

Scottish **Left** Review

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IT REALLY CAN BE
BETTER THAN THIS.



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Comment

If nothing else, the Common Weal symposium demonstrated that if nothing changes its not for lack of strong ideas

On 3 April the Jimmy Reid Foundation held a symposium on its Common Weal project. It was significant for a number of reasons.

The project itself is very ambitious.

In what was little more than a year the Foundation commissioned and developed 50 major reports and papers covering most of the policy issues that would need to be addressed if there was to be a fundamental change in the way we run our society.

This in itself is important; it has become quite the fashion in political commentary today to feign a belief that creating a fairer, more equal, more productive society is an aim so complex and difficult as to be virtually impossible. An entire industry of conservative writers have filled newspapers with copy which is carefully crafted to imply that Scotland (or Britain, depending on context) may well have many social problems which other similar countries do not face but that for ill-defined reasons there is nothing that can be done about it.

There were about 100 academics, economists and writers at the symposium and among them there was little sympathy for the 'there's nothing we can do' tendency. The day itself was based around ten sessions, each with two presenters covering different policy aspects. That there could have been double the numbers of people presenting shows the volume of work that has been done.

The sessions moved through the steps that authors believed were necessary to create fundamental change. Participants heard about changing in political philosophy, the need for a participatory democracy, how to create investment, the outline of an industrial policy, the scope for collective control,

how to change the politics of work, creating social security, creating personal financial security, creating human security and designing our society in a way that enhances life.

This issue of *Scottish Left Review* is a collection of short essays summarising each of the presentations. Each is linked to each other - you can't fix work without changing the economy, you can change the economy without investment, you can make investment unless you sort out public finances...

What it adds up to is a fundamentally different approach to how we design our society. There has

been much interest in major new works on the state of global capitalism (notably *Capitalism in the 21st Century* by Thomas Piketty and *The Price of Inequality* by Joseph Stiglitz) and the lesson from these is straightforward. If we allow inequality to grow to great it creates concentrations of wealth and power which create their own feedback loop, acting only to increase that wealth and power at the expense of everything from human wellbeing to economic effectiveness.

This is an inevitable result of a political philosophy of 'survival of the fittest' - any enterprise that grows biggest must therefore be the best and must be supported at the expense of those who are smaller. It creates cartel and monopoly and these distort and weaken the economy which in turn harms wellbeing.

Common Weal works from a different perspective; rather than looking at two actors in a policy area and working out which one is 'the winner' to be backed and which 'the loser' to be forgotten, it looks at all the actors in a policy area and asks how they collectively can produce the best

result for all. This approach pushes away from concentration of power and wealth and implies a greater mutual sharing of resource to create better outcomes for all.

It is this which conservative commentators refuse to engage with. In their paragraphs and paragraphs of wilful confusion they present alternatives to what we have as either 'the same thing but with higher taxes' or 'central planning and state communism'. That a different political outlook might not be the same thing at all appears to be beyond their comprehension. That a change in politics might lead to a change in society is dismissed - 'if those Nordics did it then it must be about tax, right?'.

This is another important factor in the symposium and the Common Weal project - the content is there and so to argue that 'no-one knows how to do any of this equality stuff' is to be deliberately ill-informed. Hopefully in future conservatives will have to find a more cogent argument against this policy work than 'oh dear, it's all so complicated isn't it?'

But there are other aspects to the day which hopefully have a lasting impact on left politics in Scotland. Since the project is greatly focussed on what needs to change and how to change it, it is to be hoped that the various strands of progressive politics in Scotland will be encouraged to take a similarly detailed and measured approach to change. The 'steady as she goes but with just a little tweak' arguments need to be tested to see how these little tweaks will actually achieve change. And the 'tax the rich and all will be fine' arguments need to be tested to see if these simple measures will actually work.

All of this is leading up to a major launch of the project in early June. This launch will pull together all the ideas in all the papers into a single narrative explanation of how transformation can be achieved.

If nothing else, at least let it be hoped that this can change the perception that those who want social change have no idea what they're talking about. ■

The case for mini-publics

**Prof Stephen Elstub,
UWS lecturer in Politics,
discusses the advantages
of mini-publics in
building a Scottish
participative democracy.**

Regardless of the independence referendum result, Scotland has the opportunity and potential to put its citizens at the heart of the political system by moving towards a participatory democracy. There are, however, a number of significant problems that must be overcome to achieve this, and the argument here is that minipublics can help overcome these issues.

Participatory democracy involves all citizens affected by a decision participating in the making of these decisions directly. If we take the literal and original Greek meaning of the word 'democracy', then it is 'rule by the people.' Therefore the more opportunities all citizens in Scotland have to take an equal part in decision-making directly the more democratic Scotland will be. In this sense a participatory democracy offers a more authentic approach to democracy than just having our elected representatives decide all policy on our behalf.

Innovative institutions, to promote participatory democracy, that have been employed all over the world are minipublics, which are made up of randomly selected citizens. The principle here is that everyone affected by the topic in question has an equal chance of being selected, and to ensure that a range of demographic characteristics from the broader population are adequately represented e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, disability, income, geography, education, religion, and so on. Participants are remunerated, the discussions are facilitated, and experts provide evidence

and advocacy of relevant information and positions are then cross-examined by the lay citizens. They seek to answer a fundamental question: How would 'the public' deal with an issue if they had the time and resources to learn and deliberate about it in order to reach an informed decision? In this sense they are anticipatory publics and trusted information proxies that can guide politicians and the broader public.

In political debate in Scotland, it is common to hear concerns about the 'uninformed public', the 'distorting media context', and the lack of opportunities to 'get a fair hearing' for all perspectives. Furthermore, citizens can also feel uninspired to engage with important issues due to a lack of safe spaces for learning and deliberation, and the absence of new and trusted points of reference to guide their judgements. A robust minipublic can provide that 'safe space' and 'trusted point of reference'.

There are though significant barriers to achieving a more participatory democracy in any political system, including Scotland. I would like to highlight six of the most salient barriers here and further demonstrate how minipublics can alleviate these problems.

Firstly, many citizens lack the inclination to participate. However, because minipublics use random selection and invite specific citizens they are more more likely to participate. If they decline the invite they are replaced by someone with similar demographics.

Secondly, citizens also lack the time to participate. We all have other commitments including work, family and a social life and understandably many people are reluctant to sacrifice their limited and valuable time to participate in politics, especially when their participation may be inconsequential. Paying participants helps them find the time, and minipublics are usually held at weekends to make this easier.

Thirdly, there is a socio-economic bias to political participation with white, middle-aged, middle-class men most likely to participate, although the key determinant for political participation all over the world is education. The more education a person has undertaken the

more likely they are to participate in politics. Random sampling removes the socio-economic bias. The whole point is that the participating citizens are representative of the broader public.

Fourthly, when citizens do participate, they are usually uninformed. This is partly due to the fact that if their participation is unlikely to be consequential there is little incentive to make the effort to become informed. However, this enables politicians and the media to unduly influence and manipulate public opinion. Minipublics provide participants with information from a range of perspectives, and gives them the chance to question experts and discuss the information. The incentive and opportunity to become informed is also created as citizens in a minipublic can influence policy.

Fifthly, due to a combination of all these factors, when opportunities to participate beyond the ballot box are extended to citizens, specific interests mobilise their support and capture these processes, meaning they are not representative of the whole public. Random sampling means minipublics tend to be made up of non-partisan participants and the possibility of capture by special interests is eliminated.

Sixthly, there are problems of scale. In any country, including relatively small ones like Scotland, the numbers of citizens, geographically dispersed, present significant logistical challenges to ensure inclusive and meaningful political participation in the public policy process. Through random sampling an economy of scale is achieved as only a relatively small number of citizens are required to participate, but this sample is representative of the broader public.

This is not to suggest that minipublics are the only relevant type of institution that can deepen democracy in Scotland and open up opportunities for citizen influence on public policy. Nevertheless, they do provide distinct and unique advantages and could be used in combination with other new and traditional forms of participation and representation that already exist in Scotland.

Reclaiming local democracy

Prof Paddy Bort, Edinburgh University lecturer in Politics, analyses the problems of Scotland's 'local' democracy and argues that it must be reclaimed as genuine community-based democracy.

The state of Scottish local democracy has come under increased scrutiny as part of the wider debate surrounding the independence referendum. Why did devolution stop at Holyrood? Scotland has the largest council units in Europe with the weakest community tier of government in Europe. Local government in Scotland is, in large parts of the country, not local, and it is administration – the executive arm of central government – rather than decision-making self-governance.

There are only 32 councils with a total of 1223 councillors for the whole country; community councils are, by and large, toothless, powerless and even more poorly supported than local authorities; distances – particularly in rural council areas – can be prohibitive. Highland Council, for example, covers an area as big as Belgium, with the population of Belfast, all represented by one council; towns like Kirkcaldy, East Kilbride, Cumbernauld or St Andrews are without their own governance structures. Nowhere else in Europe is such a state of play remotely imaginable.

Not only do we have far fewer elected councils per population and area than the rest of Europe, we also have far fewer elected councillors and candidates standing in council elections.

The selected, but fairly representative numbers speak for themselves:

	1950	2001	Av. Pop.
Austria	4,065	2,359	3,437
Denmark	1,303	276	19,381
France	37,997	36,585	1,615
Germany	33,932	13,854	5,931
Italy	8,100	7,802	7,141
Switzerland	3,097	2,867	2,488
Norway	744	435	10,295
Scotland	236	32	163,200

	Pop (m)	Stand for election	Ratio
Finland	5.4	38,509	1 in 140
Norway	4.8	59,505	1 in 81
Baden-Württemberg	10.7	75,726	1 in 141
Sweden	9.4	64,810	1 in 145
Scotland	5.2	2,607	1 in 2,071

	Stand for election	No. of seats	Stand per seat
Finland	38,509	14,412	3.7
Norway	59,505	10,785	5.5
Baden-Württemberg	75,726	21,279	3.6
Sweden	64,810	14,631	4.4
Scotland	2,607	1,223	2.1

Scottish local democracy has been compared to a ladder, with the lower rungs missing. It is excluding Scots from running their own local affairs, denying them access to democracy. Combined with the loss of power through centralisation and privatisation, emphasising the customer rather than the citizen, that begins to explain the catastrophically low turn out at local elections.

Austria	(2004) 73%
Denmark	(2005) 69%
Finland	(2008) 61%
France	(2014) 63%
Germany	(2014) 50%
Italy	(2012) 68%
Spain	(2007) 73%
England	(2012) 31%
Scotland	(2012) 40%

Scottish voters clearly experience local government as something they are being excluded from and ignored by and which they see as remote and bereft of powers. Even before the onset of the council tax freeze, Scottish councils only raised about 20% of their revenue. In other EU countries like Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Spain and Sweden, local councils' revenue is based significantly on local income taxes (where is the SNP bill proposed but not introduced in the last Parliament?); in Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, local governments are free to set the rate.

	First tier	Second tier	Third tier
Denmark	46	63	--
Finland	43	--	--
France	46	61	48
Spain	35	--	16
Netherlands	8	19	--
Sweden	56	66	--
Scotland	20*	--	--

* until the Council Tax Freeze imposed by Central Government in 2007

The three island councils of Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles launched their 'Our Islands – Our Future' campaign about a year ago, with demands for greater autonomy; then the Scottish cities chimed in; and, finally, CoSLA installed a Commission on 'Strengthening Local Democracy'.

COSLA president David O'Neill warned the 'centralising' Scottish Government against future power grabs and called for the role of councils to be enshrined in law. Among the issues set out for the commission is the funding of local government. 'The council tax freeze has been in place since 2007 and that is going to go on until the end of this parliament which will be 2017,' said O'Neill. 'During that time, local government's ability to raise its own finances has been reduced from only 20 per cent down to 14-ish per cent.' That, he argued, is 'not a sustainable future.'

Devolution was never meant to stop at Holyrood, and the Parliament's founding principle of sharing power with the people has, so far, not been extended to sharing power with local democracy. On the contrary, as Andy Wightman has commented: "At the same time as Scotland is on a journey to greater autonomy as a nation, the opposite is happening at the local level."

The Scottish Government's White Paper offers only limited hope. While promising to guarantee local government in a written constitution, it states: 'On independence, the responsibilities and services of local government will continue as normal, as councils' statutory basis, funding, contracts and workforce will remain in place.' That is one of the most disappointing sentences in the Scottish Government's White Paper. What's 'normal' about Scottish local government?

Centralising tendencies continue, and any attempt to democratise local government will have to slay the ghosts of the past when local elites ruled the roost, and corruption, sleaze and nepotism were rife. None the less, addressing Scotland's local democracy deficit ought to be the priority of any Scottish government, regardless of the referendum outcome. Reclaiming local democracy is not a distraction in the current debate, it is an essential cornerstone of a renewed democracy in Scotland: self-governance begins at the local level.

Children's Rights, Social Justice and Participation

Prof John Davis, Prof Kay Tisdall, Prof Louise Hill, Selywn McCausland, Liam Cairns and Carine Leborgne look at what participative democracy could mean for children and children's rights.

The rights of children and young people are inalienable - they cannot be taken or wished away. A new politics in Scotland should lead to the full incorporation of The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child - the most ratified human rights treaty in the world - that addresses a holistic range of children's provision, protection and participation rights. The rights of children and young people have been incorporated on a piecemeal and case-by-case basis in Scotland because the political establishment fears full incorporation of the UNCRC may open a floodgate of litigation. Yet a UNICEF UK 2013 report found that full incorporation and increased training for professionals had given: legal effect to government commitments, generated more respect for children and young people as rights-holders and ensured the implementation of children's rights principles in domestic law and policy.

Children and young people associate rights with being: safe/secure, treated fairly, respected, and included. They associate rights with concepts of social justice such as access to law, respect from adults and the removal of structural inequalities such as poverty, scarce transport, poor play facilities or inadequate housing. Structural

inequalities inhibit the building of strong long-term relationships, for example: it is difficult to make friends if you do not live in housing that you feel happy to bring a friend home to. The Scottish Human Rights Commission and The Christie Commission have argued that dignity and fairness can be better achieved, if the core principles of human rights (participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and legality) are embedded into public services. A new politics in Scotland requires us to develop frameworks for enabling children and young people to influence and change issues in their lives.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child defines participation as an on-going process of information sharing, mutual respect and dialogue between children, young people and adults, where diverse views are taken into account and shape outcomes. Here, the rights of adults, children and young people are not separate and competing - they are connected and complimentary. Outcomes in Scotland: tend to be defined by professionals; often fail to enable social justice; can be incomprehensible to most families; and can be manipulated or used un-reflexively by professionals to discriminate against families. A children's rights and social justice approach poses questions for how we ensure that children and young people are enabled to: collaboratively define outcomes; collectively participate in local partnerships; and co-operatively set the agenda for the Common Weal.

Participation can sometimes be manipulative - hence one Think Tank on children and young people's participation called for participation to be meaningful, effective, embedded & sustainable. Good examples exist of where children and young people have been engaged with on a rights basis. Children and young people are able to collaborate with adults, in different ways and at different levels, to influence policy and practice - whether it be a local early years centre at Cowgate in Edinburgh which receives regular outstanding inspections for promoting child-led learning, or Investing in Children, an organisation with an emerging profile in Scotland,

that runs a membership scheme, agenda days and dialogue groups to effect local change, or the Scottish Youth Commission on Alcohol.

The Common Weal papers have sought to create a new participatory political environment in Scotland - if children and young people are to be afforded their full rights, we need to build on existing good examples to ensure that we foster appreciative collaboration between adults, children and young people.

Universality vs Selectivity

Paul Spicker, Professor of Public Policy at RGU, looks at the benefits of universalism over selectivity as two distinct approaches to public services.

At one and the same time, arguments about universality and selectivity are about principles - what kind of society we want to live in - and methods - how things can practically be done. When the 'welfare state' was founded in the 1940s, part of the idea was to break away from the old patterns of welfare provision. The Poor Law was supposed to be a safety net, ensuring that in the last resort there would be some provision for people who were destitute, who had no other means of living. It was supplemented between the wars by 'means tests', that were supposed to break away from 'pauperisation' but were just as problematic. The Poor Law was punitive, divisive and stigmatising. It has been called a 'residual' model; it was designed to hold provision to the minimum, and to deal only with people who could not manage in any other way. The Welfare State was supposed to do things differently: providing welfare for everyone at the best level possible.

The core of this model was the idea of 'institutional' welfare, accepting welfare as a normal part of everyday life, in the same way that roads, or street lights, or drains are 'normal'. Welfare was 'universal' because it was comprehensive and extensive, meeting needs 'from the cradle to the grave'. The model was the National Health Service. It does not do the same things for everyone, but it provides everyone (including people who don't use it) with something in common - a service equivalent to health insurance. There are other things that people may want to see beyond institutional welfare - rights and empowerment for citizens, solidarity and mutual support, or the commitment to equality implicit in the idea of the 'people's home'. In the most basic sense, however, the institutional principle is fundamental to common decency. Few people who believe in the Common Weal are not also universalists.

When universality and selectivity are considered as methods, however, things get more complicated. One key question is whether people are better receiving goods and services, like water or medical care, or whether they are better receiving the money to buy things, which is what we do for food. Another is whether a service should be 'targeted', focusing on people in need, or whether it should go to everyone. Sometimes the best services are personal; sometimes they are general, like providing schools and hospitals.

Universal services and benefits are services which go to everyone, or at least to everyone in a category (such as older people, or children, or residents in a community) without a test of need. Examples are schools, libraries, bus passes for older people and the controversial 'Winter Fuel Payment'. The basic arguments for universal benefits are, in principle, that they represent rights which everyone has, and they meet common basic needs. The basic practical arguments is that they are simple to administer, and minimally intrusive. The main arguments against are that they divert resources away from people in greater need, that the British press is adamantly opposed to them, and they can be expensive. However, universal

benefits are also often austere, in a sense of that word we seem to have forgotten: the NHS was introduced when there was no money to waste on complex administration or the luxuries of choice, and in the developing world universal Basic Health Care Packages have been introduced as the simplest, cheapest and most effective way of spending what one plans to spend and no more.

Selective services and benefits are services which are preserved for people in need. Examples include free personal care for older people, benefits for people with disabilities, and benefits for people who are unemployed. Selection implies a test - that some people will receive the benefit, and others will not. This should, in principle, lead to greater efficiency, and greater fairness; selectivity is supposed to be responsive to need. However, selection is difficult in practice: selective systems tend to be complex and intrusive, the boundaries are difficult to maintain fairly, and the process of exclusion means that the systems run the risk of becoming divisive and stigmatising. Means-tests - benefits which are selected on the basis of low income - have all the problems of selectivity, and more besides. Income is complex, unstable

and difficult to track. There are fiendish problems of equity, treating people fairly and dealing with people in different circumstances such as self-employment, savings and low earnings. Mistakes are frequent. The public response is often hostile, and the take-up of means-tested benefits is notoriously poor. At the same time, some element of selectivity is unavoidable - we cannot not have some extra provision for the needs of people with disabilities.

The arguments about universality and selectivity are not well served by supposing that we ought to have entirely one kind of system or another. The main argument for universalism is that we should be trying to shift the balance towards greater simplicity, less intrusion, and a sense that the public provision of benefits and services should be accepted as a normal part of social life.

The Case for Democratic Public Ownership

Andy Cumbers, Professor of Economic Geography at Glasgow University, makes the case for democratic public ownership as distinct from top-down state ownership and private ownership.

Since 1979 the privatisation and marketization policies of successive governments have delivered the economy into the hands of a narrow set of vested corporate and financial interests. The consequences are that decision-making is geared towards short-term profit and rent-seeking, at the expense of more longer term thinking and in particular strategic concerns for the common good. Privatisation has also been accompanied by a growing foreign ownership of Scotland's most strategically important resources and assets, raising important questions about government's ability to control and administer important public policy objectives such as tackling climate change and providing essential services to the public at the lowest cost.

Privatisation of Scotland's infrastructure and key resources also means that key public policy objectives are not being achieved. For example in the energy sector, privatisation is failing to provide energy security, meet climate change targets, or deliver cheaper fuel supplies to consumers. Critical issues such as upgrading and modernising the electricity grid to better enable a post-carbon future and securing international connections to other European energy

networks are not being delivered because of reliance on private investment. In other areas too, notably rail, critical strategic infrastructural issues – such as shifting freight from road to rail and delivering modern public transport solution – are not being met.

Privatisation was a powerful political and ideological project that managed to inaccurately castigate older forms of nationalisation for their ineffectiveness and wasteful bureaucracy. In developing new forms of public ownership it is important to counter some of the widespread myths and caricatures of past forms of nationalisation in the UK to stress the under-reported effectiveness of many forms of public ownership at delivering public goals, in contrast to the experience with privatisation. However, older forms of public ownership in the UK were often lacking in democratic accountability and public participation. New forms should address these deficits.

In particular there is a need for a more democratic approach to the ownership and management of basic resources and network infrastructures which re-distributes economic decision-making power beyond its capture by financial, corporate and foreign interests. In particular we need to create new forms of public and collective ownership that are better able to develop an economy to serve social needs and environmental concerns over private gain. Such forms of ownership should combine higher level strategic coordination with more localised forms of public ownership. In all cases, though, ownership should seek to enhance democratic accountability and public engagement in the economy.

The failures of privatisation in other countries are producing a growing trend to take back utility sectors into public ownership where the emphasis is upon developing non-profit and collective forms of ownership. A range of new and hybrid forms of public ownership have been developed in other countries, from Latin America to Western Europe and Scandinavia, that offer models for Scotland to draw from in creating its own bespoke forms of collective ownership and infrastructure provision.

Making Welfare about Social Security

Willie Sullivan, Director of the Electoral Reform Society Scotland, looks at the principles behind a progressive approach to welfare in Scotland.

Welfare has been given two distinct meanings in Britain. As distinct as a tennis ball is from a graduation ball. One concerns the wellbeing of an individual and the other is about a stigmatised hand out to the poor. This political occupation of language is where the right excels. We have to break out of this political frame if we are to have a chance of creating a society beyond the limitations set by the new right.

The Common Weal approach to welfare is a return to the concept of social security. It sets up our view of a society of individuals free from anxiety against a system of welfare that seeks to keep the population in a state of low level fear.

To be secure people have to be sure that they won't be left destitute if something goes wrong. They should have a secure home, meaningful occupation and a reasonable income.

The publication 'In Place of Anxiety : Social Security for the Common Weal' explains that an industrial policy that raises employment levels, skills and wage could take us out of a low wage economy and ensure tax revenues are enough to support the disabled and carers. It shows with a proper house building program and decent regulation as has happened in Germany, we could hold house prices and therefore rents down and ensure homes are not products but places people build lives, families and communities

from. Most importantly it reiterates the case for a Citizens Income as a basic level of payment for every single person from birth to death varying at different life points. This is cheaper to run than current 'situation tested' systems and fundamentally changes the individual's relationship with the state, each other and with capital. It also allows proper integration of the tax and benefit system so that those with enough, pay back the citizens income through their tax code.

There are potentially two views of a successful society. The first is a society that strives on the back of fear. It is built upon the idea that the population should be so afraid of the stigma of failure and the material reality of poverty that comes from not being able to work or find work that they are motivated to produce and grow that economy or else sink. Its politics are fear-based, setting one section of the population against another. These are all elements that thrive in an atmosphere of anxiety.

The second is one that is built upon humanity's innate desire to create, communicate and be social. Where our Common Weal is used to give everyone a guaranteed a basic starting platform from which to build a good life and a good society. Creativity, ambition for something better and hope drive productivity and the creation of community. Cooperation and mutual support build the economy. Its politics seek unity and the power of a collective force. These are all things that thrive in an atmosphere of security.

The Case for a Citizen's Income

Annie Miller, Chair of the Citizens Income Trust, makes the case for a citizen's income

The UK Social Security system comprises a National Insurance scheme, plus a means-tested-benefit (MTB) 'safety-net'. National Insurance was designed for industrial societies with high employment. The withdrawal rates of MTBs act as inherent disincentives to work-for-pay for unemployed and low-paid workers, leading to inefficiency in the labour market. In addition to the below-poverty benefit levels, there are many other structural faults in the system. This results in widespread out-of-work and in-work poverty, stigmatisation, intrusion, insecurity, high stress and anxiety levels, and endemic fear of long-term unemployment, debt and homelessness.

In addition there is evidence that all government administrations over the last four decades have systematically redistributed income from poor to rich. This has led to the UK having one of the highest income inequalities in the developed world, and high levels of personal debt.

What sort of society do we want to be part of and help to create? A government's first duty should be to provide the conditions to enable all of its citizens (not just the wealthy) to meet their needs to be able to develop and flourish.

The UK Social Security system is complex, unwieldy, unjust, inefficient and not fit for 21st century society. This Gordian Knot needs to be cut through and replaced by a radical alternative suitable for today. A Citizen's Income (CI) scheme is just such an alternative. It is like Child Benefit, but for everyone. It involves a new way of thinking about Social Security policy, and represents a new, more compassionate relationship between society and its citizens. A CI uncouples the link between income and work, and can secure both greater equality and efficiency; the more generous the scheme, the greater the fulfilment of these objectives.

A CI is defined as universal, individual, unconditional, and high enough to enable one to live a life of dignity, participating in society. This definition does not create a complete system. One still needs to decide who

gets what. Will every one get the same? How will it be financed? Potential sources of finance include income tax, sales tax, land value tax or other wealth tax, or a sovereign wealth fund.

A CI scheme can help to achieve several related objectives for welfare reform, including healing the current divisions in society of stigmatised benefit-recipients and resentful taxpayers. It can also help to reduce financial poverty and insecurity. Prevention is cheaper than cure. A CI will restore incentives to work-for-pay, and labour market efficiency. It could introduce simplicity, transparency and thus accountability into the administration of benefits. It grants financial privacy and autonomy to individuals, and gives citizens more control over their lives.

A CI scheme can help to achieve the objectives listed above, but, by itself, cannot redistribute income from rich to poor without a restructured income tax system. For instance, income tax and employees' NI contributions could be amalgamated. It would contain no personal allowances, or tax loopholes. All sources of income could be taxed at the same rate.

CIs can fulfill a variety of welfare objectives. There is no single optimum CI scheme, and so it should be designed to fulfill a set of prioritised-objectives and constraints. It is not a panacea for all ills, but is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for a better society, and it has been shown to be economically feasible.

Good housing for a good life

Sarah Glynn, housing expert at UWS, outlines how we can achieve affordable social housing for all.

Good housing is essential to the good life, and provision of good housing should be the defined purpose of housing

policy. But housing is also integral to the wider economy, so investment in housing is money doubly well spent.

A strong economy needs a well-housed workforce, and the social consequences of bad and expensive housing have huge economic implications. High housing costs have also soaked up billions of pounds that could have been invested in the productive economy. In contrast, money spent on housing construction and upgrading boosts local economies and jobs, and public investment in construction can contribute to economic stability.

The current focus on housing as speculation has failed to provide the homes people need, pushed up housing costs, encouraged bad design and short-termism, and concentrated wealth in a small elite. It has also brought economic crisis. We need to move housing away from the market and shift focus towards social and environmental priorities. This includes preventing a person's life chances being dictated by their housing tenure.

Land is the major element of property speculation. A Land Value Tax would allow increases in land value to benefit everyone; and, combined with strong planning, would foster the most beneficial use of land and reduce land speculation. We should also promote public land ownership.

Publicly owned rented housing avoids speculation while providing affordable and secure tenancies. Major investment in new and upgraded public housing can make this a tenure of choice for all who want it. This can be done through local authorities, but with a new approach to management (locally based with active tenant involvement) and freedom for tenants to personalise their homes.

Home ownership is not a 'natural aspiration', but has long been promoted and subsidised by government. Good available public housing would remove the imperative to get on the housing ladder in order to get a home, and fiscal changes would restrict the use of homes for speculation (but not stop investment in building new homes). These changes should include – besides Land Value

Tax - ending all subsidies for home ownership, extending capital gains tax to include the home, and raising the levels of both capital gains tax and inheritance tax. Re-regulation of mortgage lending would reduce risk of default and restrict price inflation.

House prices would fall and stabilise at a more realistic level. Even for existing owner occupiers this could be generally positive or neutral. Mortgages would need to be genuinely portable, while an extension of the mortgage to rent scheme could offer owners the alternative of converting their existing home into a local authority tenancy. Good pension provision and elderly care would ensure that housing is not relied on to meet the costs of old age.

Strengthened empty homes legislation should be used to increase the stock of affordable rented public housing, and the use of houses as holiday homes should be regulated.

Private renting can be improved through controls on rents and repair and better security of tenure. Landlordism is a major vehicle for transferring wealth to the rich, and ultimately most privately rented homes can be turned into public housing.

Environmental concerns must inform everything from national planning to the design of individual houses. Maximum use should be made of existing buildings, with VAT removed from building repairs and Green Deal type funding extended to cover holistic whole-house improvements.

Wider environmental demands mesh with social requirements for connected local communities and green space. Planning is key and needs to be supported by revived democratic structures to create good places to live.

Housing policy needs to be part of wider social changes towards a more equal community-centred society, and good housing policy can make an important contribution to those changes.

The Common Weal in the Built Environment

Edinburgh-based architect Malcolm Fraser argues that space must be at the heart of the Common Weal

The built environment provides the places and spaces in which we are more-or-less happy, more-or-less creative and more-or-less economically-effective. A proper measure of the "more", rather than the "less", is the amount of amenity, or utility, a built environment offers us: the nearby parks, schools and shops, its connectivity via a nice, easy route to work or by good access to its public buildings, how it allows and encourages the ways we creatively interact with each other from park bench to great places of public assembly, and how all relate to nature and sunshine.

How we achieve such a simple, focussed vision, intersects with the general aims of the Common Weal, for a fairer, more open society:

Democracy and the Common Weal : whatever our digital future the delivery of services, from public to private or commercial (Town Hall and libraries to ordinary offices and shops) will always have a physical component for we are social animals and work and play best when we come together. In planning our built environment we must not forget that not all have access to a car.

First and foremost, we need to regain confidence in the idea of public services, and the fairness and efficiency of how the open, democratic state can deliver them. Thereafter, a democratic right for all to have easy access to the physical manifestations of these services, as well as to complimentary commercial

ones, would see them fortified in their existing, town centre locations under the Town Centre first principle, where public transport goes, rather than dispersed out-of-town, where the car owner gets stuck in traffic.

Alongside this, the Common Weal's proposals for reinvigorating democracy would see the revival of the missing, local level, of parish, community or whatever councils that would care for their immediate communities, providing a balance to larger authorities which might be reorganised around the 14 Health Board areas. Alongside this is land reform, with the rights of communities to access and own land and buildings in common, underpinned by a Land Registry that makes all ownership clear.

The Built Environment as Precious Resource : the urgency of resource-depletion and man-made climate change must make an end to cycles of demolition and new build, and abandoning old towns for new. The Town Centre first policy helps re-nucleate our atomised built environment, drawing it together so we can walk in it, or access it by public transport.

And just as we need to renew, not abandon, our old towns, building joyful new buildings alongside their old ones, so we need to joyfully-renew old buildings, finding appropriate uses for them rather than condemning their often sturdy fabric to landfill sites. To do this we also need to level our absurd VAT regime, that taxes renewal at 20% and rewards demolition and newbuild with a zero or 5% rate. Such a policy, with a flat rate of 5%, has been shown to promote regeneration, increase the supply of homes by encouraging empty homes back into use at the hearts of their communities, reduce the black economy and increase employment – repair being more labour, and less resource, intensive. A wee magic bullet for society.

A Utilitarian Planning System : delivering all this would be a radically-revised Planning System, which would answer the question “why does society build?” by putting utility at its heart : hospitals that use light, fresh air and access to nature to promote healing, homes and communities built

round sunshine and shared space, offices focussed on creative working environments and schools on light, playspace and their location in their communities, for instance; and villages, towns and cities focussed on parks, walking and shared space.

An Industrial Policy for Scotland

Mike Danson, Prof of Enterprise Policy at Heriot-Watt University, looks at how Scotland can build an economy that puts all of us first through an industrial policy for Scotland.

Today's most successful economies and societies had similar structures and standards of living as Scotland in the early 1970s; now they are ahead of us in almost all ways of measuring quality of life and economic development. This is down to the UK's poor performance in innovation, productivity, competitiveness and the other drivers of sustainable development and the divisive and wrong policies and strategies of successive Westminster governments. Our neighbours also have high trade union membership, low gender and income inequality, employee involvement at work, and high protection for the unemployed, disabled and old. These are not unrelated in theory, policy or practice to economic success, and the Nordic countries, Basque country and other small northern nations have shown how an industrial policy contributes to a balanced and sustainable economy.

Yet, none of the Westminster parties has promoted such an approach of inclusion and quality, and not one

has the essential building blocks in their manifestos or plans. For change to happen, we must have a reversal of anti-trade union legislation, regeneration based on high quality-high value added-high wage jobs, active encouragement of employee ownership and involvement, funded through a national investment bank with complementary financial institutions and enterprise support at the local level. That Common Weal approach is inclusive, cohesive and all-embracing.

The revival of the economy and society cannot be based on consumerism and personal debts nor blind to the negative and stultifying effects of the financialisation of the economy. An industrial policy can make the most of our natural resources and investment in our people: a Common Weal approach which is for all and involves all.

Our institutions for the development of the economy, enterprise and skills have been rightly described as world-leading in the recent past and partnership working has led and informed best practice across the European Union. Our networks and diasporas give us access to markets around the world, but many have been obstructed and underdeveloped without a focus on the smart specialisation of the Scottish economy.

The key words in the superior economic and social performances of our closest neighbours are inclusion, cohesion, innovation, sustainability and involvement. These do not feature highly on the agenda of the neoliberal parties who oppose independence. In power or opposition at Westminster, the damage of the policies and closures from 1977 have not been addressed - there has been no recognition of the need for radical change, that ‘fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families’ that we voted for and never rejected at the polls. If we look at the social partnerships underpinning the Nordic countries, the low levels of inequality and strong social security systems, we see how local communities and enterprises can thrive to mutual advantage.

The UK has an industrial policy

which privileges banking, insurance and finance sectors and retailing, which together suck energy, incomes and hope out of families and the local economy. A better future is possible through a Common Weal industrial policy which highlights:

- creating and sustaining high wage, high quality jobs
- produces socially useful goods and services
- creates sustainable industry sectors which achieve these two goals without social or environmental harm

Common Weal investment

Iain Cairns, researcher with the Reid Foundation, proposes a new approach to public finance and investment that breaks with the UK's neoliberal dogma.

The current rounds of austerity in the UK are justified neither by the level of debt nor the rate of interest paid on that debt, both of which are currently low by historical standards. There has rarely been a more favourable time for the government to borrow to invest in renewing infrastructure and fostering new industries. Yet the UK is damaging the productive capacity of the economy by neglecting investment. Only cash strapped Cyprus, Greece and Ireland invested less in 2012 as a proportion of GDP.

The UK is one of the most expensive countries in which to build infrastructure, largely because of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes and their derivatives. The House of Commons Treasury Committee report which investigated PFI in 2010

recognised that the cost of paying off PFI debt would be over 40 per cent cheaper if government funding were used.

A Common Weal approach would abandon such failed models of investment. Moreover, it must ensure that investment results in tangible benefits to the public, in higher wages, more interesting work and in greater revenue for public services. To enable stability going forward, capital and revenue investment should be separated with the objective of ending deficits in revenue expenditure. Borrowing for public investment is justified where it develops the capacity of the economy so that returns ultimately meet the cost of borrowing.

These returns may be: indirect, such as with the Scottish Government's childcare proposals which, by helping more women into employment, realise gains through an increased tax take; or direct, where, for example, investment in a major housing project is financed through borrowing by local or national bodies against future rents. Other approaches may include the establishment of Special Purpose Vehicles to source funds at public rates of borrowing on behalf of locally or nationally owned companies or, more radically, large scale companies could be developed as national or local mutuals in which each member of the country or community would receive a non-tradable share, providing voting rights and a return on investment through a dividend. A central component of an investment strategy should be a national investment bank. National investment banks, such as Germany's KfW, provide stable long term financing, promote diversity in the commercial banking sector, direct lending towards societal goals and provide profits to the states which own them, helping to reduce deficits. Beyond this, a more stable and sustainable investment landscape could be realised while simultaneously providing government with considerable sums in seigniorage, which could be allocated for investment, through the implementation of a full reserve banking system.

Community Banking

Gordon Morgan, researcher with the Reid Foundation, makes the case for community banking to build local economies.

The credit crunch of 2007 led to: the Failure of Northern Rock and other medium size banks; the effective nationalisation of RBS and Lloyds TSB; a crash in the real economy, unemployment and on-going recession.

Banks created a trillion pounds of new money between 2000 and 2007: 40% of this went to property, which pushed up house prices; 37% went into financial markets which eventually imploded during the financial crisis; just 13% of the money went into productive businesses.

97% of all money in the economy is created by banks NOT governments. Money creation was deregulated in the '80s and rarely since then has bank lending matched the public interest.

The UK banking sector is dominated by just five banks which account for approximately 90% of banking. Banking reforms in both the UK and the EU have simply forced the merger of banks increasing the number of too big to fail banks and encouraging banks to boost capital and cut lending. Bank bail outs put pressure on government budgets and increase austerity.

All central banks used to issue generally followed guidance to banks over how much they could lend and who they should lend to. Guidance was only abandoned in the Western economies in the '80s. It is still used in East Asian economies and is arguably the central mechanism for China's long stable growth. Its use alongside central bank activity could help align policy objectives and bank lending and prevent "bubbles".

90% of lending by large banks is damaging the UK because large banks are less likely to lend to SMEs which are the most productive part of the economy. Scottish SMEs experience problems accessing bank finance particularly finance for development and manufacturing and especially if they lack a trading track record.

Smaller banks are more likely to lend to SMEs as they are more willing to visit premises and meet with budding entrepreneurs e.g. Airdrie Savings Bank est. 1835 has 8 branches with independent managers, no shareholders and lends to local businesses. In Germany, Japan and even the US such banks are common as they were here until deregulation. If supported with management training and seed funding, they could flourish and attract customers from commercial banks. Credit Unions which are often community based could have their deposit limits and lending rules revised.

For major projects, direct lending or investment through publicly owned banks is both cheaper and more effective. For political reasons in the UK this is discouraged. The Green Investment Bank will not compete with or undercut other sources of commercial finance. Some other public banks can lend at lower rates but have low lending limits. Few of these organisations have local community links and there is confusion over which organisation to apply to for support.

In Germany 42.9% of the banking sector are publicly owned local banks. Each council in Scotland could establish at least one such bank. Public enterprise companies e.g. local energy companies or housing associations, could receive funding for essential projects to meet national or local plans.

Local bank lending for public investment should be coordinated by a national investment bank with long term loans at around 3.5% e.g. public loan board rates. All profits would be retained by the public purse and goals such as meeting renewable targets and supporting local industry would be achieved at a much lower cost.

Personal Finance for social need

Katherine Trebeck, research & policy advisor for Oxfam, looks at what we need to do to create secure and sufficient personal finance.

Say the words ‘personal finance’ to most people and it’s likely their eyes will glaze over with images of savings books, mortgage statements and piggy banks. For my part, ISAs – Individual Savings Accounts – are what springs to mind.

But, recasting that acronym perhaps offers some insight into the principles which could guide a shift in the way people navigate the world of personal finance.

What if we looked again at the ‘ISA’?:

‘I’ comes to mean Individual control and autonomy. The lesson here is that people need to be able to manage their finances according to their own circumstances: they should be in charge. The way financial support is offered to people, if required, should reflect this. For example, where possible, people should be offered cash rather than vouchers; best practice from our international development work suggests income rather than hand outs boosts local economies, and empowers people to make their own choices. Yet, in the UK the recent dramatic rise of foodbanks suggests we are heading in the opposite direction as people’s income through work and benefits is proving insufficient and instead they are turning to (life saving) food parcels.

‘S’ is for Sufficiency. The Oxfam Humankind Index for Scotland – a measure of Scotland’s performance across a range of issues derived from public

consultation – tells us that people do not seek extreme levels of wealth. Instead they want enough money to live in their community with dignity and they want to know funds will be forthcoming when they need it. Sadly it seems the erosion of the social safety net and the growing numbers of ‘precarious’ workers on zero hour contracts are undermining these very natural objectives.

And A is for Accessible to All. This means everyone needs to be included – not just those ‘striving’ in paid work and those deemed to have ‘contributed’ in a narrow sense, excluding those who contribute through unpaid work or caring, for example. This requires ensuring a basic level of support. For all. On this, increasing discussion of concepts such as Citizens’ Income might just take us in the right direction.

Delivering Individualised, Sufficient, Accessible personal finance clearly demands action across a range of areas – including a labour market which provides decent work that pays enough. We need appropriate financial instruments that help people plan and smooth their incomes over time. State mechanisms are crucial in providing support in difficult times – to which we are all vulnerable.

Ultimately, we need greater equality, preventing problems at their root causes, tackling poverty at its sources rather than simply treating the symptoms with increasingly threadbare sticking plasters.

And if we are really serious about this – about creating healthier societies, supportive labour markets and cohesive, strong communities – we need longer term time frames in all our decision making. That means the decision making of businesses; of government departments and politicians; and even civil society organisations..

Rather than just encompassing savings books, mortgage statements and piggy banks, rethinking Personal Finance can help us reclaim the economy so it serves people’s needs, rather than the other way around.

Time for Life

Gillian Wales, co-author of recent Reid Foundation report on working time, looks at the report and how it could transform work/life balance in Scotland.

In a 'Time for Life', a report recently published by The Reid Foundation, we argue the case for a 4-day, 30-hour working week in Scotland. We demonstrate how our current work/life apportionment is highly imbalanced, creating stressors and how our fast paced, consumption-led lifestyles are not making us happy. 'Work to earn to consume' is a seriously flawed mantra by which to live our lives. The report advocates a complete rethink in how we value and distribute our time. By redistributing labour and creating a high pay economy, a more equitable, inclusive society is possible. A ten year transition plan accounts for the needs of workers, employers and government alike, demonstrating a cohesive and realistic approach. The proposal is not a panacea, we emphasise the need to combine it with wider measures to strengthen the economy and tackle inequality.

Challenging the dominant narrative of work, that many people are 'work shy', the report highlights our time-imbalanced labour market. Many people are working excessive hours whilst others cannot find enough, or indeed any, work. No one would have intentionally designed a system like this. We highlight the far reaching consequences associated with overwork. The report argues that time-stressed households tend to drive faster, eat out more, and generally engage in more carbon intensive activity. The effects of low pay, zero hours contracts and unpaid overtime all negatively impact upon workers' quality of life. Absenteeism is strongly linked to overwork, costing the Scottish economy £630million (2011/2012). The flip-side

to this is the lack of work opportunities for those un(der)employed and associated welfare costs. £461million is spent on Jobseekers Allowance in Scotland, £670 million on income support and £1.7 billion on housing benefit. Shorter working hours is of course not the only way to tackle these issues but it could be part of the solution. By re-defining full-time work as 30-hours per week, we can allocate hours for all those seeking work, whilst also managing the problem of overwork.

A key question is how will those currently in work be able to afford working fewer hours? These proposals must not make low earners worse off. The report includes numerical evidence of how a living wage, enhanced by a citizen's wage, would deliver the same financial remuneration for 30 hours as over 47 hours at the current minimum wage rate. A high pay economy with increased industrial democracy is a core issue within the paper.

Case studies and evidence from Europe prove that a shorter working week does not equate to lower levels of productivity, an understandable concern for employers. The comprehensive transition strategy details incentives for employers, such as alternative National Insurance policies and additional lifelong learning training to reduce skills gaps.

Gender imbalances are also examined. Women account for over 48% of the Scottish labour force. However, 42% work part-time compared to 13% of men. Additionally, 26% of men work over 45 hours per week compared to 8.5% of women. A shorter working week will create more gender equality in raising children, managing domestic labour and caring as already occurs in the Netherlands. The paper emphasises the importance of employee-led flexibility and floats the idea of school hours contracts to encourage women back into the workforce and improve status.

Freeing up more time for family and friends, cultural and leisure pursuits and civic participation will benefit society as a whole. A 4-day, 30-hour week provides the opportunity for a more equal society, helping to create a healthier economy

and offering all of us the chance to reclaim some Time for Life.

Sculpting our own footprint

Dr John McDonald, Director of the Scottish Global Forum, looks at the defence and security challenges that would face an independent Scotland

Independence would give Scotland the opportunity to press 'reset' on its engagement with the world. In defending itself, and in reaching out to the international community, the scope for change is considerable.

Scottish taxpayers contribute sizeably to UK defence, over £3 billion per year. Scotland is poorly defended for this outlay; a great many Scots also resent how this money is spent. An independent Scotland could develop a more modest and effective defence model which gives primacy to patrolling and defending Scotland's sizeable coastline, sea and airspace, and to protecting Scotland's people and national resources.

As well as defending itself better for less, Scots would also notice significant benefits from having a defence infrastructure based in Scotland. Firstly, a Scottish Defence Force would be peopled by salaried personnel (military and civilian) who are overwhelmingly resident – and spending – in Scotland. Secondly, developing new infrastructure and refurbishing old would generate considerable cross-sector employment. Given the emphasis there would likely be on developing Scotland's maritime capabilities, Scottish shipbuilding would probably be given a major boost. Scotland would inherit some vessels

from the UK but not all that it would need; the fleet shortfall would be built in Scotland.

Making these observations does not represent some nefarious genuflection towards the military-industrial-complex; it reflects instead a rational acceptance that independent Scottish governments would allocate substantial annual defence budgets, and that – unlike the current situation – a sizeable proportion of that expenditure would remain in Scotland

How would an independent Scotland engage with the world? Scotland could show itself to be a responsible international actor by enshrining appropriate dedicated articles in its written constitution. Aside from those suggested in the White Paper, other appropriate articles might include:

An article deeming ‘unconstitutional’ any acts undertaken by the Scottish state with intent to disturb the peaceful relations between nations, especially through military aggression.

Deeming it ‘unconstitutional’ for the Scottish state to export weapons (thus precluding the development of a Scottish arms industry)

Following independence, Scotland could place its experience of peaceful democratic transition at the centre of its international outreach. If successful in evicting Trident, it could also credibly posit itself as a key player in rejuvenating the international non-proliferation agenda. These experiences could form a cornerstone of Scotland’s international engagement. The vehicle for facilitating this would be a Scottish Institute for Peace and Disarmament (SIPD).

SIPD would be a centre of research and international exchange whose knowledge-base and authority would be based upon Scotland’s experience of peaceful constitutional change, nuclear disarmament and military transition. As well as emerging as a leading research institute, SIPD could also host international conferences and summits aimed at encouraging greater dialogue, cooperation and practical progress on these issues. SIPD could also send ‘working groups’ on educational and advisory visits to states and regions experiencing tensions from

constitutional, secession or proliferation issues.

Independence could see Scotland sculpting its own distinctive international footprint, with a defence model more appropriate to Scotland’s actual needs and a foreign policy stance which emphasises peace, knowledge exchange and constructive international dialogue.

Engaging not threatening

Isobel Lindsay argues that we need to change the defence discourse

The military-industrial complex always wants to place discussions on defence in the context of images of territorial integrity under attack from some projected foreign enemy. It has become increasingly difficult for them to conjure up an actual invading state which might take up residence but the prospect of missile attack from (non-credible) locations like North Korea or Iran has continued to be pedalled. In fact the UK Government’s most recent risk assessment, the Strategic Defence and Security Review 2011, cited cyber attack and terrorism as ‘tier-one’ risks, not missile attacks by foreign states. Yet the response to cyber attack requires essentially civilian expertise and terrorism requires policing not armed forces. But there are major economic and status interests in big hardware projects and, of course, in a continued nuclear strategy.

This distortion of any realistic assessment of risk makes it important for us to change the discourse of the defence debate to the broader concept of ‘human security’. Traditional military objectives need to be placed beside the public risks which we know confront our communities. Unemployment, crime, climate change, pollution and environmental health risks, food and energy security. The question of what will make more people secure is a more

fundamental question from which policy choices can emerge than a narrow debate about military hardware based on the ‘you never know what will happen’ assertion which is the last refuge of people who have lost the rational argument. We need to put investment in traditional defence projects up against investment in renewable energy to protect against climate change and energy shortage, investment in serious organised crime units and violence reduction units, investment in cleaner public transport to reduce urban air pollution, investment in agriculture to increase food security.

One of the most important contributions to our security is not to be a threat to others and to be appreciated as making a positive contribution to peace-making. We are not short of models of countries, mainly small ones, who have developed a positive, peaceful engagement with the rest of the world. They have provided a home for a variety of international organisations as Switzerland and Austria have done. They have supported peace and disarmament research like the Swedish International Peace Research Institute. They have encouraged conflict resolution initiatives like Norway, Finland, Ireland, Switzerland. They have strongly opposed nuclear weapons like New Zealand and Mexico. They have actively promoted environmental sustainability like Costa Rica. It was a Finnish initiative that contributed to the end of the Cold War with the Helsinki confidence building and human rights process. It was Ireland and Norway who took forward the Cluster Bomb Treaty. Austria has a constitutional clause prohibiting nuclear weapons and Scotland could certainly follow. Given that we are a major nuclear weapons base, this would give us substantial goodwill among the great majority of UN members. Many of the countries who are most highly regarded internationally are small; they don’t owe their status to military strength but to a focus on human rights, conflict resolution and economic and environmental justice – a Common Weal approach. ■

Real answers are Labour answers

If the debate over Scotland's constitutional future has achieved anything it is in the production of ideas and the increased debate and engagement over the type of country we would all like to see. This debate has not excluded the Labour Party and the wider trade union movement; on the contrary the Labour Party, some of its Trade Union affiliates, the likes of the Campaign For Socialism, the Red Paper Collective, the Fabian Society and other bodies like the STUC and many, many others have actively discussed and debated the constitutional question. Importantly, most have considered the question from a default position over what any change means for the material conditions of ordinary working people and if there is to be any kind of constitutional change it must be change that provides powers for a purpose.

The Labour Party's devolution commission and subsequent 'Red Paper' *Together We Can* sought to do just that. However, before discussing the detail of that I want to address some of the arguments promoted by sections of the Yes camp head on. It seems to me that some of the support for independence amongst both the activist base of the left and amongst some voters is based, to a large extent, on disenchantment with Westminster politics (incidentally it has been a deliberate tactic of some to replace the words Tory or Coalition Government with what they see as the catch all disparaging term 'Westminster'). And in making this case they further seek to rewrite history by claiming the last Labour governments at Holyrood and Westminster achieved nothing and that

future Labour governments have nothing at all to offer.

Undoubtedly and inevitably during 13 years of power at Westminster and eight at Holyrood mistakes were made. Refreshingly and unusually for a front line politician Andy Burnham has put his hands up and acknowledged an error in relation to the private sector incursion into the NHS in England. However, I

hold it back. Today the dismal failure of neoliberalism, the economic crisis that began in 2008, the bank bailout using our money and the subsequent austerity agenda – resulting in appalling levels of unemployment, public spending cuts, food banks, increasing poverty and growing inequality - have burst the neoliberal bubble and with it many of the assumptions that there was no

alternative to the market. This is also true also of arguments within Labour Party where we can see that many of the policy proposals currently being put forward by Labour at Westminster and Holyrood, challenge head on the argument that suggest Labour is no longer a vehicle for progressive change in Scotland and the UK.

At a UK level a commitment to repeal the Health and Social Care Act and to abolish the marketised and competition agenda in the NHS provides clear red lines between the Tory/Liberal agenda and the Labour objective to protect the NHS from the private healthcare sharks currently circling around our most cherished institution. Pledges to raise the top rate of tax and have a 10p rate for lowest earners, a commitment to abolish the bedroom tax, address zero-hours contracts, curb the dubious practices of some private landlords and a commitment to freeze energy prices all

constitute a progressive step in a leftwards direction. Of course more needs to be done and more must be done but where else, who else, will implement progressive policies other than Labour. Historically, it has been the Labour and Trade Union movement who have fought for and achieved change; change that improved

ASLEF CALLS FOR AN INTEGRATED, PUBLICLY OWNED, ACCOUNTABLE RAILWAY FOR SCOTLAND

(which used to be the SNP's position – before they became the government!)



Mick Whelan
General Secretary

Alan Donnelly
President

Kevin Lindsay
Scottish Officer

ASLEF the train drivers union - www.aslef.org.uk

do not intend to apologise for the past mistakes of others – I will leave that to them. But of course politics often comes in cycles; perhaps many in Labour and across social-democratic parties the world over felt that the neoliberal globalised wave was too strong and that we had to ride the wave rather than

Neil Findlay MSP argues that what is needed for Scotland is the additional devolution proposals offered by Labour along with a set of policies designed to improve the life of workers

the living and working conditions of all our people. How can anyone argue that this role cannot be fulfilled again?

Only this week in the Scottish Parliament we debated the Procurement Bill where Labour in its traditional role of fighting for ordinary working people lodged amendments that would have meant no public contracts being given to companies employing workers on zero hours contracts, no contracts to those who paid less than the living wage, no contracts to blacklisters and none to tax avoiders and increased community benefits from contractor. But, the 'progressive' SNP Scottish Government instructed its flock of MSPs to vote against each and every one of these amendments – so much for becoming a “progressive beacon”! Nicola Sturgeon had the power to act; she did not need any new powers, but she failed to do so.

Labour's vision

Enhanced devolution is what Labour will deliver; new powers for Holyrood, our councils and communities. The role of the Scottish parliament and local government will be strengthened; there will be new powers over income tax, housing benefit and the Work Programme, the Crown Estate, elections, the railways and powers recognising the unique role of our island communities. Alongside the new powers devolved under the recent Scotland Act (which emerged from the Labour-instigated Calman Commission - like the Constitutional convention boycotted by the SNP), this will deliver increased autonomy for the Scottish Parliament. It will allow Scotland greater ability to implement policies tailored to Scotland's needs but which still retains our links with our brothers and sisters down South. How all this works and develops in future is I believe worthy of some kind of future UK wide constitutional convention. However, that is another discussion for another day.

Labour's workplace agenda

One dominant theme in Labour's programme is the delivery of a workplace agenda. Working alongside our trade unions we have been developing a range of policies based on the rights and the interests of working people. Indeed, as Scotland moves towards the September referendum the issues trade unions

are and have been raising have come into sharp focus. The *Together We Can* document is very clearly influenced by the work of the Red Paper Collective and has put 'clear red water' between the neoliberal, low taxed, red tape cutting vision proposed by the SNP's White Paper and Labour's 'Red Paper'. For example, It commits Scottish Labour to:

- Deliver legislation that gives the families of victims a genuine possibility of justice through prosecutions ensuring that the law serves as a deterrent to corner cutting and risky practices from employers.
- Support Patricia Ferguson MSPs members' bill to reform the outdated Fatal Accident Inquiry system to ensure we have a system that responds quicker to help bring justice to families and friends of workers involved in fatal accidents and strengthens enforcement. Delivering a system where recommendations from Sheriffs are binding to prevent future injury or deaths from occurring.
- Establish a Scottish Health and Safety Executive to set enforcement priorities, goals and objectives in Scotland and tackle the scandal that workers are more likely to die at work in Scotland than anywhere else in the UK.
- Devolve the operation of employment tribunals to Scotland in order to promote access to justice. Both in Scotland and across the United Kingdom Labour will give workers access to tribunals where and when needed without fees.
- Commit to an expansion of the Living Wage. Our amendments to the SNP Government's Procurement Bill would have delivered this expansion.
- Close the low pay loophole which allows for the contracting out of jobs which public sector bodies employ directly, meaning they can pay people less than the living wage.
- Devolve the enforcement of equalities legislation. We also

support any other transfer of power, should it be required, to ensure that women are fairly represented on Scotland's public boards and in other public appointments.

- Widen access to jobs through targeted use of gender quotas for Modern Apprenticeship STEM subjects.
- Build on the excellent work done at Westminster and Holyrood supporting trade unions campaigns against blacklisting to outlaw this abhorrent practice, ensuring those companies involved apologise, own up and pay up.
- Incentivise businesses to employ young people – there was £16m available in consequential from recent UK budget to fund youth employment which could have been used to assist businesses with the start-up costs of taking on young people.
- Other amendments to the Procurement Bill would have ensured government contracts were being prioritised to those businesses who took on apprentices.
- Commit to holding an independent inquiry into the convictions of miners from the 1984/85 Miners' Strike. Scottish Labour believes that many of the convictions are unsafe and are the result of state forces being used for political goals following revelations included in Cabinet Papers released under the 30 year rule.

These are all serious proposals and represent a real and substantive package of practical measures that the whole of the Labour movement can and should get behind. Whatever the outcome of the referendum I look forward to working with comrades across the Labour and trade union movement to deliver real change for working people based on these, and future, progressive Labour policies. ■

Neil Findlay MSP is Scottish Labour's Shadow Health Spokesperson

It's all about unions

According to John Duffy (SLR Issue 81) and his co-authors of the Jimmy Reid Foundation report on Industrial Democracy entitled *Working Together*, a major plank of the future of industrial relations in Scotland should be based on the adoption of European 'models' involving employee forums, Works Councils and employee seats on company boards. It is a proposition that appears to have resonated with the Scottish Government, who include support for increased employee involvement in their *Scotland's Future* White Paper.

On the face of it, such suggestions may look attractive, especially as they contrast sharply with the Con-Dem attack on employment rights and the establishment of the Carr Review to consider another raft of anti-union legislation.

However, as Grahame Smith (also writing in SLR Issue 81) points out, there are "dangers if the focus is to be on employee representation rather than on trade union representation" or "employee involvement schemes are used by some

employers to by-pass and weaken trade union involvement".

The relevance of Grahame Smith's warning is borne out by the fact that one of the companies which have established a Works Council is Ineos, the same organisation which is engaged in unfairly dismissing the trade union convenor, the non-recognition of democratically elected shop stewards and the withdrawal of 'check off' facilities for the collection of trade union dues. It is also evidenced by examples, including some in the finance sector, where the existence of works councils or employee forums is presented as a substitute (or more accurately, a barrier) to full trade union collective bargaining rights.

There are many other, albeit much more subtle, examples of employee involvement schemes being used to undermine trade union organisation. As a young shop stewards convenor in the chemical industry, I had to grapple daily with the employers attempt to weaken established union bargaining processes by taking issues out of the bargaining arena and floating them in a limited consultative process, within which "stock market sensitive" information was denied to us. They also initiated several attempts to by-pass trade union reps completely through so-called Quality Circles, team briefings, suggestion schemes and 'continuous improvement' work methods, whilst presenting these as positive moves to 'encourage' and 'value' the involvement of the workforce.

Whilst the Working Together report correctly points to the wide collective bargaining coverage in many other European countries (and suggests that the right to bargain, as well as to withdraw labour and to picket should be enshrined in law here) it fails to acknowledge that, in almost all of these countries, employees on company boards are expected to put company loyalty ahead of a workers representative role and to accept a range

of limitations, including confidentiality clauses (i.e. non-communication with the workforce on specific issues).

The report does acknowledge that in the so-called 'European models', 'employee involvement' does not necessarily mean 'trade union involvement'. Worryingly, however, the authors do not appear to regard this as a problem, going on to suggest that trade union involvement on boards should be limited to one union representative, sitting alongside potentially two non-union reps elected via a Works Council or by the workforce as a whole. If, as the report correctly suggests, "unionised labour is more productive than non-unionised", "trade unions are legitimate representatives of the workforce" and workers should have "some semblance of control over their everyday lives", why does it not suggest (as presented by advocates of industrial democracy in the 1970s and 1980s when the theme was previously dominant on the left) that workforce board representatives, as well as those on employee forums/committees, should be elected by and from the trade union members at the workplace (with the right of recall by the union members if their collective view is not properly or effectively presented)? To do otherwise is to encourage non-union representation, ensure that real power and influence continues to rest with the employer and potentially undermines trade union organising strategies, based on the goal of 100 per cent organisation and involving the empowerment of shop stewards, accountability to and communication with the membership and a preparedness to act on issues of concern to the workforce when they demonstrate a willingness to do so.

The report also suggests that overall workforce representation on boards should initially be limited to the "starting point" of one-third representation. This, together with the limitation on direct trade union representation, is a far cry from even the modest proposals of the ill-fated Bullock Report which suggested equality of representation with equal numbers of trade union and employers representatives on boards. Given that Bullock was opposed by some on the left who rejected it as a formula for "class collaboration", echoing Willie Gallagher's rejection of

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Jackson Cullinane argues that the Reid Foundation report on industrial democracy will not address the problems of capitalism because it does not put trade unions centre stage in all workplace matters

co-partnership schemes as “cunningly designed by a plausible appeal to individual cupidity to corrupt the workers and seduce them from collective action”, what chance is there of the left broadly accepting a proposal to confer minority status on workforce board members?

Furthermore, why does the report’s suggestions on the issues to be addressed by greater employee involvement not

extend to the workforce having a right to participate in examination of business opportunities, improved work routines, workplace lay-out and design, the purchase and operation of machinery and resources and the general process of production or service delivery?

Instead, the report suggests that “cooperation” or “co-determination” committees should consider issues such as hours of

work, holidays, grading, training and (ominously) workforce surveillance (effectively taking such issues out of the collective bargaining arena) and it emphasises “collaboration” and “common interests”, seemingly denying that there is an inherent conflict of interest between capital and labour.

Those of us on the left who have long advocated industrial democracy do so precisely because we recognise that that conflict of interest exists. The use of the management prerogative and their so-called “right to manage” (as protected in some of the “Nordic models” of employee involvement) is about maintaining and re-enforcing the power structures of capitalism. It is the driving force that prompts employers to regard workers as subordinates, dehumanising and alienating them as their views,

contributions and human needs are disregarded in the drive for intensification of work for profit and, in the worst cases, contributing to the tension, stress, bullying and ill health that continues to prevail in too many of our workplaces.

Industrial democracy and collective trade union organisation should not only be about genuine employee involvement and participation, it should also be about

building workers power, valuing their experience and expertise, giving them more control, ensuring fulfilling work and raising self-esteem. It should be about raising their aspirations and developing the confidence that they can forge alternative workplace relationships and, ultimately, an alternative to capitalism itself, through the realisation that we cannot fully control what we do not own. On that score, the case for industrial

democracy is inseparable from the case for workers control and common ownership. Therefore, in studying the position of workers in other European countries, it may be worthwhile to look at the experiences, good and bad, of the Mondragon Corporation (a federation of workers co-operatives in the Basque country where 82,000 workers work in companies which they themselves own) or the application of the Marcora Law in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy, where workers have a legal right to bid for ownership of firms when faced with redundancy. Looking at such examples, with all of their imperfections, could and should link to the consideration of the case for industrial democracy. It may also have the added advantage of linking to the issue of community ownership and empowerment triggered by the

community right to buy in Land Reform legislation in Scotland and the scope for further improvements in this. After all, if the benefits of democratic ownership of the land on which a community relies is now, rightly, acknowledged in law – why not also recognise the benefits of collective worker and community ownership of the industries upon which those communities also rely?

The Working Together report does submit that wider legal changes are required if industrial democracy is to be built on firm foundations – including the aforementioned case for the legal right to bargain and to withdraw labour. However, it makes no mention of the need for stronger legal protection against the dismissal of trade union activists. This is common place in many European countries, where such dismissals cannot take place prior to the conclusion of legal proceedings, within which the burden of proof is on the employer to justify the dismissal, in contrast to the situation with cases in the UK, such as that involving Ineos, where the company dismisses and the union is left to take legal action after the event.

It is long overdue that the left revisited the issue of industrial democracy. In this respect, the Working Together report serves a useful purpose. However, we should not allow trade unionism and collective organisation to be undermined by phoney partnerships or charades of involvement utilised by some employers to break collectivism, making individual workers feel important whilst providing them with no real influence and failing to address the need to redistribute power as well as wealth.

As Tony Benn put it in his *Arguments for Socialism*:

“We must reject the idea that one worker on the board is industrial democracy. We must reject phoney works councils not rooted in the strength and structure and traditions of the trade union movement. All of these are window dressing designed to divert the demand for democratic control into utterly harmless challenge. We should be talking about the transfer of power within industry.” ■

Jackson Cullinane is Political Officer of Unite Scotland

Workforce board representatives, as well as those on employee forums, should be elected by and from the trade union members at the workplace (with the right of recall by the union members if their collective view is not properly or effectively presented). To do otherwise is to encourage non-union representation

Losses to the left

**TONY BENN, 3RD APRIL 1925 –
14TH MARCH 2014**

I first met Tony Benn in Manchester in 1980, when we were both addressing a huge rally in the Manchester Free Trade Hall in support of the steelworkers during their strike. I was somewhat nervous, and Tony's immediate supportive 'well done' comment after I had spoken, stayed with me in the years to come. I moved back to Scotland in 1981, and worked with Tony with comrades in the Campaign Group in Scotland, and on the Labour Leadership campaign, co-ordinating meetings, visiting picket lines and factory occupations, and sharing platforms. We became good friends, and I took great pleasure in his infectious enthusiasm for life, combined with a strong interest in Scottish politics, in the history of women's emancipation, in organising, and in encouraging others. We explored the new Scottish Parliament building together during construction, and I know that Tony was thrilled to be able to give the Time for Reflection contribution in the Scottish Parliament, on 19 March 2008.

It is not only memories of Tony with political meetings and campaigns, but also of meeting my family, and of sharing each stage of my son Iain's life, now 19, as they enjoyed a mutual interest in technology, gadgets, and making little films.

I watched how Tony made time for so many people, despite failing health – responding to so many requests to speak, travelling up and down the country. October 2011 saw us walking through Glasgow on one of the wettest days ever, on the STUC People First demonstration. The weather was so bad that the STUC decision was taken to cancel all the speakers – except Tony – a decision that was very well received by all concerned!

There is so much to be shared and treasured, by all those who knew Tony and all who were encouraged by his words and actions.

Bringing traffic to a standstill, crowds gathered in Parliament Square on Thursday 27th March to join with family, friends and comrades at Tony Benn's funeral, held in St Margaret's

Church, Westminster Abbey. I joined in the applause, tears, and song, as time was taken to reflect on Tony's contribution to fighting for a better world. The Durham Miners banner took pride of place outside the Church, and the crowds and mourners reflected the breadth of campaigns, struggles and progressive causes to which Tony had contributed. The obituaries have recorded that Tony Benn served as Secretary of State for Industry, then for Energy, in Harold Wilson's Cabinet; and that Tony stood against Dennis Healey in a contest for Labour's Deputy Leadership in 1981, achieving 49.457% against Dennis Healey's 50.426%. The media vilification of Tony Benn during the Deputy Leadership campaign in 1981, including harassment of his family, gives an indication of how seriously the establishment took that challenge from the left.

Tony's contribution in supporting workers in struggle has been recorded too, as with the UCS and shipbuilding on the Clyde; the Miners' strike 1984-85; Liverpool dockers; and then his total commitment to the movement against nuclear weapons, supporting the Greenham Common women and heading up many CND marches. Tony was at the forefront on international solidarity with the anti-apartheid struggle; speaking out against the invasion of Iraq in 2003; and consistently speaking up for the Palestinian people.

The memories from Scotland include not only the solidarity with UCS, the NUM, Caterpillar, Lee Jeans, British Leyland at Bathgate, May Day demonstrations – but also the huge meetings that were held during the Deputy Leadership campaign, the annual Campaign Group fringe meetings at Scottish Labour Party conferences that incorporated the Labour self-organisation of women and black members to the platforms too, and the thousands that attended the rallies during the 1988 Labour Leadership campaign. Tony Benn always spoke warmly of his own family connection with Scotland, with his great grandfather James Holmes being a steeplejack from Irvine who went on to become the MP for Govan. Tony's father was MP for Leith, creating a

home in which politics was familiar, and Tony often spoke too of the influence his mother, who had grown up in Paisley becoming an active member of the church, had in his life. He was a keen supporter of devolution, and the campaign against the poll tax featured highly during the 1988 Leadership campaign mass meetings in Scotland.

Listening back to many of Tony's speeches from that time, all met with standing ovations, I hear him reiterating passionately the simple message 'united we stand, divided we fall' and, in challenging the notion that there is some common interest between those who produce the wealth and those who own the wealth, to remind us all to ask the question 'whose side are we on?'

Tony always used to say that all he wanted to be remembered for, was as having encouraged others. I think there is rather more to it than that, but I can still see the gentle smile, the twinkling eyes, and the calm words of encouragement to that young woman speaking in Manchester in 1980.....before he spoke himself to the steelworkers in the Free Trade Hall, leaving them, and me, in absolutely no doubt as to whose side he was on.

Ann Henderson is Assistant Secretary at the STUC

**BOB CROW, 13 JUNE 1961 – 11
MARCH 2014**

The RMT membership was shocked and deeply saddened by the sudden death of our General Secretary Bob Crow. Bob was my comrade and my friend. We served on our executive together, and I was proud when upon his election to GS he brought me in to form an Organisation Unit. Working for Bob and with him was always inspiring.

In 2002 our union was looking into the abyss, with deep financial problems, continuing loss of membership, we were demoralised and inert.

The wider picture was worse. Bob had been politicised as a young man in a different world, the people had owned gas, electricity, water, the railways were in public hands. We sent our kids to university for free education, we actually

Recent months have seen the loss of four major figures in left politics and policy across Scotland and Britain. Here we collect four appreciations of the lives of Tony Benn, Bob Crow, Margo McDonald and Ailsa McKay

paid them a grant for going!

The trade union movement membership had reached 13 million . Bob wanted to fight to bring these assets of the nation back to the people. He was willing to make common cause with all fighting for his unions demands.

His immediate problem was rebuilding his own union. He put organising for recruitment top of his list. He rolled his sleeves up and got stuck in alongside his rank and file and they loved it. Thousands joined, people stopped leaving us. Under Bobs leadership we became solvent, we owe not a bean to anyone. He led us away from the insults and sneering buffoons of New Labour so we could democratise our political fund. Bob put education high up our order of activity. He encouraged the membership and gradually brought back our militant tradition that had lay dormant.

In short Bob achieved for the membership of our union what he set out to achieve. But RMT members knew that Bob had come to appeal to a wider constituency, he spoke for his social class , stood up for them , understood us in a way only another working class man can. He was respected for his fighting spirit both in and outside his union.

We will all miss him.

Alan Pottage is National Organising Co-ordinator of the RMT

MARGO MACDONALD, 19 APRIL 1943 – 4 APRIL 2014

Who you are and what you do obviously overlap but some public figures make a significant statement by their personality and character. That was certainly true of Margo for reasons that varied in different periods. In the 1970s when she won the Govan by-election and became a senior office-bearer in the SNP, by being a politically successful young woman with strong opinions and confidence in her identity she put down an important marker for women and left nationalist politics. She personified a more confident and assertive Scotland for many ordinary people. But not all. I remember canvassing in the 1978 Hamilton by-election and a woman in a working-class area of Larkhall telling me that she wouldn't vote for Margo because

“she talked just like people around here”.

That comes into the same category as a comment from the early seventies – “nobody's going to buy our oil”. The deferential Scot was still with us then; hopefully much less so now. Margo was part of that transformation in the self-confidence of non-elite Scots.

In the early years of Holyrood the contribution was rather different. The public welcomed having an ‘unwhippable’ voice in the land of the bland and predictable. Because of her more difficult relationship with the SNP leadership, she lost some influence on the party's direction but she contributed instead to public support for the new parliament by showing that there were independent voices and there could be refreshingly open debate. Were people going to identify with the Scottish Parliament or become just as cynical about it as they were about Westminster? Having MSPs, of whom Margo was outstandingly one, whom they could identify and with whom they could identify was important in those years.

In her last years she certainly didn't stop being a politician with strong views on mainstream issues but her courage and determination in continuing in such an active role despite a very debilitating illness. She didn't just do the minimum required by the job; she did much more despite great difficulty in basic mobility. She took on a major legislative change which she knew would face intense institutional opposition and would be personally stressful. When it failed, she took it forward again. Since we know that the great majority of the public support this carefully drafted assisted suicide bill, it is reasonable to assume that personally a majority of MSPs also support it. Let us hope that this time they have the courage to stand up to the institutional pressures as Margo was always prepared to do and support it.

Isobel Lindsay was a school friend of Margo's and a lifelong colleague

Ailsa McKay, 7 June 1963 – 5 March 2014

Ailsa McKay thought that economics has much to offer the world, but

its true value continues to be dwarfed by the failure of mainstream economics to reflect women's roles, particularly the unpaid work they do. She worked with great wit, energy and enthusiasm to stop people being deceived by economists and argued for a more equal and just society, supporting students, women in communities and policy makers to understand how economics could work much better for equality and be a force for good.

As a founding member of the Scottish Women's Budget Group, she argued against the gender blind decision making that still dominates public policy and for gender aware policy and budgetary decisions, in Scotland and internationally. She did more than anyone to push for the kind of gender aware budget statement that the Scottish Government now produces, but she always recognised that this was just a first small step – once budgetary decisions were truly gender responsive, it should be transformative and not just a statement of intent, however gracefully done.

Ailsa was also a passionate advocate of another transformative and radical idea, a citizen's basic income, because of its great potential to meet the needs of women more effectively than the existing social security system that does not recognise or value unpaid work or the penalties that women face for bearing children.

Even when she became ill, Ailsa was pushing forward for a fairer society and promoted to the Scottish Government the economic benefits of universal childcare free at the point of delivery. She presented her ideas at a Scottish TUC women's weekend school just four days before she died.

Economists who do their work as if people really matter are rare, particularly those who recognise the value of the contributions that women and men make in all their diversity. In the passing of Ailsa McKay, Scotland lost one of her best, truly a disruptive force for good.

Ailsa is survived by her husband Jim and children, Rory and Annie.

Morag Gillespie is an academic at Glasgow Caledonian University

Poverty and independence

In important ways, the Independence debate is not simply about opposing constitutional futures but in different ways goes to the very heart of the kind of society we would wish Scotland to become. Central to this are arguments that revolve around issues of disadvantage, poverty, inequality and equality. The term ‘social justice’ has frequently been deployed in these debates by the opposing camps, but its usage has hardly helped us grasp what it actually means, beyond something that ‘of course’ we should all be ‘in favour of’. However, that the term is being used immediately marks the political and policy-making landscape of Scotland as distinctive in important regards from other parts of the UK, and in particular from the Westminster dominated

landscape in England. But before we get carried away and attach to this an importance it has yet to merit, the picture of poverty and disadvantage in Scotland today shows the extent to which our society is disfigured and scarred by the impact of the policy approaches of successive governments and rising levels of inequality.

Poverty in Scotland 2014: The Independence Referendum and Beyond, shows in stark terms the ‘headline’ poverty statistics which demonstrate that:

- 870,000 people in Scotland still live in poverty (17% of the population).
- 200,000 children in Scotland still live in poverty (20% of all children).
- Poverty in Scotland is significantly higher than in many other European countries
- Poverty exists across Scotland. Nearly all local authorities in Scotland have council wards where

over 20% of their children live in poverty.

That there was some reduction in poverty levels during the first decade of the twenty-first century is to be welcomed. But the picture for the period ahead shows that not only have modest reductions been halted but there will be an increase in the levels of poverty in Scotland, as in other areas of the

UK. By 2020 it is estimated that an additional 100,000 children in Scotland will be living in poverty.

‘AUSTERITY’ AS A POLITICAL PROJECT

There are a number of related factors at work here that account for this deteriorating situation. David Cameron’s claim that a ‘new age of austerity’ was required, meaning

large scale cuts in public expenditure, was accompanied by a new phase of what is euphemistically termed ‘welfare reform’. A total £22 billion of cuts to the annual value of UK benefits and tax credit support is being made by 2014/15. It is estimated that between £1.6bn (around £480 for every adult of working age) and £2bn will be cut from Scottish household incomes. The Scottish Government has calculated that the cumulative impact of UK welfare reforms over the five years to 2014-2015 could result in the welfare bill for Scotland being reduced by over £4.5 billion.

The idea of ‘austerity’ has entered political, popular and media discussion across the country today. It is presented almost as a technical term, devoid of any political basis, seemingly neutral in that the main Westminster political parties all saw ‘austerity’ cuts as offering the only way to economic growth and fiscal health. Alongside the idea of austerity other phrases came to be popularised:

‘sharing the pain’ and ‘we are all in this together’ were among the most notable of a plethora of terms deployed in an effort to convince us all that everyone should suffer in largely equal measures.

However, it is important to take a much more critical view of ‘austerity’: it was never going to be ‘equal’ or ‘fair’ in its impact – nor was it intended to be. It was a political project, a class project to redistribute wealth and income to the already privileged; at its most basic it was a deliberate plan to reduce fiscal deficit by slashing public spending, public services, and, significantly, pensions and other welfare benefits. These cuts impact most adversely on those who are already among the most disadvantaged in society.

However, in some regards this is still a somewhat superficial appreciation of what austerity signifies. It is also about an assault on the very social contract that was held by successive generations of people in the UK to be a core part of UK citizenship. Cutting wages, in work and out of work benefits, pensions and the social wage more generally, that is the range of public services, is also about restoring conditions for profit and wealth accumulation. This amounts to little more than the transfer of wealth and power into ever fewer hands – the consolidation and advancement of the economic and political interests of the already rich and affluent.

SOCIAL WELFARE AND THE SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE DEBATE

Since devolution in 1999, the Scottish Parliament has been a largely social policy making institution with many of the ‘bread and butter’ areas such as housing, education and health under Scottish Government control. Other central policy areas such as most taxation, social security, benefits and employment policy, remain under the control of the UK Government and it is the devolution of these areas, or their incorporation in a Scottish welfare state in the context of an Independent Scotland which is becoming an increasing element of the debate around the creation of a more ‘socially just’ Scotland. This also marks a divergence from debates around welfare in England. There are different factors at

Gerry Mooney argues that the debate about poverty is at the heart of the constitutional question in Scotland - and while the SNP answers may not be convincing, for the first time in a generation real change seems possible

work here.

In 2011-12, total public sector expenditure for Scotland was estimated to be £64.5 billion, this was equivalent to 9.3% of comparable total UK public sector expenditure in 2011-12, so a higher proportion than Scotland's share of UK population at around 8.38% at the time of the 2011 census. This is accounted for by Scotland having more people on low income, a larger share of pensioners and a larger number of people with disabilities. Social protection was the largest Scottish expenditure programme and together with health expenditure, it accounted for over half of total public sector expenditure for Scotland and this equates to around half of Scotland's GDP. Welfare reforms and changes in the public sector are felt far and wide across Scotland and these also in no small part contribute to the ongoing political controversies around the role of social welfare in both the devolved and a potential Independent Scotland.

The political debate in Scotland around social welfare is distinctive in important respects from other areas of the UK. In part this distinctiveness also emerges not so much from what is happening in Scotland – but developments taking place in England. There is, for example, no widespread privatisation of the NHS in Scotland – a process that appears to be developing apace across key areas of NHS provision in England. Differences in other aspects of social policy making, in education policy, criminal justice policy and across a range of other issues means that the policy-making landscape of Scotland and England appear increasingly different – as do the debates to which these policy landscapes both reflect, and give rise. This is the context in which arguments around social welfare have become increasingly

central, both to the Independence debate and to the future of Scottish society.

THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT AND UK 'WELFARE REFORMS'

UK Government welfare reforms have been criticised by the SNP Government as out of step not only with the wishes of voters in Scotland but also as seriously at odds with 'Scottish values'. Much of this is related to other claims that Scottish voters and the wider public in Scotland is in some way less hostile to people in receipt of benefit, that negative attitudes to welfare are more diluted in Scotland. Throughout the past 2 years, leading Scottish Ministers have repeatedly made forays into the welfare debate. At the March 2012 SNP Conference in Glasgow the Deputy First Minister argued that:

"Only independence can put a stop to heartless Tory welfare reforms that will punish the vulnerable and the disabled. And only independence will give us the tools we need to rid Scotland of the poverty and deprivation that still scars our nation and create the jobs and opportunities that will get people off benefits, not for Tory reasons, but for the right reasons."

In subsequent speeches SNP Ministers continued to push this line adding themes that spoke of Scottish values and attitudes underpinning social policy and equity, promising a Scottish welfare system that would be driven by social justice and demonstrating a strong commitment to social democracy. It was further claimed that UK Government's welfare reforms

were not only 'eroding the social fabric' of society but also marked a radical departure from the foundations of the post-war British welfare state.

The SNP have been only too

willing to seize on UK Government welfare reforms to advance the case that only an Independent Scotland with a distinctive Scottish welfare state is true to the foundations of the post-war UK welfare state, a welfare state that is being progressively eroded in England. Therefore the future state of welfare across the UK is likely to be characterised by even more divergence and complexity, but again this is also being driven by developments in England as much as it is by proposals for further devolution – or independence – to Scotland.

Social welfare issues are and have been central to other perspectives in the Independence debate and around the idea of a 'fairer Scotland' more generally, 'Fairness' itself remains a key goal but as yet undefined with little clear indication of what it might mean in a future Scotland. There are numerous questions thrown up about the future shape of welfare in Scotland. What would a Scottish tax regime look like? How could it generate more income for Scotland on a more equitable basis? What sorts of social provision could be developed with a higher tax base? How could this be used to tackle poverty and promote greater equality and fairness for Scotland as a whole?

TOWARDS A SCOTTISH WELFARE STATE: A NEW VISION FOR WELFARE IN A NEW SCOTLAND?

The debate around what kind of welfare state Scotland should have is of course a debate around the kind of society we would wish to see Scotland become. That this is directly linked with the question of Scotland's constitutional future is all too evident. But it is not a debate that is limited by constitutional matters alone. That there is a debate around the future of Scotland's welfare system brings into sharp focus the question of poverty and of inequality – but also wider issues of the kind of economy and society that would be necessary for the eradication of poverty. That this is leading to new thinking around new forms of welfare system is positive and to be encouraged but at the same time the challenge is also to advance the issue of poverty in a way that is free of stigma and disrespect now. We cannot afford to wait

for Independence or any other future constitutional arrangement to be bedded down before rethinking poverty and anti-poverty policy.

In the Independence debate the notion of 'Common Weal' as the basis of a distinctively Scottish welfare system has risen to prominence. In a series of papers published by the Jimmy Reid Foundation, proponents of the Common Weal have advocated a far reaching vision of Scotland as a fairer, progressive and more sustainable society. Looking to some of the fairest economic and social policies in the Nordic countries, it places an attack on entrenched inequality and wealth by a completely revamped taxation system that would enable better quality, well-funded public services. Social goals would drive economic development, not the pursuit of private profit. A new set of principles would underpin a Scottish welfare state, in the form of contract between people in Scotland delivered through the state. The Radical Independence Campaign has further drawn attention to the stark realities of a class divided Scotland,

highlighting the vast inequalities in wealth and income that are also a feature of Scottish society. A major redistribution of income and wealth and an assault on vested interests and entrenched privilege it is argued is central to an effective anti-poverty policy.

Scotland is, despite myths of collectiveness and a Scottish 'national interest', a society marked by class divisions and inequalities. Not only does this manifest itself in the huge and wider levels of poverty but in the huge advantages that Scotland's rich enjoy today and, in the SNP vision of an Independent but low tax and competitive Scotland, would continue to enjoy. The Independence Referendum however throws-up the possibility of building a new Scotland, a socialist Scotland in which the vested interests, privilege and advantages of the affluent will be seriously challenged. Only in this way will the scourge of poverty and disadvantage in Scotland be removed once and for all.

Gerry Mooney is Senior Lecturer in Social Policy at the Open University Scotland

Poverty in Scotland 2014: The Independence Referendum and Beyond, is published by the Child Poverty Action Group and is available (together with a sample chapter) from:

<http://onlineservices.cpag.org.uk/shop/PSP14>.

The Open University has a range of freely learning resources around the Independence Debate and Social Welfare on its OpenLearn website at:

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Yes: The Radical Case for Scottish Independence

James Foley and Pete Ramand, Pluto Press

“Independence must explain its purpose” is the guiding aim of this book and more specifically must explain its purpose for the left. As many have noted, one of the big gains of the referendum campaign has been its role as a catalyst for new thinking and fresh talent on the left. The one thing we can be sure of is that things will not revert to pre-2014 politics. But equally it is not yet clear what structures of political action will emerge. It is, however, rather clearer where the direction of change is going in policy debates. James Foley and Pete Ramand are two of the bright young activists who helped start the Radical Independence Campaign and have gone on to contribute to the left independence case. At this stage a situation of fluidity and openness is where we want to be to encourage

dialogue and lower some of the sectarian intellectual barriers. Although coming from a strong left position, ‘The Radical Case for Scottish Independence’ takes a broadly-based stance in its analysis.

It is strongest in its critique of the UK political and economic settlement. The two chapters on future policy are lighter and that does tell us that the left has work to do (it is happening) in order to put sustained in-depth analysis into the development of viable policy alternatives. Foley and Ramand are right to question the failure of the Yes campaign to promote a sharper analysis of what is wrong with the UK economy and polity, apparently because they don’t want to be seen as anti-English or too negative. But since the central No

argument on the Tory side is that Britain is good for us and on the Labour side that Britain can be made good for us, taking on the Great British myth needs to be part of the campaign. They present an incisive attack on the Britain of “financial speculation, public relations and the arms trade” and conclude that “we have linked the UK’s neo-imperial project – as financial haven, arms manufacturer and leading American client - to neo-liberal morality, privatisation policy and social regression.” They also take on the lack of scrutiny of British nationalism which the Better Together members strongly promote while attacking Scottish nationalism as somehow deviant. The ‘punching above our weight’ military chauvinism, the enthusiastic royalist street parties, the ‘best in the world’ sentiments around the Olympics reflect commonplace attitudes over generations and yet we have Scottish Labour enthusing about Great Britain while attacking the much more modest and progressive claims for a political and

cultural identity for Scotland. There is a chapter on the experience of Holyrood politics, recognising some achievements but attacking the marked drift to the right under Jack McConnell and the continuation of this under the supposed left leadership candidate, Johann Lamont. They accept that the SNP has benefited from being more to the left but with neo-liberal elements in their leadership.

Since the mainstream Scottish press have acted overwhelmingly as agents of British establishment opinion, this is why we need to turn to books like this and to social media for alternative analysis and debate. They conclude; “What Scots can unite upon is the unsustainable direction

of British capitalism. If we vote No, we all but guarantee more decades of austerity, privatisation and warfare. We will miss our chance to contribute a working model of environmental sustainability.”

Isobel Lindsay

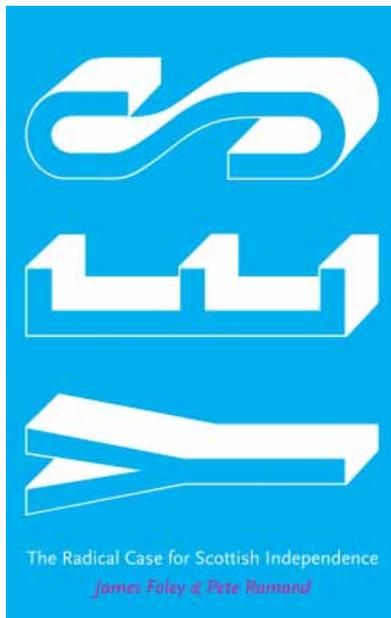
Scotland the Brave?

Gregor Gall, Scottish Left Review Press

Gregor Gall’s new book *Scotland The Brave?* pulls together several strands of the left wing and socialist arguments for yes. Gall, an ex-SSP member, curiously has deviated from one of his former parties cornerstones of the independence argument. ‘Scotland the Brave?’ is not written from the viewpoint that Scotland has a right to self-determination - an argument that has been much of the premise for SSP statements on Scotland’s independence for many years. Rather, the book opens by asking the question which must be the concern of socialists across Scotland and beyond throughout this debate: what outcome in 2014 will open up the greatest possibility for material social change in Scotland?

The chapters which proceed make clear that the only outcome that could create the circumstances for positive radical reforms to improve working class people’s lives is a Yes vote. Gall’s book, overall, is most concerned, not with the national identity of the Scottish people, nor a historic right to self-determination, but rather with the ability of an independent Scotland to make reforms to better its citizens’ material circumstances. ‘Scotland the Brave?’ is also one of the only books on independence which pulls in the role of the trade unions on Scotland’s future, and the role they play in the current context of British politics.

Gall begins by taking the arguments from the centre-left no voters head on. He argues clearly and categorically that there can be no radical social change under the current constitutional



arrangement. Westminster is so dominated by the forces of conservatism and neoliberalism that change in the foreseeable future is at the very least unlikely, if not impossible. The rightward-pull of Westminster politics has meant that Labour shows no signs of making a significant and substantial break with neoliberalism, and with statements that they will be “tougher than the Tories on welfare”, they are clearly ideologically committed to continued austerity.

Although Gall's book was written before the Collins review into the relationship between the trade unions and the Labour Party, the point he makes about trade-unions is informative. The unions, despite their left-wing leaderships, have no substantive or serious strategy for pushing Labour leftwards. The weakness of the unions overall mean that the barriers to social change at Westminster - its right-wing drift - cannot be pushed back. For the trade unions, independence is a chance too.

The narrative underlying the opening of the book is a familiar one: the SNP won not on the basis of their commitment to a referendum on independence, but rather because the

SNP began to outflank Scottish Labour to the left on issue after issue, and policy after policy. Gall rightly notes that Johann Lamont, despite being the left wing candidate in the leadership election, has still succumbed to the neoliberal policies of New Labour. Under Lamont's leadership, Scottish Labour remain on the right of the SNP and have maintained their tribal stance against anything remotely progressive that the SNP proposes: universal benefits, free school meals and so on.

Where Gall picks up this thread, is to emphasise throughout that the SNP alone cannot win this referendum. And herein lies the key argument of the book: there are three ways in which the left must operate to win not just the referendum - but to win significant social reforms for working class people in Scotland. Firstly, the left must make and argument that independence simply provides an opportunity for social change - it opens up a gap in the political systems which have adhered to neoliberal dogma for the last three decades.

Secondly, the left must seriously look towards a new form of political representation that can be formulated in the 2016 elections to the Scottish Parliament. Finally, there is a necessity for extra-parliamentary forces to exist outside of the new Scottish political establishment in order to exert influence upon it. In undertaking these three activities, the pro-independence left must focus at all times on the material circumstances of the mass of citizens in Scotland, making concrete arguments that a Yes vote will open up the possibility to change the trajectory upon which their living standards, access to employment, transport networks, community cohesion and so on, have been declining.

For Gall, ultimately, people must be convinced that independence will make them better off materially - as opposed to the traditional Scottish nationalist territory of self-determination. The

left's great challenge in 'Scotland the Brave?' is to ensure it can project enough vision and paint a picture of what a radical independent Scotland could look like for ordinary citizens.

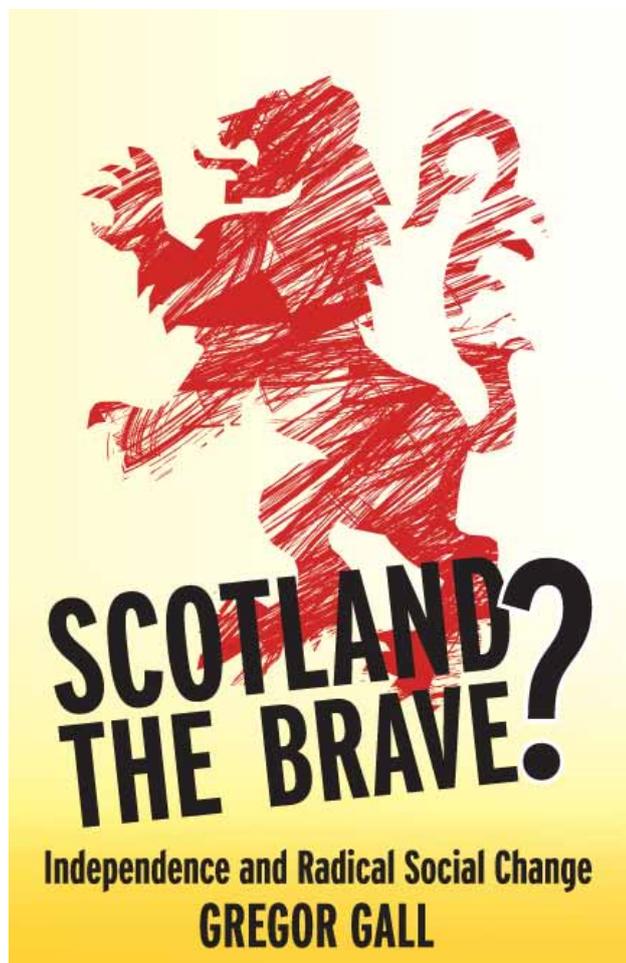
Gall rightly points out that the key to winning a Yes vote is to go beyond the SNP's vote-yes-for-no-change policies, and focus on the “ends” which independence can bring, rather than the means. For the SNP, in Gall's eyes, independence itself is enough to radically transform Scotland, to simply have 'Scotland's future in Scotland's hands'. However, this is not enough for the Left - and instead socialists supporting a Yes vote must win people to the notion that independence is a means by which we can better our lot.

This is the focus of 'Scotland the Brave?' overall - which has happily been matched by the way that the independence campaign has worked on the ground. The Radical Independence Campaign, for example, has strengthened the left-wing case for Yes. By explaining what independence is for (a more equal society) it has answered both implicitly and explicitly what we want independence from (a society that benefits only the already rich and the already powerful). The pro-independence left has also delivered on the material demands that Gall makes in this book. The Left wing Yes groups all speak in real and tangible ideas, about how an independent Scotland can benefit ordinary citizens, socially, economically and politically.

These ideas are being discussed at meetings all across Scotland, night after night in the lead up to the referendum. 'Scotland the Brave?' is a particularly useful book for pro-independence activists in the trade union movement - with a whole chapter - aptly named, Red Herrings - dedicated to busting the left wing unionist myths, and Gall also tackles head on the problems with the strategy of “reclaiming Labour” for 2015.

From the Highlands to the Borders and from east coast to west, many more people are discovering that a vote for independence is not just about voting for Scotland, but a vote that can open up the door to real radical social change. This book's central argument seems to be that independence equals an opportunity for this change to happen - and looking at the polls now, it is up to the left to be brave enough to grab it.

Cat Boyd



Kick Up The Tabloids

Shock new evidence - UKIP are definitely horrible

So, that's the European elections over for another four years. I hope you all managed not to get too excited. However, there is little doubt that the major talking point of the campaign has been UKIP's rise in the polls south of the border. It could, of course, be that UKIP's voters are more likely to turn out in the Euro elections. It's a bit ironic that the only people who are really enthusiastic about voting for the European Parliament are people who want to get rid of the European Parliament.

While I'm not someone who would normally spring to the defence of Nigel Farage, I do think it is wrong that UKIP should be dismissed as a 'single issue party'. Because they are anything but.

UKIP had a wide range of policies in their 2014 European Election manifesto, of which withdrawal from the EU is merely one of the more comparatively sane ideas. Indeed, many of their policies are utterly bonkers. Here's a list of some such policies which have featured in their manifestos in recent years, and some daft ideas which I've just thought up. See if you can spot the difference.

Number 1: UKIP are against Scottish independence, for while it's OK for the United Kingdom to be independent, you have to draw the line somewhere when it comes to this kind of madness.

Number 2: Europe should have to adopt a form of Esperanto, which is essentially English being shouted loudly and slowly at foreigners, particularly when ordering in restaurants and bars.

Number 3: All member nations of the EU should be made to apply to join the British Commonwealth.

Number 4: We should scrap the British Commonwealth, and replace it with a different umbrella organisation run from London, to be known as the British Empire.

Number 5: Membership of the Scouts should be compulsory for all children up until the age of 18.

Number 6: The smoking ban should be reversed, and smoking should be allowed in doctors' waiting rooms.

Number 7: Electronic cigarettes should be made illegal.

Number 8: Chewing gum should not be on sale to anyone under the age of 16.

Number 9: Only people who drink in pubs should be eligible to run for political offices. MPs' surgeries should be replaced by buying your MP a pint, and having a chat with him down the local.

Number 10: Taxi drivers should be made to wear uniforms.

Number 11: There should be a compulsory dress code for audiences going to the theatre.

Number 12: In order to be totally inclusive, the BBC should be forced to commission comedy shows where the humour is derived from homophobia and casual racism, as there are many people who still enjoy this type of entertainment. If they refuse, they should be made to show endless re-runs of shows such as *It Ain't Half Hot, Mum*, and *On The Buses*.

Able to tell the real UKIP policies from the fake ones? If so, well done. When I re-read that list, I was a bit unsure myself.

Of course, the emergence of UKIP, and threat it poses to the Tories is the main reason behind David Cameron agreeing to hold a referendum on EU withdrawal in 2017. Having denounced the party as "Fruitcakes and closet racists", Cameron then realised he could have been describing a huge number of Tory voters, whom he obviously wants back in the fold if he has to have any hope of winning the 2015 Westminster election.

So, if Scotland is to vote "No" in our referendum in September, we will be faced with another referendum in a few years' time. After a two-year campaign for the independence referendum, it could be that many Scots will be suffering from severe referendum fatigue by 2017. Also,

I do think many UK voters will find it difficult to make a clear choice between Yes and No, as to whether they remain in Europe. Perhaps they should be asked a more complex set of questions. How's this for starters?

"Please place the following options for the UK's future in order of personal preference:

A: Britain withdrawing from the European Union.

B: Britain remaining within the EU but on re-negotiated terms.

C: England withdrawing from the EU, but Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland remaining within Europe.

D: Withdrawing from the European Union but with Eddie Izzard, Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband remaining within the EU.

E: Remaining within the EU, but with Nigel Farage being deported to a country that still has the death penalty.

F: Remaining within the EU but without all the silly regulations about the shape of bananas which I am always reading about in the *Daily Express*.

G: Withdrawing from the EU, but with British ex-pats still being able to buy the *Daily Mail* in Spain.

H: Withdrawing from the EU but with English stag-dos still being allowed to urinate in the street of Prague and Amsterdam.

I: Don't know.

J: To be honest, mate, I haven't got a clue.

K: "Who do you think you are kidding, Mr Hitler, if you think old England's done?" ■

Vladimir McTavish and Keir McAllister will be performing in AYE RIGHT ? HOW NO? The Comedy Countdown to The Referendum at The Constitution, Constitution St, Edinburgh on Wednesday 18th June as part of 2014 Leith Festival Stand Comedy Club, and The Stand Comedy Club, Glasgow on Monday 21st July. www.thestand.co.uk

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