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radical feminist green

Perspectives

SUMMER 2003 / £2

THE EU – VIEWS OF THE EUROPEAN LEFT



Plus – David Martin MEP reviews
Eurovision or American Dream? Britain,
the Euro and the Future of Europe

MAGAZINE OF SCOTLAND'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Perspectives is published four times
a year by Democratic Left Scotland,
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5JW. Tel: 0131 477 2997
E-mail: dls@newpolitics.org.uk
Web: www.newpolitics.org.uk

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Copy deadline for the next issue is
Monday 1st September 2003.

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Perspectives (including advertising
rates), or to submit articles or
letters, please contact:

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Printed by
Hampden Advertising Ltd
73 Robertson Street
Glasgow G2 8QD

CONVENER'S COLUMN

DEMOCRACY AND CHANGE

It is the ambition of *Perspectives* to become fully what it says on the cover – magazine of Scotland's democratic left. We still have a bit to go, but feel we are moving in a positive direction. (If this is the first time you have seen the publication or if it is now becoming a regular occurrence I hope you will consider subscribing.) We can all play a role in developing the infrastructure of the left.

From the outset it is important to state that we want to go beyond the parochial. We want to look at Scotland's politics in the context of an ever-changing world. In previous issues we have done this and it is something we return to with Richard Dunphy's article. Exploring the different responses of the left across Europe requires an ideological re-examining of what we are trying to achieve. That means going beyond the limited discussions on economic tests and structure. It will also mean organisations and parties engaging in increased discussion. With our new six party Scottish Parliament we quickly need to learn from the experiences of our European cousins. Whilst the nature of our multi-layered democracy – Holyrood, Westminster, Brussels – is of extreme importance, it needs to be connected to the needs and aspirations of the people.

Dealing with one important example, Danny Phillips of the Child Poverty Action Group puts this clearly. New Labour's obsession with delivery requires a simple question to be asked about their inability to put food on the tables of our school children. Missing the links to health, socialisation, and citizenship points to



**We need to
be clear
about what
we want
from our
MSPs.**

the poverty of McConnell's political thinking. The article indicates where civil society and those in the Edinburgh parliament can work together to take very practical action on this product of inequality. MSPWatch further considers the abilities and aspirations of those that represent us in Edinburgh. We need to be clear about what we want from our MSPs (and councillors, MPs and MEPs). Knowing what they are up to looks like a good place to start. Mary Spowart's assessment of the partnership agreement allowing the Labour/Liberal coalition to form the Scottish Executive suggests we will have to keep a sharp eye on some policy promises.

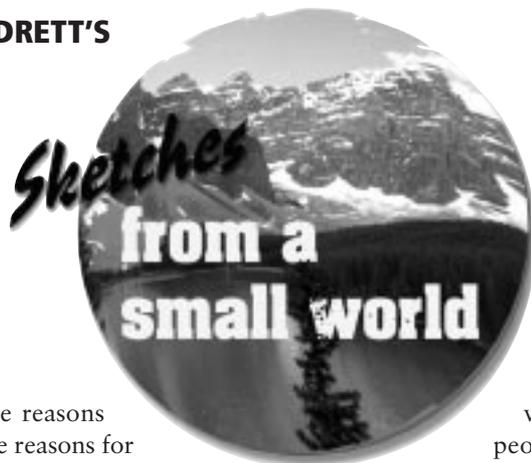
Politics however is not just about parliaments, paid politicians and government. It is also about how we operate in our relationships with each other and about our culture. With that in mind, in a departure, we have commissioned a piece from Frank Reilly in which he focuses on what continues to be, for many men at least, a centrepiece of their cultural understanding – football.

In future issues of *Perspectives* we will return to looking at gender and its place in culture and politics. We will look at the prospects and possibilities for proportional representation at local government level. We will also consider the benefits and impacts on politics of moving towards greater fiscal autonomy. We wish to connect political thought and action – democracy and change. And the process of becoming the magazine of Scotland's democratic left.

Stuart Fairweather
Convener, Democratic Left
Scotland



EURIG SCANDRETT'S



The US-Iraq war continues. The reasons for the war are unravelling. The reasons for not going to war are proving to be well founded. Terrorism has been boosted rather than stopped, Iraq has become a lawless military fiefdom of occupying America, Guantanamo continues to demonstrate the fallacy of democratic values which were supposedly being exported by the US. And that is just what we know about from the news.

What we don't see on the news, and didn't during the aggression of the war, tells a story. I recently saw some of the photographs brought back from Iraq by a friend Annette, who was a human shield prior to and during the war. The photographs are a fascinating insight into a country bombed by an imperial force with many times more military strength. About half of the photographs are of community life in a poor but developed, western-Islamic middle eastern country. Many of the photographs show children demonstrating with homemade banners against the war, smiling and playing, or women marching together, angry or whimsical, shouting against American aggression. A favourite banner of one of the children urged "war no, yes peas".

The other half of the photographs show frightened and disbelieving women, pointing at glowing lights in the sky showing the trail of the bombs, men covering their ears as blurry aeroplanes buzz over food silos, children peering at enormous American tanks blocking road ends, with young men glaring from their seats above the dwarfed houses. And other images. Bloated black bodies lying in the road days after being strafed by American aeroplanes. The charred remains of a bus driver and a heap of passengers, slumped amongst the tangled bus-wreckage on the road they didn't know had suddenly been declared closed by US tanks. Oily stains on tarmac beside flattened metal, which had once been a child, flung from a car as a tank rolled over them. Men risking their lives to recover and bury unnamed putrid corpses before they turn into secondary killers through disease.

No it wasn't bombs, aeroplanes and tanks which caused these deaths; it was young Americans, pressing buttons, squeezing triggers, obeying orders. Young men and women who presumably believed what they were told, that they were "liberating" Iraqis.

If Annette and the human shields did nothing else (and I believe they did much more), they have borne

It wasn't bombs, aeroplanes and tanks which caused these deaths; it was young Americans, pressing buttons, squeezing triggers, obeying orders.

witness to the reality of this conflict to the people of Iraq. Human shields, such as those who went to Iraq from all over the world, are a recent form of non-violent protest in the traditions of Ghandi and Martin Luther King, and currently stimulated in Scotland by the Scottish Centre for Nonviolence (www.nonviolence-scotland.org.uk). For many people becoming a human shield is the next step on from the street protests and civil disobedience against the war. For myself, who merely marched, sat-down, died-in and eventually got lifted during the Faslane blockade, the step taken by the human shields is a very significant one in terms of commitment and admiration.

In fact, my night in the cells in a Glasgow police station, along with some 160 others (not in the same cell!) was pretty tame compared with some others in the history of nonviolence. (I don't diminish these actions by calling them tame; I think it is important for everyone to be able to act appropriately to their context.)

I have recently been reading a history of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement. The mass nonviolent protests of the 1950s and 1960s in Southern USA are indeed exemplary. I may have spent a night in a Glasgow cell, but I did not expect to come home to find my house firebombed with children inside, as civil rights activists did. I did not expect to be beaten up by thugs whilst the police look on, as bus boycotters did. I didn't expect to risk my life as many hundreds of African-Americans did to end segregation, and as the human shields did to draw attention to the terrible human costs of war. I don't expect to be beaten, drowned, displaced, as the Gandhian protesters against the big dam projects in India continue to do.

Human shields are a movement in these traditions. The photographs and stories which Annette and her colleagues have collected are being turned into displays for wider exposure. Donations are sought for production costs, and outlets for the displays. If anyone wants to contribute, please send donations to the Democratic Left Scotland office, stating it is for the Human Shield display.

■ *Eurig Scandrett is an environmental activist and a member of Democratic Left Scotland's national council.*

THE LEFT AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Continuing the *Perspectives* discussion on the European Union, **Richard Dunphy** examines the positions of the various European parties to the left of mainstream social democracy.

Since the mid-1980s it has been possible to speak of at least four discernible strands of thought on the West European left as regards European integration. Admittedly, some of these tend to shade into one another and the question of when a political party has crossed the line from one to another is sometimes a matter of judgement.

MEMBERSHIP OPPOSED

The first and most distinctive position is that which sees the EEC/EU as an agent of multinational capitalist exploitation and of German or American hegemony, pure and simple. It threatens workers' rights, national welfare standards, and national democracy and sovereignty. It promotes and sustains gross economic inequalities and unsustainable development. It stands in a relationship of exploitation with countries of the developing world and indeed with would-be member states from Eastern Europe. It threatens to become a new capitalist military superpower and/or (the emphasis sometimes changes) underpins US militarism. It is diametrically and fundamentally incompatible with a socialist, or even mildly progressive, programme and indeed many of the developments of the past fifteen years within the EU have the effect of making such a programme illegal. For all these reasons, Left parties should oppose

EU-
NO!



Left parties should oppose membership of the EU in the first place, or continue to campaign for withdrawal from membership once their countries have joined.

membership of the EU in the first place, or continue to campaign for withdrawal from membership once their countries have joined. Sometimes this conclusion is implicit rather than explicit. It is perhaps most explicit in the analyses of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), the leftist adherents of the Danish anti-EU movements, such as the June Movement, and indeed it used to characterise most of the Nordic Left parties, but these are no longer as decisively “anti-EU” as they once were.

DISSOLUTION UNREALISTIC

A second position would agree with most of the foregoing analysis as a description of how the EU is currently constituted, and of how it has historically developed, but nevertheless argue that a campaign for withdrawal from EU membership, or for the immediate dissolution of the EU, is unrealistic and perhaps even undesirable. Influenced by Marxist economic determinism, its advocates would argue that one cannot turn back the clock or ignore the extent to which the EU has contributed to the development of productive forces. One must move forward. Thus, it is accepted (sometimes reluctantly and pragmatically) that a retreat to all-out national protectionism is not realistic. Moreover, the fact that campaigns for withdrawal from EU membership would place the left in an uncom-

fortable alliance with extremist right wing, xenophobic and racist elements is a further incentive to back away from the “withdrawal” position. Instead, what is advocated is a root-and-branch restructuring of the EU, turning its hitherto priorities upside down, and challenging the free market, capitalist logic inherent in the Single Act, the Maastricht Treaty, the Common Agricultural Policy, the operations of the European Central Bank, etc. How this is to be achieved is of course a moot point.

This position tends to be characteristic of most of the Nordic Left parties and of the French Communist Party, for example, since the late 1980s. In practical terms, it may lead these parties to reject capitalist aspects of the EU that they find unpalatable – they may campaign against the Maastricht Treaty or the Euro, for example – yet to laud and support calls for stronger EU environmental legislation or stronger protection for vulnerable workers.

STRONG REFORMISM

A third position is also critical of the limited and restrictive nature of the EU as it has developed to date but much more enthusiastic about the prospects for a strong reformism at the EU level. To a much greater extent than the advocates of the second position, its proponents see the EU as a potential agent of social and politi-

EU- YES, BUT BIG BUTS



A campaign for withdrawal from EU membership, or for the immediate dissolution of the EU, is unrealistic and perhaps even undesirable.

cal change – indeed of a regeneration of the European left. They tend to argue the case for more European integration, sometimes in the direction of a political federation, seeing in the development of strong democratic political institutions – a European Parliament that can legislate and elect the European Commission, for example – the key to providing the EU with the mechanism it needs (but currently lacks) to stand up to the powerful multinational corporations and to expand the “democratic space”. Such a position is strongly reformist and also, of course, strongly idealist.

Accepting that the nation state can no longer deliver the traditional goals of the left – a point painfully underlined by the failures of the Mitterrand and Papandreu governments in the 1980s – it posits a reinvention of a strong and interventionist social democracy at the EU level as a way forward. Such a position was characteristic of the Italian Communist Party during the 1970s and 1980s and is still characteristic today of many Italian and Spanish communists, sizeable constituencies within some of the Nordic Left parties, and many on the left wing of the social democratic parties (one thinks of Oskar Lafontaine, within the SPD). Indeed, it is on the terrain of this “strong reformism”, as I would call it, that pro-integrationists within the ranks of new left parties, communist and ex-communist parties and social democratic parties effectively find common ground. This is perhaps the terrain of that elusive “Euro-left” that Enrico Berlinguer and the Italian communists dreamed of in their search for a “new internationalism” during the traumatic years after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the imposition of martial law in Poland.

Advocates of this strong reformism tend to be critically supportive of policies such as the ratification of Maastricht, the introduction of the euro, etc. They condemn the rampant neo-liberalism and weak regulation associat-

ed with such policies – they would advocate, for example, democratic control over the European Central Bank and the prioritising of the fight against mass unemployment – but nevertheless argue that their ratification, even if in an unsatisfactory way, is a first and necessary step towards longer-term goals. Of course, a position of strong reformism – of critical support – is a difficult balancing act to maintain with credibility, especially when the parties in question are fairly small and unable to exercise much influence over events. There is always the risk of being blown off course and seeming to support policies that are inimical to the interests of one’s natural supporters. There is the constant danger that the inevitable search for political allies – in order to exercise some influence over the progress of events – will lead to a fatal erosion of political identity. There is the difficulty of sustaining a credible “yes, but ...” position and explaining it to supporters and potential voters when the political climate is dominated by media sound bites, the decline of traditional party allegiances and growing voter cynicism. The fate of the Italian Communist Party from the mid-1980s onwards illustrates all of these dangers and difficulties only too clearly.

WEAK REFORMISM

There is the danger, in short, of crossing the line that separates strong reformism from the fourth strand of thought on EU policy. This, for want of a better description, I will call “weak reformism”. Another, if no more elegant, way of putting this would be to contrast critical with uncritical pro-integrationism. By this I mean that the pursuit of more and deeper European integration can appear to become, at a certain point, an end in itself for some on the left. The building of a United States of Europe (however this is expressed) becomes the primary project of the left, “Europe” being seen as a

panacea, an all-powerful magical invocation to be produced when faced with seemingly insurmountable or incomprehensible problems. To sustain this, a historic compromise at the European level between “pro-European” political forces of centre-left and centre-right is urged. Thus, by eliding European socialist idealism and European federalist idealism – both sometimes presented as the one-and-the-same expression of anti-fascist European progressive thought, the repository of the best of the European Enlightenment – the difficult task of imagining socialism is by-passed. The net outcome tends to be a more or less uncritical support for “the European project” under the guise of “modernisation”. This approach to Europe arguably came to characterise some social democratic parties in power in southern Europe in the 1980s, elements of New Labour in Britain in the late 1990s, and several social democratic parties elsewhere. The Italian Communist Party was certainly open to the charge of having strayed over the line from strong reformism to weak reformism towards the end of its life, and it must be admitted that such a temptation is always present for Left parties that are desperately anxious to escape political isolation, exercise some influence on events, and distinguish themselves from the forces of xenophobic reaction.

TWIN DANGERS

Yet, if Left parties – by which I mean parties to the left of a mainstream social democracy that is fatally compromised by its embrace of neo-liberalism and capitalist globalisation – want to retain their vision of a non-capitalist future, and keep faith with the best values of the socialist tradition, it is vital that they avoid the twin dangers of retreating into a maximalist position of anti-EU rejectionism, on the one hand, and sliding into an uncritical embrace of the present logic of EU integra-

THE LEFT AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

tion, on the other. Many of the Left parties represented in the European Parliament's Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (EUL/NGL) are well aware of this dilemma. Although the wide range of conflicting positions assumed by many of the individual components of this Group prevent the emergence of anything like a common policy on European integration, let alone the formation of a truly pan-European federal Left Party, certain common concerns and themes now dominate discussions on the European Left. Ten issues in particular have emerged as central to the European orientation of the Left parties.

HOSTILE TO CORPORATE POWER

First, Left parties share a strong critique of free market capitalism, a marked rejection of neo-liberalism. They aspire towards a transcendence of the currently dominant neo-liberal model of capitalism. The old divide between "revolution" and "reform" may be less than useful here; the Portuguese Communist Party may be happier at describing itself as "revolutionary" than the Danish Socialist People's Party, for example; but Left parties in general are hostile to the relentless and ruthless rise of corporate power, which they see as anti-democratic and anti-popular. All of these parties, therefore, share a strong disapproval of the neo-liberal aspects of the Maastricht Treaty, embodied in the convergence criteria that governed the introduction of the single currency and further enshrined in the Stability Pact. They reject the agenda of jobs cutting, privatisations, welfare spending cuts, erosion of workers' rights (under the guise of labour market flexibility), erosion of social protection, and attacks on trade unions. However, they are divided on whether the very project of monetary union itself is to blame, or whether it is potentially a progressive one: whether Maastricht and the Euro should be rejected outright, or whether, for all their

Its proponents see the EU as a potential agent of social and political change – indeed of a regeneration of the European left.

**EU-
YES,
BUT**



weaknesses and failings, they can yet be an instrument in the creation of a more progressive Europe capable of guaranteeing an alternative to US-style capitalism. Thus, the Greek Coalition of Left and Progress (Synaspismos), the Spanish Communists, the Finnish Left Alliance and the tiny Party of Italian Communists (PdCI) adopt one approach (essentially pro-integrationist); the Portuguese and Greek Communist Parties and (for somewhat different reasons) the Swedish Left Party adopt another (anti-integrationist). The Danish Socialist People's Party, the French Communists and the Italian Party of Communist Refoundation fall somewhere in between.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COHESION

Second, all of the Left parties have argued that genuine European unity requires real economic and social cohesion. They are agreed that such cohesion is made more, not less, difficult by the neo-liberal nature of the present integration process. They have argued that capitalism creates disequilibria and then attempts to exploit imbalances in order to erode workers' rights and wages and reap greater profits. They are agreed that relations of solidarity between European states and regions should be harnessed to a model of economic development that involves redistribution and a concerted drive to tackle relations of dependency between core and periphery. They are less in agreement as to whether the EU can be reformed in such a way as to promote this – through a profound strengthening of the economic and social and structural funds, the introduction of a strong common industrial policy, the radical and progressive reform of the CAP, etc. – or whether the EU acts as a barrier to genuine cohesion.

Third, most Left parties believe that the EU should play a much more positive role in protecting the environment, promoting sustainable development, and penalising polluters. Even those that are

in general hostile to deeper integration concede that certain problems, above all environmental problems, transcend national boundaries and require transnational solutions.

Fourth, most Left parties are open to the development of stronger regional policies. This is above all a priority for the Finnish, Spanish and Italian parties.

FORTRESS EUROPE

Fifth, Left parties strongly condemn the relative lack of priority given to the question of immigrant workers' rights and the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. They are amongst the foremost critics of "Fortress Europe". They call for stronger measures to tackle racism and to guarantee an "open Europe", which seeks to fully integrate immigrants.

Sixth, all of the Left parties without exception see the EU as it has developed to date as profoundly undemocratic. They share a common critique of the elitist, top-down, bureaucratic and technocratic model of European integration that predominates. They see such as model as intrinsically linked to corporate capitalism – as reflecting the interests of the big multinationals who rely upon an exclusion of the mass of citizens from the process of European construction, a weakening of European civil society and an erosion of democratic control and accountability in order to evade scrutiny. The Left parties reject the notion that economic power should be concentrated in the hands of bankers and technocrats; they strongly object to the notion of a supposedly "independent" European Central Bank. They are less united on how European democracy can be reinvigorated. The anti-integrationists amongst them look to a defence of the nation state and of the powers of national parliaments, making a clear connection between democracy and national sovereignty. The pro-integrationists argue for full powers to the European Parliament, democratic control by

EU-YES

The building of a United States of Europe becomes the primary project of the left.



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT GROUPS AND NUMBERS OF MEPs

The great majority of MEPs, as well as being members of their own national party, will also be members of the appropriate European Parliament political group. For instance, the British Conservatives are members of the PPE-DE and Labour Party MEPs the PSE.

PPE-DE	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats	233
PSE	Group of the Party of European Socialists	175
ELDR	Group of the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party	53
GUE/NGL	Confederal Group of the European United Left/ Nordic Green Left (identified as "EUL/NGL" in this article)	49
Verts/ALE	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	45
UEN	Union for Europe of the Nations Group	23
EDD	Group for a Europe of Democracies and Diversities	18
NI	Non-attached	30
Total		626

Source: European Parliament website, 7th July 03

a European Government over the European Central Bank, a Constitution for the EU that greatly strengthens citizens' rights as well as guaranteeing the power of a European Government to formulate and implement policies for which it has a democratic mandate, in the face of multinational opposition. Some Left parties are clearly in a position of transition between these two positions, at present unsure as to how to best achieve the shared goal of a strengthening of popular control and a weakening of corporate power. In general, the anti-integrationists and defenders of national sovereignty also adhere to a rather out-dated model, rooted in the recent European past, that sees EU integration as masking German dominance and a German threat to the sovereignty of their countries. The pro-integrationists reject such sentiments along with nationalism in general.

EU EXPANSION

Seventh, most of the Left parties support EU expansion to the countries of eastern and central Europe, accepting this as the will of the majority of the peoples there. The exceptions to this are the Greek Communist Party (KKE) and, to a lesser extent, the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), which seem trapped in a vision of the world that is rooted in the East/West conflict of the Cold War

period. The KKE speaks of EU expansion as an "imperialist" takeover of the "former socialist" countries. All of the other Left parties, whilst supporting expansion, are anxious that this be accomplished without (a) a weakening of the rights of workers and citizens in the new member states, effectively drawing those countries into dependence on the EU core and casting them in the role of permanent second-class citizenship, and (b) without capital being in a position to use expansion in order to force down wages and further erode workers' rights in the existing member states. In addition, the Left parties in southern Europe fear that the loss of EU spending in southern Europe after expansion will impact most on the poor there.

ANTI-MILITARISM

Eighth, all of the Left parties share a marked anti-militarism, at times bordering on pacifism, especially where the Nordic parties are concerned. All strongly oppose European subservience to NATO and would like to see the break-up of NATO. All are strongly opposed to the EU developing as a major militarised superpower or a major manufacturer of arms. Some are willing to support in principle common European security, defence and foreign policies but only on condition that these develop outside of the constraints of

NATO. Indeed, they see such policies as enabling Europe to break free from its subservience to the USA. Others object in principle to such policies, which they believe will almost inevitably assume an imperialist hue.

Ninth, the Left parties all object vociferously to what they see as the "new imperialism". This is manifest both in the swaggering arrogance of the USA on the world stage, determined to enforce its political, military and economic dominance, with a sometimes reluctant but rarely outrightly critical EU following behind in tow; and in the exploitative trade and commercial relations that the EU has developed with many lesser developed countries.

Finally, the Left parties clearly have very different views on the over-riding issue of supranationality – to which policy responses to all the other issues are linked. If there has been a trend on the Left over the past twenty years or so, then that trend has clearly been away from purely national roads to socialism and towards acceptance of at least some aspects of supranationality. This is true not only of the enthusiastic pro-integrationists (such as Synaspismos), but also of the Nordic parties and even the PCF. Only the KKE and PCP remain resolutely opposed to supranationality. The differing approaches to supranationality bring me to the final issue I would like to mention, which is the prospects for effective co-ordination of policy-making and of strategic planning on the part of the Left parties in the face of the ever-growing challenges of European integration and globalisation.

CONFEDERAL GROUP

The Confederal Group of the European United Left came into existence in July 1994, on the initiative of the PCE/IU (Spanish Communist Party/United Left) and Synaspismos, soon joined by PCF, PCP and KKE MEPs. The adhesion of Swedish, Finnish and Danish MEPs in 1995 led to the

group adding the suffix “Nordic Green Left” to its title. The founding declaration describes the group as “firmly committed to European integration, although in a different form from the existing model” and “notwithstanding the different approaches that its various components may choose to follow”. In actuality, the wide disparity between the approaches to supranationality of the various components has prevented the Group from developing into anything remotely like as effective an actor on the EU political stage as the social democratic Party of European Socialists (PES).

HOME FOR LEFTISTS

As its title suggests, it remains “confederal”. After the 1999 elections, the German PDS joined the Group as did a Greek left-social democrat grouping, DIKKI. Five French Trotskyists from the Workers’ Struggle/Revolutionary Communist League (LO/LCR) also became members, as did one MEP from the Netherlands Socialist Party, a small staunchly anti-EU party of Maoist origins. The Cypriot AKEL and the Czech Communist Party will soon swell its ranks. Needless to say, such broad diversity has strengthened the Group numerically within the European Parliament (EP), but has further weakened its internal cohesion. Between 1999 and 2003, the Group gained further adherents, including dissident German Greens, Danish social democrats and French leftists of various backgrounds. Increasingly, the Group has become a home for leftists of various shades who are without an alternative home within the EP. Thus, at the time of writing, the EUL/NGL is the fourth largest EP grouping with 50 MEPs, but is less capable than ever of formulating a coherent political line or strategy.

Not surprisingly, many (especially the more pro-integrationist) within the Left parties would like to address this problem. The New European Left Forum (NELF), launched in 1991 to promote dialogue and policy ideas exchange

between Left parties across Europe (and not just the EU), and the EUL/NGL Group have often worked together, organising meetings and exchanges. But several parties have expressed the view that the gathering challenges of integration and globalisation require a more concerted response. The German PDS and Synaspismos issued a joint statement in April 2001 arguing that “European political parties, as have been established by other political forces, constitute an EU institution, provided for by the Treaty of Nice. It is high time to include in the political agenda the creation of a political subject of the European Left, open to the new social and ecological movements, safeguarding the autonomy of the forces from each country that will comprise it.” Italy’s Communist Refoundation has also called for closer co-ordination of the European left parties, seeking to use gatherings of the anti-capitalist European Social Forum to promote discussion and dialogue. In an interview in June 2002, Communist Refoundation programme officer Marco Berlinguer, acknowledging that some left parties disputed the need for “a strong European force”, nevertheless insisted that “the European left needs to unite if it wants to make any difference to society” and cited a common programme for the 2004 EP elections as “the main task for us”. It is possible, therefore, that the more pro-integrationist amongst the Left parties will move forward in the not too distant future towards the creation of a European party of the “radical, democratic Left”, but it is unlikely that the EUL/NGL in its present form would simply become the European Parliamentary group of that party.

■ *Richard Dunphy is Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Dundee and author of Contesting Capitalism? Left Parties and European Integration (Manchester University Press, 2004 – forthcoming), from which this is an edited extract.*

BUILDING

Whether or not Britain should join the euro is about much more than simply whether we should give up one currency for another.

David Martin MEP

reviews a new book that dissects the political heart of the issue: *Eurovision or American Dream?*

This is an extremely timely book and an excellent opening statement from a member of Democratic Left Scotland in the great debate on the European Union (EU) and Britain’s stance on the euro called for by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

David Purdy is well qualified to write and speak on these matters, as he is a former head of the department of Applied Social Science at the University of Manchester and a Visiting Research Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence. But, perhaps more importantly, in these times of political cynicism, he remains a political activist here in Scotland.

The title of his lucid and readable book poses the question *Eurovision or American Dream?* This is a good title but perhaps the wrong question. From my position in the European Parliament I know that we have many visionaries. What we need are more political practitioners who can put that vision into place.

However, *praxis* tells us that through practical engagement we

€UROVISION OR AMERICAN DREAM?

Britain, the Euro and the Future of Europe

DAVID PURDY

Eurovision or American Dream? Britain, the Euro and the Future of Europe by David Purdy (Luath Press in association with Democratic Left Scotland, £3.99)

“EU Enlargement and Reform” and a good section on the euro and the five economic tests, where his background knowledge is used to great effect. The book also has two appendices detailing with economic comparisons, a history, and thumbnail description of the EU and its institutions. It is almost worth buying the book for these alone.

All in all *Eurovision or American Dream?* puts forward a very well argued and positive thesis. Ironically, perhaps the one point I would pick the author up on is in dismissing some more visionary voices. Whereas we would probably agree “politics is the art of the possible” the author is perhaps too quick to dismiss “anti-globalisers ... in supposing that a new and better world can somehow be built outside existing global institutions” and urge that he reads George Monbiot’s *The Age of Consent*. I think he will find that there is a greater constituency for alliances across the lines of party, position and identity than there once was.

This book is very certainly a major contribution to the debate on the future of Europe and Britain’s place in it. Go out buy a copy and join in this important debate.

THE GOOD LIFE

can rebuild and change our environment. David Purdy answers a slightly different question: do we want to follow the American way or build the good life on the European social model – what the author calls social capitalism? The author is very firmly for the European model.



■ *David Martin is Scotland’s senior MEP and Vice President of the European Parliament.*

NEW WORLD ORDER

First let’s look at the American dream, or what, in global terms, is called the new world order. To many in the world it is not a dream but a nightmare full of disorder with the rich to the fore and the poor to the wall.

We now face the very real possibility of a unipolar world, with the USA as the only superpower getting its way in all situations and often at the expense of the poor and powerless.

We have the recent situation when the US went to war with Iraq without a second resolution in the Security Council of the United Nations, defying three of its permanent members and most of the temporary members.

The World Bank and the IMF have become the debt collectors of the world economy. The whole burden of maintaining the balance of international trade has been put on the poorest debtor nations. Between 1980 and 1996 Sub-Saharan Africa paid twice the sum of its national debt in interest and still ended up owing three times more in 1996 than it did in 1980. *Catch 22* reads like a fairytale in comparison.

The WTO enforces free trade on weaker nations according to rules which the richer states, especially the USA, do not comply with.

After the Doha development round in 2001, aimed at liberalis-

ing trade and increasing access to western markets, the USA raised farm subsidies to its own farmers by 80%, with the effect of cutting world prices and bankrupting millions of farmers in the developing world. And, incidentally, letting the EU off the hook with its own CAP reforms – which are rigorously dealt with in this book.

EURO ENTHUSIASTS

Many people in the Labour movement, like myself, became Euro enthusiasts after initially opposing what used to be called the EEC or the European Economic Community, the Common Market, which we saw as a “bankers’ Europe”, which only the rich western part of Europe could join.

I remember discussing this matter at the end of the 80s with the late John Smith, then Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was very pleased that “Thatcherism never crossed the channel.” John argued in a very persuasive interview “From a Market to a Community” in *Lothian’s Voice In Europe* (which my office produced at that time) that the EEC could become the EC or European Community, a people’s Europe, by adding important social measures – the Social Charter – and accepting the European social model.

The purpose of the European Union, which we now have, was to defend and build on that European social model into the 21st century.

GREAT EFFECT

We are now into that century and on the brink of a historic re-uniting of Europe with 10 new countries joining from southern and eastern Europe in 2004. David Purdy has an excellent section on

■ **Copies of this book (and two others) published by Luath Press in association with Democratic Left Scotland are obtainable from bookshops or directly from Democratic Left Scotland (see advert on back page of this issue).**

NOW ON TO THE MAIN COURSE

The campaign to provide all Scottish children with a free nutritious meal at school was recently re-launched. **Danny Phillips** presents the compelling arguments as to why the Scottish Parliament should legislate on this issue.



The Free School Meals Campaign was re-launched on 24 June in the Scottish Parliament. The proposal for a new School Meals (Scotland) Bill had already been lodged, with considerable cross party support, on 14 May 2003. This June launch was to bring together the groups that want to work towards the goal of providing all children in Scotland with a free nutritious meal at school.

Organisations like ours hold all manner of events all over the country covering a plethora of anti-poverty issues but none galvanise people like the issue of free nutritious school meals. Our re-launch was packed, with many key stakeholders being represented. For our last campaign we created the cartoon character “School Meals Bill”, a super hero who was, it seemed, eventually defeated. However this re-launch showed that he has developed a real life persona of his own. He will simply not go away, frankly, even if we wanted him to.

You only have to scratch the surface of this issue to quickly grasp the reason. *Sunday Herald* food critic, Joanna Blythman, passionately argued the case for free school meals saying “free nutritious school meals are not complicated and shouldn’t be made complicated. You just need a cook, not a chef, to present good unprocessed food free to all children and encourage them all to sit down round a table and enjoy their lunch.” Rosie Kane MSP, on reintroducing the fresh bid for free school meals, said “It’s about so much more than nutrition and health; its about inclusion, it’s about lifting stigma, and it’s about equality.” Clearly this simple idea has potentially far-reaching consequences.

FOOD AND DIETARY RELATED ILL-HEALTH

No one denies Scotland’s problem with dietary related ill-health. It is the second biggest contributory

Free nutritious school meals are not complicated and shouldn’t be made complicated. You just need a cook, not a chef, to present good unprocessed food free to all children and encourage them all to sit down round a table and enjoy their lunch.

factor to premature death in Scotland after smoking. Low-income families in Scotland simply cannot afford a decent diet while higher income families can but still tend to opt for the unhealthy option. We must tackle both poverty and our bad diet culture.

When you think of the economy and geography of Scotland it is even more desperate. We form part of the fourth richest nation in the world, with sheep and berries on our highland hills, huge areas of arable farmland across lowland Scotland, and fish in our rivers, lochs and seas. Quality Scottish produce is eaten across the world yet the culinary delight we are best known for at home is the deep fried Mars bar. It simply shows that more important than the land itself is the organisation of the people on it.

POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

We are among the most unequal societies, with some of the worst child poverty rates, in Europe. Despite some significant investment in Child Benefit, Child Tax Credits and other family means tested benefits since 1997, the statistics stubbornly refuse to show significant improvements and, if anything, income inequality has got worse. Our public services have a significant role in ensuring we turn the tide and end child poverty in Scotland. Other small, cold, rich northern European nations manage it and so can we.

LOOKING BACK

The first School Meals (Scotland) Bill, to provide every child at a state school in Scotland with a free nutritious school meal, was defeated in the Scottish Parliament on 20 June 2002. John McAllion MSP, summing up the first stage debate, said “this Bill is visionary, bold, radical and achievable. It has generated mass support across the country and has captured the imagination and hearts of the Scottish people.”

Thirty-seven MSPs from five political parties voted for the Bill, but this was not enough to take it to its second stage. Seventy-four voted against.

John McAllion's bold statement does stand up to scrutiny. We can claim the support of organisations across Scotland including children's charities, churches, unions, public health groups, anti-poverty groups, dieticians, prominent academics and local government representatives. A petition with 10,000 signatures was submitted to the Parliament by the STUC. Our meetings and workshops run over the two-year period were well attended with much lively discussion and our publications played a significant role in informing debate. We received comprehensive media coverage with many newspaper editorials calling on MSPs to support the Bill and 75–80 per cent of the public consistently supported the idea of free nutritious school meals. We also learned much from visiting schools and speaking to teachers, caterers and, most importantly, children. And we always came away with the same feeling. The vast majority supported the idea.

NEW SUPPORTERS

Our new campaign can claim new supporters already. The Parent Teachers Council, who were an opponent of the first School Meals (Scotland) Bill, voted overwhelmingly at a recent AGM to change its position and support the campaign. Glasgow City Council, another crucial opponent of the first bill, recently announced they will be providing free school meals to all their primary school children. The *Scottish Daily Mirror* has pledged to campaign for the bill's success in its newspaper. The Education Institute of Scotland previously supported our campaign but now they too have changed their position to campaign for free nutritious school meals. A Scottish Head Teachers Association spokeswoman told our packed re-launch that, like most, she was initially sceptical but after a visit to Sweden was convinced.

UNIVERSAL SERVICES

Public services free at the point of use are more effective than any other. They promote social inclusion and improve standards because we all have a stake in their success. Think how the NHS is continually defended. This is in part because of its fundamental universal principle. Universal free provision also plays an important anti-poverty role ensuring mothers, especially, are not worse off by entering paid work. Over half the children who live below the 60% median line (as close as we have to poverty line) live in families with at least one parent working. Welfare benefits available to those in and out of work help the transition into employment and play an important part in making work pay.

It is difficult to say exactly by how much take up would improve if we introduced free school meals. We simply know that take up of universal cash benefits and universal public services tend to be significantly higher than those subjected to means testing. Child

Public services free at the point of use are more effective than any other. They promote social inclusion and improve standards because we all have a stake in their success.



benefit, which is paid to rich and poor alike, has a take up of nearly 100% compared to, say, Tax Credits which has take up as low as six in ten of those entitled. For school meals specifically we can look to international examples in Scandinavia where the overwhelming evidence is that free school meals work.

In Scandinavia free school meals have proved a vital way of getting fruit and vegetables into the diet.

Where Swedish schools have reverted to charging policies, children's eating habits have deteriorated.

Studies by Swedish researchers show that uptake of free school meals is very high.

- 84% of Swedish children receiving free school meals eat the main course.
- 89% of Swedish children receiving free school meals leave nothing on their plate!
- 62% of Swedish children receiving free school meals sit down to an evening meal and only 5% of these children drink a sugary or "fizzy" drink.

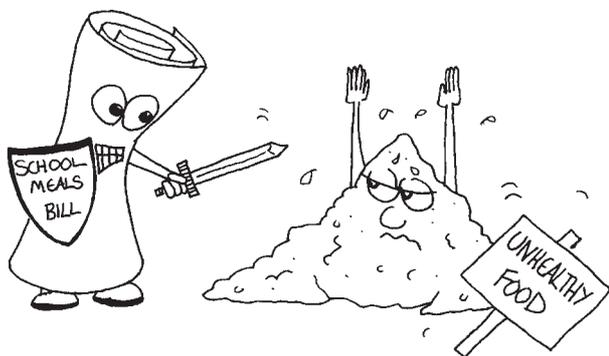
Swedish children have better dental health, are more alert and continue to eat healthier meals outside of school hours.

Research carried out by the DfEE and CPAG strongly suggests the biggest single factor why one in five Scottish children do not take the school meals they are entitled to is stigma. They report they do not like being marked out as the poor kids at school. While many bad practices make a significant contribution to this feeling of stigma, means-testing is at its core. As one child said "People just think that if you're on free school meals you're going to be a one sock person, they think that you're not very nice and that your parents just can't be bothered to get a job or something."

PARLIAMENTARY CAMPAIGN

Far from argue with these points the reports issued by the Education and Health Committees of the Scottish Parliament, who scrutinised the School Meals (Scotland) Bill, agreed. They recognised that stigma still exists, and that it was "repugnant and totally unacceptable", that it must be addressed and that present strategies were only partially successful in reducing it. They said "Urgent action" was needed and recognised the limitations of swipe cards. They said it was "self evident" that the bill would end stigma associated with taking a free school meal. In fact the Health Committee signalled its intention to pursue this as a separate issue (still not undertaken).

FREE SCHOOL MEALS



They accepted an increased take up of school meals would improve health outcomes. They were not persuaded that the middle classes would abandon a free school meals scheme or that free school meals would lead to a decline in quality. They called for free universal provision of water for every child and milk for younger children. They impressed most strongly that the executive's answer, *Hungry for Success*, must adequately tackle these issues. The education committee, the lead committee, "signalled its intention to scrutinise the conclusions of [*Hungry for Success*] once these have been published" (still not undertaken).

EXPANDING ENTITLEMENT

The Education Committee also echoed the call from the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities for the present entitlement rules to be reconsidered and, under questioning, Stephen Nicol MSP, then Minister for Education, signalled he was willing to do this.

HEARTS AND MINDS

However if the dream of free nutritious school meals for all children is ever to become a reality we must persuade backbench MSPs to vote for it. We simply failed to do this last time around in enough numbers.

Ideas like this are not won in meetings and committees; they are won in the public at large. People in Scotland have to be convinced that free nutritious school meals can make a significant positive impact on the health and well being of all our children. It is only they who can put legitimate pressure on our political representatives to act. We are therefore going out to communities to present our ideas. If free nutritious school meals are to be a reality we not only need to explain our reasons for believing in them, but we also need to listen to teachers and caterers, and to parents and children, to consider the potential problems that we may have with delivering such a policy.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE KIDS?

We have brought school meals to the heart of the debate on the fight to end Scotland's appalling child poverty and dietary-related ill health but more importantly I am proud that we have played a significant role in real changes for children. The Scottish Executive has been forced to accept that "the status quo is not acceptable." In response, three departments

We have brought school meals to the heart of the debate on the fight to end Scotland's appalling child poverty and dietary-related ill health.

■ *Cartoons by Armon Williams*

(education, health and social justice) are now working together to improve school meals, convening "an expert panel" to produce a strategy to establish standards, improve take up and eliminate stigma. It has published *Hungry for Success*, containing many recommendations our campaign supports and has been calling for. We have started to end bad practice; freshly chilled water will be provided free (some local authorities were charging up to 60p for a bottle of water), overt sponsorship of fizzy drinks will be stopped, unhealthy vending machines removed, bad practices which encourage stigmatisation will be stopped and nutritional guidelines introduced.

SIGNIFICANT GAINS

These gains are a significant start but there is a long way to go. We must ensure nutritional standards are given the weight of the law and the long time limit to implement them is reduced (2006 is suggested by the Executive). We must ensure that the changes promised to reduce queues, introduce swipe cards, improve dining halls and radically improve the service to children are given the full resources they require to be properly achieved. We must ensure the Executive do not just reduce, but do as they promised: to end the stigma attached to free school meals. Most importantly, we must ensure that entitlement to a free meal is expanded.

Finally we must keep reminding our policy makers that – for a small cost equivalent to one third of the annual under-spend of the Scottish Parliament – we could provide a free nutritious school meal to every child in Scotland. And this could make a significant contribution toward ending child poverty and reducing dietary related ill health in Scotland of all our children. Finland and Sweden had the vision to take this brave step 40 years ago and now reap the rewards.

■ *Danny Phillips works for the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland.*

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MSP WATCH – KEEPING AN EYE ON OUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

MSPWatch was set up in response to the slogans of those pushing for and supporting war in Iraq. **Mark Priestley** explains its development and objectives, and assesses its impact on the results of the recent Scottish Parliament elections.

First it was U.S. politicians: Bush and Rumsfeld singing from the same hymn sheet. Then Blair and his gang got onto the bandwagon, and it seemed that they too had nothing else to think about. Finally by January Scottish politicians were struggling to climb aboard. The mantras and slogans are all too familiar: disarming Saddam; weapons of mass destruction; the butcher of Baghdad. With hindsight it is clear even to the mainstream media that the British people were subject to a sustained campaign of “softening up”, characterised by distorted intelligence, sophistry and lies. And to what end? It is evident now that operational decisions were made by the summer of 2002 to remove Saddam’s regime by force.

ANGER AND FRUSTRATION

It is in this context that the nascent MSPWatch emerged. An idea conceived in a smoky pub took shape through several conversations with friends and colleagues, and was delivered and launched into the world following a weekend of frenetic activity involving just three people. MSPWatch was born out of anger and frustration, typified

It became important to persuade Scottish Labour voters in particular to use their first vote against pro-war Labour candidates.

by the publication in the *Sunday Herald* of a straw poll of MSPs, showing that a large proportion of them, especially Labour, either did not respond to the survey, or unbelievably felt that they could refuse to comment on what was undoubtedly the major political issue of the day, regardless of matters of devolved and reserved powers. Quite simply, people wanted to know how their MSP stood on a fundamental issue of values, and were not satisfied with a “no comment”. For many, the new US doctrine of preventive warfare, endorsed by the UK government, unilaterally overturns the conventions laid down by the UN Charter of 1945 and permits the US to mobilise an ad hoc “coalition of the willing” to wage war on any state which, it claims, poses a threat to the security either of the US itself or of the wider international community. From this standpoint alone, the invasion of

Iraq went beyond partisan politics and became an issue for all UK citizens, overriding their normal party allegiance. This is why it became important to persuade Scottish Labour voters in particular to use their first vote against pro-war Labour candidates, or if they couldn’t bring themselves to do this, then at least to give their second vote to an anti-war party, especially in regions where, in the 1999 Scottish parliamentary election, a high proportion of Labour second votes were wasted.

RADICALISING INFLUENCE

MSPWatch was largely derived from the ideas and actions of a single person, with little track record of political activism. As such it demonstrates the fact that a lack of congruence between government action and public opinion can exert a radicalising influence on the latter. This, I believe, is symptomatic of a wider process of



MSP WATCH

apparent disengagement of many people from the political processes. We hear a lot about voter apathy. The problem does not appear to me to be apathy, but rather a perception that politicians do not make their work relevant to the people who elect them (or don't as is increasingly the case). That people still care enough about expressing their choices in a democratic way is clearly evidenced by the huge scale of the demonstrations against war.

So what was MSPWatch? Initially (February 2003) it was conceived as a simple website bringing together MP/MSP opinion together with contact details. The aim was to inspire people who visited the site to lobby their representatives to vote against war. We also wished to publicise hypocrisy and pro-war sentiments and values. The website duly went online, and was publicised via email contacts. This concentric means of dissemination quickly led to an influx of email, mainly positive, and the establishment of a mailing list to coordinate actions.

Two developments quickly changed our initial conception of the role and nature of the website.

SECOND VOTE

The first of these was David Miller's strategy for voting, as articulated in the article "Three million uses for a second vote" (*Scottish Left Review*, 15, 2003). The impending Scottish parliament elections could easily be seen as a test of public opinion on the issue of war, and moreover we quickly saw that the aims expressed in Miller's article were consonant to what we were trying to achieve. When the website was launched, it consequently included advice for people wishing to use their second vote effectively to elect candidates who were opposed to war. Our advice was quite simple: electors should use their first vote to elect an anti-war party, and their second vote to elect an anti-war candidate. In the latter case, this would vary from area to area. For example, casting



We also wished to publicise hypocrisy and pro-war sentiments and values.

the second vote for the SSP would be sensible in Glasgow, should one wish to elect a candidate solely on the basis of their opposition (or indeed otherwise) to war. However such a strategy would clearly not be sensible given the remote likelihood of electoral success in, say the South of Scotland, where the Greens would have more chance of being elected.

BOWLED OVER

The second development was prompted by a realisation that we needed to focus on electoral candidates, rather than just sitting MSPs. The existing team simply did not have the resources to develop this, so we asked our mailing list for volunteers. We were bowled over by the response; MSPWatch had developed legs. Volunteers were mainly involved in the collection of contact and other data (e.g. opinions about the war). One volunteer deserves a special mention: a computer expert and web programmer contacted me offering his services in developing a searchable database of candidates. This development greatly increased the functionality of the site, by allowing people to search for a candidates by name, region, constituency or stance on war.

An interview on *Newsnight* greatly increased hits on the site and led to a torrent of letters, including from MPs and candidates for the forthcoming Scottish elections; many were concerned to

see that the database correctly listed their details. Most letters were very positive about the site and our aims, although some were hostile, even abusive. I have been accused variously of being anti-capitalist, anti-democracy (seeking to undermine representative democracy) and intriguingly (as an English ex-pat) as having a secret agenda to promote Scottish nationalism through distorting the balance of Scotland's "pretendy parliament". Interesting, given that we were simply attempting to offer advice to people seeking to utilise their democratic right of choice in an informed manner. Moreover, indeed, as we pointed out all along, the website could have conceivably been used by people wishing to vote for a pro-war candidate.

The number of hits on the website remained disappointingly low (roughly 2500 in three weeks) but we believe that the site was success. It is certainly true to say that large numbers of people voted in the fashion advocated by the site, returning six SSP and seven Green MSPs, leading ultimately to a more democratic parliament. While we cannot claim to have caused such a phenomenon, we can definitely say that our advice was in line with a large swathe of public opinion, and we strongly believe that the war was a major factor in people's voting decisions. Moreover we would like to think that we contributed to the demise of two pro-war Labour MSPs, Richard Simpson at the marginal Ochil seat and Angus Mackay at Edinburgh South (a largish majority overturned).

IGNORANCE ON MAJOR ISSUES

In the former case, it is good to see an MSP who displays such ignorance on major issues not re-elected. I wrote to Simpson on the subject of the war, and asked five specific questions. After nearly five weeks I received a reply which contained the following, in response to the question "Does Iraq pose a threat to the UK?": "No more than Hitler was re-

entering the Ruhr or Checkoslovak, another small country far away” (sic). In an article published in the *Stirling Observer*, he was asked to respond to accusations by MSPWatch that he had failed to respond to the *Sunday Herald* survey. His reply was yet more illuminating: that we had to invade Iraq to deal with the high infant mortality rate under Saddam Hussein!

In the latter case, it is interesting that such a large swing has occurred, and this must in many respects be due to the dissatisfaction of many Labour activists in his constituency. In many ways he exemplified the refusal of New Labour MSPs to get off the fence, and oppose a war that they felt to be morally wrong. A subscriber to MSPWatch reported that he had told her that he could not publicly

We would like to think that we contributed to the demise of two pro-war Labour MSPs

oppose war on the grounds that this might give political capital to the SNP and give the impression that Labour is split on the issue. This may be indicative of a tension between conscience and the demands of the party whips, but nevertheless was unpopular with party activists. I was contacted before the election by a Labour activist in the constituency, who told me that many of her ilk were switching their votes and support to the LibDem candidate in an overt bid to remove Mackay. The war was cited as being the major issue. That this has happened is a testament to the resolve of voters in Edinburgh South.

MSPWatch was conceived as a project with a limited shelf life, to coincide with two concurrent developments: the war and the Scottish elections. However we

have become convinced of the need for future presence of this sort in Scottish politics. A relaunched MSPWatch is therefore in the offing, to keep an eye on our elected representatives on a range of issues concerned with human rights issues and cases where the policies favoured by free marketeers or business interests come into conflict with widely held values and aspirations. You can be sure that the site will be used to highlight hypocrisy, voting patterns that are inconsistent with rhetoric and support for the more unsavoury types of neo-liberal policies in both devolved and reserved policy areas. The new site is at www.mspwatch.org.uk

■ *Mark Priestley is a lecturer in the Department of Education at Stirling University.*

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P/SU/03

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.

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For copies of the DLS pamphlet, "There's more to politics than parties" or to get membership information, please complete the form.

Democratic Left Scotland
na Deamocrataich Chli an Alba



A PARTNERSHIP FOR A NEW SCOTLAND

Mary Spowart examines some of the aims of the partnership agreement between Labour and Liberals that sets out the plans for the coalition that forms the new Scottish Executive.

On May 1st the Scottish people elected a new parliament. The Lib Lab coalition was duly reconstituted and a new partnership agreement drawn up. The agreement, *A Partnership for a Better Scotland*, set out the plans of the coalition for the next four years.

So what does the new coalition have in store for the people of Scotland and will it truly deliver on its stated aims of encouraging and stimulating economic growth, tackling poverty and disadvantage, improving and sustaining the environment and helping communities to live in peace and safety?

The new coalition has its work cut out as the new look Parliament is likely to keep a very close eye on the Executive. While the Tories and SNP may well continue on their own agendas of proving the Executive does not work and that the people of Scotland should vote for them instead, once they have got over their internal wranglings (in the case of the SNP), it is the new forces of the Greens and the SSP which will continually call the Executive to account for its perceived failings, and thus may actually be the more effective political forces for change in the Parliament.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

The resignation of the head of Scottish Enterprise, combined with the continuing row over the Euro at Westminster does not bode well for the Executive's plans to grow the economy. The Executive must implement its economic policy against a background of looming world recession and the

The new coalition has its work cut out as the new look Parliament is likely to keep a very close eye on the Executive.

■ *Mary Spowart is a freelance political researcher and a member of Democratic Left Scotland.*

embarrassing and costly row over the new Parliament building.

POVERTY AND DISADVANTAGE

The Coalition devotes several pages to discussing social justice with an emphasis on housing and the recent report on housing conditions in Scotland, which identified houses still without baths or exclusive toilets, highlights the enormity of this problem. While the aims of the Executive in the area of housing are laudable, its policies on preventing disadvantage and lifting people out of poverty do not appear to be very radical, with the reluctance to abolish council tax a prime example. This an area where they will come under scrutiny by the SSP amongst others in Civic Scotland.

IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT

The partnership agreement claims to have a green thread running through it and certainly the agreement has many admirable aims and objectives in the field of the environment though there are some alarming discrepancies. The Aarhus convention on environmental information is reduced to a consultation for access to courts for NGOs, hardly full disclosure, and the Executive's commitment to Kyoto rates only four lines and contains the worrying phrase "where appropriate" in connection with meeting commitments on climate change.

These are two areas with huge environmental implications and do not sit well with Jack McConnell's promise of last year to fight for environmental justice for all. With

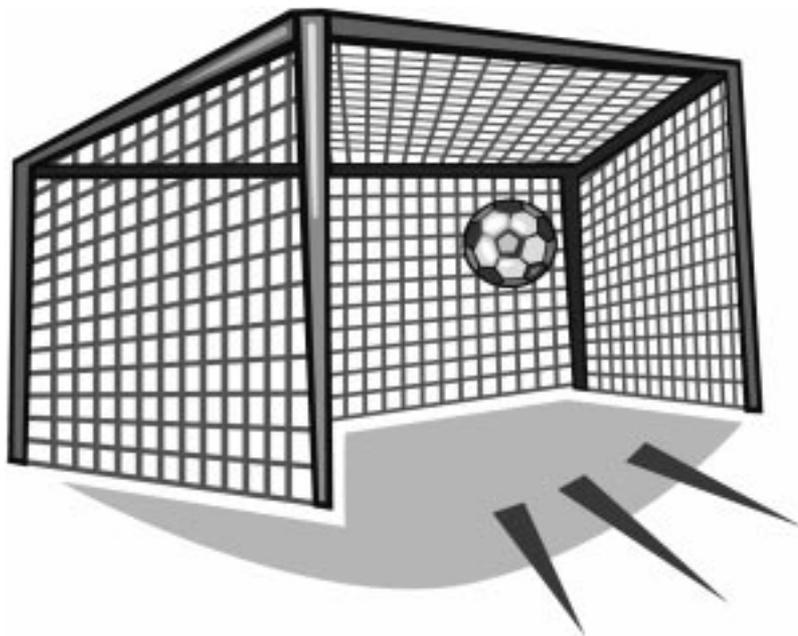
seven Green MSPs in the Parliament any lack of commitment on the part of the Executive will be strongly challenged.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

While no one would deny that community safety is important the Executive appears to be focussing on youth crime in a way that is not borne out by the crime statistics. While youth crime is an area of huge concern, the policy emphasis appears to be on punishment and not prevention. The Executive's drug policy continues to be at odds with advice from the experts in the field. This is a high profile area and one where the Executive will be under intense media scrutiny.

On May 1st we voted for a new Parliament and that is what we got. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that this Executive lives up to our expectations. Many people accuse politicians of only listening to the people when an election is due and this may be true but we as the people must ensure that we continue to talk to the politicians. We must keep a watching brief and maintain the pressure on politicians to deliver on their election promises. They must be called to account for their failings and reined in over their excesses. These people are public representatives and they have been elected to do a job. The partnership agreement amounts to a contract with the people: "this is what we will do." We must ensure that they are kept to their word.

The new Executive has four years to deliver for the people of Scotland. Let's hope it can, even if it takes the threats from opposition parties to make it do so. It is after all a partnership for a better Scotland, and it is that which is important, not the political careers of those in power.



BACK OF THE NET

Let's strip the hype away from football says **Frank Reilly**, then maybe the next generation of artists in shinpads will be unearthed.

Chosen by God, admired by men, loved by women ... but your manager's a product of the Clydeside shipyards, made in Scotland from girders, and you insist on wearing an Alice band and a dress – it had to end in tears.

So the England skipper's off to sunny Spain. Viva el euro!. The transfer suited everyone, kinda, sorta, not so much win-win more a pools panel score draw for Fergie, Man U plc, Mr Beckham and, of course, Mrs Beckham. David's reported £150k per week and earnings from Victoria's recording career will now give the Beckhams a joint income of, well, £150k per week.

There were no losers on this one. Okay, those misguided individuals who still care about their team may have been hit by an emotional ricochet but there's no room for sentiment in business. At least not until your club's in the hands of the receiver and the board are going round the ground with a bucket on match days looking for loose change donations to pay the players' wages.

Forty years ago in the Deep South a hundred white men chasing a black man would be the Ku Klux Klan – now it's the US Masters Golf.

BACKSIDE HANGING OUT

The Beckham transfer confirmed what the "kerr-ching brigade" (Murray, McCann and their counterparts globally) had sussed long ago – the backside is well and truly hanging out of the breeks of the football market. The hype couldn't be sustained any longer and we're now left to ponder the product itself. To reflect, for instance, on football's most recent global showcase, the 2002 World Cup. Although the media hyped the event like their lives (and in a very real sense, their livelihoods) depended on it, the sobering reality is that we didn't see a single talent come within Roberto Carlos shooting distance of a place in history alongside Pele, Beckenbauer, Cruyff and Maradona.

The 2002 finals will be remembered, if at all, for thrills not frills. Sure it was exciting, but as Shankly once said, "all you need for an exciting match is a muddy pitch and two lousy defences." You can find excitement in a public park (I'm still referring to football here, not wayward pillars of the estab-

lishment) but where has the quality gone?

Take Dundee United (away from Eddie Thomson ideally). I paid homage every week to Jim McLean's Arabs (*Total Football* on a shoestring budget) for quarter of a century. I live fifty yards from Tannadice and now I quite literally wouldn't cross the street to watch them. To suffer a bunch of no-marks who couldn't trap a bag of cement, whose second touch is a tackle ... you know the clichés, and if you support a provincial Scottish team, you know it's the sad truth.

NO HIGHLIGHTS

United are currently one of the worst teams in the SPL, akin to being one of the tallest players in a basketball team. How far off is the edition of *Sportscene* where Dougie Donnelly (hair darkened to its natural colour and ears pinned back to ensure gravitas) solemnly announces that there are no highlights from this week's games. When they had edited out all the misplaced passes, mistimed challenges, speculative shots hitting the corner flag – there was nothing left to show.

Apart from the top half dozen teams, the English Premiership is also populated by hard grafting journeymen – or "solid pros" as they're euphemistically tagged by the media – a more insidious form of hype. Hard grafting journeymen like Mick McCarthy. The most telling exchange during the infamous McCarthy/Keane bust-up was when McCarthy lambasted Keane telling him that his conduct was unprofessional – Keane snapped back, "it's still more professional than your first touch."

ANTIDOTE TO THE HORRIBLE

Football will endure though and it's essential that it does. It's a beautifully simple concept with a capacity for complexities within it that can take you through the whole gamut of human emotions in ninety minutes. The more complicated life gets (and we get) a basic certainty in the Great Unknown is important. The simple

THE ROAD TO HIGHLAND GOTHIC (VIA FILM NOIR AND SURREAL COMEDY)

objective reality that if we stick the ball in the back of the net more than they do we've won – and we feel good. If we lose we feel bad, but at least we feel. So it isn't an opiate, or a distraction from the things that really matter, it's an antidote to the horrible and the miserable – the true fabric of the universe according to Woody Allen (which we can all identify with from time to time).

I don't know where the next generation of artists in shinpads is coming from but the sooner we strip the hype away the sooner they'll be unearthed. For example, Wayne Rooney (aged 9? or whatever) isn't the Messiah, he's a half-decent player with the potential to maybe one day become a decent player. The most vulnerable victims of hype are the players themselves, particularly young players. Stein, McLean, Clough and Ferguson would never tolerate anyone thinking they were the finished article – true purveyors of the philosophy of continuous improvement. There's no room in the game now for their autocratic style apparently – the bland leading the bland is the order of the day.

Things change though, and often unexpectedly and for the better. Forty years ago in the Deep South a hundred white men chasing a black man would be the Ku Klux Klan – now it's the US Masters Golf. Not so long ago we were told the printed word was dead and future generations would just log on and tune out and laugh at the very concept of "a book" ... then Harry Potter ghosted in at the far post – back of the net!

■ *Frank Reilly used to be a Dundee United supporter.*



■ **Letters and contributions (which we may edit) are welcome and should be sent to the editor – contact details on page 2.**

Another contribution from the rapidly developing Scottish Film industry, *The Last Great Wilderness* is the debut full length feature from the acclaimed Scottish shorts director David McKenzie (he has already followed this up with *Young Adam* starring Ewan McGregor and Tilda Swinton, which has been selected for this year's Cannes Film Festival).

The film opens with Charlie (Alistair McKenzie, David's brother and star of *Monarch of the Glen*) taking a break at a motorway service station from his journey up to Skye, where he intends to burn down his former lover's new pop star boyfriend's house. He meets up, rather unwillingly, with Vincente, an on-the-run gigolo, who made the mistake of sleeping with the wife of a gangster boss. He persuades Charlie to give him a lift to a remote airfield, where he intends to fly off to Spain and safety.

The pair develop an uneasy friendship on the road, which is just as well for Vincente, who just escapes being assailed by the gangster thugs on arrival at the airport, when Charlie breaks through the fence in his car, to rescue his former passenger, and head off on the road again through the desolate highlands.

When their car breaks down, they take refuge at an isolated refuge (called "The Last Great Wilderness"), which turns out to be a refuge for lost souls, ranging from agoraphobics (hilariously played by *Chewin' the Fat's* Ford

Kiernan) to sex addicts, and run by Ruairidh (David Hayman), a kind of reclusive, highland sage with a dark edge.

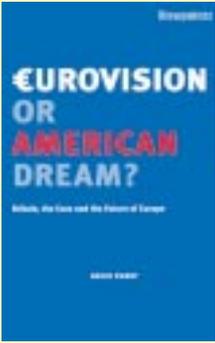
At this point the film moves on from being a bizarre, comic thriller road movie, to another strange mix of highland gothic, film noir and surreal comedy, as the two central characters slide all too easily into the general atmosphere of the refuge, their own skeletons slowly emerging from their cupboards.

To say this is a difficult film to pigeonhole would be a gross understatement. The film takes us to places rarely explored in filmmaking. It mixes in influences from films such as *The Wicker Man*, through John Boorman's *Deliverance*, with touches of Hammer Horror, Hitchcock, and Roman Polanski thrown in for good measure, and all bound in a surreal setting. But don't feel that it's some kind of mish-mash – it's a very intelligent film.

The end result is a hugely enjoyable film that can switch from farcical comedy to thriller within a couple of heartbeats, backed by a soundtrack from Glasgow band the *Pastels*.

The film was produced by Gillian Berrie, this being her debut production. Amongst her many challenges on this film was apparently sorting out film locations in the midst of the foot and mouth outbreak. She has formed Sigma films with David McKenzie, so let's hope they can continue to produce Scottish films of this quality. Catch it if you can!
Steve Mathewson

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Eurovision or American Dream? Britain, the Euro and the Future of Europe

By David Purdy, £3.99

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Eurovision or American Dream? assesses New Labour's prevarications over the euro and the EU's deliberations about its future against the background of transatlantic discord.

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Scotlands of the Future: Sustainability in a Small Nation

Edited by Eurig Scandrett, £7.99

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Devolution has given Scotland a growing confidence. With our educated population and natural resources, we are a wealthy nation. Our parliament has high ideals and strong aspirations, our civil society is robust and people are keen to improve their quality of life.

Yet Scotland is unsustainable. We continue to generate inequality and environmental damage: at home, abroad and across generations. In Scotland, as in other countries, the poorest people live in the most degraded environments. Yet collectively we are rich and our way of life impacts unjustly both on poor people in other parts of the world and on future generations.

This book is a contribution to building a sustainable economy in Scotland, a change that requires action at all levels of society. The authors are all working for a sustainable economy at the front line: within trade unions, business organisations, the women's movement and environmental groups, as well as in Scotland's parliament. They bring their experiences of transforming the real world to their vision of a transformed Scotland.

Contributors: Mark Ballard, Council Convener, Scottish Green Party; Sarah Boyack, MSP for Edinburgh Central; Stuart Duffin, Chief Executive, West Lothian Chamber of Commerce; Osbert Lancaster, Executive Director, Centre for Human Ecology; Richard Leonard, Industrial Organiser GMB and former Chair, Scottish Labour Party; Barbara MacLennan, International Association for Feminist Economics; Eurig Scandrett, Friends of the Earth Scotland; Mary Spowart, Independent and Parliamentary Researcher.



Scotland: Land and Power

By Andy Wightman, £5.00

The book that informed much of the debate on the recent Scottish Parliament land reform legislation, Andy Wightman's book is required reading, raising many long-term issues that still await resolution.

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