

Scottish Left Review

Issue 125 September/October 2021 - £2.00

#125

**LANDMARK
ISSUE!**

including
COP 26
special coverage

'best re(a)d'



eis

Scotland's largest
education trade union

Supporting Climate Change Education

The EIS has extensive climate change policies and supports climate change education in schools.

We are also working with other trade unionists around the world to call on governments to agree meaningful outputs at the COP26. Additionally, the EIS is working on a range of workstreams to support and develop climate change awareness and learning activity in the build up and subsequent to COP26.

These workstreams include: a series of climate change webinars, an EIS climate change education online portal of teaching resources and an online exhibition of pupils' work on climate-related issues on our website.

More info: www.eis.org.uk/Meetings-And-Events/COP26



comment

Eyes on the planetary prize

Though our cover celebrates reaching issue 125 (see below), this should not detract from the major global issue continuing to be the climate emergency. Since our last issue, a combination of the IPCC 'code red' report and the outbreaks of sustained torrential rain leading to flooding from Edinburgh to London and Germany to China as well as huge wild fires in North America, Siberia and Greece have highlighted the pace and extent of the crisis. Just two details graphically highlight the catastrophic nature of what is going on: for the first recorded time ever, rain fell on the peak of the Greenland ice cap and in central China a whole year's rain fell in just three days. These events are of biblical proportions.

Climate change denial is now completely untenable but that does not mean there is the political will to take the appropriate action to stop and reverse these changes. At the same time as all this, billionaires blasted off into space on combinations of commercial-cum-variety projects. It's not too hard to see how the rich will be able to take action to escape the worst of the effects of climate change by using their superior resources, meaning there are not just environmental and humanitarian aspects but also a class aspect to the climate crisis – just as there continues to be over COVID19 in terms of ability to self-isolate (financial, spatially) and widening gaps in wealth. So, all those in Scotland have a special role to play

in the coming period as for two weeks in November, the world's eyes will be on Glasgow. In addition to a major demonstration on 6 November, the COP26 coalition (www.cop26coalition.org) will convene a People's Summit in Glasgow from 7 to 9 November. This will see hundreds of meetings, discussions, action-planning sessions and networking taking place with information being shared from within the official COP26 summit with the thousands of participants in the city and beyond.

Another human tragedy continues to unfold in Afghanistan. Despite trillions of dollars spent and thousands of lives lost, what is stark is that western, US-dominated, imperialism cannot build stable and socially just democracies that



**Congratulations
from UCU Scotland
to the Scottish Left
Review on your
125th edition**

www.ucu.org.uk/join

are capable of withstanding the threat from reactionary forces. We shall look at this in more detail in the next issue.

Closer to home, and despite allowing areas for disagreement, the danger of the Scottish Green-SNP pact is not so much facilitating the greenwashing of SNP but, for the Scottish Greens, a strategic mistake in the power play

of politics. The Greens will be no more able to pressurise the SNP from within government than they could from without. And, they will be giving up some considerable freedom and independence in the process. This would foresee a Green German scenario where the illusion of influence is gained but the reality is rather different – in the case of Germany, becoming somewhat

right-wing. On Fair Work, the agreement is a considerable watering down on the Green's May election manifesto. Here, the language is highly conditional without firm commitments. As one of the negotiators, Maggie Chapman, puts the case for the pact in this issue. In the next issue, we will scrutinise the claims in more detail.

Scottish Left Review reaches a significant milestone with this 125th issue. In doing so, we have outlasted any other left magazine published in Scotland in the post-war period. *Radical Scotland*, which emerged out of the SNP's left-wing '79 group, lasted just 51 issues between 1982 and 1991. We were founded by veteran UCS work-in leader, Jimmy Reid in 2000, as his last political project. He gathered around him significant figures on the left, of different parties and none, to draw up a left-wing agenda that he hoped would influence the newly re-established Scottish Parliament, in particular, but also society in Scotland more widely.

Sustained by a loyal base of subscribers, support from many different unions and much voluntary labour, on a bi-monthly basis, *Scottish Left Review* has provided commentary and critical analysis. Beginning by training its fire on Blairism and 'new' Labour, the magazine has successfully navigated its way through challenging times for the radical left. Prime amongst these have been two sides of the same coin. First, the decline of not just 'old' Labour but the decay of Scottish Labour itself as it both headed rightwards and downwards, in the process vacating the territory of social democracy to the SNP. And, second, the dominance of the SNP as

the governing party that talks left but whose words are seldom matched by its deeds. In the process, the SNP has monopolised what is commonly understood to be left-wing.

On top of that, *Scottish Left Review* has weathered the fractious implosion of what was one of the few bright developments for the left, namely, the Scottish Socialist Party. It also steered a course through the independence and Brexit debates not only by not taking sides but by allowing all the views of the left on these matters to get a fair airing within its pages.

This sense of consensus-building where possible and recognising differences and facilitating honest debate between them - as well as looking outside just party politics to examine politics as a whole - has helped sustain *Scottish Left Review*. It now has many more people willing to write for it than ever. All are unpaid.

In 2011, a year to the day of Jimmy Reid's death, *Scottish Left Review* established the Jimmy Reid Foundation. Over its life so far, the Foundation has produced nearly 100 publications (policy paper, pamphlets, briefing notes) and organised dozens of meetings. Its well-attended annual lectures have

featured Jeremy Corbyn and Nicola Sturgeon amongst others. This year,

STUC general secretary, Roz Foyer, will deliver the lecture (see advert on p**)

So, what of the influence and impact of *Scottish Left Review*? It has provided an intellectual resource for many by critiquing, for example, the nature of neo-liberal independence which holds sway with much of the SNP leadership. It has given extensive coverage to the arguments and actions of those in the environmental movement that believe fighting for climate change also requires fighting for system change.

Has *Scottish Left Review* led to any new legislation in the Scottish Parliament? No, is the answer – though that may be setting the bar a little high given the tight management of the Parliament by the political parties. There are certainly instances of influence within Parliament though. In calling for the resignation of then Scottish Labour leader, Kezia Dugdale, in September 2017 after she made clear her opposition to Jeremy Corbyn, a senior Labour insider attributed *Scottish Left Review* a crucial role in ratcheting up the pressure on her to go.

So, it is with some wind in its sails that *Scottish Left Review* looks forward to reaching its two-hundredth issue. You can help it do so by subscribing and supporting at <http://www.scottishleftreview.scot/> where you can read all 125 issues for free.

Feedback: 1707 and all that

While Scotland was a poor country at the end of the seventeenth century, it is misleading for Adam Charlton to claim in SLR (124, July/August) that the Darien adventure 'left Scotland bankrupt, and it was in this context that a predatory England entered into union with a financially ruined Scotland'. Scotland's debt at that time was less than £200,000 compared to an English debt of £14.5m, with the population ratio being 1:5. By 1714, the UK debt had grown to over £36m. The Treaty of

Union was a deal between the ruling classes of the two countries facilitated by bribery. The Duke of Hamilton was made an English duke, and awarded the Orders of the Thistle and the Garter and appointed as British Ambassador to Paris to secure his support. The Duke of Argyll was given an English peerage for himself and a Scottish one for his brother. The Duke of Queensberry obtained an English dukedom and an annual pension of £3,000 for life. William Paterson the architect of the Darien scheme was rewarded for writing pro-union pamphlets. The English Court

made clear to the Scots that they were preparing for military invasion if the bribery and propaganda should fail. The Scots held out for a federal solution but this was rejected by the English. Someone had better tell Gordon Brown. When the terms of the Union became known there was rioting in the streets of Edinburgh and Glasgow and the terms were publicly burned in Dumfries. Of 90 petitions sent to the Scottish Parliament not one was in support of the Treaty.

Colin Darroch, Glasgow

Climate, jobs and justice

Matthew Crighton reviews some core messages from a climate conference and their relevance to debates in post-election Scotland and at COP26

The idea of a 'Just Transition' (JT) has moved from the fringes to centre stage since 2016 when Friends of the Earth Scotland and STUC set up the Just Transition Partnership. Having been a concept used mainly by unions as they orientated to the climate crisis, it is now routinely used by governments and even corporations, although often without respecting its core content. The Scottish Government has made JT one of the themes of its programme for the COP26 talks in November.

In reaction to the alarming IPCC report released in August 2021, re-stating how dire are the dangers from global heating, debate is increasingly focused how we make the economic changes necessary for the emission reductions set in our statutory climate change targets. The questions of how we organise and fund this, who pays, who benefits and who may suffer are seen to be increasingly intertwined with whether change will actually happen at the pace and scale necessary.

Just Transition is a framing which offers answers to these questions – it says that to protect us all from climate catastrophe, we have to ensure that our measures to decarbonise both protect the workforce and bring wider social benefits, in particular reducing the inequalities which stain our society. It then expands into the practical ways to do these things. It was, therefore, the right time to present the ideas and practical policies developed by the Partnership in our conference which we entitled 'Climate, Jobs, Justice: making the Just Transition happen' on 2 September 2021.

For the Scottish audience, our messages had to recognise that, for all the talk about JT in policy documents, there has been little or no progress on the ground and, in some respects, it had appeared that industrial developments were going in the wrong direction. We had said in 2020 that there actually seemed to be an 'unjust transition' underway for workers at fabrication yards, in bus manufacturing and in wind turbine manufacturing.

This view has underpinned our advocacy for a radically different approach to economic and industrial policy requiring

bold government intervention, an extension of public ownership and active engagement by workers and communities most affected. The detail of this was set out in our Manifesto for the 2021 elections. The headings from that give a guide to its contents: i) 'Turn the tide for workers facing the crisis of unjust transition now'; ii) 'Set a new course through public funding and intervention'; and iii) 'Chart the route to long-term transformation by planning and policy coherence'.

In the context of the election results and the inter-party discussions since then, and of the economic disruption and policy innovations arising from Covid-19, we have identified some immediate actions for a government which is committed making a JT happen. There has to be rapid progress in preparing 'Just Transition Plans' for each economic sector. It should be within these that specific actions like



free and publicly-owned transport, increased local content in local supply chains for renewables, a fossil fuel decommissioning programme, building retro-fits by municipally-owned enterprises, and public investment in renewable manufacturing facilities should be set. There should be JT-related conditions on all funding and support to businesses, a skills guarantee for workers in carbon-intensive industries and the 'Climate Change Plan' must be amended to include measures and target outcomes for job creation, community benefits and a more inclusive labour market.

Many of these proposals featured in the 'Green Recovery' and 'Final' reports of the Just Transition Commission (2020 and 2021 respectively) and we have urged the Scottish Government to

implement these recommendations – we await a formal response, however. The Commission's interim report in March 2020 had explicitly said that the Scottish Government should not wait until its work was completed to start implementing the JT but sadly that appears not to have been heeded.

The work of the Commission presented many useful proposals and detail on the sectors which it examined, but it did not address the scale of investment needed and how to direct that to deliver the key elements of a JT strategy. It likewise did not consider the need for a significant extension of public ownership to achieve these ends – in transport and retrofitting as well as the energy system. Therefore, the Partnership felt that the Commission's reports did not add up to a fully comprehensive plan for JT and we hope that our conference has now been an opportunity to broaden and deepen the framing of JT.

We also have the opportunity provided by COP26 in Glasgow to present and debate these positions in a global theatre and we were extremely pleased with the encouragement given to us by the international speakers at our conference including Sharan Burrow of ITUC and Dipti Bhatnagar of Friends of the Earth International. The contributions in that session reminded us that we need to build our approach to just transition in Scotland and the UK with an international perspective – both in solidarity with climate justice and labour movements around the world and taking account of possible consequences in other countries of our policies.

In the Scottish, UK and international arenas, we are faced with government greenwash and inaction, and corporate deceit and delay, in the face of the urgent need for action on climate change. A movement strong enough to turn this tide has to include unions and environmentalists at its core and the concept of a JT is central to building that alliance.

Matthew Crighton, Secretary of the Just Transition Partnership. The conference details can be found at <https://climatefringe.org/events/climate-jobs-justice-making-the-just-transition-happen/>

Their Just Transition and our Just Transition

Dave Moxham says it's not so much the devil is in the detail but the visions are quite different

Up until relatively recently 'Just Transition' (JT) was a term used by a relatively narrow group of people in policy circles, unions and environmental campaigners. Over the past few years, the term has become more commonly used, if not always fully understood or understood in the same way. For example, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (ECBD) described it as: 'seek[ing] to ensure that the substantial benefits of a green economy transition are shared widely, while also supporting those who stand to lose economically – be they countries, regions, industries, communities, workers or consumers'. Meantime, the Climate Justice Alliance said it: '... is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy ... The transition itself must be just and equitable; redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future'.

Both understand the impact will have winners and losers, and negative impacts should be mitigated. But they then diverge. The first imagines JT as being delivered by policies through existent and, presumably, unchanged institutions. The second sees JT as a more transformative process requiring a shift in the balance of economic and political power.

The Scottish Just Transition Commission, on which I sat, was conceived by the Just Transition Partnership comprising unions and environmental campaigners and adopted by the Scottish Government. The Commission's remit, set by the Scottish Government, unsurprisingly was aligned more clearly with the ECBD. In other words, the Commission was essentially asked to consider policy recommendations based on the presumption that pre-existing institutions and political and economic relations would continue largely unchanged. This is not to say that the Commission did not consider the socio-economic elements of the issues like energy, transport, industry and housing. It also made the welcome call for empowering workers and communities in delivering JT and for Fair Work to underpin this. Crucially, it called for

sector-wide Just Transition Plans, an important step towards the creation of a Scottish industrial strategy. It also called for action to create jobs in the Scottish renewables supply chain and green manufacturing; for two free bus pilots to be run in Scotland; and for a skills guarantee for workers with direct public funding provided so that retraining costs do not fall solely on those whose livelihoods will be negatively affected by the shift to net zero.

However, what the Commission did not address - and was realistically never going to - was the wider political and economic transformation required. In two of Scotland's highest emission sectors, transport and heat, we have barely scratched the surface of the greenhouse gas reductions required. Meanwhile, in energy, where progress towards emissions reductions has been more substantial, jobs have



not been created to mitigate the loss of employment in extraction and generation. The current approach, combining incentives and grants for the private sector with 'last resort' state interventions (as at BiFab and Ferguson Marine) lacks ambition.

Therefore, as we approach COP26, and as the SNP Scottish Government signals its intent to economically transform Scotland, the STUC will be campaigning for an approach to JT that achieves both the policy recommendations of the Just Transition Commission and the wider transformation we need.

'Our Climate, Our Buses', 'Our Climate, Our Homes', and 'Our Climate, Our Jobs' campaigns call for radical intervention by government both fiscally but also democratically. Central to this campaign is the need for public ownership and for re-empowering local authorities and communities to deliver change. Privatisation of our bus services has manifestly failed, in terms of fares and

services for less well-connected areas. The pandemic threatens a contraction in public transport use when we need expanded public transport to reduce car use. The SNP and Scottish Greens pact creates a public transport fund that could be used by local authorities to take bus transport back under direct control but we have yet to see the how ambitious that fund will be.

Also in the Government's programme is funding housing retro-fitting. This is another area where direct intervention and council delivery have vital roles to play. We need to create an army, with multiple council divisions, of publicly-funded, directly employed, unionised workers to undertake deep retrofitting of our homes. Scottish cities rate amongst the highest in Europe on fuel poverty while private sector rents are rising. A public retrofit programme would begin the process of correcting this wrong whilst creating much needed jobs.

BiFab and the broken promises of jobs in renewables have laid bare the need for co-ordinated planning and using every available lever to build the Scottish supply chain. While much is rightly made of the loss of work to low-cost labour abroad, less is said about continuing to lose supply chain work to higher labour cost countries in Europe including companies which are partly state-owned. 'Our Climate, Our Jobs' includes calling for a nationally-owned construction company to drive forward the industrial strategy we need to benefit from the growth in offshore wind, not to mention future developments in hydrogen production and use and carbon capture technologies.

These campaigns are growing. Importantly, they are uniting unions and trades councils with environmental organisations and a range of social justice, equality and community campaigns. How the Scottish Government responds to the growing support for public ownership and intervention as central to a Just Transition remains to be seen.

Dave Moxham is a Deputy General Secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and sat on the Scottish Just Transition Commission.

How green are our valleys and how green will they become?

Maggie Chapman gives a frank and honest view on the Scottish Government and Scottish Greens deal

Some on the left have wondered about the Scottish Green Party's (SGP) left credentials, but the day SNP and SGP members both accepted the Cooperation Agreement, Andrew Neil, in the *Daily Mail*, gave a high accolade: 'Anti-monarchy, anti-Britain, anti-wealth, ECO-ZEALOT MARXISTS'. That'll do for me, especially as the agreement has many unionists frothing at the mouth.

The deal is historic, seeing Greens in government for the first time anywhere in Britain. It also sees a new kind of cooperation arrangement in British politics - not a full coalition, not minority government supported by a confidence and supply arrangement - but a 'short of coalition' arrangement that sees the SGP have both government ministers and opposition MSPs. Whatever one thinks of the deal, these two facts are not insignificant.

As someone closely involved in the negotiations, I want to focus on what it might mean for the SGP as the leading radical voice in Scottish politics. I wrote in *Scottish Left Review* (May/June 2021) about how the left had won the SGP - by articulating the need to build our country on care, creativity and collaboration; by focusing on policies rather than personalities; and by pursuing a progressive agenda with equalities and solidarity embedded in these policies.

There are some elements of each of these in the Agreement - from the development of a national care service to commitments to strengthen LGBTQI+ rights. But during the course of the negotiations, I was and remain sceptical. Smaller parties - especially those of the left - tend to not do well in coalitions. Even though this Agreement is not a coalition, the SGP runs the risk of taking the blame for anything that goes wrong in the next four and a half years, and not having the communications apparatus to take the credit for the good things that happen.

Fourteen years of SNP government also means that their way of doing government will be very difficult to

challenge. Greens' participatory and decentralised approach to politics - which I believe is necessary to create the kind of future we need to see - is very alien to the SNP. The model of the Cooperation Agreement binds both the Scottish Government and Scottish Greens to act with trust and in good faith, with 'mutual respect, transparency and candour'. The next five years will test this commitment probably more than any other, given the relative disparity in power between the two parties.

The Agreement and Shared Policy Programme will also challenge the structures, processes and capacity of the SGP. We've never held ministerial posts before and we've never had to exert influence over the civil service from such positions. I don't wish to get all 'Yes Minister' about this, but the Green Ministers will not be in an equivalent position of power as other junior ministers in this regard. And we will need to rapidly enhance our capacity to support the Parliamentary Group to ensure Ministers and opposition MSPs have the support they need to remain true to our values and principles, and not be co-opted by either the government or parliament machines.

These risks must be acknowledged, taken seriously, and mechanisms put in place to mitigate them if we are to achieve the policy advances and wider positive changes we hope this Agreement will produce. Tackling the climate emergency, delivering a New Deal for tenants, and strengthening LGBTQI+ rights were three key policy aims we took to the negotiating table, and we have our work cut out for us to ensure we get delivered what has been agreed in the Policy Programme, in these and other areas.

One hard-won element of the Agreement is it secures the space for Scottish Greens to oppose the SNP where we most need to. Whether this is on the speed of the just transition needed, reliance upon failed economic metrics like GDP, our approach to defence and security, or any other issue in the 'Excluded Matters' section,

Green MSPs must hold on to our radical principles.

It is absolutely vital Greens continue to be driven by progressive social movements like those that enabled us to include rent controls into the Agreement. We have seen Extinction Rebellion and school strikers put climate at the top of the political agenda. We must continue to act with these movements to create the change that Scotland so desperately needs. The Agreement must not change our resolve to keep one foot in the street and one foot in Parliament.

We need to make progress on issues of ownership in the economy and delivering the manufacturing Scotland needs to power a green industrial revolution. The Scottish Government has been much too reliant upon advice from the 'Big 4' accountancy firms: we need to seek solutions for the problems at Ferguson's shipyard and BiFab from unions, workers and the wide variety of policy thinkers who aren't in the current bubble.

The Scottish Parliament offers a platform for radical politics. I was elected to use it to give voice to the vital ideas that would not otherwise be heard. Any agreement must not remove our voices from that platform. Greens were founded as a party of social movements. From peace and nuclear disarmament to the women's movement to LGBTQI+ liberation, we have always worked in harness with progressives. With a climate emergency, our focus must be on stopping oil and gas drilling. I am fully committed to ensuring we won't shy away from full-voiced support for those progressive causes.

Maggie Chapman is a Scottish Green MSP for north-east Scotland and a member of the Scottish Left Review editorial committee. See <https://www.gov.scot/news/agreement-with-scottish-green-party/> for the two key documents

Overheated & over here: our planet on fire

John Wood reviews two books about the environmental emergency

As the climate crisis comes into sharper relief by the day, it is no exaggeration – if perhaps something we have heard in previous years – for the UN to describe 2021 as ‘make-or-break’ for our planet’s future. Glasgow’s COP26 should focus the minds of global leaders while communities at the sharp end of extreme weather events need no reminding that the impact of human damage to the planet is being felt here and now.

If the left has struggled to cut through on how the climate crisis has ultimately been driven by capitalism, two books support thinking as to how both political and practical progress can be made. In *Planet on Fire* by Laurie Laybourn-Langton and Mathew Lawrence (Verso, 2021) and *Overheated: How Capitalism Broke the Planet and How We Fight Back* by Kate Aronoff (Bold Type Books, 2021) the message is clear: we cannot rein in climate change without radical upheaval of our economic model.

Written from a UK perspective, *Planet on Fire* concentrates on the global challenge we face and is devastating in describing the urgent need to act. Its authors unapologetic in their insistence that the climate crisis must not be depoliticised; so far as they are concerned a politics of ‘eco-socialism’ must be adopted. Charting the impact of human extractivism from the early expansion of farming in the middle-ages, via the destructive global reach of imperialism, to today’s supercharged ‘late capitalism’, the book also leaves no doubt that climate change is intrinsically associated with historic global inequalities. The section of global society which has contributed most to the destruction of our natural world – think of Jeff Bezos’ four minute space vanity trip – is also likely to be the most protected, while those in the global south feel the brunt.

Lawrence and Laybourn-Langton’s have made an impact on the left with this publication and their proposed solutions are persuasive and clear. Their ‘Manifesto’ attempts to provide a playbook that will turn theory into action. Hopefully, decision-makers and policy wonks are paying attention. Importantly, though, there is a pragmatic optimism in *Planet on Fire* that offers a refreshing antidote to some of the defeatist rhetoric that has

emerged in the climate debate and permeated into mainstream society recently.

One of the most-watched Netflix releases this year is Bo Burnham’s masterpiece ‘Inside’ which echoes the pessimism these two books seek to rebut. Burnham is only half-joking when he sings ‘twenty thousand years of this, seven more to go’ and it is worrying that climate defeatism seems to be taking hold on the mainstream psyche.

Writing primarily from a US perspective is Kate Aronoff’s *Overheated*. It is making waves on the left and in the mainstream environmentalist debate. Aronoff echoes some of *Planet on Fire*’s optimism, recognising that the ‘misanthropic streak’ of environmentalism needs to be turned on its head to get people behind the movement and for progress to be made. ‘The eco-pessimists ... argue that hardwired flaws of human nature mean it’s time to come to terms with the troubles ahead. It’s too late. Hole up and learn how to die.’ Aronoff argues that this unfortunately all too common view is in fact its own type of climate denial, warning too that we must not allow environmentalism and anti-democracy to become intertwined.

The prospects of ‘eco-fascism’ or ‘eco-ethnonationalism’ loom if we do not recognise these facts and Aronoff brings clarity to need for the climate debate to confront inequalities of power: ‘A Green New Deal isn’t just about subbing one form of energy for another as all else stays equal’. Collectivism is in our nature and we must fight to eradicate the hyper-individualism forced upon us by neo-liberalism which drives consumption, our thirst for ‘growth’ and, as a consequence, global heating. Whether overly optimistic about the human condition or not, Aronoff’s hope must be held onto, and is an important message for the left to bear in mind.

A significant contribution to the debate, *Overheated* is another book we should hope is picked up by those with their hands on the levers of power. Whether global leaders wish to call it ‘socialism’ or not, Aronoff is clear: we are social beings and we need a social response to the climate change driven by a strong form of government that stands up to corporate capitalist interests.

Overheated has been described as Aronoff’s ‘life’s work’ but the impressive rigour of her contribution belies her youth. There is more to come from Aronoff and we can expect her to make a growing impact.

The IPCC’s report in August 2021 put beyond doubt the scientific facts of climate change but was weak on calling out the fundamental causes, leaving it to others to name the neo-liberal order, its origins in imperialist greed, as the primary cause of humanity’s unrelenting destruction of earth’s natural resources. Both books are unequivocal that our economic model needs a radical and urgent overhaul if we have any hope of saving the planet. They begin to sketch out a blueprint, rooted in socialist politics, for how we might salvage some hope for future generations. If ‘capitalism broke the planet’, only anti-capitalism can save it.

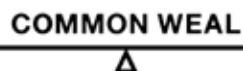
John Wood works in the public sector and has for many years supported *Scottish Left Review* by voluntarily proofing its contents.





Anti-poverty groups, environmentalists, and trade unions have joined forces to launch a new Scotland-wide campaign for better buses. Led by the Scottish Trades Union Congress, the 'Our Climate: Our Buses' campaign is calling for an extension of municipal bus ownership across Scotland. The Scottish Government are currently consulting on how buses should be run and the STUC are calling for the Scottish Government to provide financial support to Local Authorities to establish publicly owned bus services.

Bus fares have soared and passenger numbers have slumped since Scotland's buses were deregulated by Margaret Thatcher's government more than 30 years ago. The current system allows private bus companies to cut routes and raise fares, with no regard for the communities that rely on them.



#OurClimateOurBuses

Scotland's recovery relies on creating a greener, fairer society - **with public services at its heart**



**Mike Kirby, UNISON's
Scottish Secretary**

Scotland's public services have been at the heart of this pandemic, supporting and protecting communities across the country - and it is vital they sit at the heart of the country's recovery.

When the pandemic hit, the country looked to our public service workers to keep the country running and it's vital they look to them again as we focus on our post-pandemic recovery. If the Scottish economy is to recover by creating a greener, fairer and more inclusive society, then our members must be central to that process.

The growing crisis of climate change is one we can no longer put aside. COVID-19 was - and is - an emergency requiring instant action. Our politicians must accept that there are related lessons for the immediate, far-ranging actions needed to tackle climate change, which was rightly being recognised as an emergency shortly before the pandemic hit. And we need to act now.

With all eyes now on the United Nations Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP26), in Glasgow in November, we need to ensure the needs of workers and public services are central to the result. We need to create the kind of society that we all want to live in, a more inclusive society that tackles inequalities and protects the most vulnerable. Public ownership and delivery of key services is essential, with decent pay rises for the workers who deliver them.

As Scotland's largest union, with members across the public, private and voluntary sectors, we are campaigning for a just and green recovery, a Just Transition with major public investment - and public services leading by example. We will continue to work with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, the COP26 Coalition and others locally, nationally and internationally to help put pressure on world leaders this November to deliver the massive and urgent policy changes needed to protect people and planet.

The decisions taken, or not taken, in Glasgow will affect all our lives. We can't just call for change. We need to be part of it.

More Chaplin than Churchill? We will be laughing at Boris Johnson as the ‘Great Dictator’?

Peter Lomas argues prime ministers hold dangerous amounts of undemocratic and unilateral powers

Questioned, at the G7 July summit, about the problematic status of Northern Ireland in the EU Withdrawal Agreement, Johnson hinted at ‘pragmatic solutions’. So far these have meant the UK government twice breaking the Agreement, in principle and in detail. Next step may well be denunciation of the Northern Ireland Protocol of the Agreement itself. But the chilling remark with which Johnson concluded his answer deserves more attention: ‘It is the prime duty of the UK Government to uphold the territorial integrity of the United Kingdom’.

In my experience, when political leaders talk about territorial integrity this invariably means a diversion from the issues at stake – a recourse to the absolute terms of state power. For Northern Ireland today, it means a refusal of a referendum on Irish unity – although a majority of Northern Irish might want one, and Irish unity would solve the province’s problematic EU status at a stroke.

More generally, ‘the prime duty’ of state governments is arguably *not* to defend the territorial integrity of the state, come what may – that was Machiavelli’s dictum – but to consult, and then respect, the interests and wishes of the people whose trust they hold. People and state are not the same thing. When dictators the world over appeal to sacrosanct territorial integrity, what they really mean is: ‘fight with your neighbours, or among yourselves, on my behalf’.

Territorial integrity is a shibboleth. Since 1750, a state called Poland has disappeared from the map of Europe and reappeared – sometimes in a slightly different place - while ‘Germans,’ ‘Russians,’ ‘Ukrainians,’ and ‘Lithuanians’ argued that ‘Poles’ did not exist as a people with the same patrimony as themselves. Meanwhile, life went on regardless. Farmers ploughed and grew the grain while others changed the nomenclature of their fields. States have no final shape; nor do nations, only an original one.

The principle is borne out in the history

of the UK, as a voluntary association of original nations making up, in theory, a kind of super-nation above them sharing sovereignty. As a state, the UK is inherently open to dissolution or change. Like, in turn, the EU. But this is why Johnson is such a dangerous politician, because he denies both these expressions of democratic will, and he holds the power to do so, indefinitely. In 2019, he suspended the UK parliament in order to force through the UK’s exit from the EU, and in 2020 he refused, on wholly-bogus grounds, the Scottish First Minister’s request for a second referendum on Scottish independence.

In large part, his thinking is sound, because his personal power over the UK is almost unlimited. His post, as Lord Hailsham once said, is an ‘elective dictatorship’. Johnson is free to refuse a second EU referendum, or a second Scottish referendum; free to allow IndyRef2 and ignore its result; free even to override a Supreme Court order to implement an IndyRef2 vote in favour of Scottish independence. Free to do all these things until 2024, and free then to choose the date of the election to suit himself, because he’s an elected dictator. Elected, yes; but by a population, in England, which with eight votes to every Scottish one evicted Scotland from the EU. The two matters are, of course, linked which is why the two referenda have been, at Westminster, consistently refused.

Last November, I wrote to the House of Commons Committee on Constitutional Affairs, formally asking it to denounce the Prime Minister’s letter of January 2020, in which he claimed that the SNP leaders in 2014 had made a self-denying ordinance – in his words, a ‘promise’ - ‘for a generation’ not to seek a second independence referendum. This was false: they had merely described the 2014 vote as an ‘opportunity’ – to choose, or to decline, Scottish national independence. A promise binds me; an opportunity which I hold out to you sets you free. So, it would be with IndyRef2. However, the Commons Committee did not deign – or were intellectually unable – to reply to the logic of this argument.

But then, what use is a constitutional committee in a country with no written constitution? The *Scotland Act 2016*, reserving constitutional matters to Westminster, is yet another violation of the free-association principle of the 1707 Act of Union.

The crude superiority of states and their ‘integrity’ over live nations’ democratic will is something that dictators instinctively understand. It is hard, therefore, to see how any democratic choice on independence, or EU membership, in the UK can be exercised when the UK government is personated by someone who opposes all forms of democratic change.

Philip Reynolds, a distinguished commentator on international relations, wrote courageously during the Cold War, when global fear seemed to stand in the way of fundamental progress in the condition of nations: ‘the ‘national interest’ which is at stake is that of people, not of the state, which is an abstraction. Service of the ends and values of people may require the submergence of the state. The state is not a person. It has no innate moral attributes. It has no honour. It has no inherent right to survive.’

Dr Peter Lomas is the author of Unnatural States: The International System and the Power to Change (Routledge, 2017).

Socialism for the many?

The right-wing Institute of Economic Affairs provided an unlikely source of hope for the left in its ‘Left Turn Ahead? Surveying attitudes of young people towards capitalism and socialism’ in July 2021. Polling 2,000 members of ‘Generation Z’, it found a rejection of free-market capitalism and support for socialism where this was predicated upon state intervention. For the full report, see <https://iea.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Left-turn-ahead.pdf>

Uniting for change in UNISON?

Stephen Smellie gives personal reflections on UNISON's newly elected national leadership

Glaswegian Christina McAnea was elected as general secretary of UNISON, the first woman to lead one of the big unions. Leither Gary Smith was elected as GMB general secretary. In UNITE, Sharon Graham was elected as the 'left' change candidate. The election of a general secretary does not in itself change anything, although electing a woman in such a senior position does make a significant change to how a union looks and how it reflects its membership. Time will tell if any of the victors implement significant change.

However, leadership of our unions does not rest exclusively with general secretaries. The national executive bodies of lay representatives share that leadership. Therefore, the outcome of the recent election of UNISON's national executive, where the majority elected had aligned themselves to a grouping who had supported Paul Holmes, runner-up to McAnea, has prompted much discussion and, in some quarters, expectations. To her credit, McAnea made it clear that she would work with the new NEC, respecting the lay democracy of the union.

This grouping stood under the slogan of 'Time for Real Change' (TfRC) and are clearly of the 'left.' However, claims that this was a victory for 'the Left,' made by several 'Left' commentators, as if the election was a competition between 'left' and 'right' groups, is simplistic and the truth more complicated. The TfRC group consists of activists from the left of Labour allied with SWP supporters. Socialist Party supporters were not included, having disagreed over the choice of the 'left' general secretary candidate. Nor were supporters of the other candidate, Roger McKenzie, the now departed Assistant General Secretary, who had Corbyn's support. Nor were several 'left' NEC members who supported McAnea.

The TfRC group won most NEC seats and had put itself forward as championing genuine change. With others, there is now a significant majority on the NEC who would represent 'left' views. Previously, the NEC was dominated by another, slightly looser, grouping who were supportive of previous general secretary, Dave Prentis. They were steadfast in ensuring that only those loyal to 'Team Dave' were allowed access to positions of power and

influence within the union. Those outside the TfRC group, who shared some of its aspirations for change, both with some of the internal workings of the union and in the style and vigour of the union's campaigning, were hopeful that a more open leadership would emerge that would refresh the organising challenges UNISON faces.

Genuine change can take time and anyone claiming to implement it can only be judged by their actions. Whether changes are contributing to the strengthening of a 'left' agenda will be judged by the details, the values they represent and whether they empower members in workplaces, address inequalities and create a stronger union. Progressive changes have already taken place, before the new NEC was elected, with the recent annual conference voting for changes to increase the funding of branches and regions.

A challenge for any grouping winning a union election is whether they can broaden their support, bring people on board with their aims and provide leadership rather than fighting off opposing factions to protect their own newly won positions. This is particularly a challenge for those who seek to implement change and face resistance to changing how things are done.

The definition of who is 'left' is open to debate and is often, unfortunately, narrowly construed to mean not those who uphold clear socialist values and principles but, those who support one faction or candidate. This factional approach relegates values and principles as less important. It also narrows the base of support to carry through changes based on clear values and principles.

In UNISON, there is recognition of the long struggles to recognise and challenge racism, to challenge the male domination within unions, to create political and bargaining devolution and to promote diversity. A genuine 'Left' agenda would always reflect these issues.

Therefore, concerns have been raised at the first actions of the new NEC was to appoint male NEC members as President, and then as Chairs of 5 out of 7 of the main committees. That is quite an achievement considering UNISON's rules not only ensure a 2/3 female NEC but that the team of a President and

two Vice-Presidents must include 2 women and that the chairs and vice-chairs must include a woman. None of these key positions are filled by black members and none of them are from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. UNISON's lay representatives on the TUC General Council are now all white. So, UNISON's new lay leadership, drawn from the TfRC group, is white, male dominated and English and to be fair, that is genuine change but hardly the kind of progressive change expected of a 'left' leadership.

This gives the impression that diversity and issues of gender, race and devolution are not important. This has created divisions within the union over these issues. From a Scottish perspective, it raises questions as to the relevance of the NEC to Scottish members when there is no representation in senior positions, including no Scottish members on the crucial Finance Committee, when most of the bargaining agenda is within wholly devolved Scottish structures.

Though it is not likely that this was the impression the TfRC intended and it does not reflect the politics it has espoused. The challenge for the TfRC is to move on with building a broader base around a 'left' agenda, embracing other views and perspectives, enshrining core values and avoiding becoming another faction seeking to control and exclude others.

Stephen Smellie is a member of UNISON's NEC, deputy convenor of UNISON Scotland and a member of the Scottish Left Review editorial committee.

Shock and awe: investigative journalism for a change

The Ferret, in conjunction with the Herald, is to be congratulated for carrying out investigative work in the summer on who owns and runs Scotland. Its exposé of hundreds of undeclared meetings between corporate lobbyists and the SNP Scottish Government highlights the reach and influence of neo-liberalism, going well beyond the much-maligned Charlotte Street Partners. See <https://thoferret.scot/tag/who-runs-scotland/>

Working out a workable plan for an independent Scottish economy

Raphael De Santos dissects GERS, arguing for managed expectations as the first steps on a longer path

Once we get past the arguments on a second Scottish referendum and the infighting within the independence movement, unionists' focus will shift to the economy and finances. This was the Achilles' Heel of the 'Yes' movement in 2014. Then the situation looked better because the Scottish National Party's White Paper was based upon buoyant North Sea oil tax revenues but were in decline by the time the vote took place. Confusion also reigned around a future Scottish currency. Now more people are willing to accept some economic and financial uncertainty because of their desire to be in the EU and abhorrence of Johnson's government. The main weapon the Unionists will use is Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland (GERS).

GERS can help calculate what an independent Scotland's public finances would look like. It takes all public expenditure in Scotland and subtracts from it all taxes raised in Scotland, including those from all industries based in Scotland - whisky, food etcetera. It allocates UK national spending, for example, defence on a population basis. So, for example, UK defense spending is approximately £40bn and Scotland is allocated its population shares, 8.6% or £3.4bn. It even does a special calculation which reflects Scotland's geographical share of the North Sea Oil tax revenues - over 90% of the total.

The GERS numbers looked quite good until the collapse of North Sea Oil tax revenues. The White Paper on independence was based on oil tax revenues of £11bn and had been even higher and forecast that oil would reach \$140 a barrel. The oil price has fallen dramatically since then as Chinese demand has fallen after its rapid industrialisation and the huge infrastructure and stimulus spending during the financial crisis came to an end. Oil revenues are now close to zero and even with hopes of a post-Covid-19 economic recovery, the price per barrel is hovering around \$60.

This has left a gaping hole in where an independent Scotland's public finances. For financial year 2019/2020 which

is essentially pre-Covid-19, Scotland would have a nominal deficit of £15bn (spending minus taxes) even with its geographical share of North Seas Oil tax revenues. This would be 8.6% of Scotland's economy (GDP). Scotland would have the worst country public spending deficit in the European Union (EU) and way outside the 3% required by the EU for entry as a new country. This will be the main Unionist mantra in any future independence referendum.

Some supporters of independence have argued that Scotland's share of the UK's national assets will reduce our debt, our annual debt payments and, hence, our annual deficit. But our geographical share almost matches our population share of these assets. These assets are difficult or impossible to sell and any proceeds would be a one-off annual boost, not solving the structural deficit. Lenders to governments look not at assets but tax revenues and growth in the economy when assessing whether to lend or not.

Why does Scotland have such a large deficit? Simply, Scotland raises less taxes and spends more on public services than the UK, as a whole, does. We have lower average wages than the south and have less industry. At the same time our centrist social democracy culture means we spend more on public services. We also spend more per head on benefits, partially reflecting higher levels of poverty but also the cultural support for social spending. In fact, only three regions in the UK run at a surplus - London, the South East and East. Here they have higher wages, more industry and more conservative public spending. Every other region in the UK and Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland run a deficit. The deficit in GERS is where we would start as an independent Scotland. It is one where we need a serious plan to tackle it.

While once accepted by the SNP when North Sea oil tax revenues were high and the deficit looked in reasonable shape, GERS is now derided as a falsehood. We have already shown that it fairly accounts for all taxes raised and expenditure in Scotland. Here are some common GERS myths:

- We pay more in taxes than we receive back in the block grant from Westminster. Yet some taxes are collected in Scotland and used to fund spending here directly - council tax and business rates. Devolved spending covered by the block grant only accounts for 65% of Scotland's public spending. The other 35% is controlled by Westminster - pensions, welfare benefits, defence etc.
- Roysth is an example where the UK takes all the benefits but Scotland takes all the costs. Yet Roysth is privately owned. All taxes - individual and corporate - that arise in Scotland are attributed to Scotland's income. The costs are defense costs and Scotland is only allocated its population share about 8.6%.
- Japan has a big deficit and manages just fine. Japan is the third largest economy in the world (about 20 times larger than that of Scotland). It is the second largest exporter in the world and can generate the tax revenues easily to service its public debt. The Yen is a reserve currency, the third most heavily traded in the world and is seen as a safe haven asset.

Although not universal among independence supporters, joining EU is one of the primary arguments for an independence Scotland. But joining the EU would require us as a new nation to take on the Euro and reduce our deficit to 3% of GDP. This is a 5-10 years process and would involve a combination of tax rises, public spending cuts and growth in the economy. It would mean reducing the deficit from its current pre-covid 19 level of £15bn to £5bn.

Based on GERS figures, tax rises could raise £4.5bn with £2.75bn through raising corporation tax from 19% to 28% and a further progressive tax on medium and higher earners would raise £1.75bn - similar to the Scottish Service Tax proposed by the Scottish Socialist Party. Scrapping Trident would save, based on total cost of £110bn over thirty years and Scotland's population share, an extra £300m a year. This would leave us to find over £5bn more without using

any of the extra tax saved raised to grow the economy, forcing us down the road of public spending cuts. Joining the EU is a monetary straight jacket Scotland does not need. EU membership also passes monetary control to a European Central Bank who would set interest rates, impose austerity measures as they did with Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal and prohibit us from giving public financial support to our industries.

From a trade standpoint, the EU is not as important as the rest of the UK (rUK). Our trade with rUK is four times that with the EU and trade with the rest of the world exceeds that with EU. The EU is primarily an economic block designed to compete with the USA, China and Japan through the free movement of capital and labour and tight monetary controls. Of course, it has its own inter-country capitalist rivalry which is one of its great contradictions - e.g., German car manufacturers versus French car manufacturers etc.

We can, unlike England, have socially progressive laws in an independent Scotland because of an inbuilt centre left social democracy majority. There is no need to join the EU for that. We can raise some £5bn. Some of this needs to be put aside to reduce our deficit but the balance could be used to fund a Scottish Development Bank. Our debt will be considerable at over 100% of GDP from our share of UK government debt of over £2tn plus over £80bn still outstanding from financial bailouts. The Development bank could be used to fund projects such as: i) renewable energy – including the transition and eventual closure of the North Sea Oil industry into a publicly owned and controlled Scottish Green Energy Enterprise; ii) infrastructure including an integrated public transport system; and iii) affordable sustainable

housing. This would create hundreds of thousands of jobs, grow the economy in a green direction and reduce our deficit through increased tax revenues. Such a plan with a commitment to use some of the tax revenues to reduce our deficit will make it easier to borrow money on the international markets which we must do because of our deficit and also attract investments from outside Scotland.

Following this strategy will give the financial markets confidence that we have a plan to grow the economy and reduce the deficit. This will take some time and given that 60% of our trade is with rUK and individuals and companies have liabilities in sterling, it would be sensible to initially adopt it. Starting with a Scottish pound immediately would see it devalue below sterling and increase our liabilities overnight for individuals and companies. Gradually over time as we establish our financial credibility, we can introduce a Scottish pound.

We would need to establish a central bank and Treasury department from the onset of independence to set interest rates and raise loans respectively. Our cost of borrowing would at the start be above that of rUK because of the size of our deficit compared to rUK but would gradually come down as we showed our plan to be working.

The economy and our finances will dominate the independence debate. We have to be honest about the challenges that we would be faced on our deficit. We need the better off and companies to buy in to higher taxes to help solve the deficit and give us ammunition to build a green sustainable economy for all. Finally, we need a clear plan and strategy for the currency.

[Author's note: This analysis does not cover the cost of set up costs of additional state functions an independent Scotland would need even though some of the building costs could be met by our share of national assets. We would likely see a one-off issue of debt to fund this. However, the interest payments to fund this would be a recurring annual cost. It is also worth noting that the UK's national debt is growing rapidly because of the Covid-19 crisis. In financial year 2020/21, the UK government estimates it will grow by a further £240bn - Scotland's share of that is just over £20bn. Given independence looks to be at least 5 years off and the further impact of Covid is likely to see us keep on accumulating debt over that period. An independent Scotland will have to borrow for some time to cover its annual deficit. If we default in any of our perceived obligations to the UK debt, it will make it difficult to borrow on the international debt markets and we would have to borrow at much higher interest rates than the UK currently does.]

[Editor's note: This article was written before the latest GERS was released on 18 August 2021 (see <https://www.gov.scot/publications/government-expenditure-revenue-scotland-2020-21/>) and is based on the last GERS (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/government-expenditure-revenue-scotland-gers-2019-20/>) released on 26 August 2020. The difference between the two largely reflects the impact of COVID is creating a much larger nominal deficit.]

Raphael De Santos has been active in left politics since the late 1970s. He was a supporter of devolution and now independence. He has worked in the financial sector for over 30 years, leading teams in research and strategy advising governments and central banks.



**The Jimmy Reid
Foundation**

Appeal for donations

The Jimmy Reid Foundation reached its tenth birthday on 10 August 2021. It was launched a year after the death of Jimmy Reid by the *Scottish Left Review* magazine which Jimmy founded. Over its life, the Jimmy Reid Foundation has produced nearly 100 publications (policy paper, pamphlets and briefing notes) and organised dozens of meetings and our annual lectures. In order to help continue with our work for the next ten years, please donate to the Foundation:

i) Donate via Paypal on our website: <https://reidfoundation.scot/> (bottom righthand side)


ii) Send a cheque payable to 'Reid Foundation' to The Reid Foundation, 14 West Campbell St, Glasgow G2 6RX

iii) Make a payment to our bank account: Co-operative Bank, Sort Code: 08-92-99, Acc No: 65491722

★ Morning Star

Read the one that's different — the only daily paper to cover the strikes and struggles of the labour movement from the workers' perspective, featuring a wide range of contributors from across the left and dedicated Scottish coverage



 I get the Morning Star delivered daily to my door and have done for the last 20 years. It plays a key role in cutting through the fake news pushed out by the ruling classes

ROZ FOYER
STUC general secretary



More ways to get your Morning Star

In shops

Martin McColl's and One Stops, plus the Co-op and other select supermarkets, and by request at newsagents

Home delivery

NewsTeam delivers the Star early in the morning for a small fee, with a special offer for new accounts

☎ : 01782 959-532

💻 : orders@newsteamgroup.co.uk

E-edition

Online first thing every day, with the same great content as the print edition

www.mstar.link/subscribe

Our website

Read stories as they break at www.morningstaronline.co.uk, with feeds on Twitter (@M_Star_Online) and Facebook (@morningstaronline)

For further advice, email: circulation@peoples-press.com

P O A



Scotland

The POA in Scotland want to congratulate the Scottish Left Review on achieving their milestone 125th edition.

Over 20 years publication is a magnificent achievement and testimony to all those responsible throughout that time for getting the message out there.



**PROUD TO SUPPORT
THE
SCOTTISH
LEFT REVIEW**

**CONGRATULATIONS ON
REACHING YOUR 125th ISSUE**

**Hampden Advertising
For all your print requirements.**

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR FULL IN-HOUSE MAILING SERVICE.

Newsletters, banners, flyers, booklets, stationery, placards, postcards
and much more.

Call now on: **0141 429 1010** or email: **hampdenad@talk21.com**

A NEW DEAL FOR WORKERS

- £10 Minimum Wage
- Minimum 16 Hours Contracts
- Right To 'Normal Hours' Contract
- Ban Zero Hours Contracts
- Better Sick Pay
- Protection From Violence And Abuse
- Proper Social Security System
- Job Security
- Fair Treatment And Equality For All
- Stronger Union Rights

#NewDeal4Workers

Visit our website for some great campaign ideas and resources: www.usdaw.org.uk/campaigns

To join Usdaw visit: www.usdaw.org.uk/join

or call **0800 030 80 30**

General Secretary: **Paddy Lillis**

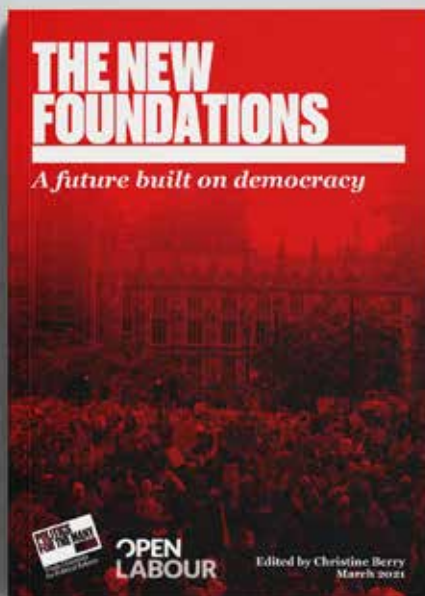
President: **Jane Jones**

Regional Secretary: **Tracy Gilbert**

Udaw, Muirfield, 342 Albert Drive, Glasgow G41 5PG

UdawUnion     

 **USDRAW**



The British state is a legacy of an empire and society long since transformed by technological and social upheavals.

So why hasn't it evolved?

A BOLD NEW COLLECTION OF ESSAYS

In this new collection of essays, edited by Christine Berry, thinkers from across the left detail the inherent conservative nature of the British state and how it impacts on the possibilities of a transformative Labour government succeeding.

Remaking the state is not a 'nice to have', but the only way a Labour Government can change Britain for good.

Available for free online at politicsforthemany.co.uk

Politics for the Many is the trade union campaign for political reform. If you are involved in a trade union, join us.

**POLITICS
FOR THE MANY**

 ADMIN@POLITICSFORTHEMANY.CO.UK

 POLITICSFORTHEMANY.CO.UK

 [/POLITICSFORTHEMANY](https://www.facebook.com/POLITICSFORTHEMANY)



ASLEF

For train drivers, trade unions & the Labour Party since 1880

ScotRail is failing to deliver for the people of Scotland. The performance of Abellio has been truly terrible. The company has failed to recruit enough drivers, is continually skipping stations, does not have enough rolling stock, has used HSTs that have not been refurbished, and has a history of poor industrial relations. But we don't want to replace one failing private train operator with another because the model is broken. It is clear to everyone – to businesses as well as passengers, and to everyone who works in the rail industry – that privatisation has failed. The Tories privatised our railways and the SNP refuses to bring our services back into public ownership. But it's time to stand up for Scotland and run our railway as a public service, not as a vehicle to make a private profit.

Mick Whelan, general secretary

Dave Calfe, president

Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF's organiser in Scotland

Britain's specialist transport union

Campaigning for workers in the rail,
maritime, offshore/energy, bus and
road freight sectors



General Secretary: Mick Lynch

www.rmt.org.uk

President: Michelle Rodgers

1971-1972: Bohemians, Beatles, Bankies and a bouquet

Chris McGachy recalls a time when music was a political force to be reckoned within workers' struggles

Fifty years ago in the summer of 1971, John Lennon was putting the finishing touches to his global anthem, *Imagine*. At the same time, Heath's Tory government announced the imminent end of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS). Within weeks, defiant workers seized control of the yards. This is the story behind Lennon's donation to the workers as he transformed from affable mop top to militant activist following The Beatles' breakup.

The stunning victory against Heath's government in early 1972 has become the stuff of political legend. It was a time when ordinary workers and communities united in solidarity to demand the right and dignity to work.

With mass redundancies already on the cards, UCS shop stewards led by Jimmy Reid and Jimmy Airlie knew conventional strike action would not win this battle. Their ingenious idea was for the workforce to take control of the yards and continue to produce the ships for which the River Clyde yards had become world famous.

On 30 July 1971, the work-in began with 8,000 men seizing the four giant shipyards on the Clyde.

Heath's Tory government had come to power in 1970 refusing to prop up 'lame ducks'. Cash flow issues at the Clyde yards early in 1971 caused panic among creditors. When Parliament heard on 29 July 1971 that liquidation was the only option, Clydebank – my birthplace – was described as a town in mourning.

A devastated Jimmy Reid would be reminded of the haunted times in the 1930s when, as youngest of seven children, three of his sisters died in infancy. It led to his scathing accusation they were 'killed by capitalism'. That memory propelled Reid to life as a political activist.

Perhaps, the most famous UCS supporters were John Lennon and Yoko Ono, who sent red roses and a huge financial donation to support

the workers struggling to keep Clyde shipbuilding – and their communities – alive.

On 25 November 1969, John Lennon visited his Aunt Mimi's bungalow in Bournemouth where he removed his MBE medal from her mantelpiece. Back in London, he dispatched his chauffeur with the medal to return it Buckingham Palace in protest in Britain's involvement in Nigerian civil war and support for the US in Vietnam. It was one of many stunts Lennon and new wife Yoko devised as he stepped away from the lovable mop-top Beatle transforming himself into a celebrity activist with global appeal.

Lennon was liberated by the sudden death of stuffy, conformist manager, Brian Epstein, and fired with radicalism



through his burgeoning romance with Yoko Ono. He grabbed the chance to escape the claustrophobic rollercoaster of Beatlemania and touring. He had the unique ability to compose global anthems, beginning with *All You Need Is Love* and then *Give Peace a Chance*. His songbook was adopted by peace protesters and football fans alike.

Signs of more political phase were also seen in his track, *Revolution*, and by publicity stunts such as a honeymoon 'bed-in' for peace reported by the world's press to a global following. These antics spurred John and Yoko to develop their radical agenda – assured of worldwide media coverage.

And Lennon's first solo album, including *Working Class Hero*, sealed the transformation. The music was brutal and bleak, personal and political.

Since *Revolution* and the creation of Apple, Lennon had been forced to defend himself against criticism from left-wing radicals who viewed him as a capitalist sell out. In January 1971, he invited *Red Mole* editors Tariq Ali and Robin Blackburn to his mansion for an interview. It was *Red Mole's* coverage of the UCS dispute which sparked Lennon's interest in the Clydeside workers. The next morning, inspired, Lennon went into the studio and recorded a new political marching anthem: *Power to the People*. Lennon's subsequent donation to the UCS fighting fund helped propel the local struggle to a sympathetic international audience.

Stewards – mainly Communists like Reid and Airlie – tapped into widespread national support and their broad coalition included workers, unions, suppliers, local traders, councillors, politicians, community and religious leaders; not to forget creditors and even the liquidator. A day after Lennon started work on his new album, *Imagine*, on 23 June 1971, around 100,000 Scottish workers downed their tools in solidarity with the UCS workers. It was followed up the same week as the donation on 12 August with another half-day walk-out by 200,000 workers – the largest Glasgow demo since the 1926 General Strike.

The joint stewards persuaded a mass meeting to reject a divisive government offer to save just two of the four yards. The workers held firm and completed a dozen ships before the government capitulated in February 1972. Having originally refused to give a £6m loan, Heath's government agreed to invest £35m to keep all four shipyards afloat, with only voluntary redundancies. Two continue to this day.

It has generally been assumed that John and Yoko became aware of the dispute through television news reports. But in his updated autobiography, *Streetfighting Years*, Lennon interviewer, Tariq Ali, revealed that it was his publication *Red Mole* which brought

the UCS to the couples' attention. In his interview for the newspaper, John explained that his latest musical material was trying to shake off the teeny-bopper image. The ex-Beatle confirmed he wanted to transform himself into a serious spokesman for the revolutionary movement. 'I want to get through to the right people, and I want to make what I have to say very simple and direct,' he insisted to *Red Mole*. 'I've always been politically minded ... and against the status quo. I keep on reading the *Morning Star* to see if there's any hope, but it seems to be in the 19th century; it seems to be written for dropped-out, middle-aged liberals. We should be trying to reach the young workers because that's when you're most idealistic and have least fear'.

In the first week of July 1971 – as Lennon flew to New York to complete *Imagine* with producer Phil Spector – *Red Mole* published a special issue dedicated to the Clydeside dispute. Recalling the events of the summer of 1971, Tariq Ali explained how UCS story in *Red Mole* had caught Lennon's attention: 'Our cover was a reprint of a 19th century caricature of a fat, ugly, bloated capitalist confronting a strong, handsome and noble-looking worker: 'He loved that cover more than the convoluted articles on the inside and later showed it to Phil Spector and others at Tittenhurst.'

Undoubtedly inspired by the *Red Mole* cover and the workers' occupation, on the 9 August John and Yoko sent a bunch

of red roses which were delivered to the gate of John Brown's shipyard in Clydebank. At the same time, a cheque for £1,000 (worth around £15,000 today) was sent to the unions' fighting fund.

Underlining his solidarity with the workers and their tactics, the dedication card repeated the lyric from his recent hit: 'POWER TO THE PEOPLE with love from JOHN AND YOKO, AUGUST 9th 1971'. By the end of the August, John and Yoko had flown to New York to take up permanent residence in order to secure custody of her daughter. He would never again set foot in England again.

When the flowers arrived at John Brown's shipyard in Clydebank, they were taken in by union members staffing the gate and delivered to the shop steward's committee with a message and the now-famous anecdote they were from Lenin. 'But he's dead' someone is said to have replied thinking they were from the Russian revolutionary leader, Vladimir Lenin. Recalling the story some years later, Jimmy Reid revealed that, until the wheel of roses arrived from John and Yoko, he had never previously received a bunch of flowers in his life.

The dedication card became a rare and valued souvenir from this world-famous event sent by the superstar couple. Jimmy Cloughley was an engineer who was on the co-ordinating committee of the work-in. For many years, this collectors' item lay boxed among Jimmy's papers along with his audio

recordings of meetings, photographs and press reports from the work-in. With many of those involved either elderly or passed away, a thirtieth anniversary exhibition was hosted in 2002. Jimmy Cloughley donated his personal papers, including John and Yoko's dedication card to a special UCS archive curated by Glasgow Caledonian University where it remains to this day.

Recalling his deep connection with Lennon, Tariq said: 'He wanted to leave Britain because he and Yoko were repulsed by its provincialism and by the tenor of tabloid racism that was directed against her. I last spoke with him in 1979 when we discussed the likely impact of Thatcher's victory. 'He didn't sound too unradical in that conversation,' Tariq tellingly recalls. 'Clearly, his views changed somewhat but I can't see him as a neo-con supporting the wars and occupations in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan. The loss of his voice was a tragedy for millions.'

And in this world of war and global injustice, both men remain icons and rallying figures in the respective worlds of politics and music; to me they are working class heroes whose lives touched me personally and continue to shape my thinking. All the more today as my heroes are dead and my opponents are in power.

Clydebank-born Chris McGachy produces the www.globetrotsky.com travel blog. Read the unabridged blog story and extensive multimedia timeline at www.globetrotsky.com/lennon.



The Jimmy Reid
Foundation

2021 annual lecture

The People's Recovery: The only way to build back better for a socially and environmentally just recovery

The Foundation is delighted to announce that Roz Foyer, general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), will be giving the annual lecture this year on Thursday 7 October. She will outline the demands for a fairer future contained within the STUC's 'People's Recovery' programme and how a strong and broad movement for these can be built and, in doing so, unite the working class around them.

The lecture will operate as both physical and online events. The physical lecture will be staged in the Banqueting Hall at the City Chambers, George Square, Glasgow at 7pm. The online event will be streamed from this.

Roz will deliver the lecture followed by a Q&A session, with proceedings closing at 8.30pm.

Due to COVID restrictions, there will be a reduced maximum capacity of physical places available so please book quickly if you wish to attend in person and avoid disappointment.

As the Foundation was unable to hold a physical lecture last year due to COVID and because it is our major source of fundraising, we have different ticketing/pricing options this year:

* £6 physical event for unwaged/low waged

* £10 physical event for waged

* £20 solidarity price for physical event

* Donation of £1+ for attending online event

If booking a physical ticket, print off the receipt as this will be your ticket for entry. If choosing the online event, you will be emailed with the link. If a Foundation sustaining member, you are entitled to a free ticket so email contact@reidfoundation.scot if you wish to.

Doors will open at 6pm and there will be tea/coffee available beforehand.

VISIT THE JIMMY REID FOUNDATION WEBSITE TO BOOK YOUR TICKETS <https://reidfoundation.scot>

Rebuilding the Scottish economy through worker ownership

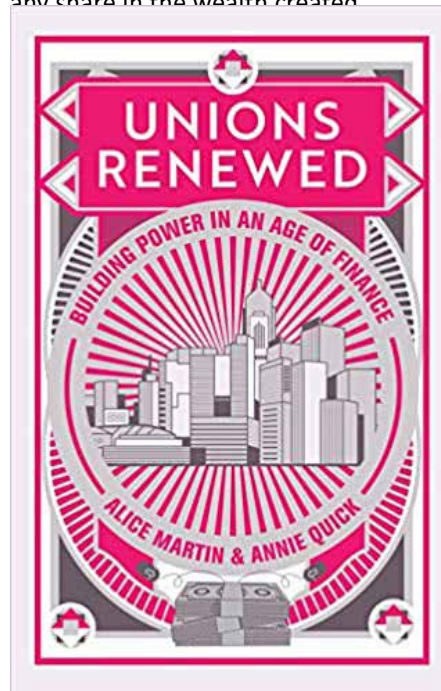
John Bratton and David Erdal argue for one specific method for 'building back better'

The global Covid-19 pandemic, which has caused unprecedented job losses in Scotland, has highlighted just how out of kilter our current arrangements are for providing well-being, security and prosperity for individuals, businesses and society. Here, we explore what a reimagined system would look like – one aimed at using democratic worker ownership to achieve a sustainable recovery and tackle social and economic inequalities in Scotland.

In the pre-Covid-19 era, neo-liberal ideology persuaded corporate elites to minimise their 'core' workforce and outsource and contract the rest, offshoring jobs to low-wage economies in Asia. This was accompanied by cost-cutting human resource practices such as zero-hours contracts devoid of employment rights and security. Neo-liberalism justified the practice of profiteering from assets, without engaging in productive activity in the real economy – known as 'financialisation'. So-called 'creative' financial procedures, included borrowing in order to buy back shares rather than investing in new technology or training or jobs or paying higher wages. Higher share prices, in turn, justified obscene chief executive salaries and bonuses. Between 1998 and 2020, chief executive pay went from 48 to 120 times typical full-time workers' pay. Financialisation helps to explain how Ford registered most of their profit from leasing cars rather than actually manufacturing vehicles. The trend towards outsourcing and offshoring jobs has shifted power away from working people towards capital. Further, income inequality has risen as union membership has fallen along with wage-bargaining from the 1970s onwards.

Democracy is supposed to keep the powerful in check. But it's notable that democracy is almost entirely absent from the corporate world. In the twenty-first century, corporate elites, across different sectors, have been found guilty of fraud, malpractice and corporate malfeasance. Many organisational problems are rooted in a flawed system of governance. No

directors or managers are 'elected and removable' by the people who engage in economic activities and create wealth. Contrary to the 'public' sphere which provides certain rights, when we walk into the workplace, a sphere classed as 'private', rights are given up being to rights to information, to influence decision-making and to have any share in the wealth created



In contrast, when a business is worker-owned, the workforce has the right to be informed on all that affects the business. The directors are elected by those who actually make the company succeed, that is, the only valued-added element in the enterprise. The directors' salaries are usually voted on by *all* workers. And the workers vote on what proportion of the profit is to be invested in technology or training to keep the business strong, leaving the rest for distribution among those in the company. To neo-liberal economists, this system sounds dangerous: workers will make bad decisions, bleed the company dry rather than invest and vote incompetent people onto the board. The evidence for the neo-liberal's nightmare is non-existent. Studies have shown that worker-owned businesses invest for the long term: they create jobs faster than businesses owned by outsiders, they invest at a

greater rate, they survive downturns better, and they last longer. Moreover, they share the wealth they create among all who work there. In short, they are managed differently and better.

Scotland, with 8.2% of Britain's population, has some 17% of the worker-owned companies. Worker ownership suits the 'Jock Tamson's bairns' strand in our culture. By making workers owners and active partners, all who work in the business experience active democracy. The rights that need to be transferred to workers for a worker-owned business to function include: the right to be informed about the business; the right to appoint or elect the leaders of the business; and the right to share in the wealth or loss created by the workers in the business. These rights are seen as belonging to the owners of the business. In the political world, our right to vote cannot be sold or given away and cannot be inherited. We have it purely due to our residency in our constituency. To sell it or hire it out to someone else would be corrupt. Similarly, in worker-owned businesses, you have the vote because you work in the business. It is not a tradable property right but a personal right because of your role. What is your property is any capital that you build through the annual distribution from profit.

Forty years of neo-liberalism has left the Scottish economy weakened and caused grotesque economic and social inequalities. To address the triple crises facing us – the pandemic, climate change, post-Brexit unemployment – it is increasingly apparent that we need an alternative, a more democratic, more environmentally sustainable, economic model. As the Scottish economy recovers, it would be unconscionable to maintain the former failed economic regime. The union movement and the Scottish Government need to challenge the democratic deficit in the workplace and support worker ownership.

The *raison d'être* of unions has been wage-bargaining to mitigate the worse features of industrial capitalism, but traditional collective bargaining is not well-equipped to address the

challenges of financial capitalism. Martin and Quick argue their *Unions Renewed: Building Power in an Age of Finance* (Polity, 2020) that as part of reimagining the role of unions, where they have leverage, unions can help build support for worker ownership. One concern of union leaders is that the rewards of ownership come with risks. We argue that this perception of risk is an illusion. In profit-oriented companies, managers are tasked to shift the consequences of any economic downturn on to the workers, by lay-offs or wage cuts. The collapse of the giant construction company Carillion demonstrated the primacy of maximising shareholder value and corporate malfeasance which saw mass redundancies and loss of workers' pensions.

The drive to maximise profits was at the heart of the recent proposed 'European Super League', the breakaway competition the inspiration of a coterie of wealthy owners, deeply ignorant of football, whose aim was to extract even more profit. German mega clubs such as Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund were not part of the breakaway group, the reason being that German football clubs are not owned by super rich elites but are 'fan-owned'. Club presidents are elected by the members. In Scotland, Partick Thistle is atypical. It is wholly fan-owned, a gift from the lottery winner, the late Colin Weir. Debate off-field has suggested that a similarly democratic model could be implemented in Scotland to give power back to supporters above rich owners.

Imagine how the idea of democratisation of workplaces would be furthered if the STUC put its multiple expertise and resources behind supporter ownership of Scotland's football clubs. STUC backing would strengthen workers' discursive power. This describes the ability of workers and unions to challenge the dominant narratives on governance, thus, shaping public discourses, develop collective identities and political agency. Unions are well placed to retrain their organisers to focus on how to make democratic constitutions work in practice in businesses that are no longer based on conflict: they are now partnerships of all who work there, strongly linked into the needs of their local communities and aimed at success over the long term.

As Roz Foyer outlined in *Scottish Left Review* (118, Jul/Aug 2020), the STUC

supports the Fair Work Convention's vision that by 2025 workers in Scotland should have an effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment, and respect. For workers and communities, worker-owned businesses can scaffold the Fair Work Framework. Based on the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic, a good starting point to begin the extension of worker-owned businesses in Scotland is the care sector. Although the Scottish government did have an infectious suppression plan, it did not have control over its borders or the financial powers to be able to support different kinds of restrictions and interventions to suppress the virus. However, constitutional matters aside, it did make critical mistakes. During the first wave, Holyrood failed to protect residents in long-term care when they followed England and discharged elderly patients from acute hospital wards to care homes, many without a Covid test, to free up NHS beds. Further, front-line care workers were exposed to the virus due to an acute PPE shortage. In a joint statement in 2020 – signed by UNISON, UNITE, GMB, TUC and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services – UK ministers were told that problems with supplies of PPE and a lack of testing was exposing care workers and residents to unnecessary risk of exposure. The common practice in the sector of peripatetic staff working at various locations also heightened the risk of exposure to the deadly virus as did the use of zero-hours contracts (ZHC). Those on ZHCs are much more likely to be women or younger or older or BAME workers. It is also well-known they are also associated with some of the worst forms of exploitation. ZHCs allowed Covid-19 to spread through residential homes because infected or asymptomatic workers who could not afford to self-isolate unwittingly put themselves and residents at risk. When the elderly needed the protection the most, the state failed, not just once, but again and again: from PPE to slow lockdowns to privatised testing to profit-driven care homes. And, in Scotland thousands died as a result. It does not take a genius to predict that removing the profit motive, worker-owned care homes could overcome the systemic failures of private elderly care in Scotland.

It would be a mistake to see union action as the sole force for closing the

democratic deficit in the workplace. Working in tandem with the STUC, the Scottish Government can pivot away from its record of orthodox managerialism and introduce policy changes that give workers rights to buy their businesses. The workers of any business that is being sold should be given the pre-emptive right to have first refusal to buy it at fair market value. Policy changes should give owners stronger tax incentives than now exist to sell their business, main or subsidiary, to the workforce. As well as greater robustness and worker engagement in active democratic systems, the dynamic of the Scottish economy would then shift towards more local supply chains, reversing the 40-year trend of de-industrialisation.

- This article is based on their forthcoming chapter, 'Can democracy go hand-in-hand with efficiency?' in Gall, G. (ed.) *A New Scotland: Building an Equal, Fair and Sustainable Society* (Pluto, 2022)

John Bratton divides his time between Calgary, Alberta and Edinburgh, Scotland. He has authored 8 books including 'Capitalism and Classical Social Theory' (2019) and 'Work and Organisational Behaviour' (2021). In 1985, David Erdal took over running his family's paper mill, Tullis Russell, and moved it towards democratically-governed employee-ownership. He has helped other businesses become worker-owned and has authored 'Local Heroes: How Loch Fyne Oysters Embraced Employee Ownership and Business Success' (2009).

Best re(a)d from our early issues

Two of our best ever read articles since our launch in 2000 are by historian, Tom Nairn, and poet, Edwin Morgan. Limitations on space mean that we cannot reprint them in full or part but they are still available to read here: <https://www.scottishleftreview.scot/constituting-scotland/> and <https://www.scottishleftreview.scot/edwin-morgan/>



ORGANISING FOR A FAIR FUTURE

PCS Scotland sends congratulations to the Scottish Left Review on the publication of the 125th issue focussing on COP26.

As COP26 approaches, it's time to make radical changes to the way we work. That's why our members are fighting for a shorter working week, an idea which benefits the environment and the economy. We look forward to sharing our progress with the wider trade union movement.

www.pcs.org.uk [pcs_scotland](https://twitter.com/pcs_scotland) [pcs_union](https://facebook.com/pcs_union)



Join the struggle to get rid of nuclear weapons from Scotland and our world.

Join Scottish CND today.

For more details about joining Scotland's largest peace movement organisation

E mail -

scnd@banthebomb.org

or phone 0141 357 1529



SNP TRADE UNION GROUP

Congratulations to Scottish Left Review on their 125th issue!

Support us on Patreon at Patreon.com/SNPTUG



FBU Scotland sends solidarity greetings for the 125th Edition of the Scottish Left Review magazine

Firefighters are on the frontline of the climate crisis tackling wildfires and floods. WE NEED URGENT ACTION NOW FROM COP26.



Executive Council Member: Chris McGlone
Scottish Secretary: Denise Christie
Scottish Chair: John Malcolm
Scottish Treasurer: Seona Hart

www.fbuscotland.org

THE DEMOCRATIC AND PROFESSIONAL VOICE OF FIREFIGHTERS ACROSS THE UK

Allan McDougall

SOLICITORS

With you every
step of the way

We've been working for Scottish trade union members since the 1930s. Whatever situations you and your family face in life, our approachable personal injury and employment law experts are on hand to provide proactive and practical legal advice you can trust. We're here to help.

t: 0808 560 0872

e: info@allanmcdougall.co.uk

🐦 @allan_mcdougall

f AllanMcDougallSolicitors

www.allanmcdougall.co.uk



Consummate consumers of the world unite!

Mick Rice argues workers have potential power in another arena under global corporate capitalism

It has always galled me that unions do all in their power to organise in the workplace but then carelessly allow their members to go back home and spend their wages on products made by anti-union employers. General secretaries and other full-time officers that take pride in being issued the latest Apple iPhone particularly upset me! Of course, the Apple iPhone is a great piece of kit. A boycott campaign may be ethically appropriate but it is difficult to build successful campaigns on guilt-tripping the masses into accepting second best.

At the outset the workers' movement took an interest in retail. In those days, employers in company towns would sometimes have 'tally shops' some of which sold adulterated goods. The development of the retail cooperative movement came about to exert worker and local community control over buying goods.

It is relatively easy to describe a world where human solidarity reigns supreme and we are all nice to one another. It is a little more difficult to work out what we should do when we get out of bed tomorrow morning to bring about this (aka world socialism)! We ought to also remember that within the interstices of the old feudal order, quasi-capitalist formations developed. Whilst production and retail cooperatives can be cited as precursors of a new world based on mutuality, the left needs to develop strategies for harnessing the power of the internet.

Some unions promote the sale of goods and services to their own members. Whilst, no union would want to promote products that are shoddy or overpriced – they are using 'Honest Joe' recommendations to get commission or price reductions. In some larger unions, this can amount to several millions of pounds per annum. This approach has been developed most fully in Australia where *Union Shopper* now provides online shopping deals for a large group of unions. The small relative size of Australian unions meant that they found it useful to merge some of their affinity activities on a multi-union basis. In some countries, there have been campaigns to promote products made by organised labour. The *Union Label* campaign in the USA is an example. However, this campaign is constrained by a nationalistic *America*

First approach.

All of the constraints to international consumer solidarity in the workers' movement are fast disappearing. The Internet gives the left, throughout the world, the opportunity to develop new strategies

In 2018, the Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25), involving former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufaki, and the Sanders Institute, founded by relatives of Bernie Sanders, issued a call for progressives throughout the world to unite. The Progressive International (PI) is the result. It also has supporters throughout the developing world as socialist academics and left-wing politicians have joined. The PI has national and continental federations. It has a head office in London. Individuals can join as members and union branches and political organisations can affiliate. The PI Council contains an impressive array of academics such as Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein, Yanis Varoufakis and Slavoj Žižek on its Council. It also contains left-wing politicians from around the globe including John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn.

It does most of its work via internet discussions on policy. DiEM25, for example, does weekly Zoom meetings and they are then published on YouTube (see <https://progressive.international>). The PI does not appear to have local branches at a town or city level – although it may well wish to see these develop. But if local branches are to be sustainable, they require ongoing programmes of work. Local branches will also need to address whether candidates should stand in elections.

The PI could adopt an *International Union Label* through promoting the sale of goods from organised workplaces from anywhere in the world. In turn, this means that we need to adopt a set of minimum labour conditions that are applicable everywhere. Strikes to obtain or enforce these minimum standards should be supported by a global solidarity fund.

International labour minimum standards commenced with the demand for the 8-hour day, initiated by American unions. In turn, this was the precursor to May Day as the 1 May was designated as the international strike day to obtain the 8-hour day by the founding conference of the Second International

in 1889, after receiving a request from the American Federation of Labor (AFL). This early focus on international action showed that workers understood that a gain in one country could not easily be sustained unless it was adopted in all industrialised countries.

So, the PI should set up a trading platform, bigger than Amazon. Where 1% of the value of all transactions will be paid into the aforementioned global solidarity fund. This will be used to support workers' rights and against companies that chisel paying fair taxes. The fund will be under the control of the PI. In doing so, the idea of global 'solidarity shopping' can be promoted.

The PI can adopt its own international minimum labour standards. It is problematic to establish a pay minimum as currencies fluctuate so it will be easier to apply standards to working conditions. This could include hours of the working day and the working week, paid maternity and paternity leave as well annual holiday entitlement. All companies advertising goods on the *Solidarity Shopping* website must confirm that they support international minimum labour standards and agree to pay 1% of sale income from the site to the global solidarity fund. The PI can also promote international fair taxes.

Many of the current leading corporations that are internet-based, originated or were developed in the US. They often act as middlemen, link the purchaser with the supplier but often do not produce anything themselves. One can think of Booking.com, Uber, Amazon, Google, Facebook and so on.

At one time, I ran a small hotel and every October, booking.com would advise that – as we were now at the end of season - we could be placed higher up their rankings and get more bookings provided we agreed to pay 25% commission rather than 15%! Independent producer suppliers have been squeezed by Amazon which gives preferential exposure if they agree to pay the 12% sales commission for using its 'market place' sales portal. For the supplier, this commission covers advertising and promotional costs.

So, let us imagine that a representative of *Solidarity Shopping* arrives at the door and says that *Solidarity Shopping* will put your products on its website on the basis that 10% of the sale price is

paid as commission. Of course, payment is only made on actual sales through a monthly retrospective direct debit. Then the local *Solidarity Shopping* group gets the 10% and pays a tenth, i.e., 1% of actual sale price), to the *Global Solidarity Fund* and another 5% (or whatever) for website costs. This then still leaves 4% for local campaign purposes to be used by the local PI branches.

Radical coders could set up a *Solidarity Shopping* website. Such

a site would rival Amazon and help finance campaigns for worthy causes everywhere. People want 'good deals' but, as most people are reasonable, they are also prepared to pay a price that ensures union pay and conditions for those making the products. After all, they - or members of their families - will be working and producing goods and services as well! It sounds like a tall order for the left to set up an ethical international trading organisation to rival Amazon. But just as a march of 10,000 miles starts with the first step, so

setting up a huge international trading conglomerate starts with a step-by-step plan. New York, San Francisco, London and Berlin could be chosen as trial locations where local PI groups approach local suppliers to secure the best price for goods and services to be marketed in their locality.

Mick Rice was a research officer for the AUEW engineering union. He is now the secretary of the UNITE Retired Members branch in Glasgow.

Pleasing political poetry

Ravenscraig by Robert Graham

Before the steel mill shut the kids had toys and bikes, their brothers bought old banger cars they'd tinker with and polish till they shone. After the steel mill shut, the toys were gone.

Before the steel mill shut the streets felt safe to stroll, to meet with friends and share a laugh, stay out late, no thought of going to bed. After the steel mill shut, the streets were dead

Before they built an iron chain link fence around the site where rollers used to hum, were furnaces that proud men fed with coal. After the steel mill shut, pride on the dole.

After the steel mill shut, two towns were gutted, all their vitals thrown out with the trash. They said the scars of loss would pass away. Look around, the scars are here today.

Forgetfulness is memory upside down, but living upside down the blood will rush into the heads where memories are kept. After the steel mill shut, remember how we wept.

Robert Graham is a retired literature professor in Canada who was schooled in Wishaw. The poem is from his collection, 'Before the Yes' (Friesen Press 2020), and used with his consent.

Borisocracy by David McKinstry

Climbing the Disraeli greasy poll
Whilst spouting a mythical past,
Of morning mists, churchgoing
Cricket and warm beer,
All a well-worn story
But ironed, laundered and spun,
By a sham one nation Tory
Welcome to Borisocracy.

Engaged in a verbal duel
With Rees-Mogg,
In competitive nostalgia
And reminiscence fog,
Peppered with imperial battles
And Latin phrases,
Whilst the plebs look on
With vacant faces,
Welcome to Borisocracy.

Appointing a Home Secretary
A modern Uncle Tom,
Claiming that taking the knee
Is no more than a convention,
With ice in her veins
And self-advancement her
intention,
Welcome to Borisocracy.

Playing high politics
In a game he couldn't care less,
Be it Covid or Etonian Brexit mess
Welcome to Borisocracy.

Peering from number ten
To survey the national horizon,
The Irish are talking unity
Whilst the Scots are slowly rising,
Farewell to Borisocracy.

Dr David McKinstry Teaches History at Holyrood Secondary in Glasgow.

prospect bectu

Support.
Grow.
Succeed.

prospect.org.uk
bectu.org.uk

@ProspectScot • @bectu



Robin Bissell, director,

The Best of Enemies (2019)

Reviewed by Jackie Bergson

Durham, North Carolina, 1971. A school which educates black pupils only is on fire. This catalytic scene follows the film's opening images, of a Ku Klux Klan (KKK) initiation, which are accompanied by a voice-over of real-life antagonist, C P Ellis, talking about the sense of belonging that he got from his Klan membership. *The Best of Enemies* film is based on the novel *The Best of Enemies: Race and Redemption in the New South* by Osha Gray Davidson.

Durham's burning school ironically symbolises forthcoming change in the education system, where the integration of black and white pupils will be accepted as the new norm. The school fire, meanwhile, leads to a heightened civil battle between black and white adults attending local council forums. At this point in time and place, an archaic municipal system of societal segregation is governed by KKK leaders and sympathisers, ensuring stasis for white supremacists. Until community activist, Ann Atwater (Taraji P Henson), whose contacts and friends touch into healthcare and business, determines to forcefully shake up their racist system.

Vociferous in their articulations about fairness and civil rights, and about housing and education, the black residents of Durham are effectively represented by the outspoken Atwater. As their undaunted leader, she intensifies her efforts behind the scenes, to win against white male council representatives, most of whom are KKK members. Leading speaker Ellis (Sam Rockwell) is the 'exalted Cyclops' president of KKK. He is also Atwater's nemesis.

A dramatic turning point comes when the NAACP (National Association for

the Advancement of Coloured People) helps Atwater to file a lawsuit against the finding of the council that the rancid shell of the burned-out school is suitable for black pupils; that they should suffer in silence despite that they have to learn, work and live in dire, unhealthy circumstances. Consequently, the battle and the change between arch rivals, Atwater and Ellis, become the focus of this great film. Their conflicted development towards mutual respect, ultimately, speaks for humanity and family, over and above political or economic supremacy.

In fighting for equality and integration, Atwater proves herself to be a shrewd, unstoppable force for good. Meanwhile, taciturn Ellis is confronted by the fact that business at his gas station is dwindling to the point of being non-existent. This situation is revealed in the film to be caused by his antediluvian resistance to a changed and changing society, where blacks have economic and political powers.

Evolving through a process where a town 'charrette' is organised by conflict resolution expert, Bill Riddick (Babou Ceesay), the entire community must reach an agreement in accepting this reality. Ellis and Atwater are afforded co-chairing status within Riddick's formalised, inclusive agenda. This setup replaces former, chaotic, would-be negotiations, where councillors literally turned their backs on Atwater, while she had to browbeat them, just to be heard.

Apparently coincidentally, Ellis and Atwater become involved in a healthcare wrangle, involving his son's residence at the local care home. Ellis's anger reaches breaking point when he discovers that his son, Larry (Kevin Lannucci) - a teenager with Down's syndrome - has been moved to a room where his usual freedoms are restricted. Whereas his influential wife, Mary Ellis (Anne Heche) retains her sense of

compassion and morality with her black neighbours at home, his explosive anger towards the care home staff conflicts with his family's need to ensure that his son receives better care and conditions.

Illustrating how and why these complex relationships and situations work out, the film highlights that Atwater's talent for political communications are at the crux of discovering agreeable solutions. Her focus on managing white collar working relations also proves to be the key to winning the trust of C P Ellis, who eventually publicly resigns from the KKK.

Dramatic scenes within the care home contrast with another scenario, where Atwater meets Ellis at his council offices. There, she silently faces a life-sized mannequin dressed in KKK uniform. The reason why this scene resonates is that it carries a sense of historical terror, white supremacy, lynching and segregation. It powerfully conveys that, other than in its present context, when violence does not occur, no good would have come from her facing up to a KKK uniformed member on his own turf.

Rockwell shines in his portrayal of Ellis as a seemingly irredeemable figure. Henson is outstanding in portraying Atwater's straight-talking character, who takes no prisoners. *The Best of Enemies* is both entertaining and timely: strongly recommended.

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

Hall, E. (ed.)

New Light on Tony Harrison, Oxford University Press/British Academy, 2019, pp246, £45 (hb), †978-0197266519, and

Hall, E. ***Tony Harrison: Poet of Radical Classicism***, Bloomsbury Academic, 2021, pp248, £45 (hb), †978-1474299336.

Reviewed by Sean Sheehan

Edith Hall is at the heart of two books about the aesthetics of resistance in the work of the poet, Tony Harrison, writing one of them and editing the other. Classicists are not renowned for their left-wing politics but Hall is admirably different, making her ideally placed to appreciate the unique blend of socialist materialism and classical learning that fuels the dynamism of Harrison's verse.

The seventeen essays and one poem in *New Light* originate from a conference Hall convened to commemorate Harrison's eightieth birthday in 2017. The contributors are a diverse crew from academia, the arts, journalism and media professionals. Hall divides their contributions into different areas of Harrison's oeuvre: his poems, work for the theatre, his immersion in the literatures of France and Italy, and his film poetry. Their essays combine to form a remarkable celebration of the integrity, depth, learning, intelligence and politics of Britain's most important living poet: the bard of Leeds.

Harrison's *School of Eloquence* sequence of poems and one called 'V' provide an accessible introduction to his combative style and its origins in a historically-specific family background, one he pinpointed in an interview: 'I came from a loving, rooted upbringing which was disrupted by Education and Poetry. And I've been trying to create new wholes out of that disruption ever since'. As a working-class scholarship schoolboy in the 1950s, his Yorkshire pronunciation of a Keats poem earned rebuke from an English teacher: 'Poetry's the speech of kings. You're one of those Shakespeare gives the comic bits to: prose!'

Defiance in the face of such claims on the ownership of culture constitute Harrison's political act. Given the sophisticated codes and traditions of literary culture, the challenge is to give voice to those excluded by these codes. Harrison has spoken of finding

inspiration in the republican Milton whose 'sonnets range from the directly outward to the tenderly inward, and how the public address of the one makes a clearing for the shared privacy of the other'.

The blending of the private and public finds expression in poems of loss and regret alongside rueful reflections on class conflict. Allied to this is Harrison's receptivity to other arts forms like photography, theatre and film and what literary critics call 'heteroglossia', a hybrid of different voices or languages within a text so that no single utterance takes priority.

A photograph of an Iraqi soldier's charred body in the first Gulf War provoked Harrison's writing of 'A Cold Coming' and this interest in the visual arts helps explain his move into making film poetry. Peter Symes directed eight of Harrison's films and his illuminating essay provides a window into how their close collaboration produced a rich artistic chemistry: 'the [filmic] image as metaphor, the word as hard fact'. In *The Blasphemer's Banquet*, they decided on a tracking shot and Harrison walked with the crew, beating out time to give them a rhythm and him a sense of how many quatrains were needed. The result is one of the film's core messages about how life's transience and our fear of meaninglessness can feed a habit for 'the opium of the people' – if Marx hadn't created the image, Harrison surely would have – with fixes supplied by dealers (the 'one-book creeds') proffering 'the unblemished beautiful in the untrue'. Another essay, by Henry Stead, convincingly links the film-poems with the cinematic montage of early Soviet film-makers like Eisenstein, the GPO film *Night Train* and Tarkovsky's *Mirror* (1975).

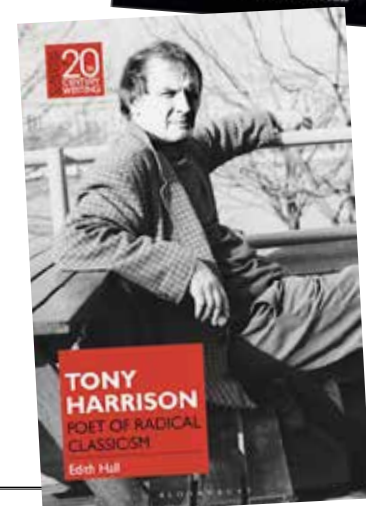
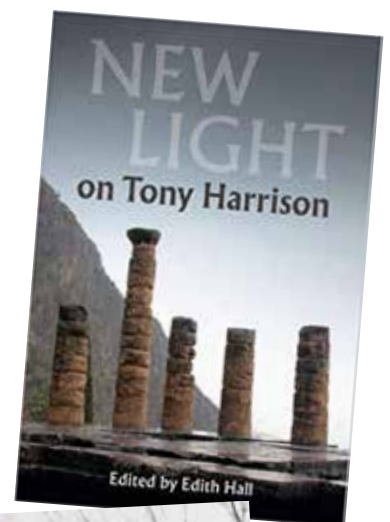
Hall's own book is as engaging and erudite, looking at Harrison's use of Greek and Roman material to give voice to the oppressed and the injustices perpetrated by hierarchies of class, race and gender. Educated as a classicist, Harrison's years of teaching and travelling in Africa and Latin America extended his learning to an awareness of colonialism and the global south and poems like 'Newcastle is Peru' (1996) gave early expression to his internationalist allegiances.

Her study begins by connecting features of his poetry with the epigrams of Pallas, the Hellenistic poet whom he translated early in his career. She moves on to Harrison's decade-long

creative relationship with the National Theatre that resulted in masterpieces like *Oresteia*. Its feminist inflection and colloquial language infuriated conservative critics: 'unease with his class politics masqueraded as aesthetic derision. The real problem was ... Olympian gods and the Argive Royal Family sounded like dockers from Hull' Hall observed. Similarly, the use of profanities in the television broadcast of his 'V' became an excuse for attacking his class position.

The book concludes with the 1990s' film-poems and his late poems, including the autobiographical elegy 'Polygons' (2015) which, as Hall says, provides the culmination to poems like 'Newcastle is Peru'. Harrison's wicked use of diction and rhyme in confronting urgent social, political and existential concerns blend dizzyingly to form an aesthetic of resistance that has no equal. Videos of some of his work are easily found online and print editions of his poems, plays and film poetry confirm the scale and depth of an achievement that puts him up there with Blake and Shelley. Like their poetry, his too is an antidote to indifference and as public as it is political.

Sean Sheehan writes for *The Eye of Photography*, *Lens Culture*, *The Prisma* and other publications.



Danny Dorling and Annika Koljonen,
Finntopia: What we can
learn from the world's
happiest country, Agenda
Publishing, £18.99, 9781788212151
Reviewed by Mike Danson

This book is barely 'okay'. To anyone accessing Nordic Horizons online, on Facebook or Twitter there is nothing surprising nor new in this publication and they will probably find the massive data catalogue referenced in this book better analysed elsewhere. This is a strange publication. It seems to have a strong eye focused on the US and English markets for those who seem to know little of Finland. Whilst we in Scotland are used to comparing ourselves with the Nordic countries, this is far less common in England. This is despite these near neighbours occupying so many of the leading global rankings in health, equality, wealth and happiness. As small open societies and economies, they offer lessons for Scotland and policies, practices and targets to aspire to; and these characteristics of scale and power relations are hardly recognised in this volume. From geographers, this book is mis-oriented as it constantly confuses England, Britain and the UK which is especially problematic in the key elements proposed to be underpinning Finland's 'happiness': education, health, social institutions. In the one instance, where this is identified as an issue, with a sub-heading UK/England, neither data nor text differ across the UK.

The physical geography is an interesting starting point but as with the very many tables, diagrams and maps throughout, the reader often needs to apply their own interpretation to these illustrations. The authors reject direct environmental determinism as explaining Finland's 'happiness' but never offer a working hypothesis of what have been the driving forces. In particular, the tripartite, corporatist approaches which are promoted and sustained across the Nordic countries are mentioned but briefly. Unions are given but passing mentions with regard to teachers, for instance, but not anywhere is there a comprehensive discussion of their role in representing working-class interests, driving change, addressing political and economic power, compromising with capital etc. Significant sections of the book offer very short-term analyses of changes in, for example, GDP and unemployment, and other indicators that do not explain greater

long-term developments nor do they paint a better picture of everyday life. Such narratives are consistent with a publication put together quickly without a coherent commentary or explanatory argument for what is behind Finland's successes. Nor, as suggested above, is there any recognition that scale is undoubtedly important in nurturing trust and cooperation – key concepts and pre-conditions in many analyses of the Nordic models. Likewise, the Nordic Council and other means for collective decision making and implementation do not warrant much consideration either despite these institutions offering early and unique ways for national sovereignty to be pooled.

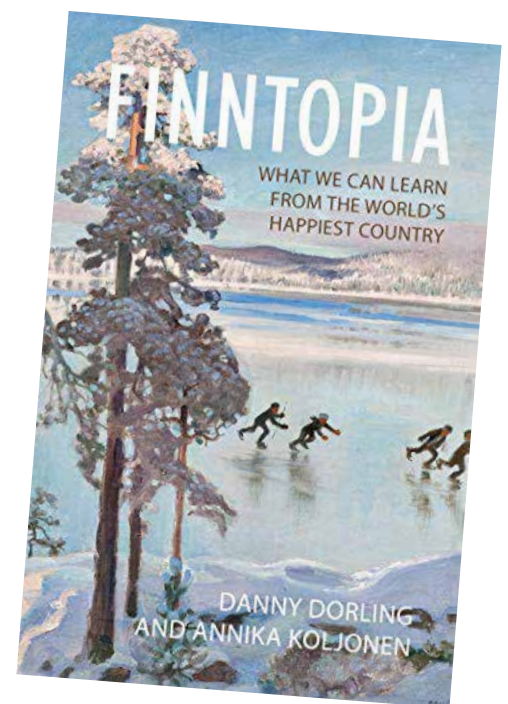
How the arguments in this book are meant to apply to the UK and USA are often incomplete and unexplained though they could be much more relevant to Scotland, Wales, Ireland and other smaller nations. Why these geographers do not appreciate these key factors and features is, indeed, a mystery: if it is because they are writing for large country markets, then why not explore the importance of size? The apparent unwillingness - and failure - to even understand that data on the different nations of the UK cannot be considered as a pro-rata of England's nor that different policies, strategies, performances are to be identified and analysed across the UK to very good effect is obvious. This lack of attention to these details, and so to the opportunity to promote understanding of the importance of scale and of differences between countries of different politics, lessens the capacity of the book to explain Finland's and others' journeys.

A particular national statistic that is used repeatedly throughout the chapters is GDP. Now this is a key performance indicator (KPI) that has come in for criticism by environmentalists, feminists, and others involved in well-being and sustainability, but economists also understand that it measures differently in different circumstances, and especially for small open economies. As Eoin O'Leary explains very well in his *Irish Economic Development: Serial Under-Achievement or High-Performing EU State* (2015), and this applies very similarly to the other Celtic nations (and many small open economies where FDI (foreign direct investment) is significant for jobs and outputs), using GDP as a KPI and as a denominator in international country comparisons of markedly different sizes is fatally flawed. Nowhere do the authors

recognise this, yet it underpins many of their conclusions. Similar distortions are implicitly incorporated through ill-defined application of such basic economic concepts as 'fiscal policy' and 'monetarism'. Students writing such accounts would quite rightly be expected to meet higher levels of quality and accuracy.

Another example where more careful thought and analysis would have modified the argument would be in considering the implications of their own recording that far more live alone in Finland than elsewhere, therefore, household size is on average smaller and the distribution of income flatter than if effort had been made to standardise for elsewhere. This is but one instance but illustrates that a much better description of Finland could have been published and needs to be, because the commentary towards the end of the book promises the world, but especially smaller economies and societies, can and should learn from the Nordic countries' successes but also from their new challenges of demography and immigration.

Mike Danson is Emeritus Professor of Enterprise Policy at Heriot-Watt University



Kick up the Tabloids

So, it would appear that Boris Johnson may have finally got his moment to be compared to Churchill. As the withdrawal from Afghanistan resembles Dunkirk without boats, the PM had to face an emergency session in Parliament, where he was roasted by Theresa May for his shambolic reaction to events. Phrases like 'make a sentence out of the words: kettle, black and calling' and 'savaged by a dead sheep' spring to mind.

Of course, it wasn't only the PM whose balls were on the slate. The Foreign Secretary was doing the job he thought he was employed to do, namely, being abroad. The only problem was that he was not abroad on work but on holiday.

And therein lies the major difference between Johnson and Churchill. Churchill was a pathological liar and a deeply unlikeable sociopath who was responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent people. The comparisons with Johnson end there. Churchill had a Cabinet of political big-hitters who knew what they were doing, unlike the current crop of faceless non-entities who owe their portfolios to pro-Brexit zealotry.

I don't trust politicians who don't look like politicians. Dominic Raab does not resemble a Foreign Secretary. He looks like he should be managing a branch of Carphone Warehouse in Slough. Grant Shapps, a man whose name sounds like a very unpleasant bowel disorder, doesn't look like a member of the Government. He looks more like a used-car salesman who is also a leader in the Boy Scouts and who still 'hasn't found time' to fill in his Disclosure form.

I am writing this in the middle of the Edinburgh Fringe. A festival that no-one was sure would happen. An event that, mid-pandemic, has attracted thousands of people from throughout the UK to gather together in Scotland's capital city in badly-ventilated small rooms to laugh in close proximity to one another. What's the worst that can happen? Hopefully you read this

column before you read my obituary.

No-one was sure how busy this year's festival would be, but we all hoped that English tourists would know how to behave in Scotland. By and large, they have been OK. But would the pandemic not have been a marvellous opportunity for Edinburgh City Council to deny a licence for the Silent Disco?

As we know, Boris Johnson announced that 19 July would be 'Freedom Day', when all restrictions on face masks and distancing in England came to an end. We have all become too familiar with this Orwellian turn of phrase from the Prime Minister. The people of England were not liberated from the Covid that day. They were set free from the measures put in place to protect them from catching the virus. Effectively, they were free not to give a flying fuck about anybody else.

Many health experts had warned the PM not to move too fast. Which is sound medical advice, given his physical condition. Any sudden movement could bring on a coronary. When challenged on the timing of the move, Health Secretary Sajid Javid replied 'if not now, when?' He then promptly tested positive for Coronavirus, thereby, answering his own question.

Johnson and Rishi Sunak were identified as close contacts, so all three were forced to self-isolate. This left us with the glorious irony of the very people who proclaimed 'Freedom Day' being locked up in the house on the day in question.

Transport for London and almost every major supermarket chain responded to a campaign from unions, and insisted that masks should still be worn on the tube and in stores, to protect the staff who worked there. We truly are living in some bizarre parallel universe when Tesco care more about public health than the Prime Minister does. But then we have already witnessed the England football team exhibiting a more accurate moral compass than the government of the UK on issues

such as racism and child poverty.

From July, what were previously laws in England are now merely 'guidelines', and it is up to the public's 'common sense' and 'judgement' whether or not to follow them - common sense and judgement being values which have of course seen to be in very short supply in government, as well as in the public in general.

Will this soon be rolled out to other areas of life currently covered by legislation, such as speed limits? If so, I now have a clean driving licence. When I totted up those nine points that I currently hold, I was using my common sense to do eighty-nine miles an hour on the M8, as if not I would risk being late for a gig in Greenock. That's common sense and judgement in action. Breaking the law to get to Greenock on time. I rest my case, M'lud.



Vladimir McTavish

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Bill Bonnar	Carol Mochan
Carole Ewart	Gordon Morgan
Roz Foyer	Dave Sherry
Gregor Gall	Stephen Smellie
Editor	Roza Salih
Pat Kelly	Maggie Chapman
Convener	Bob Thomson
Bill Ramsay	Vice Convener
Lilian Macer	



FIGHTING FEARLESSLY FOR JUSTICE, COMPENSATION AND LAW REFORM

Thompsons Solicitors Scotland are proud to have served the trade union movement in Scotland for 40 years.

Across the UK, Thompsons Solicitors has been standing up for the injured, discriminated and mistreated since Harry Thompson founded the firm back in 1921. We have fought for millions of people, won countless landmark cases and secured key legal reforms.

We will always apply the full force of the law to secure justice for victims of industrial wrong.

And when the law is wrong; Thompsons campaign to change it.



Call: 0141 566 6899
Visit: TalkToThompsons.com



 THIS COP26

 **SUPPORT WORKERS**

WORKER POWERED

TRANSITION & FUTURE

JOIN THE SCOTTISH TRADE UNION FIGHTING FOR A BETTER DEAL FOR WORKERS IN RENEWABLES, OIL & GAS, AND MANUFACTURING

JOIN.UNITETHEUNION.ORG