

# Scottish **Left** Review

Issue 65 July/August 2011 £2.00



**IS THE TIME RIPE FOR CHANGE?**

# Scottish Left Review

Issue 65 July/August 2011

## Contents

Comment.....	2
Will Victory Take Us Left?.....	4
Bill Kidd	
Looking For Its Purpose .....	6
Richard Leonard	
Grassroots Aren't Green.....	8
Peter McColl	
How To Win.....	10
Robin McAlpine	
Procuring a Better Economy .....	12
Stephen Boyd	
The Female Recession .....	14
Ailsa McKay and John Campbell	
Success Through Fairness .....	16
Pat Rafferty	
Screen Presence/Screen Absence .....	18
Elaine C Smith	
Web Review .....	22
Kick Up The Tabloids .....	23

Cover and illustrations: Nadia Lucchesi

nadia.shemail@gmail.com

Back Cover Cartoon: Frank Boyle

www.boylecartoon.co.uk

Articles for publication: [editorial@scottishleftreview.org](mailto:editorial@scottishleftreview.org)

Letters and comments: [feedback@scottishleftreview.org](mailto:feedback@scottishleftreview.org)

Website: [www.scottishleftreview.org](http://www.scottishleftreview.org) Tel 0141 424 0042

Scottish Left Review, 741 Shields Road, Pollokshields, Glasgow G41 4PL

### Editorial Committee

Moira Craig	Robin McAlpine	Tom Nairn
Gregor Gall	(Editor)	Tommy Sheppard
Bill Kidd	Peter McColl	Elaine Smith
Isobel Lindsay	Henry McCubbin	Bob Thomson
John McAllion	Gordon Morgan	Leanne Wood

Printed by: PrintIt Xpress Ltd, 34 High St., Linlithgow, EH49 7AE

## Comment

Oh, if only the complex philosophical questions in politics were as decisively answered as are elections. Almost two months on and it is not all that hard to find two people who will describe themselves as 'on the left' disagreeing profoundly about whether the Scottish Election saw Scotland move to the progressive left or lurch to the populist right. It seems like such a simple question – tremble in fear or rejoice? Where is our simple answer?

There are some things we should dispose of quickly. It is to be hoped that anyone of the left (or indeed of the mainstream) will be quick to dismiss some of the wilder and frankly vile and distasteful contributions from some – the SNP is simply not a neo-fascist party and Scotland is not moving in a fascist-nationalist direction. Not only is it not true, it demeans a term which to some is all-too-real and all-too-threatening.

But still, there are some who hold the perfectly legitimate view that if the problems of ordinary people are to be resolved then it cannot be through the divisions imposed by artificial national borders. There remains suspicion on some parts of the left that nationalism (lower-case or capital 'N') lies in opposition to socialism, and that if Scotland is to choose a way forward based on national identity then it is choosing a dangerous path.

And yet, it is harder and harder to see what is the alternative. If it wasn't for the choices that Scotland has made over the last 12 years which are about Scotland and for Scotland then it is hard to see how things would not be much, much worse. Had it not been for the Scottish Labour Party's ability to quietly overlook some of Blair's more doctrinaire crusades in favour of a Scottish alternative we would be charging students for their education, we would have a health service peppered with commercially-driven private sector companies, faith schools and privately-backed 'academies' would be proliferating and more. More recently, if it wasn't for the ability of the SNP to flat-out reject Cameron's tawdry vision for a Britain as devised by the *Daily Mail* and the *Telegraph* then heaven help us all.

That Scotland should be able to do things differently – and that Scotland really must do things differently – is accepted throughout the left. So whether

## A few weeks on, is the left viewing the Scottish Election result as more of a threat or more of an opportunity?

or not we agree with full independence it is hard to see how the proposition that Scotland should make all its decisions for itself taints its proponent. Frankly, it is hard to see how support for major constitutional change can be seen as inherently threatening. Support for independence does not automatically make you a narrow-minded right-wing nationalist any more than support for the union makes you an international socialist.

As a nation, and one way or another, Scotland is about to be thrown into a major debate about independence. We will all have different views on this, but the suggestion that we must be suspicious of the left credentials of someone who falls on the other side of the debate from each of us is a smokescreen. Independence is one issue; the way Scotland is run in the meantime is another.

So what else can we draw on to help us decide whether we should view 5 May 2011 as a threat or an opportunity? We can look at the behaviour of the Scottish Government and how it has responded to the power of an overall majority. Certainly some initial moves might suggest that it is proving just a little too quick to exert the power it has accrued. Some will feel that it would have been a positive message to have allowed the Presiding Officer to have been elected from outside the Government party. Others may feel that the distribution of Committee Conveners could have been more even-handed. These things are probably true, but they are no less true than they are of any other government with an overall majority – not least the Labour-Lib Dem coalition which governed Scotland for the first eight years of devolution and which was not known for its generosity to the SNP, the SSP or the Greens. Parties win power, parties exert that power – *c'est la guerre*. There do not yet seem the signs some have asserted that authoritarianism is particularly a mark of this administration.

Then there is language, tone and philosophy. Of course talk is cheap, but then if it is so easy to be idealistic without following through, why aren't we hearing more of it around the world? Salmond's speech to Parliament on 26 May was perhaps not exactly a landmark declaration of social revolution, but it is

worth a closer look. It sets out a vision of a Scotland built on cooperation and sharing before competition. It is filled with social values and big ideals like freedom of thought and expression. It makes an explicit attack on consumerism and acquisitiveness and instead promotes social justice and the importance of equality. And it makes what in the British context is a pretty surprisingly strong defence of the concept of universalism. This is not Jimmy Reid's rectorial address, but there must be many on the Labour left who would wish this had been delivered by one of their own.

On policy, from the options we have, it is a little more straightforward. In policy terms the SNP has proved to be to the left of the other main parties. The main political arguments deployed against them (other than the constitutional ones) are telling: too weak on crime, too inured to universalism, too interested in some civil liberties, 'naïve' on defence and nuclear power and so on. Where other parties have attacked, they have tended to attack from the right.

But most of this is based around a comparison with the other mainstream political options in Scotland. There is still much the left would want to see different. There are issues on which the SNP seems simply to want to avoid an uncomfortable fight with vested interests. For example, for the sole reason of not wanting to offend the Catholic Church, the Scottish Government continues to support religious segregation in the state school system, even at the same time as it wants to tackle sectarianism in wider society. Similarly, in trying to defuse a potential dog-whistle issue around independence it has simply accepted the right of an unelected monarch to remain as the head of state of an independent Scotland.

Then there is the SNP attitude to conventional defence. OK, in today's fervent atmosphere it would be a brave politician who did not sign-up to the 'our soldiers are heroes, protect our regiments and bases, give us warships to build' narrative. And yet it is not wrong to hope for a braver politician who will question the political function of our military.

There are open questions about the SNP attitude to tax and spend. The responses to the serious problems of the 'spend' part of the equation can be debated at great length – sustain wages at

the expense of jobs or sustain jobs at the expense of wages is a difficult call. But why is this the only question being asked? What about the 'tax' part of the equation? There may be hesitation to use the limited tax-raising powers of the Parliament since they are barely progressive, but they are there to be used. And there is nothing stopping the early introduction of a more radically-redistributionist local tax. Meanwhile, why the obsession with talking about cutting corporation tax and where is a renewed and even bolder call for a 'Tesco tax'?

As with all parties that get close to power there is the phalanx of unsavoury 'friends' one develops. An endorsement from Murdoch, money from Souter... It may be hard to turn down these endorsements but that does not mean we have to like them.

And then, above all, there is the relationship between this government and corporate power. For the left, this is the real challenge; will the 2011 SNP generation choose to keep going down the 'neoliberal with a social democratic underbelly' path of the 2007 generation or will Salmond's talk of "Merit in grace and kindness which far outweighs careers and profit" and his promise that "The poor won't be made to pick up the bill for the rich" come to anything? He has the chance to prove that he has an economic vision for Scotland that is genuinely different from that of David Cameron and Ed Milliband, not simply one which smoothes out the sharp edges more elegantly.

So it might be fair to conclude that we have got the best of the available options but that there is much to do if this Government wants to prove that it really does want to reform Scotland and break with the Thatcherite/Blairite politics of Britain.

And one final reason for some optimism – the likelihood of any political party in Britain breaking away from this neoliberal model for society seems disappearingly small if it needs to clear it with London first. London is one of the world's great ideological centres of neoliberalism and it does not tolerate dissent. To this at least the left can cling – it'll be a hard enough job to try to persuade this Government to face down the corporate power that scars our society, but at least we don't need to seek the City of London's permission to try. ■

# Will Victory Take Us Left?

Euphoria is generally considered to be an exaggerated psychological state, but it's certainly the mood of the moment as regards this second SNP Government, it's first as a majority administration – at least amongst the growing party membership and those who supported the National Party during the recent electoral victory. The mood amongst the avowedly Unionist parties and supporters is, unsurprisingly, less buoyant but also uncertain as to where Scottish politics is heading.

The plans for an Independence Referendum which the SNP had for the last parliamentary session had to be side-lined due to a lack of MSP numbers

in support to have been a successful manoeuvre towards the establishment of a democratically-mandated state. Now, however, with the numbers at Holyrood on the side of the nationalist angels, a referendum is unequivocally back on the agenda and the London-based parties have been calling for second referendums and for Westminster to continue having the overriding say on the constitutional settlement even after the Scottish People have spoken.

To give them their due, some Labour politicians such as Eric Joyce, George Foulkes and Helena Kennedy are engaging with the changing face of our nation's political future by looking at a possible federalist system or through espousing 'fiscal responsibility' as a means of widening the debate through the Scotland Bill whilst maintaining the political Union.

The SNP meanwhile has proffered a hand of parliamentary cooperation to the opposition in order that legislation

that is to pass through this session of our Parliament will have support which is as wide as possible and not been seen as being driven through by an unyielding majority government. This during the last parliament was a matter of political necessity but is now a matter of good governance and keeping faith with an electorate which still has variations as to how it would like to see Scotland's constitutional future pan-out.

In terms of where the agenda for the next five years lies, the Scottish National Party is a social democratic party in the modern European mould and has a civic nationalist construct. It is therefore incumbent that the SNP stands on its internationalist

bedrock as established by figures such as Alan McCartney and Neil McCormick and ensures that Scotland is in a position to play its full part as a member state of the European Union and within the United Nations.

Further to this commitment, last year I was honoured to present a statement of support for the UN Secretary General's plan for a Nuclear Weapons Convention to Ambassador Cabactulan, the President of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference 2010. The UK has refused to engage seriously with this vital cog in the wheel of nuclear disarmament and instead under both the last Labour and the present Conservative/Lib Dem Governments have pressed ahead with Trident Replacement, in breach of Article Six of the NPT to which the UK is a signatory.

The SNP is unwavering in its support for nuclear disarmament and the dismantling of Trident and its

removal from the Clyde and this will be one of the major issues on the agenda for resolution in the independence negotiations. The STUC/SCND Report of 2007 will be referred to when planning takes place for the use of the monies which will revert to the public purse when we are free of the many billions of pounds cost of Trident and the development of a renewables revolution in Scottish industry will be made easier by the investment of those huge sums presently being wasted.

Since 2007 the Scottish Government has started 24,000 new affordable houses, an average of 117 per week, creating construction sector jobs at this time of difficulty in those trades and this, along with abolishing the right-to-buy new builds, has shown a willingness to pursue what some might previously have thought would have been a 'left-wing Labour' agenda. Further, by committing £311.5 million in the 2011 Budget there is a new record high in creating 25,000 modern apprenticeships which must be seen as a social democratic measure in these financially-straitened times.

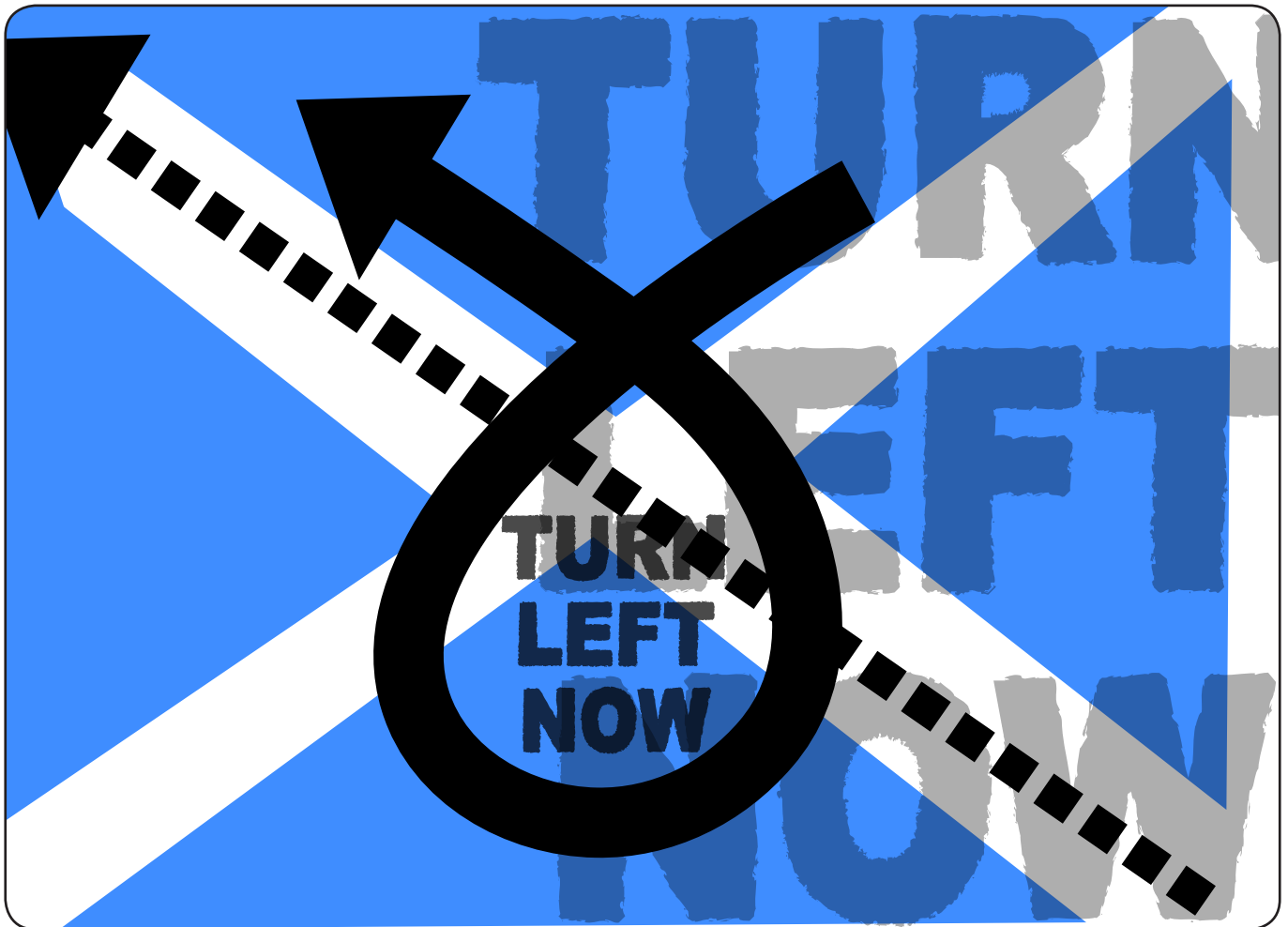
Some have argued that some of the more high-profile policy deliveries such as abolishing Prescription Charges and centrally-funding the freezing of the Council Tax have been mere populist window-dressing, but they have been targeted at the lowest earners and argued for by Labour members many times in the past.

In education, the scrapping of the graduate endowment and rejecting calls for the introduction of tuition fees have helped in avoiding the creation of England's developing two-tier structure which can only damage the prospects of young people from working-class and disadvantaged backgrounds. On that note the SNP Scottish Government's announcement of £15 million investment in support of the poorest college students demonstrates a willingness, even under the present limited budget of devolution, to stand alongside those who need the extra help that only government intervention can deliver consistently.

The living wage for NHS workers at £7.15 per hour, introduced in April

## **We stand with the position of the trade unions and their members in opposing the London Governments shameful attempts at lowering working and middle-class expectations by their policies of divide and rule between public and private sector workers**

Bill Kidd looks beyond SNP euphoria at the Scottish Election victory and explores if the Scottish Government can start to roll out a programme for government which is a genuine alternative to what is happening in London



this year, is a start towards ensuring that benefits reliance becomes less of a necessity for many thousands of our fellow citizens.

We need the powers over pensions and benefits that will see the Scottish Government and Parliament responsible for (and held to be so) the maintenance of the costs of living for those who have need of state intervention and those who have contributed for years to the system of age or infirmity support and we need control of the finances which we can then decide

**It must be for us then to freely enter into treaties which will see us take a future position of cooperation and equality of development opportunities with all the people of the World in an end to colonialism, imperialism and exploitation**

how to direct for the most equitable and just distribution. As both the First Minister and John Swinney have stated in the Scottish Parliament, the SNP is

opposed to the Westminster Coalition's attack on public sector pensions and present and future pensioners and we stand with the position of the trade unions and their members in opposing the London Governments shameful attempts at lowering working and middle-class expectations by their policies of divide and rule between public and private

sector workers.

Scotland has its own civic culture which must be nurtured and developed in a direction which is decided by the Scottish People themselves, through their political and civic institutions and through the right to self-determination as enshrined in the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in that they may freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development. It must be for our people to determine their own political future through our own Scottish Parliament and for us then to freely enter into treaties of international law which will see us take a future position of cooperation and equality of development opportunities with all the people of the World in an end to colonialism, imperialism and exploitation. ■

*Bill Kidd is SNP MSP for Glasgow Anniesland*

# Looking For Its Purpose

Unless the Scottish Labour Party understands the historic scale of the defeat and so reflects on the seriousness of the position it has fallen into it has no hope of recovery.

I am bound to declare an interest.

I was one of those selected to represent the Scottish Labour Party before the people in the 2011 Scottish Parliament election. I put forward a policy agenda of full employment, public ownership of public

services and greater equality through a Living Wage and equal pay. This may have influenced the vote of some electors, but not many of them and then probably not all that much.

May 5 was Labour's worst election result in Scotland since 1931. The Party's share of the popular vote was the lowest since 1923. Only 15 out of 73 constituencies returned a Labour parliamentary representative.

I lost, and with loss comes humility and honesty. I don't have all the answers. The reasons for Labour's rout were partly tactical, partly strategic and overwhelmingly political.

Days after the election Strathclyde University Professor John Curtice concluded "Labour's vote... fell more heavily in areas with more working class voters and in areas with relatively high levels of social deprivation". This has since been validated by research for the Carman, Jones and Mitchell "Scottish Election Study" which found in its sample that Labour could only secure the support of 36 per cent of working class voters, whilst the SNP attracted 42 per cent.

Many of the seats where Labour lost to the SNP were amongst those with the lowest turnout: the Glasgow seats of Shettleston, Kelvin, Anniesland and Glasgow Southside. Part of Labour's problem was a switch of voters to the SNP as a result of the degeneration of the election into a Presidential contest, last minute unilateral policy u-turns, and a defensive campaign. But the biggest factor was differential abstentions

no doubt brought about for the same reasons. This is borne out by my own experience. Where the SNP polled highest in Carrick Cumnock and Doon Valley it tended to be in the wards with the highest turnout and the more

prosperous wards at that. Conversely where Labour significantly out-pollled the SNP in former mining villages, turnout was typically below the constituency average.

And this decline is long term. In the 1999 Scottish Parliament elections Labour polled 908,392 votes on a 58 per cent turnout. This year it polled 630,461 on a 50 per cent turnout.

And that pattern of turnout, always tracking around 10 points below the Westminster elections, I am bound to say rubs some of the shine off the claim that "it's all about Scotland now". More worryingly it also represents a significant vacuum in Scottish political life. Across Western Europe in these circumstances we have seen the emergence of populist far-right parties claiming to speak for

the so-called 'silent majority'. Parties invariably constructed on a platform of blatant chauvinism and undisguised hatred. The Left in Scotland needs to be ever vigilant, united and active to keep this virus from spreading here.

That's why in Labour's ranks the response to the defeat must be political more than organisational, more national than local but firmly led by the Party's grass roots. For a start, Labour needs a vision of the kind of society we want to build, an up to date, relevant, compelling case for socialist transformation, rooted in people's everyday experience bound by a golden thread of intellectual credibility.

That means that Labour needs to rediscover its élan and understand its role in transforming public opinion and restructuring people's preferences rather than simply mirroring them. Listening of course but leading rather than following. Not relying on safety first but capturing imaginations and lifting horizons with a bit of vision and a message of change. Labour can't simply wait for the SNP to fail or to come unstuck with the much-promised referendum on Scottish independence. It needs to recognise the fundamental dimension of the shift that has taken place and rediscover its own distinctive sense of purpose in light of

## The reasons for Labour's rout were partly tactical, partly strategic and overwhelmingly political



## Richard Leonard argues that if Scottish Labour is to recover from the 2011 Election defeat it must rediscover its roots as a movement and not just as a party

that.

Working men and women are in revolt against an economic system which has failed them badly and gives them no voice. And so Labour's pledge on full employment, industrial democracy, growing the co-operative economy and keeping public services public should have been vote winners. But it was not policy or manifesto promises that caused Labour to lose; it was image and impression and so credibility. Despite warnings there were too many in Labour's ranks who were lulled into believing we could sneak back into office rather than march back into power.

There were profound tactical mistakes too. Scotland does now have a two-party system but the two parties are not Labour and the Tories, but Labour and the SNP. This was lost sight of in the Election campaign. Labour's re launch was a false trail too. Attacking independence when voters understood that voting SNP

would not of itself deliver independence was a wrong call. It also occurred at the very time when resources could have been devoted to spelling out what Labour was standing for, not just against.

People are looking to the labour movement in their struggles to defend locally-delivered publicly-owned public services, in their fight for jobs and useful work, for educational opportunities and dignity in retirement. And

make no mistake; the SNP's promise to freeze the Council Tax for five years and its bid for a much bigger cut in corporation tax than even George Osborne is contemplating will lead to

closures, rising charges, pay and pension cuts and job losses if left unchallenged.

So the Scottish Labour Party must reconnect with the broader movement in the defence of jobs and services. Labour must vigorously oppose injustice, inequality and privilege. Aspiration shouldn't be confused with materialism. Citizens should not be pigeon-holed as consumers. People have aspirations but many of them are social and collective. They want decent affordable housing, they fear for rising youth unemployment not for themselves but for the next generation, they want accessible public services like libraries and public health delivery in their own communities. And what people aspire to most of all is having more power over their daily lives. To borrow a phrase of John Maclean they want to "rise with their class not out of their class".

So Labour needs to articulate a credible and convincing case for the alternative: for full employment, economic democracy, an equal society and common ownership. And greatest of all a radical redistribution of power not from one Parliament and one set of politicians to another but from those who happen to own the wealth to those who actually create it.

A week before the election in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley the 8th Marquess of Ailsa put the iconic island

Ailsa Craig up for sale. A small event perhaps but one which served as a gentle reminder of some of the deepest challenges we face. So much power and wealth lies outside any kind of

democratic control. Land is a natural asset that should held in trust for and by the people. Ailsa Craig is a national asset not a bauble to be bought and sold by the old aristocracy. How archaic our society still is. Add to this the untrammelled but often hidden power of big capitalism, including much of the media and most notably the banks and we see that whatever the constitutional settlement the real power in Scotland will lay elsewhere. Political democracy without economic democracy is ultimately hollow and unsustainable.

It is for these compelling reasons, economic but ethical too, that the Scottish and then the Independent Labour Party was brought into existence by Keir Hardie and the trade unions to change the old order. It is for these same reasons that Labour and its democratic socialism will be seen as relevant again.

And relevant in Scotland too not despite the fact that Labour organises and represents people across the whole of these islands but precisely because it does. More relevant than ever because Labour is and always has been part of a worldwide movement for change with a common cause internationally built upon an underlying faith.

In the wake of that 1931 defeat, RH Tawney wrote a seminal essay "The Choice before the Labour Party" in which he argued that what was wrong with Labour was not "a failing in organisation or a weakness in programme." It was, declared Tawney "its lack of a creed".

And that lies at the heart of what is wrong with the Scottish Labour Party today. It needs to rediscover its purpose and its soul and so win the battle for hearts as well as minds. To do that it must become less of an electoral machine and more of a political movement. Renewing Labour's distinctive and historic mission to secure equality, peace and democracy, including economic democracy is not only the right thing to do. It would win back the confidence of working people and so win back their votes too. ■

*Richard Leonard was Scottish Labour candidate for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley in the Scottish Election*

# Grassroots Aren't Green

It would be a mistake to think that the Scottish Green Party's performance in the 2011 election was anything other than a profound failure. As Green blogger Jeff Breslin said the day after the election "the Greens are stuck in the mud. I'm aghast that the Greens have fared so badly, not even moving on from the two MSPs that they currently have." That's the feeling that many observers seem to share.

Most damningly Kate Higgins suggests that Greens lost the battle for a green vision for Scotland to the SNP. She says "on the little stuff – on recycling, on community-based issues, the Scottish Greens were solid and worthy. But on the big stuff – the renewable vision thing, of how it could create a real Scottish economic identity, and jobs – real jobs – in the future, well, the SNP won hands down." This is a serious criticism of a party that should be more focused on how to change not just Scotland but the world. If Greens are to have a hope of improving on the two seats we hold in the Scottish Parliament we must find ways to convince sympathetic observers like Kate of our vision.

While it is true that, the SNP aside, all the other parties lost seats and votes the opportunities for the Greens were so much greater. For at least the past eight years Greens have focused on picking up Liberal Democrat votes. Yet the Liberal Democrats collapsed in such numbers that Greens should have picked up as many seats, if not more, than the seven won in 2003. The failure to pick up Liberal Democrat voters was compounded by the failure to pick up Labour voters. With two of the three other parties that attract centre-left voters performing abysmally, Greens should have been in a position to prosper. But we didn't.

In 2007 the Greens lost more seats than any other party. That was due to a weak campaign and a serious squeeze between the SNP and Labour. Many swing voters in the electorate saw the vote as a serious choice about whether to get rid of Labour or risk independence by letting the SNP win. In this context the flow of altruistic votes that Greens had picked up in previous elections dried up. People needed to use their list votes as well as their constituency votes to vote

for the party they wanted to form the government.

There was an important lesson in 2007. Unfortunately the Green Party failed to learn that lesson. As Kate Higgins points out in her blog post on this "the [Green Party] contented itself with being the home for protest votes. And the problem with being the erstwhile recipient of the protest vote is that it is fly-by-night. It cannot be relied upon. Given its relative youth in party years, this might suffice but it does not provide a solid springboard for increased membership or indeed, representation." If we as Greens want to thrive and be in a position to enact our policies we need to win people's votes outright. We can't rely on supporters of other parties donating us their list votes. We have to build a support base that will support us whatever the context of the election.

It was only latterly in the 2007-11 term that Greens started to move to policies that built the sort of durable support we need. The 2010 General Election was an important learning experience. In the constituencies where Greens pursued socio-economic issues they put their vote up, often substantially. In the constituencies where Greens persisted with campaigns on recycling, green spaces and other stereotypical issues the vote went down – again often substantially. In Brighton the campaign which elected Caroline Lucas as an MP was based on the full range of social and economic policy.

As Kate Higgins says "the Scottish Greens have to decide if they wish to become a serious electoral threat. The right strategy and tactics can pay dividends, as Caroline Lucas and the Brighton Greens can testify. To replicate their success, the Scottish Greens need to grow and broaden their appeal."

After losing votes and percentage in all of the constituencies in which Greens stood in 2010 there was a reconsideration of the issues on which we were campaigning. The focus was more on raising tax and less on opposing road projects or other planning issues. While raising tax was better than the issues it replaced, at best it looked more like a first stab at relevance than a well-thought-through policy position. At worst it seemed a caricature of a progressive

policy. It's here that we in the Greens needed a big vision for the country and for the world. Where we focused on pragmatic policies like insulation, we needed to tell a bigger story of what we were about. The message that 'Greens would raise tax' communicated was insufficiently visionary. And we talked too little about how we'd change Scotland for the better with that money.

Then there are the serious structural problems with the Green Party. The party is heavily over-centralised. There is too much focus on press coverage and almost none on real campaigning. The number of activists has reduced in the past four years. There may be a number of reasons for this, but the most important is a focus on 'professionalisation'. Professionalism here means people being paid to do things, rather than doing things more competently. Instead of fostering and promoting a culture of campaigning, the party too often focuses on Parliamentary activity and press coverage. This over-focus on Parliament wins some plaudits from journalists - but it wins very few votes. Extraordinarily, the Party employed more press officers in the election campaign than staff to help deliver ground campaigns. At times it seemed that the campaign was being planned on the basis of story lines from "The Thick of It" and "The West Wing".

While it is seductive to think that a party can be run by a small number of paid staff commissioning work from paid contractors, it is difficult to achieve. The money to pay for this is hard to raise and bought campaigns simply aren't as effective as real grassroots campaigns. The Scottish Green Party must focus more on developing more grassroots campaigns and less on press coverage or parliamentary work. As important as press coverage and parliament might be – we now know that they don't win elections. It is especially foolish to believe that Greens can compete with the larger parties on press coverage. While it might feel good to look at the clippings, we are almost always drowned out by other parties. It may explain why Greens fail to turn good poll ratings into good election results.

That the Green campaign in 2011 had two competing slogans tells us a lot about what went wrong. The fault was not so much with the campaign itself,



## Peter McColl dissects the Scottish Green Party election campaign and finds a party with confused messages and not enough will to fight for votes on the ground

but in the internal culture of the Party. Each of the slogans speaks to a way of understanding Green politics that is resilient, but simply neither popular nor resonant enough to win the additional seats that should have come to the Greens in this election.

The first of these slogans was “The Only Alternative.” It didn’t really make it into much of the election material but is a good explanation of one strand of Green thought. The Only Alternative was an articulation of Green triangulation. The aim was to point out that, other than Labour, all of the other parties in Parliament were in power, either at Westminster or in Scotland, and that they were therefore responsible for the economic crisis. The Greens were “The Only Alternative” to parties in government.

Underpinning this was a belief that everyone was sick of the other parties. The electorate had no choice but to turn to the Greens. This was true in the case of the Liberal Democrats, and to a great extent with Labour. The great folly was to underestimate how well the SNP had done. At one stage the news had just broken that John Swinney had failed to renew the powers required for the Scottish Government to vary the Standard Variable Rate of income tax. I thought this was unlikely to make any real difference to the election. Not enough people cared. But some Greens believed that this would mean that pro-independence voters would abandon the SNP and vote Green. This was always nothing short of delusional.

It wasn’t, though, delusional to think that Greens could pick up Liberal Democrat voters. And it’s there that the massive failure in the campaign

becomes obvious. Where we needed to make positive statements about what we believed in we instead poured abuse onto other parties. This was so extensive that the Party Facebook page repeatedly received complaints about how negative the coverage was.

The SNP, which seems have picked up all those former Liberal Democrat voters, were unfailingly positive. Instead, Green press releases in the run-up to the election were unfailingly negative. One of the reasons why being negative

**If we as Greens want to thrive and be in a position to enact our policies we need to win people’s votes outright. We can’t rely on supporters of other parties donating us their list votes. We have to build a support base that will support us whatever the context of the election.**

is a bad idea is that you end up talking about other people, not yourself. The electorate is therefore denied the opportunity to find out what Greens are about. With “The Only Alternative” we’d set ourselves up to talk about others failings, rather than our own proposals. We fell into exactly the pattern that Kate Higgins warned against. We presented ourselves as a home for protest votes, rather than a party of government.

The second election message was a return to “Second Vote Green”. This had worked in 1999 and seemed to work very well in 2003. In fact it worked so well that the SNP spent a couple of years trying to work out how to win list votes in 2007. They produced the brilliant “Alex Salmond for First Minister” slogan. This not only played their trump card (Alex Salmond) but also got them to the top of the ballot paper. In 2007 Greens, hampered by a ballot paper redesign, had to adapt the slogan, and ran with “First Vote Green”. This had little of the resonance of “Second Vote Green” and with a competitive election Greens recorded fewer votes than in 1999.

This led some Greens to believe that a return to “Second Vote Green” would mean a return to electoral success. But

this was always pretty wishful thinking. While “Second Vote Green” works where no other parties contest the list (as was the case in 1999 and 2003), when other parties contest the list it is much less successful. In 2011 all four other parliamentary parties put serious effort into the list. And they were always going to – we knew that the SNP’s ingenious “Alex Salmond for First Minister” tagline in 2007 was always going to be improved upon. But we chose to test “Second Vote Green” to destruction.

There were a wide range of reasons why “Second Vote Green” wasn’t a good idea. It confused a lot of people – one of the main messages we were getting on the doors was that people didn’t understand it. A more serious problem was that the election was being held on the same day as the referendum on the Alternative Vote. Serious concerns about “Second Vote Green” leading people to vote in the Scottish election as if it were an AV election, thus depriving the Greens of votes that would be discounted (where people used 1, 2, 3 etc to vote on the list, giving Greens the ‘2’). Luckily this didn’t seem to happen, but lack of ballot papers spoiled this way points to the conclusion that people simply didn’t hear the message.

The next five years will be very difficult for the Party. Robbed of Parliamentary influence and stuck at two MSPs the Party has to refocus on relevant grassroots campaigning. But having spent the four years from 2003-07 with a sizeable Parliamentary group, followed by four years from 2007-11 holding part of the balance of power it will be difficult to go back to those campaigns. It has little of the glamour of pretending you’re in “The West Wing”. But the Green Party is a not a party for “West Wing” wannabes, it’s a party so radical that it wants to *solve* the economic and environmental crises facing the world. That requires a commitment to very real ground campaigning. And with the right arguments we should be able to deliver those ground campaigns. ■

*Peter McColl is a community activist in Portobello and a member of the Scottish Green Party. He co-edits the Bright Green blog at [www.brightgreenscotland.org](http://www.brightgreenscotland.org)*

# How To Win

The argument I want to make is simple; now is the time for the left to get it together. The 'it' is important; I do not mean that we must assemble and plan a giant, elaborate structure of some sort. I mean we need to sort out our heads, focus on what we can do now and get on with it. There are three reasons I think we need to do this now. They are as follows:

## THE PROBLEM WITH TELEOLOGY

Teleology is a philosophical approach with views an outcome to be an inherent part of a process. It is the idea that things 'work towards' outcomes as if the outcomes were the starting-point and not the end point. So a seed is simply the early stage of plant which will inevitably exist all other things being equal. In teleology there is a tendency to believe that an external force has to come into play to stop the inevitable outcome, so the seed is a plant *unless* there is a really bad frost. But since bad frost is almost as inevitable as seeds turning into plants, which one is the 'telos', the endpoint? In human affairs it is even more complicated – what is the 'inevitable' and what is the 'unless'.

The thing about change is that we can only say 'it changed from this to that' afterwards, after the change has already happened. During the change all we can say is 'it is changing from this to something else – we have left where we were'. When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white passenger on that bus in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955 it did not mean that racial segregation was now inevitably going to come to an end; after all, Irene Morgan had done exactly the same thing eleven years earlier. Indeed, had her defiance not been followed up with the Montgomery Bus Boycott it would probably have been just another criminal case. It is only looking backwards that the end begins with the beginning.

In recent years the Scottish (and indeed the global) left feels like it has suffered a series of setbacks. Not only has global ideology shifted sharply to the neoliberal right, the Scottish left has pursued projects and plans that haven't worked, from anti-war protests that

didn't work to radical political parties that couldn't hold together to attempts to 'win back' the Labour Party that didn't succeed. In seeing all of this organised failure it has tended not to notice (or, ironically, take as a background inevitability) big successes such as the extent to which the market has been kept out of the Scottish public sector, or the fact that the Christie Commission blueprint for public sector reform is pointing in completely the opposite direction to the Westminster approach. There is a risk that the left has become fatalistic, seeing an inevitable endpoint in everything and usually believing it to be defeat.

But if the left can win these significant victories while busy trying to do something else altogether, what could it do if it was focusing on what can be achieved immediately? The left sort of expects to be let down by big political parties and so gets its disappointment in early. It seems to me that we have got into a habit of expecting bad outcomes and so we start out in opposition to things that haven't happened yet. This is the trouble with teleology – if the endpoint is inevitable, why bother?

Because the endpoint isn't inevitable. We have a Scottish Government which is openly opposed to Trident – this took decades of campaigning. It was not inevitable that the impact of the media or the defence industry or Whitehall or whatever would eventually 'turn this around'.

So if the left simply sees another Big Political Party in power and does nothing more than dust down its protest banners in anticipation of the battle to come, it will have handed the endpoint over to teleology – which in fact means those who are not willing to let the future drift away from them.

So the first reason: *if the left simply expects things to go badly then they will. If it does not give itself a shake and work as if multiple possibilities lie ahead others will.*

## POWER AND POSSIBILITY

In politics, power is a form of mass which displaces possibility. If possibility is the chance that different endpoints are possible, then the role of power is to make sure that it can determine

which endpoint is reached in reality. When Tony Blair was elected in 1997, people believed the world was full of possibilities. Some stories tell it that power gradually closed these down, but in reality power had closed down those possibilities long before they were actually possible – by creating a world in which Tony Blair could become leader of the Labour Party.

Like all forms of power (electricity, gravity, magnetism) the power that comes to bear on politics is mainly invisible and we have a habit of seeing the effects of power not as a specific outcome to a specific action but as 'nature'. Of course British foreign policy will promote the interests of Big Oil. Of course taxes will be kept down to appease the Daily Mail and so on. The prospect of a UK Government imposing sanctions on Israel for human rights abuses is unthinkable only because power closes down any such possibility.

But in this at least something is now different in Scotland. The kind of power which makes things impossible no longer really exists here. It's natural home is the City of London and the London establishment networks. In London those who wield this power are striding behemoths before whom politicians tremble. But if they cross the border, which they seldom do, they shrink. They still have the money and they still get the ear of the media but they do not have the same power to close down possibilities. If they could then Scottish Water would be privatised, universities, marketised, Trident safe and sound, PFI entrenched and so on.

Scotland does not have quite the same concentrations of power. It is fairly easy for politicians to ignore CBI Scotland if they want to and very easy to ignore the Scotsman's manifesto. The Scottish banking industry used to have that power over Scotland but it is gone. And despite varying degrees of resistance, Labour First Ministers used to mainline the power of the City of London into Scottish politics simply by dint of what their UK leaders would allow them to do or not do.

That is largely gone. Of course Scotland is filled with vested interests which exert power and influence but

## Robin McAlpine argues that the post-election period in Scotland signals a number of opportunities for the Scottish left but that it needs to do things differently to grasp them

none are really so overwhelmingly powerful as to close down other possibilities. That does not mean that alternatives will necessarily happen (there is a reason possibilities are called possibilities...) but that they could. And unless the left can be sufficiently aware of how power has receded and possibilities opened up it will miss them. It must learn how to exert influence and not only how to express discontent.

This is the second reason the left has to get it together: *if the left does not seek to exert the power of influence, others will and possibilities will be lost.*

### THE DEFINITION OF MADNESS

The quote “the definition of madness is doing the same thing over and over but expecting a different outcome” is usually ascribed to Einstein. So, is the Scottish left mad? Does it believe that if it just tries one more time it can wrest the Scottish Labour Party from the hands of the neoliberal leadership in London? Does it believe that one more shot is all that is required to form a political party which can win power, change politics and not implode through infighting? Does it believe that one more march by the trade unions will halt the welfare ‘reforms’ being pursued by Downing Street?

This is not meant to mean that we should give up the fights, but it does mean that we need to be realistic about what the outcome of these fights is going to be. Of course the Labour left should fight to recapture its party, but it also has to accept that it will not have done so by the time of the next Scottish Elections in 2016; so what then? Of course Scotland deserves to have the right to vote for an avowedly socialist party, but the chances of such a unified party being in existence by 2016 or of the electorate regaining sufficient confidence to vote for it in significant numbers is slim; so what then? And of course we should all oppose the Cameron agenda with one voice, but since it seems unlikely that Cameron will back-track or lose, it will be one more valiant but futile Scottish attempt to reform London; what then?

What will the Scottish left spend the next five years doing? The same again, hoping for different results? When Scotland is there to be won, are we going

to march on London instead? Do we hope to win concessions from David Cameron? Hope to convert Ed Milliband and the Shadow Cabinet? Or in Scotland will we confine ourselves to more restructuring of a minority party while the world continues around us?

The third reason: *what we have been doing has worked in spite of our actions as much as because of them. We can't just keep hammering away at losing strategies.*

### GETTING IT TOGETHER

You don't have to support the SNP, you don't have to support independence; you just have to accept three things. Firstly, the outcome of the next five years of SNP

government has not yet been decided. Secondly, this is an administration which is much less confined by big power interests or a parent party worried about how Scottish actions will be presented in the UK media, which means that a greater range of possibilities is open. Thirdly, that there is a lot of energy and drive

on the left if it can be directed towards projects with a chance of delivering an outcome. It also helps if you can agree that Alex Salmond has flirted – perhaps no more than – with the idea of being a more radical leader of Scotland.

If we can see a moment of opportunity now in which we can exert influence on what is there rather than fight fights we can't win and plan plans that won't succeed then it could be a productive five years for the Scottish left. John Lennon was right, “Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans”; and politics is what happens while you're hoping that in five or ten years things might be different.

The Scottish left has not been particularly good at working with what is there already. It is not all our fault – in the Blair years there was so much suspicion of the left in the mainstream

that we were shunned and in the Fred Goodwin years the mainstream just got too excited by the Enron-lite promises of the Scottish financial services industry. But Blair sleeps with the fishes, Cameron sleeps soundly in another world and – well, we're legally prohibited from discussing where Goodwin sleeps, but it isn't ‘here’ any more.

In my view, the Scottish left has been in need of three things. Firstly, it needed a Parliament which was won from the left. While I don't think it has been won *by* the left, the 2011 Election saw all the battles taking place at the lefthand side of the political spectrum and the outcome was decided mainly by voters

of a left persuasion. Secondly, it needed a power vacuum, or at least an environment in which external power bearing down on Scottish politics was not irresistible. Without the same degree of London interference and with a weak corporate lobby community in Scotland, there is a much more even distribution

of influence around the political sphere. And thirdly, it needed the will and the expertise to step in and exert influence and power on a Parliament that might listen. Whether this can happen is still an open question.

In this there is an agenda for the left in Scotland, one which can reinforce the left-of-centre political ideology which is now dominant in Scottish politics and extend and push it further. We just have to believe that possibilities are there, that they can be made to happen and that we can make them happen if we choose to. And if we can do that then we simply have to start deciding what targets we are going to choose and how we are going to pursue them. It will be a terrible waste of an opportunity if we don't. ■

**Robin McAlpine is Editor of the Scottish Left Review**

# Procuring A Better Economy

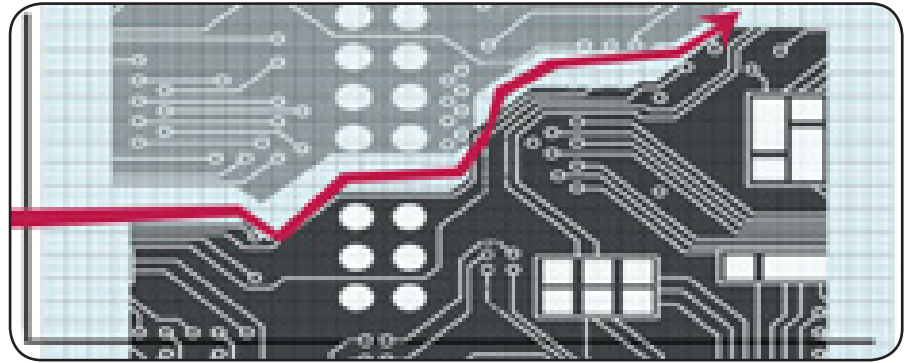
The flurry of commentary which met the Scottish Government's economic strategy in November 2007 focused heavily on the targets introduced for GDP growth. This was inevitable given the novelty – no other developed nation has such a target – and ambition of the growth targets.

The other targets included in the strategy received much less attention. Mindful that over a 30 year period the living standards of ordinary workers had become decoupled from economic growth, the Scottish Government also included targets on solidarity, cohesion and sustainability (collectively known as its 'golden rules'), in an effort to ensure that rising output and employment would once again contribute to the broadly-based prosperity of the Scottish people.

All the signs are that the new majority SNP Government economic will not substantially modify its economic strategy so it is reasonable to assume that pressure to account for performance across the full range of its targets will increase though the course of this Parliament. The Scottish Government must therefore cleverly utilise the levers it currently possesses to effect solidarity and cohesion across the Scottish economy.

One such lever is public procurement. It is estimated that the public sector spends some £9bn in Scotland procuring goods and services. The way in which this money is spent could exert significant influence over the quality and shape of the Scottish economy. However, procurement is a fraught area for Government as it finds itself wrestling with three fundamentally contradictory imperatives:

1. to make the procurement process more 'efficient' primarily through the aggregation of contracts to drive lower cost. Maximising the public sector's buying-power through more professional collaboration between contracting authorities will reduce the scarce resources currently being wasted in costly and inefficient procurement. This approach is strongly associated with the McClelland Review of Public Procurement (Scottish Executive 2006).



2. to engage more SMEs in the procurement process. This has been a campaigning priority for the small business lobbying community which believes that arcane, bureaucratic processes necessarily exclude the SME community and favour large companies. Action taken to remedy this situation (assuming for the moment that the small business gripes are legitimate) has included the establishment of Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) – a 'portal' designed to improve access to public contract opportunities the lowering of the thresholds at which contracts must be advertised.
3. the delivery of 'community benefits' through the procurement process. Building on the view that public money should benefit the communities in which it is being spent, community benefits clauses on social, employment or environmental objectives can be embedded within public contracts; the delivery of skills training and apprenticeships is probably the most common such benefit. The Scottish Government lists a number of such projects where social benefits have been or will be delivered such as the Commonwealth Games, the new Southern General Hospital and the Energy Assistance Programme.

As public spending is slashed over the coming years, it is reasonable to assume that the 'efficiency' agenda will trump the other imperatives. Such an approach would however necessarily lead to economic value being sucked out of Scotland as the global corporations best placed to bid for larger contracts cut jobs, repatriate profits and drive down wages. It also risks strangling the nascent

community benefit approach before more communities experience the positive change precipitated by enlightened procurement policy.

The STUC has developed its policy on public procurement around two central aspirations:

For procurement to play a pivotal role in securing the future of Scottish manufacturing. Trade unions recognise that public authorities must operate within EU competition rules but so far other countries have been far better at giving their manufacturers a slice of the public procurement cake; and

For procurement to be used to drive up standards across the economy. Contracts drawn up with suppliers and service providers can incorporate clauses on better employment standards, training provision, health and safety and environmental sustainability. There is significant potential for procurement to help make Scotland a better place in which to live and work.

A new approach to procurement in Scotland should not start with a consideration of what is possible under EU law; it should instead build from an analysis of ways in which as much economic value as possible can be retained in Scotland. This will involve forward-looking assessments of procurement requirements and the capacity of the Scottish economy to deliver. An approach which gave equal weight to the range of economic strategy targets would focus on three areas: community benefits, standards and manufacturing.

Recent progress with community benefits must be maintained in order that such clauses become the norm in public sector contracting. The Scottish Government's pilot Community Benefits

## Stephen Boyd puts forward an agenda which shows that the Scottish Government is not powerless in transforming the nature of the Scottish industry base – it just needs to use its power of procurement imaginatively.

in Procurement (CBIP) programme confirmed that there is scope within the EU legal framework to use contracts to deliver community benefits and also that practical and 'value for money issues' can be overcome.

The economic and social value of such clauses is manifest: in areas of persistent economic

inactivity more local people are employed in full-time jobs having been provided with the opportunity to develop new skills. There is an immediate impact on individuals, families and communities and a longer-term benefit to the public purse.

Building on the CBIP lessons by bringing procurement and wider economic policy closer together, contracts must be drawn up in such a way that standards are improved across the economy. The CBIP pilots, in areas such as Raploch and Inverclyde, were primarily focused on targeted training and recruitment requirements. The STUC believes that targeted training and recruitment should only be the start. We firmly believe that issues around quality of employment (living wages, pay, employee engagement, length of contract etc) and environmental standards can and should be included as community benefits. These might include commitments to:

- Pay at least a living wage – or union negotiated standards for the industry;
- Excellence in health and safety and a formal role for trade union workplace reps;
- A narrow range of pay over the workers involved in the contract i.e. preventing executives looting the contract;
- Employee engagement. Evidence confirms the value of workplace democracy and the Scottish Government has been happy to promote this approach through its

'skills utilisation' agenda; it should embed this approach in public procurement;

- Skills training – not just for unemployed workers taken on through separate community benefit clauses but for the enterprise as a whole. If the Scottish Government

places such a high priority on skills and apprenticeships, it simply shouldn't contract with firms which refuse to maintain such standards;

- Sustainability of employment/ length of contract etc.

There are precedents. Trade union campaigning led to several such clauses being included in the

tender for the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services in 2007. Although the Scottish Government could not state explicitly that TUPE would apply as a matter of law, a clause was inserted which ensured that, if TUPE was found not to apply, any savings accrued through cutting jobs, wages or terms and conditions would be clawed back by the Scottish Government. Therefore there was no incentive for private operators to do what they usually seek to do. For any government concerned with a fairer distribution of income and the economic stability a fairer distribution helps support, such clauses must become the norm.

Procurement policy must also ensure that Scotland's manufacturers have confidence that they will benefit from public procurement. Other member states are far more adept than the UK at retaining economic value within their borders. Far-reaching culture change is required if Scotland is to achieve similar outcomes. The civil service will have to be guided by economic and employment outcomes in Scotland rather adhering to the letter of EU law. The relationship between government and industry will have to be closer and much longer-term and, yes, industrial policy – ignored for decades – has to become a reality once

again.

For instance, much of Scotland's ferry capacity will have to be replaced over the next 15 years. Over a period when defence contracts are likely to be scarce, keeping these contracts in Scotland could prove vital to sustaining jobs and key strategic skills. Is there any proactive work underway to appraise industry of forthcoming opportunities?

Similarly, recent decisions by the UK Government have all but ensured that the UK will lose its remaining capacity to build rolling stock for the railways. The Scottish Government has invested heavily, and will continue to invest, in Scotland's railways. Increasing capacity is essential if climate targets are to be met. Is the Scottish Government talking to for example bus manufacturer Alexander Dennis to identify whether it has the skills and infrastructure necessary to invest in this market? It could even provide seed funding to assist with diversification while working to ensure that the firm was best placed to benefit from future contracts.

The Scottish Government could also create lead markets through 'Forward Commitment' procurement initiatives – learning from examples in Sweden and the US, the Government can play a key role in developing programmes to design and sell innovative green products. Forward Commitment programmes draw together a group of organisations to define a need (i.e. a more energy efficient IT system). Bids are then sought to deliver a product or service that meets this need. The specification of the need will include a range of criteria that must be met and the procurement group commits to purchasing a minimum amount of the new product or service provided these criteria are met.

Unfortunately, it is necessary to conclude by stating that enlightened procurement policy alone will not lead to a new fairer, more sustainable economic and social model. At UK and Scottish level, economic and industrial policy is so deficient and government at all levels so deferential to employer lobbying that major structural problems will persist with or without better procurement. ■

**Stephen Boyd is Assistant Secretary at the STUC**

# The Female Recession

The causes of the global financial crisis which precipitated the deepest economic recession since the great depression of the early 1930s continue to be the subject of much academic and political debate. The idea that the crash of the financial markets in 2008 provided an opportunity to learn from the apparent inherent failures in the system of financial capitalism and to subsequently consider an alternative political economy trajectory gave way to a strategy that involved effectively 'rewarding' our revered financial institutions for what can only be described as reckless and irresponsible behaviour.

In October 2008 the UK government rescued two of the UK's leading banks, Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS) and the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS). Both banks had their headquarters in Edinburgh and at the time of the rescue had a combined balance sheet worth some £3 trillion, more than twice the UK GDP (National Audit Office, 2009:5). According to a National Audit Office report the purchase of shares by the public sector together with the offer of guarantees, insurance and loans reached £850bn (Maintaining financial stability across the United Kingdom's banking system, National Audit Office 2009). To put that into context, total public spending in the UK in 2010/11 was in the region of £700bn.

While government intervention to save failing private sector businesses is not unusual what does distinguish the recent economic crisis from

previous ones is not just the cost but also the consequences of the intervention for the public finances. Once some stability had been restored to the financial system, governments, partly as a result of pressure from financial markets, became more concerned about

the growing level of public sector debt. Subsequently their attention switched from saving the banking system to curbing public expenditure and raising taxation in order to reduce the level of government debt. Indeed the 2010 UK General Election was largely fought around how quickly public spending cuts should be introduced. The Conservative/ Liberal Democratic coalition government announced plans to reduce the debt fairly rapidly mainly through a reduction in spending. In 2010 they outlined a total of £81bn spending cuts over the next five years. Apart from health, the government proposed cuts in all other spending areas by an average of 19 per cent by 2014/15.

For Scotland this meant a reduction in the block grant of 11.3 per cent in real terms between 2010/11 and 2014/15, which includes a real terms reduction of 36 per cent in capital spending over that period.

The form and scale of public spending committed to bailing out the banks imply that a prolonged period of social austerity will follow. The public sector in Scotland and the rest of the UK is currently being squeezed and will be subject to a long-lasting period of spending cuts with negative consequences for both jobs and services. Furthermore, with no evidence to date that the lending behaviour of banks has shifted from a preference to remain cautious, for the

purpose of rebuilding balance sheets, it is difficult to see how the private sector can replace publicly-funded economic activity. Thus the outlook in terms of future economic growth and employment

appears bleak. Indeed there is some evidence to suggest that what began as a private sector recession is now transforming into a public sector recession.

The Scottish economy entered into recession in the middle of 2008

and remained there for 15 months until the last quarter of 2009. Three sectors in particular contributed to the loss of output in the Scottish economy over the course of the recession. These were manufacturing which accounted for 23 per cent, real estate and business services 33 per cent and financial services 17 per cent. Between December 2008 and June 2010 a total of 168,000 jobs were lost in Scotland, around 6.1 per cent of the total. Over a third of the job losses were in the overwhelmingly male-dominated manufacturing and construction sectors. In December 2008 these two sectors accounted for 15.6 per cent of workforce jobs in Scotland but 36 per cent of the decline in workforce jobs between December 2008 and June 2010. During the period of the recession (December 2007 to December 2009) male job losses accounted for 69 per cent of the total, lending credence to the claim that the recession impacted disproportionately on male employment in the private sector. Between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2009 the level of private sector employment in Scotland fell by 6.2 per cent compared to a fall in public sector employment (excluding the financial institutions) of 0.5 per cent. In contrast during the recovery phase between 2009 and the end of 2010 public sector employment (again excluding financial institutions) had declined by 3.4 per cent whilst private sector employment has increased by 1.7 per cent.

So what began as the result of the bursting of a financial speculative bubble morphed into a banking crisis, became a deep recession and is now resulting in a major retrenchment of public services and employment.

The effects of this retrenchment will impact on men and women in a variety of different ways. Within the context of an overall commitment to promoting equality, it is essential that any differential impacts be accounted for throughout the policy process. This requires an initial undertaking to develop an understanding of gender as a social construct. That is, the individual choices of men and women as 'economic agents' are effectively determined by a given set of structurally-determined roles, responsibilities and expectations. The

**What began as the result of the bursting of a financial speculative bubble morphed into a banking crisis, became a deep recession and is now resulting in a major retrenchment of public services and employment**

## As the first part of the recession in the private sector hit men harder, the second part in the public sector is affecting women most. This has big policy implications, argue Ailsa McKay and Jim Campbell

combined effect of these gendered social and cultural norms is that men and women occupy very different positions in both the paid and unpaid sectors of the economy.

There is no doubt that women's increased participation in the formal labour market in recent decades has improved their overall position with regard to economic independence. However, the same period had also been characterised by deregulated labour markets, cut backs in key areas of welfare spending, the weakening of the trade union movement and increased economic inequalities across advanced capitalist states. Perversely, women have been afforded greater opportunities to engage in paid work via a range of measures, such as the increased use of casual part-time working arrangements, that have effectively contributed in sustaining existing gender based inequalities or even in creating new ones.

Women remain concentrated in low-paid service sector jobs; are over represented in part-time casual employment which ultimately impacts on their overall ability to build up independent financial reserves, and they continue to assume responsibility for the majority of unpaid domestic responsibilities, including child care. Subsequently women throughout the course of their life cycle are more vulnerable to the risk of poverty. Thus women could be less able to withstand the impact of recession.

Whilst this in itself is a serious cause for concern when considered at an individual and/or household level, the overall impact on the economy is less well understood. The current deflationary bias targeted on the public sector in the hope that the private sector will pick up the slack fails to account for the very significant role women play and the contribution they make to the Scottish economy.

Women's contribution to the Scottish economy, paid and unpaid, continues to be under-valued and overlooked. How else can we explain why women in full-time work earn on average 12 per cent less than men; why women workers dominate the health and social care sector in Scotland, but only 19 per cent of NHS chief executives/heads are

women and why over 60 per cent of individuals undertaking more than 20 hours per week of unpaid care work are women? At the beginning of this year the Employment Tribunal service in Scotland recorded over 40,000 local authority, and 12,000 NHS live, equal pay cases. Unison, Scotland's biggest public service union, is currently handling 500 new equal pay claims on behalf of women members per month. Clearly 40 years of equal pay legislation is not 'working' for women employed across Scotland's public services.

There are nearly twice as many women as men working in the Scottish public sector (65 per cent versus 35 per cent). Local government represents 53 per cent of the total public sector and women make up 67 per cent of the local government workforce. Women make up 89 per cent of the total health and social care sector in Scotland. So as the public sector contracts as a consequence of the fiscal cost of the recession women's employment will suffer more than men's. In addition it will tend to be lower paid workers who bear the brunt of the readjustment and nearly half of all public sector workers earn less than £21,000 per annum. Furthermore, those who remain employed in the public sector will experience a real-term decline in their living standards as a consequence of the imposition of the pay freeze and higher than expected inflation, particularly energy and food costs.

There is a rich literature indicating that women have very different spending preferences than men, for a whole host of reasons. Of particular relevance in this context is the fact that women remain overwhelmingly responsible for paying for childcare and as managers

of the household budget they prioritise spending needs on a collective rather than individual basis. When men lose their jobs individual men will of course suffer but women will effectively act as a buffer, via a combination of their own employment and their role within the household economy. But when women lose their jobs, individual women and whole families suffer. Any reduction in social services, as a result of public sector

spending cuts, will ultimately impact on the ability of low paid women to manage the limited resources in the face of competing and increasing demands for expenditure. Although the immediate and most obvious consequences of public spending cuts will relate to pay and jobs, thus affecting many low paid women with limited employment protection. The wider impact in terms of economic recovery will remain absent from the debate within a policy forum

that fails adequately to acknowledge, understand, measure and address the extent of gender-based inequalities in Scottish society.

Rather than being a time for cutting public spending, the crisis may provide us with an opportunity to justify public sector investment in key areas that supports the wellbeing of Scottish families and their wider communities. Such a strategy may seem too expensive in the current climate but can we as a nation afford the very significant consequences sustained cuts will have on the welfare of women and the wider economy? ■

**Women have very different spending preferences than men - women remain overwhelmingly responsible for paying for childcare and as managers of the household budget they prioritise spending needs on a collective rather than individual basis**

*Ailsa McKay and Jim Campbell  
both teach Economics at Glasgow  
Caledonian University*

# Success Through Fairness

There is a commonly-held myth that the Scottish Government does not retain sufficient powers to engineer greater social equality. Whilst it is true that measures such as a higher minimum wage, increased in-work benefits and credits and broader income transfers that reach poorer households cannot come from Holyrood. Unite, however, believes there is a golden opportunity to reform collective bargaining in Scotland to address vital social issues.

In April, just before the election, we launched our document 'Making Devolution Work' as part of our contribution to the 'Better Way' campaign. By any measure it wasn't - and isn't - the finished article but is designed to try and stimulate a discussion about what kind of economy we want.

An economy genuinely trying to move towards a more diverse base; focused on job creation; strategic about the future; fairer in terms of wages & how the state - in particular the Scottish Parliament - can perform a facilitating role to bring the technologies of the future to fruition. Not ad hoc policy proposals in isolation which may be beneficial but a common thread that runs through the fabric of our society.

Abstract goals are fairly non-contentious but the concrete policy measures of how we achieve these are the real litmus test. Whatever the phraseology we use 'rebalancing', 'reorientating' or 'reindustrialising', the aim is to create a fairer society - a better society.

The Scottish Government and Parliament has an opportunity to take the lead, to set itself apart from the Westminster Government's savage attacks and economically illiterate agenda. We believe that part of the machinery that helps us weave this thread should involve the establishment of sector forums. These forums would help to combat inequality and assist in improving workers' purchasing power - designed to foster strategic growth. The forums would do so by the promotion and active co-ordination of wage agreements throughout the economy, particularly as 77 per cent of all jobs in Scotland are outside the public sector.

Of course, we need to campaign for

the Living Wage and ensure that this is rolled out throughout the public sector - something we must hold the Scottish Government and all parties to account on - but we also need to find a way to inflate the pay of people outside the public sector.

Although the main focus of sector forums would be on pay and other terms and conditions of employment it is important to emphasise that such bodies would have other functions as well.

They should address other concerns, such as productivity, procurement, investment grants, competitiveness and the skills and training (including apprenticeships) needs within the sector in question. They must establish strategic and long-term responses to the needs of our economy rather than the blizzard of policy responses which do little to ensure we all rise with the tide.

We know wages are getting more unequal with average pay rising at 1.8 per cent while bank chief executives pocket a pay rise of 36 per cent and a 5.2 per cent rate of inflation is hurting hard. We know lack of consumer confidence is hampering the economic recovery yet there is strong evidence of a link between collective bargaining and economic growth in other countries and this should be applied in Scotland through sector forums.

It is a striking feature of the global economy that countries in the EU with stronger collective bargaining coverage, greater degrees of economic balance and greater degrees of regulation in the labour market have been able to manage

the global recession at least as effectively as liberalised economies. Neoliberalism espoused at various times by all major political parties in the Scottish Parliament has failed - and failed spectacularly.

High levels of collective bargaining coverage and wage equality are not associated with the economic inefficiencies of the United Kingdom and the United States, for example. Indeed, there is a stronger case for collective

bargaining fostering growth than lower rates of corporation tax which is a neoliberal economic approach that all progressives should oppose and the present Scottish Government thinks is a major plank in its narrative for further powers.

Let me be crystal clear - our organisation will oppose any neoliberal agenda irrespective of the political party articulating it and lower corporation taxes than England and Wales as the drive towards the levels of the Republic of Ireland will amount to little else than a race to the bottom, lower wages and the extraction of wealth

from our country.

There is an alternative. The revitalisation of collective bargaining machinery is a key strategy in the revitalisation of the Scottish economy. But although this is necessary for reasons of economic recovery, the case for collective bargaining is not however a purely economic one. It is also about social justice. It is about ensuring that people are not treated like a commodity to be bought and sold at the lowest price in a Darwinian 'labour market'. It is also

**It is a striking feature of the global economy that countries in the EU with stronger collective bargaining coverage, greater degrees of economic balance and greater degrees of regulation in the labour market have been able to manage the global recession at least as effectively as liberalised economies**



## Pat Rafferty argues that the best way to promote both economic growth and social justice is to devise a Scottish solution to workplace democracy

about ensuring that everyone is entitled to a fair day's wage for a fair day's pay.

We know collective bargaining density in mainland Europe remains high (though under constant threat). Of the original 15 member states of the EU, the UK and Ireland are the only countries where the coverage of collective agreements is less than 50 per cent of the labour force. In some cases, density exceeds 90 per cent. The latter is three times the level of coverage in Scotland.

The benefits of collective wage regulation may be illustrated by looking at the UK's two biggest economic competitors in the EU – Germany and France. In Germany 63 per cent of workers are covered by collective agreements yet it recently raised its growth forecast for 2011 to 2.3 per cent, with the Economy Ministry having previously forecast growth of about 1.8 per cent. The economy grew by 3.6 per cent last year, its fastest pace since

reunification.

Similarly, in France 95 per cent of workers are covered by collective wage bargaining arrangements with the economy growing at 1.5 per cent in 2010 and forecast to grow to two per cent in 2011. Further examples of countries across Europe with high levels of collective bargaining and with projected stronger economic growth than the UK and specifically Scotland are the Netherlands and Sweden. Although due to the present crisis facing the Eurozone, these figures will undoubtedly be revised downwards.

Informed commentators outside the neoliberal orthodoxy prevailing in some Anglo-Saxon countries now see collective bargaining as a necessary route to economic success and refute the idea that it is an impediment to growth. According to the ILO Global Wage Report 2008/09, the connection between economic growth and wage growth was

noticeably higher in countries with a correspondingly higher rate of collective bargaining coverage.

Despite the legislation introduced since 1997, trade union membership shows little sign of growth and there is evidence that trade union recognition continues to fall (although Scotland has recently bucked the trend). This is due in part to the complexity of the recognition procedure and the difficulties faced in making it work as

intended.

Sectoral forums will provide another opportunity for trade unions to organise and represent the interests of working people, and an important step in ensuring that everyone has a right to be protected by a collective agreement. Unite believes that if this machinery were introduced, trade unions could increase their role and visibility within key sectors of the economy such as tourism. It is a low pay sector employing around 200,000 yet with union density of only 3.7 per cent and another area of the economy which the Scottish Parliament has under its jurisdiction.

We are asking that Scotland look at areas of the economy within the Parliament's gift such as transport, the voluntary sector, renewables industry and not only retaining the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board but extending it to forestry and fisheries - a sector which employs 60,000 people but where union density is just 6 per cent. Finding a Scottish solution!

There is no room for complacency – these are dangerous economic times no matter the latest employment figures which show the number of people who were not in work falling by 10,000 to 207,000. Economic growth is anaemic – stagnation is live.

As the public sector cuts really begin to bite there will be a knock-on effect on the private sector, resulting in lower production and falling consumer demand due to less disposable incomes as inflation overrides pay levels. Scottish retail sales have suffered their worst fall since records began more than 10 years ago as total sales fell by 1.1 per cent in May before these cuts really hit.

There are choppy waters ahead but at the same time there are opportunities. We have a chance to re-design our economy, lay a plan for economic growth and create a more equal and fairer society. I urge all progressives to continue to raise their voices and to campaign together to find a Scottish solution. ■

*Pat Rafferty is Unite Scottish Secretary*

### SCOTLAND HAS TAKEN THE LEAD IN TRANSFERRING FREIGHT TO RAIL

#### ASLEF WILL DEFEND THE INDUSTRY AND ITS JOBS THROUGH THE RECESSION

### CLEANER TRANSPORT FOR A

### BRIGHTER COUNTRY



Keith Norman  
General Secretary

Alan Donnelly  
President

Kevin Lindsay  
Scottish Officer

**ASLEF the train drivers union - [www.aslef.org.uk](http://www.aslef.org.uk)**

# Screen Presence/Screen Absence

The new political landscape we find ourselves in now in 2011 after the massive SNP victory in the Scottish elections, provides us as a nation with much hope but much uncertainty over where we are and who as a country we are to become. These are important times for us all.... The game has changed and many things have to be altered if we are to make this country into the forward thinking, progressive, open social democratic nation that I believe the people want.

There are many areas politically, economically, culturally that need to be looked at in order to allow the maturing of our country to begin. The Scotland Bill and the changes that the SNP wish to bring in on several fronts, from the Crown Estates to Broadcasting are essential. I believe that getting control of broadcasting from Westminster to Scotland is pivotal.

If you want to know why areas like the Borders and Dumfries and Galloway seem to be lacking in or seem largely different in their

political allegiances, then we need look no further than the television channels that they receive. Yes there are historical differences all around Scotland but it seems odd that a great swathe of our country remains largely unmoved by what went on here in Scotland on 5 May. We can't just put it down to landed gentry or a proximity with the Border or even a lack of interest – Nationalist activists

in the Borders are every bit as dedicated as in the rest of Scotland – but if the debate is marginalised and not being heard then that has a huge effect.

In this day and age the control of Broadcasting and lack of it denies access to it and damages that discourse and debate. Other political parties like the

Greens have argued for years that they are largely marginalised by editorial decisions; but if the decisions about what is beamed into your home through TV and Radio every day is taken in another country then that effect can be disastrous... particularly for a country still trying to come to terms with who it is within a changing UK and world.

Where do we in Scotland get to speak to each other never mind the rest of the UK or the world? I was shocked to find out that areas like the Borders and Dumfries don't get to join in the debate that the rest of us are having about our future because they are largely shut out. While filming *2000 Acres of Skye* for months with a largely English crew, I did wonder what they thought when they turned on their tellies and got BBC Northern Ireland and UTV or BBC Cumbria and Border Television – none of which are based in Scotland.

I felt the same as I do when I am in London; isolated and out of touch with what is going on in my own country and dominated by a Westminster or London view of the world.

Now you may say the same for places like Leeds or the West country, but the problem with that argument is that we are a nation not a region and as such our nation (all of it) has the right to hear what's going on in it and be part of the discourse.

So is it any surprise that across these areas of Scotland, the political fight is still

between the Tories and Labour or Lib Dems? They get little or no coverage of the Scottish Parliament or the debates or political discourse in Scotland and get a diet of Southern or Irish TV which bears little relevance to the Geography or nationality of the people it serves in Scotland – and they have no choice!

If ever there was an argument for a Scottish Digital channel that can be received by the entire country then surely that is one. Let's Liberate our Borders!

All of this came as news to me as I thought that I knew quite a lot about Broadcasting in Scotland, having been involved in making television and radio programmes here for over 25 years. I assumed that stuff made in Glasgow or Edinburgh or Aberdeen for BBC Scotland would automatically be received by the Borders etc. *Rab C* and *Naked Video* were seen because they were made for the national network BBC2, not BBC Scotland.

Now most people outside the industry (i.e. you the viewers) don't know the difference – its on the TV in your living room and that's it. If its made by BBC1, BBC2 (i.e. the Network in London for National broadcast) or BBC Scotland then what's the difference? The answer is a great deal... and not just the size of the budgets. The control of how, where and why any programme is made and who it is transmitted to, is something that we should all know more about. We must understand that the cultural, social and political impact of those decisions is massive.

I was appointed to the Broadcasting Commission headed by Blair Jenkins and set up by the first SNP government, largely because they had identified and been concerned with the decline in the industry with Scottish-made product on the National Network below three per cent. The mere setting up of the Commission alarmed the London media bosses, as they hadn't really noticed the decline and had stupidly made defensive remarks like "There isn't the talent in Scotland to make big network shows". That went down like a lead balloon – especially since it was said in Wales where a decision to make *Dr Who* there has had a significant effect on the production skills and base living there. Hence now we see the sudden rush to relocate stuff like the *Weakest Link* to Glasgow, all so they can say that programmes *are* made here for the network. Yeah, thanks...

Anyway, I realised that I had much to learn about the actual workings of the media in this country and find out why we seemed to lurch from one renaissance

**The control of how, where and why any programme is made and who it is transmitted to, is something that we should all know more about. We must understand that the cultural, social and political impact of those decisions is massive.**

## Elaine C. Smith makes passionate plea for why a Scottish digital TV channel is essential both to give Scotland a window on itself and to build and sustain a television industry of our own

to another, with little or no constant base to work from. Most of what we found out over that year was pretty shocking, not only about the lack of control but the lack of vision and will within our own television channels here to actually change anything. It was a case of survival at all times and that is no way to run national networks.

That is not to say that there are not good, hardworking brilliant people within BBC Scotland or STV who have that vision and will. But they lack the resources and power to truly change anything and create. I likened BBC Scotland to the Scottish Labour Party at the time. Many of the top people were intelligent, good, dedicated professionals but who could do nothing without the nod and approval of their London bosses. I found it shocking (and I still believe it to be the case) that there is no-one in Scotland allowed to 'greenlight' (industry speak for get it made) a project for the network. No one in Scotland has that power.

But does that matter to the audiences here anyway? Is where something is made of any real interest or

concern to Scottish viewers? Well I think it should. What 'no power' means is that say for example Gregory Burke (writer of the brilliant *Blackwatch*) writes a drama and takes it to the head of drama at BBC Scotland. He/she loves it and believes it could be made for a Network audience not just Scotland. He/she then has to send it to London for approval and most importantly... money.

Culturally there is a problem there; if Greg's script is set in Dunfermline with a lot of Scots actors and (heaven forfend) Scots words in the text, then chances are that a public school educated guy or gal living in

London and brought up in another part of England will find it as appealing and relevant and as alien as something set in Poland so they decline it. (The laugh

is that if it was some obscure drama set in Poland then it would probably get made.)

The other problem there is that if the top guy or gal in London is a Scot they will also run a mile as they do not want to be known as the commissioning editor who only commissions that weird stuff from Scotland.

They have to prove that they are more Metropolitan than anyone else and are not parochial... and that means making lots of stuff in London. In the end they

**But all of this results in a type of cultural imperialism, in the same way as it is difficult for countries like El Salvador or Botswana to make programmes (i.e. if its cheaper to buy a series of Friends from the US then why bother to make your own sitcoms?)**



would most likely say that it should be made simply for a Scottish audience.

And therein lies a problem. Firstly there is little room for primetime viewing of Scots stuff in the Scottish schedule. Things like sport (i.e. football) is preserved and has a budget, as does news and current affairs (but only stuff that affects Scotland in Scotland). The rest has to be covered by the London news. So even getting a reporter from BBC Scotland into Afghanistan for more than a celebrity Christmas report is impossible. Yet while our troops are deployed there and we have a right to know what is going on from a Scottish perspective that is not our remit...

I constantly get asked why I am not doing more stuff on Scottish telly (as if I can just phone up and say that I want to do a show and that's it done). And I'm constantly asked why there is not more Scottish stuff on telly. Well the answer is that the roadblocks to getting something indigenous on TV in Scotland for a Scottish audience are hugely difficult.

The Beeb here is not going to put on a drama set in Fife instead of *Eastenders*; they have to prove that the Scottish stuff will beat what a network programme would get for the same slot. The same goes for STV; any new Scottish comedy is not going to be put on instead of *Corrie*. And its much much cheaper to buy-in a programme than to make it yourself.

But all of this results in a type of cultural imperialism, in the same way as it is difficult for countries like El Salvador or Botswana to make programmes (i.e. if its cheaper to buy a series of *Friends* from the US then why bother to make your own sitcoms?). The result is that your kids are exposed to a powerful narrative about an American way of life that eclipses and ignores their own culture

and identity. That has a deeply corrosive effect.

Now I am not advocating no US sitcoms... in the digital Age of Choice then they are constantly available and will still be in digital Scotland. At least here we do get to make some stuff for a Scottish audience. So why do we still feel so poorly served? Well because the space is so limited and the money so small there is a tough fight for any producers to get in the door to pitch their project.

If you have no track record then the bosses are not going to risk the money, 'cos if they do and its rubbish and the whole nation is watching (with so few Scottish programmes made an expectation is created) then it becomes an embarrassment. That in turn creates an industry that is risk averse at the top and a climate of fear then exists within the business too.

So they play safe... and commission another documentary about the Clearances, or lochs of Scotland or the history of the fish supper. And yes, they did make the aptly-named Poverty

**That lack of control also feeds the cringers and whingers who sit and watch some poorly made, poorly lit political show late at night that simply confirms their view that if Scotland were Independent we would have to exist on a diet of stuff like this. While the rest of us sitting on our couches are thinking "Oh Shit... is this who we really are?"**

Porn that was *The Scheme*. A series that invited us to laugh at all these poor folk, living in the worst of conditions, like rats in a lab while we sat on our couches. Some of us in disgust, some in despair and others 'as happy as larry' while making a hero out of Bullit the dog. This made *Rab C* look like *The Waltons*. Is this the best our great documentary makers can do?

The handwringing that then ensued with the makers assuring us that they were trying to show the serious social problems in Scotland was even worse. A justification for a series that was cheaply made, with no agenda of truly engaging, helping or highlighting the background or circumstances of anyone involved or showing the involvement of the agencies that exist to help. At its worst, allowing

a serious assault to be filmed and shown without one member of the crew even stepping in to stop it or a commentary that stepped away from it. But it got huge audiences (in the way that a public hanging would). But compare it to a Channel 4 *Dispatches* or a *Panorama* and you can see the difference that good documentary filmmaking makes. *The Scheme* was no groundbreaking *Cathy Come Home*. The hastily made documentary about sectarianism displayed that same lack of time and care – and money.

So what does the small budget on a programme actually mean? Compromise... in cast wages, crew rates, design costs, the lot. I have lost count of the amount of jobs I have done or turned down in recent years where the crews were working for less than the Union rate (on one job at STV the crew were working for the Bectu rate of ten years ago). But jobs are so scarce and opportunities to learn or develop any craft are so rare that people do it – and these are all good, talented experienced people.

This also means that the product in the end isn't as good. Ever wondered why the likes of *Luther* the BBC hit drama series looks so good and dramas from Scotland looks a bit hand knitted? The answer is money. And you only get the big money on the Network (though a few months ago a pal made a drama for BBC Scotland for the Network and was still only given half the budget that he would have got for two hours of drama made in London... go figure!).

So what? I hear you say. If it's good it shouldn't matter about the cash. And yes quality isn't all about money. But actually it is the knock-on effect of a writer getting paid less, no money for script rewriting or developing, no money for the best lighting cameraman or design team (we have all seen those dramas set in the 1960s that only use one street cos they couldn't afford to get the cars, buildings or fashion mocked up in any other place). You also don't get the most experienced actors or names involved because you can't pay the fees, flights, hotels that they need. If you are lucky they do it for friends and so on but that is no way to run an industry.

Or you end up with a series that does get made because it has to be populated with London names – Scots that live in London and who are nationally known. Or all the lead parts going to TV names from London with

dodgy Scottish accents (as shown in the otherwise good *Case Histories* where Edinburgh seemed to be only populated with English people living there) and again all the small parts (i.e. shopkeepers with one eyebrow) played by local actors.

And we wonder why our actors leave? We wonder why our directors, documentary makers leave? When *Rab C Nesbitt* started one very big Channel controller wanted Robbie Coletraine and Muriel Gray to play Rab and Mary, not because they were better actors but because they were Scots who were known in London!

Could I just say for the record too that this is not a personal gripe. I am one of the lucky ones here who has had a long career and made some money too. But for the others in my industry that is not the case and it has been that way for too many years.

My real gripe here is that this all feeds into our national psyche – and I am sure there is a unionist plot behind a lot of this. Control of our broadcasting is a powerful tool, and if control of it lies elsewhere then that impacts on all of us. That lack of control also feeds

the cringers and whingers who sit and watch some poorly made, poorly lit political show late at night that simply confirms their view that if Scotland were Independent we would have to exist on a diet of stuff like this. While the rest of us sitting on our couches are thinking “Oh Shit... is this who we really are?”

But the truth is that it is not who we are, it is a tiny slice of who we are when we are under-resourced and powerless.

A properly funded digital channel cannot guarantee that all its programmes will be great – for every brilliant documentary about Scottish troops in Afghanistan or politics in Catalonia or dramas in the Borders or comedies in Fife there will be an alright soap or a bad chat show. But we get that on BBC1 or ITV nationally anyway.

However it will have power and funding to actually make programmes that allow us to talk to each other and to make programmes that talk to the rest of the world from a Scottish perspective, to report news and current affairs from that same perspective. Existing in a climate that takes risks will also bring our

talent home to work and create as well as heading off to other countries.

I worry about the level of debate around this and as long as it remains mystified in media speak then the public won't support it. But if the practicalities of what and why we are served up product by our TV stations are fully explained then I believe they will.

As an old Tory pal remarked after the election “Oh God, will Independence mean that we get *Corrie* with Gaelic subtitles then?” Personally I don't mind if it does, but I believe that control of our media is vital to Scotland's sense of itself and its place in the world and a digital channel will play a big part in that.

We have to fix these basic, seemingly small things in order for us to progress as a country. I see nothing wrong with trying to fix the small things in this small country to provide us with the tools we need for nationhood. And broadcasting is one of the tools. ■

*Elaine C Smith is one of Scotland's best known actresses and comedy entertainers*



Say NO to ConDem cuts  
For all public transport in public hands  
For offshore safety  
For trade-union rights

Bob Crow, General Secretary

Alex Gordon, President

# Web Review

Henry McCubbin

Several years ago, as political attention in Europe was drawn towards the construction of the European single market and the European single currency, the European left including the organised labour movement found itself in a familiar position – a contradiction. It would appear that,

at the beginning of the 20th century, the various nation-based founders of the movement, as we recognise it today, were much more conscious of the need to organise internationally than we were.

Here we now had a situation where economic and fiscal control had been gradually wrested away from national governments, which had for previous generations used fiscal means to satisfy the needs of the wealth of

their nations as they perceived and to control and contain social problems and unrest as they arose. Incredibly the great industries such as finance, manufacturing and mineral exploitation had now been allowed to internationalise and use this freedom to avoid contributing proportionately to the common good. Their freedom was such that they were allowed to write their own rules in this new capitalist demimonde but as we were all to discover like Icarus such freedom has risks.

Back in 1990 it had not passed the notice of the “Group Syndicalist” in the European Parliament that state control was now conditional on appeasing international capital. In fact capitalism had even the temerity to assume, when countries decided to float currencies, control over these same countries currency by means of their so called Credit Rating Agencies. The situation should then have been tackled and some lonely voices were calling for just that. Here we had a world where the control of finance, manufacturing and raw materials was internationalised in

private hands, as was agricultural trade, (a disaster gradually surfacing now in our consciousness). Military actions are now pursued through international alliances such as NATO giving national parliaments the same powers as a local CND meeting. Even the Mafia is

internationalised.

Yet in the days prior to air transport, emails, video conferencing and Skype, we had the giants of the left holding conferences throughout Europe and organising and proselytising in their home countries.

Now we have a financial crisis where the cause is international but the remedy is being passed down to emasculated national governments to resolve. The net outcome of this can

only be a massive legitimisation crisis for governments at this level.

Just as previously there are voices on the left wishing to be heard – but will there be cooperation internationally on the left to meet this crisis? The German DBS union has posted this call: [www.forumdesalternatives.org/EN/readarticle.php?article\\_id=9786](http://www.forumdesalternatives.org/EN/readarticle.php?article_id=9786)

“European Trade Unions Urge Change in EU Policy: The Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB) on Wednesday harshly criticized the negative consequences of aid packages for the European nations in crisis and policy of austerity amid the financial crisis. The measures adopted in the framework of the Euro-Plus Pact will aggravate the economic and social crises in Greece, Portugal, and Ireland. Those countries will face long recessions, increased unemployment, worse working conditions and living standards, and greater debt, despite the austerity policy, the confederation predicted. Due to the danger it poses for Europe, it is imperative to make a radical

**Now we have a financial crisis where the cause is international but the remedy is being passed down to emasculated national governments to resolve. The net outcome of this can only be a massive legitimisation crisis for governments at this level.**

change in policy to support economic growth, job generation, and the building of a social Europe. The DGB and the Federation of European Trade Unions are asking for greater direct support for countries in crisis, and to extend the expiry date for loans.”

From the same source we have a call for support for the Greek workers to be found at “Massive popular uprising in Greece”: [www.forumdesalternatives.org/EN/readarticle.php?article\\_id=9760](http://www.forumdesalternatives.org/EN/readarticle.php?article_id=9760)

Meanwhile some in the European Parliament are using their position to further the cause as with the following quotes:

“The results of the trialogue (Council, Commission, Parliament) negotiations are extremely worrying,” said MEP Jürgen Klute, GUE/NGL coordinator on Parliament’s Economic Affairs Committee. “The proposals that are emerging will result in unprecedented budgetary austerity. At institutional level, the Parliament will be marginalised in particular regarding the ‘delegated acts’. In addition, the proposals on relaunching investment and taking them into account in the ‘scoreboard’ mechanism are extremely unsatisfactory. It should also be noted that at this point even Members of the European Parliament have no consolidated information on the content of the directives and regulations to be voted, and this is unacceptable in the context of such an important vote.”

“We cannot accept governance that destroys social policies and the development of the European Union, that imposes unfair measures on ordinary people and that, ultimately, heightens the recession “ said MEP Nikolaos Chountis. “What is happening in Greece, in other words, the impoverishment of people in the name of austerity and rescuing the European banking system and Member States will be on the agenda in other countries of the EU,”

But sadly some are protecting themselves from the crisis by other means. As we say “Watch this space”: [www.theparliament.com/latest-news/article/newsarticle/parliament-publishes-secret-report-on-mep-expense-abuse/](http://www.theparliament.com/latest-news/article/newsarticle/parliament-publishes-secret-report-on-mep-expense-abuse/) ■

# Kick Up The Tabloids

## POPE AND VAMPIRES IN SECTARIAN SCANDAL

Whilst the sighting of the first swallow of the year may suggest the start of spring, three events each year confirm that summer is finally upon us. These are: (1) The start of the round of summer rock festivals, signifying hedonism, peace and love. (2) Andy Murray's exit from Wimbledon, signifying disappointment, frustration, Scottish under-achievement and the predictable nature of the headlines thought-up by tabloid sub-editors. (3) The Marching Season in Northern Ireland and the West of Scotland, signifying Neanderthal behaviour, religious bigotry and an over-consumption of Buckfast. (One can, of course, take in all three experiences in one by buying a ticket for T in the Park.)

This year, it was a little less predictable. Murray won at Queens and gave a pretty good account of himself at Wimbledon, losing gallantly in the semi-finals.

And this year's Glastonbury Festival broke from all tradition, when David Cameron's constituency chairman was found dead in the toilets. On hearing this, my first reaction was that there is nothing that this Tory government won't do to appear hip and "down with the kids".

However, on reflection, I realised that U2 and Coldplay had been headlining the Main Stage. Add that to a dead Tory in the lavvies and one is forced to ask: "Just how un-cool has Glastonbury become?"

But why was a Tory politician even attending a Festival which has always espoused peace and the alternative society? Controversial though it may seem as an opinion, I believe David Cameron's policies suggest he is himself a pacifist at heart. What other Prime Minister has ever slashed defence spending when their country was fighting wars on three fronts?

Cameron started out by scrapping the Nimrod surveillance aircraft. It seems we no longer need surveillance now that we've caught bin Laden. Although, it would appear that the surveillance in Buchanan Galleries is still deemed essential. In other words, global terrorism has dropped down the list of public nuisances below shoplifting and anti-social behaviour.

Nimrod was scrapped because they no longer have enough money to run it. However, a replacement aircraft was commissioned, delivered, paid for and then scrapped. Furthermore, it cost money to scrap it. This is like going to the supermarket, filling up your trolley, paying for your goods at the check-out and then realising you've run out of cash, so you can't afford the gas bill to cook any of it. So you then pay someone else to take your trolley round the shop and put everything back on the shelves.

Yet, at the same time as scrapping Nimrod the Government is commissioning a new aircraft carrier, but can't afford the planes to go on it. So they scrap a plane that they can't afford to run but go and buy an aircraft carrier when they can't afford any planes.

This is like going to the supermarket, filling up your trolley, paying for your goods at the check-out and then realising you've run out of cash, so you can't afford the gas bill to cook any of it. So you then pay someone else to take your trolley round the shop and put everything back on the shelves. You then going next door to the car showroom and take out a 10-year finance deal to buy a car that doesn't have any seats.

There is no argument, however, that war is an expensive business. It is generally agreed that the Soviet economy went into meltdown in the 1980s because the Russians were attempting to fight a war in Afghanistan at the same

time as hosting the Olympic Games. But then what government is ever going to be stupid enough to attempt that again?

Also, why fight abroad, when we're busy enough fighting at home? This year's Marching Season promises to be rather lively following the events of the last football season. In response to the upsurge in sectarian violence this spring, the Government brought a new anti-bigotry bill before Holyrood, yet wisely decided to postpone it for six months. This was smart thinking as the bill was well-intentioned in principal but flaky on detail.

Provocative Sectarian Behaviour could be punished by five years in prison. All well and good, but what constitutes Provocative Sectarian Behaviour? "Well," waffled Roseanna Cunningham "in certain cases singing certain songs. And in certain cases, making the sign of the cross".

Forget context, just who exactly is offended by someone making a sign of the cross? Two groups. Namely, Protestant Bigots and Vampires. It's just as well this law had not been brought before the Scottish Parliament twelve months previously. Last September the Pope drove down Princes Street, making the sign of the cross to anyone who was in the general vicinity. A year down the line, he could potentially have been banged-up for a five-stretch in Saughton. And given the record of some of his colleagues, probably confined to the Beast Wing.

By the way, if there are any reported sightings of Annabel Goldie queuing for the toilets at T in the Park, we really will have entered a bizarre parallel universe. ■

*Vladimir McTavish is appearing at The Stand Comedy Club from Friday 5th to Sunday 28th August (except 15th & 22nd) at 7.05 pm as part of this year's Edinburgh Fringe.*

LONG RUNNING GLASGOW  
SAGA ENDS....



THERE'S BEEN A  
MURDER... OR TWO.

Post  
MORTEM  
IN

Boyle



# scottishleftreview

The Scottish Left Review is a non-profit making publication. Please subscribe or make a donation by filling in your details in the form below and returning to Scottish Left Review, 741 Shields Road, Pollokshields, Glasgow G41 4PL

Name

Address

Tel:  e-mail:

Subscription/Donation  Date:

165

Subscriptions: waged £15/ unwaged £12/ local organisations £15/ national organisations £30.

Donations will be gratefully recieved. Cheques should be crossed and made payable to: Left Review Scotland Ltd.

## VISIT OUR REDESIGNED WEBSITE

### [www.scottishleftreview.org](http://www.scottishleftreview.org)

