

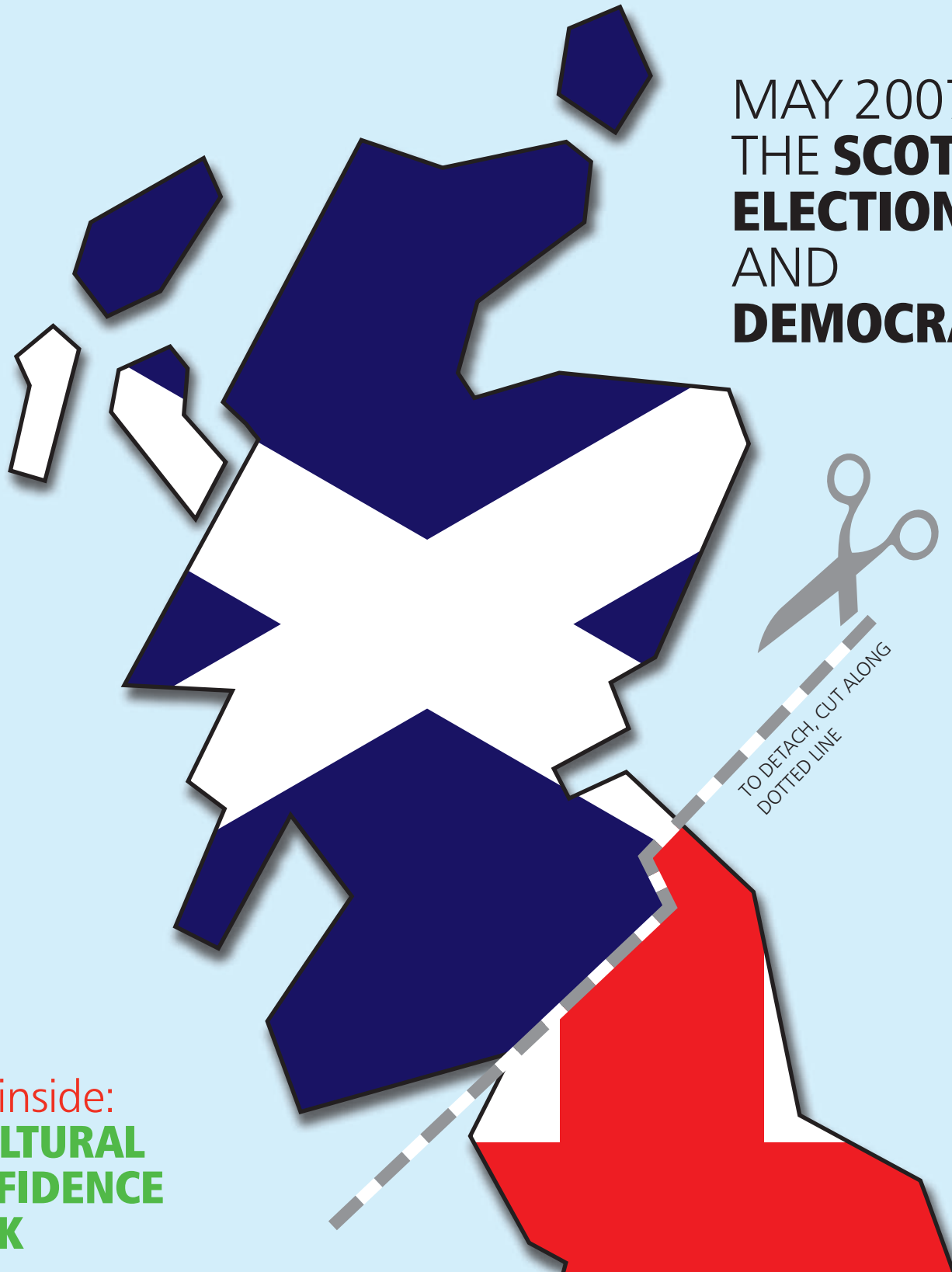
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= social justice? Page 18

radical feminist green

Perspectives

No 14 / SPRING 2007 / £2



MAY 2007:
THE **SCOTTISH
ELECTIONS**
AND
DEMOCRACY

Also inside:
**A CULTURAL
CONFIDENCE
TRICK**

MAGAZINE OF SCOTLAND'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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EDITORIAL

INDEPENDENT THOUGHT

This issue of *Perspectives* is understandably focussed on the May elections. That said, however, all of the articles equally address the bigger, medium-term issues that will form part of the post-election agenda for months and years to come.

The piece most obviously tuned in to the Scottish Parliament election is Douglas Bain's. Doug is highly critical of Labour and what he calls its "hollowing out of representative democracy." He argues that "A defeat for Labour in this election would represent a very significant challenge to these anti-democratic developments – both in Scotland and at Westminster."

The reality of Scottish political life means that defeat for Labour in Scotland would likely leave the SNP as the largest single party.

This in turn raises the question of independence which, as Doug rightly points out, is not on offer at this election. But with an SNP-led Executive, it may well become the subject of a future referendum.

And here the question arises of Scotland's history and whether, given the experience of neo-liberalism over the past twenty five years, our political culture has become sufficiently distinctive from that of the rest of the UK that independence would be a realisable and practical proposition.

There are no simple answers to this question; what is needed is a sustained period of serious public debate to which all parties contribute without scaremongering or glib appeals to national chauvinism.

Chris Kelly, an artist and executive member of the Scottish Artists Union, takes the Scottish Executive to task over its plans for culture, much of which seems to have been decided prior to the completion of the consultation period.

He contrasts the positive sentiments of Jack McConnell's St



What is needed is a sustained period of serious public debate to which all parties contribute without scaremongering or glib appeals to national chauvinism.

■ **Letters and contributions (which we may edit) are welcome and should be sent to the editor – contact details alongside.**

Andrew's Day speech of 2003 with the actual bill that seems to squander the opportunity to develop Scotland's arts and culture.

Perspectives is pleased to welcome a contribution from Isobel Lindsay, a long standing and highly respected member of Scotland's left. Again with one eye on the election, Isobel assesses how the campaign against Trident must now develop, and what opportunities are available given the existing powers of Holyrood, not to mention what might be possible if independence were on the horizon.

As ever in this magazine, we are never very far from the issue of the environment. Thanks are due to the Scottish Green Party who have ensured a steady response to requests for articles. We hope this will continue to be an on-going feature of *Perspectives*.

Rosemary Burnett fills the breach this time, ploughing the furrow of quality of life and happiness, and the unsustainability of ever-increasing economic growth.

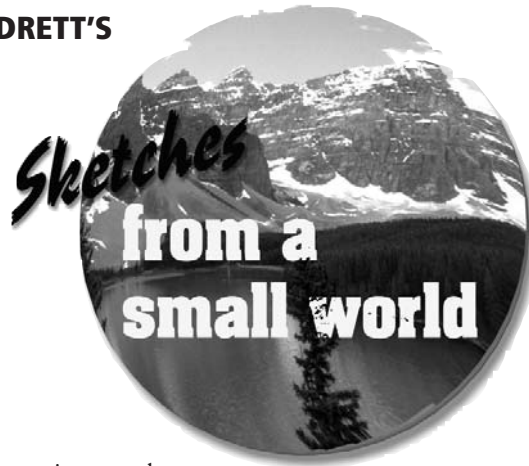
Scotland's left press includes another magazine, *Scottish Left Review*, that serves a similar, but not identical, constituency to *Perspectives*. A recent foray by them into the world of book production has resulted in the publication of *Is there a Scottish Road to Socialism?*, edited by Gregor Gall (a past contributor to these pages).

Two Democratic Left Scotland members have written for this volume: David Purdy, a regular *Perspectives* writer, and DLS convenor Stuart Fairweather, whose chapter is presented in an edited version in this issue.

Meanwhile, Eurig Scandrett has used his regular column to review the whole book, which represents the views of a miscellany of contributors from the various strands of the left in Scotland.



EURIG SCANDRETT'S

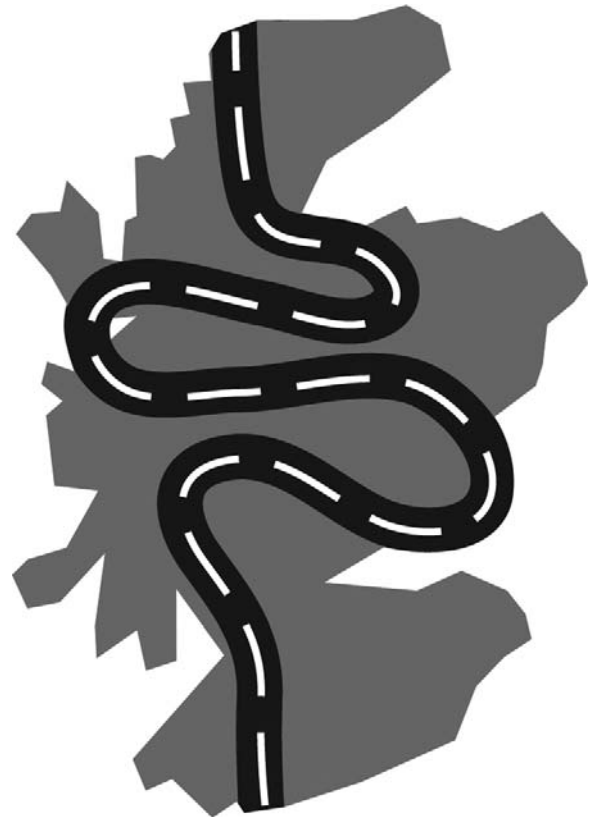


Ma'o's famous retort to the question on the importance of the French Revolution was "it's too early to tell". Liberalism has proved remarkably successful in its various forms, achieving hegemony in most countries (except France) through more or less democratic means. Political debates are largely held within the parameters of liberalism (social versus economic liberalism, freedom of speech versus freedom of religion etc) and the bourgeoisie and its allies are unquestionably dominant economically, politically and ideologically. In the face of the success of liberalism, socialism has not done well recently. Arguably, socialism has never emerged successfully from democratic means. The high points of socialism in the early and mid 20th century (revolutions in pre-industrial societies, post-war compromises with capital in the west) are no more. Socialism may have peaked too soon. The question now is how socialism will emerge through democratic processes from amongst the strengths, weaknesses and contradictions of liberalism.

Scotland didn't manage the transition from feudalism very well. Perhaps we are in a position to do liberalism to socialism better. *Is there a Scottish Road to Socialism?* attempts to encompass the breadth of views of socialism in Scotland, and for a small country there is a wide range. At one end are the classical Marxisms of Neil Davidson of the SWP (socialism can exist only on the other side of the proletarian revolution) and Communist Party of Britain's John Foster (working-class-led alliance to strike at the weak points of capitalism). At perhaps the other end are the green socialisms of Richard Leonard (Labour) (democratising the [British] economy); David Purdy (DLS) (democratise the constitution too) and Peter McColl (Green) (the green economy is socialism and more).

For many contributors, independence provides the means for building socialism. Eric Canning's (Communist Party of Scotland) nationalism interprets Britain as little more than English imperialism, Vince Mills argues that socialism will emerge through the destruction of Britain, and Joe Middleton (Scottish Socialist Republican Movement) that Britain is inherently conservative. Middleton agrees with John McAllion (SSP, ex Labour), that independence offers the possibility of achieving socialism through the elec-

The question ... is how socialism will emerge through democratic processes from amongst the strengths, weaknesses and contradictions of liberalism.



tion of an uncompromisingly socialist party, and Pam Currie (SSP, ex Scottish Militant Labour) presents the independent socialist Scotland as a kind of feminised Venezuela, using (unsustainable) oil revenues to tackle poverty and build influence (but without the cult of personality).

Robin McAlpine convincingly argues that socialism should be seen as a direction on the road rather than its end point, and Stuart Fairweather (DLS) for an alliance of across civil society and political parties. Fairweather and Purdy suggest a devolution deeper than our current settlement, but short of independence.

Capital and its economic power lies firth of Scotland. Independence could break that power, but would weaken the potential to take control of the capital. This would potentially stimulate the building of a new economy without big capital – but alternatively may bankrupt Scotland. As capital organises increas-

SKETCHES FROM A SMALL WORLD

ingly globally, what is the appropriate political level to control or democratise it? A strand of socialist thinking has identified both as the nation state – nationalise the means of production. This is problematised in various ways – to relocate the nation politically and economically (Scottish nationalisation) or to dislocate either the nation (multiple levels of devolution) or the economy (multiple forms of industrial democracy) or both.

Not surprisingly, my own views are closer to DLS members Fairweather and Purdy, and also Leonard and McColl on the more significant question of what socialism would look like. However I would want to interrogate some of these arguments and it would be valuable to hear debates amongst the contributors. For example, Canning asks ‘is there a British road to socialism?’ a question well put to Richard Leonard. Whilst Leonard’s description of socialism is close to my own aspirations, I see little optimism that the British Labour party will take this particular reformist road. Peter McColl’s green society may be like socialism, but there seems to be other green options on the



Is there a Scottish Road to Socialism?

Gregor Gall (ed.)
(Scottish Left Review Press)

menu which are not socialist. More disconcerting is the SSP/Solidarity split which, whilst occurring before the publication of the book is not reflected in any debates. And this is perhaps one of the tragedies of the socialist project, that the most damaging divisions are not about differences of strategy or vision, but personality and integrity.

A few other things are missing in the book. One is a serious discussion of religion. Socialist ideas and commitments have emerged from radical Christians and Muslims as well as secularists and embracing these ideas is an important contribution to delivering socialism, particularly at a time when many people (religious and secular) are drawn towards fundamentalism. And finally, the book suffers a little from another criticism often aimed at socialists, that of taking ourselves too seriously. It is a delight in those few places, notably Stuart Fairweather and Pam Currie, when irony breaks through.

■ *Eurig Scandrett is a Green activist and member of Democratic Left Scotland.*

December Dream

At what had been the Moscow Home
of a Decembrist conspirator
the arcane complexities of the Academy
are carefully collated
in Kropotkinskaya Street.

Negotiations are now complete
the documents to be signed
our colleagues arrange a special treat
for us, their Scottish guests.

Preserved intact within the house
the Decembrists’ hidden room
we hold our ceremony here where Democrats
conspired against the Czar.

The young man from the Ministry
in spite of our clowning at the secret door
remains dignified and solemn as befits
this place that led to martyrdom.

It is Nineteen-Eighty-Nine
the October-Dream is all but dead, withered
by the scourging winds of sacrifice.

But somehow ...
the December-Dream persists

in Kropotkinskaya Street.

Stan Bell (from *In Search of Stansylvania: Forty-Two Poems*, published by Schiltron)

MAY 2007: THE SCOTTISH ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY

Three hundred years after the Act of Union and eight years since the new Scottish Parliament was set up, **Doug Bain** examines issues of democracy and independence in the context of May's elections.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the 2007 Scottish elections will usher in a period of change. At the time of writing – five weeks before the vote – the indications are that the SNP could emerge as the largest party with the prospect of the next administration taking the form of an SNP-led coalition. The aim of this short article is to attempt an assessment of what new possibilities such a change might open up for extending and deepening democracy – not only in Scotland but also across the UK.

One important democratic advance is in fact already guaranteed in relation to local government where the introduction of the single transferable vote will effectively end decades of Labour Party domination of local government. It is likely that in future most authorities will be run by coalitions or minority administrations. The ending of what have effectively been Labour fiefdoms can only be a victory for democracy and should lead to a reinvigoration of local government. So we're

The introduction of the single transferable vote will effectively end decades of Labour Party domination of local government.

off to a good start. But the changes might be even more far reaching. A debate has already started on possible reforms of local government structures. The main battle lines have been very clearly outlined in a recent issue of the *Scottish Left Review*. On the one hand Gordon Morgan and Bob Thomson are arguing that our present 32 authorities should be cut by half in the interests of more effective strategic planning and cost cutting; Isobel Lindsay, on the other hand, notes that Scotland's 32 authorities compare with Norway's 454, Denmark's 289, Iceland's 237, France's 36,000 and so on: she argues that, in Scotland, local government is too remote for any real grass roots participation. I'm with Isobel. Strategic planning is a technical issue which can be resolved by sensible inter-authority co-operation; establishing genuine local control would begin to reverse the centralising, authoritarian trend which is at the heart of the New Labour project. The role and powers of local government

have been systematically eroded both in England and Scotland. At present only 15% of local government spending is controlled locally. The May elections could begin the process of reversing that trend.

SUPPORT FOR INDEPENDENCE

The May elections are taking place against a background of what appears to be rising support for independence. Opinion polls come up with wildly varying figures – largely depending on what question is asked. But my gut feeling is that we have reached a new stage in relation to self-government. There is a new maturity in the debate; a new confidence about our ability to govern ourselves arising from our experience of having our own parliament; a feeling that it is now only a question of time before we resume control of our own affairs. But that's not to argue that we are at a point where the independence option could be described as the "settled will" of the people. Indeed the fact that independence has become a cen-

tral issue in this election has been as much a consequence of the Labour Party's decision to focus its campaign on the dangers of independence. However it came about, the future of the Union has become a central issue in this election. One consequence of this has been a polarisation the parties and the debate: the "Westminster" parties have closed ranks in defence of the Union while the "Scottish" parties have united in support of independence.

But the point cannot be stressed too much – independence is not in fact on offer in this election. What is on offer from the SNP is a referendum within a period of four years and, even then, only if agreement can be reached with coalition partners – effectively the Lib Dems. It's on the issue of a referendum that voters have to decide, not independence. In the run-up to any such referendum there would be intense debate on all the possible options: leaving things as they are, adding more powers to the devolved parliament, some kind of federal solution as well as independence. What choices would be on the referendum voting paper could also be up for negotiation.

In these terms, the position of the Labour Party appears totally anomalous. On the one hand they are foregrounding the issue of independence and arguing that those who support independence are un- or, at least, under-informed about the possible consequences. Surely the best way to resolve such confusion is to allow a proper debate on the issue so that the people can become better informed in making a decision. Labour seems to be dangerously near to arguing that so confused and misled are the people that, if given a chance to vote in a referendum, they might misguidedly vote for independence and therefore it is duty of the Labour Party to protect the people from themselves. Labour knows best.

LABOUR NOT LISTENING

A vote for Labour will shut the door on any further debate and

The new role of the Labour Party is, in an alliance with the tabloid media and supported by powerful vested interests, to form, mould, manage and control what the people think and want.

rule out any changes whatsoever to the present devolution settlement. By any democratic standards, this is an unsustainable position. Labour are just not listening. The question must be "why?" They could have adopted a more relaxed response to the independence "threat". Yes, of course, we have always viewed devolution as a process; if we think it is in Scotland's interests to make changes to the devolution settlement then of course we will; in fact we were thinking of a couple of changes ourselves ...; we don't think a referendum is necessary at this stage but if one is forced on us, we will participate constructively; and if, God forbid, the people vote for independence, we will do everything possible to make that a success. They could have defused the whole issue and in the process left themselves with fall-back options. But instead they have raised the "No Surrender" banner.

Why? If left to their own devices, Scottish Labour would, I am convinced, have opted for something like the low-key option but they have come under severe pressure from Blair and, particularly, Brown whose position would be very seriously undermined by a Labour defeat north of the border. Independence would, of course, leave him high and dry. But there is a deeper democratic issue involved in the "not listening" stance of Labour. Central to the New Labour project has been the hollowing out of representative democracy. The old concept of a mass Labour Party – democratically controlled or at least powerfully influenced by democratic conference decisions, representing and championing the people, boldly taking on vested interests and privilege – has been all but buried. The new role of the Labour Party is, in an alliance with the tabloid media and supported by powerful vested interests, to form, mould, manage and control what the people think and want. British Labour Party conferences now bear an eerie resemblance to

North Korean Communist Party Congresses – mainly about which leader gets the longest standing ovation. Unswerving adherence to the first-past-the-post electoral system all but rules out the emergence of new political parties. The differences between the two main parties are now more a matter of style than substance. Irrespective of who wins the coming UK elections, we will inevitably be governed by a right-of-centre government which will pursue aggressive neo-liberal economic policies and which will continue with a pro-American, post-imperial, great power foreign policy. TINA rules. There Is No Alternative. The Labour Party, cut off from its grass roots, cocooned in the Westminster club, is gradually being absorbed into the apparatus of the British state.

It is difficult for me to see where any significant challenge to this plutocracy might come from in the foreseeable future – if not from Scotland. A defeat for Labour in this election would represent a very significant challenge to these anti-democratic developments – both in Scotland and at Westminster. Hence the ferocity of the onslaught on the SNP.

Which takes us on to the Blair years. What we are seeing in the run-up to the May elections is not just an increase in support for the SNP; there has also been a falling away of support for Labour. It is unlikely that this is primarily due to the domestic record of Scottish Labour which lists some very important reforms – access to the countryside, land buy-out rights, the smoking ban, free care for the elderly to name a few. In addition, one of the features of this election has been the absence of any fundamental disagreements between the parties on domestic policy. We can only conclude that the electorate are taking this opportunity to record their verdict on the New Labour project. Initially, the response to New Labour was positive. It is worth recalling the feelings of hope and

optimism which were generated by Labour's 1997 election victory. After the bruising, polarising experience of Thatcher's right wing onslaught, Blair offered the seductive prospect of a "third way" between Thatcherism and "old Labour". Robin Cook promised a new "ethical" foreign policy. Radical constitutional reform was heralded – included the re-convening of the first Scottish Parliament in 300 years – albeit as part of a continuing, but modified, Act of Union. The Labour administration at Westminster was matched by a Labour-dominated administration in Edinburgh. This was the very positive political background to the early years of our new Parliament and explains the relative stability of its relationship with Westminster.

"THIRD WAY" ABANDONED

How different things appear today. The concept of a "third way" has been abandoned altogether. Indeed the possibility of there even being a "second way" has now been ruled out. The future is neo-liberal. New Labour has emerged from all the spin in its true colours – the British Labour Party's version of Thatcherism. Our public services will be privatised; all aspects of society will be commodified; the "common good" will give way to individual choice; power will be increasingly centralised; the economy will be thrown open to the tender mercies of international capital; industry will take second place to finance capital; private equities will take over our publicly-listed companies. The "ethical foreign policy" never even touched first base as Britain allied itself with the US "neo-cons" in their crude and violent vision of a "new American century". The immediate consequence has been a war crime of appalling dimensions – the illegal war against Iraq, the resultant deaths of over 600,000 Iraqis and the destruction of their country. That there has been no foreign policy re-think following the Iraq tragedy has been brutally con-

Scotland has not bought into New Labour. It has not been seduced by TINA. It is looking for another way forward.

firmed by the overwhelming vote in the Commons for the replacement of Trident.

There is a growing feeling that Scotland is a spectator to these developments and powerless to influence the direction of British policy. Scotland has not bought into New Labour. It has not been seduced by TINA. It is looking for another way forward. The failure of the Labour administration to represent and speak up for Scottish views on a whole range of issues – most shamefully and memorably in terms of the near unanimous vote in support for the Iraqi war – has accentuated the feeling that the present structures are marginalising Scottish opinion. Even when a majority of Scottish MPs voted against the renewal of Trident, the majority at Westminster was not far short of three to one in favour.

This is not a temporary problem. The experience of the Scottish parliament has confirmed that there is a left-of-centre consensus north of the border confronting a right of centre consensus in England. There is no prospect of this changing in the foreseeable future. The political imperatives of this divide – in a sense camouflaged in the first two terms of the Scottish parliament – are now about to reassert themselves. At least a Labour Government at Westminster has been obliged to pay some attention to Scotland. A Cameron government could afford to totally ignore Scotland having long ago written it off as an electoral disaster.

And there is another deep and irreconcilable difference. Yes, Scotland was an enthusiastic participant in Britain's imperial project, but, unlike England, it was never defined by it. England is still in thrall to its imperial, great power legacy – that's why they want Trident and another two aircraft carriers. Scotland has failed to reach too many World Cup finals to see itself as anything other than a small nation playing a modest part in world affairs. In this regard, Scotland just doesn't

recognise itself as far as British foreign policy is concerned. An independent Scottish parliament would surely condemn the war against Iraq, apologise for the part it played in supporting that decision and pledge to do what it could to support reconstruction. It would surely renounce nuclear weapons and demand the closure of the Faslane base. It would break with the crudities of the war-against-terrorism strategy, acknowledge the grievances that underlie that anger and work to establish positive relationships with the Muslim world – and, in so doing, protect Scotland against terrorist attack far more effectively than tanks around Prestwick ever would. Our impact on British policy would be infinitely greater as an independent nation than what can ever be achieved by a handful of Scottish MPs toddling back and forth to London.

Scotland has always punched above its weight – and not just in relation to empire building. For the past half century it has been the power house of British social democracy. The Scottish people saw their interests being advanced by the British labour movement led by the British Labour Party. Indeed the left has traditionally been opposed to independence in the belief it would split the working class movement. But the social democratic chapter has ended, swept away by the neo-liberal onslaught of the past 25 years. We now must look to our salvation in a people united around its own independent parliament. Despite globalisation, the nation state remains a basic democratic unit; national realisation and expression remain powerful a powerful force across the world. We did the "realisation" bit centuries ago; now we need to sort out the "expression" bit. And there was another time we punched above our weight. Perhaps an independent Scotland will add a new chapter to the Scottish Enlightenment.

■ *Doug Bain is a member of Democratic Left Scotland.*

There's more to politics than parties



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People and politics

In Scotland, as in the rest of Britain, there is widespread disillusionment with politics. The mainstream parties have lost touch with ordinary people and issues are trivialised and distorted by the media.

We are continually told that "there is no alternative" to global capitalism. Yet this is doing untold damage to our environment, our communities and the quality of our lives, while millions of people remain poor and powerless because the market dominates our society and we do too little to protect and empower them.

Democratic Left Scotland is a non-party political organisation that works for progressive social change through activity in civil society – in community groups, social movements and single-issue campaigns – seeking at all times to promote discussion and alliances across the lines of party, position and identity.

Political parties remain important, but they need to reconnect with the citizens they claim to represent, reject the copycat politics that stifles genuine debate and recognise that no single group or standpoint holds all the answers to the problems facing our society.

We are trying to develop a new kind of politics, one that starts from popular activity – in workplaces, localities and voluntary associations – and builds bridges to the world of parties and government, on the one hand, and the world of ideas and culture, on the other.

What does Democratic Left add?

Our approach to politics is radical, feminist and green.

Radical because we are concerned with the underlying, structural causes of problems such as poverty, inequality, violence and pollution and aspire towards an inclusive, more equal society in which everyone is supported and encouraged to play a full part, within a more just and sustainable world.

Feminist because we seek to abolish the unequal division of wealth, work and power between men and women and to promote a better understanding of the intimate connections between personal life and politics.

Green because we believe that our present system of economic organisation is socially and environmentally destructive, and that a more balanced relationship between human activity and nature will be better for us, for our descendants and for the other animal species with whom we share the planet.

Who can join Democratic Left Scotland?

Membership is open to anyone who shares our general outlook and commitments. Whilst many of our members are involved in a range of political parties, others are not.

Democratic Left Scotland
na Deamocrataich Chli an Alba



WHAT KIND OF SCOTLAND?

Dreams of a more egalitarian society have historically been at the heart of the socialist vision, but actually getting there has been another story. **Stuart Fairweather** maps out the future direction of travel in Scotland.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF SCOTLAND

Without question there can be endless discussion on the detail of what constitutes socialism. Perhaps what is more urgent is contributing to the development of a consensus around working for a different kind of Scotland.

Providing a definition of the type of society we want to see suggests, to some extent, that socialism is an end stop, a final destination. Given that socialism is about the free development of each it would be limiting to over-prescribe it in detail. Yet we still need some narrative. We need to be able to describe the direction of travel and recognise some of the sign-posts to progress.

Accordingly any description of socialism can not be entirely disconnected from the process of getting there. We need to identify, describe and win the struggles that will assist in moving us forward. Opposition to oppression is not enough. We need a believable strategy for taking us from where we are now, to where we want to be. This strategy needs to be constantly redefined by the lessons we learn. Reforms and gains of a transformatory nature need to be won. They give us a clue to and assist us in attaining the type of society we want to see.

Added to this we need to go beyond class alone; political progress is about overcoming all social relations that alienate, oppress and exclude human beings and exploit the planet. This means radically transforming society through revolutionary change. This change needs to involve the active consent of the vast majority of our citizens. It is a process that starts now, drawing on our history of advance and failure. It is not reformist. It cannot be simply utopian. It needs to be about real lives and real people.

Entering into the debate about whether this can be achieved in Scotland alone runs the risk of isolating ourselves in academic abstraction. Interestingly however, capitalist globalisation with its voracious appetite for continual territorial and cultural expansion leaves spaces at the regional and “historic nation” level. Advantage must be taken of this opportunity for

Developing the notion of an identity that speaks to both the individual and collective aspirations of the peoples of Scotland is what the Left needs to do if it is to develop any historic relevance.

struggle. Merely tackling the parliamentary is not enough; challenging the ever-encroaching reach of the free market is paramount. This is something that needs to be addressed locally (Scotland) and globally. We can make advances towards a different kind of Scotland whilst developing our solidarity with others. What is central to this is how we run with the grain of a progressive and inclusive Scottish identity (or identities). This will provide momentum.

Developing this notion of an identity that speaks to both the individual and collective aspirations of the peoples of Scotland is what the Left needs to do if it is to develop any historic relevance. We need to go further than being defensive, or focused solely on sections of society. Our story needs to be believable, take in everyday experience and illustrate where all can contribute to achieving a different sort of society. To do this we need to consider the reality of our present situation and how we got to where we are now.

BEYOND THE SETTLED WILL – SCOTLAND TODAY

Scotland has its parliament. We the people voted yes, yes. Our long campaign for the Parliament was carried out through our civil society – social movements, campaign groups, trades unionists, academics, the women’s movement, media and cultural figures, religious organisations, political parties and activists all played their part. The contradiction between the popular consensus in Scotland – opposition to Thatcherism – and successive Tory election victories at Westminster provided the conditions for the campaign to advance. Leadership of that campaign was still required and the role of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and socialists within it should not be ignored.

The resultant attainment of a parliament elected by proportional representation returning a centre-left executive, Nationalist opposition, and small Tory group was a significant achievement. In particular the second term electoral victories of independents, Scottish Green and Socialist Parties created a new and interesting dynamic. Connections to the civil society

WHAT KIND OF SCOTLAND?

that delivered our parliament opened up, but this was not a simple process. The Parliament's MSPs were drawn away from the constituencies (political and geographic) that support them.

With the benefit of hindsight, the campaign to establish the parliament can be seen as the high-point of a radical democratic current within social democratic politics.

Simultaneous with the winning of the parliament was the consolidation of New Labour's abandonment of that social democracy. Blairism's embrace of the neo-liberal version of globalisation marks the limits of the present devolution settlement – Scotland can choose any road as long as it continues the Thatcherite economic legacy: Private-Finance-Initiative-built projects and enforced housing stock transfer being only two examples of this approach. The detail of the Executive's first two legislative policy programmes can be explored for detail of progressive advance. Welcome laws have been passed. However, we still live in a Scotland that is deeply divided, where many are ill, alienated and excluded. The language of social justice has been used, indeed it has given space to some ministers, but inequality has not been fundamentally tackled. Donald Dewar, Henry McLeish and Jack McConnell did not, and do not, have a vision for Scotland's future that politically engages with the ways that people survive in today's world. McConnell has no plan to inspire, only manage. For Scottish Labour our parliament with its limited powers is seen as the embodiment of "the settled will" of the Scottish people. This resonates strongly with a wide constituency in Scotland but it is not hegemonic. By definition it does not say much about the future.

The challenge for the left is to tell a different story. One that includes the vast majority of the population and connects with alliances for change. Alliances including social movements for equality and justice, the labour and trade union movement, progressive single issue campaigns, community organisations, individuals and politicians at all levels who openly challenge the present economic and ideological orthodoxy. These alliances are not merely about electoral coalitions, although this is likely to be a tactic employed at some juncture. There is a need to construct a series progressive alliances in and across Scotland's workplaces, communities, universities and cultural spaces: territory where we need to ask questions and help make sense of the contradictory world we live in today, recognising difference but moving away from a vision of Scotland where social services are privatised, our youth and minority ethnic communities are demonised, and excluded communities expected to feel grateful for being pulled into a society that creates the social divisions people face.

Those from a Marxist tradition have a responsibility to assess things as they are, not as we would like them to be. The above call for the development of alliances in civil society goes beyond the traditional

Our strategy should not be seen as an "alternative"; it needs to be seen as the new common sense.

approach of describing an alternative economic strategy, then leaving it to the "most developed" sections of the labour movement to pressurise and persuading the "most developed" sections of the Labour government (or in our case coalition) to implement it. The question of whether we have the "muscle" to do this is up for debate, as is the desirability of a strategy that relies on sections of society that increasingly no longer exist. In the old language we need to be alive to the ever-changing class composition of Scotland, taking into account the fact that many define reality through their experience and understanding of other aspects of identity.

Winning the new parliament initially raised expectations about connecting with the real concerns of people, yet there is a growing disconnection with politics. Low voting levels are only one sign of this. For that reason our alliances need to reach into, and learn from, the action that people are taking at present: against war, against super-market or tetra-mast sitings, against attacks on pensions and working conditions, for better social and local government services, for the accepted celebration of diversity and for localised health provision. The action of people in solidarity against poverty, global or local, should not be dismissed. The actions of summer 2005 need to be built on. These alliances, going beyond the limitations of the established party forms, can assist in drawing ideas and people together. Uniting these constituencies around a popular vision of a different kind of Scotland can challenge the sterile and at best grudging and ineffectual "social justice with market efficiency" approach of the McConnell-led coalition. Our strategy should not be seen as an "alternative"; it needs to be seen as the new common sense. It has to permeate every facet of our society. In this way we can overtake the redundant thinking of New Labour in Scotland.

Added to this we need to support, develop and learn from communities that are resisting the impact of neo-liberal economics and consumer-driven culture here and abroad. Workplaces remain key battle grounds but we also need to have an impact on our media, educational establishments and all places where we collectively engage in what it is to be human. If we want to see a radically different type of Scotland we need to respond to the actual Scotland we see around us every day. We need to support people to become political actors in their daily lives. At present people are increasingly disengaged, disenchanted, and thoroughly pissed-off with politics and society because life simply happens to them and they have little control over it. We are constrained from being fully rounded and happy human beings. The dangers of the endless inculcation of our people into a nihilistic petty-bourgeois-mindedness needs to vigorously and constantly challenged. Political self-confidence comes from effectively challenging those with power. It does not come from a lifestyle funded by consumer debt and exploiting people in the global south. People's material needs

require to be addressed but not at the expense of the social, cultural, or spiritual. The planet and future generations should not be left to pay the price. This is not to moralise or dictate what is good or bad. Here the Left needs to be very careful. We must however share an understanding of the limitations and futility of lifestyles driven solely by production and consumption. The experience of those in work and without paid work is very different. The situation that faces Scotland and developing nations is not the same. All of us however are exposed to the contradictions and inequality of twenty first century capitalism.

SITES OF STRUGGLE – CIVIL SOCIETY AND PARLIAMENT

A profound change in political, cultural, and moral leadership is required if the full potential of Scotland's people is to be recognised. Labour appears no longer interested in this story, although some members remember tales of social democracy.

The Scottish National Party remain disengaged from many parts of Scotland. At present they can raise passions but deliver little nationwide. Their flirtation with centre-right economics is not helping. A spell in government at Scottish level may assist in developing their politics. It is difficult to see the Liberals moving beyond being electoral ballast, despite their regional importance. The Scottish Socialist Party and the Greens have differently survived their parliamentary baptisms. Both have things to say outwith Holyrood that are central to any advance.

The above does not diminish the role of the SNP but highlight the problems it faces with post-devolution politics. For some sections of the party, commitment to "independence" remains what "insurrectionary revolution" used to be – and still is – for many socialists: a self-indulgent political posture that evades the real problems of the present by projecting an enticing vague image of the future. At the same time, whilst paying lip-service to the ideal of "independence", the more pragmatic and pro-business sections of the party seek to compete with the Labour/Liberal Democratic coalition on the narrow centre-ground of politics. No democrat should lightly oppose self-determination but the SNP never clearly articulate how independence would assist in challenging the interests of capital.

A more productive approach could be to press for greater fiscal autonomy, not because this would somehow transform the performance of the Scottish economy in the short run but because no nation can be truly self-governing unless it takes responsibility for raising taxes as well as deciding how tax revenues should be spent. Eventually, fiscal autonomy would help to foster negotiation and partnership between the Scottish Executive and the various organised interest groups in civil society. This focus on developing the relationship between campaign outside the Parliament and legislation within it is not socialism, but is a move forward from where we are now.

Moving our politics forward requires us to reconnect with and re-prioritise the politics of the trade union movement.

Given that New Labour has largely abandoned the social democratic, it falls to the democratic left, inside and outside political parties, to build an alliance around this idea. This is not to retreat into a refound nostalgia for the post-war consensus. Rather it is to recognise that the infrastructure of social democracy needs to be overtaken to engender the radical democratic transformation of our society. Fortunately there is more to politics than parties. Trade unions, communities of resistance and the political role of the young need to be considered alongside other dynamics.

As stated, central to winning the Scottish Parliament was the role of the trades unions, primarily through the vehicle of the STUC. Moving our politics forward requires us to reconnect with and re-prioritise the politics of the trade union movement. The role of the Left must be to build on the experience that has been gained in disputes and move the thinking of those involved from the defensive to the offensive and overtly progressive. The fact that we have a Scottish Executive but most public-sector-led action is aimed at Westminster ministries provides an opportunity to highlight a vivid contradiction. Would full fiscal autonomy provide the unions with a different kind of settlement in Scotland? Can an argument for a different approach to disputes be won in the unions – a shorter working week, earlier retirement, and more control over the workplace/production. At present this seems a long way off. This could be the basis however for campaigns that are very popular and begin to change the nature of trade union action, moving disputes from their present, understandably sectional, nature, to promoting solidarity with wider society. Adequately funding Trades Union Councils, supporting the development of shop stewards, women's, black and young workers' organisations are central to this, as is building connections to community campaigns for the defence and development of services.

This might sound ambitious. The detail and tactics require debating. It is essential to build new links across the movement and between the trade unions and other sectors of society. In Scotland with the context of coalition politics there is the potential for new alignments. These of course require to be worked for.

Within our organisations and alliances tackling inequality must remain constant. Our solidarity cannot be partial. When we paint the picture of a new Scotland (indeed new world) all must be artists. People's relationships to work, to place, to culture and identity are not discreet: they overlap. This too needs to be understood.

Due to the absence of a broad agreement that sets out what we are trying to achieve in the short and medium term we will require to make the best of the new electoral arithmetic. But campaigns cannot be the sole preserve of one, or a number of parties. Actions on prescription charges, identity cards, free school meals and a replacement for the council tax have been welcome developments but they have not been articu-

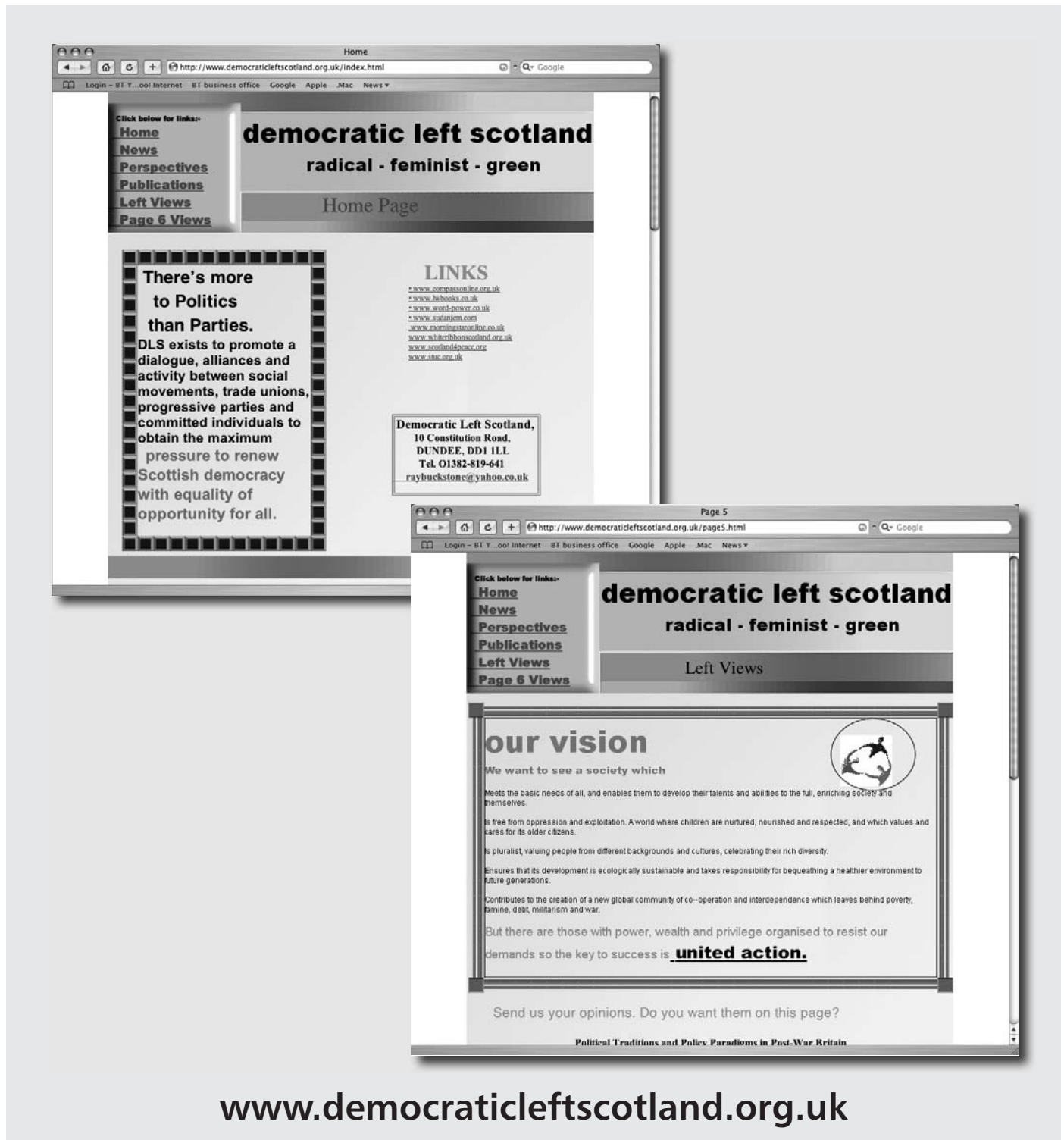
WHAT KIND OF SCOTLAND?

lated ably enough as contributions to making another Scotland possible.

Looking again at the responses of people to the Make Poverty History and Gleneagles it is possible to sense the opportunity for realigning the forces of civil society and the state. Thousands of young people, alongside seasoned campaigners, took action, debated, listened and learned. The issue now is to illustrate where people, parties and organisations stand: for or against putting people before profit; for or against a democracy where people can fully participate; for or

against violence and war. This is the test we should apply when building alliances for Scotland's future. We need to isolate those that would hold us back and celebrate the gains that contribute to a fairer, greener, happier Scotland: a Scotland that acts in solidarity with others throughout the world.

■ *Stuart Fairweather is convener of Democratic Left Scotland. This article is an edited version of his contribution to Is there a Scottish Road to Socialism, reviewed on page 3 by Eurig Scandrett.*



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A CULTURAL CONFIDENCE TRICK

The Scottish Executive's culture bill seems to view artists, the arts and culture as tools for social or economic management, argues **Chris Kelly**.

As we enter the final push in the race for Holyrood, we know points will be scored on Westminster issues such as Trident or Iraq and the fouls of negative campaigning will be common place. We can also be confident that the future of Scottish culture and in particular the Executive's culture bill will not feature highly in the commentary. For most politicians the arts are not really a first choice topic and are not expected to muster votes like employment, education, the environment or health. Yet the current first minister had in the recent past publicly heralded the arrival of a new enlightenment that he believed would give Scotland the edge.

In Jack McConnell's St Andrew's Day speech of 2003, a man with a mission stepped forward and stated "I want to describe a vision and an ideal for arts and culture; to make the connection between the kind of Scotland we want and the development of the confidence, the identity and the spirit of our people ...

"... I believe we can now make the development of our creative drive, our imagination, the next major enterprise for our society. Arts for all can be a reality, a democratic right, and an achievement of the early 21st Century ...

"... To entrench cultural development ... because for our country's future it can be neither peripheral nor an add on."

This call for arts and culture, our creative drive and imagination, to be the next major enter-

prise for our society and by all departments of our government was certainly bold. Many of us in the arts were surprised, nay even impressed, to hear a senior politician put our expertise and value at the centre of policy thinking.

DIVERSE SKILLS

The old fashioned myth of the arts as an elitist middle class indulgence has long been exploded. The artists behind the arts that are central to our culture are diverse in their skills and their contributions. Writers, musicians, visual and applied artists, actors and performers are all to be found engaged in every aspect of our society. As well as constantly advancing the traditional forms, artists are active and innovative in urban regeneration and health-care, in environmental initiatives and community development strategies – to cite but a few examples. Artists by their very nature are investigators whose enquiries bring new perspectives and leadership in unexpected places.

With the appointment of James Boyle's cultural commission, even the prospect of the subsequent consultation seemed worthwhile in pursuit of greater recognition of contemporary cultural practice. That such extensive and expensive recommendations have been largely dismissed and Jack's vision so utterly diminished by the reality of the executive's culture bill does not, however, come as such a surprise. Neither does the executive's new found enthusiasm for working with the local authorities as

The old fashioned myth of the arts as an elitist middle class indulgence has long been exploded.

their principal cultural partner, given the fall-out of the commission's report.

But this is not just another lesson in the corruption of ideas (and it was a good idea) through political expediency. Whether we realised it or not at the time, this call on culture began a process that now sheds fresh light on how little the modern political machine understands or cares about politically independent sectors. It has also put a new political focus on the arts.

There are many opinions and views about the bill within the cultural sector, from utter disinterest or dismissal to qualified support. But even amongst the latter all are adjoined with the caveat that it should have been better. Some senior arts administrators, along with Patricia Ferguson (the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport), argue that the bill is a framework and through the consultation period until March 31st, the guidance can be rewritten with improvements made and that this would be better than no bill at all. As is the way with contemporary government consultation, it appears that although no bill has yet been passed and all is supposedly up for debate, many decisions have already been taken and the wheels of the machine are already in motion. It is argued that there are important legislative needs that the bill will meet. While there are a few legal and moral questions that the bill does address, not least changes to the law in relation to

A CULTURAL CONFIDENCE TRICK

“tainted” cultural objects, the three principal initiatives of the bill are entirely political constructs and are very revealing about the future intentions of the executive’s relationship with cultural activity.

So what are the three principal initiatives of the bill?

- 1) Ministerial power to direct.
- 2) The realignment of the state’s view of priority cultural activity through the establishment of a new national cultural development body, Creative Scotland, to replace the existing Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen.
- 3) A new opportunity for the expression of executive authority without responsibility by establishing localised Cultural Entitlements.

The relationship between the political establishment and the arts has long been one of a healthy mutual suspicion. Each recognises the importance of the other but seldom have each felt they could trust the other enough to share the same bed. Political structures are quite rightly wary of being too closely identified with individualism and the sometimes controversial art headlines that can delight the mainstream media. Equally, independence of voice and independence from political interference has been a fiercely guarded tenet of the cultural sector.

DIRECT FUNDING

The executive through this bill plans to set such trivial concerns aside and is taking charge of direct funding for the national cultural institutions. It has also decided to write in powers of ministerial direction for Creative Scotland, the new cultural flagship, although we are assured that they would never consider using them to effect “artistic judgements”. Ministerial direction however, on budget, management and alignment to social or economic priorities is not disavowed and many believe that with this power to hand they could afford to overlook the occasional funding of inappropriate artistic statements.

But to what end, this seizing of the reins? Better management perhaps or improved public access? Apparently not! The Minister has herself said the policy of the administration would be to “stand well back” and that powers would be held in reserve only because ministers must be accountable. Perhaps this is the case, but if we look at the Creative Scotland part of the bill there is more than a hint of a different agenda emerging.

The abolition of the Scottish Arts Council requires a legislative bill as it was originally established under royal charter. Scottish Screen was established to separate the film media from the arts as it was felt that this highly commercial medium needed to be directed in a way that the royal chartered organisation could not deliver.

So what is the thinking behind the setting up of Creative Scotland? Is this about the establishment of a new dynamic all embracing cultural institution for a devolved Scotland in the 21st century? Does this major structural reorganisation, with all its disruption and attendant costs, also lay out a new vision of a vibrant cultural Scotland?

No it doesn’t. It is rather that a new structure is required to deliver a new type of cultural strategy. This new strategy however is inferred rather than stated and only becomes evident in the guidance to the bill, rather than in the bill itself.

This is a culture bill that chooses not to recognise the artist, the writer, the actor or the musician. It is not concerned with music or art or literature, or with the thrill of creative practice or the delight of the audience. In detailing the role of Creative Scotland, the bill’s guidance redefines culture in terms of creative industries and their economic contribution, of inclusive audience development practice and evaluation processes and of developing the contribution of the private sector. It speaks of key sector stakeholders in relation to standards of provision and quality

This brief for the nation’s new cultural development agency is fundamentally flawed because it has little or no place for the creative practitioner at the source of all the executive seeks to administer and steer.

assurance arrangements and of advising on best business practice for arts bodies.

Of course, this is the language of the modern world and culture in general and the arts in particular cannot expect to be exempt from its application. Yet, of the dozen points of guidance defining the “key activities” for Creative Scotland, only two lines can even be vaguely construed to relate to the individual creative practitioner; one is that the new agency continues to act as a lottery fund distributor (non executive monies) and the other is to “recognise talent across Scotland.”

Not the most heartfelt acknowledgment for all the makers, creators and producers throughout the length and breadth of Scotland.

One of the most significant “key activities” in the guidance states that Creative Scotland should “Provide advice and evidence of the role and value of the arts in a host of wider policy settings, such as regeneration, health and justice.”

POSITIVE ROLE TO PLAY

That we have arrived at a point in time where the power of the arts to contribute to these areas is recognised is no bad thing, but that is not down to cultural administrators or politicians. It has come from one or more generations of artists who believed they had a positive role to play in engaging with the excluded and the disenfranchised, long before any policy or initiative was defined. It has been the work of these innovators that has cleared new cultural pathways and established the added value that cultural engagement can produce. It is somewhat ironic that artists in turn are to be relegated from the bill while the socio/political agenda is raised.

This brief for the nation’s new cultural development agency is fundamentally flawed because it has little or no place for the creative practitioner at the source of all the executive seeks to administer and steer. It is almost entirely

focused on directive management practices with particular focus on commercial or socio/political outcomes. This bill chooses to forget that no matter how many cultural enterprises and arts agencies abound, without regard and respect to those individuals who establish new ways of working and create new work, who provide the cultural research, there will be no cultural development.

This brings us to the third initiative of the bill. The executive seeks to use this bill to reach out to the people of Scotland and reassure them that culture is for the many and not the few. Jack McConnell's idea of cultural rights as developed by the Cultural Commission has been adapted as the headline item for the bill but diluted to become cultural entitlements with the local authorities to be the guarantors of delivery. Or are they?

The guidance for this part of the bill emphasises the executive's view that the responsibility for delivery of non-national or pan-national cultural activity will largely lie with the local Authorities. It will however be up to each area to define and develop its own set of local entitlements. The guidance states: "The decision about what to include in a statement of entitlements ... is ultimately a matter for the local authority."

And although local authorities are in principle answerable to the executive it appears that the only mandatory public action required will be that: "A local authority are from time to time to publish information as to the cultural services which the authority propose to provide."

And again the process has begun before the consultation is complete. The executive has funded some 20+ "pathfinder" projects to trailblaze the mapping of our entitlements. All across Scotland a single year of funding is to lay the foundations for a proposal so uncertain and vague that it's likely that no two localities will envisage the same structure. Entitlement by post code lottery is clearly a possi-

ble outcome. That is not to say that some valuable work may not come out of the pathfinder exercise and of course if there are development monies available the local authorities should try to make the most of it. But to try to establish a new national system of entitlements that addresses all members of our society with one year's funding is clearly not viable. Like much of the rest of the bill this initiative lacks clarity in both its purpose and its proposed methodology. Nor does it come with any commitment to further funding. When repeatedly questioned about this at an executive consultation event the minister and her staff would not offer any further assurances.

COMMITMENT NOT RESOURCED

To propose a national culture bill and within that make your principal public action the establishment of cultural entitlements appears, in sound-bite coverage, to be a significant commitment to the benefit of the nation as a whole. But when that commitment is not resourced, when its delivery is dependent on the existing means and abilities of local authorities and when no national standard or consistent measure is to be applied, except in the way it is reported back to the executive, then it is not a genuine proposal but a cultural confidence trick.

This executive wants to wield the authority of legislation and to proclaim to the citizens that they can now expect their cultural due. It does not however want the responsibility of definition or delivery and so passes that down the line to the local authorities.

Local authorities however are currently expanding the same prerogative in the distribution of their responsibilities. Housing is increasingly delivered by the independent housing association sector. Community services are delivered through European or short-term project funding. Our new schools are owned by Private Finance Initiatives. Many of our sport and recreation facilities and

These specialists cannot hope to compete on an equal footing with any new state-sponsored agencies for the limited resources this sector offers, and so the cutting edge of our cultural development may be further threatened and marginalised.

services have been separated out into charitable trust companies. Recent initiatives and decisions across Scotland indicate that the cultural sector is to be the latest franchise opportunity.

There are powerful economic magnets at play here where local authorities see the ability of independent trusts to attract tax relief and draw in other funding streams that they cannot. What they fail to see, however, is that the introduction of new local authority sponsored trusts to take advantage of these opportunities will in turn strangle the independent sector that currently exists. It is this current independent sector that is largely responsible for supporting new risk-taking development work, artist-led initiatives, new theatre and dance groups and the innovations in non-traditional areas. These specialists cannot hope to compete on an equal footing with any new state-sponsored agencies for the limited resources this sector offers, and so the cutting edge of our cultural development may be further threatened and marginalised.

POLICY RHETORIC

It seems the example from Westminster through Holyrood to local authority level is increasingly about the appearance of government through the management of policy rhetoric and very little to do with the delivery of services or support.

There is a widely promoted myth that artists are mavericks or selfish dissenters, incapable of collective decision-making or communal action. In reality artists have always been one of the most advanced informal networking communities, coming together in common cause because they are genuinely interested in each other's work and because there is such limited support from elsewhere within the statutory system. The continuing strength of the actors' union Equity, the Musicians Union and the relatively recent emergence of the Scottish Artists Union (the first new trade

A CULTURAL CON TRICK

union of the 21st century) also shows that artists can and do work within formalised structures where appropriate.

There is now a clear view of opposition to this proposed legislation emerging from that wide range of creative practitioners who value their independence of thought and action and who were once valued by others for those very same things. The executive, through this poorly considered and deeply flawed bill, have brought modern politics directly into our working lives and naively believe that their usual courtesy consultations will be sufficient to avoid criticism. If they manage to win the race for Holyrood and are foolish enough to proceed with this bill, we all must recognise that it will do little or nothing to develop the culture of the nation. Neither will it "... make the development of our creative drive, our imagination, the next major enterprise for our society."

This bill should be embracing the vision expressed by the first minister in 2003 not squandering it. At its core it should be encouraging us all to value and develop our own individual creativity and the creativity of those around us. It should be putting in place resources, investment and support that will allow imaginations to flourish and Scotland's artists to take the risks that make our culture so exciting. Artists, the arts and culture are not tools for social or economic management and if they are treated as such they will resist.

Beyond the cultural context this bill further confirms the tendency of our political leaders to wish to be seen to be doing one thing, while actually concealing another. At its worst it may also be seen to be centralising political authority while blurring the lines of responsibility and encouraging the erosion of democratic accountability.

■ *Chris Kelly is an artist and a member of the national executive of the Scottish Artists Union*

SCOTLAND

The prospect of a Scottish Parliament hostile to Trident creates a different dimension for the peace movement. **Isobel Lindsay** looks at how the campaign against Trident might develop after May's elections.

Close co-operation across civic and political Scotland has been one of the memorable aspects of the anti-Trident campaign and if the Labour-Tory leadership thought that the March 14th vote would resolve this issue, they seriously miscalculated. This attempt to cement Britain's big power status through militarism – a continuous theme in recent decades – will be constantly challenged. Just as Scotland is in the front line in the physical presence of this weapons system, so Scotland will play a critical role in the strategies for opposition.

This is certainly not a "little Scotland" approach. The peace movement works closely with others in the rest of the UK and overseas. They recognise the importance of using the Scottish dimension to challenge nuclear strategy.

BRITISH EXCEPTIONALISM

The Trident renewal decision puts two fingers up to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and is another assertion of British exceptionalism. We are too important to be tied by what we signed up to while at the same time insisting that others comply with treaty obligations. Maintaining the profitability of BAE Systems and Lockheed Martin is, of course, another of the key reasons for making this decision and for making it early.

But we are in a different political context than we were in the 1960s and the 1980s when other critical nuclear initiatives were taken. The prospect of a Scottish Parliament hostile to Trident and,

a little further down the line, the possibility of Scottish independence, creates a different dimension for the peace movement. We have a stronger hand to play now than in the past.

A VERY BIG BALL

No Faslane base means no Trident. The Coulport/Faslane complex was adapted for Trident in the 1980s at enormous expense and over several years. There is no base in England that could be adapted without massive expenditure on top of the billions for the new weapons system. In addition we could expect considerable local opposition from any site in England that was selected. So that leaves a very big ball in Scotland's court. The fact that a clear majority of Scottish MPs voted against Trident renewal strengthens the moral authority of the peace movement's Scottish dimension.

If we can return a Scottish Parliament with a majority committed to active opposition to Trident, there are a range of possible initiatives that can sustain and even broaden the campaign. But the key is active opposition. A majority of current MSPs have voted against Trident renewal but not at the same time. Even those Labour MSPs who rebelled against the party whip on this have done so in a very calculated way to ensure that while their opposition was on the record, they only used their votes on a motion that had no chance of winning. So on the last occasion that this was debated, they voted ironically for the SNP motion that was not going to win and did not vote for the Liberal

AND TRIDENT

Democrat amendment that had a good chance of winning. Cynical? – I'm afraid so.

What are the possible initiatives that could undermine Westminster's nuclear policies? Michael Matheson, the SNP MSP, has already outlined a "prevention of crime" bill based on the fact that because of the separate legal system, it was Holyrood which had to pass legislation on the jurisdiction in relation to Scotland of the International Criminal Court. That, of course, outlaws involvement with mass civilian murder. Chris Ballance, the Green MSP, has proposed introducing legislation preventing the transportation of nuclear weapons on environmental grounds. With some ingenuity, there may be other Holyrood powers that can be used to inhibit military nuclear activities.

Just as Scotland is in the front line in the physical presence of this weapons system, so Scotland will play a critical role in the strategies for opposition.

ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT

Another possible initiative by the Scottish Executive could be the preparation of alternative employment proposals for those in Trident-related work. A newly published study by Scottish CND and the STUC showed that there were only 1,400 civilian jobs involved and over 400 of these were MOD police and security, employment easily deployed elsewhere. In fact, this study had overestimated the employment. The Ministry of Defence has had to admit in response to a parliamentary question that the number of direct civilian jobs in Scotland is 859 and indirect 250. In the rest of the UK there are around 14,000 civilian jobs dependent on Trident. Some contrast.

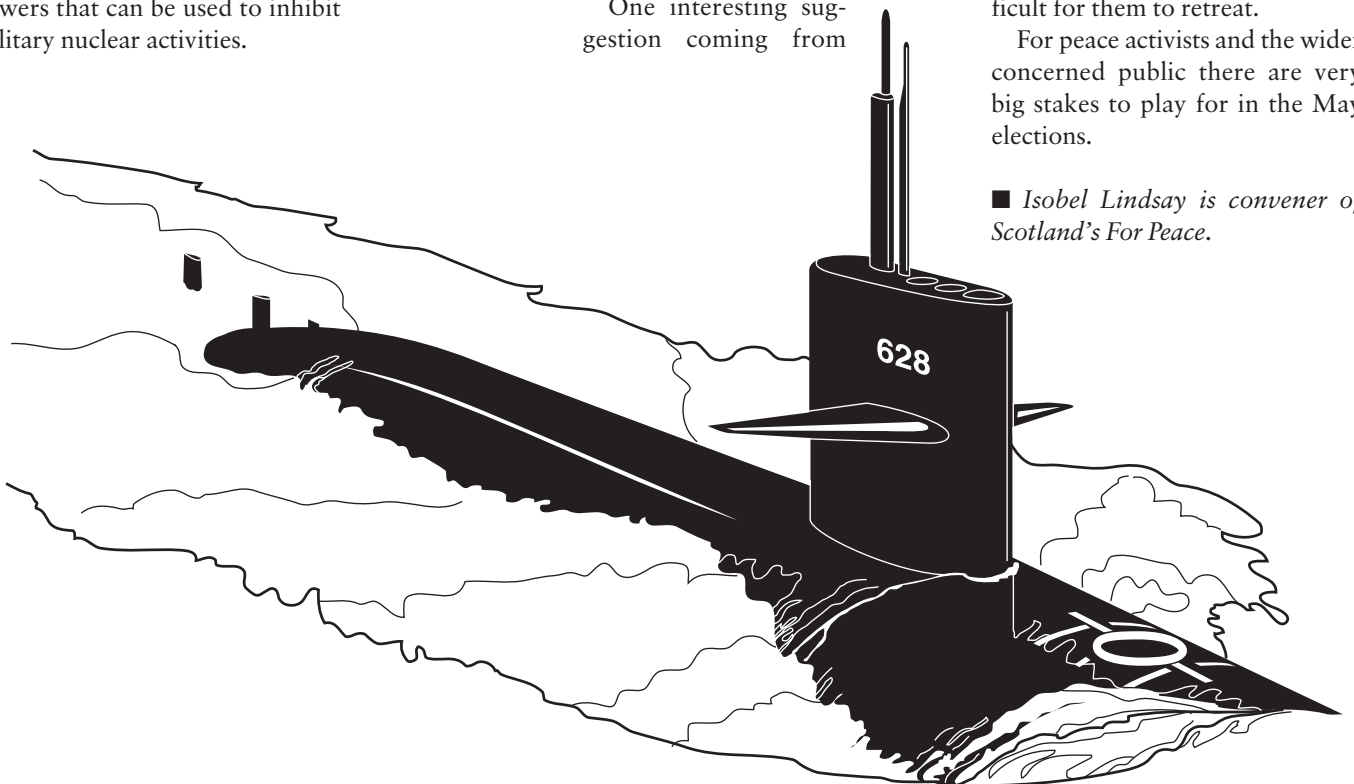
One interesting suggestion coming from

Bruce Kent of CND and given support by Alex Salmond was that Scotland could initiate an international conference on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Apart from what Holyrood could do with its existing powers, the very prospect of independence would make the Westminster decision to start spending billions on a weapons system that might have nowhere to go, blatantly absurd. At one stage it might have been plausible to assume that Scotland's role in the UK nuclear weapons strategy would be on the horse-trading agenda if independence was on the horizon. However the pro-independence parties have made this a major issue and one in which they say their position is non-negotiable so it would be difficult for them to retreat.

For peace activists and the wider concerned public there are very big stakes to play for in the May elections.

■ *Isobel Lindsay is convener of Scotland's For Peace.*



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

A high standard of living doesn't necessarily correlate to a good quality of life. We need to recognise that wellbeing based on an ever-increasing rate of economic growth is unsustainable, argues **Rosemary Burnett.**

Quality of life is a phrase we hear all too often, and we have come to define it as having enough money to buy a nice house in a good area, enough money to go on holiday two or three times a year and buy the latest gadgets or fashions.

Yet, whenever I have travelled to so called "developing countries", I have noticed that generally the people seem happier and more content than we do in Scotland. Perhaps this is just a perception and I am being taken in by smiling faces and a warm welcome. They certainly don't have money, nice homes, holidays or even what we would regard as the basic necessities.

Organisations like the New Economics Foundation have for some time been working on indicators which measure not only the wealth of a nation, as in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) indicator with which we are familiar, but on the general levels of satisfaction or contentment of the population. In this view, individual wellbeing is a function of the extent to which both psychological and physical needs are satisfied.

In a recent UNICEF report on children's wellbeing in 21 industrialised countries, the UK came third from bottom. The measures used

Issues of social justice such as child labour, starvation wages and enslavement are an essential ingredient of a global market economy driven by a "need" for increasing quantities of cheaper goods.

were based on material wellbeing, health and safety, education, peer and family relationships, behaviours and risks, and young people's own subjective sense of their own wellbeing.

UNSUSTAINABLE GROWTH

It is clear from the Stern report, among many others, that wellbeing based on an ever-increasing rate of economic growth is unsustainable. This way of life determines a disproportionate consumption of materials, water and energy, unsustainable mobility patterns, huge quantities of contaminating emissions and serious distortions to our rivers and seas. The results are clear: loss of diversity, greater vulnerability to climate extremes such as droughts or floods, desertification, migration and an increase in global poverty. In short, they result in serious environmental, social, economic, industrial and cultural problems which impact the health and life of millions.

Issues of social justice such as child labour, starvation wages and enslavement are an essential ingredient of a global market economy driven by a "need" for increasing quantities of cheaper goods. Environmental justice suffers no less: from pollution caused by a greater use of fossil fuels in emerg-

ing economies such as India and China, the despoliation of ancient forests to grow food, and the construction of dams to provide electricity for yet more factories.

Closer to home, it is evident that the growing levels of mental illness are linked to our lifestyle. Stress related illnesses are at record levels, yet work for most people in the West requires little physical or even mental effort. Much is made of communities, yet how many of us know our neighbours or feel able to speak to a child who is dropping litter on the street? People in work have no time for leisure, friendships or fun, people without work don't have the money. Our old people are tidied out of the way in soulless care homes, our children are looked after in nurseries or by nannies from overseas. "Community" for many is a virtual community of email and chat rooms, and relationships forged through the pages of lonely hearts columns or dating websites.

Both environmental and social justice would be well served by a society in which there was greater equality between groups that are currently considered rich and poor. Directors of financial institutions get bonuses running into millions, whilst others strug-



SOCIAL JUSTICE?

gle to get by on social security benefit which is neither social nor secure. Social mobility has declined markedly since the heyday of the 1960s when I and my friends were the first generation of their family to go to university. Who would risk running up a £20,000 student loan when there is no guarantee of a job at the end of four years of study?

CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

We need communities where housing, shops, parks, schools and hospitals are all within half an hour of each other and work is within walking distance. We don't need more roads – more traffic jams, more pollution, and more conspicuous consumption. We do need better public transport which will take the strain out of travelling and do so cheaply, efficiently and effectively. Clearly, people who live in poverty in Scotland live in environments where the streets are littered, shops are boarded up and drugs and alcohol have become the only escape from a future which looks far from bright.

Where power and wealth are the driving forces behind the way in which we live, then at a global level wealthy industrialised nations are going to ride roughshod over their poorer neighbours. Six

Local dairy farmers are going out of business fast and we end up with imported milk transported using yet more fossil fuels and emitting yet more greenhouse gases.

Central American governments have been persuaded by the USA and Canada to sign up to free trade agreements which give all the options to develop mineral resources to their northerly neighbours. The companies have moved in to develop nickel, silver and gold mines. These developments take place in spite of the objections of local communities, whose leaders have been shot at, imprisoned or threatened. Meanwhile, the Guatemalan government has allowed all the detritus from the mines to pollute lakes and rivers.

At a local level, multinational corporations and supermarkets exert undue pressure on producers and suppliers of goods to ensure that cost remains low. Milk producers in Scotland have been forced by the supermarkets to provide them with milk at less than it costs them to produce. Local dairy farmers are going out of business fast and we end up with imported milk transported using yet more fossil fuels and emitting yet more greenhouse gases.

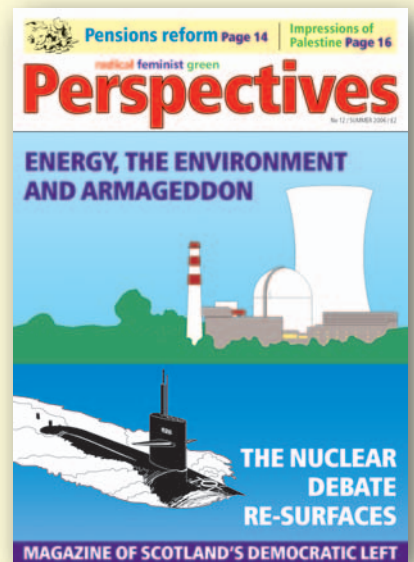
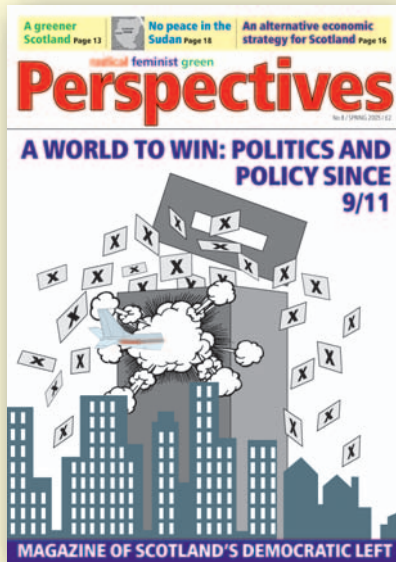
What can be done to ensure that environmental and social justice go hand in hand in Scotland and internationally? The Scottish Parliament must commit to binding annual targets to reduce green-

house gas emissions, and put pressure on the European Union to ensure that such targets are adopted throughout Europe. Airport expansion must be scrapped, as should the Aberdeen by-pass and the Glasgow M74 extension. The executive must prioritise the creation of jobs connected with renewable energy and recycling, and housing built to the highest standards of energy efficiency. Public authorities should have regard to the procurement of sustainable goods and services, including transport, food, building materials and office consumables.

Local authorities also have an important role to play in delivering education which recognises the worth of each individual and the importance of sustainability to the local and global environment. Councils will need to support local shops and businesses, community health clinics, parks and public transport.

A moment's thought will show that these policies will deliver both environmental and social justice and a Scotland which will do much better on the wellbeing indicators than the UK did on Unicef's latest survey.

■ *Rosemary Burnett is a member of the Scottish Green Party.*



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