



# AFTER THE WAR

peace, protest and human rights in Scotland

## Contents

Comment .....	2	Human rights in Scotland.....	12
Feedback.....	4	Amnesty International	
Briefing .....	5	The world thing .....	14
A permanent state of terror?.....	6	Tom Nairn	
Aamer Anwar		Pill tax .....	16
Scotland the grave .....	8	Colin Fox	
Liz Law		A Europe against workers?.....	18
Prepare to protest.....	10	Bob Thomson	
Gill Hubbard		That was the Euro election that was .....	20
		Henry McCubbin	

## Comment

The Greeks think there are too many Albanians coming to their country. The Germans worry about too many former Eastern Bloc economic migrants. The French seem to be getting increasingly hostile to their large Muslim community. The British think there are too many foreigners full stop. So we are now staring ID cards in the retinally-scanned eye, people seem prepared to accept the idea that we're going to have to give up basic human rights if we are to be saved from terror and 'intellectuals' are now suggesting that perhaps torture isn't such a bad thing after all. America is being run by right-wing extremists and yet a large part of their constituent vote seems to think that they're too liberal. Europe is being undermined from within by a coalition of Blair and accession states desperate for American patronage. Political decision-making and public opinion have never seemed so far apart. The people of Iraq are being ruled by a CIA operative whose power stems from a band of foreign fighters and mercenaries (the Americans) who have decided that there is no law in the world under which they can be tried no matter what crimes they perpetrate, who have taken billions of pounds from the international community to rebuild the country and to all intents and purposes kept it for themselves while failing to get electricity supplies back to where they were before they started. And they call this liberation. International law has been shredded, hatred, fear and extremism are growing everywhere like weeds and no-one is in any doubt that only violence brings change in the 21st century.

If this is 'after the war' it feels very much like a 1932 sort of 'after the war'.

So what does this mean for Scotland? Well, we can at least cling on to the hope that things here do not seem quite as bad as they are elsewhere yet – at least we haven't seen the same rise of support for parties like the BNP. Equally, there is something less desperate about our view of the world. Perhaps it is completely wrong but people in Scotland do not seem to feel like terrorist targets to the same degree that those in some of the big international cities do. But this isn't much to cling on to. The next year or two seem to hold out the possibility

of great change in one direction or the other, and it is the US presidential election which is at the heart of it. But it would be wrong to think that what has been done will be easily undone. Kerry might be more subtle about it, but he isn't about to let America lose out to China in the battle for the soon-to-peak global oil supply. And global fury and humiliation are not about to disappear because of the election of another wealthy patrician American. Global conflict is not slowing, and Scotland isn't 'somewhere else'.

So what can we do? Well, there are actually a lot of valuable things that Scotland could do if it could shake its political myopia and the members of the ruling party could escape their collaborators' mentality. It might sound unlikely but Scotland has the potential to play a major role in addressing the twin problems which are driving this global conflict; the fear and the fight.

The fear is the most obvious problem. The population of the west is being manipulated and controlled by fear. In fact in an almost perfect tautology it is fear of terror which is at the root of what is happening. So Scotland could play a role. We need to develop a new kind of internationalism in which the dialogue between nations is not perpetually subverted by the oil-suckers (big business, neo-cons and the rest). This could be started in Scotland if there was a will. Closer relations with Scandinavia and the Baltic countries could be a start; the Benelux countries might join, and then other countries of the East. A genuinely New Europe might be a start, and there is no reason why Scotland might not take a lead.

At home we can set an example by opposing the continual erosion of civil liberties which Blunket is intent on. We could prevent ID cards from crossing the border, we could do everything in our power to hold Scots law firm on the issues of civil liberties. We could at last take a serious step to begin educating our population about the world and its history so we no longer stare at foreign lands with blank suspicion. Hell, we could even spend some money. Jack would have us believe that he wants to bring 'Fresh Talent' into Scotland. Well, anyone who has been anywhere near this initiative cannot help but feel that what Jack really means is 'Fresh White Talent'. Why not use some of this money to bring people to Scotland to work or to

The price of influence ..... 22  
Gregor Gall

Reviews ..... 24

Kick Up The Tabloids ..... 27

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study from some of these places we fear. Why not rebuild links with the Middle East and Africa? Will trying to capture more Australians and Americans for our 'economy' really make a difference? Diversifying the cultural experience of Scots might. Perhaps we could even send some of our young people over there for a while.

Scotland's role in addressing the fight might seem less promising, but this is not the case. The fight is for natural resources; that is above all what is underpinning this perpetual war. So why don't we take a decision in Scotland to be serious about our role in developing the technology which could calm the fight. Scotland has both the intellectual expertise and the natural resources to be a serious player in developing new renewable energy technologies. This is in the end the best chance we have to ensure that China and the US don't end up entirely reliant on the same barrel of oil – and potentially therefore the same gun barrel. If we stopped spending money on imaginary schemes to 'create' entrepreneurs and then mollycoddle their (almost always) mediocre service-sector outcomes then we could invest in **real** economic development.

And given that no-one else seems particularly interested in developing a proper discipline of conflict resolution, why don't we just get on and do it? There are starting points, and surely there has never been such a big global need so inadequately met.

These are only a few quick ideas, and others will have many more. Scotland's array of lacklustre

commentators will, if they have nothing else to misinterpret, repeatedly turn back to berate us – the Scottish people – for our lack of confidence. They seem to mean that they want us to be more venal, a characteristic which seems to have no great merit. But why don't we show some real confidence and act like a nation which believes that it has something to offer a post-war-on-terror world.

Answer: because knowing that a war is illegal, that it was predicated on lies and that it has made things worse for everyone is still not enough to temper the enthusiasm for Jack's troops to press the 'Back Blair' button when it comes time to vote.

It is symptomatic of the state of Scottish politics that John Swinney has just suffered one of the most prolonged demises we have seen and yet a cornucopia of politicians and commentators are unable to provide a persuasive diagnosis. He was too grey. He wasn't a strong enough debater. Scotland has lost all interest in independence. Labour has been too effective. All utter nonsense.

No, Swinney's demise came from the almost pathological inability for modern politics to recognise what was effective about the Blair revolution. It wasn't about 'spin' – the presentational skills of New Labour were not only overrated but overemphasised. What Blair did he did only by taking a very firm ideological grip of the Labour Party and shaping the whole into his image. The slick advertising came second; first of all he created a party which had a purpose. It is simply a matter of great regret that the purpose was to wrap neo-liberal economics in the guise of social democracy.

Ideology is not dead but is very much alive and well. The problem the SNP has faced is that it simply has too many of the damned things. Against PFI but desperate to cut business tax? Opposing the war while following an otherwise neo-con economic agenda? With such a contradictory psyche it is certainly hard not to credit the SNP with maintaining a fine Scottish tradition...

The answer is much simpler than any of this. The SNP vote actually held pretty solidly between 1999 and 2003 – it was the disillusioned Labour vote which was volatile. In 1999 the SNP offered a redistributive agenda based on social provision. And the disillusioned Labour vote liked it. In 2003 they offered the same pro-business (and by extension anti-people) agenda as the rest. And the disillusioned Labour vote abandoned them for the SSP. If you doubt this look at the results constituency by constituency and consider in particular the fate of John McAllion (where the SSP didn't stand thinking they were doing John a favour). The picture is clear.

So the members of the SNP who want to halt the decline should vote for a leader with only one question in mind; which candidate actually **believes** in a vision of Scotland which reclaims the country for the people who voted to make it a contender in 1999? They can worry about the hair-dos afterwards. ■

# feedback

Letters for publication should be emailed to [feedback@scottishleftreview.org](mailto:feedback@scottishleftreview.org)

On the proposed independence constitutions I'd like to emphasise two points. The original constitutional convention and its supporters, which led to the creation of the Scottish Parliament, had a pluralist perspective of politicians working together for the benefit of our people and an end to 'yah boo' politics

Elaine Smith MSP very much relates to this when she states "the Scottish Parliament will be judged by delivery on social justice – the issues of poverty, affordable homes, education, NHS, pensions care of the elderly and reducing inequality.

A clash with Westminster on these questions and others is inevitable and raises the issue of more powers including fiscal powers and there is the possibility of a broad campaign emerging for local income tax to replace Council Tax. These conflicts assist the struggle for social democratic politics in the UK and against Blair's Thatcherite agenda.

Tom Nairn in his book **After Britain** raises some very relevant approaches to consider. Circumstances of constant disengagement and variance are likely to provoke moves in the direction of a 'Scottish Constitution' anyway, whatever one's views on further constitutional change. A powerful tradition of constitutional claim and definition already exists here. Its civic demands which won a Scottish Parliament – civic here means constitutional – a protest for democracy understood as a democratic and judicial system corresponding to institutions and culture of a distinct society. Nairn makes the point that the Scots are already halfway there: part of the work of the Parliament will have to constitute in the sense that a new democratic system needs stability. A constitution is not just a document – it is part of popular identity: people become citizens via a constitution. Some may see this as unnecessary but lots of things are loosening – monarchy, House of Lords, voting systems, the law and the creation of a supreme court, even possibly the loss of the pound Sterling..

The multinational unitarianism of the United Kingdom is foundering. In Nairn's dramatic phrase "the reconsolidation of British sovereignty, as envisaged in the past, is impossible despite the strident cries of Euro-sceptics. Blair may be cherry-picking his way through the European constitution while opposing a written constitution for the UK, but does this make it absurd for Scots to create one?"

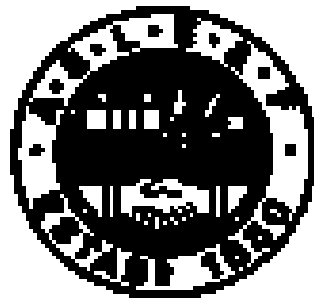
Even a regional or sub-state government needs a constitution. In Spain, Canada, Germany and India their own sub-constitutions were written into action from the outset. Perhaps what frightens some is that once things are 'written down' any self-taught pundit or rabble rouser can have his or her say.

We should remember that Blair once characterised devolution as a kind of 'local government reform'! To aim for just a 'settling down' or 'bedding in' of the devolution settlement is a disablement of democracy – but its 'enablement' requires a constitution.

In my opinion Nairn's point in no way would have us bogged down in constitutional issues as opposed to campaigning on central issues as people see them. On the contrary they are very much related. The Scottish people will be won for greater involvement in politics and our Parliament the more we are linking these issues to developing democracy.

The soil that nurtured the original Scottish Constitutional Convention was pluralist and cooperative. We might need to renew that spirit, but I doubt that it can be reinvigorated around a campaign for 'independence' solely. I have tried to suggest some alternative paths. Might our Civic Forum consider a future discussion on a Scottish constitution? ■

*George Bolton*



ASLEF calls for the Government to introduce a charter of workers' rights that would include, the right to full employment, rights from day one of employment, the repeal of oppressive anti trade union legislation and positive laws encouraging trade unions to represent their members individually and collectively.

ASLEF, 9 Arkwright Road, Hampstead, LONDON NW3 6AB.

# briefing: scotland's war on terror

"The intelligence was that terrorists with al-Qaeda links were planning an attack on Princes Street and Trafalgar Square celebrations using Bali-style bombs,"

'MI5 source'. **Scotland on Sunday 22 Dec 2002**

An intelligence source at the highest level has revealed to the Sunday Mirror that both Edinburgh and Glasgow were considered "high-value" targets because of the tens of thousands of revellers in the cities at that time. The Sunday Mirror can reveal the "Top Secret" report specifically warned of the "high probability" of a terrorist attack during the New Year's Eve festivities... The report, called "Management Emergency Briefing" was sent to the Chief Constables in all the main police forces in Scotland and northern England on November 20.

**Sunday Mirror 22 December 2002.**

Our thoughts go especially to Edinburgh where an estimated quarter of a million people will celebrate in the shadows the ancient castle in defiance of a foiled terror attack following the arrest and detention of eight Algerians in Edinburgh and London earlier this month. This being likely a foiled attack on the Hogmanay celebrations that was to cause serious loss of life and damage to property.

**British National Party website December 2002**

'The suggestion of political interference and direction is utter nonsense. We carried out a police investigation for which I take direct responsibility. I am satisfied that the inquiry was thorough and professional, and at its conclusion we reported all the facts and circumstances to the Crown.'

**Tom Wood, the Deputy Chief Constable of Lothian and Borders Police, 11 December 2003**

'Primary responsibility and authority for anti-terrorism measures lies with the Security Service [MI5]'

**Cathy Jamieson MSP, Written Answers, S2W-7384, 30 April 2004**

## Scotland's Abu Ghraib?

"We were taken to Govan [police station] where we passed about a week in very miserable conditions, deprived of sleep, which I can call torture. There was a very high light on 24/7 and it was a very cold room with two metal doors. It makes you feel like a real monster."

Detainee Salah Moullef

Evidence' against the suspects:

- An annotated map of Edinburgh. (In fact this belonged to an Australian backpacker.)
- A picture of the World Trade Center on fire. (In fact belonged to the landlord of one of the suspects.)
- 'Terrorist training videos'. (In fact these were recorded from television broadcasts.)

Result: all charges dropped

"I think these arrests are against Muslim people, not terrorists. We are more frightened now we have been released than we were before the arrest. We are worried the police might break down the door of our house and take us like they did 12 months ago."

Detainee, Ghalem Belhadj,

## In the UK

Number of arrests under the Terrorism Act 2000:

Over **700**

Number of people charged:

about **70** (mostly with immigration offences).

Number of convictions by December 2003:

**7**

Number of convictions for planning or carrying out specific acts of terror:

**0**

Source: Scotland Against Criminalising Communities: [www.sacc.org.uk/](http://www.sacc.org.uk/)

# a permanent state of terror?

Aamer Anwar looks at the Scottish legal aftermath of the 'war on terror'

Post 9/11 we have an anti-terrorism act that has the widest definition ever, giving the police and the courts the power to arrest anyone, detain anyone, search and seize property, tap telephones at will. A whole series of measures targeting refugees, asylum seekers and Muslims have been introduced. We are told it is to combat terrorism, yet as we have seen the practice is one of terrorising and causing fear in our community. The use of these laws has bred a culture of suspicion against Muslims and people of middle eastern appearance.

Home Office figures revealed that stop and searches of Asians under new anti-terror laws soared 302 per cent in a year. The total number of stop and searches under counter-terrorist legislation more than doubled from 8,550 to 21,577. Anti-terror searches of blacks rose 230 per cent, from 529 to 1,745, and of whites 118 per cent, from 6,629 to 14,429. Some 8,000 people have been stopped under the new anti-terrorism powers. Yet only 170 people have been charged as a result. Just two of those have been convicted. Both were for possession of a small amount of cannabis, which hardly amounts to a 'terrorist threat'. A labour government in its war on terror has introduced a climate of fear, targeting the innocent and weakest. To believe the fiction that Britain is in a state of war with people afraid to go about their normal lives is to allow the government to bring in ever more draconian measures.

The measures are ripping through immigrant and Muslim communities in Britain. The Labour Government's Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974 had a similar effect. Introduced in response to the IRA's bombings, Irish people in Britain suffered routine harassment from the police, who seized the chance to target 'potential terrorists'. Over 97 per cent of those arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, were never charged. It was used instead as an information-gathering exercise for the British security forces, as a measure of social control, 'a fishing expedition on a whole community'. It failed to stop the bombings of Harrods, Enniskillen and the Grand Hotel in Brighton.

Today there is a similar aim when it comes to the systematic harassment of Muslims, at a time when there is a growing political movement against Bush and Blair. Scotland has not been immune. In December 2002 in a series of co-ordinated raids in London, Edinburgh and Glasgow seven Algerian men were arrested in the early hours of the morning. Within days tabloid headlines courtesy of 'intelligence sources' declared that an Al Qaeda plot to blow up the Edinburgh Hogamanay had been foiled. The automatic assumption was that if 'our boys' in the security services got the 'intelligence' then the men must be guilty.

My client Ghalem, 6ft 4 inches with an Islamic beard with a wife in full Hijaab and four children, would have made the worst Islamic Terrorist in the world. Not exactly your sleeper cell blending into the background. Half the men did not even know each other, and the supposedly strongest piece of evidence that made its way onto the pages of the Daily Record was that of a map of Princes Street with doodlings on it. It turned out to belong to an Australian backpacker who had moved back to Melbourne. Despite this the intelligence involved over £1 million being spent on the investigation with over 80 officers working fulltime on the case for over one year. From the

beginning these men proclaimed their innocence of the charge of terrorism. It took the Crown a year to announce that there would be no further proceedings, making a quiet announcement in the run up to Christmas by means of a fax at 3.30 PM in the afternoon. The only beneficiaries of these arrests were the pro-war lobby and shadowy intelligences services. Disgracefully, the police are still treating the freed men as suspects.

This government has set about creating a 'Guantanamo Bay in our own back yard'. At Belmarsh maximum security prison in South East London, 17 foreign nationals have been held under the powers Blunkett granted himself in the wake of 11 September 2001. Fourteen of them continue to be held. They have not been charged or appeared before a court. They are caged indefinitely on the "suspicion of the Home Secretary". The Home Office's secret tribunal, which upheld the incarceration, admitted that it was prepared to rely on "evidence extracted under torture". The Home Office claims that new powers under the criminal justice act 2003, are necessary in the fight against terrorism but they have in fact been used to stir up hysteria about terrorism that is not really there, persecuting minorities and discriminating against them using legislation in the name of national security. We are now saying that someone who has fled to this country from tyranny cannot seek to overthrow by word or action that tyrannical government. The act has allowed the government to extradite political offenders to their home state - something which was not permitted a century ago when it was accepted that those fighting oppression abroad should be allowed a safe haven in Britain.



Anyone convicted of an offence under the act is likely to be excluded from refugee status in Britain as a terrorist supporter and could face deportation on national security grounds.

Since last year, the court of appeal accepted the Home Secretary's argument that a threat to a friendly government abroad was a threat to Britain's national security. The government's economic, diplomatic and political priorities dictate friendly relations with the repressive regimes which produce refugees. The Turkish, Sri Lankan, Algerian, Israeli and Saudi governments (among others) have long complained that Britain did nothing to stop refugees conspiring against them from London. The impact that the Act, and the proscription of several mainstream liberation organisations, will have on the right to asylum has been vast. What can an asylum-seeker say, who fears persecution at home for his or her support for one of these organisations? Support for the liberation struggle is the foundation for most asylum claims by Tamils, Turkish Kurds, Kashmiris, Palestinians and others, but support or membership of a listed opposition group risks bringing arrest, and disavowal of support for the group will have the claim rejected on the ground that he or she is not persecuted at home. Many people, faced with this dilemma, are likely not to claim asylum at all, although they deserve to be granted refugee status. The measures are likely to result in the growth of the

undocumented, invisible underclass vulnerable to exploitation by employers leading to more misery such as the cockle shell workers in Morecambe.

Following 9/11 an apartheid legal system is being constructed in the UK, in which foreign nationals are being subjected to intense surveillance, arbitrary arrest, secret trials and worse. Indeed, the control of foreign nationals has become the main domestic front in the war against terrorism. Zero tolerance of immigration offences is criminalising vast numbers in Britain's poorest immigrant communities. The usual checks and balances against miscarriages of justice are being swept aside. Blunkett's parcel of measures against asylum seekers in his war on terror, will certainly deny basic legal rights and access to public services to some of the most vulnerable but they would certainly not have helped prevent the attacks on the World Trade Centre, which were carried out by men who were not asylum seekers, did not use schools and could afford private hospitals (and did not have Islamic beards!).

We have to acknowledge the impact of the 'war on terror' - the huge increase in

the number of Muslims now being subjected to stop and search adds to the feeling that the whole community is being criminalised. For over 50 years my parents' immigrant generation were polite workers who did not answer back, tolerated being spat at and being told to 'go back'. Then my generation, by struggling for rights and having been born here, naively believed we had earned our stake in Britain. But since 9/11 the atmosphere has changed to one where as Muslims, we are challenged to be more British or Scottish than anyone else. Every bomb set off around the world sees a huge question mark hanging over our heads in our workplaces and communities. Institutional racism highlighted by the McPherson report is rapidly turning into institutional prejudice against Muslims. A generation of young Muslim men is being criminalised in the wake of 9/11 in the same way young black men were previously targeted by police.

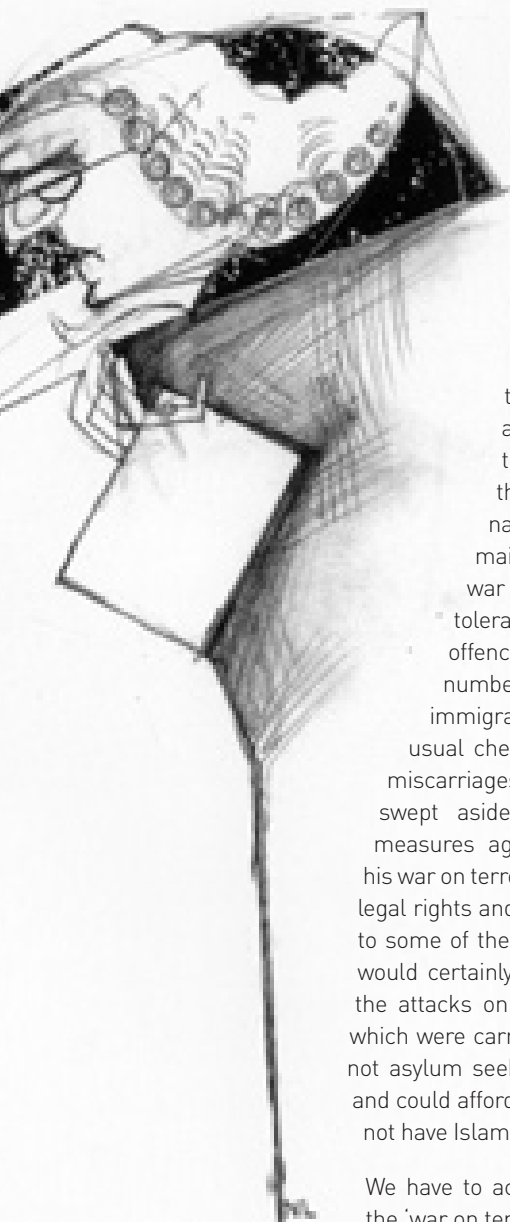
There is a silver lining and it is that the resistance in Iraq has stunned Bush's neo-conservatives and his poodle Blair; so too has the global anti-war movement. The Bush gang are on the defensive and are deeply divided. We can drive those splits deeper and hasten the end of the war of occupation, but for that to be successful we must unite in the way we did on February 15 2003 on the world's anti-war marches and not allow a separation of the war against imperialism from a war for freedom and justice at home. The fact is that Osama bin Laden remains free, and the causes which created him not only remain but have actually increased. Even in 'liberated Iraq' he is more popular than either Bush or Blair. Together with the thousands jailed as Taliban suspects are thousands of other innocent Muslims, in jails in the US, Europe and in 'friendly Muslim countries'.

Fighting terrorism with terrorism is not a moral or intelligent thing. There is no weapon of mass destruction we can come up with that can destroy the human spirit in its calls for freedom and justice. Our smart bombs and war on terror will only provoke the same. We need to appreciate the cries and pain of people who continue to suffer because of policies adopted by the west. Until we do that we will continue to be hated. Otherwise we should expect to reap what we are sowing: violence and terrorism. I can never forget that both Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein were instruments of the American intelligence services and neither is the product of traditional Islam. It is highly likely though that Bin Laden would now win any vote against any Muslim leader in any country in the Arabian peninsula. And his reach is now, unfortunately, much wider - Bin Laden posters are hanging up in the rooms of young people in West Africa, the Far East and in Glasgow here in Scotland.

The Bush administration wants to introduce the right to indefinitely detain immigrants suspected of ties to terrorist groups without trial. In Britain, the Home Office is seeking to gain similar powers to detain asylum seekers, to impose compulsory identity cards to access schools and hospitals, and to curtail the number of judicial reviews available to someone charged with offences abroad before extradition.

The failed war against terrorism should be stopped; the aim should be to listen and act on genuine grievances, injustices and pain. It will bring closer the day when Blair and Bush are held to account. It can help bring an end to the occupation and bury the Bush project of a 'Permanent War on Terror'. Otherwise, "the chickens" - as Malcolm X pointed out - "will come home to roost". ■

**Aamer Anwar is a Solicitor and Human Rights Campaigner who represents several of the men accused of Terrorism in 2002-3**



# scotland the grave

## Liz Laws on the battle against the image of a romantic war

Whatever your views on whether or not Jack McConnell should have dropped all commitments to go to Dunkirk, no-one could have missed the news headlines and failed to realise how embedded militarism is in Scotland's culture. Indeed the fact that each year around this time we are treated to the same propaganda about brave Scots and fine heroes of World War II without any complaints from the public or media, again re-emphasises our romantic attachment to the prevalent myth of the 'glorious dead' and 'our boys'.

In our green and pleasant land, riddled with British fascism, collusion, discrimination and anti-Semitism, the youth of yesterday might have been better placed learning how to deal with their own anger and prejudice than taking up arms.

Today social exclusion, poverty and unemployment lead to the creation of disaffected young people who are drawn into the mesh that is militarism in Scotland. At all levels of society the Armed Forces are seen as providing the ideal opportunity to learn skills, to go adventuring, to have mates, earn money and develop an identity and when an individual is made to feel as though they have none of these, privilege or hope of status can be a strong driving force. Opportunity is valuable currency when selling to people who are made to feel poor and excluded and the underlying desire to have something better than at present makes for a fertile recruiting ground

The way the services present themselves is efficient; at an army presentation last year I was only slightly bored. They did not have the bad taste to show anything to liven it up that included dead bodies or real combat pictures. There was no scent of the desperation of young adults being asked to take the life of another, no smell of blood drying, or of burning flesh, no sound of the constant crying of a hungry child held by a frightened parent. We tell lies through imagery all the time; we sanitise and subsequently glorify war and death.

Our regiments pride themselves on being 'families', being a team. As a member of that team you will be expected to give up your individuality, to be the same, to do as you are told, right or wrong. Bullying, persuading, sharing and excluding are paramount and are all experiences likely to confirm your position as part of the team.

A sense of belonging must be one of the more seductive reasons for joining such an organised group. Why seductive? Because the idea that the services provide a 'family' means that those who have suffered from the new 'world of the individual' that we now live in may find that a place offering a family, even if it is not a particularly good place, might be better than the alternative. Belonging to a group of people who can protect themselves and each other provides a haven for those who have suffered any form of bullying and belonging to an organisation where

common perception suggests you will be respected because of the clothes you wear - a different form of designer label - gives a person the sense of a head start and advantage.

Furthermore, while the Armed Services are seen as a way out for the highly excluded, unrest and anarchy are minimised, because those whose views might be considered extreme, are drawn into a hierarchical and rigid system, thus silencing dissent. This hierarchy and structure reaffirms divisions in society and protects the system from erosion.

So what is it that legitimises our romance with structural violence? Is it the affluence associated with those on the receiving end of profits from the arms trade? Is it the opportunities offered to those adolescents from narrow and blighted communities? Or are we trying to gain international credibility to counteract the fact that we are actually a small province north of the Watford Gap? Surely it cannot be about 'boys with toys'?

We need to start with the imagery; the aural tradition as well as art and folk music remember and lament the death of loved ones, children, lovers, friends, killed in battle and this should be revived by those of us who object to the current use of image and sound to present an altogether more romantic version of war. Historically, making sense of

the massive human waste of war in an age when adults were needed to keep starvation at bay must have been an essential element for mental health. What better way than to glorify the dead, to enrich their memory through stories of bravery, all the while demonising the enemy. Separating good from bad and venting disillusion and anger on 'the other' rather than tackling injustice locally seems like a far 'safer' alternative.

So the myth that a fighter is something special - a romantic figure - has gradually become part of Scottish hegemony. For the soldiers that survive and are maimed a status is created in myth - the fact that in the past so many needed to beg to live; the fact that at present so many ex-forces people are among our homeless community is rarely noted as being of historical interest.

War, of course, needs an industry to keep it functioning and that industry needs war to keep it profitable. I am not talking of the factory worker or any other person trying to make a living in a difficult world. Nobody wakes up one morning and decides to make instruments of torture. They start a job in the steel industry or electronics and gradually get sucked into a trade that deals in human suffering. However, all people must accept that they have a degree of agency. I am thinking of the middle class people with clean jobs and pensions who turn a blind eye to the fact that they hold shares in unclean investments, in companies supplying arms. I am thinking of the junior

**The myth that a fighter is something special - a romantic figure - has gradually become part of Scottish hegemony**



dealers and company executives, themselves driven by such shareholders and their own bonuses, who want high financial returns. And so the dealing continues. Are they too just doing a job?

We move up a level to the people who hold the slush fund, organise the 'entertaining' and the suits get smarter, the cut gets better and the corruption increases. I suppose it is like every market; the numbers of people who significantly gain are tiny. They just have a big voice. Each worker in the arms industry costs the taxpaying public. Go to [www.caat.org.uk](http://www.caat.org.uk) for sound information.

What interests me about the idea of militarism is that somehow we have managed to incorporate it within the concept of privilege. Our promotion of cadet forces in schools is one of the magnificent contradictions of affluence. The perceived value of the Armed Services has been so internalised that parents, who will beggar themselves for the advantages of private education, will encourage participation in the potential brutalisation of their precious offspring. A few years ago a parent said to me they were happy that their boy of thirteen was in the cadet force as he was learning leadership skills and all sorts of useful things. To me a short time later he explained which weapons he could put together in the dark having searched a darkened room for the parts. Today he is in conflict with the same parent who does not want him to join the Marines but sees no correlation between early acceptance of the army and his present worldview. Interesting how often the moral high ground is taken on the issue of child soldiers in areas of conflict in countries of the south where there is a perceived need for fighters, yet in the comfortable north we collude with the grooming of children for recruitment purposes.

It would be good if at the end of a comment on militarism and Scotland if there could be found a simple underlying cause, a clear cut exit strategy to our love affair with false images. Perhaps part of the problem is that if we deconstruct our ideas about the Armed Services we may have to reappraise our history as explorers and innovators. We may have to examine the oppressive behaviour within our own borders as well as our global relationships.

Demystifying militarism is a slow process and must not suddenly reverse our long-held attitudes towards our service personnel. To demonise people in the services is modelling demilitarisation on structural violence; people are just people doing the best they can. Education in non-violence and different ways of dealing with conflict is one general route, but specifically we must, as individuals, change our behaviour. As individuals our aim must be to stop colluding with militarism through pageantry, doubtful war films and shares in the arms industry. By slow steady steps we need to request our pension companies to declare their interest in oppressive industries whether armaments, water or slave labour. We must learn to be proud of our own activism our own ability to change things for the better without generating yet another simplistic dichotomy. ■

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# prepare to protest

## Gill Hubbard highlights two major events you cannot afford to miss

The G8 summit in July 2005 will take place in Gleneagles. Already, participants of the social movements in Scotland are discussing ways of highlighting why the G8 is part of the problem rather than a solution. A counter-summit and peaceful protests is likely to be organised.

The European Social Forum (ESF) in London 15-17 October 2004 is the first opportunity for anti-capitalists to gather in one place to discuss and debate a wealth of issues including the European Union and the Project for a New American Century and collectively decide a response. The Scotland Mobilising Committee for the European Social Forum (SMC-ESF), which includes a wide range of organisations, has already decided to hold a session on the G8 at the ESF. This will be our first major opportunity to inform people from other countries what we are planning to do in Scotland and invite them to participate.

### Why mobilise against the G8?

There are a number of reasons why protest against the G8 will be massive.

1. The G8 (then the G6) met for the first time in 1975. It has had 30 years to alleviate the misery and poverty endured by people in some of the poorest parts of the world. Yet, at the beginning of the 21st century:
  - A child every 15 seconds dies from lack of safe water.
  - Most of the estimated 10 million worldwide child deaths are preventable. Of the 20 countries with the highest child mortality rates, 19 are in Africa, the only exception being Afghanistan.
  - Half of the people living in sub-Saharan Africa are living on less than a dollar a day, which is half the level of subsidy given to European cows.
  - Late in 2003, the United Nations reported that one billion people - approximately one third of the world's urban dwellers and a sixth of all humanity, live in slums.
  - While at least a billion people on the planet subsist on the equivalent of a dollar a day or less, the concentration of wealth among a handful of people at the top has set new records. In March **Forbes** magazine listed a record 587 individuals and family units worth \$1 billion or more, an increase from 476 in 2003. The combined wealth of this year's billionaires also reached record levels - a staggering \$1.9 trillion, an increase of \$500 billion in just one year.
2. The G8 has consistently imposed a neo-liberal economic model that benefits the rich and powerful at the expense of the most impoverished people in the world. An increase in international trade for the world's poorest countries has not led to any real reduction in poverty in these countries. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

reported that the majority of people in countries that opened up their markets for free trade were still surviving on less than a \$1 a day.

3. The G8 continues to demand that poor countries open up their borders to free trade. Like vultures, trans-national corporations circle over these countries waiting to feed off the profits. The G8 insists that to qualify for debt relief poor countries must privatise public utilities including water, gas, electricity and transport. Privatisation has increased the costs of these essential services, which means that poor people can no longer afford them. Debt relief was denied to seven heavily indebted countries because they had not abided by IMF and World Bank neo-liberal economic agreements.
4. Tony Blair was recently handed the presidency of the G8 and announced a Commission for Africa. Yet, existing reports, including the highly acclaimed Brandt report, already show what needs to be done to help people in Africa. Britain for instance, has still not fulfilled its promise that it made 30 years ago to the United Nations to increase aid to 0.7 per cent of national income (Britain currently gives 0.34 per cent which is approximately £3.83 billion). On the other hand, Britain reserved £3.8 billion for the Iraq war and the costs of this war are still rising. A recent opinion poll reported in the Guardian shows that 60 per cent of the public say that money spent on the Iraq war would have been better spent on tackling poverty in poor countries. And Blair has still not apologised for this war despite the lies about the reasons for going to war and torture in Abu Ghraib.
5. The G8 could immediately cancel Third World debt. It would cost \$18 billion to cancel the debt owed by the 41 most heavily indebted countries to the IMF and World Bank. The United States spent \$100 billion on the war in Iraq.
6. The G8 could also tackle HIV/AIDS. An estimated 40 million people in the world have the disease, and 28 million of them live in sub-Saharan Africa. An estimated 6,300 people die of HIV/AIDS every day because they cannot afford medication. HIV/AIDS did not even reach this year's G8 agenda; instead, it was discussed for 2 hours over a 'working lunch.' The G8 endorsed co-ordinated international research for a HIV/AIDS vaccine. Yet, the United Nations estimates that Africa needs \$10 billion to fight HIV/AIDS each year. The World Aids Campaign is still waiting for the G8 to honour the United Nations Global Aids Agreement that it signed three years ago.

Given the failed history of the G8 it is no surprise that people have protested whenever the G8 meets. Gleneagles in 2005 is likely to be no different. The leaders of the eight richest countries in the world make take their photo-opportunities but there are millions of us ready to point out their hypocrisy and reveal the G8 for what they really are: a rich cabal disguised as pious philanthropists.



decided at the ESF in Florence in November 2002. Millions of people in 600 cities in 60 countries across the world marched together for peace on that day. Already, there is discussion about uniting across Europe to oppose the EU constitution, campaign against the G8, and continue opposition to the war in Iraq.

### **How your organisation can hold a meeting at the ESF**

There are three types of meetings at the ESF. Plenary meetings are organised by the ESF itself and are likely to be very big. Seminars are hosted by organisations from across Europe and are also likely to be huge. Workshops are also hosted by organisations but they do not have the same facilities as a plenary or

### **How to get involved in mobilising for the G8**

The Scotland Mobilisation Committee for the European Social Forum is inviting organisations and activists to a series of meetings to discuss what we should do during and in the run up to the G8. To get involved contact the SMC-ESF by email [esfscotland@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:esfscotland@yahoo.co.uk) or ring Gill Hubbard 07985797022 or Mike Arnott 07951443656.

### **European Social Forum - London 2004**

The European Social Forum, which is a huge gathering of anti-capitalists representing all European countries, is being held in London 14-17 October 2004. Tens of thousands of anti-capitalists, trades unionists, peace activists, environmentalists, human rights campaigners, feminists and more from across the continent will come together in London to discuss, debate and demonstrate. Meetings are being planned on the themes of war and peace, democracy and human rights, women's rights, the battle against privatisation, global poverty, corporate globalisation, racism and the far right, and environmental crisis. There are different views and perspectives among participants of the global anti-capitalist movement and the ESF provides an opportunity to debate them out so that action can be planned. In contrast to the ways in which the rulers of the world reach conclusions in the United Nations, no element of the anti-capitalist movement has a veto, uses violence or financial blackmail to get their way.

The ESF will also be an opportunity for people to prepare for global days of action. For example, the demonstrations on February 15th 2003 against the then impending war on Iraq was

seminar. To host a seminar your organisation needs to post a suggestion on the official ESF web site [www.fse-esf.org](http://www.fse-esf.org). The cost per seminar is £250, which will get you a room at Alexander Palace where the ESF is taking place. Your seminar will also be simultaneously translated in seven different languages and it will be listed on the ESF timetable. However, more seminar proposals will be submitted than can be held so organisations across Europe are encouraged to submit joint proposals. The deadline for proposing a seminar is 25 July. The next SMC-ESF will be discussing seminar suggestions and will also be proposing a number of speakers from Scotland for the Plenary meetings. This meeting will be on Wednesday 21 July, 7.30pm, STUC, Woodlands Road, Glasgow. For more information about the SMC-ESF and details of how to get involved visit the web site [esfscotland.no-ip.org](http://esfscotland.no-ip.org).

### **Another world is possible**

The anti-capitalist and anti-war movements have shown millions of people around the world that another world is possible. We have challenged a class of parasites who produce nothing, but have a huge need to squander our money on wars, foreign embassies, financial speculation and luxury commodities to devastating effect on the rest of humanity. We are not going away. ■

*Gill Hubbard attended the G8 summit protests in Genoa 2001 and is convenor of Globalise Resistance Scotland, which is one of the organisations participating in the Scotland Mobilisation Committee for the European Social Forum*

# human rights in scotland

## Two reports on human rights in Scotland from Amnesty International

### China human rights abuses: Edinburgh's shame

THE televised massacre of hundreds of democracy activists in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, still makes people shudder at the naked brutality displayed by the People's Liberation Army. The following day in Beijing, the ages-long struggle between peaceful dissent and violent repression achieved iconic status through the picture of a lone, unarmed protestor confronting a column of army tanks. This image has been reproduced in huge quantities since 1989 and represents one of the defining moments of the 20th century. It is also one of the most inspiring moments in history: every human being with a sense of decency stands humbled and awe-struck before the image of the lone protestor in Tiananmen Square. It tells us that, even in the face of bitter intolerance and crushing force, the innate dignity and worth of the individual endures.

This year is the 15th anniversary of those events and the people of Edinburgh have a special reason to ponder its significance because the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, with the support of the city council, has invited the People's Liberation Army to perform. Neither the human rights record of China nor that of its army were taken into account in issuing that invitation. In the People's Republic of China, human rights receive no respect at all, and major violations, such as torture and political imprisonment, are everyday events. China leads the world in the use of the death penalty, executing more people every year than all other countries put together, and for offences including VAT fraud, car theft and cattle rustling. Mass executions are often carried out Taliban-style, in sports stadia, immediately after unduly swift and extremely shoddy trials. The People's Liberation Army is an integral part of the complex of security forces responsible for these violations.

The Tiananmen Square massacre was not a one-off, aberrant incident; it was part of a pattern of human rights abuses that has persisted for decades. In recent years, the People's Liberation Army has been used to prevent Roman Catholics and other religious or spiritual groups from exercising their faith and has played a leading role in suppressing minority cultures in the Tibet and Xinjiang regions of China. However, it should be remembered that the defining moment that was Tiananmen Square is not yet over - it stretches into the present day. Dozens of people who participated in the demonstrations remain in prison, or are unaccounted for. Every year in the run-up to June 4, Chinese security forces arrest those who dare to speak out about Tiananmen Square and the government's lack of remorse for it. This year has been no exception. Three members of the 'Tiananmen Mothers' - Ding Zilin, Zhang Xianling and Huang Jinping - were held for several days in March, apparently to persuade them not to commemorate the anniversary.

The Tiananmen Mothers is a campaigning group of victims' relatives who call for government accountability over the events of June 1989 (there has been no independent judicial inquiry into the killings, no-one has been brought to justice, no compensation has been paid). Some of those who were killed on or around June 4, 1989, turned up recently in unmarked

graves in central Beijing. Many others have yet to be found and possibly never will be. Ding Zilin, whose own son, Jiang Jielian, was 17 when he was shot in the back and killed near Tiananmen Square by the People's Liberation Army, believes that the construction works related to the 2008 Olympics will make it "extremely difficult to find even one more trace". Ding Zilin obviously did not learn her lesson from her incarceration in March - she has since been placed under house arrest, where it is expected she will remain, at least until the anniversary is safely past. It is reported that she has also received a visit from a senior official, who is said to have told her that "under the present regime there will be no resolution of the June 4 question". Then there is Wang Wanxing, who has been held almost continuously in a psychiatric hospital since 1992, after he unfurled a flag in Tiananmen Square to mark the anniversary of the massacre. The Chinese government says he suffers from a mental illness called "political monomania", which sounds to me like he just refuses to change his political opinions.

What should all this mean to the people of Edinburgh? Well, the city's international standing is somewhat at stake, I would suggest. The respectability thus gained by the People's Liberation Army could be respectability lost to Edinburgh, by acting as enthusiastic host to representatives of this institutional abuser of human rights. As Shakespeare put it: "Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing; 'twas mine, 'tis his and has been slave to thousands. But he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him and makes me poor indeed." I hope that the people of Edinburgh will maintain the good name of their city, by peacefully, but firmly, expressing their disapproval of human rights abuses in China.

*Bernard O'Hear is China co-ordinator for Amnesty International*

### Refugees are Key to Nation's Future

SCOTLAND'S falling population is old news. However, as it continues to decline at the fastest rate in Europe, the skills gap in the Scottish labour market is widening. In response, the Government has increasingly made much of policy initiatives to attract skilled workers from abroad, including the Fresh Talent Initiative. This may not, however, be enough. Futureskills Scotland forecast last year that over the next five years Scotland will need an extra 82,000 workers in the retail and wholesale sector, 61,000 in health and social work, 59,000 in finance and 44,000 in education.

Many campaigning organisations have pointed out the lost opportunity for Scotland in the refugee and asylum seeker population here. At present, it is estimated that around 10,000 refugees and asylum seekers live in Scotland and many are highly skilled. This year, the Scottish Executive's Skills and Aspirations Audit found that more than 50 per cent possessed college qualifications and a fifth had university degrees. However, under current legislation asylum seekers who have arrived in the UK since July 2002 are not allowed to work. This

has meant that many feel they are 'stuck' in the asylum system for years, watching their skills go to waste. What's more, those who have refugee status and full rights to work often face severe barriers in getting employment, including racism and widespread confusion amongst employers about the law.

We recently took part in Refugee Week, which celebrates the contribution refugees make to Scotland and promotes understanding about the reasons why people seek sanctuary. The week aims to deliver positive educational messages that counter fear, ignorance and negative stereotypes of refugees through arts, cultural, sports and educational events across Scotland. As part of the week Amnesty International has compiled case studies of refugees' experiences of living and working in Scotland. There are positive stories about the contributions refugees have been able to make to Scotland and about their deep desire to 'give something back'. There are also stories of lost opportunity and wasted talent, with dire consequences for those involved.

One of these is the story of a 38-year-old mother of three from Malawi, who does not wish to be identified, and who now lives in Edinburgh. She fled her country after returning from a funeral to find her home destroyed and her family gone. She was targeted because of her involvement in political activities protecting human rights in Malawi, and ended up in Scotland because she had a relative who was living in Aberdeen at the time as a student and she was able to live with him. However, he then decided to return to Malawi and could no longer put her up, as he felt associating with her might endanger him on his return. The Scottish Refugee Council helped her to find a flat in Edinburgh. Before the events that led to this, she had had a good life and was a primary school teacher, taking classes of up to 149 pupils, while also managing a hair salon that hired 50 people.

Since arriving in Scotland, it has not been easy. At one point she was living in a one-bedroom flat in Broomhouse with her three children, and suffered a great deal of racial abuse. She has since been moved and things have got better, but her main problem now is employment. She says: "As a person who has worked all my life, I feel like I've been buried alive. I can see what is going on, but nobody can see me. It's really a scary place to be." She hoped that her asylum application would be processed quickly and that she could get back to teaching. However, she has struggled to find employment that matches her skills and vividly recalls her first interview. "I went for a hairdressing interview and it is customary for me to put out my hand when meeting somebody, and this lady just looked at me with a sour expression and said: 'Sorry, I think we've made a mistake. It's not you we are trying to interview.' That was it, no interview, no nothing. So that discouraged me from the first."

Since living here, she has gained a degree in mental health and numerous other educational certificates. She has also

volunteered to help a number of organisations. She should be an employer's dream. However, nine years have passed and still no decision has been made on her asylum application so she cannot work. She doesn't want to live off benefits and can't understand why she is made to feel like a criminal when she just wants to work.

THE experience of another asylum seeker, a 35-year-old accountant from the Middle East now living in Glasgow, is more encouraging. Esi was forced to flee for his safety and is seeking to build a future here. He knew that it was essential to gain a UK accountancy qualification. For years he studied by day and worked by night in takeaways. At the same time he was sending out his CV to accountancy firms, applying for basic jobs such as filing. He estimates that he applied to more than 100 jobs, but the reply was always a polite no. He said: "Nobody told me I can't continue my career, but I realised this was the translation of what they were telling me. Just forget about accountancy, just work in a food shop, this is what most other foreigners do." His luck turned during a chance conversation with a regular customer in the takeaway where he was working. He was put in touch with an accountancy firm in which the customer's son was a partner. Despite the son's initial reservations, he was immediately offered a work placement. The work was unpaid, but Esi was very happy to be given a chance. He proved himself to be a hard worker and got on well with the other staff. Since last October he has been working as a full-time employee. ■

***Sonya Fairhurst has been compiling case studies of refugees' experiences of living and seeking work in Scotland for Amnesty International.***



# the world thing

Tom Nairn argues that devolution looks out of step in a new world order

When Devolution was the unrealistic dream of a few lunatics, I remember attending a '70s convention of fantasists at Scottish Churches House in Dunblane. One of the speakers said how he dared to hope Scotland might one day attempt 'a world thing' — what I think he meant was it should try for the opposite of parochialism, or hole-and-corner nationalism. The phrase came back to me, getting off the plane from Melbourne last April. In some way hard to fathom, everything was changing. Such feelings are the common lot of exiles, and usually has the effect of making them long for a retreating past. My own reaction has been to think the past isn't retreating fast enough. More aggressive exorcism is required. However, this too seems to be at least under way. For all its faults, devolved government has provoked a real awakening. But the patient has awakened to an altered world — indeed, to external conditions changing so fast that most adaptive powers risk being left behind. Another way of putting this is to say that Scotland has finally stumbled upon that 'world thing' dreamt of back in the '70s. But this does not result from any new nobility of the Caledonian soul — and certainly not from the weird range of 'pull-up-your-socks!' exercises that have accompanied Devolution and its aftermath. No, the considerably weirder fact is, there is nowadays little possibility of doing **anything else**.

This is because globalisation has shifted all the goal-posts. Neither states nor nations (nor, therefore, national movements) can be what they formerly were. World-related things have become obligatory. And if Scots make the right political choices, they can be seen as rather well placed in this emergent arena. By contrast, it is devolution that now smells of hole-and-corner, and of a kailyard left behind. Twenty years ago, when we had nothing else, it seemed the way ahead. And so it was, but in a sense only now becoming clearer. What nobody could appreciate at that time was the profound ambiguity inseparable from it. The progress has been undoubted; but it was also been far too little and (above all) too late. Its forward motion has been inseparable (so far) from the parochial, rear-guard slide of a United Kingdom close to the end of all its greatness.

Devolution had been meant to appease natives complaining about 'democratic deficit'; yet such satisfaction was delivered mainly for the sake of keeping British grandeur going. Thus a constructivetacticwasdeployedaspartmentofaprofoundlyreactionary strategy, to serve the purposes of a fantasised rejuvenation of Westminster, plus

Dome, Coolness, and the Special Relationship that would end in the Iraqi murder-

fields. New Labour thought that Home Rule would be merely the formalised version of a subordination previously tacit and customary. Behind a think-tank rhetoric of enabling, Blair and his accomplices (many of them Scottish) seem to have perceived devolved power in such dismal, instrumental terms. It was another management device. That democracy might be living, dangerous and rather un-British never occurred to them.

## Quitting Scotostan

By 1997 'democratic deficit' was in any case not confined to Scotland, Wales and Ulster. It was a global phenomenon. And by 2004 it has become a condition that much of the globe is reacting strongly against. The dreadful debris of Iraq and American great-power nationalism must not be allowed to obscure the sky ahead. Since the Madrid atrocities, a powerful current of renewal has become evident. Its original start-up probably lay among the biggest mass demonstrations in history, the anti-war protests of early 2003. Then in 2004 there has been the Spanish vote, the astonishing regional elections in France (a triumph for the Left), the huge shift in India, successive elections in South America, and the new re-grouping of opposition inside the USA itself. By 2005 it seems likely that Australian war-Premier John Howard will have followed Julio Aznar through the Exit door. Whether or not Bush and Blair manage to stay on this side of it, their glory days are already over.

Scotland can make itself part of this renewal. Indeed in an interesting way it already **is** part of it — as the May 1 Holyrood election demonstrated last year. Devolution had set up what one might call 'Scotostan' — a reservation self-management like the old South African Bantustans, whose harmless ethno-parliaments were meant to underwrite Apartheid. But with all its limitations, the Caledonian system had allowed some democratic infusion — which was immediately expressed in distrust of the whole established order. This touched the SNP's opposition as well: it found itself punished for over-responsibility, rather than (as previously) for irresponsibility and opportunism. And the Euro-elections of June 2004 have made it clear just how widespread such revulsion is. Cairns Craig puts it this way in the current **Product** magazine (No.09, April-July 2004):

"If the future of Scottish culture is to depend on the Executive's cultural strategy, it will be a future of compliance, of the celebration of Scotland's culture only as far as that culture does not conflict with a growing subservience to multinational capitalism."

Substitute 'Europe' for 'Scotland', and one has the overall results of last June's elections.

Independence is a necessary condition of Scotland's re-joining the new world. In globalising conditions, national-democratic

renaissance is not the only game in town, but it remains a key one. And player status doesn't come

with being a region, or even a home-rule nation. Attaining it demands a national movement and mentality more adapted to globalising conditions — to the whole world 'after empire' (as the French writer Emmanuel Todd puts it, in his recent book with that title). I suspect this is the real point of the Scottish National Party's recent crises and disputes. The SNP had grown up over several generations as the political equivalent of a National Liberation Army. Non-violence was compensated for by a curious moral regimentation, and by a missionary fidelity

**For all its faults, devolved government has provoked a real awakening. But the patient has awakened to an altered world.**

voiced through the us-or-them mentality, and the simple fundamentalism of victory-or-bust. All these traits were to be painfully reiterated in John Swinney's losing struggle against the no-good dissenters and trouble-makers of 2003-04. In other words, a political model was out of date, rather than the one man running it.

Some critics had always doubted such ideology, pointing out its limits in a country that had been the accomplice, rather than the victim, of the British imperial system. Whatever the historical truth, a change is plainly called for today. The Scots have begun to get over their real hang-up: that is, **self-colonisation**, rather than standard-issue oppression or dependency. And to follow up that liberation, a broader-based, more democratic national movement is required — an alliance or confederal grouping, rather than a soul-brothers (or sisters) party. Such a movement did come rapidly into existence after the 2003 election, and is still evolving. It has assumed the form of a coalition (so far informal) among the Greens, the Scottish Socialists and the Nationalists — or at least, those SNPers who have learned something from the disappointments of 2003 and the Euro-election. The SSP and the Greens have been born into these new times. They represent a post-sectarian Left and post fossil-fuel ecology respectively. The 'anti-globalisation' globe is by natural inclination left-wing (against the Hidden Hand) and Green (opposed to the imperialism of old-style Human Nature). No doubt the present leadership struggle in the SNP will decide that party's place in relation to the new currents.

The deeper shift of assumptions at work was described by Robin McAlpine in the magazine already quoted. He points out how the problem remains that old Scottish cramp, lack of self-confidence — 'the deep-rooted hopelessness that has been present for many of us since the very first moment we learned how to think'. To relate meaningfully to 'the massive social movement emerging around the world', a shift in political outlook is needed much greater than that generated through devolution. What McAlpine calls 'recapturing the social imagination in Scotland' is actually more like forging it for the first time, at least in political terms. He quotes Alasdair Gray's famous phrase, urging action 'as if we were in the early days of a better nation, and world'. But that's the point: willy nilly, we **are** in the early days of another world. And the main agency for signing up remains the nation — not the Labour Party, the working class, or think-tank cosmopolitanism.

### Last Ditch Follies

There are serious obstacles to this course, which also call for some re-definition. Those that should concern us most are mainly Scottish, and divisible into two kinds: the well-meaning muddle-throughers, and the last-ditch malignants. The former are mainly represented by Liberal-Democrats, who have played a significant part in making the Scottish Parliament work, and work more tolerably than New Labour alone could ever have done. But this success has given them a vested interest in the ambiguous, transitional system itself, which they continue to cover up ideologically with ideas about 'Federalism'. In

truth, Federalism stands no chance whatever of becoming a replacement British structure. Worse than that, it is also a relic of a more deep-seated political **ancien regime** of great-power supremacy — the very thing from which anti-global protest is trying to liberate us. Admittedly there are a few exceptions in Europe, like Germany and Spain, deriving from the peculiar circumstances of total defeat and post-fascism; but **on the whole** modern Federalism has been one set of Emperor's Clothes after another, for great-nation ambition and delusion. It was imposed by Abraham Lincoln, as the post-Civil War formula of American-Union greatness. In the following century it would be given

unforgettable shape by Lenin and Stalin, as the happily extinct Federation of Soviet-Socialist Republics. Two of the three leaders of the Iraqi war-party are such archaic Federations, the USA and Australia. What possible point is there in trying to face-lift the U.K. into still another?

The last-ditchers are a more serious foe. The whole history of nationalism has demonstrated time and again the crucial role of national and peripheral minorities in fostering or aggravating big-state self-importance and ambitions. Scots played such a part earlier, in building up the Anglo-British Empire. Now, regrettably, important Scottish elites remain stuck with this invented tradition, primarily within Her Majesty's New Labour Party. But Gordon Brown, John Reid and their retinue are not alone: a squad of well-meaning grave-diggers remains influential in other parts of civil society, notably in the literary and cultural arena.

For many of these, jobs and social or personal status are of course dependent on the continued viability of Britishness. However, it would be mistaken to ascribe the diaspora's motives solely to that. By and large they're sincere — and in a way this is worse. Self-seeking would quickly shift its ground (as happened all over Eastern Europe up to 1989). But what we're dealing with here is a more deeply-anchored stance that still vents itself in a virulent version of nationalism — the Great-British variety. This is often at its most strident among Scots and Welsh, as well as Ulsterfolk. Although Unionism has been badly wounded by Blair's Iraqi folly, it's still capable of reacting with increased venom and ruthlessness. The last ditch may be crumbling, but isn't yet ready for evacuation.

### And never the clock rins back

The Scots have always been diasporic, like the Greeks, the Jews and the Arabs. Homeland circumstances drove them that way, and in the long run generated a collective temperament to match. This is why globalisation seems made for them — an altered globe where migration is endemic and unstoppable, both disruptive and fertilising in its consequences. In the past it was of course also why (unfortunately) imperial militarism and colonisation appealed to them so strongly. The independence they need to recover is still out-going — a capacity to contribute in some specific way to the vast mutation in course.

Obviously, they need to make the best rather than suffer the worst of this sea-change. And some urgency attaches to the shift, because 'the worst' has ceased being a figure of speech. Much recent evidence suggests that Devolution has greatly

increased the demographic outflow. The population of the UK as a whole has increased to nearly sixty million, thanks to immigration. But that of Scotland is dropping like a stone. Here, emigration has become something like haemorrhage. A MORI-Scotland survey, **Our Lives, Our Scotland** (2003) concluded that: "One in three young Scots would leave the country if they got the chance...Even more, one in two could imagine moving away in the future" (**Sunday Herald** October 19 2003). When asked to comment on these results, a new Labour spokesman replied "While a minority of young people have expressed a desire to leave Scotland, the fact that almost 90 per cent are proud to live here should be welcomed...". This response is all the more telling, because quite unintended, as an expression of the deeper contradictions — and even the tragedy — of Devolution. The complacency of 'Scotostan' has, in spite of itself, brought about a raising of consciousness. But unless this issues in action — in a new style of independence movement — then what matters most might be lost. Lost **forever** is not idle speculation, if one reflects that new democratic political life depends above all on youth, and should these vital forces continue to flee their birthplace at such a rate, last-ditch Scotostan could become permanent. Independence is the very minimum needed to tackle life-or-death issues like these. But it needs a broader-based, more civic, varied and agile movement to get there. More imagination and confidence are called for, not more ethnic faith or constancy of will. Globalisation is bringing internationality — not abstract internationalism, or cosmopolitical sameness. Democratic nationality is the way to the international in that sense: a political attitude that didn't come naturally under the reservation, and is only half there under devolved government. It's being learned, acquired in stages, sometimes against the communal grain.

This means there's a precarious, novel aspect to the development. The Scots gave up politics in that sense, for self-colonization and

the rewards of service — compensations that included a greater-cause ideology, the sort of transcendence their own culture had been historically adapted to. Recovery is under way, but difficult and hesitant, as the last-ditch brigade know only too well. And the pressures described mount all the time.

I think that's why, if once then a thousand times since returning from Australia, an uneasy sense of the precarious has assailed me. For what matters most about Devolution — all that really counts, the reborn will —remains also a handicapped child, threatened by enemies without and conservative cramps within. This is the will and identity of a small country, in some ways getting even smaller, and threatened by enemies (themselves cornered and retreating) who badly want it to stay the way it was. It reminds me of the lonely boat Sydney Goodsir Smith saw putting out to the North Sea sea from Largo Bay, back in the 1940s. By rights a thriving, confident fleet should have accompanied it, had not circumstances worked the other way, and left it as the only hope. What the poet — a returned New Zealander —saw was of course his country's hope of recovery and independence, at that time faint indeed. It's a whole lot better today, but still belated, and still under-manned and sinkable. Now as then, his imagination sounded a true depth, warning and determination as one:

And never the clock rins back...  
 The world shrinks, we luik  
 Mair t'our maisters ilka hour —  
 When yon boat I see  
 Daith and rebellion blind ma ee. ■

*Tom Nairn is a leading academic*

## pill tax

Colin Fox asks, if Wales can afford to abolish prescription charges, why can't we?

The decision of the Welsh Assembly last year to abolish NHS prescription charges was widely welcomed and puts pressure on the Scottish Executive to follow suit. A Teletext poll in April suggested 89 per cent support abolition here too. Deputy Health Minister Tom McCabe refuses however to swim with the tide. Asked in the Parliament what plans he had to follow the Welsh example he said "clearly one of the inevitable effects of devolution is that governments in one part of the UK may do things differently from another. What the Welsh do is their concern. In Scotland we have no plans to abolish NHS prescription charges."

Having promised to review the charges in the Partnership Agreement 12 months ago, the Executive has as yet failed to announce even its terms of reference. Many expected them to consider extending the current list of exemptions to include those in full time education and training. The leadership of the Welsh Assembly was also opposed to abolition at the outset. However when it became clear that the difference

between extending exemptions and abolition was marginal, just £12million, they saw a political opportunity and decided to scrap the charges.

The NHS was constructed around a simple premise that healthcare would be paid for out of general taxes and that the tiny minority who were ill could get treatment freely when they needed it.

In 1951 Aneurin Bevan, the founder of the NHS, threatened to resign as Health Minister over attempts to subvert that principle and introduce a charge of 1/- for prescriptions. The money was needed, claimed Labour leader Hugh Gaitskill to help offset the spiralling cost of Britain's involvement in the Korean War. A charge of one shilling per prescription in 1951 has soared to £6.40 per item today. Since 1979 the increase has been 3,200 per cent. If the cost had risen merely by the rate of inflation it would be 64p today. In opposition to Mrs Thatcher Labour

pledged to abolish prescription charges. But the policy itself was abolished, like so many others, when dropped from Labour's 1997 Manifesto.

The fears of Bevan and others that the charge would inevitably lead to many being unable to pay has unfortunately been borne out. For example, a recent report by the Citizens Advice Bureau entitled 'Unhealthy Charges' suggests 70,000 Scots annually are going without the medicines they need because they cannot afford them. Whilst prescriptions are available free to some on grounds of age and financial circumstances, 50 per cent of us do have to pay. My colleague Rosie Kane told me that after visiting her GP with a chest infection this winter she was prescribed seven different tablets and inhalers which together with medicines for her depression cost her £64 across the counter at Boots. For an MSP on a workers wage it was tough coughing up that much. A series of international health studies from Canada and across Europe found that for each 10 per cent increase in the cost of health care there is a concurrent three per cent drop in take up.

The Executive insists that to a stretched NHS the loss of this income would be severe, vital as it is to the future of the service. A quick look at the figures makes this an interesting reply. Income to NHS Scotland from prescription charges last year was £46 million. The NHS Scotland drugs bill is £760m annually. Prescription charges therefore bring in just 6 per cent of that total. And since the entire Health budget is almost £7,000m per annum the money raised from the charge is not significant and yet undermines the principle upon which the NHS was built 70,000 times. Furthermore the costs of administering the system and the cost of nursing those that do not get their prescriptions and have to be admitted to hospital (the weekly cost is on average £1,600) are not available.

The Executive last month announced an extra £70 million for frontline NHS services across Scotland. That money is to come from an underspend in last years budget. Why, many of us ask, do we not also use more of the underspend to abolish prescription charges too? There are those who say that universal exemption means giving the rich and those who can pay something for free.

Of course a more socially just approach would be to insist that the richer and better off paid their fair share of taxes, but let us be clear it is not the rich who would benefit most here. The rich already qualify for free prescriptions if they are under 16 or over 65 or have a qualifying condition. Furthermore the NHS is not usually a port of call for the rich when they

are ill; they tend to go to Harley Street or Bupa. No, those living marginally above Income Support levels, the low paid, have most to gain, those who currently are forced to go without, not the rich.

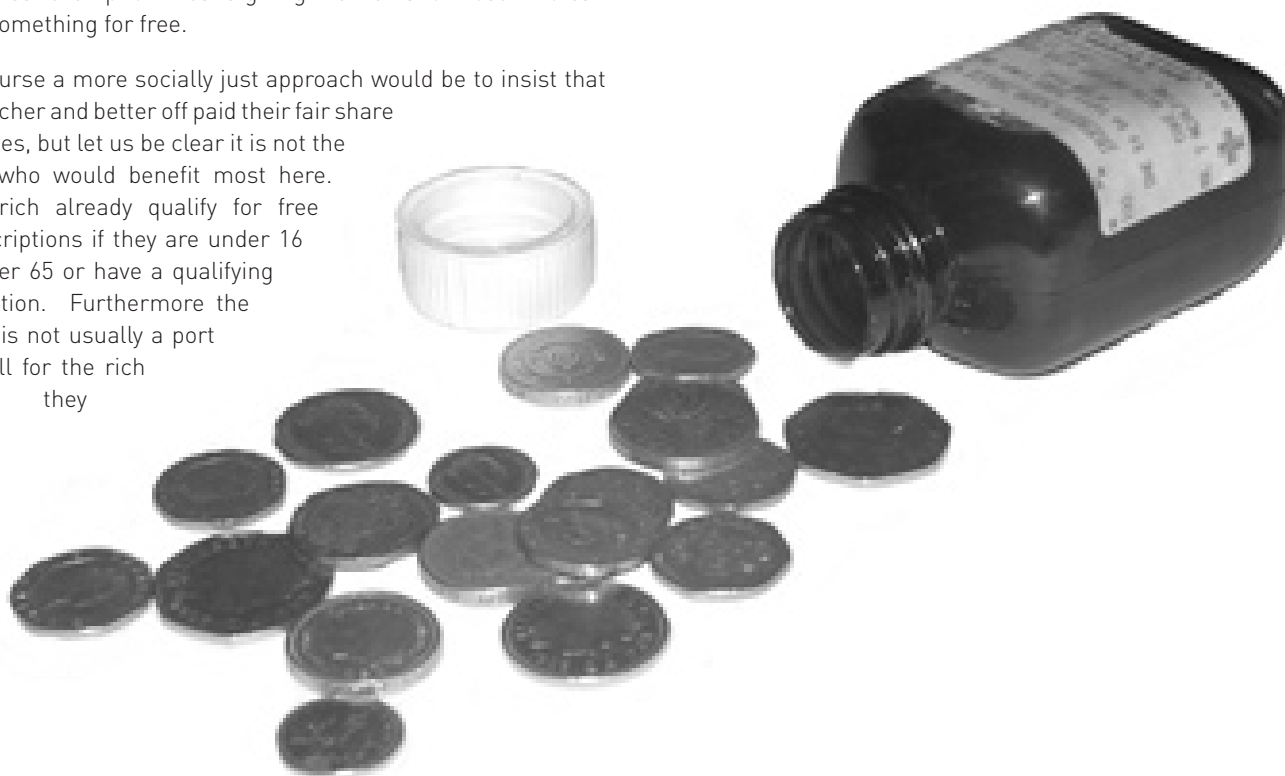
One in five doctors believe that patients go without the medicines they need because of the cost. One in ten even admit to bending the rules to try to keep costs for patients down either by prescribing double dosages or cutting down on multiple medicines.

There are people who have campaigned for this reform for decades. I am grateful for the generous and widespread support I have received from many quarters. The organisations who support this plan are too numerous to list here but include the British Medical Association, the Kings Fund, Citizens Advice Bureau, Unison and the Royal College of Nurses, patients groups and sufferers' associations as well as prominent health campaigners like Dr David Player of the Public Health Forum. The Bill also has the support of the SSP, Greens and Independent MSPs in the parliament.

There is a view that the Executive itself may come forward with plans to abolish the charges as a 'civic sweetener' following the Holyrood building fiasco. At a cost one tenth that of the new Parliament building I am sure it would be warmly welcomed. I also recognise abolishing prescription charges in the run up to a Westminster General election could be highly attractive to this government. However that is all just idle speculation.

In the meantime the consultation period for my bill ends on June 30. I intend thereafter to launch the cross party 'Scottish Campaign to Remove All Prescription charges' (SCRAP) and take the case round Scotland holding meetings and forums to marshal the support their undoubtedly is for this historic and necessary reform. ■

*Colin Fox is the Scottish Socialist Party MSP for the Lothians.*



# a europe against workers?

## Bob Thomson looks at how New Labour has fought to prevent Europe providing basic rights for workers

The Labour Party was formed by trade unions to advance the interests of working people and their families; that's why it's called Labour. Specifically the trade unions needed a political organisation to counter the power of business and an unsympathetic legal establishment, which was frustrating their ability to take any effective industrial action to protect their members. The Law at work was based on the concept of master and servant. So 100 years on where are we now? Note the following letter sent to the Foreign Secretary on 21 May:

Dear Jack

I am writing to let you know of the real anger reflected in the TUC Executive Committee discussion today at your remarks to the CBI dinner yesterday evening. Trade unionists have been in despair, as our Government has appeared systematically to oppose every recent positive European initiative in the social field. The Government fought to the last ditch to resist the Information and Consultation Directive only acquiescing when a clear majority of other member states was about to prevail.

The Government has orchestrated a blocking minority of member states in order to deny proper protections to some of the most vulnerable members of the workforce who work through agency arrangements. Migrant workers, many of whom are employed on that basis, will be amongst those who remain acutely at risk of exploitation until that protection is introduced.

A lobbying effort of remarkable intensity has been mounted to seek to keep the individual opt-out from the safeguards provided by the Working Time Directive and weaken its protections, despite the powerful evidence that any such framework exposing individual workers to employer pressure is inevitably going to lead to abuse.

And now the Government's intention to render the Charter of Fundamental Rights as having little more than declaratory status with no practical capacity to support and strengthen workers' rights is carefully explained to a CBI audience, with the additional explanation that 'the interests of business have been put at the heart of [the Government's] negotiating position on the EU Constitutional Treaty.

Meanwhile those trade union leaders who have been seeking to encourage active member interest and participation in the forthcoming European elections face the ground cut-away from underneath them as the social dimension of the European Union, on which so much trade union support has been based, appears to be under attack from our own Government.

I urge you, and other colleagues in Government, to reflect carefully on what is at stake and to understand the real frustration and disappointment so keenly felt in the trade union world.

The trade union Movement - and I am convinced the peoples of Europe - will only back a constitution that nurtures the European Social Model, balancing the dynamism of free markets with protection for people at work, consumers and the environment from the destructive forces that unregulated capitalism can unleash. We need to strive to create a people's Europe that is more than a business arrangement to suit Britain's boardrooms.

I would welcome your comments on these issues.

Brendan Barber  
TUC General Secretary

I have reproduced the letter in full, as it is the most forthright, comprehensive condemnation of New Labour's treatment of workers' rights by a trade union leader I have heard.

The European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights was signed at the European Council meeting in Nice on 7 December 2000. The procedure, which produced the Charter in the first place, was a unique one for the EU, and the Charter now sets out in a single text, for the first time, the whole range of civil, political, economic and social rights of European citizens. Currently its status is political rather than legal.

Preceded by a short and readable preamble, the rights are divided into six sections: 1 Dignity, 2 Freedoms, 3 Equality, 4 Solidarity, 5 Citizens' Rights and 6 Justice. Section 4 on Solidarity received much attention, moving away as it does from what some saw as traditional fundamental rights to social rights. Articles 27-38 cover Workers' Rights such as collective bargaining, information and consultation, and fair and just working conditions. They move onto family life, social security and assistance, and health care, finishing with environmental and consumer protection. Article 36 on services of general economic interest generates much debate about the possible scope of its interpretation under law i.e. that business efficiency/success has to be measured against the well being of citizens and communities.

The intention of the Parliament and Commission was that the Charter be incorporated into the Constitution and therefore be legally binding on member states. Despite support from the majority of EU countries the pleas of Labour MEPs and the TUC, New Labour scuppered this at the final negotiations in Brussels in June and insisted that the Charter only have 'declaratory' status. **This means that it is not enforceable in British courts.** This was one of New Labour's red line issues; yellow lines or badge of shame would be a better description. In Parliament Labour MP Michael Meacher challenged the Prime Minister who responded "it would be wrong if the charter were to lead to an enlargement of this country's labour laws". This is the same Tony Blair who in the early nineties as Shadow Employment Minister supported the abolition of the Tories' draconian anti-trade union laws. We shouldn't be surprised, this same guy who has taken the country to more wars than any other PM this century was once a member of CND.



The history of Britain's labour laws is one of modest gains and substantial setbacks. Up to the 1960s they were based on immunities from the law of master and servant and tort (actions for damages). The Labour governments of Wilson and Callaghan passed a series of legislation, which for the first time gave positive rights and protections to individual workers and trade unions. These were the Equal Pay Act, Health and Safety at Work Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Race Relations Act and Unfair Contracts Act. The Employment Protection Act introduced protection from unfair dismissal. The Tory government reversed many of these reforms and introduced severe restrictions on the right to strike, and banned secondary or sympathetic action, which effectively led to the failure of the miners' strike in 1984. On individual rights they raised the qualifying period of employment for bringing unfair dismissal claims from three months to two years. John Smith, then Labour leader, promised that Labour would give workers protection from day one – the qualifying period now stands at 12 months. During the 19 years of Tory misrule, trade unions were able to use EU directives to protect workers. The most notable of these was the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment directive (TUPE), which gave enormous protection to mainly low-paid workers against the Tories' privatisation of public services, which New Labour has continued under the guise of private finance initiative/public private partnerships.

This Labour government has introduced some modest reforms. The National minimum Wage Act is welcome but the rates are too low and less than that Labour promised in their 1992 manifesto. The Trade Union recognition rights are too bureaucratic, open to abuse by employers and the voting threshold so high that if it were applied to Westminster, two thirds of MPs would not have been elected. The right to strike is still very compromised; the ballot procedures puts an unfair obligation on trade unions to provide information to employers but no similar responsibility

on the employer. Workers who have gone through this tortuous route and taken legal strike action can still be fairly dismissed after eight weeks. On health and safety, despite a manifesto commitment, New Labour has failed to introduce a law of corporate manslaughter, making directors culpable for their actions.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is a United Nations agency. Every year since 1989 the ILO has commented unfavourably on the state of British law. In the past two years the ILO has focused on three issues. These are that in some circumstances it is still lawful in Britain for employers to discriminate against trade unionists, that there are still excessive regulations of trade union internal affairs and that there are too many restrictions on the freedom of workers to take, and trade unions to organise, industrial action. On secondary or sympathetic action, the ILO stated, "workers should be able to take industrial action in relation to matters which affect them even though, in certain cases, the direct employer may not be party to the dispute".

There are a number of reasons for and against voting for the constitution in the proposed referendum. However there is no doubt that New Labour removal of the incorporation of the Charter will be a determining reason for very many workers to vote NO. Tony Blair has said he will lead the campaign for a YES vote. Yet one of his ex Ministers referring to the Charter stated "fundamental rights! As legally significant as the Beano". It is New Labour who are likely to become the comics. They have antagonised the largest pressure group in the country, seven million trade unionists. John Monks, head of the European TUC, said "the UK government is demonising the Charter of Fundamental Rights as a strikers' Charter, and is insisting that it be rendered meaningless. This is a highly exaggerated and misleading picture of the Charter, which is already less effective than many of us would like it to be". The TUC said after New Labour's 'victory' in excluding the Charter "people won't vote YES to a new European Constitution if there is nothing in it for ordinary people".

There is the wider issue, much in debate, of whether Labour can be won back as a democratic socialist party, or whether a new alternative party or alliance can be a viable alternative. In this debate the trade unions have a vital role to play. The last word to Tony Woodley, General Secretary of the TGWU: "Blocking any improvement in the position of British workers, who have the fewest rights in Europe, is not the way to a third term Labour Government". From a purely Scottish perspective, an independent Scotland in or out of the European Union would be able to incorporate the Charter into our legal system. However with the SNP adopting an increasingly neo liberal economic policy, similar to the other main parties, it is questionable how likely this would be. ■

***Bob Thomson is the Former Associate Scottish Secretary of UNISON and Past Chairman and Treasurer of the Scottish Labour Party***

# that was the euro election that was

## Henry McCubbin on the possibilities and pitfalls for Europe

Well now, that's the European Elections over and what does our Great Leader do? He begins to address European politics. An entire election campaign for the only directly elected democratic forum in the EU and none of the most pressing European issues addressed. Sorry - lest I forget, apart from fishing. Suddenly we go from a Europe free month to having the Labour Party fighting in Europe to keep Mrs Thatcher's anti trade union laws. Which way can I turn?

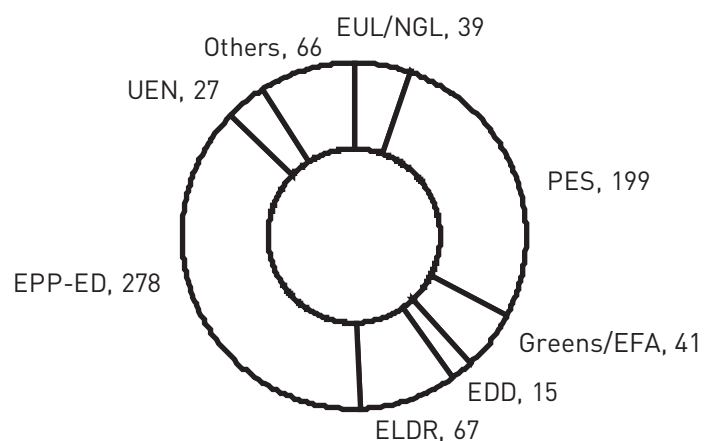
I searched the election literature of the all of the parties standing for a sane route forward. The Tories would really like to withdraw but not until after UKIP have cleared their pitch. The Liberal Democrats want neo-liberalism but a benevolent view of society. I'm sorry Charlie but predatory instincts are hard wired into neo-liberalism - ever seen a cat carefully climb a tree to put a fledgeling back into its nest? The greens did in fact stick to European issues and approached them in a coherent and intelligent manner and have indeed a respectable record in the European Parliament. However, they failed to make the breakthrough by winning a seat. As to the Nationalists, what can I say?

The first time a significant turnout occurred in the European Elections in Scotland was in 1989. It was not on the back of the Common Fisheries Policy nor who sits at the top table. It happened after a speech to the TUC in Bournemouth on September 1988 by Jacques Delors. In it he set out a vision of an alternative EU - one with a social dimension and that related to ordinary people and in particular to the audience in Bournemouth that day. His emphasis on the importance of trade unions and workers' rights as integral parts of a healthy and modern economy stood in stark contrast to the closed-door policy of the Thatcher government. Thatcher's response in Bruges, "no socialism through the back door or by the back Delors", shortly afterwards was probably just as important. The feeling was that if Thatcher was worried by these developments then there must something in them! At the same time however, our domestic government was viewed as the major obstacle to realising the potential of EU social legislation.

Within a month Bill Jordan, President of the AEU, made a speech during the International Debate at the Annual Conference of the Labour Party calling for the Party to pursue engagement with EU. So enthusiastic at this time was a young Tony Blair that he wrote that the EU should "counteract the influence of big business [and act] in favour of ordinary employees". The only other EU election to match 1989 in turnout was that in 1994 after the Tories had achieved their Social Chapter opt-out at Maastricht. With Labour now pursuing Thatcher's neo-liberal agenda would any other party of the left come forward with an inspiring call to vote to the proletariat? Here the SSP fell flat on its face. Its 'left-wing' arguments against integration are all short term. The existing EU economic and monetary policies can all be changed by the left acting together across borders in the EU. We can have influence and impose left-wing structural

policies which are, by their nature, long-term. It is through this that we share in ruling Europe and avoid being steered by the US over whose policies we have no influence. The lack of dialectic in the election campaign was, I believe, reflected in the turnout and the results.

### State of the political groups in the European Parliament



In 1994 Labour had 63 seats in the European Parliament. It now has collapsed 19 and, as can be seen from the chart, the socialist group, PES, is lagging 79 seats behind the Tories EPP Group where once it was in the lead. This is a state of affairs that affects the handout of all the important positions within the Parliament which are distributed under the D'Hondt system. The positions within the PES are distributed likewise.

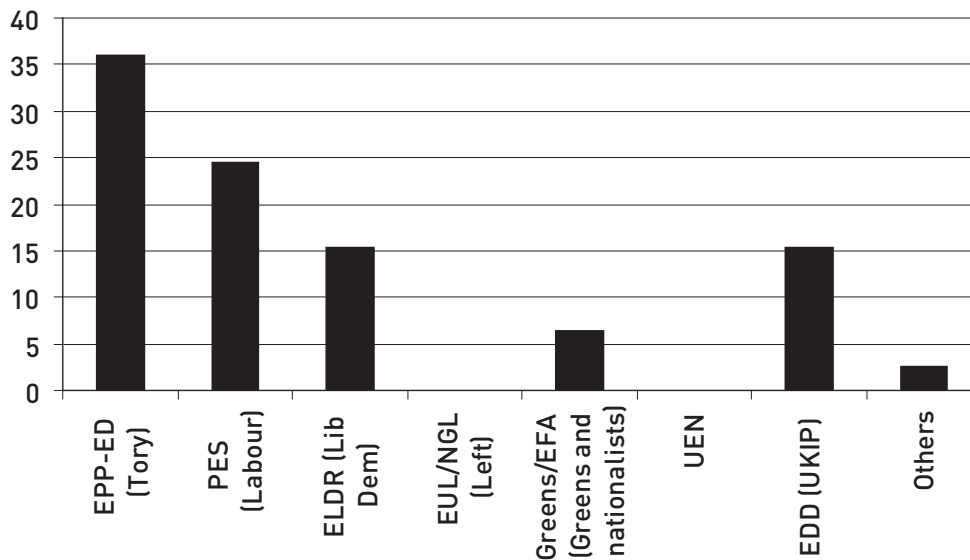
In the UK, the destruction of the Labour and the Tory votes is reminiscent of the intervention by the SDP in 1983, although Labour's position is actually worse now. The Parties given below are the European groups to which our parties are members.

All this must sound pretty depressing but there has been left-wing thinking going on in Europe and in particular in the UK. Take this quote for instance:

"Europe today faces three shocks which threaten its social institutions and aspiration for an independent role in world affairs. They are the shock of rampant US power, the shock of Anglo-Saxon economics and the shock of a poorly planned EU enlargement. While these processes have a long-term character they now possess enough concentrated force to paralyse European institutions and to subject the continent to corporate-led globalisation domestically and to United States 'leadership', as the White House now calls its imperial role in global affairs. This is not the Europe the world — or its own citizens - needs.

"Because the EU is, at present, the only global entity with an economic weight and political potential equal to that of the United States it has — in principle — the best possibility of defying the new hegemony. This should not

## Percentage of UK seats won by each political grouping



at all be a question of making Europe more like the US — a process which has already gone too far — but instead of ensuring that Europe represents a different social model and that on the international stage it refuses to chain itself to the chariot wheels of the Bush regime.”

I received a copy of this essay by Robin Blackburn who is an editor of *New Left Review* and the author of **Banking on Death or Investing in Life: the History and Future of Pensions**. On reading it my mind went back to that debate inspired by Jacques Delors.

Blackburn goes on to point out that “Europe has every opportunity for a creative response to the challenges it faces. This is partly because US leadership is itself in deep difficulties, above all in Iraq and the Middle East. And it is also because the sterile formula of Europe’s own grotesquely-named ‘growth and stability’ pact has been breached by the EU’s two leading core states. This represents a break with the baneful rule of the European Central Bank and its disastrous monetarist dogmas. Europe’s response to the impasse of US strategy in Iraq and to the crisis of EU monetary governance does not measure up to the opportunity presented. Rather it weakens Europe and betrays the hopes of peoples around the world who would like to see some check on US power.

At home the rule of the European Central Bank will be rescued and recycled by giving even greater scope to explicit and ‘implicit’ privatisation. The latter is the process whereby public services and social protections are degraded in order to oblige the mass of citizens to become customers of rapacious finance and insurance houses. Raffarin, Schroder and Berlusconi have all been pursuing such commodification of social insurance and educational provision. The new course has encountered large-scale, but episodic, resistance: the peace demonstrations of February 15 2003, strikes and demonstrations against pension cutbacks, opposition to student fees, the rejection of the government in the French local elections and the drubbing administered to New Labour in June. Continuing mobilisations against the wrecking of education and welfare will have further opportunities to challenge the misleaders of Europe and to open up conflicts and fissures in the extraordinary alliance which now unites Schroeder and Raffarin, Prodi and Chirac, Berlusconi and Blair. The disarray of the ruling parties furnish

an opportunity to spell out the core elements of an alternative to neo-liberal Europe.”

It is difficult not to refer once again to Delors’ speech to the TUC because it was at that time the phrase ‘social dumping’ came into usage. Britain, represented in the person of Margaret Thatcher, was fighting to ensure that British workers worked longer and had lower social conditions than those in the rest of Europe. That it would be easier for employers in the UK to hire and fire employees and that your working conditions including your job

could be privatised from under your feet. Are we heading back in that direction? Bob Thomson’s article on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights explores this elsewhere in this edition. The essence of Robin Blackburn’s essay and I hope of this article is to show that it need not be like this.

For instance three economists — James Galbraith, Pedro Conceicao and Pedro Ferreira have argued for a “truly European welfare state, with a continental retirement programme” and “the creation of major new universities of the first water . . . in the beautiful, lower income regions of the European periphery and the full funding of students to attend them”. A Europe-wide welfare regime could also encourage better child-care provision. The problem of the ageing society is as much the result of a low birth rate as it is of increased longevity. It is striking that today Scandinavia, with its generous attention to child care, has a much higher birth rate than Mediterranean Europe. It is also interesting that the introduction of the 35 hour week in France has coincided with a small but significant recovery in the French birth rate. Improvements to social welfare, education and working conditions should be pursued for their own sake but they will often contribute to a broader social framework of well-being. A European-wide welfare regime should be organised on a universal basis so that every citizen and every country receives some benefit. Special supplements might be available on a regional basis so that poorer regions in the wealthier states would also benefit.

All of the above thinking runs counter to the wisdom received from Thatcherism. The arguments posited at the Brussels summit by the UK that national vetoes on social security and taxation should remain in place and that Britain should be able to retain its strict labour relation laws all of these tell you who is expected to pay for failed economic policies.

Labour’s historic role was to defend these same people. Now it regards them as expendable at the whim of the CBI or the **Sun** and from the results of the Euro elections the feeling the electorate are beginning to view Labour in the same light and are looking for an alternative Europe, perhaps more like the one proposed above. ■

*Henry McCubbin is a former Labour MEP*

# the price of influence

Gregor Gall asks whether the unions and Labour should make up or break up?

The traditional destination of trade union political affiliation is today more under question than at any time since the Labour Party was founded at the end of the nineteenth century. The only period which bears any resemblance was the short-lived attempt by the Communist Party in the 1920s/1930s to establish 'red unions' which were not affiliated to Labour. Despite the apparent hegemony of Labour in the unions because the majority of large unions such as the Amicus, CWU, GMB, TGWU and USDAW are affiliated to Labour, there exists a diversity of positions throughout the union movement. Unison has an idiosyncratic form of affiliation dating from its creation from NALGO, NUPE and COHSE where it has a general political fund and an affiliated political fund. There are unions like the PCS, NUT and Unifi which are not affiliated and never have been whilst there are also unions that do not have political funds with which to affiliate to any political party like the NUJ but do engage in political campaigning.

Finally, there are the RMT and FBU. The RMT has, subject to any court action by the RMT, been disaffiliated from Labour for allowing its branches to affiliate to political parties other than Labour. By the mid-June, seven branches in Scotland and the Scottish Regional Council had affiliated to the Scottish Socialist Party, while one had voted to affiliate (subject to National Executive approval) to Forward Wales led by former-MP John Marek AM as had ten in England to Respect: the Unity Coalition led by George Galloway. The Scotland No. 2 branch of the CWU has also affiliated to the SSP while a Welsh CWU branch voted to support Respect. In the case of the FBU, it disaffiliated from Labour at its recalled 2004 conference, opening up the possibility of funding these other left-of-centre parties. The London Region of the FBU had already voted to support Respect

The major political faultline running through the union movement concerns whether unions should fight to 'reclaim' Labour from 'New Labour', whether this is achievable or whether they should open up their political funds to other parties to the left of Labour. These parties include not just the SSP but also Respect, Forward Wales, the Greens, SNP and Plaid Cymru. The opening of funds may be through disaffiliation or democratisation of the political fund allowing a plurality of parties, including Labour, to be supported. This article addresses, *inter alia*, the following questions: under what circumstances could unions influence Labour?; are unions that 'leave' Labour going into the wilderness?; and is the question of Labour merely one of many facing the unions?

**The 'reclaim' Labour school of thought comprises the leaders of all the major affiliated unions, many of whom are also members of the so-called 'awkward squad'. Opinion varies on whether Blair must be replaced and on who should succeed him.**

The 'reclaim' Labour school of thought comprises the leaders of all the major affiliated unions (save USDAW), many of whom are also members of the so-called 'awkward squad'. Apart from the Labour left like the Campaign Group and the Campaign for Socialism, the Communist Party/**Morning Star** also takes this line. Their argument is threefold: 'new' Labour is a clique which can be easily removed because it has no roots in the party, the level of local party activity is so low as to give unions a free run in 'taking over' the Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) and by working together national unions can exercise a disproportionate influence. Opinion varies on whether Blair must be replaced and on who should succeed him. The premise of this is that Labour remains the 'only show in town' and that being outside it is to be 'outside the labour movement' and without influence. What are the merits of this case? The first concerns the practicality of staging a palace coup: when the unions came together at recent party conferences and policy forums they were able to turn over the Labour leadership. Second, taking an approach of gaining 'best value' to funding Labour and determining the election manifesto may provide some recourse where Labour in deep in debt and business donations have considerably dried up. Third, there are some signs the major unions are collectively developing an alternative economic and political strategy which they hope to present as an alternative election manifesto (see **Guardian** 18 May 2004).

But set against these is a number of counter-considerations. Prime amongst these is that the Labour leadership is not bound by party democracy and that away from conference it carries on as it pleases. This raises the question of whether 'new' Labour can be held to account between conferences. It can be doubted whether there are sufficient numbers of highly motivated union activists to take over the CLPs and whether this would make much of a difference if achieved given the administrative controls of a centralised party administration, the other parts of the electoral college that the Labour leadership can call on, and many of the new members who are inactive but may vote in elections are 'Blairites'. To the extent that the unions have already got tough with Labour, they have little to show for it. Taking the review of the **Employment Relations Act 1999** as an example, unions have gained the most minor of concessions while the central existing planks remain in place. Moreover, can the unions present a united front? The longer the 'awkward squad' has existed, the clearer its diversity has become. Even though the alternative 'sensible squad' is small, Derek Simpson no longer seems prepared or capable of slaying dragons and

Dave Prentis is more meek than militant. With the approach of the next election, there do not seem many unions willing to 'rock the boat'. So far 'case unproven' would be a reasonable conclusion.

Is being outside Labour being outside the 'tent'? Does leaving Labour necessitate joining others? Clearly, this is a possibility of the depoliticisation or apoliticalisation in disaffiliation but this is latent rather than real. Unions recognise they need political representation and this can take many forms other than Labour or other political parties. A number of unions campaign politically and obtain representation without affiliation. Indeed, locals unions putting up candidates in local elections, like the RMT-linked Campaign Against Tube Privatisation in the Greater London Authority elections in 2001, is possible. The RMT has found like many unions there was no leeway for compromise within Labour or progress for left-wing policies. Now outside Labour, it is hard to conceive of it as being any less influential than before. But is it any stronger now? The SSP does not have sufficient parliamentary representation to significantly advance the RMT's interests and neither can it construct sufficiently wide alliances to do so. However, the SSP and others can potentially use their parliamentary representation and their general profile to raise the case of the unions in extra-parliamentary campaigning. Here their key resource is the size of their membership and the extent of activity of these members. This offers the distant possibility of trying to build a mass or popular coalition or movement that can exert influence on parliament and government from without.

Consequently, it may be more sensible to see the realignment of the left and unions as a long-term project which should not be judged in the short-term on just whether it can deliver large-scale political representation on a par with that which hypothetically exists with Labour. The appropriate historical parallel here would be the twenty to thirty years that it took for the Labour Party to become an effective political force at the beginning of the twentieth century. If this is the case, it suggests that unions that go down this non-Labour or not exclusively Labour route will need to advance their interests in an analogous way in the industrial sphere. Whilst this would not mean a syndicalist approach *per se*, it would mean a much heavier emphasis on recruitment, organising, collective bargaining and membership mobilisations. Industrial strength would compensate for current political weakness and out of it greater political strength could be created.

Each side of this orientation (political, industrial) is risk laden because there is no guarantee that either or both can be achieved. Thus, it is just as possible that unions will not be able to gain adequately extensive political representation and/or rebuild themselves industrially.

One key reason for viewing the process as a long-term realignment is the 'Catch 22' situation that exists. Many unions – judged by their rulebooks, members' interests and leaderships' politics – have much in common with the policies of the SSP and the like. They all coalesce around policies associated with 'old' Labour and social democracy. But

agreement is not sufficient on its own. The SSP as the most advanced political formation to the left of Labour lacks the credibility of critical mass because of its relatively small size. Quite apart from only operating in Scotland [sic], without further union affiliation and support, other unions will not see the SSP as a credible option. Moreover, and without further union support, the SSP will not grow to the extent that it would need to in order to present itself a genuinely mass party of the working class. For Respect, the cool, if not hostile, response from the RMT national leaders like Bob Crow and Pat Sikorski may prevent it from making the advance than the SSP has been able to. If this is so, at the very least, it will take longer for Respect to grow and entrench itself.

But then again, these considerations may not seem quite so important if political frustration becomes dominant. Some union activists may just want something other than Labour. If the clock could be wound forward several years so that we

could look back in hindsight, it would be probably be safe to say that whatever the eventual outcome, we are witnessing a crisis of the sort that Gramsci conceptualised, namely, organic and prolonged, rather than short and sharp. ■

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*Gregor Gall is Professor of Industrial Relations at University of Stirling*

# Reviews

## Scottish CND pamphlet “Star Wars”

At first glance, this new pamphlet can appear fantastical and outlandish. It describes a space command under the exotically named General Lance W Lord, and a space corps of 21st century space warriors. It details a new star wars system of interceptor missiles, kill vehicles, x-brand radars and airborne lasers. It tells of the control of cyberspace and of the realisation of full spectrum dominance. There is even a strategic master plan for the military and economic domination of the world. It is the very stuff of science fiction. Yet, as the reader is drawn into its detailed and excellently documented research, its message becomes all too frighteningly real.

Already there are 40,000 military and civilians working for US Space Command at its base in Colorado. Last year alone, 10 billion dollars worth of star wars contracts were placed with US aerospace and military companies. Eminent economists estimate that US spending on star wars will rise to 500 billion dollars by 2015 and to 1,000 billion dollars by 2025, in which year the complete system is expected to be up and running. The spending may be American, but the significance and impact of the system will be truly global. No country in the world will be able to escape from the global vigilance, reach and power of an arms system that gives the US military the ultimate high ground in warfare.

As ever, no country in the world is doing more than the UK to help the US achieve its master plan for global dominance. Brushing aside serious reservations by the Commons Defence Select Committee, the UK Government gave approval 18 months ago for the upgrade of Flyingdales Early Warning Radar in Yorkshire to become an integral part of the star wars system. Although the US has not yet officially requested that RAF Menwith Hill be part of star wars, the base is already being upgraded for the new space-based infra-red system that forms a key part of the star wars system. In any case, Menwith Hill was turned over to the US National Security Agency in 1966 by the then Wilson Government.

As Tony Benn points out in his contribution to the pamphlet, the special relationship meant little to US presidents other than a general expectation that Britain would follow the American lead in most foreign and defence policy decisions. Successive British Prime Ministers since Wilson have not let their US counterparts down in that expectation.

Yet star wars is potentially a greater threat to Britain than most other countries. As the Commons Defence Select Committee noted, there are no plans to deploy US missile interceptors in Europe and therefore no enhancement of UK or European security. Moreover, as former Assistant Defence Staff Chief, Timothy Garden, told the BBC the radar upgrade at Flyingdales makes the UK a target for potential enemies of star wars.

Nor will the UK reap many economic benefits from its involvement with star wars. In their contribution, John Foster and Richard Leonard outline how the massive doubling of US defence spending since 1999 has gone almost exclusively to US and US based companies. Where British firms have been successful in winning a piece of the star wars action, it has only been through their ownership of US based production sites and facilities.

As it has gradually dawned on defence-related industries in the UK that access to star wars contracts is dependent upon ownership of US sites and production facilities, there has been a steady pattern of disinvestment in Scottish and UK locations and a switch to Foreign Direct Investment by UK companies in the United States; a clear case of heads the US wins, tails the UK loses.

In his foreword, Bruce Kent describes the pamphlet as carrying “an urgent message” that the global public needs to hear. There are, of course, many urgent messages carried in this excellent pamphlet.

The G8 currently cannot reach agreement on increasing the global aid budget by 50 billion dollars a year. Yet the US Government will alone be spending 50 billion dollars a year on star wars by 2007. Gordon Brown balks at spending 4 billion pounds to push our aid budget up to the UN target of 0.7 percent of GNP, yet thinks nothing of spending 10 billion dollars a year on major weapons contracts. The hypocrisy of western leaders is manifest and well documented in the pamphlet.

Yet the key message of the pamphlet is surely its insight into the real nature of the star wars system. In a recent piece on the death of Ronald Reagan, the *Independent*'s Johann Hari berated the former US president for his fantasy of star

wars national missile defence. The idea of a nuclear shield that would protect the Continental United States from attack was “preposterous” and “pure science fiction”. You simply cannot shoot down one bullet with another bullet. However, to dismiss star wars in this way is to seriously misunderstand the nature of

**1,000 billion dollars will have been spent by 2025. The spending may be American, but the significance and impact of the system will be truly global. No country in the world will be able to escape from the global vigilance, reach and power of an arms system that gives the US military the ultimate high ground in warfare.**

the beast. As the pamphlet makes clear; star wars is not about defence – it is all about attack.

The primary goal of the strategic master plan is to give the US military the capability to deliver attacks from space. The sole superpower of the future will fire either nuclear or conventional missiles from space, well away from the range of any potential enemy. Its war fighting commanders will have the “ability to rapidly deny, delay, deceive, disrupt, destroy, exploit and neutralise targets in hours/minutes rather than weeks/days”. So says the strategic master plan. We should all be very, very afraid.

Buy and read this pamphlet and begin the fightback against the greatest threat to global security in any century.

*John McAllion is Director of Campaigns for Oxfam Scotland*

**The Scottish Labour Party: History, Institutions and Ideas**, G. Hassan (ed.), Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2003, pix+255, £15.99

The current malaise in the standing and fortunes of the Labour Party alongside its continued dominance of institutional politics in Britain presents an opportune moment to conduct an examination and appraisal of the Labour Party in Scotland-cum-Scottish Labour Party. While the Scottish Labour Party is a central part of political life in Scotland today, particularly in the most heavily populated part (the Central Belt), it is so with 22,000 members, of whom only some 2,000 are activists (broadly defined) and around 800 of these are either elected politicians, party workers or trade union officials. This suggests a hollowing out of previously more vibrant entity.

Hassan has brought together a collection of commentators and academics in an attempt to do so. These include Iain McLean, Mark Irvine, Christopher Harvie, Richard Finlay and Bob McLean. The collection succeeds, as well as fails, on a number of levels. Those essays which are journalese are often interesting and insightful contemporaneous contributions, which have an undercurrent of intention as political interventions. However, they neither succeed as accounts of record nor as analytical treatises. The academic contributions are far stronger and more thoughtful but even they lack some conceptual underpinnings or framework such as the triumvirate of market, state and civil society so they appear as relatively unrelated standalone chapters. Stronger editorial direction along these lines may have ensured a publication of greater rigour and depth. But to the reader, whether academic, commentator or activist, the collection provides a diversity of useful and stimulating materials.

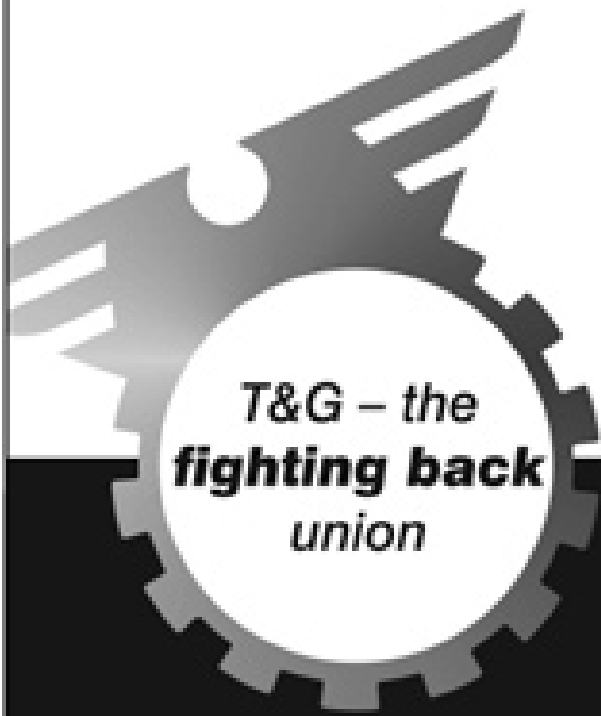
Hassan provides a broad overview of this transition in the opening chapter, highlighting both the similarities and

dissimilarities of what he calls ‘Scottish Labour’ to ‘British Labour’. He argues Scottish Labour is neither ‘new’ or ‘old’ Labour but a more hybrid animal with a distinct but pluralist internal culture and cultural identity, only part of which is based on the west of Scotland. Other chapters examines the unfolding of the tensions between the Scottish Labour Party being a party of labour (i.e. pursuing **sectional** interest) and being a party of socialism (i.e. pursuing a welfare **society**) on changing social terrain, the rise and fall of factionalism and its implications on policy development, and the political relationship between Scottish national identity, nationalism and labourism, north and south of the border.

If the collection had examined as themes, in a Scottish context, the influence of neo-liberalism on social democratic and liberal democratic thought, the implications of withering-cum-fragmentation of the socialist left and the decline in overt working class struggle as a pole of attraction and resource, it would have made a greater contribution to our understanding of modern and contemporary Scotland. Nonetheless, as one of the few detailed studies of the Scottish Labour Party in recent years, this collection does make a useful contribution overall. Hopefully, it will be followed by others looking at the Scottish Labour Party and the rainbow spectrum of politics in Scotland at present. ■

*Gregor Gall, University of Stirling*

**The Scottish Labour Party has only 22,000 members, of whom only some 2,000 are activists and around 800 of these are either elected politicians, party workers or trade union officials. This suggests a hollowing out of previously more vibrant entity.**



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# Kick Up The Tabloids

## McAveety in Bogus Minister Claim

Welcome to the latest Kick Up the Tabloid's column in the week when scientists made the exciting announcement of the first solely Scottish expedition to space, with the aim of retrieving the ball from David Beckham's penalty kick against Portugal. If the mission is successful then the ball will be auctioned and the proceeds used to pay Lord Frazer's libel cases legal bill. The aforementioned Frazer has been writing his final judgements on individuals for publication and has been anxiously checking with civil servants that wanker has one 'k'.

The battle begins to identify the individual to succeed John Swinney. Not often you put John Swinney and succeed in the same sentence. Nicola Sturgeon threw her hat (our image makeover suggestion) into the ring, arguing on the basis that like the most successful SNP leader of recent times, her name also sounded like a fish. Talking of Mr Salmond, his supporters called for the return of the "King Over the Water", showing a fantastic grasp of UK geography. Maybe they plan to build a big moat between Carlisle and Berwick. After all, the Skye Bridge Company needs an alternative location to extort money from people. Roseanna Cunningham, who famously dislikes all kings (and present Queens) said that her sound judgement was demonstrated by her having moved back to Scotland from Australia (hmmm). Alex Neil said that there was a need for a candidate who was a died-in-the-wool nationalist – maybe not the best connotation for a party gaining most of its support from the North East.

Frank McAveety provided the most hilarious moments in the history of the Scottish Parliament (pre 1707 included) when he was accused of misleading the chamber by pretending to be a Minister. Apparently he thought that Minister's question time meant responding to the waiter about whether he wanted a square sausage or black pudding in the canteen. The SSP demanded that all meals for ministers should be provided free of charge, given the detrimental impact of eating habits on their mental and physical development.

Early June saw the D-Day commemoration of the sacrifice of thousands of Scots who gave their lives in the fight against a group of right wing extremists in ridiculous clothing. Meanwhile Jack McConnell preferred to be at St Andrews Golf Club dining with...a group of right wing extremists in ridiculous clothing. You can't make up irony like this. Mr McConnell eventually and reluctantly agreed to go to France, as long as someone kept

him a piece of that chocolate cake shaped like a five iron. He was roundly condemned by the many politicians who hoped the present generation of Scots would never have to face similar circumstances. Imagine trying to struggle off Dunkirk beach these days whilst holding on to your 2,000 cheap fags and ten crates of low-tax lager.

Still, the St Andrews dinner was more civilised than the train driver's union barbeque in London, where it all kicked off big style. They have barbeques now that they don't stoke coals on the trains these days (although watch this space). Resignations followed the mass brawl, which we felt was a bit harsh. Our readers will share the understandable frustration when you have spent four hours sweating over the Castro Burgers only for some Blairite in a flash suit to complain that the middle bit isn't cooked through.

Meanwhile the Scottish Executive began its consultation on smoking in public places. John Reid entered the fray, suggesting that smoking was one of the few pleasures poor people had. Obviously the alternative idea of providing them with jobs, a reasonable income, decent housing etc. has been given up on entirely. There are indeed some places in Scotland where you can see people smoking because there is nothing for them to do (workmen at the Scottish Parliament site for example). But the last thing we want is for Frank McAveety to suffer from passive smoking in a Burger King in Gorgie when he is supposed to be greeting Nelson Mandela at Edinburgh Airport. Kick Up the Tabloids is far too dependent on the continued wellbeing of Mr McAveety and his colleagues for that... ■

*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](http://www.thestand.co.uk)). The next show is on Wednesday 21 July, doors open at 7.30pm., with the show kicking off at 9pm.*

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