

Scottish Left Review

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'best re(a)d'

It's **QUESTION TIME** now

As May's Scottish Parliament elections near, we ask the unions affiliated with the Jimmy Reid Foundation to consider the big issues affecting their members, and what they want to see from the next Scottish Government

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This issue is our traditional STUC congress themed issue. In it, and in addition to hearing from the STUC itself, we ask the union affiliates of our sister organisation, the Jimmy Reid Foundation, to consider five questions a year after the pandemic began and as we head into the 6 May Scottish Parliament elections. The questions were: i) What lessons you have learnt about organising and campaigning under COVID?; ii) What do you make of the recent Scottish Government budget?; iii) What do you want to see from the next Scottish Government (especially on public sector investment, public health, protecting and creating jobs)?; iv) What impact Brexit is having on your members?; and v) What your union's position is on a further independence referendum and on independence itself?

The common threads to emerge from their responses to these questions are that unions are adapting to organising virtually in a disrupted world, and that they have higher expectations of the current and future Scottish Government than are being delivered and are likely to be delivered. Barring any last-minute disasters for the SNP, it is on course to win enough seats to be a majority government according to polling evidence as Malcolm Harvey in this issue suggest. If this is the case, it will be something of a triumph given the internal ructions the party has experienced of late. But it will also be testament to the ineffectiveness of opposition to the SNP government both inside and outside the Scottish Parliament. It is not as though there has not been the terrain on which to tackle the SNP, both pre-pandemic and during the pandemic. Previous articles in *Scottish Left Review* by Lilian Macer have made this amply evident. The most recent case of this is the SNP's endorsement of the report of the Feeley Review of adult social care which still, as Stephen Smellie shows in this issue, allows more than ample room for profiteers to continue to make profits from. But there have been plenty of

other recent cases too like the clear class contours of COVID. Not only are the poorer more likely to die from it because of a greater propensity to underlying health conditions but they are also likely to do so because of the type of work they do where exposure to COVID is greater. Then they are also less able to afford to self-isolate, have the ability to work from home, have sufficient rooms to self-isolate and social distance in, have the computing and connectivity resources to facilitate home schooling and so on and so on.

The experience of Scottish Labour under Richard Leonard's leadership has been a salutary one for the left, and in many respects has strong parallels with the rise and fall of Corbyn south of the border. To put it simply, having the right left-wing policies can never alone be sufficient for it is the manner in which they are espoused which is critical and gives them their cutting edge and credibility. Leonard and his team were sorely lacking here. His replacement as leader by Anas Sarwar is likely to be a mixed blessing for the left because while there is the possibility that Scottish Labour will not retreat any further come 7 May this will also be a result of more favourable media coverage and an initial honeymoon. This will allow the Labour right to pronounce it was right to dump Leonard and his policies. Sarwar will then be in tune with Starmer on issues like naively seeking partnership with business to end social inequality. But quite how Sarwar will manage the continuation of the refusal to countenance another referendum along with Starmer's push for Labour to become a British patriotic party is going to be interesting to say the least. All of that suggests that in the longer-term, Scottish Labour will continue in the rut it is already in albeit with different leadership. In this sense, it will be more like Labour south of the border as Starmer and Labour's ratings are heading south too. A Labour party north and south of the border will only convince many that an imperfect SNP

is the best available defence against Johnson and his Tories. Outside of parliament, the Radical Independence Campaign has dissolved itself while All Under One Banner has relaunched and reformed itself as Now Scotland. Consequently, it's not as though the slack of absent opposition is being taken up elsewhere. Yet there is the long game to be noted here as the seeds of an ability to offer a quicker and more progressive prospectus for independence may be germinating now. We shall revisit all these issues and more after the 6 May.

- With International Women's Day on March 8, we restate our position of support for upholding and advancing the rights of women.

The Jimmy Reid Foundation is marking the 50th anniversary of the UCS work-in led by Jimmy Reid

To watch the Jimmy Reid Foundation's first meeting on 28 January 2021 celebrating and commemorating the UCS work-in, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJkbd60mnUU&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=STUCCovid-19updates

To attend the next one on 25 March 2021 on the role of leadership in workers' struggles, sign up at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/leadership-and-trade-union-struggles-lessons-from-jimmy-reid-and-the-ucs-tickets-142481184057>

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Building back better: Fairer and greener for people not profit

Roz Foyer outlines the STUC agenda for the coming period and how it is working to gain these goals

Across Scotland there are thousands of workers' families, retired workers' friends and communities who are carrying the pain of loss of their loved ones. The shocking statistic of over 100,000 COVID-19 related deaths is an indictment on the failure of the UK Government to carry out its foremost duty – to safeguard the lives of its citizens. Running alongside the shocking death toll is the devastating economic impact as sectors flounder with the stop and start lockdowns, incomes fall and unemployment increases. Coupled with the disastrous Brexit process, it was clear that 2021 wasn't going to be an easy ride for Scotland's workers. As politicians and policy makers tip toe around the core problems of inequality, the STUC is clear that we need a 'People's Recovery' (see also *Scottish Left Review* Nov/Dec 2021 for a summary). Our recovery is for working class people to recover the income, wealth and sense of collective purpose stolen from them by decades of political bias towards the rich and powerful.

We need to centre the voices of workers and unions at the heart of the debate about Scotland's recovery. We need to identify the key areas where change can happen and will make a material difference to the lives of workers and their families. We need action on pay, action on care and action for jobs.

The coronavirus pandemic has shown that our society depends on key workers and, while the economy depends on manufacturing and transport, it also needs young and ethnically diverse workers in retail and hospitality. We need government intervention to increase pay for keyworkers, support for sectoral bargaining in sectors dominated by women and BAME workers, and enforce equal pay in the public sector.

We are demanding the creation of a National Care Service, valued as much as the NHS. Thousands of people in care homes have died, and nearly 70% of private care homes have had suspected COVID-19 cases, significantly higher than not-for-profit homes. The profit motive must be removed from the care sector and workers terms and conditions must be standardised and raised across the board.

Lastly, we want the creation of good

quality jobs that will tackle the climate crisis. A just, green future can only be built on public investment, democratic ownership, and a strong domestic supply chain. The private sector has shown itself woefully inadequate to meet the challenge of the crisis and there is no prospect of a green recovery without massive public sector intervention.

Our union affiliates have never worked harder, longer or smarter to defend their members' health and safety and pay and conditions than this last year. While it might have been thought that lockdown restrictions and home working, for some, should have stalled union recruitment, paused ongoing grievances and halted disputes, it has been, in fact, quite the opposite. Every sector has been dealt a blow from aviation, construction and manufacturing to retail and hospitality. As workers in energy, public health, social care and local authorities have faced job losses, wage stagnation and the imposition of new contracts, their unions have been by their side.

Concepts and models of digital campaigning and organising that were once seen as fringe are now mainstream as union reps across our movement have stepped up to learn new platforms and applications. The potential is enormous. We have seen workers and reps in rural communities, disabled activists, shift workers and those with caring responsibilities enabled to take part. If we are serious about building a diverse movement, we must invest in training and skill sharing to ensure people are not pushed back outside as we move to a 'new normal'. The importance of this cannot be overstated as we have witnessed the growing polarisation in our communities as minority groups come under attack and growing instances of misogyny. Unions have a role as educators as well as agitators and we will campaign against structural inequality and discrimination experienced by women, black and minority ethnic workers, LGBT+ and disabled workers.

The Scottish Parliament elections in May provide us with a platform to inspire workers to take action with visible, powerful campaigns that could see workers determine the outcome in

key seats. We will aim to maximise the number of prospective parliamentary candidates to commit to STUC 'asks' on pay, care and jobs. We know that winning in Parliament and changing laws and policies are only part of the process as we need to develop collective actions, online when necessary, to bring about change.

Scotland will host the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November this year where heads of state, climate experts and negotiators will look to agree action to tackle climate change. Workers voices, union demands and the need for a Just Transition must be on the agenda. We will have the opportunity to showcase the best of union tradition showing solidarity, international cooperation and progressive policies that tackle inequalities in wealth and power.

The challenges, grief and loss of the global pandemic will remain with us for years to come. But the experience has refocused our movement and in places re-energised it as the cracks in economy and public services were laid bare. We are committed to making unions visible and relevant so we can build towards and win a 'People's Recovery'.

Roz Foyer is the general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC). The 'People's Recovery' report can be read at <http://www.stuc.org.uk/files/Policy/Research-papers/peoples-recovery-full.pdf>

Cover: Nadia Lucchesi
(nadia.shemail@gmail.com)

Proofing services:
John Wood and John Daly

Editor Email: Gregor Gall
gregorgall@outlook.com

Web: www.scottishleftreview.scot
Tel: 0141 424 0042

Address: Scottish Left Review,
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Rebooting and rebuilding unions' fighting capacity

Pat Rafferty sees much opportunity to strengthen union organisation amid the challenges of COVID.

The last year has been one of the most challenging for us as we have had to confront a threat to our way of life, and a direct threat to human life. Many of us have struggled with not being able to meet loved ones, to comfort friends and family who have contracted COVID and, in the worst of all cases, losing someone we love to this horrible disease. The simple things we took for granted in life like sitting in a café or having a beer in the local pub and going for that summer holiday, seem a distant memory to many of us.

Perhaps, one of the most pressing issues we have faced as individuals and as families is the mental health toll that the pandemic has taken on us through the fear of a losing jobs, having pay cut, being furloughed or even just working from home give it can be an extremely lonely and anxious experience. So, it's vital for as long as the restrictions continue that we think strategically about how we can reach workers in their homes and how we can create forums and structures that make people feel part of a working community – a collective.

Even, when the restrictions are lifted, for many people forms of home working are in all likelihood here to stay. For many people, working at home has become the new 'normal'. Figures show that the number of people exclusively working from home in January 2020 was around 5.7% then jumped to 43.1% in April 2020. It is now around 24%. Therefore, going forward, UNITE is planning for the eventuality that many employers - and some members - will seek to continue homeworking, either fully or as part of a 'blended working' approach.

While preparing for this type of blended working, we must in concert develop collective bargaining strategies for homeworking, in particular, looking at how we organise and bargain around this. UNITE is at the forefront of developing a 'Homeworking Framework Agreement' to enable workers that choose to, to be given the opportunity to continue working from home with the protections that should come with that.

Unite has also introduced a one-day homeworking course which includes online workshops looking at homeworking agreements, health

and safety and equalities as well as the advantages and disadvantages of homeworking. For some, this may mean more autonomy and control over work schedules and less stress; less commuter time, increased environmental benefits and virtual platforms facilitating greater involvement, accessibility and inclusiveness.

For others, safety concerns particularly ergonomics, social isolation, energy bills and the blurring of lines between home and work life may cause greater stress as well as the potential for increased employer surveillance and unrealistic targets. Equality and other issues such as an increase in domestic violence, or specific impacts on particular groups



such as workers living with a disability, or childcare responsibilities could also bring disadvantages for some workers. This multitude of issues needs to be properly thought through in the employment contract and safety valves put in place to take cognisance of the predicted and unforeseen consequences of working from home.

We also need to ensure that we have a connected workforce because working from home has also highlighted issues such as patchy internet access across the country, and the many technical issues which can happen when working at home such as access to resolving problems with PCs, tablets, printers or laptops, and the necessary up-to-date software. Being online has never been more important. We need to ensure that workers are not penalised if any of these issues genuinely arise when working

from home. All these factors must be on the bargaining table, including whether workers get compensated for their internet connection and energy bills. This also requires a change in mindset from unions in order to adapt to different forms of working and a different bargaining agenda.

At UNITE, we have been trying to change this mindset through our extremely successful social media streams and we have thousands of regular visitors to these forums. The introduction of Regional Digital Assistants in 2019 has enhanced our communications capacity to reach beyond our membership; driving our 'good news' stories, which are often ignored by the mainstream media, to a wider audience. It is important to spread the positive impact unions have on the lives of workers and their families, especially when this does not usually capture the attention of news editors.

We have also adapted by running electronic consultative ballots and regular surveys, both bringing positive results. Our constitutional committees are meeting more regularly on online platforms and engagement is more inclusive. We have seen numbers attending virtual meetings on the whole increase. Of course, our movement thrives on face-to-face debates and discussions so we have continued this by way of virtual discussion forums which have been very successful. We are keen to maintain this in conjunction with physical meetings so that they significantly help us engage more with our members.

It's clear that the future of work is changing before our very eyes following the onset of the pandemic. It's important that we plan for the opportunities this will create for unions and be aware of the challenges this will create for workers at home and in workplaces. All of this must shape our organising and political strategies, and we need to ensure that this is captured within the collective bargaining framework and employment rights agenda post-COVID.

Pat Rafferty is UNITE Scotland regional secretary

Neither clapping nor words of acclaim for public servants pay their bills, rent and mortgages

Cat Boyd eyes opportunities to put class before constitution in the coming period

If there's anything good to say about the pandemic, it's that unions have been forced to rethink our strategies. The turbulence of 2020 encouraged us to contemplate how we do things. COVID-19 *should* force those in power to re-evaluate too, because what's really important is health, wellbeing, time with friends and loved ones and our ability to live comfortably without fear of financial loss. So, for many unions, simply moving our usual 'offline' activity onto 'online' organising won't be enough. Like most people, we've had to reflect on what really matters.

At the time of writing, most PCS members are still working from home, having decamped from offices in March last year. 'Home working' was once a 'flexible' option for many of our members, now it's a civic responsibility. Staying at home will reduce transmission of COVID-19. But long hours, caring responsibilities, home schooling, inadequate space and the blurring of work-life boundaries bring different problems.

Despite having waned in the public imagination, demands for more free time are a cornerstone of the labour movement tradition and now more than ever, the union movement can revive it. Overwork and long hours contribute to ill-health, burnout, stress and low productivity. This has to change. Working with *Autonomy*, whose comprehensive research on working time provoked a debate on the post-pandemic recovery ideas, our union is looking at the possibilities of a shorter working week in parts of Scotland's civil service. After all, even the First Minister has suggested it might be one of the solutions to rebuilding the economy after COVID-19.

But 'work-at-home' has a tendency to spill into our family time, leisure time or weekends, no matter how much of it we have. The edges of work and home bleed into each other and are undoubtedly harder to control. That's why PCS wants workers in the civil service to have the *right to disconnect* from work servers, the right to be 'email free' on non-work days, weekends and holidays and the right to

bring the work day to a conclusive end when they clock off.

All civil and public servants have not just faced the challenges of a global pandemic with aptitude and skill. They have done so during Brexit, potential constitutional change and increased public scrutiny. At the civil service unions' annual meeting, the First Minister heaped praise on the civil service in particular. She told the assembled trade unionists that she 'wouldn't have been able to do [her] job without them' and that the contribution the civil servants have made to keeping Scotland running continues to be invaluable. That's why it's doubly galling to read a public sector pay policy which caps pay for thousands below the rate of inflation.

The entire public sector response to the coronavirus crisis has been phenomenal, especially considering the harsh and often concealed cuts to services and local government. Civil servants, however, are the most hidden of public workers and, therefore, the easiest to forget when it comes to questions of pay.

Once more, this year's public sector pay policy falls short of what our members need and deserve. Workers in the civil and public service saw their wages fall faster than any other group following the 2008 financial crisis and our message to the Scottish Government is very clear: our members must not shoulder this burden again. Barely anyone, not even the Tories, defend austerity anymore. Civil servants need a proper pay rise; we need to see the beginning of wage restoration so that post-pandemic recovery works for all.

Shifting to 'digital' organising isn't easy, especially when face-to-face contact yields

the best organising results. But it's not impossible to grow unions digitally. In fact, PCS has seen membership gains this year, a record number of activists and reps have been trained online and attendance at campaign briefings and national meetings has increased significantly.

Lastly, this is a significant year for Scotland as a nation. As we head into May's election, the possibility of a second referendum on independence resurfaces and PCS' motion to STUC Congress 2021 recognises the challenges for our movement. The Growth Commission hasn't just left the case for independence weakened, it has also reinforced economic orthodoxy which is refuted and deeply flawed. No matter what happens, the union movement has a role to play: we must shape the constitutional agenda with a class agenda so the things that matter most to us form the basis of our future.

Cat Boyd is the PCS National Officer for Scotland and Northern Ireland



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For investment and education-led recovery and restitution

Larry Flanagan does not pull his punches in laying out what the EIS demands of the Scottish Government

Scottish education, whether it be schools, colleges, or universities, has rarely been far from the headlines throughout the pandemic, which perhaps underlines how critical education is to our communities and, indeed, to society as a whole. The challenges have been immense and whilst Scotland likes to see itself as a model of a social partnership approach, particularly in contrast to the scenario at UK level, consensus often only operates at a general level, leaving many battles to be fought over the detail and implementation. That has certainly been the experience of the EIS.

Being involved in discussions does not mean that organising and campaigning are set aside; in fact, being able to mobilise member opinion and participation remains critical to being able to deliver our objectives. Like other unions, the EIS has been able to use IT platforms effectively to engage members in new ways with some of our webinars, for example, achieving 10,000+ views. In the absence of face-to-face meetings, we have developed stronger means of communication to keep members involved and informed. For instance, surveys to determine members' attitudes have reached record turn outs, and we have moved into safety disputes in several areas as a result of member ballots.

In further education, we have industrial action ballots running in relation to attempts by college managers to de-professionalise the role of lecturers, and whilst it is disappointing that some would seek to use the cover of a pandemic to attack conditions of service, the simple fact is that unions are more than capable of fighting back despite some of the challenges to be overcome in terms of organising. Looking ahead, with the threat of post-pandemic austerity looming large, our renewed organisational capacity will be critical to defending our memberships.

The recent Scottish Government budget pronouncements are indicative of some of the challenges we will face. The 1% public sector pay offer for those earning more than £25,000 is less than the projected rate of inflation and would represent a pay cut for teachers, if replicated by COSLA, when all the

social partnership dialogue has been focused on a continued journey towards restoration of the pay cuts which followed the last bout of austerity!

Announcements of public spending during the pandemic have involved huge sums. Many will wonder, quite correctly, why these sums could not have been found to address some of the pre-pandemic inequalities (which have been deepened in the past year) or to properly fund our public services to avoid the situation exposed by the pandemic of historic chronic underfunding which left us poorly equipped to deal with COVID.

Moving forward, the EIS alongside other public sector unions, is calling for massive investment in public services to allow us to build back better. With specific regard to education, where the impact on children is huge, we are demanding a huge investment in employing more teachers and school staff to better meet the needs of pupils – not only in terms of education but also their well-being and mental good health.

It is scandalous that at the moment we have supply teachers, effectively on zero hours contracts, unable to find work when the recovery needs of pupils are huge. Thousands of teachers are on temporary contracts with little prospect of finding permanent work unless we see action by both the Scottish Government and the employers through COSLA. These are big challenges which the EIS will be campaigning strongly on as we move towards the Scottish Parliament elections.

Discourse around the election is liable to be dominated by a binary approach to the issue of a further referendum on independence. But it is essential that unions demand consideration of immediate challenges such as ensuring investment in our public services, the protection and expansion of jobs, tackling the impact of poverty, rejecting austerity, and (from an EIS perspective) support for an education-led recovery.

Larry Flanagan is the general secretary of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) union



ORGANISING FOR A FAIR FUTURE

PCS sends solidarity greetings to all delegates attending the 124th Annual Congress of the STUC

Mark Serwotka, General Secretary
Fran Heathcote, National President
Cat Boyd, National Officer

Firefighting doesn't require firefighting problems but instead sustained and strategic investment

Denise Christie says our fire and rescue service requires the Scottish Government to make a decision turn

The COVID-19 pandemic very quickly forced us to find new ways our movement can continue to campaign and organise, away from the traditional means we have been used to for many years. The FBU has very effective democratic structures in place, but those predominantly rely on in-person branch meetings to engage with members. That structure was sharply restricted due to the social distancing measures to support the response to COVID-19. A series of measures had to be put in place to address the various urgent challenges the FBU faced. Many of our campaigns have now migrated to online and social media campaigns that target both employers and governments.

The FBU in Scotland has always found it challenging to organise our members who live and work within our remote and rural communities and islands. We are a relatively small, lay official union with limited capacity to consistently and fully engage with our members in these communities but the COVID-19 pandemic has opened doors to new ways of organising. Previously, we would be holding branch and area meetings that would take a whole week out of your time to visit. Now, with online meetings via various platforms, accessibility to these members is so much easier and attendance by FBU reps has increased greatly. We should combine online and in-person methods in the future as the pandemic abates.

On 1 April 2013, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) came into existence, replacing the eight previous fire brigades with a single service. However, overall funding in cash terms fell steeply by 11% in the first five years, before some increases in recent years. Overall funding is still 5% lower in 2019-20 in money terms, compared 2012-13. At the time of writing this, the Scottish Government's draft budget for 2021-22 has seen an increase of £8.7m to the SFRS resource budget. An increase to any budget is always welcomed. But it does not negate the fact that this has taken place against the backdrop of many years of cuts. A reversal to this

trend must continue to be a priority for the Scottish government.

To address existing SFRS policy priorities and any proposed changes, then we need to look at how these should be funded. The FBU believes at the present time, in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, floods and wildfires, terrorist attacks and other hazards firefighters tackle, there is an exceptionally strong case for sustained investment in the fire and rescue service in Scotland.

In the last decade, firefighters and control staff have suffered a real term pay cut of over £4,000. There is an opportunity to repair this damage and better protect Scotland's communities. Firefighters are prepared to expand their roles, as long as this is clearly defined and without strings. It is also imperative that funding for any future proposed pay offer is supported by continued additional Scottish Government



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investment and must not be funded from cuts to the current SFRS budget.

Since the SFRS's creation, there has been a significant decline in the number of firefighters – almost 10%. Moreover, the cuts to all staff amount to more than one thousand employees. The picture painted by these figures is bleak and points toward the dire need for investment in the SFRS now.

The Scottish Government must commit to investment in the SFRS with the following; i) moratorium on cuts, reduced crewing levels on pumping appliances, and fire station closures; ii) fund the initial employment of more firefighters to complement the existing professional workforce, with a review to examine further recruitment; and iii) ensure that risks and resilience are assessed nationally, to ensure adequate resource planning and response and to

guarantee national fire standards are maintained and improved.

Firefighters have been and will continue to be key – along with other workers – in getting us through this pandemic. They deserve a SFRS that is well resourced and hence values them accordingly.

The FBU previously noted that a 'no deal' Brexit would have consequences for FBU members' work and living standards. Current and retired FBU members and their families could be affected by uncertainty over their immigration status and access to health and travel plans, whether they currently live in the UK or within the EU. The Westminster government wants to use Brexit to deregulate further, including attacking working time, health and safety and other minimum safeguards. Other concerns include the impact on cross-EU firefighter cooperation, including on disaster planning, joint rescue work and training exercises.

The FBU has gained a great deal of intelligence and advice from European sister unions, including the EPSU firefighters' network, the Scandinavian study programme and from individual unions tackling firefighter cancers, pensions and other matters.

In the previous Scottish independence referendum of 2014, the FBU was aware that the issue is emotive and politically divisive. The union, therefore, considered that for us to express support for or against Scottish independence would be inappropriate, as this could alienate a significant number of our members and also be potentially damage the relationships our union has with parties and individuals from across the whole political spectrum. Therefore, the FBU concluded that we would remain neutral on this issue and not indicate support for or against Scottish independence. There have been no further debates at our conference on whether the FBU supports another independence referendum or if the position on independence itself has changed.

Denise Christie is the FBU Scotland regional secretary



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

Mick Whelan, general secretary

Dave Calfe, president

Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF's organiser in Scotland

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A year unlike any other: pressure in the prison, correctional and secure psychiatric system

Phil Fairlie says the time for debts to be paid to public service workers has now arrived

Following a year of living life that has been completely dominated by a global pandemic and one which has had an immeasurable impact on every one of us in a way we could never have envisaged, we now face the prospect of coming to terms with the fact that we are nowhere close to being able to contemplate returning to normal for some time to come yet. In fact, it is more likely we need to come to terms with the fact that 'back to normal' is not going to be one we remember and accept that a 'new normal' is to be a permanent feature of life going forward.

For unions that means recognising this early and start planning for what the 'new normal' means for those workers we represent. Our first priority is to make sure they are safe in their workplaces, and that all steps needed to protect them are being taken. Not after the facts as a 'lesson learned' response, but as a proactive, preventative step, so that we are not looking back with regrets.

For those of us working in the prisons in Scotland, there was genuine fear of the impact a pandemic would have within our prisons. It is a perfect environment for rapid spread, and potential fatalities on a large scale. As of today, that has not happened. We have lost people and, for those families, life will never be the same again. The control of the spread, and the management of the regimes inside our prisons has been a Herculean effort by all involved, and the staff are due enormous credit for putting themselves in the front line every day, keeping themselves and those held in our prisons, as safe as can be in the circumstances.

That effort and commitment has been reflected right across so many sectors by workers who have gone above and beyond day in, day out. We have rightly stood on the streets and applauded for some of them, but not them all. And that is wrong. We talk in terms of key workers or front-line workers and it is right that

we applaud and praise them. But it is equally right that we do the same for every single worker who has played their part, risked themselves and their families to keep things moving, keep things ticking over, so the rest of us can get on with doing our part, and living our lives.

Prison officers get very frustrated whenever we hear government ministers or media refer to uniform, or front-line services, and never include prison staff when handing out praise or acknowledgement. Being behind the walls and out of public consciousness does not just apply to those serving sentences - which is why I have every sympathy with those workers throughout this pandemic who have been there every day making their contribution and risking themselves to do so, yet not get so much as a passing mention in some quarters. They deserve the recognition and respect as much as those who regularly hit the headlines.

For those of us who are public sector workers, the Scottish Budget matters a great deal in terms of direction of travel for public services, and for pay. The most recent announcement then has been a major disappointment to unions, at least in terms of pay. The Scottish Government rightly criticised the Westminster Government for its announced pay freeze when it cited the cost of COVID as the reason. Funny how it is always those you rely on most in times of difficulty that end up rewarded the least.

However, after setting expectations of a radically different approach by the Scottish Government, its own approach to public sector pay was, to say the least, a kick in the teeth for those impacted by the announcement. A 1%

cap was hardly radical, and certainly not reasonable given the efforts this year, by those tasked with keeping the wheels moving. In fact, it was only just enough to allow it to claim it was different to the Westminster Government.

Prison officers are protected from that gut punch this year, given we are in the third year of a three-year pay deal that betters that outcome by some distance. But I have every sympathy with my colleagues who now have the job of managing their memberships who, having put their lives on the line this year, are being asked again to suck up the consequences of government priorities now lying elsewhere.

It is perfectly clear from unions' reactions that this is not an issue that is over, not by some distance. Anyone in government who thinks what has happened here is fair are in for a rude awakening. Workers have just paid more than a decade of the price of full-blown austerity at the hands of various governments who simply never see them as the solution to the economic crisis. We are always simply part of the problem.

Given the year in which workers have carried the risks, sacrifices, endless dedication and commitment to keep others alive and an economy from crumbling, anyone who thinks that those efforts can be so easily forgotten or dismissed need to be disabused of that very quickly. It is for unions then to organise, to agitate, fight and win. In this year of all years, the various governments and employers owe their workers a huge debt and we, as their unions, owe them the commitment to see that this debt is paid.

Phil Fairlie is the Assistant General Secretary for the POA in Scotland



The Professional Trades Union for Prison, Correctional & Secure Psychiatric Workers

Navigating through COVID, Brexit and the Scottish Parliament 2021 elections

Mary Senior surveys the changing landscape to identify the countless challenges in higher education

In unprecedented times, last March the University and College Union's (UCU) members returned from 14 days of strike action - over pensions, casual contracts, workloads and discriminatory pay - to a global health pandemic and lockdown. Overnight, university staff rose to the challenge to put lectures, tutorials and student support online, making campuses COVID safe. Nevertheless, the pandemic and its consequences jeopardised the marketised university model, with a loss of vital commercial income and international tuition fees, threatening finances. A number of universities moved quickly to threaten jobs - Napier University in early summer and Heriot Watt in August 2020, where 130 jobs were put at risk. UCU's Heriot Watt branch organised to oppose cuts, engage members, and save jobs. The branch demonstrated that a strong ballot mandate is possible in a home-working situation by effective organising, communication, leadership and campaigning. Branch negotiators harnessed a broad alliance to save jobs: from alumnus, author and journalist Gary Younge, to local politicians including Conservative MP, John Lamont, whose constituency covers Heriot Watt's borders campus. The collective power of our members, politicians, alumni and students, mobilised the membership to vote, securing a strong ballot mandate, and leveraging the negotiating clout to get a positive deal from the threat of cuts.

The financial pressures of the pandemic come on top of the year-on-year cuts to university funding, meted out in subsequent Scottish Budgets over the last number of years. So, the real-term increase this year was a relief but it failed to address the years of below inflation settlements and the consistent underfunding of teaching in our universities. February saw some additional funding announcements to reduce student hardship, as well as one-off money for research and revenue budget lines. All of this is much needed for universities, and UCU has urged government and the Scottish Funding Council to ensure that the additional funds go towards preserving jobs –

which in turn enhances the student experience.

As we enter this strange Scottish election period, fair funding for universities, especially fully funding teaching, is a key demand for UCU. Universities should be powering Scotland out of recession with an education-led recovery. Now is the time to invest in education, skills and development – for young people and older learners returning to university. We need a greater injection of funding to enable them to do so effectively. We're also calling for more action to address casualisation in the sector, and to implement one of the remaining demands of the von Prodzynski governance report of a decade ago on principals' pay: to ensure that the pay of senior managers relates to the rest of the workforce, ending excesses at the top. Another key priority must be to



ensure that Scottish universities remain outward facing international institutions that welcome staff, students and ideas from across the globe.

Predictably, Brexit is having a damaging impact upon the sector and UCU's members. As a sector which has a high number of EU and international staff, it's hardly surprising that in lockdown some EU staff have returned home to look after sick parents or relatives while continuing to deliver lectures or work remotely. However, more employers are becoming concerned at the liabilities of employing workers in a foreign jurisdiction, and Brexit simply does not allow the flexibility that could help EU staff who may need to support families at home during this global pandemic. This is tough on those torn between home commitments and their employment.

Fortunately, international student applications remain strong but EU student applications to Scottish universities have halved for entry in

September 2021. We urgently need support for EU students so as our campuses continue to benefit from their diversity and cultural input. There's considerable disappointment that the UK government did not agree to continue in the Erasmus Plus exchange scheme, which offers reciprocal educational and cultural benefits to students and staff in schools, colleges, universities and apprenticeships. Instead, we have the inferior 'Turing' scheme from the UK government, which treats international students as cash cows, provides around £83m less than the UK was receiving via Erasmus, and most frustratingly, but inevitably, is a one-way scheme – there's no reciprocity.

Brexit was never going to be easy for a higher education system which is enriched by the diversity of staff and students, and the sharing of knowledge and ideas across boundaries and borders. UCU, along with the Scottish Government and employers, has worked to ensure EU and international staff are aware of their rights and changes to their immigration status. However, we are bracing ourselves for 30 June 2021, the deadline EU citizens have to apply for settled status.

The UK's exit from Europe, along with 2019's landslide victory for the Johnson-led Conservatives at Westminster, and the perceived differences in the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, has increased calls for 'indyref 2'. Indeed, UCU Scotland's annual congress 2020, held later than normal last September, noted the calls for a second independence referendum and debated the issue. Our congress agreed that irrespective of the timing of any vote, and as set out in the 1989 claim of right signed up to by the STUC, it is the right of the people of Scotland to determine their future. Our union agreed that if a further referendum is held that UCU Scotland should engage in the debate and examine the issues, opportunities, threats and challenges to Scottish education, our economy, and society generally, to ensure that our universities are best placed for the future whatever the result of a referendum.

Mary Senior is UCU's Scotland Official and the current president of the STUC

Coming out stronger – coming out fighting

Mike Kirby reports that UNISON Scotland is meeting the challenge of organising online

Over the last year, UNISON branches across Scotland have adapted to the radically changed circumstances in which we have been operating. We have expanded and developed our range of organising and campaigning techniques, and we have grown in number.

The vast bulk of UNISON members have been working throughout the pandemic, very many of them either in, or in a very similar setting, to previously before the pandemic (like offices and depots). As a result, we have made a real effort to maintain our presence in the workplace, with due regard to public health and safety measures. However, we have had to adapt how we do things. Branches and networks have put more emphasis on organising and communicating through social media and inevitably, the ‘zoom call’. Virtual rallies, webinars and symbolic demonstrations at workplaces, pictured and hashtagged are now all core campaigning activities. This hasn’t lacked challenges, but has illustrated innovation in organising. Our training programme for activists has both moved online and developed to meet the needs of the moment – most recently we have been delivering a widespread programme to train up activists to participate in COVID-related workplace safety inspection. With some groups, such as women working in social care, the shift to more online organising has made participation easier. Meetings are generally a bit shorter and more focussed too – no bad thing.

All of this will remain necessary as, regardless of the efficacy of any vaccine programme, the impact of the pandemic will be with us for the foreseeable future, as can be seen from the Scottish Government’s Budget. There are welcome elements to the budget. The lack of a pay freeze being the most obvious one. This is not to say that the announced public sector policy is sufficient to reward the variety of public service workforces who have had a difficult year, without precedent. It does though allow scope for negotiation.

There are also serious concerns, gaps and deficiencies. In particular local government, bearing the brunt of community demands, continues to be the poor relative for Holyrood. The budget as announced sees local government set to receive a cash

increase that only matched inflation. Audit Scotland estimated the cost of COVID to councils as over £760m with only 70% of being covered by the Scottish Government. This comes after years of settlements where the Scottish Government has passed on disproportionate cuts to local government and inadequate settlements to deliver Scottish Government priorities. UNISON’s concern in all this has been primarily the impact it has on local services to depressed local economies, communities and those who deliver them. There are increasingly urgent questions concerning the undermining of capacity and autonomy of a tier of democracy which should concern everyone.

Many of the issues which the pandemic will leave us with will take longer to tackle than the timeframe of any single budget. The next Scottish Government must take the opportunity that this rebuilding process represents as an occasion to do things differently. Too many parts of our society and economy were in crisis before the pandemic – there should be no going back to this as ‘normal’. We will be making the case that a sustainable recovery has to be service led, focussed on community wealth building and the foundational economy.

By this we mean prioritising essential goods and services like housing, utility supply, health, transport education and care. This foundational economy of branches and networks provides the infrastructure of everyday life. They serve our essential daily household needs, keeping us safe and civilised. These can and should be at the centre of any future economic strategy. Investing in these sectors provides both longer term economic benefit and increased social resilience. Investing in these sectors can provide reliable incomes for workers, with returns that go into the community rather than offshore bank accounts. They are sectors less vulnerable to economic shocks and more reliable over the medium and long term.

The care sector is a good example of this – as we have argued for years, and the recent Feeley Review report acknowledged. The contribution of adult social care to

the Scottish economy extends beyond the care sector. For every £1 spent on social care, more than £2 is generated in others. Care could and should be a source of stable long term decent employment – and the more reforms of the sector focus on shifting to different ownership models based on public and community ownership, the more it will be delivering for local economies rather than shareholders.

These urgent issues of economic and social reconstruction will not, of course, be the only items likely to feature post-election. The constitution, specifically another referendum on independence, is also likely to be a matter of contention. As a union we do not have a position on independence. However, the decision as to whether or not another independence referendum is held is a matter for the Scottish Parliament to decide.

The last year has seen union members, particularly those in the public services, facing and rising to the unexpected challenges of a pandemic. The years ahead will see us facing a more familiar challenge – to prevent ‘economic recovery’ becoming a euphemism for attacks on the social provision, and wages of working people. Our enhanced organising capacity equips us for that challenge.

Mike Kirby is the regional secretary for UNISON Scotland

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The COVID crisis shows Scotland requires constant connectivity

Craig Anderson shows how the CWU union takes a class position on communication

The COVID pandemic has changed how we look at home and work, and how we look out into the world. Millions of workers have had to get to grips with working at home and shopping from home, whilst of students, pupils and teachers around the country have had to adapt to learning remotely - and all of this relying on a telecoms network which, in 2021 is still overwhelmingly delivered across copper wires.

The pandemic should have taught our governments much. Not since the Second World War has the power of the state to make or break the economy and the lives of millions been more obviously displayed, but less than two years ago, that perhaps was not so clear.

UK government ministers now overseeing massive state intervention in the economy were amongst those in politics and the media to write-off the joint Labour Party and CWU plan for free, publicly-owned full fibre broadband and the investment to deliver it as 'broadband communism'. The joke is now on them as they are left scratching their heads and wondering how to deliver education remotely to low-income households. As the Scottish Government has discovered, buying tens of thousands of devices does not cut it if they have nothing to plug into - perhaps, this is why so many still sit in storage.

For all the Scottish Government's protestations of £579m investment in broadband, it continues to miss its own targets, lags behind the UK as a whole on full-fibre - and the UK figure is pathetic by world standards. Whilst Scotland has 18.4% full-fibre rollout, countries such as Singapore, Korea and Canada are in the region of 90%. The Full Fibre Charter championed by Paul Wheelhouse fails to make any serious demands of operators to tackle the digital divide, and has only three operators on board.

Lessons are there to be learned. An early lead in fibre optics use and manufacture was squandered by privatisation, short-termism, and disinvestment in the early 1980s, and our economy is still paying the price. A familiar tale for comrades in

other privatised industries.

Recent research by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) estimated that full fibre rollout by 2025 could create as many as 40,000 jobs in Scotland, adding billions to the economy in its construction and its long-term effects. The case for this investment is unanswerable in economic terms, but for Scotland with its dispersed population and falling rural populations, this investment could provide more than just the usual tangibles. Connected communities can become more sustainable and reverse the drain of young people to the cities. There is even the oft forgotten knock-on effect of improvements to our notoriously patchy mobile signals outside of the central belt.

Whatever the geographical divides though, the class divide pervades all.



The digital divide runs through every community in the land. According to a recent Citizens' Advice survey, only 40% of those in deprived areas regularly use the internet, and 20% never access it at all. Perhaps, this should not surprise us. We live in a society where access to food, shelter and care are heavily dependent on the size of our wallets, and it is equally so in the digital world. If many of our citizens cannot put food on the table, it could be easy to dismiss the importance of broadband in this context. But government does not need to choose between them. It has the power to resolve both crises, but only with the political will and a determination to challenge the present, failed system.

Like so many other privatised industries, telecommunications is reliant on government subsidy to renew and rebuild infrastructure. Pledges to spend from £5bn from the UK and £579m from the Scottish governments are unclear in terms of where one begins and one ends, but they at least acknowledge the need for the investment, and it

should all be welcomed with a demand for more, as the STUC rightly does. The short-term economic case for investment as stimulus is obvious, and the Scottish Government must break its silence and make some demands of its own - it's time to see the colour of the UK government's money, it's time for the pledge to not only be honoured but accelerated in Scotland; with the challenges of geography and deprivation we face, the case makes itself.

The power of government over infrastructure that is so essential to the present and future of our economy and communities must be greater than the power to sign a cheque though. With only three signatories to the meagre asks of the Scottish government's Full Fibre Charter, it surely is clear that a more robust approach is required.

This is why now the CWU believes that the next Scottish Government should be prioritising investment not only in improving Scotland's infrastructure but also in looking to the communication sector as a source of economic recovery post COVID-19.

Scotland could be a manufacturing and service provider out with our own country. The government should be focusing on research facilities, fibre optic manufacturing, server manufacturing and cyber security. The creation of highly skilled jobs should be a priority to end the current race to the bottom we are currently experiencing. Scotland could be a trusted leader in a market where numerous others are suspected of cyber interference.

Connectivity will always be required and will only develop in the future. Therefore, the Scottish Government should see the communications sector as a priority for investment in parallel with significant investment and improvements in Scotland's own network. With a proper industrial strategy, Scotland can be a leading digital nation in the future and this is how we truly build back better.

Craig Anderson is the CWU communications union Scotland regional secretary

Allan McDougall

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Making devolution work for workers on injuries and illnesses

Mark Griffin explains the rationale behind his Scottish Employment Injuries Advisory Council Bill

The testimonies I heard from the women GMB union members in January were quite simply heart-breaking. Meeting them in the final weeks of my consultation on a Proposed Scottish Employment Injuries Advisory Council Bill, what they retold crystallised just how out of reach protection from illness and disease is for many women in the workplace.

Their experiences are routine and are treated as 'part of the job': one worker was injured falling on stairs in front of their manager, who failed to record the accident; another, an amputee, recovering from cancer, was forced to work so hard her stitches broke; and care workers spoke of their fear, going from house to house, alone, on dark nights at real risk of attacks and worse.

Regardless of their keyworker status, their work is undervalued and underpaid, their injuries and illness ignored. The risks they face go unrecognised, and their experiences underrepresented in our wider understanding of occupational hazards. As such, they are unprotected and under-compensated when they do fall ill or suffer tragic injuries.

I am adamant we must start to fix this and hope my Bill can be one such platform to put workplace hazards on the Parliamentary business bulletin. There are, of course, parallels with these women's experiences across whole groups of workers routinely having their safety ignored - which is why I am confident the Bill can be a starting point for change.

My proposal – for an independent, authoritative research and advisory council, with powers to make the case to bring the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) into the 21st century – received universal support from those responding to the consultation.

With more than 40 responses from individuals and organisations split evenly, not one disagreed with the core proposal to establish a new council. As a result, we have a coalition of workers, academics, trade unionists, and third sector organisations ready to make the case for renewing the benefit making it relevant to the workers in modern

roles and workplaces, respecting their careers and working patterns.

Support for the functions and membership proposed exceeded my expectations too. Just one respondent was unsure the Council should have responsibility to investigate and review emerging hazards, and another that it should commission its own research. Overwhelmingly respondents agreed membership must, in law, include workers, and their representatives, including unions. Though the Scottish Government could immediately establish an administrative council with these features, only this Bill would secure these new functions and mandatory trade union membership, permanently, in statute. Not one respondent reported a positive experience of the current scheme, though some noted positive aspects, a reminder that we must build on the best of the current scheme.

Now devolved legally and financially, I believe the benefit could wither away if Scottish Ministers adopt a lift and shift approach as they have done with disability benefits. Doing so would embed a system that promotes inequalities, fail to reflect modern Scotland, and would not close the enormous 6:1 gender gap in applications that is symptomatic of women's health and safety being systematically ignored.

I also heard how badly the current IIDB scheme is simply ignoring workplace illness and diseases. Workers who are facing dismissal as long-COVID, contracted at work, leaves them unable to fulfil their duties but with no entitlement. And long-known illnesses women face, like breast cancer caused by shift work (the top occupational cancer in women), respiratory and skin diseases that care workers and cleaners suffer, and asbestos related ovarian cancer, still go unrecognised by the UK system.

I was rightly asked why specific and direct changes to the IIDB scheme were not proposed in the consultation. First, as a Member's Bill, there are practical and resource constraints which would hamstring a more prescriptive approach akin to re-designing the benefit. Second, the task

is substantial. This bill aims to create the space for experts, including those with experience of workplace injury and disease, to consider the evidence and solutions to better support those who have become disabled. Third, and more importantly, ensuring those with expertise have independence to make advice and tackle the task, will best secure agreement in Parliament.

Getting meaningful change for people disabled at work will take longer than establishing a new advisory council, but the body is vital to make case for change as robust as possible. New data and analysis, alongside expertise and testimony, will help us go well beyond the work undertaken by the Department of Work and Pensions and UK Council. Freeing the council to commission its own research, not just calling in existing evidence, will give it the tools and authority to look into the hazards and practices that don't get a look in – including in sectors which have simply been ignored for decades.

As I write, the Non-government Bills Unit is preparing its formal summary of the consultation process, which I am hopeful will be made available ahead of Holyrood rising for the election, readying me to bring forward a formal proposal early in the next session.

Right now, Employment Injuries Assistance, as the SNP plan to call it, is years away from being truly devolved because delivery is outsourced to the DWP, in exactly the same shape as if it were still reserved. But we do now have on the table a chance to put workplace illness and disease on the agenda, and secure workers a seat at the table in shaping the new benefit.

Mark Griffin is a Labour list MSP for Central Scotland and a member of the Parliament's Social Security Committee. See his <https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/116429.aspx>

No touchy Feeley as social care still to be tied to the market

Stephen Smellie says of the Feeley report it's a case of several steps forward and massive one back

The broken system of social care has been fully exposed during the pandemic. It is a system designed to create a market so private companies can generate profits, not one designed to deliver care. It created minimum-wage-level-insecure employment, staff shortages and poor standards of care. It crashed when it failed its most basic responsibility - to protect the vulnerable people it was charged to look after.

The sector is dominated by private companies providing the majority of places in care homes and care at home services, with council services and services run on a not-for-profit basis by various voluntary and charitable organisations making up the rest.

Private and voluntary sectors had to be rescued by the state stepping in, both financially and logistically, to ensure PPE was provided, staff were paid to isolate, that they were trained in infection control and that these measures were implemented. Even then it was still a struggle to make sure these things were delivered in some parts of the private sector.

In this midst, the Scottish Government appointed Derek Feeley to lead a review of Adult Social Care. His report, published in February, proposes a number of steps to address the crisis including creating a National Care Service (NCS), reforming current Integration Joint Boards, developing a human-rights led service, greater inclusion of people with lived experience of care in the design of services, including their own, and steps to address the pay, terms and conditions and security of the employment of social care workers. The report was welcomed by unions and others for these headlines. However, as always, the devil is in the detail of what is proposed.

The case made for improving social care workers' conditions and to implement the proposals from the Fair Work in Care Report are welcome. The Report rightly links how staff are treated to standards of care. Feeley recommends a national Job Evaluation Scheme to set wages across the sector. This needs to be extended into a full bargaining system with the right of unions to organise and represent the workforce in the national bargaining system. Feeley also adopts

the UNISON's 'Ethical Commissioning' proposal and calls for clear standards to be established to ensure Fair Work principles and standards of care.

The proposal for a NCS based on 'partnerships and not market places' has been widely welcomed. In recent months, the one voice regularly raising opposition to a NCS was Scottish Care – the voice of the independent (private) care sector. In its recent briefing to MSPs, it said the voice of their sector has been heard. It is correct. It can now welcome the NCS because Feeley's vision of it is based on increasing public spending on social care whilst protecting the existence of the care market and ensuring that profits will still be made for shareholders within what he calls an 'actively managed market'.

Feeley rejects nationalising the care sector. Using a caricature of how a NCS could be established, he argues the cost of buying out the private sector would be huge and not the best use of public money. Actually, removing private-for-profit interests from social care could be done without huge expenditure by the use of procurement processes that reflect commissioning priorities on care standards and Fair Work principles alongside national systems to supply quality resources to providers at efficient costs. More of a 'tightly controlled' rather than 'actively managed' market would allow the best of the not-for-profit sector to enhance public sector provision. Those for-profit companies who found such a system limited their ability to make profit and wished to leave would be free to do so. Feeley's approach here illustrates that whilst workers' voices through their unions were heard on pay and condition, they were not on a NCS that was based on public money serving solely public good.

The proposals raise further concerns. Integration Joint Boards (IJB), where councils and Health Boards (4 Councillors and 4 appointed Health Board members) are responsible for commissioning and integrating social care services, are to be reformed. That would be welcome if it addressed the current failures and weaknesses of the IJBs such as their lack of democratic accountability and their added local

bureaucracy that neither integrates nor improves services. However, Feeley proposes that IJBs should be accountable to a NCS and take on the role of procuring as well as commissioning services, therefore, reducing further the role of councils, relegating them to merely one provider of social care services, and further reducing the local democratic oversight over social care.

A NCS will include the current functions of the Scottish Social Services Council and the Care Inspectorate and so will be responsible for the commissioning and procurement of services, for the inspection of services and for the development and regulation of the workforce - essentially regulating and inspecting its own performance. It will be answerable to a Scottish Minister. The concept of independent scrutiny and democratic accountability within social care will have been eradicated.

That this is allied to investing significant sums of public money in order to secure decent conditions for both staff and service users, whilst retaining a market so that private companies can continue to extract profits should cause concern for openness and transparency in public services. People with lived experience of social care, the social care workforce, and tax payers, deserve a better care service than that proposed by Feeley

Stephen Smellie is Depute Convenor UNISON Scotland. Stephen is also the author of a contribution to the new pamphlet called 'People Before Profit: The Future of Social Care in Scotland' which can be purchased at <https://www.calton-books.co.uk/books/people-before-profit-the-future-of-social-care-in-scotland/>



Can the Fair Work Framework make Scotland a fair work nation?

Gregor Gall analyses a recent report by the Fair Work Convention and finds it fatally flawed

The 'Fair Work Framework' (FWF) has been the Scottish Government's flagship programme on employment issues since 2016. It sets out to make Scotland a 'fair work' nation by 2025. With the forthcoming Scottish Parliament elections, this next parliament will run until that date so the next Scottish Government will self-evidently be accountable for ensuring this goal is achieved.

The FWF has five dimensions, namely, facilitating 'fair work' as work that provides workers with effective voice, opportunity, security, respect and fulfilment, and is supervised by the Fair Work Convention (FWC). This covers various matters of pay, conditions and collective bargaining amongst other issues. At the end of 2020, the Convention published its report on the progress made since 2016 to achieve 'fair work' in Scotland.

The FWC took a critical line saying 'greater commitment by government, employers and trade unions to implementing and progressing fair work [is needed] if Scotland is to achieve its ambition of being a Fair Work Nation by 2025'. This was because it found, prior to the COVID-19 crisis, that disabled workers, ethnic minorities, women and young workers often experienced poorer work outcomes and are often more heavily concentrated in precarious and low paid work.

The report also found there has been no improvement in access to flexible working; no improvement in the number of illnesses caused by work; the use of zero hours contracts increased; effective use of skills in the workplace decreased; workers' participation in workplace learning decreased; and union membership decreased.

More positively, however, the report found that the proportion of people earning less than the real living wage decreased; the overall measure of employment security improved; levels of participation in involuntary non-permanent work and involuntary part-time work improved; gender and ethnicity pay gaps narrowed; and collective bargaining coverage increased. To summarise the report using its own indicators, on 40% of them the situation was 'improving', on 38%

it was 'maintaining' and on 22% it was 'worsening'.

Predictably, the media picked up upon the criticisms in the FWC's report and supported the set of recommendations such as making fair work a condition of all public funding available to employers as a means of improving and embedding higher standards of fair work policy and practice. But the real story was ignored. This is because the report's own criticism drew attention away from a critical flaw. The flaw is that no evidence was presented – or, indeed, even exists elsewhere – that the FWF accounts for any of these outcomes, especially the 'improving' ones. So 'Fair Work' is taking credit for developments that are, at best, not directly connected to it and, at worst, it has nothing to do with. This is all the more apparent when one remembers that 'Fair Work' is entirely without any statutory underpinning.



How did this flaw come about? The report tells us that the secondary data sources used were those like the Labour Force Survey. The report says of these that 'The data sources used ... are designated as Official Statistics. This ensures that data presented here is robust and reliable'. The only caveats the report entered into on the data were that 'there is some time lag' – meaning that the data covers 2016 to 2019 – and a 'number of gaps in data exist' so that two of the 39 indicators could not be measured. As a result of this, the Convention also recommended that Scottish Government invest in improving the quality of workplace data, particularly as it relates to workers with protected characteristics.

But even if this particular recommendation was enacted, it would show what has happened but not why or how it has happened or who was responsible. In other words, it would still not establish the connection between

developments on the ground, whether positive or negative, in attaining the five dimensions and the actions and policies of the Scottish Government towards creating 'fair work'. Indeed, the FWC provides us with just four 'stories' of where employers have implemented fair work.

So, let's turn to an aspect where there is some decent data. This concerns the Scottish Government's Scottish Business Pledge. From its launch in 2015, the pledge involves employers committing to a number of goals of which the two core ones are paying the real living wage and no inappropriate use of zero hours contracts. The number of employers making the pledge has grown from 184, covering around 39,000 workers, in 2016 to 711, covering around 127,000 workers, by 2020. That does represent progress but it still only covers 5% of the workforce in Scotland, and it also has to be borne in mind that the independent Scottish Living Wage was established in 2014 and has accredited just over 1,900 employers by 2020, giving 46,000 workers a pay rise. Both the Scottish Business Pledge and Scottish Living Wage indicate how limited progress is when there is no force of law to secure policy goals.

The significance of this is that developments in employment matters, both good and bad, result from economic and labour market pressures, the actions of employers in deciding how to best chase profits, and the behaviour of unions in trying to best defend their members' interests. And this is where the state does not compel employers to act in certain ways as a result of legal measures.

There is nothing in the work of the FWF or wider actions of the Scottish Government on employment matters that has a statutory underpinning to it. Until it does, there will be no hard and fast evidence that any changes in employment matters have any direct bearing or relationship to the FWF. And given that employment matters remain reserved business to Westminster, that may require either further devolution or independence.

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

Weggie climate warriors go to war to green up the dear old 'Green Place' of Glasgow

Stuart Graham lays out what union activists in Glasgow are organising for in the run-up to COP26

Glasgow Trades Union Council (GTUC) attended the STUC Trades Councils conference at the end of January. We requested a session was added to deal with the COP26 conference in Glasgow in November and the required level of mobilisation for it. Consequently, two of the Glasgow delegates led a session to discuss the work started on one campaign (Free Our City campaign for free public transport) and the intention to devise another (along similar coalition-building type lines) around a retro-fitting agenda for the city.

The opportunity to engage with Glasgow City Council (GCC) on these issues has been presented by it declaring a climate emergency in June 2019 as well as publishing a list of recommendations from the Climate Emergency Working Group and undertaking public consultations on transport and the wider Climate Emergency Implementation Plan (CEIP). While these are not always going to provide the desired solutions – indeed, the transport proposals are particularly frustrating at this stage, this does provide some kind of opening to initiate dialogue and discuss what social protections are needed in the process of just transition. However, we need to ensure that such dialogue remains sincere and capable of being a two-way conversation and not just a monologue with the option to tell the council in question how much you agree or disagree with an already defined endpoint.

The provision of renewably-powered, free public transport is one of the significant, societal transformations that the Free Our City coalition (which includes GTUC) has identified as capable of delivering the just transition to a low carbon/carbon neutral economy. Thus, GTUC will be meeting with trades councils from the local authorities surrounding Glasgow to devise a common approach to take to the politicians which sit on the Strathclyde Regional Cabinet. Bus service provision in Greater Glasgow cuts across local

authority boundaries to such an extent that we will require a common mobilising agenda that is also capable of being adapted as we go.

Whether we view this solely from the perspective of municipal bus transit for a domestic population, or consider the number of visitors we may yet be hosting come November, we need to continue to make the case that the Bus Service Improvement Programmes (BSIPs) that continue to subsidise private companies with public funds are neither good enough nor capable of delivering what bus users across Greater Glasgow need. Therefore, irrespective of the current or anticipated positions of the various administrations which make up the Strathclyde Regional Cabinet, part of any campaign on public transport/buses needs to have the demand for public ownership and democratic control at its centre. Public sector job creation – as drivers or mechanics as well that

ahead is that it has massive, public sector job creation potential. Here, hundreds, if not thousands, of newly created jobs are needed to carry out the deep retro-fitting of all homes. This must be accompanied by training available to those who want to do this work as well as for those who have lost jobs due to the pandemic or are finding it particularly difficult as they are younger workers with little to no work experience. We will once again attempt to do so through coalition-building, and hope that Living Rent will also be one of the coalition partners due to its status and work as the only tenants' union in the city.

We appreciate that the priorities detailed are specific to Glasgow/ Greater Glasgow and rely upon the demands of urban societies/economies. And we know that some of the more rural local authorities/trades councils, like Highlands & Islands, will have



significantly differing demands, including a greater reliance on electrical vehicles. Once known, these aspects can be better articulated but they will take some time to properly assess. However, the proposal is to use one, other or both campaigns as a mobilising template or impetus

offered through renewables-focused supply lines – would also result from re-municipalization.

GTUC is in the early stages of devising a local retro-fitting campaign too and is watching with interest the progress of, and obstacles to, Leeds TUC's retro-fitting report and recommendations. Carbon emissions from domestic energy use/consumption remain a significant contribution to the city's overall emissions levels. But while GCC's CEIP has a commitment to a retro-fitting programme, it is nowhere at the scale or level of ambition which will be required to retro-fit all of the city's homes, which will have different specifications depending on property types, ranging from multi-storey flats to tenement and four-in-a-block properties. While still in its very early stages, what is known about the scale of the retro-fitting task

which trades councils can then use to build coalitions and bespoke campaigning agendas around. Transport and housing affect everyone – so the aim is to try and harness the energy that type of appeal can bring as a common mobilising agenda across trades councils. Scottish trades councils will be meeting more regularly throughout 2021 under these and other auspices to bring their affiliates under the banner of the COP26 coalition and call for more participation and action at all levels. We - in Glasgow at least - will definitely be here in person for COP26.

Stuart Graham is a Glasgow City UNISON delegate to the GTUC and a member of the COP26 coalition for both.



The People's Recovery

Post-pandemic, building back better is both an opportunity and a necessity. “The People’s Recovery” is the STUC’s manifesto for change.

The report contains new calculations showing that Scotland is even more unequal than first thought, with Scotland’s richest twenty families - many of whom are tax dodgers and are detailed in the report - wealthier than the bottom 30% of the population.

The paper calls for a fundamental rethink on the purpose of growth and the introduction of urgent measures such as a National Care Service, a green stimulus package, wealth taxes, sectoral collective bargaining and democratic public ownership.

The report can be found via this link: www.rebrand.ly/STUC-Report

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The horrific—and often avoidable—impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the lives of older people and disabled people in Scotland has thrown into sharp relief the inadequacies of our social care system.

While the recent report of the Independent Review of Social Care has identified some of the problems, its recommendations shrink back from confronting the real cancer at the heart of social care—its domination by market forces and by private providers such as HC-One whose primary concern is with profit, not care.

By contrast, this pamphlet, jointly published by the Social Work Action Network and the Jimmy Reid Foundation and with contributions by leading disabled activists, public sector trade unionists, frontline workers and campaigners including Neil Findlay MSP and journalist Kevin McKenna, calls for a publicly owned, controlled and funded national care service, where care workers and care users are in the driving seat.

The pamphlet can help shape the debate in the coming months over the kind of National Care Service we want to see in Scotland.

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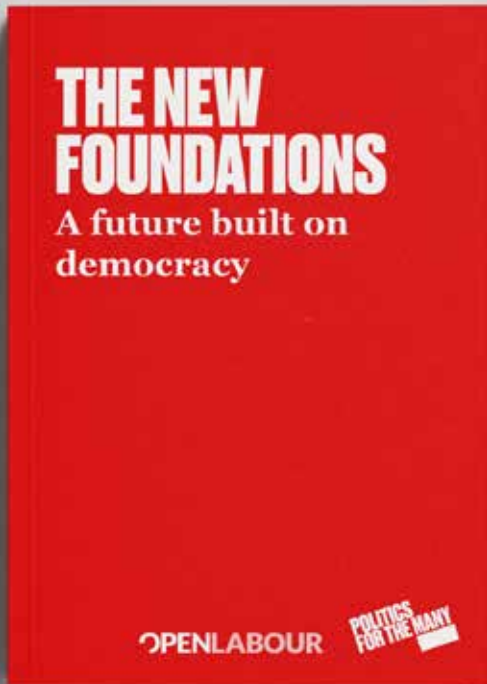
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CWU wishes all delegates and those participating in this virtual STUC 2021 Congress a successful and enjoyable event

- **Campaigning against compulsory redundancies and the eradication of terms & conditions in BT #CountMeIn**
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Craig Anderson Regional Secretary Scotland

Pauline Rourke Regional Chair Scotland

‘Play it again, Sam’: projecting the prizes and pitfalls for the political parties

Malcolm Harvey assesses the likely outcome that we shall wake up to on 7 May 2021

Elections happen frequently in democracies; in multi-level polities, even more frequently. Years without elections seem unusual – and even when they occur, as in 2020, regular polling keeps the idea in our heads that an election is just around the corner. And, so it is the case: the sixth elections to the Scottish Parliament are scheduled for 6 May. In these pandemic-induced uncertain times, even that might not proceed as intended.

Every election lays claim to being ‘the most important election in your lifetime’ but once again it is not just the direction of public policy that is on the ballot paper this year, but the future of Scotland itself.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) has governed at Holyrood, either as a minority or a majority, since 2007, and according to polling, that seems likely to continue into a fourth term in office. Such longevity in government is remarkable – we have to go back to the Thatcher/Major Conservative governments of 1979-1997 for the last time a UK government succeeded in winning four successive terms of office. Which is not, one would imagine, a comparison that the SNP would particularly appreciate.

But, unlike the Conservatives prior to 1992, the last in that run of election victories, the SNP remains popular in government. It is consistently polling not just ahead of other parties also has the preference of a majority of voters. Simultaneously, at the time of writing, twenty-one consecutive polls have indicated that independence is the constitutional preference of a majority of the Scottish electorate. These two poll findings are not unrelated. And, despite a slew of internal divides – over constitutional strategy, trans rights, personalities, and the fallout from the Alex Salmond trial – the SNP looks likely to benefit from those poll figures, and return to government, with a majority of seats in the chamber a strong possibility.

Their pro-independence bedfellows, the Scottish Greens, find themselves in a similar position. Their support appears to also be enhanced by support for independence, and the desire among those for whom independence is a preference to secure

a pro-independence majority for the next parliamentary term. They too have internal divides and have lost the prominent land rights campaigner, Andy Wightman, who now sits as an Independent, but look set to increase their representation at Holyrood slightly in May.

As a result of increases in support for both the SNP and the Greens, it seems unlikely that the newly-formed ‘Action for Independence’ and ‘Independence for Scotland’ parties will be able to secure representation. The effective threshold for parties to win regional seats varies from around 6-9%, and it looks unlikely that any new party will be able to achieve this level of support. This holds true for former Conservative MSP Michelle Ballantyne’s newly-formed Reform UK Party, as well as the currently nameless party George Galloway hopes to register.



The Scottish Parliament Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

On the opposite side of the constitutional debate, perhaps the most interesting battle in this election is which party, Labour or Conservatives, will return as the second largest party. Both are under new leadership in Scotland. Former Conservative leader, Ruth Davidson, currently deputises at Holyrood for Moray MP and part-time referee, Douglas Ross, who replaced Davidson’s former deputy, Jackson Carlaw, last year. Davidson herself is standing down from her Edinburgh Central seat to take up a position in the House of Lords, while Ross has struggled to make an impact from Westminster thus far. As a result, the Conservatives look to be in a fight to maintain that second place, with a slight revival on the cards for Labour.

Labour has finally moved on from the leadership of Richard Leonard, and a leadership contest between Monica Lennon and Anas Sarwar ensued, both outlining quite different futures for the party. Lennon wanted a more independent Scottish Labour Party, and suggested it should not block a second independence referendum, while Sarwar opposed the idea. The positioning for Labour appears to be crucial here: supporting a second referendum would potentially attract more of the (leftist) pro-independence electorate back to the party; taking a harder line would make the party more attractive to pro-Union voters who have recently voted Conservative on account of their own ultra-Unionist position.

It seems likely, on account of gains by the SNP and Greens, that the block of 60 seats achieved by the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats combined in 2016 will be reduced in 2021, with perhaps fewer than 50 seats in play. Labour will have more of the momentum, with a new leader, while being in government at Westminster will likely impact negatively on the Conservative vote. If the Liberal Democrats hold onto their five seats from the last session, it’s possible that the Conservatives and Labour may share the remainder almost equally between them, with neither really able to stake a real claim to be the ‘main’ opposition in Scotland.

Polling then, suggests more of the same in the coming Scottish Parliamentary session. A majority SNP government would ensure the constitutional question remains squarely on the agenda, and the question of how to move forward with a referendum will undoubtedly be central to their programme – not least because the UK Government has indicated that it would not consent to the holding of a second referendum in the immediate future.

Dr Malcolm Harvey is Lecturer in Politics at the University of Aberdeen

Finding a new 'third way' between independence and unionism

Neil Findlay lays out the case for a third option in any future referendum

Tony Benn famously set out five questions of democracy and urged all of us to ask them of those in power: What power have you got; where did you get it from; in whose interests do you use it; to whom are you accountable; and, how do we get rid of you? I have used them to ask people to consider four fundamental questions on the future of Scotland: What type of country do we want to create; what powers do we need to create it; where should those powers lie; and how do we deliver them?

If we survey the political and constitutional landscape of Britain, we see a shambolic, hotchpotch of district councils, parish councils, unitary authorities, boroughs national and London assemblies, parliaments, metro mayors, police and crime commissioners, the Lords, the Commons and god knows what else. The COVID crisis has exposed the often competing and incoherent ways in which these

different bodies and their political leadership works. Who can forget the incredulity on the face of the Greater Manchester Mayor, Andy Burnham, as he gave a press conference about negotiations with the Government on lockdown support for his region only for an aide to show him a mobile phone message of what the Government was going to impose on the region he is supposed to be accountable for.

COVID and Brexit have exposed the crisis in our local democracy and decision making. There is a palpable feeling across the country that decisions must be made more local and more accountable. Our towns and cities, regions and nations have their own distinct regional and cultural identity. Regional foods, accents, words, customs, art, humour and music are what makes our local communities unique, lively and vibrant. We are rightly proud and protective of them. We have connections with and affections

for the history, the landscape and the idiosyncrasies of them. In so many ways, they survive in spite of the system not because of it. It is only because of human resilience, a driving sense of injustice and the organisational abilities and determination of different communities of people that the grotesque failings of capitalism are resisted and at times rebuffed and our identity protected from bland homogeneity.

This brings me my answer to my first question. COVID has brutally exposed the failings of the neo-liberal system. Across the world even the most right-wing governments have been forced to accept that market economics could not answer the biggest question posed since WW2. What would have happened if there had been no state intervention to try to defeat COVID? Unemployment would be into the tens of millions, families would have been left literally starving and destitute, businesses would



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have closed in every sector, workers would have been left unpaid and, in such circumstances, there would have been a serious threat to the complete breakdown of society and law and order as desperate, abandoned people tried to survive.

Government was forced to adopt policies that run completely contrary to the philosophy. Massive state intervention shored up the economy, paid wages to workers to stay at home, sector after sector had tax payers' money pumped into it where previously they would be left to go under. Projects were funded to feed the hungry, computers bought to help home educate children and subsidies paid to transport operators running empty buses and trains. In short, the government resorted to a socialist, interventionist approach to deal with the crisis. This, therefore, begs the question if we can adopt a more socialist, caring, compassionate and inclusive society where the state steps in to support those in real need at a time of crisis, why can't we do this in normal times to create the better society?

I want to see a society of full employment, where no one goes hungry, and every child has the same opportunity to learn and flourish, where public services are funded and supported to meet community needs and where we protect our environment for future generations. One where political power and decision making are returned to local communities with councils re-empowered and funded and no longer seen as just an administrative layer to take the blame for cuts handed down from above. I want a planned, regulated economy where human endeavour is applied to meet society's needs not to pursue the 'holy grail' of wealth accumulation.

What powers do we need to create it and at which level should these powers lie? The basic principle on which I would answer this is based on this belief - that all powers be devolved to the lowest possible level unless there is a logical and overwhelming reason not to do so.

Let's take two examples. First, drugs. To our national shame, Scotland has the worst rate of drug deaths in the developed world. It is, therefore, logical that all policy headings related to drugs be fully devolved to Scotland to address the crisis here. Why would we not do this? Scotland, Wales, Merseyside and every other English region should equally be able to develop policies

to meet their local needs, pressures and circumstances. We can then hold government and public bodies to account for their decision making and measure the success or failure of policy without them having anyone else to point the finger at.

Let's look at another area: the border. We live on a small island nation with a well-developed internal trading market with free movement of goods and people within our borders. No one with any sense is arguing that this should end but we need to ensure that we maintain and develop the highest possible standards in areas such as food production, employment rights, consumer protection and environmental standards. So, I would argue that it makes no sense to erect internal borders between the regions and nations of this island and that control of the border remains reserved at a UK level but we have the flexibility necessary to meet our own specific national and regional needs including immigration.

These are just two examples but if we systematically work through all powers then we can see the natural level of government for each power to rest. There will be debates and disagreement about where a minority of powers should lie, these can be resolved through negotiation.

Finally, how do we deliver these powers? I have long argued that we need a third option in any future constitutional referendum – one that is neither the *status quo* nor independence. That option should be based on the maximum practical and beneficial devolution of powers to the most appropriate level, subsidiarity, as it used to be called. This option isn't a cop out or fudge. It is the most logical, practical and beneficial proposal for Scotland' long term economic, social and political well-being, with the potential to transform our country.

Some argue a multi-option referendum is impracticable and is just a ruse to prevent independence and others argue that it is a cop out to nationalism and would divide the anti-independence vote. It is neither. I would not be associated with it if it were. Professor James Mitchell explains in the *Red Paper on Scotland* (January 2021) exactly

how multi-option referenda have been used across the world on over one hundred occasions and how it could work in the Scottish context.

Having answered my four questions, I hope readers will see that whether they are supporters of independence or Devo-Max that there is much more that unites us than divides us. We can build on that by coalescing around a campaign for a multi-option referendum. In the 1990s, some nationalists and socialists were able to set aside their differences and come together in the 'Scotland United' campaign for a multi-option referendum. It is my belief that this is what is required now. It needs us to set aside tired hostilities and put down the boulders we have been lobbing at each other for decades and work on a set of common principles that build unity around that call. It is clear that Boris Johnson has no intention of conceding a referendum to the SNP and that it has no credible plan B. However, faced with a cross-party, united call for a multi-option referendum, Johnson would be in a much more difficult position. My final question is whether our leaders will rise to the occasion or retreat into the trenches and reach for more boulders.

Neil Findlay is a Labour list MSP for the Lothians. This is a slightly abridged version of Neil's contribution to the Red Paper (January 2021).

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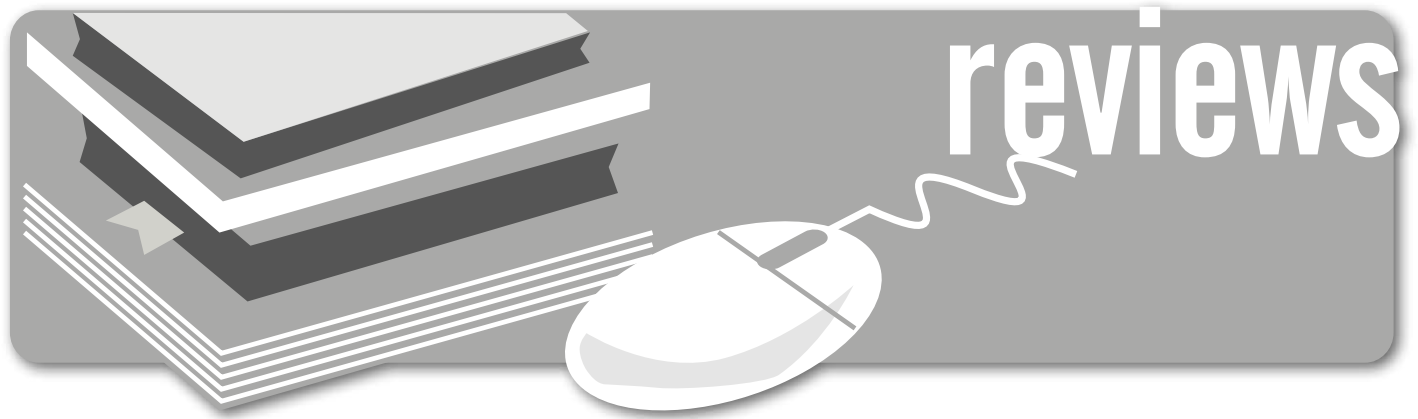
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time of her death in 2012, she had won multiple awards and accolades for her outstanding work. *A Private War* gives audiences insight into the life of the woman rather than the headlines which made her career. Paul Conroy's book, *Under The Wire*, which formed the basis for Chris Martin's award-winning documentary of the same name, are both strongly recommended as companion pieces to *A Private War*.

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

***A Private War* (2018),**
director: Matthew Heineman,
screenwriters: Arash Amel and Marie Brenner

Reviewed by Jackie Bergson

Bridging the period from when war correspondent, Marie Colvin, reported from within Sri Lanka in 2001 until the moment when she was killed in 2012, *A Private War* begins and ends with real footage from the place where she lost her life: Homs, Syria. Rosamund Pike's portrayal as Colvin is faultless and fascinating. The actress embodies her forthright instinct for getting to, and speaking, the truth as well as her professional humility and integrity, her capacity for love and glamour and the warm, steady tonality of her voice.

A Private War also throws light onto Colvin's more vulnerable side. This spanned her need to sometimes drink too much alcohol to numb the post-traumatic-stress which she constantly suffered is divulged and the probability that she considered suicide. The film's narrative tracks Colvin's mission to tell and show the tragic suffering of civilian victims of war crimes. Ultimately, and outstandingly, she uncovered the relentless and complete destruction and multiple daily bombings upon Syrian

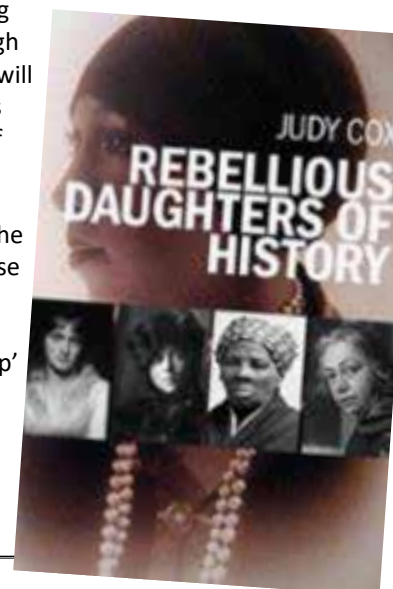
civilians by their own government.

Colvin's widely publicised confrontational interview with Libyan Colonel, Muammar Gaddafi (Raad Rawi), before her Syrian missions is featured with specific intention. The political relevance of this narrative thread is especially important because it clarifies why she and her journalistic team in Homs were consequently targeted and killed by the Assad regime. Ominous repercussions focus on the fear and grief of her colleagues and editors in London (Tom Hollander as her news editor, Sean Ryan) when they hear and see what they will come to know as her final live broadcast from Syria. Colvin's credibility was such that when she spoke over tenuous airwaves about ordinary, innocent men, women and children who were not terrorists being indiscriminately bombed and killed, her voice carried weight of truth and power.

The heroine of this story reasoned that she had to '... face the many horrors and tell people what really happens when all sides try to obscure the truth'. As a senior correspondent for arguably the most respected of major Fleet Street broadsheet newspapers, Colvin and her team (her photographer, Paul Conroy, played by Jamie Dornan) were hugely admired and revered. By the

Judy Cox,
***Rebellious Daughters of History*, 2021, Redwords,**
9781912926947, £10, pp128
Reviewed by Lorna McKinnon

Where can we look to see the seedlings of the ideas we hold today in terms of the struggle for women's liberation, for the liberation of all, for the abolition of slavery, and for an end to the atrocities of war? There are more people constituting these seedlings than we could possibly imagine. But if and when we dig deep through history, we will find endless examples of inspiring, leading women at the front of these battles for liberation. I say 'dig deep' because more often than not, these women,



their contributions and their struggles, have been buried, ignored or written out of history. 'Rebellious Daughters of History' pays tribute to these women, bringing their stories to life.

Originating from some posts on her Facebook page, Cox began writing about rebellious women from history during the first lockdown in March last year, sparking long and engaging discussions about other women fighters for justice and liberation who could be pulled out and researched. All of this culminated and transpired into these inspiring pages.

I read about women Black Panthers fighting systemic racism in the US. I learned from labour movement leaders, anti-war and women's rights campaigners, Ella May Wiggins and Mary Heaton. From Glasgow-born rent striker, suffragette and communist, Helen Crawford, to Pritilata Waddadar, Bangladeshi campaigner against British colonialism, all of these rebellious daughters are evidence that in every part of the world, in every pocket of struggle and throughout all periods of history, there has always been women at the front. There have always been women who stood up for unpopular

issues that are now celebrated, women who refused to stay in their 'place', and even when it was the most challenging, women who fought for their principles and changed ideas.

They fought not only for themselves but for women and workers everywhere, rallying against the system that breeds injustice and inequality. They didn't just want bread, they fought for roses too. As Cox herself says: 'It's not a book about women who fought for their own rights, but those who were part of a fight to change the system'. This is a key argument in the book: that class struggle has been integral to the victories that have been won by women in the fight for a better world, and it still is.

In conversation with Cox, she reminded me of an important point to take away from my reading: That this tribute is merely the beginning. Each of these women deserves a whole body of research detailing their stories. The rebellious daughters of today can take inspiration from these pages to carry out that research but also to fight in the struggles we face in the here and now.

Lorna McKinnon is a music teacher and member of the Socialist Workers' Party in Glasgow

'Visionaries'

by David McKinstry, Glasgow

As winter turned to spring
And Churchill's bombast stilled,
The nation turned to quiet Clem
Voting for a rebuild.

Up went the homes
Finally for heroes to fit,
Down went the miners
Into nationalised pit.

Nye valued good health
Stuffed doctors' mouths with gold,
As a price worth paying
For an NHS to behold.

Castle insisted family allowance
To women be paid,
Then came the pension
Taking care of all
From cradle to grave.

Proletarian petals began to flower
In schools that planted sixties swinging,
The light of knowledge shining
To the echoes of Jerusalem singing.

Through blitz storm they stood firm
When Nazi was at the gate,
Then with worn out tools
Turned to build a welfare state.



COVID has highlighted that those who contribute the most to ensure we have a decent life are those least valued financially. This is most obviously the case with shop and warehouse workers, delivery drivers, transport staff, cleansing workers, utility engineers, those in construction and all unable to work from home. Something rarely acknowledged is that during lockdown 56% of workers continued to go out to work and 42% of workplaces remained open. Health, social care, and public sector staff struggled against COVID in services hit hardest by austerity policies with no or inadequate protection. The speed with which a vaccine was developed and distributed shows that cooperation is not only possible but essential in these times if we are to triumph and eliminate if not eradicate the virus. There can be no return to the 'old' normal of food banks, zero hours, or precarious work, the homeless again on the streets and the unemployed struggling to exist on universal credit.

COVID put paid to the Peoples Assembly's Scotland's planned programme for 2020 with limited opportunities for public campaigning. Restrictions on movement, the need to remain safely at home meant that what work we could do happened online. Soon we'll be back on the streets demanding investment for our industries, the creation socially useful, green jobs with safe workplaces for all, and an NHS and care service no longer starved of funding or putting money in the pockets of profiteers (with workers in these sectors no longer relying on benefits but with a decent living wage).

We refuse to believe that what we had was the best our planet could offer us. Any future must be created by and in the interests of working people and their families. **Phil McGarry (Chair) and Keith Stoddart (Secretary)**

Kick up the Tabloids

In Britain, it is now a year since the Coronavirus pandemic reached our shores. And to mark the first anniversary of lockdown, we are having another lockdown. I would be tempted to say it's like Groundhog Day, but I said that yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that. So, in case you missed any of it, here is a round-up of the highlights of the past twelve months.

A bunch of posh gits returning home from a skiing holiday to Italy bring a virus into the country which then goes on to kill countless thousands of people, most of whom could never have afforded to go on a skiing trip in their lives. Half of them are also returning home with broken limbs, putting more pressure on an already beleaguered NHS. Boris Johnson says there is no cause for pubs to shut and that the Government is committed to getting to the bottom of the toilet roll crisis.

Boris Johnson decides there is a cause for pubs to shut, but promises to 'send coronavirus packing in 12 weeks'. The public is encouraged to stand on street corners on freezing cold evenings, and give a weekly round of applause for health workers. This means the government do not need to give nurses a pay rise. However, it does lead to a rise in road traffic accidents and cases of hypothermia, thereby, loading even more pressure on the NHS.

Boris Johnson's pledge to increase funding for the NHS, written on the side of a bus four years previously, is partially fulfilled due to a 100-year-old man walking around his garden every day.

In April, having failed to send coronavirus packing, Boris Johnson decides the best way out of getting any blame is to pretend to have caught the virus himself. A spokesperson for the NHS states that it is impossible to say whether or not the prime minister has COVID as he is permanently sweaty, breathless and lacking any sense of taste.

Having tested positive for the virus, Dominic Cummings, drives his car on a busy motorway to test his eyesight. When asked if he ever did the same thing, former Home Secretary David Blunkett is unavailable for comment.

In June, with COVID-related deaths reaching forty thousand, Boris Johnson decides it is time to re-open pubs in England, while enough potential customers are still alive. In an unprecedented showing of joined-up thinking, Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, doles out limitless £10 meal vouchers to encourage people to pack into restaurants and kick-start a second wave of Coronavirus.

In September, Boris Johnson decides that pubs are exceedingly dangerous unless food is available, thereby, sparking a debate in cabinet about what constitutes a 'substantial meal'. One minister suggests a pasty, but Matt Hancock is firm that it must be a pasty and chips. This gives rise to a widespread misconception that chips help prevent the spread of the virus.

Boris Johnson insists it is essential that universities must re-open, on condition that all students remain locked-up in halls of residence and that no teaching is allowed. Boris Johnson promises students that the pubs will definitely still be open by the time they are allowed out of their rooms to go home for Christmas.

In December, the vaccine is rolled out, although some people are worried about potential side effects, in particular memory loss, infertility and incontinence. As all of the first wave of recipients are over eighty-five, it is too early to tell. Batshit conspiracy theories abound on the internet, including that the vaccine includes a chip. Matt Hancock claims this proves that the vaccine is not only effective but also be considered 'a substantial meal'.

In addition to the vaccine rollout, the NHS appeals to young, fit volunteers to take part in COVID Exposure Trials, where they are intentionally infected with the virus. It is suggested that

places on the trials should be handed out in place of fixed penalty notices for lockdown violations, until an expert points out that most cases of COVID start at illegal house parties so it would be a waste of resources infecting people who are already infected.

In February, there are revelations in the press that COVID-related Government contracts were handed out to friends of Dominic Cummings. The only thing that anyone finds surprising is the revelation that Cummings has friends.

As the vaccine rollout brings a lowering in cases, many Tory MPs insist that lockdown should be ended before April. However, health experts advise Boris Johnson 'not to move too quickly'. This is because if he did move too quickly, he would probably have a heart attack due to being fat and out-of-shape.

As we enter March in lockdown, many people are tempted to say it is all a bit like Groundhog Day. But then they remember that they said that twelve months ago.

Vladimir McTavish is one of the regular contributors on 'The Thursday Show', broadcast on YouTube, Twitch and Facebook every Thursday at 8pm



Vladimir McTavish

Investing in public services is essential to recovery



Mike Kirby
UNISON's Scottish Secretary



Proper investment in our public services would help speed the country back to recovery and more prosperous, certain times. It would help to heal the deep cracks that have been exposed in care and the NHS during this pandemic.

With extra funds, national and local public services could provide many more jobs. We need to prioritise essential services like health, housing, education, care, utilities and transport.

A much-deserved early pay rise for public service workers would mean more money to be spent on local high streets.

This pandemic has shown how much we all rely on public services. Funding them properly can help the economy and bring back the support and security that our communities have long been missing.

The road to recovery

- REBUILD...**
Rebuild all our public services, by securing long-term investment and making money available to employ and train the number of staff that are needed to ensure our services are there when we need them.
- CREATE...**
Create fairer and safer work places with proper risk assessments. Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect.
- CARE...**
We need to put people before profit. We need to use the care economy to deliver for communities not shareholders
- PAY...**
Give public sector workers a decent pay rise because the pandemic has shown how important they are. This would also help the lowest paid out of in-work poverty.
- BUILD...**
Build a fairer and greener post COVID-19 society, in which the inequalities that have become so evident during the crisis are addressed as a matter of urgency.

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