

# Scottish Left Review

Issue 126 November/December 2021 - £2.00



talking about

## power shifts

'best re(a)d'

The first female secretary of Unite /  
Scottish Greens in government /  
COP26 comes to Glasgow /  
The German federal election /  
The new AUKUS military pact /  
The continuing case for Independence



**ASLEF**

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## COP26 ≠ much cop



On the face of it, there may not seem to be a much of a theme to the articles that make up the front half of the content of this issue of *Scottish Left Review*. However, they all do gather around the crux of ‘power shifts’. Power shifts has several meanings here. One is that power does shift issues, interests and processes along, from one place to another in space and time. The other is that power does shift from one social group to another. It will be no surprise to state that we believe that not only is power contested but so are any shifts in it. Some groups hold disproportionate amounts of power with which they protect and further their interests, supported by hegemonic ideologies. Other contest the cause and effect of this. Being on the left means that class is one of, if not the, key divides between groups. Others are race, gender and nation and how they intersect with each other.

Applying this to the articles in the front half of the content of this issue reveals a singular thread that runs through them. The excerpt from Roz Foyer’s 2021 Jimmy Reid Foundation annual lecture covers much territory and is predicated upon the gaining and then loss of power by the working-class to prosecute its interests. This was best represented by the social democratic post-war settlement and then the rise of neo-liberalism as the ruling-class sought to resolve the crisis of capitalism by taking back power through using the state to weaken the organisations of the working-class. This indicates that power is a zero-sum game – what one side loses, the other gains. Helen McFarlane’s article shows one part of the organised working-class is seeking to recalibrate the current power relationship between capital, state and labour, especially by taking advantage of current labour shortages. In this, little help is to be expected from the Starmer-led Labour Party which has continued its rout of

the left and does not offer a social democratic alternative - notwithstanding a single bright spot on employment rights policy at its annual conference - to the still rampant Tories.

The October 2021 budget was soaked in uncritical newspaper headlines of illusory real pay rises for the poor while the ingenuity of creating new tax breaks for the rich continued unabated. In other words, the real levelling up is still happening: more wealth being extracted from those labourers who created it in the first place and transferred to those that already have it aplenty. The phrase ‘smoke and mirrors’ does not even begin to cover the con trick workers are being subject to by Johnson and his gang. Starmer and Labour do not even seem capable of inflicting the kind of limited defeat on the Tories that the German SPD did on Merkel’s CSU in September – see Victor Grossman’s article.

Despite the downfall of US-backed imperialism in Afghanistan, the creation of the AUKUS pact – see Binoy Kampark’s article – shows the US seeks to try to continue its global supremacy. Of course, the US is not prepared to put the same effort into creating a COP26 pact to limit and reverse climate change because the interests of those the US state protects and prosecutes would not be served by this. This is one area where the US does not seek to be the No. 1 superpower (and that is not to go soft on the likes of China or Russia). After the COP26 circus has left town, it is highly doubtful that further calamitous climate change will be averted. This is because even half-decent agreements do not include counties and implementation is another issue altogether. Again, the US is not prepared to be the world’s policeman on this as it has done on other issues like protecting the foreign oil reserves

it relies upon. Moves towards capitalism solving the climate crisis by going green are just more sophistry. In Scotland in October, *The Ferret* carried out another great investigation giving support to this unpleasant and worrying but very necessary conclusion.

As this is our last issue of 2021, we wish readers, subscribers and supporters a good break at the close of the year and the arrival of 2022. For this purpose, we have a bumper selection of reviews to stimulate dipping into the books themselves. We will in 2022 examine the ramifications of the Scottish Greens/SNP political pact and why the proposed National Care Service (NCS) will not be what we want it to be – SPOILER ALERT – because of the SNP’s determination to use a market-based, contracting out system. The awarding of the contract by the SNP Scottish Government to PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to draw up the NCS structure is a grave warning here.

### Scottish Left Review

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# For a ‘People’s Recovery’ and a socially and environmentally just Scotland

Roz Foyer, STUC general secretary, gave the eight Jimmy Reid Foundation lecture on Thursday 7 October 2021 in Glasgow. Here we print an edited version of her lecture.

**A**s a lifelong union activist and organiser, I’m deeply honoured to be invited to deliver the lecture this year because it has particular resonance following the recent 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UCS work-in. It was one of the most inspiring and well executed industrial union campaigns, ever fought and won.

I will focus on why now is the time for our movement to take inspiration from that struggle and apply its lessons to the struggles we face today on building a fair economic recovery from the pandemic, and transitioning to a net zero economy based upon the STUC’s ‘People’s Recovery’ programme of ensuring ordinary working people can get a fairer share, of the nation’s wealth and power.

If we are to do this successfully, we’ll need to build our movement into an angry, strong, and diverse, mass movement for change, by organising the fightback in our workplaces, and on our streets, and by focussing in on key issues that unite us, and make a material difference to our class, and our communities.

My family background has taught me valuable lessons about fighting for social justice. I recall my dad, Walter, a former train driver and proud ASLEF member, was born in 1932 in the midst of the Depression when the infant mortality rate in Glasgow was on the rise. As a new born baby, he was given away to the Parish, we think, probably because his birth family, simply couldn’t afford to feed another mouth. He was lucky to be adopted into another local family, who’d just lost a child, and were in a position to care for him. Whenever I try to imagine what it must have been like to live through those times, I’m always reminded of the *Manic Street Preachers’* song, ‘If you tolerate this, then your children will be next’.

I guess that’s why that generation, our forebearers, fought not only to stop fascism but for a better life for themselves and their children. Coming out of the Great Depression, they’d had enough, and they knew,

there was a better way, and after WW2, they demanded change and a fairer share of the wealth. They collectivised, organised and won a new deal for workers: massive council house building, nationalisation of key services like energy and transport, an NHS free at point of need, access to free education, and jobs for everyone that offered a decent standard of living, with pensions that would allow folk comfort and dignity, in their old age.

That’s where the UCS struggle comes in because 1971 represented the start of the neo-liberal attack, on working people’s power but the shop stewards involved in the UCS work-in stopped them for a while at least. It was a fantastic campaign. One of the most powerful attributes in it was those that fought here weren’t union general secretaries or paid union officers. The work-in’s leaders were the authentic shopfloor voices.

The demand, put by STUC general secretary Jimmy Jack, was for a Scottish Parliament – one could protect the real wealth of the Scottish people, as represented by the embattled stewards of organised labour. For him, the Parliament should be a workers’ parliament! This was a massive moment, for both the labour movement and Scotland as it fused together the cause of labour and democracy, and played no small part in both defining the STUC’s commitment towards creating and sustaining a Scottish Parliament. We still have a long way to go in creating that workers’ parliament - one that has the transformative effect on our economy. But the key point is: it’s now upon us to deliver it.

We need to achieve this because the economy has failed working people - it is not serving the needs of the many. The post-war generation rightly expected, because of their efforts and sacrifices, things would keep getting better for each generation. Instead, we’re slipping backwards with alarming speed.

We face the biggest global economic

crisis in living memory and while the immediate superficial cause is COVID-19, the virus has drawn its strength from generations of injustices. It does not discriminate on the lines of class – but its effects are clearly exacerbated, by imbalances of income, wealth and power. So, while we’re all riding the same storm, we are most certainly not all doing so in the same boat.

Scotland has shamefully high poverty levels. Prior to the pandemic, over a million people were living in poverty, and over half of those had a working adult in their household, highlighting Scotland’s poverty levels are increasingly driven by in-work poverty due to a prevalence of low wage, insecure jobs. Privatisation, short-term investment, and corporate dominance have placed workers in a position of weakness, made worse by state driven attacks on unions. This has led to the growth of precarious work, through bogus self-employment, zero hours contracts, and unwanted part-time working. Added to other factors, hundreds of thousands of Scottish workers experience a toxic mix of low wages, insecure contracts, rising fuel and food costs, high rents, and poor housing. These outcomes are not accounted for by a shortage of wealth - what we have is inequality in how that wealth is shared.

Even before the pandemic but starkly highlighted by it, the people that have kept our society going, are the cleaners, carers, nurses, supermarket workers, cleansing workers, delivery workers, public transport workers, and many, many more. They’re low-paid, predominantly women, frontline key workers, who have now risked their own health to keep us all safe. So, when we speak of recovery, it’s not about going back to the pre-pandemic period. By recovery, we mean recovering for working-class people, recovering from the income, wealth and sense of collective purpose stolen from us by decades of political bias towards the rich and powerful.

This is where we take issue, with the

government responses. For all the welcome rhetoric - the well-being economy, levelling up, building back better etcetera - there is as yet no plan to abolish the built-up conditions that made society so damaging to so many in the first place. Neither the Scottish Government nor any others will be able to deliver on their warm words without fundamental state intervention to reset the rules of the game and deliver a more level playing field for workers.

So, the STUC launched its 'People's Recovery', subtitled: 'For a different track for Scotland's economy'. Our demands combine short-term measures to rebuild our economy with medium and longer-term measures to create a democratic and green economy, and a society in which workers and their families have fair work, decent housing, and a proper safety net. We called for a fundamental rethink, on the purposes of growth, and the introduction of a number of urgent measures, that, if implemented, would deliver the sort of economic transformation required, to support greater economic justice for all our citizens.

It's important to note from the outset that not all of the required actions sit within the current powers of the Scottish Government. Many of our demands still rest within the jurisdiction of Westminster.

So, given the Scottish Government's democratic mandate, and stated intention to hold another independence referendum within the life of the current Parliament, it will be important for us to establish to what degree the constitutional proposals that will eventually be offered to the people, will be able to meet our demands for our People's Recovery.

This should be the key question asked by trade unionists in Scotland in determining any position we might chose to take in the run up to any further independence referendum. The context is that neither the Growth Commission version of independence in the EU, offered by the SNP, nor the current status quo offered by the Tory-led Westminster Government - or even models of Federalism, if they lack the appropriate powers - will deliver manifest change for a fairer share of

the wealth for Scotland's workers. For that, we need to secure a very different approach to rebuilding Scotland's economy - one that will involve us gaining powers at a local, a national and UK level to counter the neo-liberal economic system that has failed working-class people.

So, the forthcoming constitutional debate will give us an opportunity to start talking about the powers we need to effect real change. But to get the decision-makers, law-makers and politicians to offer us viable options for that, we'll need to movement build from the bottom up. That means educating, agitating and organising, workplace-by-workplace and street-by-street, in order to harness the anger



of what our people have been through and channel it into demanding that change. That is what I mean by people power and by collective people power. In this, we'll need to use the lessons from our past successes.

The UCS work-in was not just a fine example of how to run an industrial dispute - it was also a fine example of how to escalate political pressure and create leverage over decision-makers, even when those decision-maker comprised an anti-union Tory government. It was also a great example of how a union centre like the STUC can use its position to support workers in struggle, and help them achieve victory. This is something the STUC has a proud tradition of delivering upon, and which we're developing once again. Because given the tough times working people are facing, we as a whole movement need to become a well-oiled fighting machine.

What advice would our forbearers give us here? I think they'd tell us to have more hope, to have more confidence, and to remember what they achieved, and the odds they were fighting against. I think they'd tell us that 'enough is enough', it's time to stand

up, and start fighting back and that we are more powerful than we think and can dare to imagine. They'd tell us to embrace the technology now available to us, and they'd point to the tens of thousands of participants in digital organised events, spanning the globe, encouraging us to act local but think global.

They'd tell us to be bolder, more militant, have more urgency and to devote every ounce of our resources and efforts to educating people about the changes required, building up collectives and developing strong leaders at a local level. They'd tell us this because our power is rooted, in our workplaces and our communities!

And they'd warn us, that if we don't act now, if we leave it too late, then the right will split the progressive forces in society again, using the old tactic of 'divide and rule'. Finally, they'd tell us that after all our people have been through, they are ready now to fight for a better future. They'd tell us we must not just ride out the storm of this pandemic, but we have to be the storm. Because if we tolerate this then our children will be next!

The video of the full lecture is available at <https://reidfoundation.scot/2021/10/video-of-2021-reid-foundation-annual-lecture-by-roz-foyer-stuc-general-secretary-now-available/>

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# Back to the workplace to rebuild working-class power

*Helen McFarlane welcomes the election of the new UNITE leader and looks forward better times*

I am delighted Sharon Graham won the election to be General Secretary of UNITE. She stood on setting out her vision for UNITE as a union refocusing efforts and resources on 'doing what it says on the tin' and fight hard for jobs, pay and conditions. Sharon attracted supporting nominations from 28 branches in Scotland from a range of sectors, including the biggest branches such as NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, Edinburgh and Borders District Council and the Glasgow Electrical Plumbing and Mechanical Branch. She inspired a team of activists to campaign for votes throughout the election process.

With Covid-19 meaning many members were still working from home, online social media campaigning was key. However, where members were at work, then Sharon's campaign team were out in force. Traditional campaigning included leafleting at shift changeover times with material tailored to members. There were 5am starts at bus depots with leaflets focussed on drivers and engineers and the team moving to hospital entrances at 8am with leaflets adapted with key messages for lab workers, support staff, psychologists, nurses and speech therapists. Sharon worked as national executive officer for leverage and organising before becoming General Secretary so it was in keeping to see her campaign utilise organising tactics and generating nominations and targeting votes amongst members within these big branches.

Her manifesto was set out in six sections with commitments to reinvigorate lay member democracy, establishing combines bringing together stewards from each of the top ten companies and employers within each sector and reviewing all resource allocation to ensure maximum chance of winning industrial disputes. The manifesto also focussed upon bringing the equalities agenda to the bargaining table and ensuring community and retired member sections get access to funds to better support industrial and community wins.

One section of Sharon's manifesto

is of particular interest to Scotland where she sets out her plans to further recognise the devolved powers of the nations where UNITE has membership such as Gibraltar, Ireland, Wales and, of course, Scotland. She made it clear that any decisions affecting Scottish members must be made by Scottish members. This includes UNITE policy position on any Westminster request for a second independence referendum - and any UNITE recommendation in any such election. Like the population at large across Scotland, UNITE members are split on their views for or against independence but on the issue of whether Westminster should agree to a second referendum if requested by the Scottish government the UNITE Scottish Executive Council is already clear: Westminster should agree.

Sharon's victory was described by some mainstream media as a surprise. Certainly, she came under immense pressure to stand down in favour of Steve Turner, touted as McCluskey's successor for many years and who secured the nomination as the United Left (UL) candidate. Turner did not attract much support in Scotland with the breakaway officer-led so-called progressive group throwing its weight behind losing UL nominee, Howard Beckett.

When Beckett withdrew, he circulated a video message urging his supporters - the majority of his nominations being Scottish - to vote for Turner. With well over 500 branch nominations and declarations of support from national officers, all regional secretaries including in Scotland, many assumed Turner was the heir apparent. But comparisons to my own election campaign for UNITE Executive Council demonstrated that machine politics in the union are no match for campaigning on a clear message of lay member democracy and supporting workplace struggles. I won the popular vote, beating the sitting candidate by a significant margin. So, Sharon's victory sends a similar message. Machine politics and relying on officer-led organisations has had its day.

Sharon has wasted no time in putting

into practice her programme. Her first act in her first days of being elected included requesting a list of all active disputes in UNITE and arranging a zoom call with all stewards and responsible regional officers. She gave media interviews in her first few weeks into her new role stressing her priority was meeting all members engaged in struggle rather than attending Labour's conference. She then attended picket lines across UK giving her personal support and allocating communication, research, economic analysts and other resources needed to help win these disputes. In week one, she moved the General Secretary office to be more accessible than top floor of Holborn House, set up a members' hotline to the general secretary's office and set out her plans to publish her expenses and appoint a finance director as soon as possible - all examples of the openness and transparency that marked her campaign.

She has also been busy securing key supporters into pivotal roles to ensure she delivers. This bodes well for long overdue changes in Scotland where the organising and leverage approach has been derogatively described as a 'union within the union'. Officers and leading lay members in Scotland who campaigned for the *status quo* and contributed to the scaremongering of what a Sharon Graham victory would ensue are likely to be considering their positions. My advice would be to get with the programme or make way and enable a new vibrant lay membership left grouping to emerge, free from officer interference.

Sharon has set out her manifesto to the UNITE national executive and to approximately 1,000 UNITE policy conference delegates, responding to questions and helping members understand the programme for change she was elected on - and intends to deliver. For Scotland, I believe there many are reasons to be cheerful.

*Helen McFarlane is a UNITE Executive Council member for Scotland and writes here in a personal capacity.*

# Against de-politicisation: For working-class environmentalism

Ewan Kerr critiques current offerings and argues for a socialist strategy to prevent planetary collapse

COP26 has now arrived in Glasgow. These two November weeks will be remembered as a critical moment for the future of the planet, and we should be in no doubt what is at stake. Heatwaves, wildfires, flash flooding and biodiversity loss have become more noticeable for those of us living in Global North but are becoming far worse for those in the Global South, who have long lived at the sharp end of extreme weather events. According to the IPCC's report in August, the outlook is grim. Climate change cannot be averted, and there is little cause for optimism that, under the UK's presidency, COP26 can successfully limit emissions in order to keep global temperatures below 2°C. Despite this, there is widespread awareness of these issues and there is public appetite for change. YouGov (4 June 2021) polling has shown the environment consistently ranks in the top three most important issues in the UK, and a global survey by the UN (Guardian 27 January 2021) found two-thirds of respondents think climate change is a global emergency. And yet we find little evidence that the transformative policies which are required to address the severity of the climate crisis are being taken up.

The Paris Agreement (2015) and Kyoto Protocol (2005) show that international agreements remain flawed instruments that make binding agreements between national governments at an international level difficult to achieve. In explaining this, we have to look first and foremost at the level of the nation-state. It is governments and states who create, implement and sustain international environmental negotiations such as COP26. National presidencies of these negotiations are a significant factor which determines their successes or failures – the weakness of the UK on the world-stage gives further cause for skepticism regarding possible outcomes. Shifting domestic political and economic interests have led national governments to remain fixated upon market solutions such as carbon pricing, combined with technological fixes such as carbon

capture and storage which simply shift environmental problems around without addressing their underlying causes. These have roundly failed to resist the pull of a 'business-as-usual' *status quo* that is locked into fossil capital. But they present something more than just false solutions for they also represent an attempt to disguise the political character of environmental problems by de-politicising the climate crisis.

De-politicisation, firstly, seeks to stifle and diffuse the antagonistic relations of power that underpin environmental issues by posing them as universal problems which affect everyone equally. This is the view, as the sociologist Ulrich Beck once put it, that 'smog is democratic'. Whether it be Tony Blair's belief in 2005 that 'Global warming is too serious for the world any longer to ignore its danger or split into opposing factions on it', or Al Gore's view in 2007 that 'the climate crisis is not a political issue, it is a moral and spiritual challenge to all of humanity', this presents environmental problems as requiring techno-managerial solutions which are achievable through narrow institutional reform. This is useful for governments and big businesses as it deflects blame and allows the climate crisis to be framed as a crisis for humanity, instead of being defined by inequality and injustice. This path of least resistance may keep those with vested interests content by presenting little threat to profitability but has so far done little to make any meaningful headway into tackling the climate crisis.

De-politicisation, secondly, allows nominally progressive political organisations to put environmental issues beyond the scope of conventional political action. Here, the SNP's tendency to blame everyone but itself for repeated failures of policy is instructive. The Scottish Government's 'Third Way hand-wringing', as Jamie Maxwell put it in *Jacobin* (21 August 2021), has led to abandoned Bi-Fab workers, a refusal to solidly come out against the Cambo oil development and a failure to meet the SNP's own carbon

targets for three years running. More worryingly, environmental movements like Extinction Rebellion (XR) show some naivety when they suggest we must, in their own words, go 'beyond politics' and 'beyond ideology' where 'somebody has to win (and therefore someone loses)'. XR are only the latest incarnation of the mistaken view that environmental movements should go 'beyond –left and –right'. This often ignores the conflict between competing interests which a political understanding of the climate crisis draws attention to. Without a structural diagnosis of power relations which lie at the heart of environmental problems, XR fails to recognise that the climate crisis produces winners as well as losers but also of the limits of forever standing outside the state, as Sam Gindin and Leo Panitch put it in *The Socialist Challenge Today: Syriza, Corbyn, Sanders* (2020). XR's choice of targets is also deeply questionable – XR's leadership were charged in August 2020 with plotting to commit acts of criminal damage on buildings owned by UNITE and UNISON, while their direct activism against commuters in predominantly working-class areas has attracted significant controversy.

De-politicisation, therefore, frames the climate crisis as either a problem of market failure which can be resolved through narrow institutional reform or technological fixes, or of a crisis of humanity that requires we 'go beyond' politics. In doing so, de-politicisation ignores the uneven causes and effects of environmental problems and writes out the class, racial and gender dynamics of environmental issues. In place of this, we need to frame the climate crisis as a problem of social transformation that requires political interventions suited to tackling unequal power relations in society. Politics is fundamentally about the conflict between antagonistic and competing group interests. A politicised understanding of environmental problems highlights questions of economic ownership, social control and political power: the climate crisis becomes a class issue that requires a strong working-class response. For

this reason, we need 'working-class environmentalism' that should include, but not be limited to, a political party that is serious about winning state power and that has capacity to enact an ambitious and transformative eco-socialist agenda. This party should be backed up by a working-class movement that focuses upon the imbalances of power that lie behind social antagonisms and that creates the conditions for environmental catastrophe.

Luckily, we do not need to rely upon technocratic governments, timid politicians nor strategically inept social movements for this. Despite the end of the Corbyn project and ongoing moves against socialists within Labour, there are still reasons for hope. Labour for a Green New Deal (LGND) is a grassroots campaign within Labour that has set out compelling eco-socialist solutions to the climate crisis. Arguing for a socialist and worker-led transition, LGND is an advocate of a state-led response that has the principles of democracy, solidarity, justice and internationalism at its heart. We believe that that the climate crisis is first and foremost a crisis of capitalism. This requires not only a planned socialist economy where production is geared towards social use and environmental sustainability, but also a just adaptation to a more crisis-prone environment. Central to this is a massive extension of public ownership and the introduction of innovative democratic models of ownership, but also a Just Transition which can create millions of decent, well-paid and unionised jobs. This all requires that the UK's draconian anti-union laws are revoked in their entirety. At this year's annual conference, delegates voted overwhelmingly to commit the party to support a visionary 'Green New Deal', and for the extension of public ownership and community wealth building. These transformative ideas – many of which first appeared in the 2017 and 2019 manifestos – remain hugely popular with the general public. Instead of continued retreat, the left within Labour would do well to begin the hard work of rebuilding its support base from the bottom up by reconnecting activists, members and communities using these policies as a starting point for serious strategic discussion. However, there is no easy nor straightforward route for the

left's renewal: without doubt, a hard road lies ahead as Starmer's counter-revolution intensifies. Ultimately though 'the Labour Party must be criticised, but it cannot be discarded' as Aneesa Akbar put it (*Tribune* 12 October 2021).

More optimistically, the union movement is beginning to assert itself as a vital environmental agent of change, able to develop and implement innovative solutions to environmental problems. Despite a historic skepticism towards environmentalism, unions have engaged with climate issues at the workplace and beyond, and can answer the challenge of environmental problems from a distinctly working-class perspective. The emergence of working-class environmentalism within the union movement, what I describe as labour-environmentalism,



can revitalise unions, but also holds the prospects for a re-radicalisation of the union movement as a social force which can champion a distinctly working-class variant of environmental politics. Moreover, labour-environmentalism does not require a profound transformation of the intellectual traditions and ideological resources associated with trade unionism – the union movement has a long history of articulating alternative economic strategies which challenge the rationality of the market by being rooted within the notion of solidarity and a moral economy. By emphasising that it is the expansionary dynamic of capitalist accumulation which lies at the heart of the climate crisis, these can steer well clear of the questionable and often incoherent politics of 'degrowth'. Here, contemporary unions can learn much from the Alternative Plan produced by Lucas Aerospace workers in the mid- to late-1970s, and the occupation of the Vestas plant

on the Isle of Wight in 2009, which was framed by workers themselves as a struggle for a more democratic economy and Just Transition for workers. In addition to this, Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED) have vocally advocated for the democratic ownership of energy production. In all these cases, trade unionism has articulated a challenge to the rationality of market relations by putting production for social use ahead of production for profit, and acted more as swords of justice than just another set of vested economic interests.

The labour and union movements can, therefore, articulate an alternative and class-based politics of the environment – a working-class environmentalism – that puts class relations, capitalism and power at the centre of our analysis of – and action on – the climate crisis. This is not to romanticise Labour nor fetishise the unions. By abandoning his 10 pledges, Starmer provides a timely reminder that Labour is not a socialist party, but a party with socialists in it. Meanwhile, the integrative and transformative tensions within the union movement present as many challenges as opportunities. Despite this, these organs of working-class power remain the best hope for socialists to organise within. If this requires shifting the balance of forces internally in these organisations as we tackle the imbalance of power in society, so be it. There are no final victories nor final defeats. With visionary leadership, an engaged membership and energised activists, it is possible to popularise and institutionalise a transformative, emancipatory vision of a fair, just and sustainable society. Given time is rapidly running out, we need to quickly assert our demand for democratic eco-socialism over barbarism. The cause of labour is the hope of the world – and now, more than ever before, we have a world to win.

*Ewan Kerr is a Senior Teaching Fellow in Environmental Politics at the University of Edinburgh, and recently completed his PhD thesis entitled 'The Politics of Labour-Environmentalism'. He is Research and Policy National Co-Lead with Labour for a Green New Deal, and a member of Glasgow Kelvin Constituency Labour Party.*



# Climate justice and climate jobs: one is necessary for the other

Below is an excerpt of a speech by Annie Morgan, speaking to the Climate Justice rally during COP26:

This decade is the crucial time, possibly in the entire history of human existence of planet earth, for radical change in how our species exists in relation to the natural world. We face a 'metabolic rift' in terms of the ruination of ecosystems, largely through an economic system based on profit and out of kilter with the natural world on which our species and other species depend. This economic system, capitalism, is choking the planet. We also require a thorough change in the way political decisions are made within moves towards economic democracy. This economic democracy means economic growth must be challenged in terms of its production levels which lead to the over consumption culture driving pollution.

In North America, the work of the water protectors and pipeline protestors is a vital example of action and integral to ways in which we can share and shape radical international co-operation to effect change. Their achievements despite arrests, assassinations and imprisonments are encouraging. A recent report by the Water Protectors (North America) and Oil Change International shows that more than 25% of annual US and Canadian emissions had been stopped or delayed by resistance. This side of the pond, activists against preparation to open the Cambo oil field have forced a postponement. Trade Unions for Energy Democracy provides another other example of international action and solidarity.

In Scotland, reforming land use and ownership vital to how we encourage green jobs in regenerative agriculture and move towards more soil health and increased local production. Nearly 60% of rural land in Scotland is in private hands. Promises by billionaires to

rewild their estates do not offset the environmental degradation involved in 'fast fashion'. We cannot have any hope in 'high financiers' running country estates – even if they have been appointed by the SNP Scottish Government to influential advisory positions. The danger of putting companies in the forefront of mitigation cannot be overstated. It is a false hope to have dependence upon fossil corporations moving to a 'net zero' carbon emission age.

Since a post-extraction economy is a long way off, supporting workers in a transition to climate caring jobs, locally, nationally and inter-nationally in an ecologically based socialist transformation is the way forward. Climate caring jobs include looking after people, from nursery through to further and higher education. Many of these could be based around cooperatives and non-profit community led projects which do not contradict the concept of public ownership but could enhance economic democracy. Part and parcel of this would be participatory budgeting with unions, workers, unemployed workers, retired workers, those who cannot work, carers, and students as future workers deciding how the monies from public purse are spent. We could also create community campuses where older skilled workers can pass on their crafts to younger people and training in retrofitting and renewable energy can be explored and

implemented. Energy which won't cost the earth. For as the slogan goes: there is no Planet B so let's get working on Planet A - A for alternative to this failed capitalist system!

Annie Morgan is a climate activist with ScotE3 and a member of the Unite union retired section

## Launch of Reid Foundation paper, 'Beyond Just Transition', 7pm, Thurs 2 December 2021

After the COP26 circus has left town, we invite you to engage in thinking through how union and environmental movements can work together by learning from each other in a way that requires going beyond 'Just Transition'. This is to lay out the basis for an economy and society that is democratic, egalitarian and environmentally safe.

Dr Eurig Scandrett will present his paper called 'Beyond Just Transition' - details below. He is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Queen Margaret University and a longstanding union activist and environmental campaigner.

The paper will be discussed by Fiona Montgomery (UNISON Scotland officer), Sam Mason (PCS union political officer) and Dave Moxham (STUC deputy general secretary).

Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/beyond-just-transition-tickets-203242412527>



# Bringing working class politics to COP26

*Colin Fox looks at some practical steps socialists in Scotland can take to counter the climate emergency*

**T**he COP26 summit in Glasgow is a defining moment in the struggle to keep the planet from climate catastrophe' warned the *Financial Times* editorial on the eve of the event on 29 October 2021. Yet it is fair to say that all eyes have not been on the 'ball' as far as global warming is concerned since the last COP gathering. The UN's annual Conference of the Parties was delayed a year by the COVID pandemic which in turn commanded most of the world's attention and to some extent still does. It is understandable then that Boris Johnson felt the chances of success in Glasgow was 'touch and go' according to the *Financial Times* (26 October 2021). That may be expectation management on his part of course. On the other hand, global warming 'successes' are in such short supply that UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, gloomily insisted the world was 'still on track for climate catastrophe' after the G7 failed to deliver the £100bn climate finance promised to the developing world at COP25. His analysis puts the planet on course for a 2.7oC temperature increase above pre-industrial levels by 2100. And this, after the much-heralded Paris COP in 2015 agreed to a 1.5oC rise.

And yet the approach being taken by big business and its political leaders like Johnson, as evidenced by the Global Investment Summit held in London in October, is to complacently promote 'business as usual'. Private capital was promised such lucrative rewards for greater engagement with the global warming threat that consequently their appetite for electric cars, renewable energy, plant-based diets - and the financial rewards accompanying them - is now insatiable. The transition from fossil fuels to renewables, for example, is being led by multi-national corporations like Iberdrola, owners of Scottish Power, among others. The earth's bounty of free wind, tides and sunshine is being privatised and sold back to us by venture capitalists. A new boom is being lined up on the journey to 'net zero' and the world's poorest stand to get nothing. It's the age-old conflict in our 'grave new world'.

The Scottish Socialist Party's (SSP) view is that working people need to be aware of the threat global warming poses and be alert to solutions that both benefit and dis-benefit us. Decarbonisation and moving towards a plant-based diet can help keep the global temperature rise below 2oC. Additionally, there are, as the recent STUC paper 'The Green New Deal' has shown, thousands of jobs that can be created in Scotland in renewable energy, retro-fitting buildings, extra demand for public transport, improved energy efficiency, waste management and in imaginative new uses of our land, forests and seas.



In embracing the challenge climate change poses, the SSP advocates a socialist 'New Deal' where the transition to renewables is embraced with gusto and guarantees are provided to those whose livelihoods are threatened by enforced reconfiguration of our economy and society. All solutions, however, must, as far as the SSP is concerned, include the redistribution of wealth. That requires a serious political challenge to global capitalism, of course. When the rich and powerful are so resistant to that change, huge political challenges are posed and new leadership of the working-class movement is required.

Two initiatives the SSP has rallied behind could deliver both. Our Bill to introduce Free Public Transport, presented to Holyrood 20 years ago, sought to drive down emissions and reduce inequalities together. The Belgian city of Hasselt introduced the measure first in 2000 to great success. Similar initiatives were

then subsequently taken up in the 'downtown' area of several US cities. And Luxembourg recently became the first country in the world to follow Hasselt's lead. Malta last month unveiled similar plans. It's clearly an idea whose time has come. Our second key initiative demands the return of Scotland's oil, gas and electricity industries to public hands to lead the transition to clean energy and eradicate the scourge of fuel poverty. As things stand, private energy companies reap the rich rewards Scotland's natural bounty bestows whilst fuel poverty kills thousands annually.

Socialists must fight for solutions to global warming that make our lives easier and the world fairer. In the run up to COP26, the SSP campaigned on street stalls, leafleting door-to-door, writing letters to the press and to Government Ministers and hosted both 'in person' and online forums urging people to combat global warming and widening inequalities together.

And the response? Initially, many felt global warming was an issue of little immediate concern to them. Then, as the publicity surrounding the Glasgow event intensified, we noticed how young people in particular seemed better informed about the issues and conflicts involved. So public awareness of the need to ensure working people's interests are fully considered in this debate has markedly increased. Of course, the question inevitably arises 'who is going to deliver such progressive reforms?' Is Nicola Sturgeon going to introduce free public transport? Or is Keir Starmer going to return essential public services to public hands? No, of course not. Working people are going to have to press for them ourselves through mass action and effective political mobilisation. At the same time, the global warming protest movement needs to develop a deeper understanding of the material interests of the mass of the population, not least in the developing world.

*Colin Fox is the national co-spokesperson of the Scottish Socialist Party and a former MSP*

# German federal election 2021: votes lost and re-found

*Victor Grossman looks beyond Merkel's party's defeat to see how the left still lost out*

When the German election result became known on 26 September, there were cheers and tears. But the outcome in Europe's strongest economy was no humdrum matter. The end of Angela Merkel's 16-year-long premiership added a special twist. So, who raised cheers and who cried tears?

Anyone who loved the Social Democrats (SPD) could be more than happy. After sagging lower and lower in recent years, almost seemingly heading towards oblivion, they swooped back upwards in a few months at an amazing speed and won the federal election, by a thin margin, entitling them to form the next government. They also won out in state elections in northern Mecklenburg-West Pomerania and the city-state of Berlin.

The defeat of Merkel's Christian Democratic 'Union' (CDU) was not an occasion for mourning. It is a double party. The Bavarians have an independent wing, usually voting with the main party, asserting its right to some Cabinet seats when the Union rules, but at times asserting even more reactionary leanings than its bigger sibling. Currently, each wing is blaming the other for their joint election loss. The Bavarian Christian Social Union says the weak candidate - instead of their own man - was to blame while the others say the Bavarians sabotaged their joint candidate.

However, Merkel's cautious balancing act between support for the bellicose policies of Washington towards Russia and China, with a giant military build-up, and her support for vital trade and diplomacy with both powers, is now in question. Her economics minister approved the Baltic gas pipeline from Russia, for example, while her defence minister preferred ever more armed manoeuvring at its borders. Her departure may contain a mixed message about German foreign policy.

What about the new lead actors on the federal stage, the SPD? Their miserable poll results last spring, down to 14% at one time, reflected their weakened links with the working people who

had been their basis for more than a century. During their years of coalition government with the Greens (1998-2005) their record was disastrous, in their merciless treatment of the jobless and pensioners, for whom the retirement age was raised from 65 to 67 and, far worse, their break with the post-1945 refrain from any German deployment to foreign wars by sending planes to join in subduing Serbia. Their chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, was smart enough to win re-election by keeping Germany out of the Iraq war in 2003, but domestic betrayals during the SPD's junior partnership with Merkel lost him further working-class backing. But new promises won former voters back while it was largely the choice for the lesser of two evils which brought the SPD its slim victory in September.

But the number of seats it won, 206 (of 735) was far from enough to form a government. In former times one partner was sufficient for that. But with six parties dividing the Bundestag, this is only possible if the two biggest parties joined hands, as they have since 2013. But their Grand Coalition with the Christian Democrats has run its course and is no longer feasible, forcing the SPD to find two partners to achieve a majority.

In Germany, parties are designated by colours. The CDU, still vaguely clerical, has black. The SPD sticks to red (though pink would be more appropriate). The smaller Free Democratic Party (FDP) has chosen yellow so Germany will now get a 'traffic light coalition' of red, green and yellow. While red and green like to be seen as left-of-centre, the FDP, traditionally secular and, therefore, labelled as 'liberal' is a strictly big business party. Its main objective is to promote capitalist interests without tax increases on the wealthy.

It seems clear that each party must give and take; toning down some demands, putting more pressure on other ones. The Greens may retreat on demands for 80mph speed limits even on autobahn stretches where 150mph or more is now allowed, or on cutting fossil fuel usage and gasoline motorcars by 2030, or postpone and forget other tougher

demands. Maybe the SPD will ease up on its promises for working people, like the date of retirement with full pension, how much pension money should be invested in the stock market, how soon should minimum wages be raised from €9.60 €12 an hour.

But the FDP wants two demands to be 'red lines'. One is protecting the well-to-do from higher taxes. The other is a tight restriction on making debts for social improvements, for children, the needy, those with precarious or no jobs, the elderly. How improvements promised by the SPD and the Greens can be realised without higher taxes on the wealthy or dipping into deficits is still a mystery. But the FDP, smallest of the three, seems to be the toughest because it knows it is critical to form the triangle.

Despite their differences, all three parties are united in wanting to preserve free enterprise and free market which for them equates with free democracy. But there are two other parties with players in the Bundestag. What about them? One is the Alternative for Germany (AfD), split from the start between its rabid pro-fascists and a more cultivated wing which is often embarrassed when the other wing betrays too clearly its genuine beliefs. Nationally, the party barely held on to a two-digit result (10.3%), down 2.3% from 2017, but the more open pro-fascists won first place in two East German states (Saxony 24.6%, Thuringia 24%). No other party dares to warm up to them as yet, but some politicians in the FDP and the Union flirt with the idea. Its strength in eastern Germany is related to the weakening of the smallest Bundestag party, The Left - Die Linke - created in 2007 by 'old faithful' remnants of the once dominant Socialist Unity Party in the East and militant trades unionists and leftists in West Germany.

Too few, even on the left, have ever realized the extent of devastation of East Germany, the German Democratic Republic in 1990, after so-called 'reunification' - really annexation or colonisation, even though it was approved by a demoralised and cleverly deceived majority (see *Scottish Left*

Review November/December 2020).

Not only were nearly entire sectors of industry wrecked but in academia, journalism, public administration, the judicial system and government at nearly every level West Germans replaced East Germans and were given a special 'bonus' for their sacrifice. Countless towns and villages were emptied, especially of their younger inhabitants who, finding few jobs in the abandoned factories and occupied institutions, moved by the million to Switzerland, Austria, Holland, Scandinavia but especially West Germany. Far more girls and young women left than males; they could more easily fend for themselves. With a rejected orientation and limited hopes for the future, with GDR cultural centres and free sports facilities shut down, many hung around bars or the like and became easy prey for fascist recruiters and organisers from West Germany.

A few industrial centres picked up, like Leipzig, Dresden and around Berlin. Many never recovered. In all areas a deep bitterness about their status as 'second class citizens' developed - and against the 'Wessies'. In the early years of 'unified Germany' many voters, especially those cherishing GDR memories, voted left, with results reaching 20-25%. Some left party leaders in the East were able to join in coalition governments, indeed, they have just joined with the SPD in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, they still head a Left-Green-SPD coalition in Thuringia and will continue the red-green-red coalition in Berlin. But it was just such participation in state government which, while achieving some social improvements, also limited party militancy and resistance to an establishment which many easterners distrusted and resented. To make matters worse, the media, almost 100% western-owned, led them to believe that the government was assisting refugees and immigrants with support they felt they should be receiving; thus fear, even hatred of foreigners, especially Muslims, was skilfully used to direct emotions and action, leading to the growth of the far right and the weakening of The Left, many of whose supporters, the faithful from GDR years, were dying off.

Such developments help explain the election tragedy, with The Left losing about two million votes and landing in last place with only 4.9%, hardly half the 9.2% it received in 2017 when it became the leading opposition party. It came close to completely losing its status in the Bundestag, which requires a minimum of 5% but was saved from total defeat by a special rule in Germany's complex election rules.

When Germans vote they make two crosses on their ballots; first, for a candidate in their own district, second, for the party they prefer. The winner of the first votes gets a seat directly. The percentage obtained in the second vote determines how many seats a party receives, even if it fails to win a single seat directly. Who gets these seats is decided by a list chosen by each party before the election; the more crosses obtained in that second column, the more listed nominees will be seated. If 5% is not achieved nationally none



on the list get in, but only those who won out in their own district do. It's a complicated system but does guarantee smaller parties a voice - if they reach 5%.

Sadly, The Left missed this but was surprisingly saved by this special rule. If a party's delegates win out in three or more of their own districts (with those first crosses) their parties are seated proportionally, just as if they had reached 5%. And The Left squeezed through, with two candidates winning seats in (East) Berlin and Leipzig. Its 4.9% will thus get it 39 seats, far less than the previous 69 but enough to form a caucus with all of its rights, rooms, staff jobs and privileges.

That miraculous rescue is of great importance. A powerful Germany is intent on economic and military expansion on a scale second only to the USA, Russia and China, and the endeavours of giants like Bayer-Monsanto, BASF, Daimler, Aldi, Krupp, Rheinmetall, the Deutsche Bank are supported by all parties except The Left. Only a few minor SPD voices have called

for the removal of American nuclear bombs from German soil or opposed armed drones. As for the Greens, its leaders are loudest in demanding that Germany 'stand up' to Russia.

Why has The Left now taken such a beating? One reason was red-baiting by CSU, desperate to regain strength by warning that a SPD-Green-Left take-over would plunge Germany into reprising the (East) German Democratic Republic. But that was neither new nor successful. Then, too, COVID played a part, limiting efforts of smaller parties to reach voters. Far more injurious were the quarrels among The Left leaders, gladly played up in the mass media and often centering around the personality of Sahra Wagenknecht, the party's finest orator and best-known media figure but who, step by step, has broken with her former leading positions in the party. Whether these were based on personal animosities and jealousies, ambition, or genuine strategy differences, they boiled up during the campaign and did serious damage to the party's image.

But for many on the left, a main cause of defeat were the hopes of some party leaders to join with the SPD and Greens in a coalition government. As their gains in the polls made this seem

more possible, The Left electioneering focused mostly against the CSU and FDP and avoided hurting Greens' or SPD feelings, alluding only to mild differences which could surely be ironed out. But this meant compromises on basic questions, while SPD and Greens stuck to their guns - almost literally. Would The Left still oppose NATO and demand a peaceful European collective including Russia? Did it still reject deploying Bundeswehr troops on foreign missions? If so, it was insisted, it could not be included in any government coalition. Despite The Left's programme, some candidates and leaders weakened. Consequently, the splits were very public and their effect very dispiriting.

*Defecting to the GDR in 1952, Victor Grossman writes the 'Berlin Bulletins' and his autobiographies are 'Crossing the River, A Memoir of the American Left, the Cold War, and Life in East Germany' (2003) and 'A Socialist Defector: From Harvard to Karl-Marx-Allee' (2019).*

# Ireland: from 1921 to 2021 and with implications for independence in Scotland

*On the occasion of the centenary of the founding of the Irish republic, Bill Bonnar asks questions about Scotland's future*

It's November 1921 in Inverness Town Hall. The British Cabinet are in the Highlands for a weekend of grouse shooting and have taken some time out to agree the final draft of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. This would establish the Irish Free State and the separate province of Northern Ireland the following year. How did we get here?

In April 1916, the Easter Rising took place in Dublin in which heroic Irish Republican forces staged a military uprising against British rule. Militarily, it was a non-contest as they were vastly outnumbered and outgunned. Politically, it represented a dramatic victory and paved the way for the end of British colonial rule. Support for an independent Ireland was always widespread but latent; an aspiration to be achieved some time in the future but beyond reach at this time. The Easter Rising changed all this. It was like someone had pressed a button in the consciousness of Irish people with independence now an immediate and urgent demand. This was reflected 18 months later in the general election of 1918 when Sinn Fein won a stunning election victory winning majorities in 26 of Ireland's 32 counties. Only in six of the eight counties of Ulster that had Protestant/Unionist majorities did they fail to win seats. Armed with a clear, democratic mandate, Sinn Fein declared Ireland to be an independent republic and formed a provisional government.

Not surprisingly the British Government refused to recognise the result, banned Sinn Fein and launched a campaign of mass repression against the Irish people, in effect, an aggressive re-occupation of the country. In response, Sinn Fein's military wing, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, launched an armed struggle to end the occupation. For the next eighteen months, a bloody conflict developed with the IRA launching guerrilla raids against the British forces and with the British responding with their own campaign of terror against the Irish people. It was a stalemate situation. The IRA were strong enough to wage a successful insurgency but not strong enough to drive the occupying forces out. The British Government

while strong enough to maintain the occupation was not strong enough to defeat the insurgency. Meanwhile in the six counties of what would become Northern Ireland, unionists were mobilising their own mass military force.

By 1920, it became clear to the British Government that it could not prevent the establishment of an independent Ireland. With this, it adopted a different approach: we will recognise the principle of independence but we will set the terms. These terms would include; the right of the Protestant/Unionists majority in the north to secede from an independent Ireland and remain part of Britain, Ireland would remain part of the British Empire with the king as head of state, MPs elected to the newly proposed Irish Parliament would have to swear an oath of allegiance to King George, British military bases would remain and the Ireland's new currency; the Punt, would be pegged to the British pound in a form of shared currency.

These proposals in turn plunged the republican movement into crisis. For the majority, it represented a sell-out falling far short of the independence they dreamed of. For the rest it was the best that could be achieved at this moment and would in the words of Michael Collins give Ireland the 'freedom to choose freedom'. It would be supported by most of the people thoroughly exhausted by the war. In 1921, the Treaty was put to a referendum and was voted on overwhelmingly. This was not surprising considering it had the support of the new Irish Provisional Government, the British Government, almost all the Irish media and the Catholic Church. Some witnesses at the time commented that when people went the polling stations to cast their vote for the Treaty they did so with little celebration. The British Government had made it clear that if it were rejected and the armed struggle resumed, they would inflict a massive war on the Irish people. Some likened it to be voting with a gun pointed to your head.

The Republican movement already split dissolved into a savage civil war between Treaty and anti-Treaty forces.

It represented the greatest tragedy in the history of the Irish independence movement as former comrades fought against each other. Supported by British military aid, the pro-Treaty forces comfortably won this conflict. In the film, *Michael Collins*, the tragedy is played out. Collins was the leader of the IRA and remains one of the greatest figures in Irish history. There is a scene where anti-Treaty forces are barricaded inside the Four Courts in Dublin surrounded by the new Free State army. These forces are all carrying British weapons, have British supplied artillery and Collins himself is directing operations in what looks like a British military uniform and travelling in a British military jeep. The tragedy of the situation could not have been clearer. Collins would later be assassinated by anti-Treaty forces.

The civil war ended in 1923 by which time the Anglo-Irish Treaty had been implemented. The Irish Free State was established in 1922 with Ireland divided. The six counties of Northern Ireland would remain part of Britain. The new Irish Parliament, Dail Eireann, was dominated by the pro-Treaty faction which would become Fianna Gael. This domination was helped by the fact that anti-Treaty MPs elected to the parliament refused to take their seats because they refused to take the oath of allegiance to the King. The leader of Sinn Fein, Eamon de Valera, tried to get this policy reversed and when he failed formed his own party, Fianna Fail, in 1926. In the general election of 1932 Fianna Fail became the largest party and began the process of undoing many of the provisions of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. This process had already begun in 1931 when an Act of the Westminster Parliament enacted a Statute of Westminster which ended Westminster's ability to legislate on behalf of the Dominions. This primarily affected Canada, Australia and New Zealand but also applied to Ireland. In 1932, the Irish Government abolished the Oath of Allegiance and later would withdraw Ireland from the British Empire. In 1937, a referendum formerly abolished the Free State and replaced it with the Republic of Ireland. The only

part of the Treaty still standing was the division of Ireland and the separate status of Northern Ireland. The new constitution laid claim to the province declaring as its aim the achievement of a united Ireland by peaceful means and 'with the democratic consent of all the peoples of Ireland'.

The Free State was created almost a century ago and represents the only example of part of the United Kingdom breaking away. What are the lessons for Scotland and its struggle for independence? If the 'Yes' side had won the referendum in 2014, how would things have proceeded? There would have been a two-year period of transition and negotiations leading to the establishment of an independent Scotland in 2016. Yet some of the likely compromises show significant similarities to those accepted by the Free State. Scotland would remain part of the British Commonwealth with the Queen as head of state. Presumably

Scottish MSPs would still take an Oath of Allegiance to the Queen. Scotland would almost certainly have a shared currency with England. Although this was rejected by the British Government during the campaign, it is almost certain it would be agreed in the negotiations. Westminster would also demand a leasing agreement for the Trident nuclear submarine base at Faslane and probably agreements on other military bases. Like the Free State of 1922, the new Independent Scotland of 2016 would have a compromised independence.

What about a future referendum? Here the similarities may be closer. In 1920, the British Government changed tact and accepted the principle of Irish independence. Taking the view that this was now inevitable, it sought to shape the nature of that independence in Britain's interests. One can imagine a scenario in the future with the Scottish and British Governments going down

the same road. This would involve reaching an agreement on issues like a common currency, Trident, the monarchy etcetera and putting this package to the Scottish people in a referendum. A referendum in which both governments, all the major parties in Scotland and most of the media would support the proposals. In this situation, there is no doubt that this would be endorsed overwhelmingly. Either because people had few problems with the compromises or would seek changes in the future: 'The freedom to achieve freedom'. It would also fit into the SNP's strategy for achieving independence, in so much as they have a strategy. Independence achieved not through struggle but through negotiations, compromise and agreement.

*Bill Bonnar is the International Secretary of the Scottish Socialist Party and a member of the Scottish Left Review editorial committee.*

## Fair Work Scotland: Scotrail or Scotfail?

*Gregor Gall says taking Scotrail into public ownership will test the SNP's left credentials*

Industrial relations at Scotrail have been at their worst for many, many years, culminating in the proposed two-week strike by RMT union members during COP26. While this dispute was resolved and the strike did not go ahead, the underlying issues of an arrogant, uncaring and undemocratic management remain. From 1 April 2022, the Scottish Government will run the franchise as Scotrail Trains, an operator of last resort with the franchise having been removed from current operator, Abellio. The \$64m dollar question is then: Will this lead to an improvement in industrial relations?

It should if the Scottish Government abides by its own Fair Work Scotland policy. This comprises a framework with five dimensions, two of which are 'effective voice' and 'respect'. Rather than having the same management system and managers, the opportunity is to create a new company structure where representatives of the workforce are on the board as worker directors. This is the policy of the four rail unions – ASLEF, RMT, TSSA and UNITE – see the 'A Vision For Scotland's Railways' document they published in October 2021. Worker directors should be able to smooth off any rough edges and foresee and forestall industrial relations problems.

But when it comes to the crunch, it will take more than just having such workforce representatives on the board in order to complement and supplement the existing industrial relations machinery based upon union recognition and collective bargaining. Key amongst the considerations are: A) Will the proportion of directors that will be the worker directors constitute anything more than a small minority that is rendered powerless?; B) Will they be given the resources to be trained to allow them to do their job as directors?; and C) Will they be subject to 'Chatham House rules' on commercial sensitivities etc so they cannot communicate properly with their members? So, will the SNP-Scottish Greens Scottish Government make sure there are workers directors and set them up in the ways outlined so they are not toothless tigers?

*Gregor Gall is a visiting professor of industrial relations at the University of Leeds*



# Could Scotland become the new Norway?

*Though Raphael De Santos argues that while there's no way to be a new Norway, there is still much scope for social advance*

Many in the Scottish independence movement point to Norway as a model of what an independent Scotland could become. Is this possible or desirable? Both countries are in northern Europe with large land masses, small populations and an abundance of natural resources. That is where the similarity ends when one examines the key metrics around their economies and finances.

Norway is one of the richest countries in the world if we look at the size of the economy divided by its population (GDP per capita). It ranked, in 2017, as the eleventh richest country in the world with \$62, 183 per head compared to Scotland at 34th with \$39,272. Norway has one of the lowest rates of poverty in the world at 0.5% of its population. Scotland on the other has very high levels of poverty at 19% of the population. Scotland carries a large amount of public debt and its ratio to the size of the economy is 106%, which excludes our share of the £80bn of debt from 2008/2009 financial crisis. Norway's is much lower at 41.6%. Norway's deficit varies because of the volatility of natural resource prices. It ran a surplus until 2019 at an average of over 5% before falling into a deficit of 7% in 2020 because of the slump in oil prices and the COVID-19 recession but is expected to return to surplus 2021. This compares to a Scottish deficit of nearly 9% in 2019 and 22.4% in 2020.

Norway took under public ownership, in the 1970s, its oil and gas resources with initially well over 80% public ownership which has now slipped to 67% with 3% owned by the Norwegian public sector pension fund. This has allowed it to build up a large national wealth fund of \$1.3n and fund public services properly. Scotland's oil and gas resources are exploited by large corporations netting huge profits for them over 50 years. Scotland has no national wealth fund and under-funded public services.

In addition to the oil and gas industry being under majority public ownership, vast swathes of Norwegian industry are also commonly owned. Norway maintains large public ownership positions in key industrial sectors concentrated in natural resources

and strategic industries such as the hydroelectric energy production (Statkraft), aluminum production (Norsk Hydro), the largest Norwegian bank (DNB) and telecommunication provider (Telenor). The government controls around 35% of the total value of publicly listed companies on the Oslo stock exchange, with five of its largest seven listed firms partially owned by the state. When non-listed companies are included, the state has an even higher share in ownership (mainly from direct oil license ownership). Norway's state-owned enterprises comprise 9.6% of all non-agricultural employment, rising to almost 13% when companies with minority state ownership stakes are included, the highest among OECD countries.

Norway has a progressive income tax system with the rate of tax gradually increasing to a top rate of 16.2%. The low tax regime exists because of the tax revenues from oil and gas activities that are taxed at 78% of profits. It does, however, have an annual wealth tax. Scotland's income tax rate starts at 19% and goes up to 46%. Corporate tax is 19% across the UK, the tax on petroleum super profits (PRT) was set to zero in 2016. Norway has its own currency, the Nokia Oyj (NOR). It is highly volatile and is driven by the oil price, trading over the last five years between 6.4 to 2.6 NOR versus the US dollar.

Norway is a member of European Free Trade Association (EFTA). In 1992, the EU, its member states, and the EFTA member states signed the Agreement on the European Economic Area in Oporto, Portugal. EFTA members are also members of the European Economic Area (EEA). The EEA comprises three member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and 27 member states of the European Union (EU). It was established on 1 January 1994 following an agreement with the European Union. It allows the EFTA-EEA states to participate in the EU's Internal Market without being members of the EU. They adopt almost all EU legislation related to the single market, except laws on agriculture and fisheries. However, they also contribute to and influence the formation of new EEA relevant policies and legislation at an early stage as part

of a formal decision-shaping process.

This allows Norway to keep its own currency, set its own interest rates and not be straight jacketed by the EU's 3% deficit rule – which is very important when Norway can have one-off deficits because of a slump in natural gas and oil prices. It also allows the Norwegian government to intervene in its industries.

Having set out the economic substructure, let's now turn to the political superstructure. Here, Norway is a leader in social legislation. With a wide-ranging social safety net, Norway takes the Sustainable Government Indicators (SGI) 2020's top place with regard to social policies. Its score on this measure has improved by 0.3 points since 2014. This covers the areas of education, social inclusion, health, families, pensions, integration, safe living and inequalities. Norway, like the other Scandinavian countries, is progressive in regards to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights. In 1981, Norway became one of the first countries in the world to enact an anti-discrimination law explicitly including sexual orientation. Same-sex marriage, adoption, and assisted insemination treatments for lesbian couples have been legal since 2009. In 2016, Norway became the fourth country in Europe to pass a law allowing the change of legal gender for transgender people solely based on self-determination.

So, let's turn to the issue of whether Scotland can become a Norway. We can certainly go in the direction of Norway without completely emulating it. The lack of public ownership of our oil industry since the discovery in the 1970s of North Sea oil and the fact Scotland was not an independent state then are the two main reasons why we will never be able to match Norway.

We are already a relatively wealthy nation coming in just above Spain in GDP per capita rankings. It would be impossible and not desirable to match Norway's rating as we would have to grow the economy by over 56% with disastrous consequence for the impact on the environment. It would be possible to grow the economy gradually in a green sustainable way over a

number of years. More important would be to reduce inequality in Scotland. Currently, Norway is the least unequal country in the world with the UK coming sixteenth.

An independent Scotland could dramatically reduce poverty by providing everyone with a guaranteed income, building affordable social housing and creating new training and job opportunities. But we have to remember that Scotland carries a large amount of public debt and would start off independence with a large deficit. We can bring this down over time but not likely completely eliminate it. This means that our debt would gradually increase over time. As long as we are showing that we are being prudent with our finances and bringing the deficit under control then investors will continue to lend to us (see September/October 2021 issue of *Scottish Left Review*). Our deficit can be reduced without public sector cuts through raising taxes on the better off and corporations and growing the economy in a controlled green fashion.

Joining the EU as a new country would mean that we would have to commit to taking the Euro our currency. We would have to set out a transition plan to bring our annual deficit down from nearly 9% to less than 3%. This could not be realistically achieved without an annual £5bn cut to public spending - about 6% of Scotland's normal public spending budget. Belonging to EFTA and the EEA is a more preferable option.

We do not own our oil industry and the golden years of oil revenues have passed. It would not be desirable to be dependent on an industry which contributes so much to climate change. We could slap a super-tax on oil profits

and give no tax relief for investment. This would stop future exploration in the North Sea and see the oil companies run down their existing fields. The additional super-tax revenues could be put in a Green Energy Fund to launch a publicly-owned national green energy company to move Scotland to renewable energy and create thousands of jobs.

There is great scope to take key strategic industries back under public control and ownership in an independent Scotland. We can identify key industries that provide essential services where public ownership can assure access to all at a reasonable cost which would help reduce inequality in Scotland. These industries would include: utilities, transport, banking, telecommunications and housing. These would be in addition to the creation of a new publicly owned green renewable energy company.

Taxation would be the main weapon to do this. We would have to raise taxes on higher earners and introduce a wealth tax as well as raising corporation tax which has fallen to an all-time low of 19%. As well helping our finances, this would reduce inequality in Scotland.

Having our own currency immediately after independence would not be advisable. The uncertainty of oil revenues and the size of our deficit would make the currency very volatile. We need a period of stability and showing the world we can manage our finances before launching our own currency.

Joining the EFTA and EEA looks to be the best option. We have the benefits of having a partial implementation of EU laws, be in the Schengen area and trade tariff free in the single market. But we have none of the disadvantages of EU

membership: 3% deficit rule, no control of interest rates and being restricted on industry intervention.

Scotland has some way to go to match's Norway's social legislation with the UK being ranked 18th in the SGI index. Similarly, Scotland's LGBT rights are not as advanced as those of Norway. There is no reason given Scotland's centre left social democratic bias that we could not match what Norway has achieved in these areas.

So, to conclude, Scotland could not fully emulate Norway as it has lost the wealth that could have been gained from owning and controlling North Sea oil if had been independent in the early 1970s. Nor would it want to continue to rely on oil exploration given the further damage that would do to the environment. But it could with independence reduce inequality and poverty in Scotland. It could remain European and connected to Europe without the economic restraints of being in the EU. But all this requires a radical programme for independence, one that would appeal to the poorer sections of Scottish society to show them that independence would mean a better life for them.

*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. References for all the statistics are available on request ([contact@scottishleftreview.scot](mailto:contact@scottishleftreview.scot)). Raphael examined the GERS figures in the September/October 2021 issue of *Scottish Left Review*.*



## The Jimmy Reid Foundation

## Jimmy Reid Foundation gains Scottish Charitable Incorporated Status (SCIO)

In early October, our sister organisation, the Jimmy Reid Foundation was delighted to announce that the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) granted Scottish Charitable Incorporated Status (SCIO) to the Jimmy Reid Foundation for the purpose of the advancement of education. This includes the *Scottish Left Review*. The Jimmy Reid Foundation is now to be known as the Jimmy Reid Foundation (SCIO) and its SCIO number is SC051331. The vesting day for operating as a SCIO is likely to be 1 January 2021. The activities of the JRF (SCIO) include the Jimmy Reid Foundation as it is currently constituted and the *Scottish Left Review* magazine. Both will continue to operate as they have done to date. In due course, we shall shortly amend the websites of both the Jimmy Reid Foundation and the *Scottish Left Review* to reflect this changed status. We shall also explain the benefits of SCIO status for the work of JRF (SCIO).



# Gender violence: Groundhog Day of ‘we’ve been here before’ again and again

*Marsha Scott says strategic, resourced action tackling causes and symptoms is the only way forward*

Scottish Women’s Aid (SWA) has welcomed the recent attention to violence against women and girls (VAWG) in media, criminal justice, and political spheres, but that welcome has been accompanied by a slightly jaundiced eye. We have been here before, as have our sister organisations across the world. The pattern is familiar—a high profile case, horribly tragic, a justifiable expression of moral outrage and ‘how can this keep happening?’ and little or no effective system reform. So, how *can* this keep happening? What causes VAWG, and why have the decades of investment and attention delivered no discernible decreases across any of the indicators we track?

Behind closed doors at SWA, we are inclined to remark with some version of ‘It’s the patriarchy, stupid’. Scotland’s ‘causal story’ is that gender inequality is the cause and consequence of VAWG—that principle has been embedded in UN policy and Scottish VAWG strategies since devolution. Only recently, alongside development of a delivery plan for *Equally Safe*, have we seen any sign that the Scottish Government has been willing to take women’s inequality out of the ‘too-hard’ box, aligning primary prevention with decreasing the gender pay gap and other manifestations of structural inequalities in our economic frameworks and increasing women’s access to public power and decision making. As Emma Ritch and I wrote in *The Routledge International Handbook of Domestic Violence and Abuse* (2021):

*Women and men and girls and boys live very different lives. Any analysis, research, policy, or legislation can be said to be ‘gender competent’ when it reflects that principle. Familiarity with the dynamics of gender in our gendered world enables the development of policy and laws that disrupt the unequal distribution of power, prosperity, and safety in our families, communities, and institutions and promote social justice. Gender competence is thus required for activists, governments, and state institutions to develop and deliver policy and practice that sees oppression, understands how it works, and then*

*dismantles it.*

So, the first and most important step to ending VAWG in Scotland is to demand anyone with power and authority in service to the Scottish people understand how very critical being gender-competent is to doing their job. No excuses, no delays.

The following are some of the policy opportunities that could secure some manifest change and give us some hope that we will see actual decreases in rape and sexual assault, domestic abuse, forced marriage, and the other forms of VAWG that are nurtured by attitudes to gender roles and systemic sexism:

- Revise and enforce Scotland’s Public Sector Equality Duty. Hold officials, politicians, and leadership at local and national levels for accountable, with incentives and sanctions that work.
- Restructure funding for frontline services, based on need rather than historical accident, guaranteed by legislation and protected from local political whim. Services across the VAWG spectrum are under-resourced and increasingly precarious. Indeed, for domestic abuse services, while reports of domestic abuse incidents by Police Scotland have risen for the fourth year in a row, 81% of local grass-roots Women’s Aid services suffered cuts to funding from local authorities (the trend started in 2009, with austerity policies, and has never abated).
- Implement the recommendations of Lady Dorrian’s review of the management of sexual offence cases and the Scottish Government’s working group on Improving Housing Outcomes for Women and Girls Experiencing Domestic Abuse by providing access to free legal services for women and children experiencing domestic abuse.
- Prioritise incorporation of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms

of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and include where possible the principles of the Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention, signed but never ratified by the UK Parliament.

- COVID recovery—the evidence is compelling that women were hugely and disproportionately affected by state and local government responses to the pandemic, and poor women, BAME women, disabled women, immigrant women will have been the most severely harmed. Each and every element of recovery must respond to that disproportionate harm by disproportionately benefitting women, by restructuring our economy and public services to make gender visible, by becoming part of the solution, rather than the problem.

We have two other asks. First, we would like to see our leaders make some hard decisions about the more than 40,000 cases in the backlog for Summary courts, many of which are domestic abuse cases. The current plan is just not good enough. Waiting two or three years for her case to come to court is the surest way to drive a victim-survivor out of the justice system, destroying any faith they have in Scotland’s courts, and women are already voting with their feet. Second, we think it is never too late for journalists and media outlets generally to improve reporting of VAWG. At SWA, we observe regression in reporting about domestic abuse in media coverage of COVID and domestic abuse. We, and researchers, have been saying for years to journalists that football does not cause domestic abuse. Nor do COVID, alcohol, stress, or poverty. Perpetrators, mostly men, choose to control and abuse, and the tired mantras about football, Old Firm games, and alcohol are just a set of cultural excuses. We welcome good media reporting about these issues and long for a time when as a nation we stop making excuses and blaming victims but instead hold abusers to account and support survivors of all forms of violence against women and girls.

*Dr Marsha Scott is CEO of Scottish Women’s Aid*

# A world made less safe: Creating AUKUS

*Binoy Kampmark looks behind the stramash over selling nuclear subs to see a new cold war developing*

The formation on 15 September 2021 of a new security relationship, AUKUS, by Australia, UK and US sent ripples of shock through the Indo-Pacific. It ruffled the feathers of the French security establishment, who felt it appropriate to recall their ambassadors to Australia and the US. It perplexed various figures in the EU, eager to develop their own Indo-Pacific policy. And it concerned countries in the region, notably those in Southeast Asia, who warned that the agreement risked inciting an arms race.

The creation of the AUKUS compact, as President Biden and PMs Johnson and Morrison stated, was intended as a new 'enhanced trilateral security partnership'. There was something that stood out as particularly unusual: the trio had committed 'to a shared ambition to support Australia in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy'. It was this feature that was particularly important in enraging France, since it ensured the scuppering of an AU\$90bn contract with France's Naval Group (formerly DCNS) for the construction of diesel-powered submarines based, perversely enough, on a French nuclear design.

That deal had been celebrated by the French defence establishment as the contract of the century. But its original commissioning was problematic. Australia's Future Submarine Program (FSP), known as Project SEA 1000, had its gestation in the 2009 Defence White Paper and the Defence Capability Plan 2009. The FSP was intended to provide a submarine capability that would eventually replace the Royal Australian Navy's six ageing and historically problematic Collins Class Submarines. As the 2016 Defence White Paper explained, their eventual replacement with 12 future attack class submarines was necessary given that half of the world's submarines would 'be operating in the Indo-Pacific region by 2035'.

Three contenders duly emerged: France, Germany and Japan. In 2014, it seemed the Japanese naval industry had what the Abbott government wanted. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN), however, disliked what was

offered. The Japanese group failed to confirm that it would boost local skilled jobs in Australia, even as it was being outmanoeuvred by German and French contenders. The French contenders began to take the lead. In 2016, a \$50bn contract followed, promising 12 French-designed submarines from the originally named DCNS (with 62% French government ownership) supplied to the RAN. Pundits and security astrologers suggested 4,000 jobs would be created in France alone while French Defence Minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, proclaimed the solemnisation of a '50-year marriage'.

The problems were not long in coming. Disputes emerged on the issue of actual costings, distribution of labour and the number of jobs to be created in Australia. The commitment of the Naval Group to develop Australian industry came to be doubted. But the most troubling issue was that of premature obsolescence. By the time the first attack class submarines would find themselves in water in the 2030s, they would be ineffectual. Within the Australian Defence Department, there were suggestions that a rival submarine design should be encouraged, developed upon a repurposed version of the Collins Class. Some Australian parliamentarians were also concerned that the contract was unsustainable. 'In the middle of this pandemic we cannot afford to proceed with this contract' warned One Nation Senator, Malcolm Roberts, in May 2020, proffering 'This money will be far better spent to support the Australian recovery from the economic pit that is caused by this pandemic'.

Which brings us to the self-evident point, one much neglected in considerable commentary on the submarines. The promised nuclear-powered vessels are irrelevant, at least in the context of Australian industry. Two decades in defence planning is not just a distant country but another, barely visible galaxy. The US and the UK have them, which is all that matters. They have the staff, training and expertise. And submarines are, as Guy Rundle points out in *Crikey* (21 September 2021), only useful as an 'auxiliary force to protect a navy proper

and civilian shipping'. Australia, strictly speaking, lacks a proper navy.

No contracts have been drawn out between Australia, the UK and the US, merely revocable undertakings. The Morrison government intends commissioning an 18-month 'intense examination of what we need to do to exercise our nuclear stewardship responsibilities here in Australia'. Costs, always a huge problem in the field of submarine technology, promise to remain open-ended and unaccountable. In terms of infrastructure, Australia lacks a shipyard capable of building or maintaining a nuclear submarine force. This does not trouble Australia's PM Morrison, who has praised South Australia, the state intended as the base for these phantom vessels, as 'home to some of the most skilled shipbuilding workers in the world' replete with 'know-how, ingenuity, industrial knowledge and determination'.

The nature of AUKUS, then, is to further entrap Australia within security arrangements, utilising its resources and bases for a broader projection of US power in the Indo-Pacific. This point was made by a retired US submarine admiral to *USNI News* (15 September 2021): 'Maintenance was a big factor in limiting [our deployments]'. The agreement, former US National Security Council member, Barry Pavel, similarly confirmed, would also enable 'US submarine access to Australian support infrastructure' as part of Washington's 'increasingly 'latticed' defence posture' (*New Atlanticist* 15 September 2021).

With such prospective arrangements, Canberra has become complicit in an act of geo-political encirclement, ostensibly for peacekeeping reasons. 'The US is using the same approach employed to contain Russia in Europe after the Cold War to contain China in the Asia-Pacific region' is the assessment offered by Professor Li Haidong of the Institute of International Relations of China Foreign Affairs University. Thus, 'Washington is building a NATO-like alliance in the region, with AUKUS at its core, and the US-Japan and US-South Korea alliances surrounding it' (*Global Times* 16 September 2021).

For Australia, the consequences promise to be dire. The country will be further militarised and garrisoned, with US military personnel and assets offering false insurance against attack. Read another way, such personnel can also be seen as an invitation to future belligerents, their facilities and their presence confronting and provocative in regional power struggles. The fact that nuclear powered submarines might be involved adds a further incentive. As the official Chinese state publication, *Global Times* (16 September 2021) suggested, the idea of 'an innocent non-nuclear power' was a nonsense in this context. Such an ally would be able to be armed with nuclear weapons at any moment.

In addition to pre-existing alliance arrangements, AUKUS is also likely to oblige Canberra to commit forces should the US find itself in conflict in the Indo-Pacific. The claim by hawkish policy wonks in the US-funded Australian Strategic Policy Institute that this is simply another arms deal with no such obligations is disingenuous. The Australian military has been moving towards 'interoperability' with US forces for years. 'The extraordinary level [of cooperation and interoperability] attained reflects our compatible national attitudes and common traits of confidence, ingenuity, optimism,' wrote Gary Roughead (*The Strategist* 22 March 2013). But more, he argued, could be done to 'embed military personnel into each other's forces'.

Any sceptic about such eventualities need only consult the various statements and comments from the AUKUS parties. According to US Secretary of Defence, Lloyd Austin, on 16 September, the trilateral security pact 'will help contribute to what I call integrated defence in the region, the ability for the United States militarily to work more effectively with our allies and partners in defence of our shared security interests'. Despite assurances from Austin and US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, that this did not entail 'follow-on reciprocal requirements of any kind' as part of 'a quid pro quo mindset', Australian Defence Minister, Peter Dutton, was obliging in clarifying matters. Fleshing out what such integrated deterrence might look like, Dutton, at the same press conference as Austin and Blinken, envisaged Australia becoming the base

for 'rotational deployments of all types of US military aircraft'. This would be accompanied by the establishment of 'combined logistics, sustainment, and capability for maintenance to support our enhanced activities'.

The already existing complement of 5,000 US Marines on rotation in the Northern Territory would be increased, an idea Dutton was already considering in June, along with a potential joint US Marines-Australian Defence Force (ADF) training brigade. Australia would also offer 'storage of different ordnances' (*ABC News* 10 June 2021). Much of this beefing up of US forces is already in train, with the unveiling in July of plans to build four new military sites at Robertson Barracks, Kangaroo Flats, Mount Bundsey and Bradshaw Field for the princely sum of AU\$747m.

It is worth noting Australia's own Defence Department has always been at pains to use the language of mobility and action when describing the presence of the Marines, which has increased since the initial deployment of 200 in 2012. Semantics plays an important part here in order to reassure Northern Territory residents that they are not living under occupation. The name Marine Rotational Force-Darwin (MRF-D) suggests something more benign. At least Defence is not coy in admitting that this 'highly capable force ... provides significant opportunities to enhance interoperability with the ADF'.

AUKUS is also a clamouring message to powers in the region that the Anglophone bloc, with its vast historical baggage, intends to police the region against a country never mentioned in the original joint statement but crystal clear to all present. 'It is impossible to read this' wrote Sam Roggeveen of the Lowy Institute 'as anything other than a response to China's rise, and a significant escalation of American commitment to that challenge' (*The Interpreter* 16 September 2021). Such a development is no cause for celebration for those in the EU who have preferred a different approach to the challenges posed in the Indo-Pacific. The AUKUS announcement was a brusque statement to others who also intend to play some regional role, not least Paris and the EU in general. Benjamin Haddad, director of the Atlantic Council's Europe Centre, called this 'a blow to transatlantic strategy

in the region' that risked placing a 'lasting hurdle in US-France relations' (*New Atlanticist* 15 September 2021). EU foreign policy chief, Joseph Borrell, in expressing regret with the lack of consultation regarding these new arrangements asserted: 'We must survive on our own, as others do.' Currently, the grouping is, according to an EU statement, 'exploring ways to ensure enhanced naval deployments by EU Member States to help protect the sea lines of communication and freedom of navigation'.

Indo-Pacific powers such as Malaysia and Indonesia are particularly concerned by the nuclear component of AUKUS. 'We agree on the latest issue in the region regarding a country near our territory that is purchasing new nuclear-powered submarines,' stated Malaysia's Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah at a news conference following a meeting with his Indonesian counterpart, Retno Marsudi. Despite Australia not having 'the capacity for nuclear weapons, we are worried and concerned' (*ABC News* 18 October 2021). They have every reason to be, not least because of voices in Australia's strategic community, Hugh White being foremost among them, calling for the eventual acquisition of Canberra's own nuclear deterrent 'to counter China's nuclear threats'.

Britain, given its essentially symbolic role in the new security alliance, has been allotted the conciliatory role to convince other powers that this is entirely peaceful, a sort of gentleman's club of afternoon pink gins and gentle nods at the sanctity of the rules-based-order. The UK's departing Chief of the Defence Staff General, Sir Nicholas Carter, stated: 'AUKUS is not designed to be in any way what exclusive'. Other states could well be admitted. That is not likely to include France. President Macron told Morrison the trust between the two countries is broken. The relationship between Australia and Europe's most prominent Indo-Pacific power has been severed. More importantly, the creation of AUKUS means the world is now a less safe place.

*Dr Binoy Kampmark was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He lectures at RMIT University, Melbourne.*

# Refugees and asylum: Unfortunately, there never was a 'golden age'

Henry Maitles argues that Priti Patel's 'hostile environment' is lamentably nothing new

Current debates on refugees and attempts by Western governments to restrict asylum seekers are deeply depressing. Deaths in the Mediterranean and the Channel of the 'boat people' have become common while ever more ludicrous schemes – from wave machines to deserted oil rigs to detention camps in foreign countries – are thought up to try deter refugees. In this debate, there is often a harkening back to a supposed 'golden age' of asylum, usually that of escaping Jews in the 1930s and 1940s, as if the current policy is a break in tradition. The truth is far from this rosy picture.

One factor why more Jews did not flee from Nazi Europe was the attitudes of the Western democracies and their immigration controls. Britain did allow Kindertransport, although the children had to be sponsored so that they would not be a burden, but also sent back Jews who did not have the correct paperwork to Germany, where it was Nazi government policy to send returnees to concentration camps. The British Government's own figures are quite startling - 484 sent back in 1933, 378 in 1934, 365 in 1935, 412 in 1936, 438 in 1937, 489 in 1938 and 191 in the first six months of 1939. When a small number of Jews fled by air to Britain after the Germans occupied the autonomous city of Memel in March 1939, those without the necessary papers were put on the next plane back to Europe. In 1939, fleeing Jews on board the St Louis were refused entry to USA, sent back to Germany and many of them were murdered in Auschwitz. The signals given out were clearly designed to discourage Jews from fleeing West. The British Government was clear in its secret memos to its delegates at the 1938 Évian refugee conference that it wanted to bring to Britain those Jews 'eminent in science, technology, art, music etc'.

Equally, it was made clear that it did not want 'persons likely to seek

employment, agents and middlemen, minor musicians, commercial artists, the rank and file of doctors, lawyers, dentists'. The test for admission was to be, not the needs of the Jewish refugees, but 'whether or not the applicant is likely to be an asset to the UK'. So terrified were Western governments of the possibility of millions of Westward moving refugees, that they used the Évian conference to send an unmistakable message to Eastern European governments and the Jewish populations that Jewish immigrants and refugees would not be accepted by Britain, France or the US. The British delegation to Évian was told that it would be 'desirable that the results of the meeting should not act as an incentive to these [Central



and Eastern European] governments to increase the pressure on their Jewish minorities'. In other words, there was to be no welcome for refugees. The Australian delegate, T.W. White, was explicit in stating that 'as we have no racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one'.

Indeed, by July 1939, the Foreign Office was questioning the status of fleeing Jews as refugees. One high official claimed: 'A great many ... are not in any sense political refugees ... Many are quite unsuitable as emigrants and would be a very difficult problem if brought here'. The Nazi press was clear about the meaning of Évian: 'no state is prepared to fight the cultural disgrace of central Europe by accepting a few thousand Jews. Thus, the Conference serves to justify Germany's policy against Jewry'.

Virtually identical fears were prevalent in both the US and France. So stringent had US policy become, that less than 500 German Jewish children were allowed in, in total, during 1938 and 1939. As the 1930s wore on, central to French policy was the obsession not to provoke Germany and give any reason for hostility. Following the Kristallnacht pogroms of November 1938 in Germany, the French border police sent back escaping Jews - sending back, it must be remembered, to the arms of the Nazis. Finland introduced stringent controls immediately after the Évian conference, even refusing transit to Austrian Jews with the necessary papers for US immigration. So distraught were the refugees that three committed suicide.

And, it was not only before the war that the attitude of hostility to fleeing Jewish refugees was evident. In 1943, there was a proposal from Sweden that, if Britain and the USA were willing to pay the costs, there was the possibility of 20,000 Jewish children being released from Central Europe to Sweden. Private money was available but the US State Department was not enthusiastic about it, one official noting that 'any rescue concentrating on Jewish children might

antagonize the Nazis, and prevent other possible co-operative acts'. This is near incredible bureaucratic jargon in mid-1943; the US was not willing to do things to antagonize the Nazis in the middle of the war! The proposal was dropped.

What is most concerning about the current events played out across Britain and the rest of the world is how little change there is today in both rhetoric and policy. Priti Patel is just the latest in a long line of politicians creating a 'hostile environment' where even death is not seen as problematic.

*Henry Maitles is Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of the West of Scotland*

# Care + COVID = crisis continues

*Wilma Brown reports on her experience of an overstretched and under-resourced NHS in Scotland*

**W**e know staff in the NHS are suffering from years of being underpaid and overworked, even before COVID. Despite this, we have seen a huge effort from NHS staff over the past 19 months to meet the needs of the public who have accessed NHS Services. They've demonstrated adaptability and versatility working in new and different ways and have embraced the use of technology. They have gone above and beyond the call of duty to ensure patients, communities, and their colleagues have been supported. But this does not come without a huge cost.

Staff are suffering on a daily basis, being deployed and redeployed across the service to fill staffing gaps in many wards and units, quite often at last minute with no time for physical or mental preparation. They are being asked to undertake duties without adequate training and are working in different specialities that they have no experience in. The pre-COVID mantra of 'having the right staff in the right place at the right time' appears to have been forgotten or even to be important. They are constantly asked to work their days off as well as often working extra hours after their normal finishing time. Staff feel helplessly frustrated at the poor quality of care for patients.

This is causing high levels of stress, burnout and in some cases post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The pandemic weighs heavy on our colleagues and with winter pressures looming, there is no let up, there is no cavalry coming over the hill to rescue them from what many describe as a working nightmare. Never before have I heard so many colleagues indicating their intention to leave at their first affordable opportunity, putting further strain on those left behind and we simply cannot afford to lose any more of our colleagues.

This leads us to the big question on the mind of every member of NHS staff: 'How much longer can we continue sustain this level of pressure?'. Pressure on the NHS is not new as we have seen this level of pressure every winter – so it is a problem which has been growing year on year for many years now. But the 'winter' period has grown from the worst of the cold weather months, namely, November to February, into a problem lasting at least 7 or 8 months every year.

Of course, the fundamental point now is that since the winter of 2019 there has been no let up. Staff got through the tough months from around November 2019 hoping for let-up in spring 2020 but COVID prevented any period of relief. March 2020 saw the country go into lockdown and hospitals preparing for the impact of patients with COVID. This means that for almost two years staff have been working in unprecedented times under enormous pressure.

Years of austerity have led to situations within Health Boards of having high vacancy levels in professional roles, particularly nursing. Managers a few years ago were strongly encouraged to hold onto or freeze vacancies in an attempt to meet savings targets set by Scottish Government. This was a practice usually called upon toward the last quarter of the financial year to assist Boards reaching their financial balance.

Some Boards have hundreds of nurse vacancies with very little, or no, prospect of filling them due to the reduced numbers of student nurses qualifying. The Scottish Government tells us it is increasing the numbers of students, but the increase does not meet the attrition rate of the previous year. How will we recruit nurses if we don't train them?

My role as Employee Director, Staff Side Chair, usually finds me in endless meetings and office based but I've cut back on a number of meetings and I've gone back to my roots as a nurse to offer whatever assistance I can. I've worked in the Vaccination Clinics and Acute Wards and Departments of my local hospital. This has given me a dramatic insight into the impact this pressure is having on staff, many of whom feel they are already at the end of their tether. The relentless ask of them is a real cause for concern. I have witnessed many, many staff in tears, heads in hands, stating they cannot take any more, can't cope with the pressure being put upon them. They frequently forego their breaks to ensure patients receive the care they require. The biggest concern I have is that many staff do not want to speak to managers about how they are feeling because they may be seen as weak or not resilient enough. This is a very nasty problem which is multi-factorial in seeking solutions and assistance for these staff. I worry about the 'normalisation' that is creeping in and the paralysis this brings to staff who are feeling more and more helpless without escalating their issues and concerns. What this does tell me is that I must continue my work on the floor getting the true picture of what is going on, because I will, and do, escalate the issues. I will and do stand up for these amazing people, and with the backing of UNISON we will not give up on them.

*Nurse, Wilma Brown, is Chair of UNISON Scotland Health Committee. She has worked in the NHS for 35 years and been the Employee Director in NHS Fife for the past 12 years.*

# National Care Service consultation: heading in the wrong direction on multiple fronts

*Dave Watson identifies the dangerous attack on democracy and inadequate resourcing found in the Scottish Government's proposals*

The Scottish Government published a consultation paper in August 2021 on creating a National Care Service (NCS) in Scotland. This followed from the Independent Review of Adult Social Care, known as the Feeley Review, which published its findings in February 2021. Many of us with long experience in the sector welcomed the Feeley Report while expressing concerns about over-centralisation and funding. The consultation paper seeks views on the scope of the NCS, which goes further than adult social care to include children's services, alcohol and drugs, mental health, criminal justice social work and all community health services (including general practice). Ministers will be accountable for social work and social care, leaving local government as simply another service provider. The mixed economy of care will continue with services commissioned from health boards, councils, third and private sector providers. Workforce regulation and inspection services will remain independent of the NCS.

The NCS will set the commissioning framework, including pay and conditions and outcomes. Complex and specialist services will be commissioned centrally with others commissioned locally by new Community Health and Social Care Boards (replacing the Integrated Joint Boards (IJB)), directly funded by the Scottish Government. The chief executive officer (CEO) will report to the NCS. There will be national workforce quality standards to help deliver 'Fair Work' principles, which could include a 'Fair Work Accreditation Scheme'. In addition, the consultation seeks views on national sector-level collective bargaining arrangements as recommended by the Feeley Report. This may involve a National Job Evaluation Framework and pay structure.

The Socialist Health Association Scotland response to the consultation sets out a range of concerns shared by others in the sector, which include:

- It will take a significant amount of time to implement an organisational change of this magnitude. In the meantime, the system is in crisis now. In particular,

we have a demoralised, tired, and financially stretched frontline staff who immediately need a break, decent pay and a vote of confidence. Hospital delayed discharges are on the increase once again. To avoid an NHS crisis this winter, we also need to fund social care adequately.

- The scope of the NCS is too broad. The range of services removed from local democratic accountability will damage integration. For example, separating children's services from education makes no sense, and social work is also a local service with essential links to community activity that will be undermined by the 'dead hand' of ministerial intervention. It will also create new barriers to shifting resources from acute to community services as health boards focus on acute services.
- The proposals involve a high degree of centralisation, giving ministers new powers that effectively remove local democratic accountability - rebranding IJBs (again) with even less local accountability. This approach is contrary to the Christie Commission principles and the recent legislation on the European Charter of Local Self Government. Moreover, the lessons from previous centralisations (e.g., Police Scotland) have been ignored.
- The workforce proposals are less than firm. Unions have long argued for national collective bargaining supported by job evaluation and comprehensive workforce planning. Only those providers who meet that standard should be considered for service commissioning. The current 'Fair Work' initiative suffers from a lack of enforcement as a recent Jimmy Reid Foundation paper pointed out. The Scottish Government has all the levers required to achieve better outcomes in the social care sector.
- The proposals effectively retain the marketisation of social care with the inclusion of for-profit services. It does not address the growing involvement of private equity, hedge funds and real estate investment trusts in the care sector and the use of predatory

financial techniques, let alone look seriously at the lessons of the pandemic for the future provision of residential care.

- The funding arrangements are inadequate for the scale of the challenges facing social care now. For example, the NHS has a £1bn recovery plan but no equivalent plan for social care. In fact, there are no costings in the consultation on the development of the NCS or how it is to be funded.
- The UK Government plans to fund an increase in social care spending, including addressing accommodation costs, by raising National Insurance. This is the wrong approach, placing the burden on working people. However, the Scottish Government's funding plans also fail to address these issues. £840m barely meets the current funding deficit, let alone improves services. The recently announced winter care package includes a welcome, if modest, increase in wages for social care staff and some capacity growth. However, this is a sticking plaster when Audit Scotland showed spending on adult social work care needs to rise incrementally from £4.35bn in the next financial year to £7.66bn in 2034.
- The consultation gives little consideration to the broader impact of social care and has only limited support for unpaid carers. Post-pandemic, there is also an opportunity to create a caring economy by linking the NCS to a broader economic strategy. This was promised in the Gender Pay Gap Plan back in 2018, but not for the first time; bold statements are not followed through with action.

Creating a NCS remains the right approach. However, its role should be to create a national framework, with services designed and delivered locally. I agree with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) that this represents a direct attack on localism and on the rights of people to make and benefit from decisions taken locally.

*Dave Watson is the Secretary of the Socialist Health Association Scotland.*



**Shaka King (director) and Will Berson, Shaka King, Kenny Lucas and Keith Lucas (writers),**

## ***Judas and the Black Messiah* (2021)**

*Reviewed by Jackie Bergson*

In late 1960s Chicago, socialist revolutionary Fred Hampton led the Illinois Black Panthers. As their popularity and power strengthened and grew, they attracted the attention of the highest USA government officials, right up to the President. Operations were consequently authorised by J Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), against the revolutionary 'black Messiah' and which concluded in the cold-blooded murder of twenty-one years old, Hampton, by police during a violent raid upon his home.

*Judas and the Black Messiah* is based on the true story of the betrayal of Hampton (Daniel Kaluuya) by career thief Bill O'Neal (Lakeith Stanfield) who was coerced into infiltrating the Illinois 'chapter' by FBI operative Roy Mitchell (Jesse Plemons). The film introduces O'Neal as he robs other black men by posing as an undercover police officer, before he makes his getaway in a car which he steals on impulse. His treacherous yet plausible qualities are, thus, clear from the start of the film through to its end.

Kaluuya delivers an earth-shattering performance which embodies Hampton's spirit, both as a loving, expectant father and as a driven, humane leader. The British actor's screen presence in the role is electrifying, heart-breaking, charismatic and utterly captivating. He has interestingly revealed in interviews that he voluntarily took opera lessons to lend cadence and tone to his vocalisations of Hampton's enthralling speeches. He has also spoken of the respect and empathy which he feels for 'Chairman Fred', whose son was

occasionally present on the film set of *Judas and the Black Messiah*.

As Hampton, he pronounces to the Illinois community: 'We gonna fight racism with solidarity. We ain't gonna fight capitalism with black capitalism, we're gonna fight capitalism with socialism'. His oratory contrasts starkly with chilling threats which Mitchell (Plemons) soaks up at the direct command of J Edgar Hoover (Martin Sheen): 'The Black Panthers are the single greatest threat to national security ... more than the Chinese, even more than the Russians. Our counterintelligence program must prevent the rise of a black messiah from among their midst – one with the potential to unite the Communist, the anti-war, and the New Left movements'.

In a recent podcast interview, actor and civil rights activist, Sheen, plainly states his view of Hoover: '[He was a] fascist... a government official so high up... that he created... his own agency and ran it his own way for decades and destroyed the lives of many, many thousands of people [in his] position as director and founder of the FBI. I was given the opportunity [in *Judas and the Black Messiah*] to expose his level of malevolence'.

One particularly scintillating scene, where covert infiltration by Mitchell and O'Neal affords them an early opportunity to witness a rousing speech by Hampton to a gathered crowd delivers a deeply striking impact. Publicly stating his impassioned feelings to the crowd about killing violent police officers evokes the painful question of whether he almost sealed his own fate. The scene illustrates that Hampton often spoke emotionally. In reality, his plans and actions were focused on the creation of peace for both blacks and whites.

Stanfield delivers a compelling performance as O'Neal, whose duplicity is masked by his convincing allegiance to the Panthers. So much so that he



accepts a leadership role whilst the Chairman serves a prison sentence for a petty theft crime which he did not commit. As a paid impostor, O'Neal evidently maintains control over his inner conflict - closely monitored by, and reporting to, the FBI meanwhile, developing trusted companionship with Hampton and his inner circle of co-revolutionaries.

On 3 December 1969, while asleep, maybe drugged by O'Neal, Hampton is tragically murdered by police in front of his pregnant wife, Debora Johnson (Dominique Fishback). In 1970, a coroner's jury ruled that her husband's death was a result of 'justifiable homicide by police'. *Judas and the Black Messiah*, however, echoes later forensic investigations which were authorised through Federal District Court proceedings and which resulted in a damning judicial report against those accounts given by police. Although these proceedings are not featured, the sinister plot against Hampton and the callous brutality of his killers are clearly manifested in the film.

In its thought-provoking finale, *Judas and the Black Messiah* cuts in archive footage of 'Chairman Fred' at the height of his powers. This is juxtaposed

against footage of a 1989 interview with O'Neal, whose betrayal ultimately resulted in Hampton's murder and, consequently, also in his own suicide in 1990. There are overwhelming reasons to see this tremendously moving film: highly 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.*

**Leeanne Elizabeth Clark,**

### ***My Journey Through Life: The Real Me, 2021,***

**self-published, 9781913632069**

*Reviewed by Carole Ewart*

This autobiography is an intriguing story from an author that would usually be overlooked. It is a route map on how to thrive despite her parents and going on to family-based care. It explains the impact of parents who fail to care for their children's physical, mental and sensory needs whilst manipulating her 'very slight' Cerebral Palsy for their own financial and social gain. The book stands out because of the collective effort to publish it by the Scottish Commission on Learning Disability (SCLD), the Life Changes Trust, RSA Scotland, the Community Fund and Moniack Mhor, Scotland's Centre for Creative Writing.

As Leeanne points out at the start: 'Some parts of this book will be upsetting for some readers but I am not apologising. The truth is the truth!' Attending college prompted her to write down her story and her motivation for writing the book is 'to help other people who have been in similar situations. If they can see someone like me now, getting on with life and standing on my own two feet, maybe they might believe that there is a chance for them to do the same'.

Leeanne's frankness about growing up in Fife is powerful: 'From day one growing up with my birth family they tried to belittle me and treat me as though I was worthless, as though I had no mind of my own, as though I was a scrap of litter on the doormat. However, I had some self-belief. I held my head up high and tried to keep a smile on my face. I felt this was important for the sake of my younger siblings because I was their main role model'.

Leeanne describes her role as a child

carer and explains, with substantial and corroborated evidence, that her 'Mum and dad were selfish and thought nothing of spending money on themselves instead of me and my siblings'. She declares that the main message of her book is that: '[E]veryone is unique and important, and we all need to understand that Different can be Great'. Amen to that!

Leeanne's mum worked at a Remploy Factory and it was due to her colleague, Molly, and her husband James that Leeanne enjoyed safe and happy weekends, learned to walk, was enabled to swim, be cared for and know that she was loved. The significant others in children's lives, including neighbours, are critical when the state is slow to effectively intervene. However, initially it painfully backfired as her parents wanted her in a wheelchair 'to claim higher Disability Benefits'.

Church has become one of the main parts of Leeanne's life and introduced her to a wide variety of people who encourage and enable her to thrive as an individual such as Dennis and Thomas who were invited by the Episcopalian Bishop to sponsor 47 children in India.

Leeanne shares her history to help change people's lives – those who work in services and those who receive them. At college, she is an active 'Care Experience Officer' and promotes the issues faced by care experienced students. Her matter-of-fact description of relatively recent events should incentivise public services of the need to change if they are to achieve their stated purposes. Her account of repeatedly moving home and schools, what led the police to destroying her precious phone with so many memories on it, and the impact of repeated changes of social workers confirms the inability and the failure of the state to deliver joined up care when people are at their most vulnerable.

The book has no pompous analysis. It is illuminating about receiving services and only latterly being able to influence decisions which make a huge impact on happiness, personal safety and development. Its messages will only be powerful if people read and hear them and that remains the challenge. Clearly, it can inform the design and delivery of publicly funded services. But will it?

It is routine now for organisations to say they value diversity and enable inclusion to ensure voices are heard

to inform the design and delivery of policy, services and funding. However, some voices are never heard or are filtered, indeed sanitised, so this book is a refreshing as well as sometimes a startling read. It should be a textbook for so many disciplines especially childcare, social care and criminal justice. This book is a page turner, easy to read and utterly thought provoking. It is also a book of hope from an inspirational young woman. Leeanne was 18 in 2015 so I look forward to hearing what she achieves next. Names have been changed by the author to protect people's privacy.

*Carole Ewart is a public policy and human rights consultant. One of her clients is SCLD but she had no part in publishing this book and received no fee for this review.*

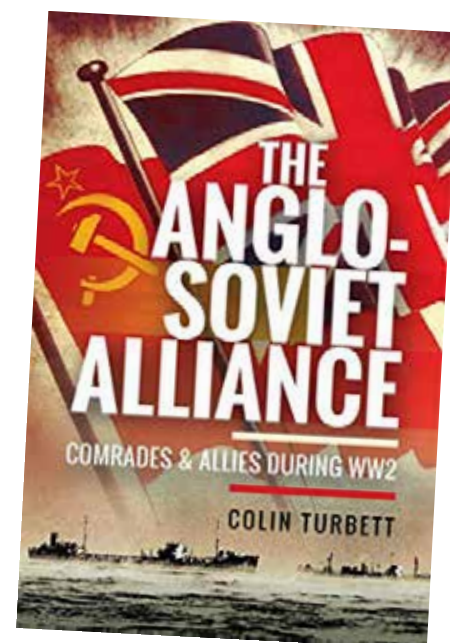
**Colin Turbett**

### ***The Anglo-Soviet Alliance: Comrades and Allies during WW2, 2021,***

**Pen & Sword Military, pp216,**

**1526776588**

*Reviewed by Michael A MacLeod*



As a schoolboy, I interviewed an uncle for a school project regarding WW2. There, I heard first hand of the Arctic Convoys where my uncle had served as bosun on a Merchant Navy rescue ship during one of the many convoys from Britain to Russia. With this in mind I picked up Colin Turbett's book looking to learn more about the Arctic convoys and especially how they were viewed from the Soviet side. That a whole chapter was dedicated to these convoys shows just how important they were.



Weaving into the narrative three distinct strands, actions of the states, British political parties and those of the ordinary people in the street, trenches or onboard ship, Turbett manages to present a precise overview of events whilst zooming in to pepper the story with individual episodes of comradeship. Beginning with an overview of the inter-war period and how relations between the Soviets and British had developed, he demonstrates that despite ideological differences between the two states there was a growing awareness in Britain that Germany was the biggest threat and as unpalatable as it was too many within the British Establishment an alliance with the USSR was going to be necessary.

If the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was an acrobat, it would have been gracing the Bolshoi circus such was the manoeuvring and outright volte-faces it performed during WW2. Turbett highlights how the CPGB morphed overnight from declaring the war a battle for supremacy between capitalist nations to full throated support for war following Germany's attack on Russia. Examples of the different campaigns undertaken are provided to show how ordinary people responded to the call to support the USSR. Tours by Soviet war heroes such as that of sniper, Ludmilla Pavlichenko, were met by enthusiastic crowds and massive fundraising was undertaken.

Cooperation between respective armed forces is studied, showing that on the occasions that such actions took place they generally worked well although as war concluded any joint effort met with increasing suspicion by those on either side. The firebombing of Dresden is cited as an example of the British and the US military flexing their muscles to intimidate the USSR.

I highly recommend this book to those wishing to better understand how the British and Soviets worked together during WW2 despite their ideological differences. That the British workers took so quickly to their Soviet comrades worried many within the British establishment and it was only as the Allies seemed set for victory that the suspicion and fear that would come to dominate the coming years appeared. This book helps dispel the Cold War fog which has distorted this reality for decades.

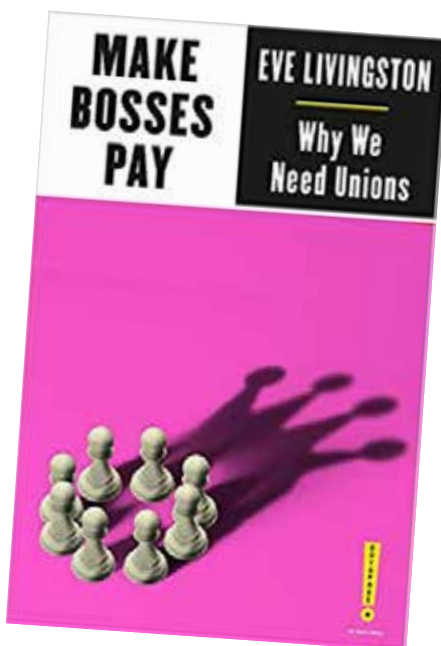
*Michael A MacLeod is a seafaring workplace rep and member of the RMT Glasgow Shipping Branch*

**Eve Livingston**

## ***Make Bosses Pay: Why We Need Unions, 2021,***

**Pluto, pp160, 0745341624**

*Reviewed by John Wood*



**F**or some, there is a rare feeling of positivity in the union movement at the moment, as unions prepare to take strike action in Glasgow and beyond, and with a wave of encouraging personnel changes in the senior ranks of some of Scotland and Britain's biggest unions. Supporting this feeling of rejuvenation in the labour movement have been some important publications and Eve Livingston's *Make Bosses Pay: Why We Need Unions* is a significant contribution to recent literature on the continued relevance of unions.

Part of Pluto's *Outspoken* series platforming 'underrepresented voices, intervening in important political issues, revealing powerful histories and giving voice to our experiences', *Make Bosses Pay* is aimed at a younger readership but is a thorough, compelling and highly relevant book. Livingston makes the case for why workers of all ages – especially the young – should join unions and get active, offering a clear and persuasive analysis of the imbalance between capital and labour within our economy that demands union action. Seasoned trade unionists would do well to pick this book up and take advice on where efforts can be focused to adapt unions to the economic and societal shifts in the age of digitisation, international mega-corporations, 'gig economy' and environmental challenge.

The book refreshingly includes a wide

range of views from activists in low paid precarious work to senior union leaders and academics, exploring key conceptual debates around the role of the unions such as the 'servicing vs organising' models (building on the work of Jane McAlevey and others who promote unions' role in 'deep organising') and 'liberatory unionism' which puts marginalised or underrepresented workers at the centre of their work. As with the decline in union power over the past decades, so there has been a decline in journalism dedicated to the labour movement and, while this young award-winning Scottish writer has a broad portfolio, Livingston makes a vital contribution to the often-wanted coverage of union politics and industrial relations.

*Make Bosses Pay* is an accessible but comprehensive introduction into the vital role of unions in today's world, providing an instructive run through the political and historical theory underpinning the movement and offering practical examples and insight (using case studies into effective modern organising examples such as *Better Than Zero* and *Unite Hospitality*). This book should be read widely by activists young or old, experienced or up-and-coming and those with a casual interest in how joining your union is the key to rebalancing an economy tilted in favour of your boss.

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

**Jane Holgate**

## ***Arise: Power, Strategy and Union Resurgence, 2021,***

**Pluto,**

**pp272, 074534402X**

*Reviewed by Michael MacNeil*

**H**olgate charts the historical rise and fall of union power but this is no dry or dreary account of the past. The book is structured to build bridges between the new unionisms of the 1880s and the situation facing the UK union movement today. A rich narrative using short case studies to illustrate points brings the book to life.

The 1970s are used as the point around which the story of union growth and decline pivots but,

from the outset it is obvious that wistful nostalgia will be avoided. Within the first three pages, the scene is set by quoting the then controversial essay published in 1978 by Marxist historian, Eric Hobsbawm and called 'The forward march of labour halted?'. That analysis of 40 years ago suggested that the British labour movement was already failing to respond to the changing structure of British capitalism. The book does not bludgeon the reader but puts the zenith of union membership in its historical context and questions whether high levels of membership equated with actual power. The point is clear that looking back at a period regarded by some as the halcyon days of union power, key elements of state and employer counter-mobilisation were already in train. Whether you are a union and community activist, a union 'leader', or a scholar of industrial relations, in other words if you have any interest in trade unions, this is a book for you.

The book covers a lot of ground but, as already suggested, its central thread is a discussion of union power, a phrase in common usage but often with little thought about the expression's meaning. Helpfully, *Arise* breaks down the concept into the different types of power available to workers, providing examples by interlacing them in case study accounts. In so doing, Holgate provides a practical checklist for understanding the power resources that are available to us in different contexts.

The battles of the 1980s are dealt with deftly, managing to avoid both the traps of sentimentality and being clever in hindsight. The point made is obvious but worth restating: Employers and the state are not submissive recipients of union mobilisation, they learn from previous battles and, perhaps, there's been an over-reliance by unions on old tactics and manoeuvres that the other side are wise to. In dealing with shifts to the composition of the working-class, Holgate takes a conscious choice to

incorporate the struggles of women and ethnic minority workers and issues of precarity as a core part of the movement's history, dispensing with the temporal parochialism that pervades many contemporary accounts of these issues.

Essentially, *Arise* takes Hobsbawm's question and suggests that the reasoning still holds true today. Despite the turn to organising by UK unions from the mid-1990s, unions are still failing to respond to structural changes in political economy. Holgate's evaluation is nuanced, noting that the introduction of organising techniques were important in slowing the decline membership rates but asks if union leaders were really signed-up to 'a strategic review of where power lies and how it can be (re-) created.', arguing that, in many cases, the approach was organising in theory but recruitment in practice.

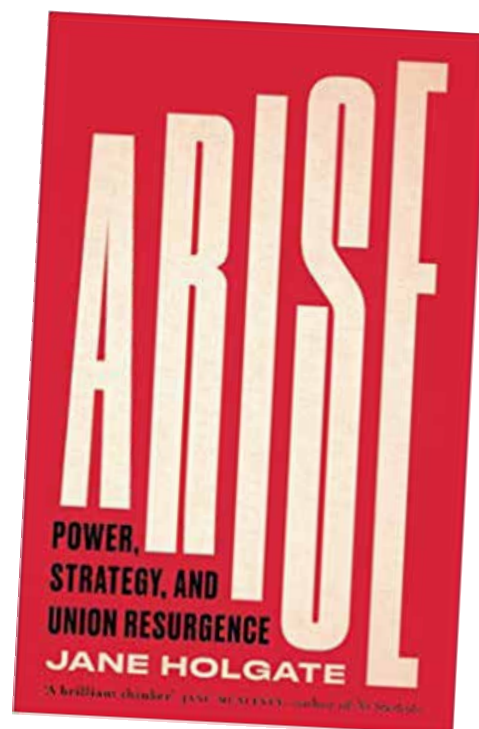
Now to the picky points. Unsurprisingly, it is natural that the strategic choices made by unions and the role of leaders are questioned. Holgate's account is certainly not a diatribe against union leadership and takes care to acknowledge the complexities of internal union governance. However, the general conclusion gets close to blaming one set of actors ('full-time officers') for poor decisions and there are a couple too many references to the oligarchic tendencies of union leadership. Now, given the job I do, it would be easy to assign any difficulty I have with this reasoning to defensiveness and self-interest but the conclusion is too easy and has a shaky evidential base. The analysis is a bit too crude and does not fit with larger (admittedly old) and focussed empirical studies of union officials.

The other minor gripes I have about the book also say more about my current predilections than the publication. One concerns the use of 'class'. The term is used more as a rhetorical device and rallying cry than an analytical category; the other is that, on first reading,

I thought it may have been useful to be clearer about the contextual differences and similarities between the period of Victorian new unionism and today. I would not be surprised to revise my views on a second reading and so, these minor points aside, *Arise* has done what it should, caused me to reflect.

Although an academic of some standing, Holgate is no passive observer. Years of activity in the field mean her style leaves you in no doubt whose side she is on. It does not shy away from the knotty questions about the prospects for union resurgence and future forms of workers' collectivisation but, mercifully, she is much too modest to join the ranks of commentators who think there is one clear way (theirs) to build union power, regardless of context. Instead, she notes: 'Workers have always fought injustice and will continue to do so' but, while careful not to predict the exact organisational form, notes that unions should be capable of adapting and equipping workers with the political education to realise their collective power. This book is a great read and would be a valuable contribution to anyone wanting to resurrect the tradition of political education courses within unions.

*Michael MacNeil is a senior union official*



James McEnaney

***Class Rules: The truth about Scottish schools, 2021, Luath, pp240, 1910022608***

*Reviewed by David Watt*

**C**lass Rules is an engaging tour through Scotland's contemporary education landscape. It maps out some of key issues in Scottish schools in the early twenty-first century and is recommended for those who wish an up-to-the-minute, broadly-based critique of Scottish education focusing on Curriculum for Excellence, examination results and the impact of the pandemic.

Over the course of its chapters, McEnaney aims to cut 'through the endless political grandstanding, media misrepresentations, impenetrable statistical releases and pernicious class-based assumptions that obscure so much of Scottish education'. He fulfils almost all these aims with a comprehensive analysis of teachers' concerns with the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, the decline in quality of education data and an expose of the shockingly poor response of the SQA - and by association Scottish Government - with its alternative certification model utilised during the pandemic for national awards. In addition, his journalistic investigative work in accessing necessary information and data not readily in the public domain continues to shine the light on the lack of transparency and openness within the civil service in Scottish Government as well. Across the book, the writer's discussion about education and social class, leads to his wish for radical transformative (even revolutionary) change for Scottish education.

In terms of the book's key aims, McEnaney does not miss in his attack on political grandstanding. He skewers both Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney, the latter for his series of failures in thwarted legislation and mismanagement of certification arrangements during the pandemic. The former's 'I want

to be judged on this' speech at Wester Hailes Education Centre in August 2015 is criticised as an entirely and transparently cynical manoeuvre dressed up as political accountability. In his view, the introduction of national standardised testing at various stages from primary one year (P1) led Scottish education into a poisonous conflict played out across the media and the debating chambers across Scotland.

He brings a great deal of clarity to the degraded, if not corrupted, quality of statistical data issued by the Learning Directorate of Scottish Government. In a fascinating chapter, he manages very successfully to make sense of a wide range of assessment and exam data. Taking this evidence, he questions the whole notion of closing the attainment gap as a policy aim. The hope would be that his excellent work can lead to a debate around quality of statistics that seek to measure the outcomes of Scottish schools.

The chapter on Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence is, perhaps, less successful in indicating a route towards transformative change. In discussing and raising the concerns of teachers in secondary schools with its implementation, this chapter damns Curriculum for Excellence's faults in all their glory yet too often fails to identify its strengths fully. Within the chapter, it does read as if the Scottish curriculum, in secondary schools in particular, should return to a fragmented sectorally-structured, academic knowledge-based curriculum. This would be accomplished by a managerial approach with further levels of specialist promoted posts in secondary schools. The chapter does not include much of strengths and outstanding practice in implementing Curriculum for Excellence in primary schools where teachers felt more able to make progress in engaging with children to gain their capacities while also working attentively with numeracy, literacy and health and



well-being. In part, the idea is reinforced that the broad general education only occurs in secondary years one to three (S1-3) and partly accounts for problems with Curriculum for Excellence. James offers the notion of mixed-age provision at early years. This is a recipe for transformative change for ineffective structures in S3-5 too.

The class-based assumptions that underpin Scottish education are identified throughout the book though a more coherent analysis within a chapter of its own going beyond 'closing the attainment gap' may have better served many of the points made across the text. James does say that limits to its length prevented the text giving a further analysis of social and cultural injustices within Scottish education. In this context, it is a regret that he did not explain the social injustice promoted through setting by ability, still a very common practice within Scottish schools.

Before advising you to rush out and buy this book, it's fun to record the irony of the future Freedom of Information (FOI) hunter extraordinaire following the advice of his early mentor in regard to requests for paperwork: 'Almost all paperwork should be ignored the first time it appears - if it actually matters someone will ask for it a second time.' Perhaps the governing authorities pursued by Mr McEnaney maybe need more than one request?

In concluding, he comes round to agree with Basil Bernstein's statement from 1970s: 'Education cannot compensate for society'. McEnaney's neat summation being that 'injustice in, equals injustice out.' More recently educators, such as Michael Apple, from a democratic socialist position reset the argument as a question as 'Can education change society?' In England, the question is posed by Diane Reay as 'what would a socially just education systems look like?' McEnaney's major strengths are that not only does he broadly critique the failings of Scottish education in the early twenty-first century for her also begins to identify practices that can be part of transformative change towards a more socially just education system for Scotland.

David Watt is Secretary of the Socialist Educational Association Scotland. Further information is on the SEAS blog <https://seascotland.blog> Rob Gibson

**Reclaiming our Land, 2020, self-published, pp324, 9781527281813**

Reviewed by Magnus Davidson



This is a book about land reform, providing through it a valuable resource for those looking to better understand the history of the SNP and those interested in

parliamentary process. Gibson, with a long history in the SNP, was MSP for the Highlands and Islands Region for two parliamentary terms with constituency MSP for Caithness, Sutherland, and Ross following, before retiring in 2016. As a senior backbencher, a longstanding contributor to SNP land policy, and with convenorship of the Rural Affairs Climate Change and Environment Committee, there is a wealth of experience here for discussing land reform under the SNP government.

In many cases, *Reclaiming our Land* can be considered a defence of the SNP government's progress on land reform and offers explanation on perceived lack of progress for many on the left in terms of both dealing with the challenges of getting land reform legislation through Parliament and facing down landed interests looking to diminish progress. *Reclaiming our Land* is introduced as a deliberate non-academic approach to telling Gibson's personal story. There are a wide range of subjects incorporated into the book and it sets out to explore issues wrapped up under the banner of land reform as well as the parliamentary processes to progressing land reform legislation in the Scottish Parliament.

The first five chapters are given over to land reform history and progress over fifty years from the 1960s through to 2011. These chapters encompass Gibson's own personal story of political development with a focus on land reform including reference to membership of the '79 Group, but refreshingly not dramatic scenes and suspensions, more the logistical difficulties of accessing debate with other radicals in the Highlands in the pre-internet age.

Of particular interest is mention of his authorship of the party's 1977 land policy containing suggestions of a two-tier land commission and what appears to be suggestion of a public interest test which, having made into the 2021 SNP manifesto, Green party manifesto, and now shared policy programme, should make it into a new land reform bill in this parliamentary term.

Although following a linear timeline, various chapters diverge into specific land reform issues, in the case of chapter six on deer impacts across Scotland. Much of the, arguably central belt focussed, Scottish left now view land reform through the prism of grouse moor reform, which although an important issue, is much to the

detriment of wider debate. This focus on deer is welcome relief.

If it had not been for the previous five chapters, the reader could be forgiven in thinking this focus on deer was written by a Green politician, providing a gentle reminder that today's parliament lacks a Green politician with as much land reform experience as Gibson nor an SNP parliamentary group with a politician with environmentalism so close to heart.

Various chapters deal with other aspects of land reform, or in chapter eight marine reform, which allows the casual reader to easily find points of interest. Tenant farmers, human rights, and urban land reform are all included and are incorporated back into the timeline of Gibson's parliamentary career.

Evidence of this are the numerous extracts from parliamentary speeches, news articles, parliamentary research briefings and more. One of which, a speech at Community Land Scotland's annual conference, encompasses two issues of personal interest: 'Far from being wild land, I call it Clearances Country' in response to the 2014 Scottish Natural Heritage's 'Wild Land Map' and 'local people describe themselves as the most endangered species' regarding depopulation in the Far North, both as pertinent today in 2021 as they were in 2015.

In reference to other work and, at times, detractors (including those from his own party), Gibson outlines why process cannot match the speed of progress others aspire to. There's a rebuttal of the 'rebellion' at the 2015 SNP conference, although I would have liked to have seen more on internal party politics, and voices on the Scottish left critical of SNP land reform policy. Gibson's frustration is often apparent, and no one is safe from his attempts at refutation. The prominent voices of Lesley Riddoch and Gerry Hassan are highlighted in the book as failing to identify EU transparency registration as 'beyond the power of the Scottish parliament' and 'crucially ... unworkable'. Andy Wightman's research skills and publications are praised, and Gibson recognises his impatience, yet picks up frequently on areas where he feels progress made by the minority government had been ignored. There is a brief and humble respite from defence in recognition that Wightman's claims were a 'black mark against any government no

matter what the political and economic circumstances’.

Reference to Wightman’s ‘polemic style which takes no prisoners’ suggests that this approach, shared by many left commentators, may be at odds with the fundamental message of the book, that delivering on land reform in the Scottish Parliament has proven to be laborious work fraught with difficulty that can only be understood with experience of trying to deliver land reform via the devolved settlement and, ultimately, ‘Holyrood politicians should be recognised for being as radical as was practical’. Gibson is clearly happy with his achievements and sets out to defend them. It is also clear that land reform in Scotland would be in a poorer place without the work of Rob Gibson.

*Magnus Davidson works in the Environmental Research Institute at the University of the Highlands and Islands’ North Highland College*

**Neil Findlay (ed.)**

***If You Don’t Run, They Can’t Chase You: Stories from the frontline of the fight for social justice, 2021, Luath, pp184, 1910022438***

*Reviewed by Iain Ferguson*

October 2021 marked the third anniversary of the historic 48-hour strike for equal pay by 8,000, mainly female, Glasgow council workers, members of UNISON and the GMB. Amongst those who responded to the strikers’ call for solidarity were the male cleansing workers at Polmadie and Dawsholm Recycling Depots who came out ‘illegally’ in their support. On the Dawsholm picket line of the second day of the strike, the scent of victory was in the air. One woman, a home carer, said that she had even been phoned by a relative in Australia to say that their strike – the biggest equal pay strike ever - had been reported there on the national news. ‘We’re making history’, she proudly announced. This is just one of the fourteen accounts of struggle contained in this powerful collection edited by Neil Findlay, providing examples of what the media calls ‘ordinary people’ making history by challenging injustice and oppression.

Their stories range from the most intimate and personal to involvement in some of the biggest national and international struggles of recent

decades. Those of the former include the death of a son at the Hillsborough Stadium on 15 April 1989, one of the ninety-six Liverpool fans who died that day; the loss of a much-loved brother as a result of corporate manslaughter; and the horrific story of the women whose lives have been devastated by transvaginal mesh, inserted by medical professionals supposedly to cure incontinence. On the bigger scale is Terry Renshaw’s account of his experience as one of the Shrewsbury 24, rank-and-file building workers in the early 1970s who were jailed and blacklisted for decades for fighting to improve safety conditions on building sites; chapters detailing life on the frontline during the Great Miners’ Strike of 1984-1985; and accounts of building solidarity in the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa and in the fight against the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. Yet despite the very varied range of experiences discussed in the book, some common themes emerge.

One is just how little value the ruling class – the employers and the state – places on the lives and well-being of working-class people. Whether it be workers forced to work in highly dangerous conditions as building workers were in the 1970s (as nurses, social care and transport workers have been during the current pandemic), or the housing of poor people and migrants in high-rise buildings like Grenfell Tower that are little more than firetraps, nothing can be allowed to stand in the way of maximising profits.

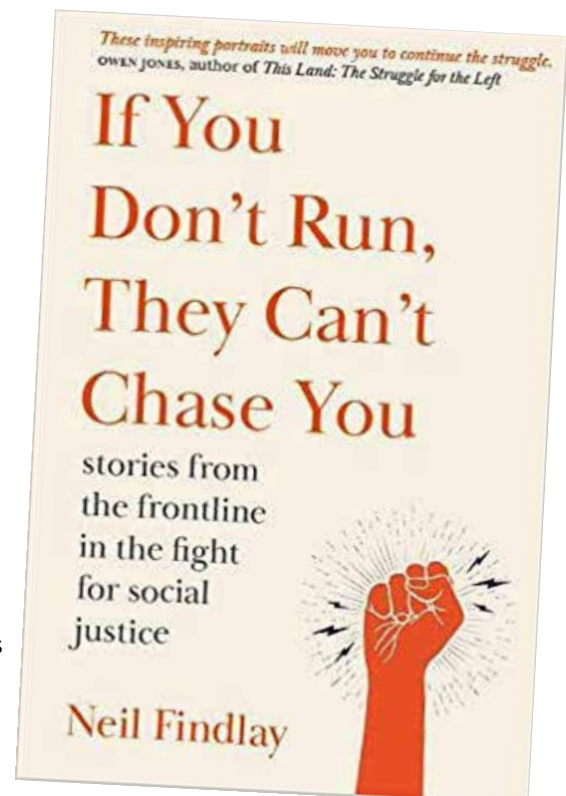
A related theme is the brutality of the state and the bosses towards those who seek to challenge their power. In his chapter on working as a union activist in the building industry in the 1980s and 1990s, Dave Smith discusses the employers’ decades-long blacklisting of union activists as a means of ensuring that workplaces remain unorganised: ‘A pattern emerged: pretty much any time I raised health and safety concerns or site conditions, I’d be sacked. It was as simple as that’. As a result, countless lives and relationships were destroyed as activists struggled to find work, pay the bills and bring up families.

Even more shocking is the account of female activist, Andrea, of being a victim of what she accurately describes as ‘state-sanctioned rape’ when she found years later that a man whom she loved and had been in a long-term relationship with was, in fact, an undercover cop, placed there by

senior police officers to report on the campaigns that Andrea was involved in. As we now know, Andrea was far from alone in being a victim of ‘spy cops’.

But the overall message of the book is a positive one. For what these individual stories show is that where the experience of personal loss, oppression and injustice can be channelled into collective organisation and action, then the anger and grief can be a force for challenging the system. And in the process of fighting back, people themselves are changed in ways they never expected. For Louise Adamson, campaigning to hold employers to account for corporate manslaughter following the death of her brother, ‘Progress is made by collective action. That’s how you bring about change’ while for Dave Smith, the lesson of the struggle against the blacklist is: ‘Social change comes from below, not from handing over power to any politician’. It’s a lesson that is particularly relevant today when we face the triple crisis of climate change, the Covid pandemic and an economic system that will see millions of families this winter forced to choose between food and heating.

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# Kick up the Tabloids

**W**ho knows what the fight the UK will have started in Europe by the time this appears in print. After noising up the Irish and trying to stir things up with France, who knows which country the UK will have decided to take on next. Furthermore, as the country lurches from crisis to crisis like an articulated lorry without a driver, it would be a brave person, indeed, who predicted what essential items will have disappeared from our shelves by the end of the year.

During the EU referendum five years ago, the Leave campaign accused Remain of running unsubstantiated scare stories about the potential catastrophes in store if we voted to leave the EU, similar to 'Project Fear' employed in Scotland two years beforehand. Yet even the most ardent Remainers would never have dared to predict the pig crisis, a lack of butchers, and a shortage of CO2 means thousands of pigs cannot be humanely slaughtered. Some farmers are left with no alternative but to watch healthy animals being burned. Observing the UK unravel right now is like some dystopian version of an Ealing comedy

This is not what was promised in 2016. Johnson and his cronies were pledging millions of pounds every day in additional funding for the health service. In reality, the only extra cash received by the NHS in the last five years was raised by a 99-year-old war veteran walking up and down his back garden.

The pig crisis is only the latest fall-out from Brexit. I don't remember Boris Johnson travelling around the country in 2016 with boasts about killing pigs painted on the side of a bus. He is doubtless relieved that he never promised to bring home the bacon!

The SOS sent to butchers in the EU asking them to apply for temporary visas is likely to get the cold shoulder

it deserves. Expect severe chipolata shortage over Christmas. This is exactly the same as the offer being made to Polish and Romanian lorry drivers. Less than twelve months after they were told they were not welcome in the UK, the government is pleading with them to come back.

This is what happens when you replace policy and strategy with three-word soundbites. 'Get Brexit Done' may have been a catchy slogan on the campaign trail, but 'Let's do our best to get Brexit done properly without making a complete fucking cock-up' would have been a better aspiration, although admittedly less snappy.

That attitude would never be taken to any other transaction. If you were paying someone to decorate your house and they asked what you wanted them to do, you wouldn't say 'Just get it done'. Likewise, if you were ordering a meal, or getting a haircut. On second thoughts, 'Just get it done' is probably exactly what Johnson says at the barber every time he goes for a chop given how his hair turns out.

Some would say that the chickens are coming home to roost. Except that there is likely to be a severe poultry shortage in the next few months. Johnson was offered the chance by the EU for a further delay to withdrawing from Europe, due to the unique problems posed by the pandemic. He, of course, decided to plough on and insist on leaving, no matter how bad the terms.

Doubtless this was because of his earlier claim that he would 'rather die in a ditch' than postpone Brexit. That claim was the main reason I supported the campaign for a second referendum on Europe. That should have been the choice on the ballot paper.

We were already the laughing stock of Europe before the government started offering temporary visas to

the very people who we told were unwelcome in this country a mere twelve months ago. Comparing Brexit to the break-up of a marriage has become a rather hackneyed cliché. However, in this current situation, is quite apt. Imagine one partner turning to the other and saying: 'I've decided I'm leaving you. Look, this isn't working for either of us. You're holding me back, you're stopping me becoming who I want to be. I'd be much better off without you. Don't try to stop me. I've packed my bags and I'm going. Don't even think about trying to make me change my mind'. The door slams, we hear keys drop through the letterbox. Five minutes later, the doorbell rings. 'I don't suppose you could give me a lift to the station, could you?'



Vladimir McTavish

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