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which strategies? Page 7

Law change would allow councils to  
MSPs asked  
to legalise red  
light zones

radical feminist green

# Perspectives

AUTUMN 2002 / £2

Gerry Hassan on  
**The Scots**  
**self-preservation**  
**society:**  
**the limits of**  
**devolution**  
**and the**  
**politics of caution**

MAGAZINE OF SCOTLAND'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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## CONVENER'S COLUMN

# UNCERTAIN TIMES – MAKING POSITIVE POLITICAL CONNECTIONS

Living with the threat of war is terrifying. It is obviously threatening for those that live in direct fear of aggression and worse still for those that are exposed to brutality and death. But in a global context it harms us all. War is the negation of the political. It's about power. Blair's enthusiasm to embrace post-“cold war” imperialism contributes massively to us living in an uncertain world. His support for the Bush-led unilateralism flies in the face of popular opinion. Bush: the man who stole his election “victory” in the United States. The action of these men, and those around them damages democracy.

Whether the motivation is vengeance, resources, control or all of these it needs to be made clear that the beneficiaries of war are never the poor, the powerless or those with the closest links to our environment. The motivations of those that call for war are very strong. Yet millions are opposed. Thousands protest and march. People of all ages and races are saying no. The Left is not new to opposing dictators, challenging inequality and building solidarity. We need to create some uncertainty of our own.

At one time Labour politicians (at least some of them) would have opposed war. They would have also resisted privatisation and the supremacy of the market in every aspect of our lives. But Blair is for increasing uncertainty. The public sector needs to take more risks. With private finance initiatives (PFIs) Blair and Brown advocate that we take the risks and the private sector take the profit. Yet



**It means making life a little less certain for those that tell us there's no alternative.**

resistance appears to be alive in the unions. New Labour are uncertain of getting their candidates elected.

Those that view society from the perspective of the inequalities between men and women, between rich and poor or on the basis of its impact on the environment, need to call for their own modernisation – one that moves away from inadequate, unresponsive and, at times, inhuman services. This modernisation should not be dependent on the chaos and injustice of making money from people's needs but must involve people in sharing the caring and the costs of being part of a mature and developing community.

Waking up to the fact that politics has been stolen from us might be a big revelation for some. The established political parties are becoming ever more distant from the constituencies they pretend to represent. They have vested interest in “proving” to us that politics is boring and irrelevant.

Building alliances around the issues above, and that are contained within this copy of *Perspectives*, is something Democratic Left wants to be a part of. That's not just about making politics nicer or facilitating worthy discussions. It's about campaigning for change and thinking seriously about the alternatives to what we have now and in the future.

It means making positive political connections with others and making life a little less certain for those that tell us there's no alternative.

**Stuart Fairweather**  
*Convener, Democratic Left Scotland*



## EURIG SCANDRETT'S



I've managed to fit in two holidays this year, one of the advantages of working in a job share. The opportunity for the first came from my partner Susan's attendance at a meeting of the DASI partners (Domestic Abuse Strategy Intervention) in the north of Italy. Attending a public conference on domestic abuse provided a valuable lesson in the importance of feminism and the women's movement. In Italy, with the exception of a free telephone helpline run by volunteers, services for women are largely controlled by non-feminist, liberal professionals. Liberals and feminists agree on the need to tackle the terrible human costs of domestic abuse. However, within the narrow confines of liberalism, domestic abuse is a problem of a dysfunctional family, mental illness, substance abuse and so on, and the objective is to return (sic) the situation to the healthy individual in a "functioning" family. For feminists domestic abuse is the policing of patriarchy. It is the front line in the more ambitious battle for gender equality, alongside women's pay, share of childcare, nursery places, glass ceilings, political representation and so on.

The holidays, in northern Italy, and north-west Scotland provide an interesting comparison. The Dolomites, as with Sutherland, are a mountainous region. Comparisons can't be over-played – the

Dolomites are vast, young, high mountains in the middle of a land-mass, with a continental/Mediterranean influenced climate and have been the front line in both European world wars. In Italy however, where land ownership is not dominated by landlordism, the region is populated by apparently thriving communities. There is a good forest cover and most towns have an industrial area and a degree of productive activity other than tourism. The tourist industry is however expanding, especially for winter skiing. Planning restraints appear to be poor and there are clearly problems with rapid and insensitive development. However, it shows what can be done in Scotland, if we can maintain our planning system against the pressures of the developers but get rid of the big landlords.

On return, news coverage was saturated by four big stories. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, the anniversary of the twin towers attack, the extradition moves against Warren Anderson for his responsibility for the Bhopal industrial massacre and the heightened rhetoric in the US around a war against Iraq. However, even the more liberal and analytical news programmes are scarcely making the links. The failure of the US authorities to process the extradition to India of Warren Anderson, the MD of

**Those who died in the Bhopal industrial massacre and in the twin towers terrorist attack are both victims of the same global economic dominance of American capitalism.**

Union Carbide at the time that the company's Bhopal factory leaked gas and killed 3000 people immediately, and many thousands more subsequently, contrasts with the mass patriotic emotionalism of the "attack on America" which killed 3000 people. In a sense, those who died in the Bhopal industrial massacre and in the twin towers terrorist attack are both victims of the same global economic dominance of American capitalism. Meanwhile, at the World Summit, the beneficiary of global capitalism – big business – is promoted as the solution to sustainable development, whilst Bush is too busy ratcheting up the war rhetoric at home to bother delivering this message to the rest of the world's leaders in Johannesburg. If you ever wanted a tableau of the new world economic order, then here it is.

During the cold war the dominant American discourse "better dead than red" meant that a nuclear holocaust putting at risk life on earth was preferable to life under a Communist government. Today, George W. Bush tears up Kyoto and sabotages Johannesburg on the basis that US citizens prioritise their cars above the survival of future generations. A case of better dead than green?

■ *Eurig Scandrett is a Green activist and member of Democratic Left Scotland's National Council.*

# THE SCOTS SELF-PRESERVATION SOCIETY

More than three years into the Scottish Parliament, the public attitude towards politics seems to be one of ever greater cynicism and disengagement. With elections due next year, **Gerry Hassan** puts the case for living dangerously to challenge the politics of despair and disillusion.

Scotland has been a busy place in the last few years – as the Scottish Parliament and new institutions, structures and processes have been put in place. We now have a complex multi-layering of bodies and governance, and more politicians and elections than we have ever had before. And we have seen lots of exciting, interesting and controversial things occur: from the election of Labour at Westminster in 1997, to the “Yes, Yes” referendum, setting up of the Parliament, and the constant changing of Scotland’s First Minister: the tragic death of Donald Dewar, tragic and farcical reign of Henry McLeish and surprise arrival of Jack McConnell.

However, for all this change, excitement and sometimes haphazardness, devolution has left a sense of disappointment and disillusion across wide sections of Scottish society. Some of this is a cynical, dumbing-down media pursuing an anti-Scottish agenda, and some of it is Scots’ love of dismissing anything they create themselves in a mentality of pessimism and self-defeatism. And some of it is the transition from the pre-devolution “fantasy Braveheart Parliament”, an embodiment of national identity, into a conventional political institution. But it is much more than that reflecting the scant resources of the Scottish political

classes and the centre-left who dominate Scotland. There is a lack of imagination and urgency in these circles about bringing a politics of change to Scotland, in part because of the institutional dominance of Labour, and because of the strength of a Scottish social democratic consensus which became stronger and all-persuasive in the 1980s, and viewed Thatcherism, New Labour and any other perspectives as unnecessary to Scottish conditions. Thus, the dominant political sentiment of the early years of devolution has been of conservation and preservation, rather than change, and where there is change, of cautious, incremental change, rather than transformative change.

## A SMALL COUNTRY

Scotland is a small country, often described as a village – a place where everyone who is somebody knows everybody else. It is a sort of self-preservation society to invoke the gang in the Michael Caine film *The Italian Job* of the 1960s. In the right-wing circles of Andrew Neil and others, the “village Scotland” view is used to rage against the crimes of Labour municipal rule and Scots collective complacencies. However, to *The Herald*’s Alf Young, the Neil argument is a myth, used by those who disparage Scotland to emphasise

its claustrophobia and centre-left comfy consensus. Instead, he argues there is a cluster of villages, with their own spheres of influence and specialisms, and which do not speak to each other.

This echoes Anthony Sampson's original *Anatomy of Britain* published forty years ago, in which his critique of the establishment accused businessmen, politicians and scientists of not working together effectively enough for the greater good. Amateurism and the cult of the gentleman ruled. In modern day Scotland, many of the elites across politics, business and the civil service, do regularly meet. Whilst their interests are distinct, there are many common views. It has been called "dinner table leadership", where key individuals from a certain stratum of society, eat, drink and dine each day of the week for Scotland, selflessly putting themselves out for the good of the common weal. Elites by their nature meet and network, gossip and trade information across Scotland in public and private. The effect is the creation of a narrow Scottish consensus, the closing down of wider debate and the suffocating of dissident opinions.

### **A SCOTTISH ESTABLISHMENT?**

Does any of this amount to a Scottish establishment? Magnus Linklater, ex-Chair of the Scottish Arts Council and previously editor of *The Scotsman*, stated ten years ago that "it would be very hard to talk of a Scottish establishment" and that "the notion of clubland, it seems, is alien to the Scottish character". Perhaps the social whirl of being part of elite Scotland does not allow these individuals the time to reflect on their position and privilege. But it does allow a certain kind of lifestyle, of comfortable living at home and abroad. It also bestows a certain kind of status and influence that allows these people to shape things and get things done. And, of course, this elite Scotland is concentrated in certain groups and parts of Scotland that has consequences for how this country

develops and how decisions are made.

The Scottish Parliament was meant to change things. Expectations at the outset were high that the greater scrutiny and accountability intended of devolution would challenge some of the old ways of working and centres of power. It was hoped that where discussions and decisions were made previously behind closed doors, devolution would kick open those doors and bring new light to bear on the workings of Scottish life.

### **UNRECONSTRUCTED LABOUR**

With only a short while to the end of the Parliament's first term, an interim assessment of the extent to which devolution has effected Scotland, and shifted power and influence would have to be very cautious indeed. Instead of "new politics" shaped by consultation and transparency, as Iain Macwhirter makes clear in the newly-published *Anatomy of the New Scotland*, we have seen the power of the unreconstructed Labour state. Its patronage and networks extend into every part of Scottish public life. Some of this came to light in the Henry McLeish "Officegate" scandal, where a whole set of shady arrangements between party, trade unions, business and local government, became public.

Scotland has long been run by such arrangements – by Labour machine politicians, and before them by Tory toffs and Liberal patricians. And to some powerful voices in Labour and its extended establishment, devolution was not primarily about bringing about change, but cementing and institutionalising Labour's dominance of public life. That conflict between expectations and reality has been one of the main stories of the early years of devolution.

Scotland now has a much wider political class. However it is questionable whether they govern Scotland, or even shape and steer policy. There have been innumerable task forces and reports but the

**Scotland has long been run by such arrangements – by Labour machine politicians, and before them by Tory toffs and Liberal patricians.**

sum of their parts is less than the whole. There has been a lack of vision and any sense of fundamental change; there has been a lot of tinkering, initiatives and giving small amounts of money to every pet project. Others, whilst worthy, such as the social justice strategy, lack effective delivery. A pile of papers does not create a stepping stone to a more successful, inclusive Scotland.

### **VESTED INTEREST GROUPS**

Muir Russell's recent announcement of his departure to be Principal of Glasgow University next year also suggests that the dichotomy of "old" and "new" Scotland is not clear-cut. The former Scottish Office was part of the cosy, quiet arrangements that ran Scotland pre-devolution. The early years of devolution have been marked by continuity, more than change, and this is in part due to the influence of the civil service, who have at points run rings round some ministers, and prevented others doing anything. We are still stuck in outdated notions of public administration and delivery. Public policy issues facing government and public agencies are ever more complex, yet the civil service model is still a Victorian hierarchical one. In the case of the Scottish Office/Executive, it has been shaped for years by the power of producer and vested interest groups (teachers, unions, lawyers, business groups) that it is no surprise the last example of an innovative piece of legislation pre-devolution was the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

Seen in this context, the Muir Russell-Jack McConnell episode is an irrelevance. Both profess to be modernisers in their respective areas, but both are imbued with the conservative cultures of their organisations – one the civil service, the other the West of Scotland Labour machine. Both in different ways reflect the compromises reformers have to make to get on in Scotland, and the obstacles and ambiguities which face any real, far-reaching change.



Business too has accommodated rather than changed with devolution. The extended network of Scotland's business class and its plethora of business organisations such as the Confederation of British industry and the Institute of Directors long opposed devolution pre-1999 but seem quite content with it now. They seem very happy with the new processes of devolution. They have easy and endless access and consultation. And participation gives them a sense of self-importance and a feeling they are at the centre of things, not just being listened to but actively affecting decision-making. With Wendy Alexander as Enterprise minister, they felt that they had a champion; they are less sure of Iain Gray.

### GLASGOW DIMINISHED

Some places, as well as people, have gained more from devolution than others. Edinburgh has begun to gain more status, more public jobs and private investment as power and wealth concentrates in and around it. In a paradoxical sense, devolution is leading to an increased concentration of public life and resources around the capital. Glasgow is being diminished by this rise. Glasgow male life expectancy is still 66 years – the UK average 36 years ago and the degree and extent of poverty in parts of Glasgow shows no sign of improvement, and is disconnected from growth and affluence in other parts of the city, let alone across wider Scotland.

The Parliament has done many good things, but it has sucked up power and absorbed attention. Parts of Scots civic society, in par-

**In a paradoxical sense, devolution is leading to an increased concentration of public life and resources around Edinburgh.**

ticular local government, have been diminished. And there is a huge void in debates about its future. As George Kerevan argues in the *Anatomy of the New Scotland*, that debate has concentrated on the detail of voting systems rather than on the big question about the purpose and vision of local government under devolution. Proportional representation for local government on its own will undermine the basis of one-party Labour rule across the west of Scotland, but will not tackle the culture of local government, the calibre of councillors, or the lack of energy and talent at the heart of Scotland's councils.

### CAUTION AND CONSERVATISM

Scotland is still a society defined by caution and conservatism, by a fear of change, and a sense of conformity, and unease with difference and people who stand out. Large parts of elite Scotland think that the country is doing fine, and, for sure, some parts and some people are thriving. But it is a different story in the parts of Scotland devolution was meant to reach: disadvantaged and excluded Scotland. For these people and their communities, little has changed. At best they remain impatient for change, at worst they are becoming disengaged and disillusioned.

Scottish devolution righted a wrong at the heart of Scottish politics – of a “democratic deficit” caused by minority Tory rule in distant Westminster. However,

once this injustice has been rectified by a parliament – providing a voice, where once there was a void and silence – it has been driven by caution and a lack of imagination. Part of this is the power of the Labour establishment in Scotland, content to get their hands on the levers of influence and status, but part of it is also the lack of drive and radicalism in civil society, business Scotland and the other institutions of public life. The next year will clearly see more of the same with a “safety first” Jack McConnell administration avoiding any mistakes and not taking any risks faced by a lifeless SNP under John Swinney's uncharismatic leadership. Thus, the contours of politics towards the 2003 elections have been set. In the short run, this will produce a second Labour-Lib Dem administration, but in the long run, it will reinforce a politics of little change and limited aspirations, where at its worst, small-minded municipalism is left running Labour and large parts of Scotland. It is time for those who dared to think of a different potential for devolution to begin thinking and living a little more dangerously, and challenge this politics of despair and defeatism.

■ *Gerry Hassan's latest books are Anatomy of the New Scotland: Power, Influence and Change, Mainstream £20.00, and Tomorrow's Scotland, Lawrence and Wishart £14.99.*

## Developing Perspectives

Regular readers of **Perspectives** will have noticed a number of changes with this issue. Building on some of the developments in the last few editions, this one boasts a new layout and masthead, a full colour cover, a consolidation of the 20 page size and a commitment to regular quarterly production. We hope you like it.

We plan to make further changes over the next issue or two, including exploring wider availability in bookshops and other outlets.

However, subscriptions are a core part of our circulation, ensuring you get your copy, by post, as soon as it is printed and also helping provide a steady income to cover production costs. Subscribing (£8 for four issues, post free) costs no more than the normal cover price. So please, complete the form on page nine and take out a subscription (for yourself) or two (for a friend as well)!

Any comments about the development of **Perspectives** are very welcome and should be sent to the editor at the address on page two. Thanks your support.

# WHAT STRATEGIES ARE NEEDED TO TACKLE PROSTITUTION?

Contrasting approaches to tackling prostitution in Glasgow and Edinburgh were the subject of much media attention during the summer. **Jan Macleod** examines the issues at stake.

A commonly expressed view is that prostitution is “the oldest profession”, and so the “realistic” approach must be to accept it as inevitable. Another view, much promoted by businesses and organisations which profit from the commercial sexual exploitation of women, is that prostitution is a “sexually liberating” and rewarding experience for women. This view is often promoted by prostitute rights organisations, and this has caused some confusion within the women’s movement, particularly since women’s organisations in Scotland have only recently begun to place prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation within the spectrum of male violence. In sharp contrast, feminist writers and thinkers, including Sheila Jeffreys, Andrea Dworkin and Kathleen Barry, have highlighted that prostitution is being increasingly industrialised and internationalised, with women’s bodies seen as a resource or commodity. Prostituted women have little or no control over, or access to, the vast amounts of money raised through prostitution. From this stance it becomes clear that, to be effective, any approach to prostitution must have both short and long term strategies in place: the answer does not lie in short term or piecemeal measures. Above all you need to have the commitment to end prostitution.

## EDINBURGH Vs GLASGOW?

Any understanding of the importance of this commitment has been sadly lacking in recent media debates on prostitution. For example, media debate on the “Prostitution Tolerance Zone” Bill proposed by Margo MacDonald, MSP, has characterised the “Edinburgh” view as liberal, pragmatic and forward thinking, whilst Glasgow City Council, which opposes the proposal, has been

Media debate on the “Prostitution Tolerance Zone” Bill proposed by Margo MacDonald, MSP, has characterised the “Edinburgh” view as liberal, pragmatic and forward thinking, whilst Glasgow City Council, which opposes the proposal, has been stigmatised as moralistic, judgemental and backward.



stigmatised as moralistic, judgemental and backward. The Edinburgh “side” claims that tolerance zones bring increased safety for women. Opponents say that the same benefits can be achieved without bringing in legislation. Very little has been said about the harm caused through prostitution: scant attention has been given to the harm caused to individual women through physical assault from men buying sex, but what about the harm caused to women through the actual activity of prostitution, and the harm caused to families and to communities, particularly where street prostitution takes place?

The Routes Out of Prostitution Social Inclusion Partnership, based in Glasgow, aims to prevent vulnerable women entering prostitution and to support women who wish to get out.<sup>1</sup> The Partnership is one of a few organisations in Scotland currently working to address this broader agenda of harm caused through prostitution. The Partnership has publicly stated that it believes that prostitution is neither acceptable nor inevitable, and that it is no more unrealistic to challenge the harm caused by prostitution than it is to challenge the harm caused by other forms of social exclusion such as poverty, addiction or domestic violence.

In developing any strategy for responding to prostitution it is necessary to have an understanding of the real nature of the problem, and this must include some

## STRATEGIES TO TACKLE PROSTITUTION

places. And exacer- and a control over what services they will perform. On the street, very few women will do anal and few do sex



NO CHOICE: DCI Pollock says women drift into prostitution to survive.

'Toleration zones mean no policing, which is even more dangerous for women . . . and in saunas they have even less control'

without a condom. But in the saunas, the owners, who obviously don't want their punters going away

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### Legalisation of prostitution makes money for men and for the state. It does not improve the situation of prostituted women and children.

olds and trafficking, whilst supporting prostitution as legitimate work. If you take this view, how do you respond to women who enter prostitution under the age of eighteen? How do you distinguish between forced and free prostitution?

Work hazards associated with prostitution include risk of pregnancy, high abortion rate, HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual assault, rape and murder. Women in prostitution report higher than usual levels of physical and mental ill health. Melissa Farley of Prostitution Research and Education found that women in prostitution scored higher levels for post traumatic stress than did Vietnam veterans.<sup>2</sup> Does anyone really want to hold a position that says that it is reasonable for women to work in a profession where these risks occur on an every day basis?

Regarding prostitution as legitimate work raises a number of questions. Would information on prostitution be included in careers advice to young people? Would a woman be penalised by the benefits system if she refused a job in prostitution? In the Netherlands, where some aspects of prostitution have been legalised, government "health and safety" guidelines caused an outrage: whilst the Government set a minimum standard of one pillow per bed, the brothel owners protested that women refused to work with pillows due to the constant danger of being suffocated by a "customer".

### PROSTITUTION IS JUST SEX

The sex of prostitution is the male supremacy model of sex.

Through prostitution men are able to purchase forms of sex which feminists have campaigned and fought against, including sex with underage girls, unwanted sex, violent sex, sex without respect or equality. Any form of sexual violence against women can be bought in prostitution.

There is a difference between "consensual sex", "non-consensual sex" and "unwanted sex".

Prostituted women are very clear that although they may consent to the sex of prostitution, it is unwanted sex. This causes severe and lasting psychological harm. Although research shows that women working in indoor prostitution report fewer serious physical assaults from men than do women involved in street prostitution, there is also evidence that women who work indoors experience at least as much psychological harm as women on the street.

### PROSTITUTION REDUCES VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

It is sometimes said that prostitution reduces violence against women but for this argument to make any sense you have to completely disregard all violence against prostituted women. Prostitution routinely involves both paid for and not paid for violence. Prostituted women collect the hate of men who hate women and of men who hate sexuality.

Groups campaigning against prostitution, including ex-prostituted women, are beginning to name prostitution as "bought rape", and as "commercial sexual exploitation".

### OPTIONS FOR RESPONDING

**Legalisation.** The only arguments for legalisation relate to men's comfort and ease of conscience. Legalisation of prostitution makes money for men and for the state. It does not improve the situation of prostituted women and children.

In areas where legislation has gone ahead, for example in some parts of Australia, street prostitution, prostitution of underage girls, and trafficking of women and children have continued to flourish.

**Harm reduction.** Harm reduction work has mainly focused on public health concerns, for example control of HIV and other infectious diseases and distribution of condoms, and on personal safety advice for women. Harm reduction is a necessary response for the short term – but we also should be

understanding as to the cause. It is helpful to look in more depth at some of the commonly held views on prostitution.

### PROSTITUTION AS CHOICE

Prostitution is never a free choice for women. Women speak of childhood experiences of sexual and physical violence and neglect, and of adult experiences of homelessness, poverty, domestic violence, addiction, bereavement and mental health problems. These are some of the factors that cause vulnerable women to enter prostitution. This should not be mistaken with the cause of prostitution itself, which is of course the demand from men. "Choosing" prostitution is a politically, socially and economically constructed choice. Women couldn't "choose" prostitution if the institution of prostitution didn't exist. It is set up by men for men's interests. Globally, fifty percent of women enter prostitution under the age of eighteen. "Prostitution as choice" is a woman-blaming argument.

### PROSTITUTION AS WORK

Internationally there has been a shift towards viewing prostitution as legitimate work. There are contradictions between opposing prostitution of under eighteen year



working to end prostitution forever. Current harm reduction does little or nothing to tackle the harm caused through the activity of prostitution itself.

**Tolerance Zones.** This is an “out of sight, out of mind” approach that abandons prostituted women.

Violence and crime thrives in tolerance zones, including wars between organised crime groups fighting over territory and profit. Supporters of this approach argue that tolerance zones improve women’s safety. In fact the one major advantage for women is that they would not get arrested for soliciting, thereby removing the current gender inequality that exists in the law. However claims for improved safety are dubious. For a start many women are picked up by car and taken out with the “zone”. All of these benefits could be better achieved through other means, including the decriminalising of soliciting, without the legitimisation of prostitution that is implied in the creation of a “tolerance zone”.

**Decriminalisation.** As has been said, all approaches need to start from the position that prostitution must be ended.

Many campaigning groups, including the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, support the decriminalisation of prostitution for women. It is very important to include the decriminalisation of street prostitution. Prostituted women have already been punished and violated. They should not be punished again through the law.

In order to be effective the decriminalisation of prostituted women must be accompanied by:

- criminalisation of third parties profiting from prostitution.
- criminalisation of men buying prostitution. Sweden has recently taken up this option and has criminalised the buying of sexual services.
- services to help women get out of prostitution, including shelters, education programmes, targeted drug rehabilitation programmes.

# Murder warning over pros

**Tolerance zone in Edinburgh is a must, says support worker**

GRAEME SMITH

A WARNING that it is “almost inevitable” that a woman will be murdered if a tolerance zone for prostitution is not reintroduced in Edinburgh has been given by a

could face prosecution under plans to arrest offenders drawn up by Labour to crack down on the street sex trade.

The drive follows the enforcement of a zero-tolerance policy over brothels by Glasgow City Council, which moved last week to close two of the city’s longest-running “saunas”.

In Aberdeen, the only Scottish city still with a prostitution tolerance zone, the council leader is calling for things to be taken a step further with brothels being

port group Scot Pep, issues the murder warning in a documentary focusing on the tolerance zone near Aberdeen’s harbour.

“If we fail to reintroduce a zone in Edinburgh I think it is absolutely inevitable that we will see a woman murdered. I think it’s inevitable we will see a phenomenal rise in violence and attacks against women and I think it is inevitable we will see under 16-year-olds back involved in street prostitution in Edinburgh,” she said.

Speaking on The Zone, which

she said: “If we don’t have a tolerance zone we have to come up with strategies about how we are going to protect these women.”

Aberdeen’s four-street zone was established two years ago by Grampian Police, who believe it is the best way to manage a situation that cannot be eliminated. There are an estimated 200 prostitutes on the city’s streets, the vast majority working to feed their drug habit.

Although nearby residents believe the tolerance zone has worsened their situation because of increased publicity in recent

Aberdeen City Council leader, backs it and would like to see things go even further.

“I think it’s better to control the problem and be able to deal with it in a particular area,” he said. “I’d like to go a lot further and have prostitution decriminalised, then we could set up proper houses for it just like they do in Holland.”

“The prostitutes themselves would be looked after in terms of their health. It’s known that some of these women get beaten and battered.”

The zone is adjacent to one of

development which comes soon, and regeneration opened in closure of

As new into Leith forced out regarded practical that will n Grampian see the 23 tendent f won’t be prostitution

(One town in Norway reduced the number of prostituted women from around 300 to 60 through using the above measures.)

- education on prostitution, including inclusion of information on prostitution in school sex education programmes.
- development of “john schools” as in San Francisco and Bradford. Men found buying sexual services have to pay for and attend an education course on prostitution. Ex-prostituted women are involved in the delivery of the course. (In Scotland this would require the creation of a new offence equivalent to “kerb crawling”.)

How realistic is it to hope for such a change of attitude? Well, people said that it would be impossible to end slavery but we now have a situation where slavery is

**Prostituted women have already been punished and violated. They should not be punished again through the law.**

illegal throughout the world. Although people are still living in conditions of slavery, this is no longer legal slavery and there are rights and legal protection that can be applied to the situation. We can all contribute to achieving similar change for women abused in prostitution, simply by refusing that there is anything natural or inevitable about that abuse.

■ *Jan Macleod is Chairperson of Routes of Prostitution.*

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- 2) *Prostitution, Violence against Women and Post Traumatic Stress* by Melissa Farley, PhD, 1998.

Acknowledgement to Sheila Jeffreys, author of *The Idea of Prostitution*, Spinifex, 1997.

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# EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP:

Citizenship education means something quite distinct from simply training people to be “good citizens”, argues **Ian Martin**. The whole concept must flow from an understanding of democracy, social justice and equality.

“Debating the citizenship debate” means asking some awkward questions.

Citizenship education has received more than usual amounts of attention both in Scotland and in the UK as a whole. Whilst this may be welcomed, my purpose here is to focus on what seems to be missing from the current debate about education and citizenship. I want to fill in some of the blanks – so that the debate can be more open and honest, democratic and creative. In doing this, I do not speak for an educational sector or an institutional or professional interest. Rather, I want to speak from a particular tradition of critical, social purpose adult education – and consequently for a political and ideological position.

This kind of adult education has always been centrally concerned with issues of citizenship and democracy. “Debating the citizenship debate” from this perspective means asking some awkward questions.

We live in strange times. Times with which I find it difficult not to feel decidedly out of joint. This is partly because I want to argue that in “debating the citizenship debate”, our starting point should be that we cannot speak of citizenship without speaking of democracy, and we cannot speak of democracy without speaking of social justice and equality. In my view, education for citizenship, as distinct from training people to be “good citizens”, must start from this vital set of moral, political and material connections.

## REASSERTING THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION

I have always been a socialist and internationalist, and, as I look back, I realise that this is one of the reasons why I chose to work in adult education. As a child of the Sixties, I believed we could make a better world, and that education – and, specifically, a particular kind of adult education – had an important part to play in this process. And I still do.

I don’t mean “socialism” in some complicated or doctrinaire sense, but actually in a very simple and straightforward way. This expresses three core beliefs: first, that all human beings, whatever their differences, share what Raymond Williams called an “essential equality of being”; second, that as human beings we are social and political animals, meaning that our individuality and humanity reaches its highest expression in relationships, collective endeavour and caring about each other; and therefore, third, that human society, including its material and cultural resources, should as far as possible be organised to honour this shared equality of being and, in doing so, enhance our capacity to be human and to live in a meaningful, fulfilled and useful way. This, it seems to me, is essentially what moral democracy and civic virtue should be about.

There is, of course, a key role for education in all of this – and particularly adult education, as history has shown. One cannot but be disappointed, then, by what Ruth Lister (2001) calls the “PAP” of New

# SOME IF AND BUTS

Labour: its populism and pragmatism – in other words its concern to “woo” rather than “lead” the electorate – and its insistent mantra that “What matters is what works”, and, of course, the managerialist gloss and “spin” that goes with this – which, incidentally, does so much to put ordinary citizens off politics, *actively to de-activate* them.

## ADULT EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP: SETTING THE PARAMETERS, ENTERING THE CAVEATS

In thinking about “education for citizenship”, it is first necessary to reach some clarity about what education can and cannot be expected to do. I confine myself to five points:

First, what is the nature of the state’s current interest in citizenship? The disabled scholar and activist Michael Oliver (1996) writes: “It seems that when the relationship between the State and its population is in crisis, citizenship becomes the device whereby such a crisis is talked about and mediated.”

Is there a crisis? If so, what is the nature of this crisis? Is it about political legitimacy and popular participation in the system? Is it about consensual meritocracy and law and order? Is it about the place of the “other” in our social and political life? Or is it about not asking different kinds of questions about the way we live? We need to think about this.

Second, true citizenship presupposes a “rough equality of condition” (Miliband, 1994). Here I must, in passing, point out the coyness of the currently fashionable discourse of “social capital” about such matters. By “condition” I understand both people’s material circumstances and a political culture in which they are treated as citizens, that is with dignity, honesty and justice. Of course, part of problem with so-called “spin” is that it is deeply contemptuous of the citizen’s right to know, to understand and to be trusted. And, incidentally, we need to know much more about the wider political economy of trust – the material and cultural conditions which predispose us to trust each other and our leaders. The main point is that any government interested in citizenship education has a primary role and duty to create the *educative conditions* in which citizens learn to be informed and active because they are trusted as social actors and political agents.

This leads directly to the third point: we must also think about the wider socio-economic context in which we are called upon to act as citizens. We live in an increasingly globalised system of production, distribution and exchange which systematically generates very different and unequal conditions of citizenship.

Fourth, educators should consider carefully the realistic and legitimate aims and objectives of their work. I repeat the salutary warning of the sociologist A.H. Halsey (1972) that we should avoid treating “education as the waste paper basket of social policy –

The educational space for “deliberative democracy”, in which citizens learn, on their own terms, to be active in their own communities, workplaces and social movements as well as the wider body politic has, in effect, been closed down.

a repository for dealing with social problems where solutions are uncertain or where there is a disinclination to wrestle with them seriously.”

Fifth, in all of this we are, of course, talking about a particular tradition of adult education and education for citizenship. This tradition insists that in the kind of individualistic and unequal society we live in, adult education must remain a *dissenting vocation*. Moreover, if we really are interested in democratic citizenship, we really must learn to *yearn* as well as *earn*.

My main point is that, as educators, we need to delimit rather carefully the interest in citizenship education for which we can reasonably be held accountable. Unless we do this, we will just end up, yet again, filling Halsey’s waste paper basket. We also need to think seriously about other, *non-educational* preconditions for citizenship like: how our electoral and parliamentary systems work, and in whose interests; how our education, health and welfare services continue to reproduce and, indeed, to legitimate inequality; how free we really are as citizens to know and say what, within reason, we want.

What all this suggests is that we should exercise considerable caution in assessing what education can and cannot be expected to do to create the conditions for active and democratic citizenship.

## LEARNING CITIZENSHIP: ADULT EDUCATION AS DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

Critical, social purpose adult education has, historically, been important and influential in contesting the terrain of citizenship and resourcing the process of *learning democracy*. This is partly because it has always recognised that education is a dialectical and contested field characterised by shifting conflicts, alliances and compromises between competing interests, and partly because it has always valued in ordinary people those two essential prerequisites of democratic life: the capacity for scepticism and the possibility of dissent.

Indeed, it is worth remembering that many of us have been lucky enough to be both the beneficiaries and the agents of precisely this kind of adult education. And if not, we don’t know what we’ve missed! But today, for a variety of reasons (none of them accidental), this kind of critical, engaged and open-ended adult education has almost completely disappeared – not least because it is precisely the kind of education which cannot be dumbed down to sound bites, bullet points or SMART targets. This is simply not how democracy, or learning democracy, works!

Despite all the apparent interest in citizenship education, there is almost none of this kind of citizens’ education left (at least within capital E education). It has been commodified, credentialised, incorporated, co-opted, marketised, competence-ised out of existence. In other words, the educational space for

## EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

“deliberative democracy”, in which citizens learn, on their own terms, to be active in their own communities, workplaces and social movements as well as the wider body politic has, in effect, been closed down.

There is also one particular respect in which the current debate about citizenship seems to be woefully (perhaps wilfully) ignorant. Feminist scholars argue that any inclusive model of citizenship must recognise a non-gendered “ethics of care” as a key dimension of citizenship, that is as a civic virtue which is equal and complementary to the dominant and almost entirely economic ethic of paid work. Similar arguments are now coming from the disabled people’s movement and some minority ethnic and cultural communities. What this means is finding new ways of thinking about citizenship and struggling for it.

So, in re-casting citizenship and trying to address the difficult notions of “cosmopolitan citizenship” and “solidarity in difference”, we must face up to the uncomfortable fact that the political economy of citizenship still reflects and reinforces the major social divisions of power in terms of class, gender and “race”, and systematically excludes many “others”. This is the importance of the emerging concept of “post-national democracy”, in other words a way of thinking about democracy, based on the recognition of fundamental and universal human rights, which combines political solidarity with social and cultural difference. It is now essential for us to start thinking about democratic citizenship in this expansive and non-national way.

But, of course, all of this runs quite counter to the economic and exclusionary discourse of citizenship that is embedded within current government policy.

### MAKING ANGER HOPEFUL

Real citizenship reflects and expresses people’s sense of political agency, that is their willingness and capacity to act as citizens. Developing agency is also the central purpose of adult education. Agency can, of course, be expressed in different ways: creatively, destructively or cynically. All too often nowadays agency is expressed as anger – sometimes disguised as apathy. This is certainly a problem for democracy, but it is also a possibility. What I want to suggest is that a key civic virtue in a democracy is the capacity for dissent and, if necessary, anger – or “legitimate rage” (Bourdieu, 1998).

**There is a great deal of “legitimate rage” around at the moment – but the government’s citizenship agenda seems to be constructed not to address it.**

There is a great deal of “legitimate rage” around at the moment – but the government’s citizenship agenda seems to be constructed not to address it. In this sense, the managerial state suffocates the politics of citizenship. Historically, adult education enabled angry people to use education as a resource, and sometimes as a weapon, in their own struggle for democracy and citizenship. So, in “debating the citizenship debate”, it is important to recognise that anger can be positive or negative, creative or destructive.

Citizenship education needs to start by confronting the Janus-faced nature of people’s anger, and making the most of it, because “Anger does not in itself produce a political programme for change, but it is perhaps the most basic political emotion. Without it, there is no hope.” (Franz Fanon, quoted in Turnbull, 2001)

And, of course, *making anger hopeful* is an educational task.

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# WHAT DOES THE SNP OFFER A REPUBLICAN?

The SNP recently published its draft *Constitution for a Free Scotland*. But, as **Robert Seaton** explains, that doesn't necessarily point to a queen-free future.

**T**he Scottish National Party is not officially a republican party, although almost certainly the majority of members are republicans, including me. This is an odd situation. Why is it so and what can the SNP offer a republican?

The simple argument for not becoming a republican party is that one should fight one constitutional issue at a time. The aim of attaining independence is more important and should not be confused with the another constitutional goal such as abolishing the monarchy.

This is a convenient argument, since republicans remain a minority in the population as a whole and the SNP, as a political party, wants to be elected. However, it also has some merit, since abolishing the monarchy is difficult even when republicans form a majority. The Australians set up a constitutional convention which debated the new republic for a year but in their referendum it was the proposed form of republic that lost, not the monarchy that won.

## CHOICE BY REFERENDUM

The SNP does offer citizens a choice by referendum on whether they want a monarchy during the first parliament of an independent state. Dealing with the problem after independence does fit with the sometimes millenarian tendency in the party. Nevertheless, one would hope that the SNP would support a referendum on the monarchy in the United Kingdom even before independence in the unlikely event that a unionist party proposes holding one.

The promise of a referendum post-independence would, by itself, seem a rather weak argument for republicans to gravitate to the SNP. What use is independence if it promises us nothing but the old injustices in a Scottish form?

## MONARCHY A BAD EXAMPLE

There are two aspects of the problem of monarchy. On the one hand there is the archaic nature of the institution, not just that it is an inherited office in a democracy, but that it encourages unearned privilege, that it attracts a reflexive deference from Government, that it maintains the Church of Scotland as established church and religion in Scotland and preserves the antique discrimination against Catholics and women as heirs. If an institution can be a bad example to society, then the monarchy certainly sets a bad example.

On the other hand, there is the question of the great legal powers of the monarchy and how they are exercised. In preserving its inherited position by staying above politics, the monarchy has lost its ability to act as a constitutional protection and delegated vast power to executive government. These include powers to make treaties and declare war without reference to Parliament, as well as to declare a state of emergency, requisition property or, in one particular case, ban a trade union. Great powers of patronage are also vested in government to appoint judges, peers, ministers, European commissioners, ambassadors and chairs of public bodies, establish royal commissions and award honours.



**If the Scottish people are sovereign, the person who fills the role of head of state is of less importance. The post is in their gift.**

What the SNP offers is limited government under a constitution. The latest edition of the draft Constitution for a Free Scotland was published on 16th September this year. It is the SNP's prospectus for independence and, for me, realises many aspirations without the form of a republic.

The written constitution gets rid of many of the oddities of monarchy. There is no coronation oath and no established church. There can be no discrimination on the grounds of religion since any law of succession must be subject to the rights guaranteed in constitution and discrimination is prohibited in their application. Acts of government, also, would be subject to the rights of the citizen guaranteed by the constitution. The rights guaranteed by the constitution include not only rights modelled on the European convention, but also, for instance, rights to education, to decent housing, to health care and to free access to the land of Scotland.

## PATRONAGE CURTAILED

The powers of patronage of the executive are curtailed. The appointment of ministers is subject to the approval of Parliament and the appointment of judges subject to an appointments commission whose independence is guaranteed. The powers to go to war and to make treaties are made specifically subject to Parliament's assent.

Lastly, the monarch will only exercise the powers of the head of state while in Scotland. When she is not in Scotland, the powers are exercised by the presiding officer in Parliament on the advice of ministers. Effectively the presiding officer becomes head of state, except on certain ceremonial occasions. The presiding officer represents more of a constitutional backstop than the monarch. The monarch will be very reluctant not to act on advice from ministers since the nature of the institution is such that to survive it must stay above politics.

The presiding officer is elected by a free and secret vote in Parliament. The constitutional convention on how and when the presiding officer acts on ministerial advice will have to develop but the presiding officer will have a stronger position of legitimacy than the monarch to restrain the executive.

### REPUBLIC ADVANCING

This limited constitutional monarchy is not going to be sufficient for anyone who objects to inheritance of an office in a democracy and I will still be voting for a republic in any future referendum. However, I believe that by the very existence now of democracy in the Scottish state through having a Parliament, the republic is advancing. This is the case in two respects.

First, privilege can be challenged in Parliament. When the Scottish Executive proposed that the Queen's private land, including fifty square miles of Aberdeenshire, should be exempted from the right to roam, Dennis Canavan shamed them into withdrawing.

Second, the process that re-established the Scottish Parliament demonstrated the Scottish people's right of self-determination. If they are sovereign, the person who fills the role of head of state is of less importance. The post is in their gift.

■ *Robert Seaton is a researcher with Scottish National Party.*

# THE REGIONAL

In the wake of the creation of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, the Government has published its White Paper on regional devolution in England. **Katie Schmuecker** and **John Tomaney** examine the proposals and particularly what they might mean for the North East.

The creation of the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Greater London Authority, while strongly supported in the English regions, has left the constitution of the UK out of balance.

The citizens of Wales, Scotland and London now have greater influence over the policy decisions that affect their daily lives. They also have legitimate bodies to represent their territorial interests, both at Westminster and in Brussels. The English regions however are still governed by a poorly accountable and largely invisible tier of appointed bodies and quangos, and resentment has grown apace.

### "REGIONS DON'T EXIST"

It is at this point that people often say "but Wales and Scotland are nations – the regions of England don't really exist." While it is true that Scotland and Wales are different to the English regions, there are nonetheless still profound differences in terms of culture, identity, problems and potential between the English regions.

Just as centralised, "one size fits all" policy has often been to the detriment of Wales in recent decades, in the same way when the Government attempts to implement policy to meet the need of all the English regions it often fails them all.

Welsh or Scottish citizens rightly demanded to be democratically represented and to have the opportunity to take many more of their

own decisions. A debate now exists among the English about whether they should have the same rights.

This issue is most advanced in the North East of England, where the debate about regional government has existed for some time. There is some polling evidence that people in the region would support the idea of a regional assembly. In the North East, the proximity of Scotland and its "demonstration effect" has given much more of a focus to the debate than is the case in southern England. Although there is evidence of emerging interest in devolution in other parts of England, in the south county identities tend to remain strong. For these reasons any early moves are likely to focus on regions like the North East.

Partly in response to these developments, and reflecting the fact that key Labour ministers, including Tony Blair, hold seats in the North East, pressure has been growing on the government to produce proposals for a mechanism for creating regional government in England.

### CHALLENGE TO WHITEHALL

The publication of the White Paper is momentous because no government has ever brought forward proposals to devolve government within England. In some respects, its proposals are potentially more far-reaching in their implications than Scottish or Welsh devolution because they represent a more fundamental

# DEBATE IN ENGLAND

challenge, albeit initially modest in scope, to the dominance of Whitehall over all aspects of English life. Scottish and Welsh devolution, on the other hand, involved making separate territorial departments accountable to elected bodies.

Some Whitehall departments shared this outlook and fiercely resisted handing over powers to elected assemblies. John Prescott had to fight a subtle campaign to obtain the maximum range of powers for his proposed assemblies. For this reason, the package of powers outlined in the White Paper is uneven. In some areas they are surprisingly strong, in other areas, there is a compelling case for them to be strengthened.

The Government's proposals hand over control of regional development agencies, like One North East, to elected assemblies. Similarly, the Government allocates the assemblies some important planning powers, which will allow more important decisions to be taken in the region rather than in Whitehall. In areas of economic development and planning then the proposals contain no major surprises.

## BEYOND EXPECTATION

In other areas, though, the powers go beyond what was expected. For instance, the Government proposes that assemblies will have powers over the allocation of housing investment. These are powers which the Mayor of London has demanded, but so far has been denied.

Equally important, the White Paper states that in future more powers could be devolved to assemblies, proving the now old adage that "devolution is a process, not an event".

In some areas, though, there is a strong case for strengthening the powers proposed in the White Paper. Two examples are in the fields of training and transport. In

**The proposed assemblies are to have borrowing powers and the power to precept, giving them more direct revenue-raising powers than the Welsh Assembly.**

both cases the White Paper makes a convincing argument that more decisions should be taken in the regions, but then consigns assemblies to a consultative role. In both training and transport the case for more regional decision-making would appear compelling. Take transport. At the very least regional assemblies should be responsible for strategic roads and funding local transport plans: both responsibilities of the Mayor in London. The Mayor's office also acts as the Passenger Transport Executive for London, and there is strong case for similar powers to be assigned to a North East Assembly.

A well-trailed but nevertheless contentious proposal is to link the creation of regional assemblies to the creation of unitary local government.

## "HISTORIC" COUNTIES

There are good reasons for seeing regional and local government as separate issues. Assemblies bring to democratic account a tier of regional government that already exists. But the Government is mindful of the accusation from detractors that its proposals create "another tier of bureaucracy". Hence the proposal to create single tier local government. The Conservatives claim regional assemblies are part of plot to destroy the "historic" English counties. This claim needs to be put into perspective. Take Durham. The current boundaries of the County Council bear little relationship to Durham's "historic" boundaries. For instance, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland were all removed from Durham in 1974. Darlington left in the 1990s. In each case, it should be noted, it was a Conservative government that dismembered the "historic" county.

The Government's proposals, however, could lead in the direction of a more rational, streamlined structure of local and

regional government. It would be up to the people of the region, through the mechanism of a referendum, to judge whether the prize of a regional assembly was worth local government reorganisation.

## BORROWING POWERS

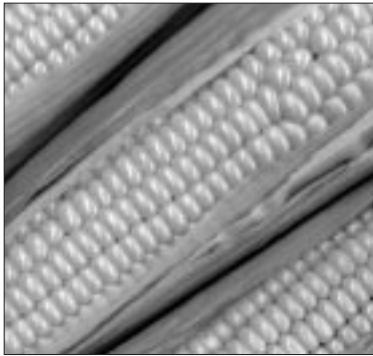
The proposed financial regime for elected assemblies has probably attracted least comment, but in many ways is the most interesting aspect of the Government's proposals. In some ways the financial powers of the proposed regional assemblies are stronger than those available to the other devolved institutions in the United Kingdom. For example, the fact that funds would be granted to assemblies via a "block grant" provides for substantially more financial flexibility than that available to the Greater London Authority. Also, the proposed assemblies are to have borrowing powers and the power to precept, giving them more direct revenue-raising powers than the Welsh Assembly. At the same time though the heavy presence of the Treasury looms in the background, with a series of centrally-imposed prescriptions on how the money might be spent.

Taken in the round then, how significant are the proposals? Potentially, they are very far-reaching and likely to be the start of a process of devolution within England, not its end. The package could be strengthened though in ways that would add greatly to its credibility. The obvious ways this could be done would be by beefing up powers over training and transport and loosening the financial strait-jacket. There is much to be fought for in the months ahead.

■ *Katie Schmuecker is Assistant Campaigns Officer at the Campaign for the English Regions. John Tomaney works in the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies at Newcastle University.*

# WHO IS ANTI-SCIENCE MR BLAIR?

Opposing genetic modification is not to be “anti-science”, argues **Morag Parnell**. It is entirely proper to be deeply sceptical of trends pushing science towards purely material goals, subservient to the aim of uncontrolled economic growth and wealth creation.



It was reported that, in a speech to the Royal Society, Tony Blair accused those of us who oppose GM (genetic modification) of being anti-science. We should have “open minds” and “look at the evidence”. Sir John Krebs, Director of the Food Standards Agency and appointed for his “balanced views”, assures us that there is no evidence of harm from GM foods, and Professor Vivian Moses of the CropGen panel declares that there is not one case of damage to health anywhere in the world from GM. Similar pronouncements come from pro-GM scientists and others who cram the bodies that advise and shape public policy on GM, and attempt to influence public perceptions. Has nobody told them that “no evidence of harm” is very different from “evidence of no harm”; that the methods of obtaining and the assessment and interpretation of scientific evidence inevitably include the worldview – i.e. the philosophical, ethical, political, religious views and the experiences of both the scientists and the public – and is much more than Mr Blair’s narrow view. Prof Moses fails to acknowledge the research that indicates very serious potential

**Worldwide, people are being exposed to GM in an involuntary experiment without their informed consent.**

harm, the cases where the outcomes have been disastrous for both crops and animals, and the few cases reported of human harm, including the recent death of a young man in a gene therapy trial.

The problem in assessing the effects on human health is that the necessary monitoring and trials have not been done. To do so would need the exposure of one population to GM products while protecting another control population from them, over a number of years. Such an experiment would be condemned as unethical and would be almost impossible to conduct. Yet worldwide, people are being exposed to GM in an involuntary experiment without their informed consent. No pharmaceutical product would ever reach the clinical market without extensive and expensive trials, and even then 5% never make it and 15% have to be strictly controlled because of toxicity. That the safety of many more cannot be guaranteed is shown by the fact that iatrogenic illness (from medical treatments) is the third most common cause of death in the US. My letter to Ross Finnie protesting at the Scottish Farm Scale Trials was answered by a Government adviser who informed me that “The Scottish Executive is responding to the *reality of GM crops being on the brink of commercialisation in the UK. The Farm Scale Trials are not assessing the safety of GM crops but they do give us the opportunity to obtain answers about the possible environmental impacts of these crops on a commercial scale ...*”. (*My italics – M.P.*)

Microbiological and genetic research has an important role in our understanding of much about us and the world – our development, our evolution, our disease processes. Genetic engineering, as it is at present constituted and practised, is a travesty of this, and while there is such a wide divergence of opinion amongst scientists, the least we should be doing is to apply the Precautionary Principle and to confine GE research to strictly controlled laboratory conditions.

## **OLD IDEA LINGERS ON**

From my reading on this subject, I would conclude that the problems of current genetic engineering practice are intrinsic to both its theory and practice. Most biologists have rejected the idea that genomes are fixed, except for some random mutations, and that they carry some kind of master plan that directs and controls all development and life processes virtually unchanged from generation to generation. But the old idea lingers on and allows the belief that mechanistic interventions such as GE will produce only one effect, the one desired by the engineers. This is far from the truth. Genes have been shown to be endlessly flexible – the words used are “the fluid genome” – and to respond to the needs of the cell/organism/plant/ animal in its ever changing internal and external environment, by rearranging, moving, combining, interacting. The Human Genome Project unexpectedly confirmed this fluidity when it revealed that we have only around 30,000 genes. Genes



code for proteins (not for characteristics or for diseases). Our human bodies need ten times that number of proteins, so multiple interactions and cooperation between genes must occur.

Genetic engineering involves the introduction of foreign genetic material into a cell. There are natural barriers to this, designed to preserve species integrity and biodiversity, so the foreign gene has to be spliced to a “vector” – something that will break down these barriers and carry it into the cell. That vector is usually a selected piece of DNA from a virus or a bacterium, whose natural life’s work is to invade cells. Additional bits of DNA are added from various sources to ensure the transgene will work in its new location. This is the forced marriage of genetic engineering, and the use of this type of fragmented DNA greatly enhances the possibility of alien gene flow to a wide range of species.

### MUTATIONS

Many things can happen: the new gene can be silenced; it can affect the neighbouring genes or be affected by them in many ways, one being the production of unusual proteins, which could be toxic or cause allergies; the instability of the transgene construct can lead to its breakdown and recombination with other fragments of viral DNA which exist in all genomes, leading to the emergence of new organisms, or adding virulence to existing ones; it spreads antibiotic resistance genes; and it has the potential to induce cancer. Professor Joe Cummins has raised the question of “extinction mutagenesis”. Inducing multiple mutations has been used experimentally to eliminate disease viruses. The instability of genes and chromosomes resulting from genetic engineering procedures enhances the possibility of mutations, and Cummins warns “how long will it take to become aware of depressed yields and finally the extinction of GM varieties” and of “the havoc that could be wreaked

on the Human Genome by crop retrotransposons (*pieces of genetic material – M.P.*) running amok within humans and animals. Noting that gene flow is already taking place from GM to non-GM varieties – the nightmare of organic farmers – and that US farmers touring Europe now are warning us of the failures of their GM crops, and if we consider the “pharming” of plants and animals to produce pharmaceuticals, textiles and industrial chemicals (all as yet in the laboratory), being expanded, with the possibility of their escape into the wider environment, then Cummins’ speculations are not just “what if?”.

### MANIPULATION OF RESEARCH

All this is in the context of the corporate takeover of science. There is much evidence of the manipulation of research and research scientists, and the marginalisation, gagging, denying funding, and even sacking of those who do not conform to the demands and the needs of the biotech industry to grow and make profits for their shareholders. An IPMS survey found that one third of scientists in recently privatised laboratories had been asked to change their findings to suit their sponsors, and 10% were pressurised to modify their results to secure contracts. Two leading medical journals have been drawing up a code for publishing research which requires that it is declared to be truly independent and that there are no conflicting interests.

Science is being pushed overwhelmingly towards purely material goals, for things to make our lives easier, to cure our sickness and extend our lives – perfectly laudable aims in themselves, but all too frequently frivolous, unnecessary and illusory, and grossly distorted with dangerous side effects when made subservient to the over-riding goal of uncontrolled economic growth and wealth creation. The Government’s support for this is plain to see, and can be seen in its generous funding for the Biobank and for Genomics. The

**An IPMS survey found that one third of scientists in recently privatised laboratories had been asked to change their findings to suit their sponsors, and 10% were pressurised to modify their results to secure contracts.**

Biobank will collect genetic information and personal and medical histories and will try to match illnesses with genes. Genomics will examine our genes and predict which illnesses we may suffer from in the future. We should note what Sandra Steingraber said in her book *Living Downstream*: that what we read in our damaged genes is as much a record of past exposures as a prediction of future illness. There are innumerable scientific, ethical and practical problems thrown up by this genetic determinist approach, not least that it diverts attention and resources away from the major environmental determinants of ill health – poverty, industrial toxic and hormone disrupting chemicals, ionising radiation and now the possibility of genetic engineering itself.

### MORE AND BETTER SCIENCE

Living in a seriously degraded and contaminated environment has brought us to a crisis situation. If we are to survive, we need more and better science, especially science that explores and extends our knowledge of the world we inhabit, the science that is exciting, fascinating, beautiful, and necessary to give us the understanding we need to curb our goal-orientated science and allow us to live in harmony with the rest of creation. Unfortunately it commands fewer resources, yet without it our future survival is in doubt.

Let’s give the last cautionary word to Albert Einstein: “We should be on our guard not to overestimate science and scientific methods when it is a question of human problems; and we should not assume that experts are the only ones who have a right to express themselves on questions affecting the organisation of society”.

■ *Morag Parnell is a retired doctor and has just completed a report on the environmental factors in breast cancer which is available from the Scottish Breast Cancer Campaign and will soon be posted on their website.*

# A TALE OF TWO CAPITALISMS

As the long Tory era drew to a close and the Blair-Brown duumvirate prepared their bid for power, Will Hutton wrote a trenchant critique of British capitalism and the neo-liberal policy paradigm, commending the concept of “stakeholder capitalism” as the lodestar for a radical alternative. To his surprise, *The State We’re In* (Vintage, 1995) became a best-seller, revealing an unsuspected appetite among the book-buying classes for clear-eyed economic analysis, compelling political narrative and impassioned moral argument. *The World We’re In* is a timely and important sequel which, if anything, surpasses the achievement of the earlier book and, at a critical juncture in world politics, when the United States has emerged as a global hyperpower and the European Union is wrestling with the problems of enlargement and reform, deserves to be no less widely read.

## QUALIFIED PRIVILEGES

In one sense, the title is misleading. What Hutton offers is not a panoramic survey, but a focused comparison between two very different kinds of capitalism: the various socialized and regulated forms that have evolved in Western Europe, and the more feral variety to be found on the other side of the Atlantic. These two models, he argues, embody divergent conceptions of property rights, citizenship and the public realm. In Europe, where capitalism developed out of the seedbed of feudalism, property-ownership came to be understood as a form of stewardship exercised on behalf of society as whole, and the privileges it conferred were never absolute, but always qualified by corresponding social obligations. This root idea has been preserved, albeit with rival interpretations, by all



**The World We’re In**  
by Will Hutton  
(Little, Brown  
£17.99)

the main European political traditions: socialism, liberalism, one-nation conservatism, Christian democracy and even fascism.

## RIGHTS AND DUTIES

The idea that citizenship entails significant social rights and duties has become similarly entrenched. In the course of the industrial, national and democratic revolutions that engulfed their continent from the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, Europeans came to accept that it was not enough for all (national) citizens to enjoy equality before the law, civil liberties and the right to vote in elections for government: in societies where capitalism dominates the economy and market forces govern the allocation of resources and rewards, the only way to ensure that everyone is able to participate fully in the various spheres of social life is for the state to guarantee universal access to adequate health and social care, education, housing and income security. Furthermore, if property-owners are to be held to account and if some conception of the common good is to be discovered and pursued, society needs a vigorous and diverse public realm – not to be confused with the public sector – where collective choices are defined and debated, public opinion moulded and mobilized, political leadership tried and tested, and public policies decided and implemented.

## THOROUGHLY BOURGEOIS

The US, by contrast, has from its origins been the world’s most thoroughly bourgeois society. Settlers in a land of opportunity with no feudal past, Americans have devoted their lives to the pursuit of individual self-betterment, and except in periods of desperate social crisis, have spurned collectivist

politics, seeing no legitimate role for the state outside the spheres of law enforcement, penal policy and national defence. Accordingly, property rights in the US are relatively unencumbered by social responsibilities; the social dimension of citizenship is stunted and fragile; and the public realm is deformed by the power of money, the shallowness of the media and the decline of civic participation. To be sure, from the New Deal of the 1930s to the Great Society programme of the 1960s, American liberalism gained the upper hand and successive Democratic administrations set about managing and regulating the economy, establishing the rudiments of a welfare state and ending racial oppression. But from the early 1970s onwards, these advances were steadily eroded as the conservative right assembled its own hegemonic coalition, challenging the assumptions of the post-war consensus, benefiting from the shift of capital and population from rust-belt to sun-belt, securing the support of big business, and basing its popular appeal on a potent blend of anti-statism, militarism, chauvinism, racism and moral authoritarianism. In the course of this war waged without blood, the Democrats were forced to reposition themselves, while outside the US the conservative worldview secured strongholds in international agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank and in other states, notably Britain.

The differences between the two models of capitalism would matter less if the claims made on behalf of the US were true: for example, that its companies are more successful than their European counterparts or that its record in creating jobs or promoting social mobility is unmatched. In fact, Hutton shows, these claims are not

## THE EURO AND SOCIALISM

borne out by the evidence. Indeed, he argues, America's love-affair with deregulation, shareholder value and flexible markets weakens its economic performance as well as its social cohesion, giving rise not only to chronic job insecurity, excessive working hours and grotesque social inequality, but also to corporate myopia, irrational exuberance and the risk of a major depression. Thus, far from embracing the American way, he urges Europeans to celebrate and defend their civilization, not by retreating into some "fortress Europe", but by seeking to reshape the current global order. This in turn requires an enlarged and reformed EU to build on the achievement of monetary union by reconnecting with the citizens of its member states and projecting its social model outwards as an exemplar for the world.

**PERSISTENTLY IGNORED**

Hutton's argument is a tour de force, combining deep understanding of contemporary capitalism with political vision and strategy. The efforts of Anthony Giddens to chart a course for the centre-left along "The Third Way" seem paltry by comparison. Yet Will Hutton is to New Labour what J.A. Hobson was to the pre-1914 Liberal governments: a disillusioned supporter and constructive critic, whose views are persistently ignored. Among the many questions prompted by this bold and exhilarating book are why New Labour prefers to listen to policy-wonks and pollsters, particularly at a time when the opposition is floundering, and what can be done to induce the Government to broaden its horizons, rethink its strategy and bring Britain's best political economist in from the cold.

David Purdy

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

BY CONTRAST to normal media political discussion, it was a treat to read, in the last issue, David Purdy's and Mark Ballard's differing views on joining the euro, but I cannot let Mark's travesty of the European Union go uncorrected. Mark states "The current overriding priority of the EU is to turn Europe into one giant economic superpower, able to compete more efficiently with the US and Japan. To this end it is increasing economic centralisation and international trade and is accelerating the process of economic globalisation". Well, given his misconceptions, we might all share his anti-euro views, but change that last sentence to "increasing financial homogeneity ... and controlling the economic damage of excessive globalisation", and our views change accordingly. That is where European social capitalism comes in.

The battle for socialism is inside Europe, inside Britain and inside America. Europe and the world have to co-exist with imperial America, and Britain has to find a home.

British people may vote Labour but they do not vote for socialism. They vote for jobs, pensions and the ability to provide for the future. Blair may be a socialist, but he knows his position depends on giving the British people what they want. All left-wingers become gradualists when faced with the controls of Government, unless they want to smash the system. So the euro has to be able to produce the (capitalist) goods, within the capitalist system. Given the strength of the economies involved, I see no reason to doubt that it will.

The objective of the euro is to establish a level financial playing field. It is nonsense to talk of being in Europe and leaving the Bank of England to control the British economy. The objective of a modern socialist government is

to control the inequities which arise throughout interacting market economies. To do that by raising and lowering the bank rate is clumsy and inefficient and obstructs the evolution of co-operative methods in a market place. Experience within Europe seems to show that alternative methods do evolve and work.

Mark's arguments, although expressed in conventional anti-big business terms, are also ultimately aimed at bread-and-butter effects. I have no quarrel with him there. But when he starts talking about Reebok's distribution and quoting Morgan Stanley and European policy he shows he does not understand that there is a sense in which globalisation has arrived and is here to stay. It has probably also peaked. Economic forces are politically neutral. The problem is learning to control them. Mark discusses Europe, but he does not mention outside Europe. Does he really think we can establish an economic neutrality, independent of the USA? The economic effect of defence would be ruinous for a start, if we tried to establish a position of political neutrality, as we would have to. I am all in favour of winding down our armaments industry, but it cannot be done without total financial integration with Europe. Our political and trading position make it essential that we join the euro, sooner or later.

We must join the euro to abolish the hegemony of capitalist greed which ruled the twentieth century. The tools are there. Naturally there is a fight going on to get control of them, but no such fight exists outside, where it is a walkover for the fat cats. We will not establish an earthly paradise in Europe and there will be a lot of disasters, but I do not want to go on living in the same old capitalist Britain while Europe moves toward socialism.

John Ballantyne  
*East Lothian*

## 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 trivialized 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 recognize 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.

There's  
**more**  
to politics  
than  
parties



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P/AU/02

### 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.



**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

