcare while men dominate in the traditional sectors such as Construction. For example, 98 per cent of participants in training in Early Years Care and Education as of January 2004 were female.

The extent of occupational segregation based on gender in the take-up of the Modern Apprenticeship scheme closely mirrors segregation in the wider labour market and hence will not contribute to a narrowing of the current gender pay gap. Work that is traditionally viewed as appropriate for women such as childcare continues to command lower wages. SWBG have previously argued that investment to promote non-traditional occupational choices to young women and men, and particularly to increase the participation of men in sectors dominated by women in Modern Apprenticeships, would combat this. In addition measures to address low pay in the sectors occupied by women would further promote non-traditional occupational choices for young men.

Inequalities for women sustained

Women make up 52 per cent of the Scottish population. A recent report commissioned by the Scottish Executive illustrates the position of women compared to men in Scotland today:

- Women have less access than men to income, earnings, pensions and material resources such as cars or housing;
- Women have less access than men to time that is their own and not spent on caring for other people or on paid or unpaid work;
- Women have less access than men to political power and to decision making across a range of public bodies; and
- Women have a one in five chance of experiencing domestic abuse during their lives.

The disadvantages women in Scotland face continue to be sustained by a spending decision and policy making process that fails to recognise the differences in the lives of women and girls compared to men and boys. Local authorities and the government's partners in the private and voluntary sector must also be encouraged to use gender impact analysis to address gender inequality. It is time for the Executive to take the lead in addressing the gender bias in the policymaking and spending process and put its money where its mouth is. ■

The Scottish Women's Budget Group (SWBG) brings together women from academia, local communities, statutory and voluntary sectors and trade unions. It forms a group dedicated to the promotion of gender equality in the Scottish budgetary process. Oxfam, Engender and Glasgow Caledonian University support its aim of tackling inequality through combating the current gender bias in public expenditure in Scotland. Oxfam currently funds the employment of its part-time Development Worker and is funding our participation in an International Visit on gender budgets to South Africa and Yemen in May. If you would like to join the group, or find out more about our work, please contact Kay Simpson, Parliamentary Liaison Development Officer, SWBG, 26 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3QH. Email: ksimpson@engender.org.uk. Tel: 0131 558 8199

what's a vote worth?

Gordon Morgan looks at the voting systems we now have in Scotland and concludes that much of the comment on them emerges from confusion and lies

Following the 2003 elections an Electoral Commission survey found that most people who didn't vote were completely unaware that the Scottish Parliament was elected by a proportional system. Many who did vote were confused by the process. They pointed out that PR hadn't put people off voting as they didn't know about it. A significant number would have voted had they realised their vote could have influenced the result.

The upcoming European election is a proportional system and the Scottish Parliament has voted to make Local Government elections proportional. Far from welcoming this as a chance to increase voter participation, certain diehard opponents of PR, predominantly Labour, are seeking to abolish PR for the Scottish Parliament or at least change the system to one which will cut out the Greens and SSP. A commission set up by Westminster is to investigate this.

Supporters of devolution and independence should oppose Westminster interfering in the Scottish Parliament election process. The election scheme for Holyrood was endorsed by the Scottish people in a referendum, has delivered on most of the criteria set out in the paper – smaller parties, independents, women, geographic links – and should not be lightly changed.

The most undemocratic system is the First Past the Post system at Westminster where many of PR's critics were elected by a small minority of the voters in their area, and the Labour Government got 63 per cent of the seats on 41 per cent of the vote.

Nevertheless, even to anoraks, the present voting systems are confusing and the changes to them unclear. The following is an attempt to explain these changes and some likely outcomes.

European Election June 2004

The present eight Scottish MEPs, will reduce to seven after June. Contrary to how some MEPs describe themselves, each represents the whole of Scotland. Regional MEPs ceased to exist when an all-Scotland list was introduced.

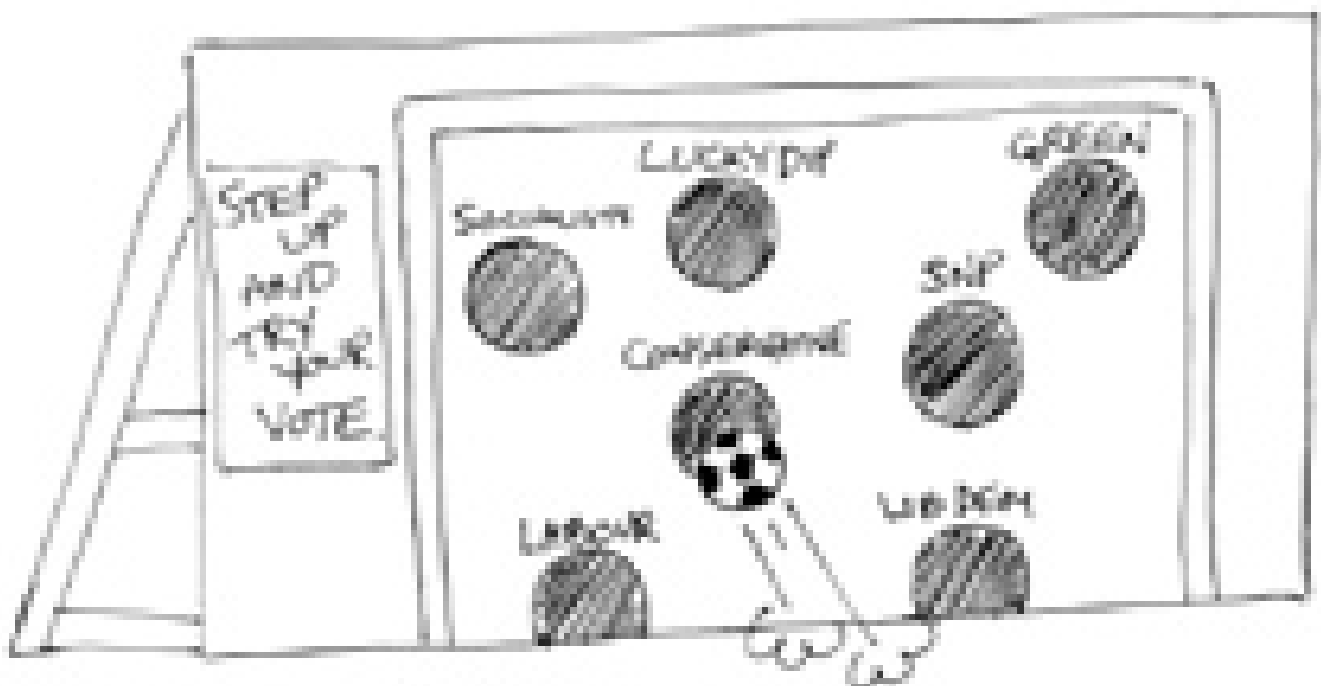
At present Labour has three MEPs, Tories and SNP two each and Libs Dems one. The system is a closed party list system, so you have no choice over the candidates and simply vote for a party by ticking a box. It is expected there will be 15 or 16 parties standing in June; however, only six parties have any chance of election.

In the absence of polls specific to the European election we can look at the 2003 Holyrood election and use the 1999 result to estimate propensity to vote.

The poll is expected to be less than the 25 per cent in 1997, possibly 20 per cent. The key will be getting the vote out for your party. Labour were disappointed in not having an all-postal ballot, which may have helped them retain three seats.

The 2003 regional results were Labour 29 per cent, SNP 20 per cent, Tories 16 per cent, Lib Dems 12 per cent, Greens seven per cent and SSP seven per cent. In 1999 at the Euro election, Labour and Lib Dems lost voting share on a low poll, Tories, Greens and SSP gained. Applying the same adjustments to current polls would give Labour 24 per cent, SNP 21 per cent, Tories 20 per cent, Lib Dems nine per cent, Greens nine per cent and SSP nine per cent.

The likelihood now is Labour will win only two seats, hence being second in Labour's list is important. The Tories and SNP



'Aw now man can i no get another shot?'

could both take two seats, but either could lose one if their vote ends up less than double any of the three smaller parties. The Lib Dems may hold onto one seat but could be beaten by both Greens and SSP and end with no MEP. The possible winners in these scenarios are the SSP and the Greens, whichever gets the higher vote being most likely to take a seat.

In practice each 10.5 per cent of the vote should give a seat; however, as little as nine per cent may be enough. If the SSP can get 70 per cent of those who voted for it in 2003 to vote in June it should take a seat.

Local Government Elections

The decision to change from first past the post to Single Transferable vote (STV) has caused ructions amongst Labour councillors. But PR was the price for the Lib Dems joining the Scottish Executive.

What has been delivered barely counts as PR. Elections will be based on multi-member wards. However, wards will consist of only three or four members, when five is accepted as the minimum for proportionality. The Parliament's working group accepted four-member wards would be the least democratic implementation of STV anywhere in the world and recommended there should be five-member wards. This was voted down by Labour and the Lib Dems in committee. It is likely the final scheme will remain three or four-member wards. A boundary commission will create new wards rather than using existing boundaries so this makes predictions of outcomes more difficult. Most cities should have four-member wards and rural areas three-member wards.

Under STV, you vote for a candidate not a party. Thus if there are two Labour candidates standing, the voters give their first preference to the candidate they prefer and their second preference to the other Labour candidate then perhaps their 3rd preference to the SSP and so on. The problem is not everyone will vote in this fashion. Possibly 20 per cent may switch to other parties without voting for all the Labour candidates. To minimise this effect, in Northern Ireland different candidates from the same party are promoted in different parts of a ward and they stand as many candidates as the seats they expect to win.

The fewer members per ward, the more STV favours larger parties. With four-member wards you require 20 per cent to get a seat. Hence 40 per cent of the vote spread evenly across a city gives 50 per cent of the seats. As 2nd preferences add to votes, less than 40 per cent first preferences may gain two seats in individual wards. However, some parties are less likely to get second preference votes than others. Under STV the least hated party gains.

I would expect a party with 45 per cent first preferences to have a majority of seats in cities and with 40 per cent to have a chance of a majority. With three-member wards, you get two seats (66 per cent) with 50 per cent of the vote. This is an unlikely outcome in rural areas unless both candidates have strong personal appeal.

Looking at last years local government votes and polls of second preferences, John Curtice has calculated only Labour would have overall control of any council. They would hold East Ayrshire, Glasgow, North and South Lanarkshire and West Dunbarton. It is reasonably likely they would have a majority or

close to it in East Lothian, Midlothian, North Ayrshire and West Lothian. They would lose control of Clackmannan, Edinburgh, Renfrewshire and Stirling. The SNP would lose control of Angus and the Lib Dems of Inverclyde.

With three- or four-member wards and six main parties contesting, a fairly high first vote is essential to participate in the redistribution of 2nd preferences. Unless you get around 13 per cent first preferences in four-member wards or around 17 per cent in three-member wards your party will be eliminated at an early stage. This will particularly affect the Greens, the SSP and in most places the Lib Dems. It is impossible to predict how independents will fare but if well known and locally respected they should survive.

In 2003, the SSP would have won seats in Glasgow, some in Edinburgh and Renfrew and a sprinkle in other councils. Probably less than 20 in total out of 1,222 across Scotland. The Greens may fair slightly better. However, they are likely to get far less seats than their share of first preference votes.

In Glasgow, under the existing system Labour won 71 out of 79 seats – 90 per cent – on 48 per cent of the vote, the SSP and Tories took one seat each, the Lib Dems and the SNP took three each. I estimate under STV the outcome would have been Labour 47 seats (59 per cent of seats on 48 per cent of the vote), SNP 18 seats (23 per cent on 20 per cent vote), SSP 10 seats (13 per cent on 16 per cent vote), Lib Dems three seats (4 per cent on eight per cent vote) and Tories one seat (1 per cent on eight per cent vote).

Clearly STV in three- and four-member wards favours the largest parties in each locality. In Glasgow Labour and the SNP would win more seats than their share of the first preference votes, although in comparison with the existing system Labour are losers and SNP and SSP are winners. Different parties will gain in each local authority area.

Over Scotland, Labour may suffer a slight reduction in the number of its councillors; however, its losses in its heartlands will not be as pronounced as some fear and will be partly made up by gains in other areas. The system proposed is far from proportional but it is better than the status quo.

Holyrood and Westminster

The Holyrood AMS system is far more proportional than STV based as it is on 16- or 17-member wards (not seven as some think). Those who suggest a change to STV at Holyrood, presumably based on at most three- or four-member wards would be denying representation to the SSP, Greens, Pensioners and most independents. It is also possible that Labour would still have more than their share of seats.

Those who want to scrap proportionality altogether in favour of dual member constituencies are at least more honest. Nevertheless, they fought and lost the battle for this proposal in the '90s. We should defend the existing Holyrood system against Westminster's attentions.

The first past the post system gave Blair an elective dictatorship with 41 per cent of the vote. He then gave us an illegal war. Campaign for PR for Westminster. ■

Gordon Morgan is the Scottish Socialist Party's Constitutional Spokesperson

making a corpse of habeas corpus

Duncan McFarlane summarises your chances of being jailed without trial in the aftermath of the anti-terrorism legislation passed in Britain and America

In 1647 Charles I, King of England, Scotland and Ireland, was handed over by Scottish Covenanters to forces loyal to the English Parliament. This marked the beginning of the end of the 'English' civil war - which was in fact a civil war that raged across the entire British Isles. It also paved the way for the further development of the legal right of Habeas Corpus. Today Britain's Prime Minister is, like Charles I, an English ruler of Scots descent who is attempting to erode basic legal rights in Scotland and Britain - and, like Charles, claims to do so for the good of the nation.

In 1215 AD English barons forced King John of England to approve a Great Charter of rights - Magna Carta. This included a right which would later inspire the legal principle of Habeas Corpus by providing that "No free man shall be seized or imprisoned...except by the lawful judgement of his equals". Habeas Corpus is effectively the right to be presumed innocent and not be imprisoned unless found guilty by fair trial by jury. Since Magna Carta was drafted for the nobility the term 'free man' in it excluded much of the population - but Habeas Corpus rights were gradually extended in English law to cover all citizens of both sexes.

The 1632 Habeas Corpus Act did not prevent Charles I holding notoriously unfair royal 'star chamber' trials which sentenced his critics to imprisonment, torture and mutilation until his overthrow in the English Civil War. The subsequent military dictatorship of 'Lord Protector' Oliver Cromwell also limited reform. The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 in uneasy co-existence with a strengthened parliament was far from democratic but still an improvement on the situation preceding the Civil War. The 1679 Habeas Corpus Amendment Act closed loopholes in the 1632 Act. The British Empire spread the legal principle of Habeas Corpus world-wide and it remains a principle of law in the UK and all its former colonies - from Kenya to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and of course the USA.

Now governments on both sides of the Atlantic have begun putting this process in reverse - a reversal which has accelerated since September 11. The precedents set if this process continues could threaten these rights - and democracy - in Britain, America and globally. First Habeas Corpus rights were removed from foreign nationals; now suggestions have been made of removing them from citizens. The UK's 1973 and 1989 Prevention of Terrorism Acts (PTA) removed Habeas Corpus rights from terrorist suspects in Northern Ireland. The Terrorism Act 2000 widened the definition of terrorism to include "the use or threat of action...designed to influence the government" or "for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause". After September 11 the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act of 2001 gave the Home Secretary the power to have foreign nationals suspected of terrorism jailed indefinitely without proper trial. The 'USA Patriot Act' combined a very similar definition of terrorism as acts which "appear to be intended" to "influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion" with the same provisions for jailing

non-citizens indefinitely without trial. An early draft of the 2002 USA Patriot Act contained a section titled "suspension of the writ of habeas corpus" which was rejected by congress.

According to US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld "We need to keep in mind that the people in US custody [at Guantanamo Bay] are not there because they stole a car. They are enemy combatants who are being detained for acts of war against our country and that is why different rules have to apply." So if the crime is serious enough we can just assume anyone accused of it is guilty and imprison them without a fair trial?

Some argue that terrorists don't deserve a fair trial or are too dangerous to be afforded one. This misses the point. Being accused of being a terrorist is completely different to being proven to be one. All the Algerians arrested in the UK in December 2002 and held without trial for a year under suspicion of planning Al Qa'ida attacks were released last December after the government admitted it had no evidence against them. Many other suspects arrested after September 11 still remain in solitary confinement without trial. Some have lost limbs as a result, others have gone insane. Similarly five British citizens held by the US military at Guantanamo Bay were released without charge in February after having been held for between one and two years without trial. Others remain incarcerated without trial. The releases may have been motivated by the Pentagon's fears that the US Supreme Court will rule against it in the Bush administration's appeal against a ruling by a Federal court in December 2003 that the administration's policy of imprisoning 660 non-citizens in the US Navy's Guantanamo Bay base in Cuba without access to US legal protections is unconstitutional and violates international law. The same ruling rejected the Bush administration's attempt to justify jailing the US citizen John Walker Lindh indefinitely without trial by claiming he was an 'enemy combatant' after he admitted fighting for the Taliban in Afghanistan. If this practice had been upheld any US citizen could potentially have been jailed indefinitely without trial.

In the UK Home Secretary David Blunkett has suggested new anti-terrorism legislation which could remove Habeas Corpus rights not just from foreign nationals but also UK citizens. A leaked draft of US Attorney General John Ashcroft's 'Domestic Security Enhancements Act' does the same by allowing the Attorney General to decide who is classified as a terrorist. Bush's Education Secretary has labelled the largest American teachers' union a 'terrorist organisation'. Blunkett and Ashcroft argue that trials would be involved. However these trials would be anything but fair. Captives at Guantanamo bay can have defence lawyers - but only those vetted and approved by the Pentagon. The last batch of these were fired for protesting at the unfairness of the trial system which breached even army court martial procedures never mind US law. Blunkett has proposed trials held in secret with judges, prosecution and defence lawyers all vetted by the same intelligence services that brought us WMD claims through the Rockingham cell's 'Operation Mass Appeal' propaganda campaign. Defendants



'But neither it was only a cherry bomb!'

will not be allowed to be present at their own trial to hear the evidence against them. Effectively it would be trial by secret services who have proven themselves political tools rather than politically neutral guardians.

If a government can jail one of its citizens indefinitely without trial then a legal precedent is set which allows current or future governments to jail anyone indefinitely without trial just by accusing them of serious enough offences, whether there is any evidence to back up the accusation or not. This could potentially allow governments to jail all opponents on trumped up charges.

On Saddam's capture Bush claimed "the secret police are gone forever". Instead it seems the coalition are keener on not only setting up their own 10,000 strong secret police in Iraq – including many former members of Saddam's notorious Mukhabarat force – but also risking a police state at home where accusations by secret agents lead straight to jail. Iraqis are already held without trial in their thousands, suffer beatings and sometimes die in custody. The risk is that rather than bringing democracy to Iraq the 'war on terror' could end up eroding it in the US and Britain. There is already a knock-on effect in countries such as Pakistan which has introduced harsh new laws which American- and British-backed military dictator General Musharraf justifies on the grounds that they are no harsher than the USA Patriot Act.

Anti-terrorism acts supposedly grant government temporary powers during emergency or war. They contain 'sunset' clauses under which the powers lapse unless renewed by new votes of Congress or Parliament respectively. However the emergency or

'war' which they are meant to deal with is the unending 'war on terror'. Bush told Fox News last year that Iraq and Afghanistan are only 'battles' in the war. A war on terrorism can never be won. Military action frequently becomes terrorism itself when civilians become 'collateral damage' – or even targets. As the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine have shown it also creates a bloody cycle of military 'strikes' and terrorist attacks. Terrorist movements gain recruits and supporters from military action. Only fairer economic and political systems combined with better policing can reduce terrorism. Under these circumstances anti-terrorism laws cannot be presented as temporary emergency measure; they are a continuing erosion of legal rights.

If new anti-terrorism legislation is passed extending that passed after September 11 we risk wiping out within a matter of years rights of Habeas Corpus which took centuries of struggle and progress to secure. To deny even one person's basic rights is not only unjust but also threatens our own rights. Comparisons to the rise of the Nazis might be exaggerated but there is a genuine threat to democracy involved in removing rights on which it is based. So it is worth remembering the words of Pastor Martin Neimoeller – a survivor of Dachau concentration camp; "They came for the Jews. I was not a Jew. So I said nothing. Then they came for the Catholics. I was not a Catholic. So I said nothing. Then for the trade unionists and industrialists. I was neither. So I said nothing. Then they came for me - and there was no-one left to say anything." ■

Duncan McFarlane is a freelance member of the NUJ who writes for magazines and websites

labouring the point on immigration

Henry McCubbin examines the confusion surrounding the Government's ever-changing immigration policy

Lurid headlines and an inept and frequently incompetent Home Secretary have elevated migration to a significant issue for the economic and social policy of the UK. According to the European Commission, 13 million non-national citizens lived in the 15 EU Member States in the year 2000, nearly half of them bearing the nationality of other European countries. The net inflow of migrants into the EU reached, in the same year, 2.2 per 1,000 population, or 680,000 persons. Worldwide, migrants account for around 2.5 per cent of the world population.

British policy, such as it has developed under New Labour, towards allowing workers the freedom to move seems to be pro-capital, confused and contradictory. Similarly, EU policy on immigration has developed in an ad hoc manner changing course from an ideological policy based on market economics in the original EEC Treaties to one where it is under the control of interior ministers. Students of the EU will be familiar with the way that unexpected outcomes appear from behind closed doors entirely out of line with public pronouncements on the same topic.

At a Council of Ministers meeting in Rome in 1975 the then Foreign Secretary James Callaghan gained approval to set up a special working group to combat terrorism. From this the Trevi group was formed comprising of the Interior/Home ministers, a secretariat, national ministry officials, senior police officers, immigration and customs officials and internal security service representatives. Trevi later progressed through Europol, which added drugs to its remit, and on to the Schengen agreement to which Britain, forever stuck in its Little Englander mode, became a semi-detached member. The problem with these structures is that they were designed never to come under proper public scrutiny as they are run by the secretive Council of Ministers. Hence we have a department whose *raison d'être* is the pursuit of criminality now interpreting the meaning of freedom of movement on their terms. It is no wonder that 'bang 'em up' Blunkett has dug a hole for himself.

There is little doubt that the immigration problems now appearing come from the parallel universes of European Union politics; the democratic parliamentary one and the secretive Council of Ministers universe. Frequently however the deliberations are so fragmented that in the course of decision making, policies surface in a spectacular collision. Such an event has occurred over immigration.

It has been the political subtext of EU decisions that ideologically driven social and economic changes should be accompanied by flanking measures to ameliorate any negative effects which could have adverse political consequences. For instance in 1988 Chancellor Nigel Lawson agreed to a ****doubling**** of the regional funds to allow for the smooth introduction of the Single Market. In 1992 Chancellor Norman Lamont agreed to the ****doubling**** of regional funds in the run up to EMU and enlargement. This enlargement was of the wealthy nations of Sweden, Austria and Finland, although Norway decided to decline the invitation.

New Labour set out its stall early in its first term by pushing for a cut of one billion Euros in structural funds on 25 July 1997. Secretary to the British Treasury Helen Liddel was quoted thus; "[The cut in structural funds] was an encouraging start to this year's budget round and good news for the taxpayer". This was the first cut since the funds were set up in 1975. Worse was to come for, as the Berlin European Council stressed, improving the effectiveness of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund was the cornerstone of the Agenda 2000 reforms to manage the enlargement to the east. In it the Commission proposed an increase in funding to €275 billion so ensuring that structural assistance is more concentrated both in geographic terms and in terms of the object of assistance and improving the management of the Funds, while continuing to pursue the objective of economic and social cohesion in an increasingly diverse Union. The funding ceiling for the structural policy was set at €213 billion for the 2000-06 period for the current Member States; this representing a slight increase on the preceding period (1994-99: €208 billion). The worrying aspect from our perspective in the UK is that we argued for a budget ceiling of €170 billion!

Here we had a logical policy designed to cope with internal changes and external shocks funded by a budget which was no more than 0.46 per cent of the EU's GDP which was being adjusted within these meager budgetary limits to cope with enlargement. A policy eagerly promoted by Tony Blair as indicated in his speech to the Polish stock exchange in October 2000; "We want Poland, and as many others as are ready, in the EU as soon as possible". But what did he mean by ready? The structural funds are part of that preparation. Here we have, for the first time, a tranche of new members all of whom have a GDP per capita below the EU average. For the first time since the Treaty of Rome in 1952 the EU's GDP per capita will fall. The Commission's proposals in this light are modest. In other territories with a federal-type structure such budgets can be as high as 5 per cent. Why therefore should a Labour Government in the UK want to enlarge the EU without ensuring adequate provision to converge the various economic and social structures and what is their real attitude towards workers in the enlarged EU?

From the above it would appear that they want to apply free market nostrums to all sectors, ensuring that those with excess wealth can survive any turmoil whereas those whose only capital is their ability to work will have to 'get on their bikes'. The transfer of investment and technology to the east pre-accession is interesting in that the attitudes and actions of existing member states have been different. The UK has, in the main, provided funding through loans from banks and some of our larger farm operations have bought land. Germany on the other hand has bought ownership of existing companies (VW's purchase of Skoda is a good example) and then put in place new management systems and transferred new technology. The German example exploits the initial advantage of low wages but reduces the desire to migrate. The UK example unbalances the

new economies, leads to cuts in the social wage and promotes the push effect of the local economy on the desire to migrate.

It would appear therefore that the British Government has been promoting a freedom of movement policy all along until, that is, the right wing press rumbled it. But it has been pursuing a very specific selfish and reckless freedom of movement policy. What they have been doing is looking for a solution to what they see as the demographic problem of an ageing workforce and labour shortages by replenishing the workforce from the new entrant countries. According to the results of a major study by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, "The positive demographic effect for the old Member States will be marginal, due to the relatively small increase in the number of potential migrants up to 2030 and the expected return migration, triggered by improved living and

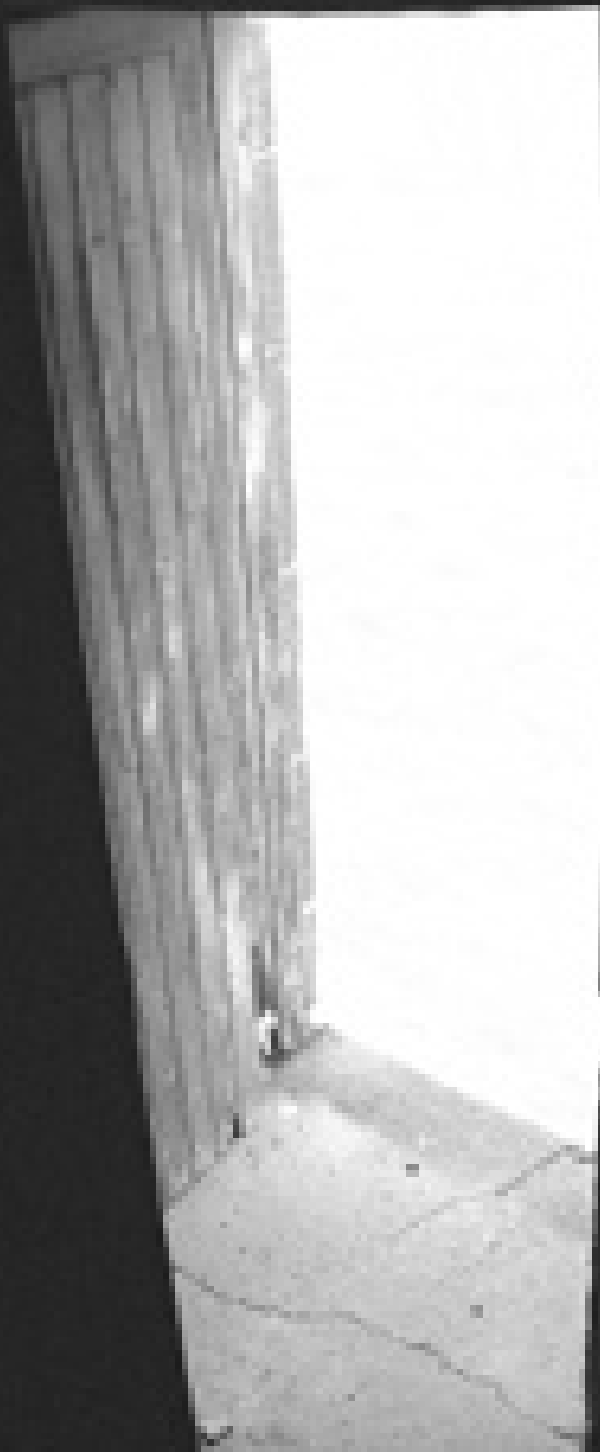
employment conditions in the new Member States". Another aspect of this policy is just who will migrate. Sending countries face the prospect of a major 'youth drain', generally in a range of 2 per cent-5 per cent of the youngest group and in Bulgaria and Romania, the outflow from the youngest age group may be nearly 10 per cent in the next five years. The potential youth drain is combined with a potential 'brain drain'. The sending countries are in danger of losing between 3 per cent and 5 per cent of people with third level education and more than 10 per cent of their students. The net results may be a 'brain drain' of around 2-3 per cent in these countries in the next five years. The outcome could be massive short term disruption in the new members states and no long-term gain for the older states.

An area of research as yet uncharted both by the Commission and the Foundation is that of sectoral readjustment on entry and in particular the agricultural sector. A look at the key employment indicators for the EU shows that agricultural employment in Romania stands at 40 per cent whereas in the UK it is 0.9 per cent. Furthermore, I remember leading a team of observers at Bulgaria's first open elections and running in to swarms of young Americans, mainly from large corporations and seconded to help out at these elections. All of them likely candidates to use their MBA's for the benefit of Enron but in this case selling free market snake oil to the Bulgarians who have paid a heavy price since. All of this is building up a head of steam for emigration which will benefit few in the long run.

All of this may go to explain why the Labour Government has panicked and at the last moment decided to apply the transitional arrangements which it had promised new applicant countries, through Tony Blair, it wouldn't. Hence the sham summit demonstrating once more that Blair should not be allowed out of the country without a minder. His agreements over neo-liberal employment policies with the former Spanish Prime Minister to his deal with Bush to invade Iraq and now the mess over EU immigration policy are all his personal policy failures. Blair can have as many summits as he wants but he cannot hide from the facts. In answer to the question 'can Member States impose tighter restrictions from 1 May 2004 than were in place before?' the Commission in its fact sheet replies "no, the so-called 'standstill clause' states that current Member States cannot make access to their labour market more restrictive than it was on the date of signature of the accession treaty, 16 April 2003".

This answers the questions surrounding Blunket's sudden volte face on his sudden ban on immigration from south east Europe. His boss had agreed to the deal but hadn't told him. ■

Henry McCubbin is a former Labour MEP



a worker wins

In SLR 15 James Higney reported the industrial relations problems in the Scottish further education sector. Here he gives an update on one of the cases raised.

Since 1992 when the Scottish colleges of further education were taken out of local authority control and passed over to non-elected boards of management, the history of this sector has been one of mismanagement and increasing industrial conflict. Recently in a number of Scottish colleges there has been a particularly worrying development for trade unionists; activists, and especially branch officials, have been singled out for disciplinary action.

The disastrous industrial relations record between trade unions and boards of managements' in further education colleges in Scotland culminated in the elected President of the Educational Institute of Scotland – College Lecturers Association (EIS-CLA) being unfairly dismissed from his job as a lecturer at Central College of Commerce Glasgow, Central College Board of Management, with the Principal and Chief Executive Officer Peter Duncan acting the lead protagonist, sacked the EIS-CLA President Jim O'Donovan. The College stated three reasons for Mr O'Donovan's dismissal, Firstly, an approach made by Mr O'Donovan to an employee member of the Board of Management, Secondly that he copied and circulated a letter of complaint made against him, Thirdly that he took out a grievance maliciously, Although there had been detrimental industrial relations at Central College for a number of years Mr O'Donovan's dismissal sparked strike action by his co-workers at the college, a public demonstration and rally in Glasgow, and questions being asked with a petition sent to the Scottish Parliament.

The management of the college alleged that Mr O'Donovan was intimidating, threatening, and confrontational, They further alleged that in asking a question of the employee member of the Board of Management, O'Donovan had been aggressive and threatening, On 8 March 2002, Mr O'Donovan was charged by Central College management of gross misconduct, He was also warned that his continued employment at the College was at risk.

At the end of June 2002, one week before the college summer break, Mr O'Donovan was finally informed that the Principal had recommended his dismissal, and that he was suspended from work pending a hearing by the College's Appeals Committee, When the Board of Management Appeals Committee finally met, O'Donovan's trade union representative explained that Mr O'Donovan was ill and unable to attend and asked for a short postponement of the meeting, The Appeals Committee refused any postponement, At that point the trade union official informed management that he felt that Mr O'Donovan would be unable to obtain a fair hearing and he left the meeting, In July 2002, during the holiday period, the Appeals Committee, in the absence of either O'Donovan or a trade union representative, upheld the Principal's recommendation to dismiss him. Mr O'Donovan's trade union, accepting legal advice, took the case to an employment tribunal on the basis that he had been sacked because of his trade union activities and that his behaviour was appropriate to legitimate trade union activity.

Over 16 days between May and December 2003 an Employment Tribunal in Glasgow heard evidence that management at Central College had to make staff redundancies to achieve

financial savings and that Mr O'Donovan met Charles Boyce, the support staff Board member, in a corridor chatting to two lecturers whose posts were in jeopardy because of the colleges restructuring exercise, O'Donovan stated that he asked Mr Boyce: "Do you want to sack these two women?" Mr Boyce complained about this approach by letter to Peter Duncan, the college principal, and Mr O'Donovan was eventually sacked for gross industrial misconduct.

Mr O'Donovan maintained throughout that in asking the question of Mr Boyce it was a legitimate trade union activity pertaining to two of the lecturing staff he represented as members of his trade union, Equally, and vehemently, the College Principal Mr Duncan maintains that in his view it was not a trade union activity and also that the ostensible reason for sacking Mr O'Donovan centred on his bullying and harassment of Mr Boyce.

On Thursday 10 December 2003 the Tribunal chairman decided that he had heard enough evidence and stated that the panel were ready to give a decision, and also give a written 'sketch' of the reasons for their decision prior to the final written report and extended reasons, The decision of the Tribunal was broken into four main points:

- the applicant was unfairly dismissed by the respondents and the principal reason for the dismissal was that the applicant had taken part in the activities of an independent trade union at an appropriate time;
- esto the principal reason for the dismissal of the applicant was not the fact that he had taken part in the activities of an independent trade union, the applicant was unfairly dismissed by the respondents contrary to the Employment Rights Act 1996 Section 94;
- the applicant did not contribute to his dismissal;
- that an order for reinstatement be made

In their written 'sketch' the Tribunal panel were scathing of Central College management, In regards to the first two parts of the complaint against Jim O'Donovan they concluded: "...we find it difficult to understand how the activity that took place could be anything other than permissible trade union activity...It is essential to be clear that this was an approach by a trade unionist to management."

"In our view, the matter is utterly trivial, and, no reasonable employer could have taken any other view... It is difficult to think of a more obvious example of a trade union activity than an approach by a trade union official on a matter that affects both the employer and work force. The approach by the applicant was characterised by the respondents' Principal as "intimidatory, threatening and confrontational", The justification or supposed justification for so characterising the approach was the fact that the said Boyce felt 'singled out', We are quite satisfied that this is an abuse of language and betrays hostility on the part of the respondents to the applicant, No rational person whose

judgement was not affected by improper motivation could have so described the applicant's conduct."

As regards the third reason for Mr O'Donovan's dismissal the panel stated: "The applicant was entirely entitled to take out a grievance against the said Boyce... From the point of view of the respondents in connection with this third reason... we are satisfied that the manner of approach of the respondents to this issue reveals an improper on their part towards the applicant, Again, put simply, no reasonable employer whose judgement was not seriously distorted could have viewed the applicant's supposed actions in the light that the respondents viewed them."

The written 'sketch' finally concluded: "In all the circumstances, we are satisfied that the principal reason for the dismissal of the applicant was the fact that he had taken part in trade union activities, It is not possible in the time available to enter upon the detail of this matter other than to say that it is quite implicit in the respondents own position that one of the reasons for dismissal was the applicant's trade union activity, In addition, that attitude of the respondents is explicable upon the hypothesis, namely that the applicant was dismissed for a prohibited reason, That hypothesis explains the constant exaggeration of the fault of the applicant, if there was any fault, and the willingness on the part of the respondents to "make mountains out of molehills." We have not lost sight of the respondents witnesses who vehemently denied having taken account of any matter other than the applicants conduct, Even if we were to accept all of the respondents' witnesses as credible (and we make it clear that we reserve our position on this) it would make no difference, We are satisfied that the perception of the applicant of the respondents' witnesses was so distorted that their own reports of their mental processes were unreliable."

There has never been such an indictment of a Scottish FE college's management and their blatant attack on the trade union movement, The Board of Management at Glasgow's Central College found their nemesis in the tribunal committee and by their witnesses apocryphal testament Mr O'Donovan and his supporters were vindicated, The apologist style of declared evidence by Mr Duncan merely highlighted his sophistry and pseudo-profundity, While giving evidence his feeble risible attempt at a syllogistic explanation portrayed his misunderstanding of logic.

This momentous decision should be the catalyst for a public enquiry into the governance of Scottish further education colleges, A specific investigation is required to uncover the financial cost to the public purse of Central College's legal defence of their unlawful action, The use of law firms for legal advice and legal representation at employment tribunal's is an expensive process and recently tribunals have ordered compensation of many tens of thousands of pounds to further education workers who have been unfairly treated, As it stands, the taxpayer cannot establish how much has been paid out since the monetary costs are regularly hidden in college accounts, Audit Scotland should be asked to investigate.

In the meantime, Jim O'Donovan sits at home an innocent man in a living hell while Central College's management stand firm, even after three months since the employment tribunal published its recommendation, Peter Duncan and Central College management refuse to process O'Donovan's re-instatement but continue to draw their fat-cat salaries, Meanwhile Jim O'Donovan worries about his and his family's future. ■

James Higney is a College Lecturer, National Vice President of the EIS-CLA and a member of the Scottish Federation of Socialist Teachers

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the supporter

In the final part of a series of four articles exploring the personality types of our leaders, Derrick White looks at the quiet type

The fourth and final primary personality type is the Introvert Sensing Feeler (ISF). Although Carl Jung's descriptive terms are partly self-explanatory, some psychometricians prefer to use simpler single word categories such as Supporter, Amiable, Caring or Green. The most common single word format to describe the four quadrants is DISC, standing for Dominant, Inspirer, Supporter and Co-ordinator. The first article began with the analytical Co-ordinator using Dr David Kelly as an exemplar and continued with Tony Blair representing the Inspirer and Margaret Thatcher as a Dominant.

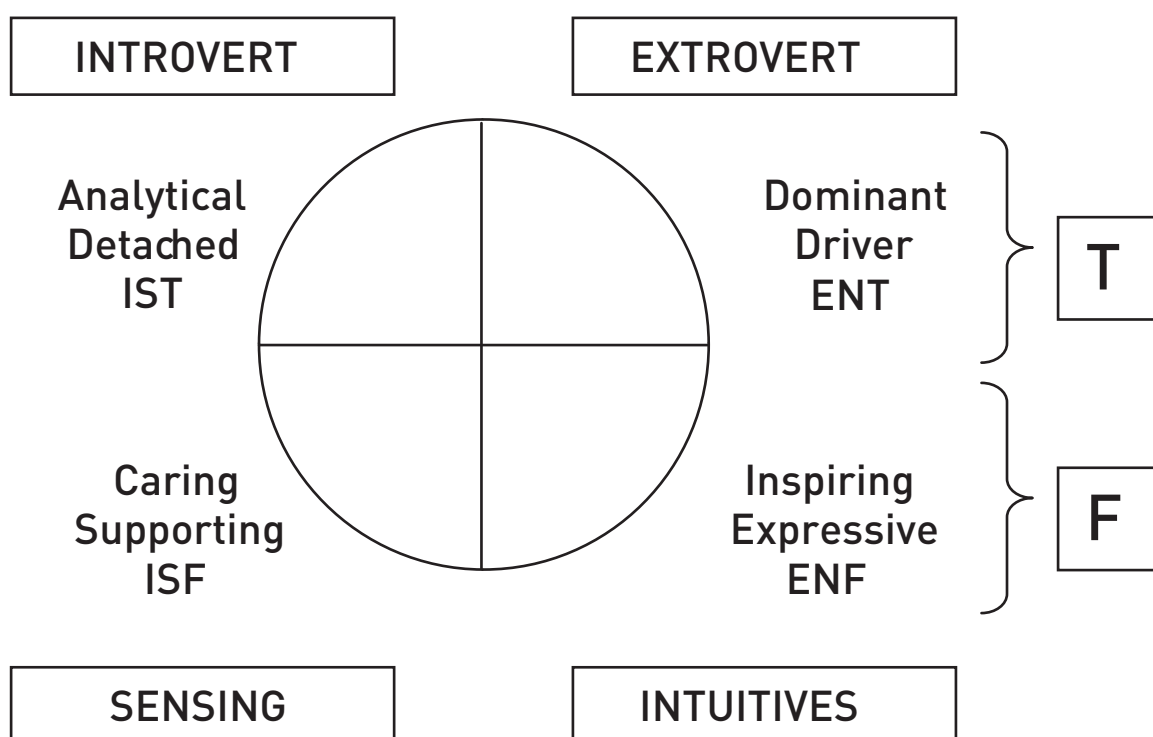
The Supporter/ISF is the least common type in world political figures. Logically, to lead a party and/or a nation one has to have a measure of the Dominant/ENT or the Inspirer/ENF – such as Clinton or Blair or perhaps the Analytical/IST such as Wilson or Nixon. The ISF is the quadrant adjacent to Nixon's IST and Clinton's ENF but diametrically opposite to Thatcher's ENT (N is used to avoid confusion with Introvert).

ISFs are amiable and non-confrontational. They prefer harmony and consensus rather than assertion. They care about relationships. Their strengths are patience, loyalty and an ability to listen. They may appear passive, bland and non-assertive. Though sometimes apparently docile they will take a stand on a matter of principle.

The closest match in UK politics was probably John Major who embodied many of the ISF traits. His outburst at those who conspired against him to depose him calling them 'bastards' may have come as a shock to **Daily Mail** readers but it is entirely consistent with the ISF personality type. Perhaps the most striking example of the ISF worm turning was Geoffrey Howe's

crushing attack on Mrs Thatcher's leadership style. Mr Howe's House of Commons' speech was all the more dramatic when viewed from Denis Healey's dismissive assessment that an attack by Mr Howe was like "being savaged by a dead sheep". In US politics the most likely ISF match was Jimmy Carter – amiable, easy-going and non-confrontational.

One method of establishing a personality type is to find a 'least like' match and look to the diametric opposite (or blind spot) for the correct quadrant. Both Nixon and Wilson were very much ISTs, rather withdrawn, analytical and, though fluent, not particularly gregarious. Both men were suspicious – Wilson monitored the BBC (plus ca change) and believed that MI5 was plotting against him. Nixon taped his conversations and displayed symptoms of paranoia with his post-Watergate "you won't have old Nixon to kick around any more" resignation speech. Their diametric opposites are Inspirers such as Blair and Clinton; fluent, earnest and charismatic, though Mr Blair's repeated exhortations to trust became counter productive. Mr Blair's very strong Inspirer/ENF traits don't always serve him well. Self-belief can be a great asset in leadership but the downside can be poor judgment and constant self-justification. Mr Blair could learn from an earlier PM, Disraeli, who said "never complain, never explain". To visit Colonel Gaddafi was not in itself a bad thing but to make the trip the day after attending the emotionally charged funeral of the victims of the Madrid bombings was worryingly insensitive. ENF's centre-stage behaviour can sometimes be seen as shallow. Commentators have asked why a Prime Ministerial visit at all; would not the Foreign Secretary or the Deputy PM have sufficed? An interesting footnote is that the last PM to



visit Libya was Churchill. One wonders how the fiery ENT Mr Churchill would have viewed such a handshake.

Another prominent ISF is our future king. Much of Charles' diffidence and pronounced gaucheness comes from his ENT (blind spot) father desperately trying to turn the boy into a Dominant/ENT like himself or in the vacuous terminology of the period 'make a man of him'. Charles was more suited to being a vicar in a country parish but he was sent on every action-man course available only making him less secure. Similarly with the un-macho Edward; the father forced him into, of all things, the ultra tough Royal Marines, a sure-fire disaster. It is surprising that with all the wealth and professional resources available to the royals no-one put forward the basic psychological maxim that square pegs and round holes don't work and the analogy of leopards and spots is universal, even for royals.

A profoundly sad royal photo was of Charles as a bewildered wee boy shaking hands with his mother on her return from a long foreign trip. Compare that with Diana's open-armed welcome for her sons. Diana, the ENF, extrovert, demonstrative and affectionate, needed these qualities in return or a perhaps a strong ENT. Alas her husband's shy nature was exacerbated by his nurture, so much so that on the Buck House balcony on his wedding day he had to ask his mother if it would be all right to kiss his bride. Clearly not a Dominant. It was the denial of parental affection and the rigidity of palace life which drove Charles into the matronly arms of his mistress. To forego the beautiful Diana for Camilla had little to do with aesthetics but

was all to do with psychological compensatory needs.

In summary, all four quadrants are gifts. Each has its strengths and each its weaknesses. In choosing politicians, the electorate decide on many factors very much in line with **cometh the hour cometh the man**. Michael Howard once reviled by the Tories in the Thatcher/Major years suddenly became attractive after the ineffectual Duncan-Smith. It is no coincidence that during the frighteningly uncertain pre-war years, a succession of Dominants came to power; Mussolini, Franco, Salazar, Churchill, Tito and the nightmarish Hitler and Stalin – all very much from Jung's Thinking hemisphere. In peacetime we can relax with the vapid Eden, the laconic Macmillan, the machiavellian Wilson or the avuncular Callaghan. In a perfect world we would vote for an honest, dedicated, compassionate, non-drinking, non-smoking, loyal husband who only draws half his salary. Alas, Mr Sheridan is the jigsaw piece that the electorate cannot fit into the complex and tarnished political puzzle. ■

Derrick White is a psychometrician and training consultant. He is an erstwhile parliamentary candidate for both the Westminster and the Holyrood parliaments. www.personality-assessment.co.uk



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2. To support the TUC's Charter for Workers' Rights.
3. Continued opposition to PFI/PPP Projects and to defend Public Services.
4. Return the National Rail Network to a Publicly Owned, Publicly Accountable System.
5. Legislation to be enacted upon over Safety and Corporate Criminal Accountability.
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beating liblaborism

Joe Middleton suggests that uniting around independence is the first step of a realignment of the left in Scotland

Since the elections there are three main independent Scottish parties. All are on the left. All support Scottish independence, all are trivialised by the media, none have any genuine access to the centre of UK power in London. Lloyd Quinan's move to the SSP has been described by the press as a defection but it is more accurately a realignment. Formerly, Scottish left activists who supported independence had one choice of party. Now there are three parties and depending on how patriotic, socialist or environmentally aware you feel you are, one of these parties is going to be more attractive than the others.

Lloyd Quinan was one of the most active MSP's in the parliament and one of the most talented. The fact both he and Margo did not rise far through the ranks is an indictment of the SNP leadership. Quinan used to make a living grilling politicians on Trial by Night; it was absurd not to use his abilities at the top of the SNP. Both Margo and Lloyd are talented campaigners who are willing to grasp the big issues. Both were left politically isolated by the party. I don't know whether this was due to jealousy of their high public profile or other internal disagreements. Certainly both of these individuals are a big loss for the SNP.

I can easily understand why Lloyd, as a left winger, has moved over to the SSP and I can also understand why Margo decided to stand as an independent. Ultimately, however, we need a national movement which is large enough to re-incorporate these two nationalists and bring back to the fold people like Jim Sillars. Jim Mather is a lone voice. The main strand in the SNP at the moment is the 'gradualists'; their argument is that the SNP have achieved a unique level of power (as Scotland's official opposition) and that the party needs to build on this to eventually gain power and build trust to then gain independence. It is probably true that constitutional change of the magnitude of independence is unlikely within the next twenty years; that is, if the Scottish parties continue to play the exact same political game. Any Scottish party fights any Scottish election under enormous disadvantages. The vast majority of newspapers and TV stations, probably all of them, are owned by or run by non-Scots or certainly non-independence non-socialist non-radical Scots. The messages of the SNP or SSP is therefore never going to force its way through this prism, much as we may like them to. The independence arguments will never be properly aired when the vast majority of TV coverage is highly biased and heavily slanted towards the main UK parties **Liblaborism** short (well... not that short obviously).

Liblaborism is a form of politics which embraces the status quo and the rich. It is funded by business and represents little to no prospect of change. Oh yes, small tinkering will be done at the edges, slightly to the left very occasionally, but mostly the political spectrum drifts further and further to the right. Real power does not even rest with our unreachable 'president' Tony Blair who is in reality only the latest in a long line of Tory

puppets. Real power lies with international and multinational business and the capitalist world trade organisations. A power bloc also exists in Europe but Scotland has no say there at all, nor any input anywhere else either. The Scottish Parliament has no genuine powers and no will to use the existing limited powers. The unionists at this point have a lock on power. The SNP view – that eventually opposition will become power – is deluded. If one wants to see a concrete example of how the parliament really operates have a quick look at the stitch-up over office accommodation. Though this is a trivial matter it is a fact that despite being Scotland's official 'opposition' the SNP have been forced over three floors while the unionist parties are together on a floor each. Liblaborism is a powerful organisation when it decides to rule together. The set up of the Scottish Parliament also lends itself towards unfairness. The voting system with its FPTP majority element basically guarantees power for unionism. STV will come in for local elections because central government knows that basically local government is a waste of time. Does anyone know a local council that works better than any other in any major fashion? No? I didn't think so. Essentially another layer of elected apparatchiks (but now on an all party basis rather than the former Stalinist dictatorship of Labour) will fiddle around with silly projects, up the level of council tax and remain entirely subservient to central government. Labour knows that local councils don't matter and is probably glad to clean out most of their dinosaurs who don't agree with Tony. No, STV will never reach the actual powerbase, Westminster, and it will never reach the Scottish Parliament either (just in case). The Scottish Parliament is controlled by a block grant, we could raise 3p in the pound but it might encourage Westminster to rap our knuckles the next time.

There are two hopeful elements in the Scots body politic however. One is the aforementioned rise to greater prominence of smaller parties due to the proportional element of the Scottish Parliament (not exactly STV but better than nothing). Two is the Scottish independence convention. The Scottish independence convention offers an opportunity to work together on the mechanics of independence. Once we nail down the route map to independence, set up the actual mechanics of a referendum and decide in advance the objectives of independence negotiations it will be much more transparent to the electorate. The potential of agreement within the Scottish left is much larger than the silly 'arguments' that crop up around election time. Boo! says Labour, ye canny afford independence! Aye we kin! say SNP. Other issues tend to be strangled between the phoney debate on these two positions. In reality the 'economics' of independence cannot be proven one way or the other, resting as it does on various sets of figures, a lot of which are unavailable.

We must move on from arguing whether Scotland can afford to be independent; the question is really can we afford not to be? Given the alarming political moves from London all left

parties must unite around a move away from Liblaboryism and its elected dictatorship - The House of Commons under our old friend FPTP. Under the stifling nature of Liblaboryism any new and/or progressive or even interesting political ideas are kicked into touch. To give but one example the case for a local income tax has been overwhelming for years but since it was an SNP idea (now adopted by SSP under a different name) Labour cling to the council tax, a system which is for most people a lot worse than the hated Poll Tax it replaced. The truth is the Tories don't want it and Labour just doesn't have the guts to rock the boat.

So how do we defeat Liblaboryism or 'Unionism'? The only way is by forming our own movement to defeat it. The name of this movement doesn't matter, but what it must do is involve all Scottish political parties. By this I don't mean Labour, Tories or Lib Dems; all of these parties are irrelevant to a progressive Scottish society. Each is controlled by London, each supports the existing union, each has turned its back on giving any more power to the Scottish Parliament. The Tories 'interest' in fiscal autonomy is as genuine as their new support for the Scottish Parliament. The Tories say one thing in power and another in opposition. Does anyone seriously believe the Tories would stop tuition fees or PFI? The cause of independence will not be won by coffee mornings, cheese and wines, jumble sales or squeezing our own rapidly declining vote into the polling stations. The only way forward is preaching a different agenda on a one to one basis across a door step or even better in a public meeting.

There are lots of people who do want change and who are sick of the existing political system. The decline in the vote shows that the existing political structure, candidates and parties do NOT match people's expectations.

I suggest we use the convention as the first building blocks towards a permanent alliance of the left. The SNP, Greens and SSP need to start supporting each other in the Scottish parliament. We should share knowledge, meet often and eventually form electoral pacts. That is the only way to win the rigged FPTP elections. The SNP has successfully built considerable support up North, the SSP is beginning to break through in Glasgow and the central belt. The Greens had the greatest breakthrough in the Scottish parliamentary elections and are becoming stronger throughout the EEC.

It is up to individuals if they wish to change parties but ultimately a new and genuine cross party left alliance would be the most fulfilling grouping. The Convention, if properly run, will give rise to a much greater forum of people united around the cause of independence, the logical next step then is a Scottish independence alliance that can turn the concept of independence into actual reality. ■

Joe Middleton was until recently Press Officer for Midlothian SNP

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web review

Henry McCubbin

All that it requires for evil to triumph is for the good to remain silent. In this months web review we have sickening footage of US marines cheering and on a high after shooting a critically wounded Iraqi lying writhing on the ground. What about it then Tony, lost your tongue? I guess we know where it is.

Twelve months ago we offered a review of the media coverage of the illegal unilateral invasion of Iraq under the orders of Commander in Chief Bush. We told how the story was entirely distorted and reduced to a Manichean struggle between good and evil so that international illiterates such as Bush and Blair could get their heads round the need to follow the US neo con agenda. Many innocents are now dead because of their acts. Even some of those who previously espoused the occasional need for "humanitarian intervention" are beginning to repent. No matter how hard we tried to warn them that handing over humanitarian tasks to the US military altered the logic from humanism to militarism they still gave important moral support to the Bush Blair alliance. Now I hope that they realise that we have still to see a "humanitarian intervention" controlled by the US military in which the ambulances and aid convoys arrived before the B52s.

Why do we not get the full tale? Well journalists, on the whole, are not unlike the rest of the sensible populace. When the bullets start flying journalists get their heads down so try this little confessional piece; dailytelegraph.news.com.au/story.jsp?sectionid=1274&storyid=1199988.

Who's been doing the dying? Good question; it's the Iraqis stupid, and a few so-called aid workers who all seem to be working for companies with risk in their corporate names and are sub contracted to Dick Cheney's old company Halliburton. We used

to call them mercenaries. The latest verifiable head counts are; Coalition dead head count - lunaville.org/warcasualties/Summary.aspx, Iraqi head count - www.iraqbodycount.net. And just to show that there is opportunity cost to war watch the clock run on the cost to the US taxpayer for this adventure. You can even allocate the cost per state or to cuts in welfare, health or education programmes at costofwar.com.

Mercenaries, but fighting for whom? We hear much about insurgents coming across the border from Syria but this might balance the account with those flown in onboard USAF Galaxies; www.thestar.co.za/general/print_article.php?fArticleId=401463&fSectio.

US misreporting? Surely some mistake? Well have a look at what the Americans are saying about Americans; www.mediachannel.org/views/dissector/affalert171.shtml, www.ohio.com/mld/ohio/news/8355466.htm?1c, www.counterpunch.org/lindorff04022004.html. And so to new group running a report card on the performance of the occupying forces; www.occupationwatch.org.

And finally, why shoot your own at Columbine when you can have an "awesome" psychopathic experience shooting the defenceless wounded in Falluja and get a medal instead of the electric chair. Anyone of a squeamish disposition or indeed who is a normal member of the human race should be aware that these scenes depict a low in human behaviour; homepage.mac.com/webmasterkai/kaicurry/gwbush/iraqiwar.wmv, cop-players.com/cop-media/apache.mpeg. ■

With thanks to media-watch for its help in compiling this review.

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Kick Up The Tabloids

Citizenship Test Resit Drink Scandal

The Kick Up the Tabloids team attended Cathy Jamieson's key note address last night setting out her political philosophy in a speech entitled 'Left or Right? Did any one see which way that prisoner went?'. The Justice Minister was said to be shocked by the fiasco of the Reliance Prisoner Home Address Delivery Service (no call-out charge). She and Jack McConnell are particularly surprised and disappointed at developments, given the obvious success the private sector has demonstrated in providing decent railways, passports... (we could go on). The scandal began with the release of a convicted killer, who used the brilliantly planned system of: "Are you the murderer?", "Naw" to make good his escape. Initially Reliance was complacent about recapturing him, stating they had satellite tracking systems in their vans (this turned out to be satellite telly). After all, how difficult could it be to isolate someone with a ginger perm in Hamilton? (You're right, quite difficult.) The crisis was only averted when the said prisoner walked into a young offenders institution (which must have been sore). The farce deepened when it was revealed that Reliance staff had on occasion asked prisoners for directions to the court: "Eh, it's that big building with the planes parked outside it pal. Wait here, I'll be back in an hour." So watch out for the Reliance vans driving past you with the inmates holding up their 'Hi Mum- Back Home Soon!' placards.

Talking of placards, nobody uses poster paint on union banners as well as nursery nurses, who continue their strike. The nurses held a march though a number of Scottish town centres (all holding hands with a partner in a boy-girl, boy-girl formation, did you notice?). Maybe these nurses could solve the Reliance problem. Given that they regularly escort twenty infants to local parks, looking after a couple of serious offenders would be a doddle.

Plans for identity cards were revealed, including iris recognition, which will work well in Scotland, given the levels of beying and subsequent state of all our eyes. There will be exemptions for Muslim women who will not have to show their faces on the cards, leading the SNP to ask 'What about ugly folk?' David Blunkett insisted that the identity cards will bring a number of benefits to those that carry them, including reward points for affordable houses, two for one offers on NHS operations and free air miles to Baghdad.

Related to ID cards, Glasgow held Scotland's first citizenship ceremony when a number of would-be Scots swore allegiance to the nation in front of a Union Jack and a portrait of the Queen. Hmm. We wonder which of the city's football teams

these new Glaswegians will end up supporting. However a hitch was discovered when a number of our prospective fellow countrymen and women failed the citizenship test examination. Apparently many of them had been given the questions and answers by their friends who had taken the test previously in England, not realising that whilst the questions were the same, the expected responses were different north of the border. The majority failed the very first one: 'England is playing Germany in the final of the World Cup. Who do you want to win?' Let's hope they do better with the resit question, which is simply 'Do you drink?'

The opening of the Scottish Parliament looms, with concerns that security protection against a terrorist attack will be weakened as the police will be unable to deploy trained marksman on the Parliament roof, due to the lack of... a Parliament roof.

George Galloway, flush from his recent libel successes where he, justifiably, won damages from a newspaper who described him as 'gorgeous' has caused outrage with his claim about the flute-playing antics of Adam Ingram. Ingram has responded with threats of legal action of his own, and has rigorously denied that as Armed Forces Minister he ever ordered British soldiers in combat action to cease hostilities only when they were 'up to their knees in the blood' of their opponents, to pick a song lyric at random.

Campaigning will now begin on the European Union constitution referendum. The people of Scotland have a number concerns about voting yes, including the key question, will they be building a parliament? Blair insists that Britain needs to be at the heart of Europe (like it was over Iraq eh Tony?). The Tories on the other hand are keen for a no vote in order to limit our engagement with Europe, presumably to concentrate on Mars where the early probe polling indications suggest a small lead for Howards' troops... ■

Kick Up the Tabloids is the Stand Comedy Club's monthly satirical comedy show. Totally live and interactive, it offers an irreverent take on who and what has been making the news in Scotland or beyond. The Kick Up the Tabloids team include regulars Bruce Devlin, John Flint, Susan Morrison, John Scott and Paul Sneddon, with surprise guest appearances. The show takes place on the third Wednesday each month at The Stand, Yorkhill Place, Edinburgh (Tel 0131 558 7373 or visit the website at www.thestand.co.uk). The next show is on Wednesday 19 May, doors open at 7.30pm., with the show kicking off at 9pm.



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