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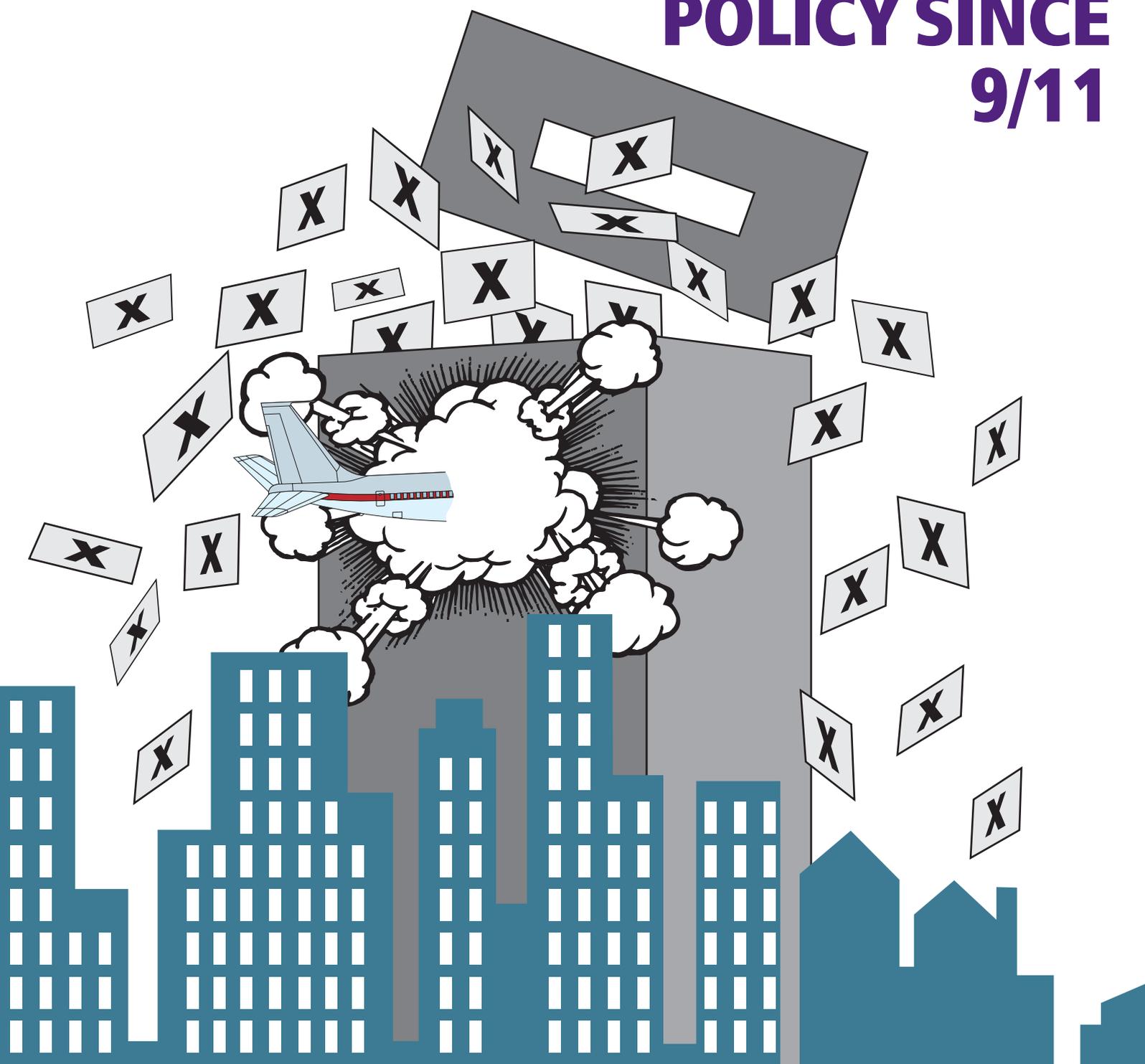
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radical feminist green

Perspectives

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A WORLD TO WIN: POLITICS AND POLICY SINCE 9/11



MAGAZINE OF SCOTLAND'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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EDITORIAL

9/11 AND 5/5/05

With the date now announced, the leading article in this issue of *Perspectives* provides an essential background to the general election.

A world to win: politics and policy since 9/11, by David Purdy, examines the impact on Britain of the rise of neo-conservative policies in the United States. In the context of the current election, Britain's participation in the Iraq war has been a major bone of contention for many who supported Labour last time round and may well cause substantial defections.

However, many Labour supporters may feel disinclined to vote elsewhere for fear of the effect this might have on the number of seats the Tories gain. Indeed, there have been attempts to examine Labour's recent record in office (for instance *Better or worse? Has Labour delivered?* by Polly Toynbee and David Walker, Bloomsbury, £7.99, which is both critical and giving of praise where it is due). This sort of information is invaluable in coming to a balanced view of how to vote for those who have misgivings about some of Labour's policies but have no stronger political allegiance elsewhere.

But the reality of the current electoral system can make things difficult for many people, forcing them, as it does, to vote Labour (as the lesser evil) to keep the Tories out. Is it beyond the wit of our politicians to devise an electoral system for Westminster that allows electors to have a transferrable vote, permitting the voter to cast a ballot showing their preference for what they want, rather than feeling obliged to vote for a less preferred party to keep another (even less preferred) out? So a voter in a Scottish constituency might express their choice as Green Party first, SSP second, Labour third – their vote transferring to their second or third choice if the earlier one(s) do not get elected. No wasted votes here!



The Iraq war has been a major bone of contention for many who supported Labour last time round and may well cause substantial defections.

Those still puzzling over where to cast their vote could visit www.strategicvoter.org.uk, which aims to help people who want to vote tactically, giving information on a constituency by constituency basis as how to most effectively cast their vote if they share the authors' desire for a small Labour majority or hung parliament.

The March/April issue of *Scottish Left Review* contains a briefing, listing all relevant historical voting information for the new constituencies at this election – visit www.scottishleftreview.org to download a copy.

Lastly, the *Guardian* on 6th April listed how all Westminster MPs voted on five key issues. Again, essential information for those wanting to make the most effective use of their vote.

Elsewhere in this issue, Shona Baird MSP outlines areas the Green group will be pursuing inside (and outwith) the Scottish Parliament.

Democratic Left Scotland's convener, Stuart Fairweather, reviews a history of the final years of the British Communist Party. Ex members of the CP will obviously be interested but, Stuart argues, there are wider conclusions to be drawn that are of interest to successor organisations, such as our own.

Andy Cumbers has written a piece on an alternative economic strategy, a concept that has lain largely dormant for twenty years or more, now acquiring an extra aspect with the birth of the Scottish Parliament.

Lastly, the international dimension is represented by an article on the Dafur crisis in the Sudan. Dr. Abdel Adam is consultant and advisor to the Justice and Equality Movement in the Sudanese peace negotiations in Abuja, Nigeria, and thus brings a real authority to his contribution.

Sean Feeny
Editor



EURIG SCANDRETT'S

Lessons in democracy: the privileged don't vote for fairness. We should know that but still seem to hang on to our faith in human nature to see the decency in supporting a more just social order. Here are a few recent examples of the democratic defence of privilege.

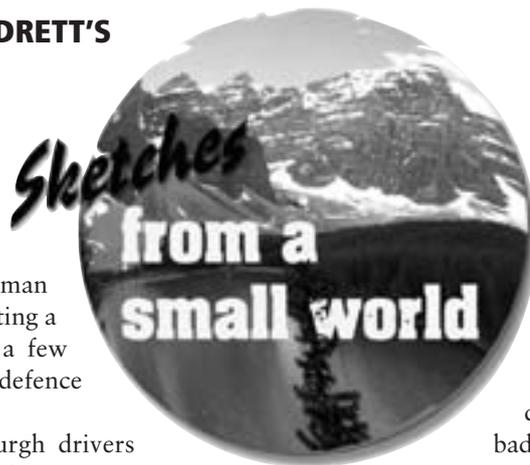
Lesson in democracy 1: Edinburgh drivers vote in favour of congestion – or against the congestion charge which City of Edinburgh Council proposed. Full marks to Councillor Andrew Burns for spearheading a system that could have reduced congestion and diverted funds into public transport improvements. The strange bedfellows of Edinburgh's business elite, Scottish Socialists and the most individualistic Liberal Democrats provided the excuse to those who wanted to vote against decent air quality for all. Well don't blame me when I zip past stationary traffic on my bicycle.

Lesson in democracy 2: USA, producer of a quarter of the world's carbon dioxide, refuses to tackle climate change. The Kyoto agreement has been ratified despite the USA's continued intransigence. The US administration argues that Kyoto is not the way to achieve reductions in greenhouse gases, and they are right but for the wrong reasons. Indeed the USA's insistence on market and compensatory mechanisms of carbon trading and joint implementation have guaranteed the weaknesses of Kyoto.

US rejection of Kyoto is on the basis of the one strength the protocol has: the setting of targets for the rich countries, thereby accepting the principles that 1. there are absolute limits to the capacity of the global ecosystem to absorb our waste, and 2. that the rich countries which are responsible for the lion's share of emissions should be first to do something about it. So one cheer for Kyoto.

Let's look at the figures. The USA has the most efficient economy for converting oil into dollars, so argues that the rest of the world should improve its efficiency (i.e. by buying US technology). The fastest growth in carbon dioxide emissions is from India and China, whose economic growth with inefficient technologies will raise their share of the total carbon dioxide emissions significantly. However, despite its efficiency, the USA contributes a quarter of all the carbon dioxide emissions currently, with about 4% of the world's population – 20 tonnes per person per year. China and India between them have 40% of the world's population and emit less than half a tonne per person.

An equitable distribution of the right to emit carbon dioxide would require a 95% cut for the USA, and a nearly 90% cut for the UK. The US baulks at Kyoto's 7% cut because it is bad for their industry. Christian



Not protest for the sake of it, but protest as part of the creation of our vision of a just, non-violent and participatory democracy.

Aid estimated the value to the OECD countries' economies of this excess is \$13 trillion per year – an effective subsidy from the poor.

Seriously tough targets for carbon dioxide emissions are needed, not just to reduce the total carbon dioxide emissions but also to distribute the right to emit more fairly. It will be bad for industry, it will need a radical change to our economy, you won't get a majority in a referendum. We need the vision and the commitment to analyse how it can happen, not how we can get out of it.

Lesson in democracy 3: Meanwhile, despite the UK's immeasurable debt to the rest of the world, conventional wisdom amongst the mainstream political parties is that, if you don't want to lose votes, you have to compete with the BNP and UKIP to keep the foreigners out. Instead of bold initiatives to tackle the worldwide growth of TB and HIV, the Tories want to use these infections to send non-Europeans (actually non-whites) back to where they came from, to put pressure on other overstretched health services. Labour chase the same arguments with their appalling record on asylum seekers and their pledge for more secure borders to keep foreigners out so we can enjoy the privileges we've taken from them. Whoever will take political leadership for our moral responsibility to account for our global exploitation?

Lessons in democracy 4: the Iraqi elections happened yet the failed legitimacy of the US/UK invasion continues. It's hard to criticise all those who participated in the election or to support all those who are part of the resistance – people find democratic spaces in the conditions which are not of their making – but the legitimacy of the US claim to export democracy is as moribund in Iraq as it is in Afghanistan. Arundhati Roy, Walden Bello and others have argued for an escalation of protest throughout the world, and civil disobedience against corporations who benefit from and legitimate the war, to use the failure of US "democratic imperialism" as a lever for an alternative vision of justice.

The next global summit which can focus some of this protest is of course in Scotland, the G8 in Gleneagles, 6th–8th July. Climate change is on the agenda – expect Tony Blair to pull something out of the hat, but don't expect too much. Strong non-violent protest in the run up to the G8, turning up the heat from the 2nd (Make Poverty History) to the 5th (Climate Justice day) (www.g8alternatives.org.uk.) will be the kind of lessons in democracy we all could do with. Not protest for the sake of it, but protest as part of the creation of our vision of a just, non-violent and participatory democracy.

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

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.

There's
more
to politics
than
parties



Please tick as appropriate

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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



A WORLD TO WIN: POLITICS AND POLICY SINCE 9/11

The terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001 marked a turning point in world politics, argues **David Purdy**. What can the left learn and how should it respond?

The neo-conservative foreign policy pursued by the US government since 9/11 has given renewed impetus to the neo-liberal revolution that began in the 1970s. A fresh wave of social engineering aimed at creating a more “dynamic and flexible” form of capitalism is spreading across Europe, cheered on by a British government which has become an evangelist for the American way. And notwithstanding the millions throughout the world who demonstrated against the war in Iraq, opposition to the “New American Century” and the march of the market is at present weak, disoriented and disorganised.

These are dark times for the democratic left, now an endangered political species. What is to be done? At the most basic level, if we are to survive, we must, in Bob Dylan’s words, keep on keeping on, doing our best to understand the world we are in and, like the monks of old, illuminating manuscripts for posterity. Beyond that, we need to acknowledge how much the left’s failure to learn the lessons of the twentieth century has allowed the ideas of neo-liberal economists and philosophers to become embedded in the fabric of society, steadily reshaping popular common-sense and eliminating alternative forms of social life. If we are to stem the advancing tide and vindicate the claim that “another world is possible”, we need to rethink our politics and policies.

1. THE “NEW AMERICAN CENTURY”

The terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001 marked a turning point in world politics. Initially



These are dark times for the democratic left, now an endangered political species.

caught off guard by what now looks like a lucky strike, the neo-conservatives in the Bush administration quickly seized the opportunity to launch the “Project for a New American Century” which they had conceived in the late 1990s. History, they believed, was on their side. How else could one explain the victories of the West in the twentieth century, first over fascism and then over communism? And would there ever be a better time for a bid to shape the future? Communism was dead, the USSR dismembered and Russia prostrate. China was hurtling down the capitalist road, bent on acquiring economic clout to match its military reputation, but for now was content to be the workshop of the world, pegging its currency to the dollar and investing its trade surplus on Wall Street. Yesterday’s economic champions, Japan and Germany, had no military pretensions and were struggling to regain their old form, both of them reluctant to abandon policy regimes that had served them well for fifty years and – in Germany’s case – still

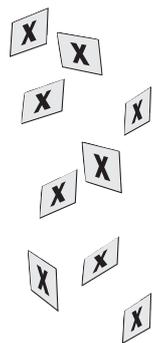
burdened by the costs of reunification. Elsewhere in Europe, the political classes were preoccupied with monetary union, EU enlargement and institutional reform. More generally, the neo-liberal counter-revolution against the collectivist state that had begun under Thatcher and Reagan was entering a new stage in which areas of the world and social activities from which capital and commerce had hitherto been largely excluded were rapidly being opened up for business.

Thus, Washington cast aside the cautious multilateralism that had characterised its foreign policy since the end of the Cold War and embarked on a campaign to spread the American model of capitalism throughout the world and to overturn totalitarian or tyrannical regimes that were deemed to pose a threat to American security. The consequences of the new strategy were dramatic. It demonised Islam and gave a fresh lease of life to the far-flung, loose-knit terrorist groups whose influence in the Arab and Muslim worlds had previously been waning; it underlined US military supremacy, sidelined the UN and threw the whole international order established after the Second World War into disarray; and it split the EU, raising doubts about whether the goal of “ever closer union” towards which France and Germany had hitherto been steering it was either feasible or, indeed, desirable. Furthermore, although conventional wisdom exaggerates the superiority of the American model of capitalism over the more domesticated varieties that emerged in Europe, where capitalism evolved out of feudalism, it contains enough truth to

intensify the pressures on European governments to eradicate or emasculate the various forms of social protection and social partnership that were built up in the twentieth century as a counterweight against unbridled market forces.

Until the late 1970s when neo-liberalism replaced Keynesian social democracy as the dominant public policy paradigm, the welfare state and the “mixed economy” enjoyed almost universal support across the political spectrum in the West, from communists and social democrats to conservatives and Christian Democrats. Thereafter, the collectivist consensus steadily lost ground and the neo-liberal paradigm came to exert a decisive influence on the form taken by globalisation, understood as a combination of two intertwined processes: the revolution in information and communications technology and the creation of global markets. In this sense, globalisation was the neo-liberal word made flesh. Or to use a different metaphor, neo-liberal ideas became hard-wired into the world, imposing new rules and routines on all who aspired to win elections, stay in business or simply make a living.

Within the US itself, the neo-cons turned 9/11 to good account by exploiting the electorate’s ignorance and fear, ramping up “homeland security” and impugning the patriotic credentials of their opponents – always a vulnerable point for the Democrats. Sustained vilification of liberals, strenuous efforts to mobilise Christian conservatives and superb political organisation proved a winning formula. Not only was George W re-elected for a second term – this time after a keenly fought contest, with a clear majority of the popular vote and on an increased turnout – but the Republicans gained control of both Houses of Congress plus the chance to turn the Supreme Court into an enduring bastion of free market social conservatism.



Real hegemony – a long-lasting and deep-seated relationship between rulers and ruled in which consent takes precedence over force – demands moral and intellectual leadership and the willingness to make concessions in pursuit of long-term goals, political alliances and popular legitimacy.

2. GLOBAL HEGEMONY? TELL IT TO THE MARINES!

Yet unleashing a political tsunami on the world and routing one’s political opponents at home are not the same as establishing global hegemony, even for a global superpower. Indeed, in some ways, the sense of manifest destiny which has resurfaced in America in recent years is at odds with the guile and patience required to see any large-scale, long-range political project through to a successful conclusion: recall the career of Oliver Cromwell – God’s Englishman, military genius and political failure. Real hegemony – a long-lasting and deep-seated relationship between rulers and ruled in which consent takes precedence over force – demands moral and intellectual leadership and the willingness to make concessions in pursuit of long-term goals, political alliances and popular legitimacy. Witness the US government’s reckless attitude to global warming; its cool response to proposals for a new Marshall Aid Plan for Africa; its resounding silence about the shambolic and corrupt record of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq; and its “America first” approach to international economic management, from the unilateral imposition of steel tariffs in 2001 – subsequently withdrawn after the EU’s claim that they breached WTO rules was upheld – to the financial strains caused by the fall of the dollar and America’s twin budgetary and balance of payments deficits.

The contrast with the statecraft of the Truman administration after the Second World War is telling. Then, the real and present threat of communism helped to concentrate the minds of Western statesmen. Today, with communism dead and social democracy dying, neither the American state nor the American way of life has any serious rivals. Anti-war marches and G8 mobilisations express widespread popular anger and frustration at the state of the world and

can sometimes influence the course of events, as happened in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq when the “swing states” in the UN Security Council refused to bow to US pressure, in part because the eyes of the world were upon them and their leaders knew they would have to defend their voting records to their own citizens. But it is idle to pretend that mass protest, peaceful or otherwise, is the harbinger of a new civilisation.

Of course, even a military colossus has to avoid overstretch, count the costs and evaluate the results of its actions. Accordingly, since the turn of the year, the US has launched a diplomatic offensive to mend its fences with France and Germany and bring greater stability to the Middle East. The Iraq elections could yet be a turning point in the counter-insurgency warfare that has raged since the occupation began, particularly if the ceasefire between Israel and Palestine leads to a resumption of peace negotiations with active US engagement. The state department has also turned down the heat on Iran, recognising that covert operations and overt threats might be counterproductive and relying more on soft power of the sort that helped to secure the election of pro-Western governments in Serbia and the Ukraine. Yet there will be no early “exit” from Iraq, for even after its army of occupation has been scaled down, the US will retain a dozen or more permanent military bases in the country and the wider region remains volatile. Nor, on current form, is there much prospect of re-engagement with the UN, even though without this, the task of redesigning international institutions to meet the needs of a global age cannot begin. More generally, as revealed by its vacillating response to the (natural) tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the Bush administration has little idea how to translate the diverse passions, interests and ideals that animate the neo-con/theo-con coalition into a plan for global reconstruction. (Not that it is alone in this respect:

exactly the same applies to the self-styled anti-capitalist and anti-globalisation movements.)

Parallel deficiencies are evident on the home front where the administration will be tempted to exploit its partisan advantage by rewarding its corporate and conservative supporters and pressing on with the market revolution. A key battleground here is the Federal pay-as-you-go system of retirement pensions, the last surviving remnant of Roosevelt's New Deal. The Republicans are planning to introduce a privatised and "funded" pension scheme backed up by a residual, means-tested safety net. They will have their work cut out. "Grey power" is a potent force in American politics and social security reform is a complex and risky business, as the Clinton administration learned to its cost. It is also worth noting that a prototype of the Republican pension plan was introduced by the Pinochet regime in Chile in 1980. At the time, the reform was hailed as a bold, pioneering measure that would guarantee income security in old age, expand individual choice, increase household saving and boost economic growth. 25 years later, the general verdict is that while the experiment has been good for the Chilean economy, it has been bad for most Chileans. Almost a third of the labour force has no pension entitlement at all and even well paid, middle-class employees face a drop in income of 60% or more when they retire.

3. THE RISE AND RISE OF NEO-LIBERALISM

Even in a degenerate democracy where popular consent to the prevailing social order rests more on the power of nightmares than on the promise of a better future, dreams are subject to reality checks. Just as the McCarthyite witch-hunts of the 1950s eventually gave way to a less paranoid response to international communism, so in the absence of further terrorist attacks, fear of al Qaida will subside and curbs on civil liberty will be relaxed, though it will

In the absence of further terrorist attacks, fear of al Qaida will subside and curbs on civil liberty will be relaxed.

take longer to repair the damage that has been done to inter-communal relations. Likewise, if market theology is repeatedly disproved by mundane experience, pressure will grow for a more pragmatic approach to public policy, as happened, for example, in Britain when the discredited and bankrupt Railtrack was converted into Network Rail.

However welcome, such developments should not be confused with emergence of a new policy paradigm. In 1997, the "Third Way" was heralded as a successor both to Keynesian social democracy and to Thatcherite neo-liberalism. And there were, indeed, real policy differences between the New Labour government and its predecessors: notably, in the fields of devolution, public spending, minimum wage regulation, the New Deal and allied programmes aimed at reducing poverty, combating social exclusion and regenerating communities. Yet somehow, far from displacing the neo-liberal approach to public policy, the "Third Way" turned out to be its continuation by other means – "second-wave neo-liberalism", as it has come to be called. How did this happen and what does it signify?

Our present civilisation contains two central fault-lines: one runs between the business or capitalist sector of the economy and the various other kinds of activity that serve to keep society going and enable it to flourish, from rule-making and mind-forming to child-rearing and trust-building; the other runs between human activity as a whole and the natural world. Competition between rival units of capital gives rise to unlimited accumulation and growth which, in the absence of any countervailing force, generates a variety of social dysfunctions and environmental stresses. Over the past thirty years, since the dissolution of the post-war settlement, this tendency has operated largely unchecked. Against a background of industrial restructuring, technological change and global integra-

tion, business firms have extended the sway of commodity production to every corner of the world and every facet of social life, and governments – particularly in the Anglo-Saxon countries – have set about recasting public policy in a business-friendly, growth-promoting mould.

The result has been a comprehensive regime-change. The Keynesian welfare state created after the Second World War in response to popular democratic pressure and the challenge of communism has been superseded by what might be described as a "post-democratic, market state". Under the old order, governments sought to maintain full employment by managing aggregate demand; private enterprise and market forces were combined with public ownership and central planning; and primary goods such as schooling, health care and social security were provided outside the framework of the market via tax-financed public services so that – in principle at least – all citizens could enjoy them, regardless of ability to pay and regardless of where they lived.

The new regime is dedicated to monetary discipline, fiscal rectitude, privatised public utilities, commercialised public services, light-touch business regulation, flexible labour markets, welfare-to-work activism and the propagation of the idea that personal salvation lies in paid employment, regular shopping, possessive individualism and self-reliance. Thus, where schools and universities once sought to broaden access to culture and to nurture the democratic intellect, their contemporary mission is to turn out "high achievers" – students who, in the perpetual flux of turbo-capitalism, will become "winners" or at least avoid becoming "losers". Similarly, where governments once sought to protect workers and control capital, they now seek to re-equip and re-motivate jobless benefit claimants, enabling, encouraging and, if necessary, compelling them to behave responsibly, cope with

risk and seize opportunities so that they do not become a “burden” on society. And whereas the creation of the welfare state in the twentieth century added a new, social layer of citizenship to the civil liberties and political rights that had been won in earlier centuries, contemporary welfare and public sector “reform” erodes the ethos of public service and converts citizens into customers, incidentally giving rise to the supreme paradox of choice: that nowadays we are free to choose everything except our form of society and our way of life.

Where the difference between value and price becomes blurred, economy and society become unbalanced. Thus, paid employment is now characterised by long hours, flexible contracts, debilitating stress, inadequate security and grotesque inequalities of reward, while in the household economy, the birth rate has fallen below replacement level, parental time budgets and family relationships are governed by the “work and spend” culture, and childhood itself has been transformed by the relentless commodification of everyday life and the attendant social and psychological pressure on children to conform to consumerist norms. The voluntary sector too has been invaded by commerce. Amateur sporting and cultural activities which lend themselves to commercial sponsorship, tie-ins and spin-offs continue to flourish, but religious observance and membership of political parties and trade unions have all declined. More generally, active participation has given way to passive subscription and the internal culture and management of voluntary bodies increasingly resemble those of business firms. In the public sector, traditional tax-financed and centrally planned forms of provision are steadily being replaced by contractual public-private partnerships dedicated to customer choice, cost efficiency and recurrent, target-driven re-organisation. And the damage inflicted by boundless growth on

New Labour's main achievement has been to grasp the Zeitgeist, transforming itself from a class-based party.

the natural world is so serious as to call into question humanity's long-term prospects of survival, not to mention the other species with which we share the planet.

4. NEW LABOUR'S RECORD

New Labour's main achievement has been to grasp the Zeitgeist, transforming itself from a class-based party which, though not totally hostile to capitalism, nevertheless sought to tame or control it, into a meritocratic, business-friendly party whose main goal is to adapt to market forces rather than seeking to shape them. Its relations with big business have not always been amicable and it has had some bruising encounters with the Tory press. Nevertheless, it has been remarkably successful not just in winning elections, but in displacing the Conservatives as the “natural party of government”. Of course, the Tories have helped by their multiple failures: to choose the right leader, to improve their public image, to appeal to women, ethnic minorities and young people, to regain ground lost in the big cities and, above all, to cotton on to the difference between counter-revolution and social reconstruction. In this sense, they are still living under the shadow of Mrs Thatcher and it would be a pleasing historical irony if the party which used to pride itself on being pragmatic and ruthless in the pursuit of power were to end up in the museum. Still, credit where credit is due: on immigration, asylum and crime, New Labour has been adroit and shameless in stealing Tory clothes. Moreover, the government's genuine and sometimes impressive efforts to tackle the baleful social legacy of the Thatcher years have enabled it to distance itself from the asperities of first-wave neo-liberalism and to retain some connection, however tenuous, with its core supporters and the social democratic tradition.

New Labour's political success has been underpinned by the turnaround in Britain's economic fortunes. To be sure, this began under

the Tories and is exaggerated by government propaganda. But there is no denying that since sterling was ejected from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism in September 1992, the country has enjoyed uninterrupted economic growth. As a result, average real income has risen steadily, the proportion of the working age population in employment is higher than ever before and nationwide unemployment has fallen to a level which has not been experienced since the mid-1970s and is well below the levels prevailing in France, Germany and Italy. The story is not, however, one of unalloyed success. Pockets of chronic joblessness persist in the old industrial areas of the UK and the return of prosperity has been accompanied by a degree of inequality which, elsewhere in Western Europe, would be considered shocking. True, the steep rise in inequality that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s appears to have tailed off under New Labour. But even if inequality has reached a plateau, failure to reverse the previous rise still counts as a blot on the government's record, for however much its spokespersons repudiate social levelling and insist that combating poverty and extending opportunity are the proper goals of public policy, wide disparities of income and wealth are not simply divisive and unjust, but also a prime cause of human misery; all the evidence shows that it is not absolute poverty, but relative deprivation that makes people unhappy.

Nor is the government's conduct of monetary and fiscal policy beyond reproach. The spread of owner-occupation, the growth of mortgage lending and the inflation of house prices mean that monetary policy is now constrained by the need to avoid jacking up interest rates for fear of puncturing the price bubble, depressing consumer spending and precipitating an economic downturn. And while there is endless scope for arcane disputation about whether, once the current business cycle is judged to

have run its course, Gordon Brown will turn out to have breached his own, self-imposed fiscal rules, the government has made little effort either to raise the ceiling of public tax tolerance or to crack down on personal and corporate tax evasion. If it wins a third term, therefore, New Labour will find it more difficult to keep on reducing the incidence and severity of poverty, particularly among single people in low-paid jobs, a large group these days which has missed out on the proliferation of tax-credits targeted on retirement pensioners and families with children.

How far New Labour deserves its reputation for macro-economic competence is unclear. The foundations of recent prosperity were laid by the Thatcher governments which abandoned the commitment to full employment, crushed the labour movement and deregulated the labour market. No doubt, Gordon Brown's golden rules and his decision, on Day Two of Year One, to depoliticise monetary policy helped to win the confidence of the City, setting up a virtuous circle of low inflation, financial calm and cyclical stability. The New Deal and inward labour migration have also helped to sustain growth by increasing the supply of employable workers, forestalling labour shortages and containing inflationary wage rises. Then again, successful Chancellors, like successful generals, need to be lucky. But whatever the reason, New Labour has not had to wrestle with the problem of reconciling tolerable inflation with tolerable unemployment that bedevilled and ultimately destroyed its predecessors in the 1960s and 1970s.

On the debit side of the balance sheet, New Labour has become a by-word for spinning and, since Blair's disastrous misjudgment in aligning himself with Bush, for outright duplicity and deception. Huge political damage was caused by the decision to take a divided country into a war that was wholly unnecessary, deeply immoral,



How far New Labour deserves its reputation for macro-economic competence is unclear.

probably illegal and staggeringly reckless, all for the sake of Britain's "special relationship" with the US and the influence this is alleged to convey. Ministers and MPs were compromised, public goodwill was squandered, the left was outraged and Labour Party membership plummeted – even nominal membership is now admitted to be between 200,000 and 250,000 compared with over 450,000 in 1997 – while the party's internal life is moribund.

The Iraq imbroglio also wrecked the government's European policy, dashing the hopes raised in 1997 that New Labour would end Britain's semi-detachment from the EU, embrace the European social model and repudiate free market individualism. In reality, Europe contains a family of social policy regimes, not a uniform model. Nevertheless, despite their differences, the social democratic systems of Scandinavia, the conservative systems of middle Europe, the liberal system of the UK and the hybrid systems of the Mediterranean fringe all have more in common with each other than with the US model. Even low-spending Ireland devotes a higher proportion of GDP to its welfare state than the USA, where a fifth of the population live below the poverty line and a third have no health insurance.

In mitigation, it could be argued that Europe has been a divisive issue in British politics ever since 1972 when Edward Heath negotiated entry into what was then the EEC. Unable to rely on the government's normal majority to carry the Europe Bill through Parliament, he was forced to depend on Labour defections. The second reading, which passed by only eight votes, was supported by sixty-nine Labour MPs who defied a three-line whip. The pattern of cross-party voting continued in the referendum called by Harold Wilson in 1975 when the Labour left campaigned for withdrawal from the "Common Market", sharing platforms with the Communist Party, the Tory right

and the National Front. Five years later, the leaders of Labour's pro-Europe rebels split the party by forming the SDP. And the schism within the Conservative Party continues to haunt them to this day. Nevertheless, by appealing Euroscepticism and clinging to the special relationship, New Labour has hastened the transatlantic drift that is evident not only in Britain's international alignment, but also in its economic and social policy.

5. BETWEEN EUROPE AND AMERICA

Blair's U-turn on the proposed EU constitution illustrates the issues at stake and the forces in play. In a sense, the government was right to reject opposition calls for a referendum. Taken on its own and at face value, the constitutional treaty is less significant than either the Single European Act of 1986 or the Treaty on European Union (the Maastricht Treaty) of 1992, neither of which was thought to require ratification by referendum. The proximate reason for the move was electoral; having shelved any decision about joining the euro and having forfeited public trust over Iraq, Blair felt impelled to shut off one of the few issues on which the Tories could still strike a popular chord. But why is national sovereignty – that relic of the age when the territorially defined nation-state was the exclusive focus of political life and a potent source of social identity – still a live issue? Because the EU itself is beset by a crisis of popular legitimacy, which has got steadily worse since it first surfaced in the early 1990s and has now spread from the Anglo-Nordic fringe to core member states like France, Germany and the Netherlands. And nowhere is this crisis deeper than in Britain, where somehow the moment never seems to be ripe for the government to challenge the Europhobic press and win over public opinion.

For the time being, the U-turn has brought the government a breathing space and recent opinion polls have given fresh heart to pro-

European campaigners. Even so, if the UK is the only member state to reject the constitution, as seems entirely possible, the result can only be to accelerate the country's transatlantic drift. Curiously, this outcome would not suit Washington, for which the UK is currently playing a useful double role: as an ally on the global stage and as an advocate for the Anglo-American model of capitalism in Europe. The UK's value will diminish if it becomes isolated from the rest of Europe. Far better, from the US standpoint, if several member states were to vote "no", for then the constitution would become a dead letter and instead of consolidating its unique status as a transnational union of semi-sovereign states, the EU would evolve into a looser, less coherent association.

A complete reversion to the nineteenth-century system of fully sovereign nation-states with shifting patterns of alliance is unlikely. Nor will Europe polarise into permanent rival camps – core versus periphery or "old" versus "new". What seems more likely is a Europe à la carte. France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries would probably belong to everything – the euro, the border-free area, the internal market, the EU judicial zone and military co-operation. The other states would pick and choose. Thus, the UK, Denmark and Sweden would stay out of the euro, but stay in the single market. The UK, though not Sweden, would sign up for military co-operation, but might withdraw from the common fisheries policy. And the new member states in central and Eastern Europe would seek to follow the Irish model of low taxes and light regulation, resisting pressure for costly social and environmental commitments.

The partial disintegration of the EU would represent a major defeat for the European social model and a decisive advance for free market individualism. This is why, for all its flaws – the CAP, the democratic deficit, the Stability and Growth

The UK is currently playing a useful double role: as an ally on the global stage and as an advocate for the Anglo-American model of capitalism in Europe.

Pact – the left should support the campaign for a "yes" vote in the forthcoming referendum. It is a complete delusion to suppose that the problems caused by boundless capital accumulation in a globalised world can be tackled within the framework of the nation-state. What is required is transnational co-operation – ultimately enshrined in a series of interlocking global institutions covering international trade and finance, multinational corporations, social and environmental standards, human rights, cross-border crime and inter-state conflicts – not to replace, but to revive regulation and action at the national level. The EU represents an imperfect staging post on the way to this long-term goal, and with its experience of multi-tiered government, its economic weight, its international connections and its historically evolved welfare regimes, provides opponents of neo-liberalism with a much-needed and, as yet, underused resource in the struggle to resocialise capitalism.

6. SCOTLAND'S MARKET STATE

In September 2004, the Scottish Executive published an updated version of its long-term strategy document "The Framework for Economic Development in Scotland" (FEDS). This reaffirms the original aim of creating a "smart, successful Scotland", but places more stress on the global challenges facing the Scottish economy and argues that if Scotland is to attract foreign investment it must tackle the home-grown weaknesses that are causing its productivity – output per hour worked – to lag behind that of the UK as a whole. According to FEDS, the key to competitive success lies in continual innovation – in products, processes and organisation – together with the capacity to adapt quickly and flexibly to changes in market conditions which present new opportunities and threats. Hence, the task of government, at both devolved and national levels, is to scrutinise every aspect of eco-

omic and social life – every activity, institution and practice – to see how far it contributes to this overarching goal and, where shortcomings are revealed, to prescribe appropriate remedies and strive to get them adopted.

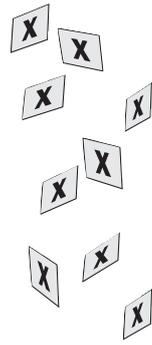
Two features of the revised strategy are noteworthy. First, in principle, the remit of public policy is very wide indeed: virtually no social activity, from parenting to patenting, is off-limits. The modern market state is thus a far cry from the minimalist, night-watchman state of the nineteenth century. Yet at the same time – and this is the second point – unlike the Keynesian welfare state that preceded it, the market state does not represent a compromise between contending social forces and divergent principles of social organisation: rather, it signifies the triumph of consumerist-capitalism and the neo-liberal paradigm. For although FEDS sets out four basic aims of economic policy – faster growth, regional balance, social justice and environmental sustainability – at bottom, there is really only one criterion of success: the rate of economic growth as measured by trends in GDP, GDP per head of population and GDP per hour of work.

A sure sign of the Executive's tunnel-vision is its language. Throughout FEDS, buzzwords such as global competitiveness, knowledge economy, human capital, enterprise culture, vibrant communities and economic drivers recur with a frequency that suggests ritual incantation rather than dispassionate inquiry. No less significant are the words that do not appear in the text. For example, even if we accept the implicit equation of economic growth with the expansion of capitalist commodity production, we might still wonder why FEDS contains not a single reference to human happiness or well-being. Once a society has passed beyond the stage of gross material scarcity, do people become any happier as they consume more commodities or, at any rate, sufficiently happier to com-

pensate for the costs incurred – in terms of the work required to produce them or the damage they do to society and nature? There is, in fact, a great deal of evidence that they do not. Indeed, since the 1970s, self-assessed levels of happiness in Britain have actually declined.

Another missing word is negotiation. The reason is that in a market state, with one exception, government operates at arm's length from civil society. Policy-making consists of setting standards and targets; implementation consists of "delivering" them. In neither case are decisions improved and support for them strengthened through dialogue and negotiation with the multitude of interest groups in civil society. Nor, therefore, is it possible to combine bargaining over questions of distribution, where sectional interests collide, with a shared commitment to problem-solving, learning and development. The exception is business interests, for it is these, above all, that the market state seeks to promote. A close working relationship between government and business is thus indispensable. Until Mrs Thatcher razed it to the ground, tripartite policy bargaining between government, employers' organisations and trade unions was an accepted feature of Britain's political landscape. Since then "corporatism" has become a dirty word. Yet our present system of government could reasonably be described as one "bilateral corporatism".

Bewitched by mainstream economics, the Executive of Scotland plc recognises only two kinds of economic activity: those undertaken by privately owned, profit-seeking firms which employ waged-labour to produce marketed commodities; and those which, for various reasons – conventionally grouped together under the heading of "market failure" – are carried out by agencies of the state. Self-employed commodity-producers are assimilated to the first of these categories. All other



Bewitched by mainstream economics, the Executive of Scotland plc recognises only two kinds of economic activity.

human activities are deemed to be "unproductive"; they depend on the activities and products of private firms and public agencies, but the latter do not depend on them. This is a blinkered and untenable view. Take the case of unpaid provisioning and caring work performed within the household. If, for whatever reason, less of this work is done or it is done less well, the physical and emotional costs are felt not only by the individuals concerned, but also by society as a whole in the form of family breakdown, mental illness, classroom disruption, anti-social behaviour and all the other ills that fill up the caseloads of the police and social services. And how ironic that the household should be regarded as a non-economic institution when one recalls that the word "economy" derives from an ancient Greek word meaning "household management"!

Granted, the remit of FEDS is broad. But the benefits of ranging widely are lost if all issues are viewed from a crabbing, growth-obsessed and business-centred perspective. The document acknowledges, for example, that a healthy workforce is good for business, but says not a word about diseases of affluence such as obesity, depression and stress-related illness in general, about Scotland's epidemic of asthma – the contemporary equivalent of nineteenth century cholera – which could be overcome at little cost through simple improvements in building regulations – or about the various forms of addiction that plague our society, including gambling and alcohol abuse.

In a similar vein, FEDS declares cultural activity to be important because it gives young people the chance to acquire the attributes that globally connected employers are looking for – self-confidence, creativity, communication skills and experience of team-working; because cultural products can be turned into marketable commodities which create new jobs; and because a "vibrant culture" makes Scotland a good place to live and

work, helping to attract and retain mobile capital and labour. Perish the thought that writers, artists and performers might also have a role to play as educators, critics and arbiters of value, posing difficult or uncomfortable questions for the rest of us about the ends of human life – what is ultimately worth doing, being or having?

This is not to dispute the central thesis of FEDS: that Scotland needs to improve its productivity – whether in the business sector, the public sector or the use of natural resources – though it needs to be borne in mind that productivity is a slippery concept which is notoriously hard to define and measure, especially when applied to non-market activities, to entire national economies or, indeed, to any ensemble larger or more complex than a single firm producing a single "bog-standard" product. The point is to extend the range of interests and issues that are brought to bear on public policy-making and to foster a regime in which business monoculture, bilateral corporatism and boundless growth are replaced by economic pluralism, multilateral partnership and balanced development.

7. CHANGING THE SUBJECT

What specific policies do these slogans entail? Space precludes a full answer to this question here. Two topical illustrations must suffice. Consider, first, the debate about fiscal autonomy. With its tunnel-vision and one eye on the SNP, the Executive rejects proposals to widen the powers of the Scottish Parliament to raise its own tax revenue. There is, it insists, no reason to believe that greater fiscal autonomy on the revenue side of Scotland's public finances would "lead to large gains in output growth". Conversely, there is good reason to believe that fiscal separation would damage the Scottish economy by sacrificing the "existing and proven benefits of macro-economic stability within the UK". So far as it goes, this argument is correct. But it hardly exhausts the issue.

For one thing, there are various intermediate options between the status quo and “fiscal separation” that are worth considering. Suppose, for example, the current system of student loans were replaced by a graduate tax, levied as an additional charge on the incomes of Scottish university graduates – at a rate, say, of one penny in the pound – with the proceeds earmarked for spending on current university students, in some agreed proportion to finance from general taxation. About 20 per cent of the Scottish population holds first or higher degrees. Hence, if the tax applied to all graduates, past as well as present, the revenue raised would almost certainly cover the costs of tuition and leave a margin to spare for student maintenance grants. A revolving fund of this kind would help to promote inter-generational solidarity, while safeguarding Scottish higher education finance at a time when variable tuition fees are being introduced south of the border. The fund would build on the graduate endowment scheme that was introduced by the ruling coalition in 2000 as an alternative to up-front tuition fees, and would activate the power of the Scottish Parliament to vary the standard rate of income tax by up to 3 pence in the pound. (If it is never actually used, this power will wither away).

Another modest reform would be to amend the devolution settlement so as to allow the Scottish Parliament to authorise bond issues, widening its tax-varying power accordingly. This would enable the Executive to finance public investment projects by conventional borrowing at market rates of interest without having to seek prior Treasury approval. To maintain its credit-worthiness, the Executive would still have to run a tight ship, borrowing only to cover capital expenditure. Nevertheless, the option of bond-finance would provide a useful alternative to public-private partnerships which offer taxpayers doubtful value for money and are often little more than licensed corruption.



It is time to leave the past behind and develop policies which prefigure the future while attending to the needs of the present.

Finally, an idea which deserves at least the same public exposure as Edinburgh’s proposed congestion charge is the replacement of the Council Tax by a Scottish Service Tax, to be levied as an additional charge on personal income, whether on a uniform basis throughout the country so as to permit redistribution in favour of areas in need, or with the tax rate set locally so as to decentralise power and revive municipal democracy.

Incremental additions to Scotland’s fiscal arsenal are not going to turn it into a tartan tiger. But pace the SNP, the case for fiscal autonomy does not rest on its power to work miracles; control over the structure of taxation is an important attribute of self-government. True, the fiscal options open to a small country in a globally integrated economy are tightly constrained. But they are not non-existent. What is more, a devolved Scottish government that was less beholden to Westminster would be better placed to negotiate social pacts with interest groups in civil society, opening up scope for Scotland to follow the example of small activist democracies like Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands, which use their social integration to adapt quickly to change and to maintain a degree of manoeuvre in an interdependent world.

Consider, second, the debate about demographic vitality. Scotland’s birth rate has fallen by a third over the past thirty years and its fertility rate is now well below the population-replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. This trend is the main (proximate) cause of Scotland’s declining population. The Executive treats it as a brute fact which public policy should – and perhaps can – do nothing to change, pointing out that fertility rates are below replacement level throughout Europe. What it fails to add, however, is that the shortfall is greatest in southern Europe where child-care services, paid parental leave and other family benefits are poor and lowest in Scandinavia and

France where provision is good. This pattern strongly suggests that in so far as population decline is a problem, public policy could help to ease it.

Obviously, it would take twenty years or so for a rise in the birth rate to affect the size of the workforce. But while the alternative of encouraging inward migration might bring temporary relief, it offers no solution in the long run. For leaving aside the vexed politics of immigration, the simple fact is that migrants grow old as well and although a steady large inflow of young migrants would continue to boost the working age population, before long it would also start adding to the retirement age population, making it impossible to sustain a potential support ratio of, say, 4 to 1. A constant support ratio would require ever increasing immigration, causing the population of the host country to rise and putting pressure on resources and amenities, whereas with a long-term fertility rate of 2.1 the population would remain stationary. Moreover, if a rich country effectively “offshores” the reproduction of labour power to poor countries where the costs of raising and educating children are lower, it creams off skills and talents that could be put to better use elsewhere.

Does population decline matter and, if so, for whom? One could argue that the current preoccupation with getting as many people as possible into paid work, in a context where public provision for parents and children lags behind the best European standards, is crowding out procreation and leading women to have fewer children than they would have under a more family- and child-centred regime. For its part, the Executive opines that “population decline will tend to reduce economic growth if less labour is actively engaged in production.” As it stands, this proposition begs so many questions that it is hardly worth considering. But it hints at an underlying concern that may well be justified. As noted earlier, under our current policy regime,

A GREENER SCOTLAND

Green MSP **Shona Baird** outlines her group's priorities for 2005.

what keeps wages under control and maintains discipline at work is a combination of weak trade unions, deregulated labour markets, welfare-to-work activism and inward labour migration. The emergence of a chronic shortage of labour would tilt the balance of bargaining power against employers, just as it did during the long post-war boom. And as in the 1970s, the country would then face a choice between developing some form of negotiated social pact and resorting to mass unemployment to contain wage inflation and restore social discipline.

Historically, the British left has been long on values and vision, but short on strategy and policy. This syndrome is characteristic of discontented, subaltern groups which yearn for a better world, but are stuck in opposition and seek consolation for their impotence in piety. It is time to leave the past behind and develop policies which prefigure the future while attending to the needs of the present. The working class long ago lost its chains and ceased to be, in Marx's sense, a historical subject. If history has a subject these days, it is the shareholder. But there is still a world to win.

■ *David Purdy is a member of Democratic Left Scotland's national council and author of Eurovision or American Dream? Britain, the Euro and the Future of Europe (Luath Press in association with Democratic Left Scotland, £3.99).*

● This article is offered as a contribution to debate at the **AGM of Democratic Left Scotland**, to be held on Saturday 23 April at the Cowane Centre, Stirling. The business session, from 11.00am to 1.00pm, is restricted to DLS members only, but everyone is welcome to attend the afternoon session, from 1.30 to 4.00pm, when we shall be discussing "Politics and Policy since 9/11".

The tsunami tragedy in Asia which heralded the start to 2005 has made such a profound impact – it is impossible not to be affected or influenced by it. As well as sparking unprecedented generosity and compassion for the people who are suffering in the aftermath, it must also force politicians to face up to the clear connections between the environment, the economy and social justice – and to look at Scotland's role in the fate of the planet and *all* its people.

The man-made global disaster of grinding poverty in the developing world needs our urgent attention. That is why Greens back the Make Poverty History campaign – and why we argued in a debate on the tsunami disaster in parliament that the best way to guarantee long term recovery and the rebuilding of communities in Asia is to challenge unfair trade and debt, and tackle poverty. With G8 set for Scotland this summer, Greens will be doing their best to get these issues higher up the global agenda, and demanding action by the Executive at the same time.

Global warming is one of the biggest threats to us all and the flooding and the hurricane force winds we have seen this winter in Scotland make the dangers of a chaotic climate all too clear. With some scientists now talking about a mere 30 years before we reach the point of no return in the impact of rising CO₂ emissions, we are quickly running out of time – yet virtually every government around the world is sleepwalking to disaster. Greens are exposing the inconsistencies of the Labour/LibDem coalition, which talks about the need to act on climate change yet

at the same time commissions climate-changing new roads and airport developments. They have also failed to take a strategic co-ordinated approach to renewable energy development or set energy efficiency targets for Scotland – leaving the door open to the pro-nuclear lobby.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Green MSP Mark Ruskell, Deputy Convenor of the parliament Environment and Rural Development Committee, has initiated a committee inquiry into climate change. He has also led the way in promoting dialogue between pro- and anti-wind farm campaigners, stressing the need for proposals to be assessed in relation to other nearby developments, and the need for more community participation and ownership. In addition, Green MSP Chris Ballance's Green Transport Bill is aimed at reducing both traffic congestion and climate pollution.

As Enterprise Spokesperson I am promoting the real win-win potential of renewable energy for the economy and to reduce CO₂ emissions. We undoubtedly have renewable resources in abundance which, with increased energy efficiency, could meet our energy needs.

Some Scottish Labour MSPs want to press the nuclear power button, yet it is one of the least efficient ways of reducing carbon emissions. As Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute says: "If climate change is the problem, nuclear power isn't the solution. It's an expensive one-size-fits-all technology that diverts money and time from cheaper, safer, more resilient alternatives." With £83

billion needed over the next 40 years to “manage” nuclear waste we have already created, we must not add to this appalling legacy. Greens will continue to campaign for positive solutions to the problems causing climate rather than dangerous quick fixes like nuclear power.

In the community, our work is informed by communities and constituents themselves up and down the country. With representation in six out of the eight regions, Greens are in a good position to link grassroots activities in to the parliament and we help give voice to public concerns through parliament debates and committees, as well as with petitions, protests and events at both Holyrood and in the regions.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Efficient public transport is both key to economic prosperity and social inclusion – yet the Executive is insisting on prioritising new motorways. This is the case with the Glasgow M74 where vulnerable nearby communities with little private car access, stand to suffer. At Camphill near Aberdeen, the community of adults and children with learning disabilities is likely to be split in two by the proposed bypass.

Our Food Revolution campaign is aimed at recreating a positive food culture in Scotland – from opposing the dangers of GM crops to tackling the rising power of the main four mega-supermarket chains (Tesco, Asda, Morrisons, Sainsbury’s). This year will see a Green Bill on GM take a step forward in the parliament – this would make GM companies liable for economic damage from trials and any future planting of the technology.

The control that just a few mega-retailers have over our entire food chain is a serious concern for communities. As the New Economics Foundation concluded in the *Ghost Town Britain* report, when a new supermarket opens, jobs are lost as local businesses close. For every £1 spent in a supermarket, 90p leaves

the local area while £1 spent in a local shop doubles its value to the local economy. Supermarket power is causing economic, social and environmental damage, driving out small local businesses, forcing down prices to suppliers and farmers who work under no contract, and promoting unhealthy junk food.

We will continue this year to campaign for a third party right of appeal (TPRA), in the planning system. This would give communities similar rights to developers if there is a case to answer in a development conflict – it’s only fair! At Greengairs, Lanarkshire, residents are surrounded by eight open-cast coal mines and landfill sites, and face another rubbish mountain on their doorstep – despite Jack McConnell’s promise on environmental justice to them two years ago.

If enacted, TPRA would encourage developers to engage with local communities at the earliest stages of the application, rather than waiting until the point of confrontation when an amicable resolution is so hard to achieve. TPRA could be crucial in empowering communities, groups and individuals to gain back control over their health and environment.

We are also supporting communities campaigning against the new emergency service communications system, TETRA. Those who live close to these masts are concerned about health implications – but this is the one issue planners are not allowed to include when considering planning applications.

Zero waste, local abattoirs, warm homes, outdoor education ... the list of campaigns and issues we’re engaged in is a long one, however I hope this gives a flavour of our priorities. There is a huge challenge in achieving a just, sustainable and a prosperous Scotland – but the benefits to be had are worth fighting for and that’s what Greens will be doing this year.

■ *Shona Baird MSP is the Scottish Greens co-convenor.*

TIMES

Stuart Fairweather has been reading an account of the final years of the British Communist Party.

For this reviewer, reading *End Games and New Times* had its painful moments. Nevertheless Geoff Andrews’s account of the Communist Party (CP) in the years from 1964 to 1991 is an excellent assessment of an important period in the development of our labour and social movements: a period not yet adequately explored. Importantly the book does not come over as an academic exercise, although it started as such. Irrespective of how central people were to the events that led to the ending of the CP the book acts as a helpful tool for determining the forward direction of the democratic left.

From a Gramscian perspective the book follows a line of development that charts the challenges made to the leadership throughout the period under discussion. In spite of the author’s sympathies differing positions are examined with a degree of critical rigour. This is amplified by the fact that the book is historical in two distinct ways. Firstly, it uses a “history from below” approach, relying heavily on personal interviews. These interviews are balanced by extensive research drawing on a wide range of materials. Secondly, and importantly, the text is historical in that it puts the episodes in question into the context of Britain’s wider cultural and economic trajectory.

Addressing the entire content of the book sequentially would perhaps be to miss the central point. The main argument goes something like this. Two main tenden-

CHANGE ...

cies can be seen in the history of the CP during this period, Militant Labourism and British Gramscianism. The first focussed on the reformist but central role of the working class. The second developed as a theoretical response to growing political activity of new social forces.

MILITANT LABOURISM

By the early 1960s the party, officially at least, dropped its attachment to attaining a Soviet Britain. Whilst aspects of this continued to be reflected in its relationship to “real existing socialism”, this was the beginning of the end for any pretence at Leninism.

This approach may have been more of an organic response to the developing social democratic landscape rather than an overt abandonment of revolutionary principles, but nevertheless it created a void. This void was filled by drawing on the economism and labourism of the British working class, with the requirement to retain vanguardist credentials maintained by a pragmatic relationship to militancy. Here the admiration for the tenacious work of the party’s industrial section, led by Bert Ramelson, is acknowledged. The contribution that was made to the leadership of the labour movement is discussed. Dialectically it is argued that the strength of this industrial militancy ultimately hid weakness. The development of the shop stewards’ movement was supplanted by a strategy of moving the trades union leadership leftwards. This strategy assumed that power could be attained by stealth. Unwittingly Labour governments would acquiesce to the muscle of the movement. Political gains could be attained through economic struggle alone. This part of the book is particularly insightful, although not uncontroversial. It deserves to be read and re-read. Whilst the CP was



Endgames and New Times

by Geoff Andrews (Lawrence & Wishart, £15.99)

→ Democratic Left Scotland has a limited number of copies of this book which we can supply on a first-come, first-served basis at a discount of 25% below the recommended retail price. Please write to: David Purdy, 4, Hillfoots Road, Stirling, FK9 5LE giving your name and full postal address and including a cheque for £12.00 payable to “Democratic Left Scotland”. This price includes postage and packaging.

leading workers in a direction that had a narrow economic focus it also pointed in other directions. The Upper Clyde Shipbuilders work-in is acknowledged. The Welsh and Scottish miners are mentioned but it is suggested that their contribution, like that of Women Against Pit Closures, came too late.

Paradoxically the space that *Marxism Today* and the party created for Eric Hobsbawm and Tony Laine to critique the movement (and the party itself) are discussed, alongside a reference to the ideas of Pete Carter, but for Andrews (and in the context of a polarised battle with the *Morning Star*) these contributions belonged to the other tendency.

BRITISH GRAMSCIANISM

This tendency included the Eurocommunist elements of the party but also maintained an ongoing relationship with the different manifestations of the New Left. Geoff puts up a strong argument. But just perhaps the argument draws the old times battle lines a little too sharply and a little too conveniently.

The second tradition or tendency included the Young Communist League during the ’60s, the students and Communist University of London activists, feminists like Bea Campbell and intellectuals. The tendency gravitated around tireless work of Dave Cook and, in a different way, Martin Jacques and was sustained by the culture they and others generated. The theoretical development of a humanist Marxism, as opposed to an economic one, is a point well made. It is highlighted that this can be understood as a return to an older tradition. Unquestionably the unfolding exploration of Gramsci’s ideas of counter-hegemony and the construction and maintenance of alliances found their way into mainstream CP

strategy and practice. Whether this change away from more insurrectionary or Fordist notions of transformation carried all those within the sections of the party named above is more debatable.

Each of the groups is discussed in turn. An objective assessment is made of the complex characteristics of each. The assessment of their development, contribution and place in the balance of power is not in question. What is, is the degree to which these different parts of the party constituted a transparent alliance. The book powerfully asserts that this tendency had *Marxism Today* whilst militant labourism had the *Morning Star*. However the discussions on inner party democracy, the alternative economic strategy, incomes policy and the nature of alliances did not always neatly follow these fault lines. Also *End Games* fails to acknowledge the position outwith the inner circles of the party. Elsewhere most members retained a much more fluid and simultaneous relationship with militant labourism, Gramscianism (particularly in its British Road to Socialism manifestations). More consideration of the role played by the official leadership in managing this would have been worth discussion.

Ultimately exploring the different tendencies mapped out and their responses to their times suggests that the book is correctly titled. *End Games* required to be played out before the space for *New Times* could fully emerge. Understanding this is central to moving beyond both the limitations of the positive aspects of the CP’s culture, as well as its conservatism. Geoff’s book is a huge contribution to this. I will re-read it and continue to contribute to the development of the democratic left.

■ *Stuart Fairweather is convener of Democratic Left Scotland.*

AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND

There is a lack of debate on a progressive alternative to the massively unpopular neo-liberal economics. **Andy Cumbers** sketches out some areas that the left needs to engage with.

A glaring paradox faces those on the Left committed to social transformation and a radical political alternative. Whilst neo-liberal economics has become massively unpopular, as the flaws of privatisation and deregulation become apparent, there is a lack of debate about an alternative progressive agenda, outside a few radical circles and cliques. Indeed, if anything, the recent political success of UKIP and the BNP, allied to the right wing drift of mainstream debate on social issues such as immigration and asylum suggests that it is the extreme right that is playing the mood music that resonates with public consciousness. If we cast our gaze wider to the rise of the Christian Right in the US and the continued electoral success of neo-fascist and neo-nationalist parties across Europe, Engels's famously-posed alternative futures of socialism or barbarism look like being replaced by a battle between a free trade, but socially dysfunctional, neo-liberalism and an increasingly authoritarian neo-conservatism.

Against this rather gloomy global backdrop, there are some reasons to be cheerful. The World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in January this year drew over 100,000 trade unionists, environmentalists, NGOs and left political activists, committed to resisting neo-liberalism and exploring alternative futures under the slogan "Another World is Possible". At a more local level, the Scottish Parliament elections of 2003 produced the largest vote for the radical left since the 1930s, with thirteen per cent voting for either the Scottish Socialists or Greens. Both parties campaigned on an alternative economic platform to the pro-business consensus of the four mainstream parties and might have received an even higher share of the vote with better press coverage. The Greens are committed to a more sustainable economy, both in social and environmental terms that hinges around localisation strategies while the SSP favours a more progressive taxation system, a higher minimum wage and the return of key sectors of the economy to public ownership.

CONSTRUCTING A NEW COUNTER-HEGEMONIC DISCOURSE

Such developments are critical in opening up new spaces of debate and articulating a new left agenda for

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the twenty first century. Building a new discourse means moving the debate on to a different terrain than that occupied by the Labour Party which has meekly followed the free market agenda of the Right in recent decades. More fundamental questions need to be dusted down and given an airing such as, what is an economy for? And, how should it be organised for the benefit of the many and not the few? But it also means developing a new range of concrete proposals that resonate with the daily realities of people's lives and indeed that emerge from the experience of those at the sharp end of corporate restructuring, privatisation and the destruction of the public sector.

Framed in these terms, the development of an alternative economic strategy that has mass appeal is clearly not an easy task, for it requires combining philosophical engagement with practical application. Such an approach was very much at the heart of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's call for a counter-hegemonic project in which socialist ideas connect with the material concerns of those at the sharp end of capitalism.

Today, Gramsci's "philosophy of praxis", where an alternative politics emerges organically alongside material struggles against market pressures, is most evident in the Global South. In Latin America in particular, the devastating consequences of neo-liberal driven and IMF sponsored reforms have given rise to popular resistance movements in countries as diverse as Bolivia, Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil. The development of more radical alternative economic agendas in these countries has led to policies such as land redistribution, re-nationalisation and the collectivisation of factories. The outcome of such developments remains uncertain and open-ended but they are a reminder of the importance of alternative utopias and imaginations in structuring day-to-day struggles.

This is a reality forgotten by much of the Left in the "developed" north, both within political parties and the leadership of the trade union movement. The politics of TINA (there is no alternative to free market capitalism in an age of globalisation) has been fully absorbed with the result being the neglect of the urgent task of forging alternative strategies to the current dominant economic model.

REFORMULATING AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY

In some cases this means returning to some older left economic themes. These would include: a strategy for controlling financial speculation and mobility (which will need a supra-national solution akin to the mooted Tobin Tax); a macroeconomic policy underpinned by full employment rather than fighting inflation; redistribution of income through a more progressive system of taxation; a commitment to a shorter working week of thirty five hours as a stepping stone to a goal over five years of thirty hours; a campaign for a decent minimum wage; a renewed commitment to public ownership as a way of extending economic democracy; and fuller recognition of unions, employment rights and co-determination at work.

But, it also means acknowledging past mistakes and adapting policy for the changing landscape of the twenty first century. The new thinking and self-critique required here can be illustrated through the example of public ownership. In the UK, the forms of public ownership introduced by previous Labour administrations, under various nationalisation programmes, were in practice heavily bureaucratic, over-centralised and lacking any real democratic accountability to either workers or consumers. When the nationalised industries experienced a crisis as part of the general economic downturn in the 1970s, the result was that they had few supporters and were an easy target for the resurgent right in the 1980s.

New forms of public ownership are therefore needed that actively engage the broader public in economic decision-making and participation, with the centralised "Morrisonian" model of the post-war era giving way to a diversity of more localised and decentred co-operative forms of organisation. A particular danger at present is that as the privatisation process unravels, particularly in areas such as public transport and energy where the limits to the market vision become evident, forms of re-regulation are constructed that re-impose state-managerialism, at the expense of more democratic and participatory structures.

Another area where new thinking and self-critique is required is in the Left's attitudes towards markets, where a simple market "bad" versus planning "good" mentality has existed. Thus, a previous Alternative Economic Strategy, developed by the Labour movement in the 1970s and early 1980s, whilst concerned with democratising the economy and overcoming some of the flaws in the nationalised industries, tended to put too much emphasis upon strategic planning as a panacea. Yet a system of centralised planning contains some serious flaws, in terms of economic efficiency, social and environmental justice and democratic accountability in the same way that unfettered free markets do. So, important questions remain about the limits to, and regulation of, markets. Whilst there has been some debate over these issues in academic and intellectual circles, including a lively

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exchange on this subject in the journal *Economy and Society* between Geoff Hodgson and Pat Devine during the 1990s, such discussions need to reach a more mainstream audience if an alternative politics is to take hold.

THE STIRRINGS OF DEBATE IN SCOTLAND

Whilst there are signs of a growing debate in Scotland over an alternative economic agenda, a problem is that there remains too little open discussion and dialogue between the different parts of the Left. On the one hand, the Greens have developed some very interesting new insights and ideas on the economy, for example in relation to localised production systems, land value taxation and alternative exchange systems, but these still tend to be confined to a middle class elite group of activists working in a tradition of voluntary organisation or NGO culture. The result is that ideas are often hatched which, despite their potential long-term benefits, are directly opposed to the short-term interests of working class groups. A classic example of this was the recent fiasco over the Edinburgh plan for congestion charging.

Contrast this with the SSP, which is the very model of a political movement that has emerged organically from struggles in working class communities, particularly over the mass campaign against the Poll Tax in the late eighties. Yet, whilst it has a much firmer footing than the Greens in the community and in the trade union movement, it is often wedded to a set of ideas and language about a socialist economy which belong to the 1970s rather than the 2000s. Too often the rhetoric is of seizing the machinery of the state and taking control of the commanding heights, without confronting more fundamental questions about how socialism and democracy can be resolved in an alternative economic system.

Recognising this discursive deficit, there are those in the SSP and Green Parties, as well as left activists within the Labour Party and SNP, who are committed to a more open dialogue and exchange of ideas. A recent one-day seminar at the STUC (see website <http://web.geog.gla.ac.uk/~acumbers/strategy.htm> for the papers presented) brought academics, political activists and trade unionists together to discuss different strands of an alternative economic strategy. However, this is very much the exception and there remains a need to broaden out the debate to a much wider audience if we are to campaign and fight for a socialist future. An alternative strategy needs to be anchored firmly in a mass political movement. As Gramsci would have been the first to point out, political action is rudderless and unsustainable without a guiding philosophy, whilst good ideas themselves are useless if they remain the preserve of a few academics and quirky think tanks.

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NO PEACE IN THE SUDAN UNTIL KHARTOUM DEVOLVES POWER TO THE REGIONS

Dr. **Abdel Adam** examines the background to the crisis in the Sudanese region of Darfur, and outlines the measures needed to bring peace and prosperity to the troubled area.

It is natural that people's minds everywhere are exercised by the recent humanitarian disaster in Asia but the ongoing one in Darfur continues despite the recent peace agreement. My wife and I have friends and family in Darfur and are grateful for the help being given at this moment of crisis. However, this is not a solution because the problem is "man-made", so charity is only a temporary sticking plaster when in-house major surgery is required for a permanent settlement. What, then, is the problem?

The priority now is to construct an agreement for a long-term peaceful future but the way forward is difficult and complex as in Northern Ireland. The present humanitarian crisis in Darfur is deeply rooted but the recent agreement by the Sudanese government and the opposition groups to end the violence is only the first step. But why did violence bubble up in the first place?

ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES

A proper understanding of the present-day conflict in Darfur has to be found within a framework that incorporates historic and post-independence political and economic practice. First of all, Sudan inherited from British colonial rule a centralised and undemocratic system within artificial boundaries. Secondly, successive Sudanese governments maintained the power and resource base in Khartoum but implemented flawed economic policies. Sudan is controlled by only one region, the Northern, one of the five yet with only 5.3% of the 30 million population.

For example, all Sudan's presidents and prime ministers came from this region. Members of this

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region also controlled all key positions in the country ranging from ministerial posts to heads of banks, development schemes, the army and police. In its blatant favouritism for the Northern Region, successive governments in Sudan have systematically breached the human rights of its other citizens.

On the other hand, the regions have not been passive in the face of inequalities and oppression. They responded, and movements for devolved power, justice and the sharing of resources grew to the extent that the government became very concerned but unconciliatory and, as a consequence, social unrest and violence escalated. Talks have been difficult as politics in Sudan have been sectarian, dominated by the two religious houses of the Mahdi and the Mirghani. Important members of these "parties" have been encouraged to stand for elections in areas other than their own, making it impossible for the emergence of locally-born political representatives.

A political system that thwarts its laws to preside over an unfair distribution of wealth is bound to witness a rapid erosion of its legitimacy. Also people are aware of the corruption in high places. One example of many is the General

Director of a well-known public company who moved to head another public company but demanded expenses for himself and his family from both companies. He also asked for and received two years' house rent and a salary of 7 million Sudanese pounds a month but when the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) raise these points we get accused of racism!

CIVIL WAR

The British Government's Department for International Development says: (www.dfid.gov.uk) "Sudan has been beset by conflict for most of its history since independence in 1956. The latest round of civil war started in 1983 after the failure of the 1972 Addis Ababa accords. It has resulted in the death of over two million persons and the largest internally displaced population in the world (some four million). In turn the war has devastated infrastructure and social services, exacerbating the poor development in a country of 30 million people. As a result, Sudan is one of the poorest countries in the world ... Work on implementation of the peace agreement will require early funding. We will gradually increase the amount we can put towards the

longer-term objectives of improved governance and policies." Fine words but this requires the British Government to put far more pressure on Khartoum if we are to get a just settlement. Why?

It was noted long ago by thoughtful Sudanese that the existing highly-centralised system of government and administration was not conducive to national unity. For example, the influential Professor Mohamed Bashir observed that "the public expression of regionalism, in the face of mounting inequalities and non-participation in decision-making, was made as long ago as 1964, and this situation holds good today." He showed in detail that demands for more power to the regions during this time were made by three areas: Darfur (from the Darfur Development Front,); the Eastern Sudan (from the Beja Conference) and the Nuba Mountains (from the Nuba Mountains Union).

For example, he made the pertinent point that the Darfur Development Front originates "from the general disappointment generated by the traditional parties among the people of Darfur and their obvious inability to face the difficulties and the problems of the country" and the aim of the DDF was "to create a multi-racial movement to channel people's political, ethnic, social and religious aspirations into the right direction in the Sudan, and in Darfur Province in particular."

POOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Darfur is the size of France but with a population of four million of diverse ethnic groups with black Africans and lighter-skinned Arabs. It is homeland to peasant cultivators on small plots of land, Arab nomads with camels and cattle and a small urban population of traders, craftsmen and professionals, including administrators implementing the policies of the central government. It is one of the poorest regions with only small traditional industries and a poor infrastructure of roads and

communications maintained only to serve the centre.

Essentially, a limited conflict over scarce natural resources developed into regional ethnic war. For instance, there has been a dramatic increase in cattle numbers over the past 40 years resulting in overgrazing alongside an expansion of cultivation into the pasture areas. No strategic plan for investment and development was adopted. Wealth was exported rather than imported into the region. Two decades ago, Professor Bashir warned that "so long as there is an inequitable allocation of resources tension will persist." Alongside the reconstruction of the war-torn areas must be an opportunity for the resident population, especially women, to plan and establish a new and sustainable rural economy with the help of outside resources but not outside interference with a foreign agenda.

CONFRONTATION

While confrontation between the centre and Sudan's southern parties was military, that between the centre and the DDF was markedly political. The latter case was attributed to the mitigating role that Islam and the Arabic language played throughout the Darfur region. Not so for present-day conflict in Darfur.

Contrary to the mainstream view which traces the current conflict in Darfur to a narrow ethnic divide, the recent conflict is an accentuation of uncompromising processes of economic and political marginalisation with military repression directed from Khartoum.

In summary, little has been done over the years by successive governments in Khartoum on behalf of regional economic development and participation in decision-making.

So, by the year 2000 an insurgency was already underway in Darfur, and in February 2003 it grew into full-scale civil war.

Although conflicts of interest exist as between the farmers and herdsmen, it is not basically an ethnic problem on which some are

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too eager to lay blame for the present crisis. The escalation of the conflict is primarily over resources with regional discontent in the face of mounting economic and political marginalisation of Darfur and the other regions by the concentration of power and resources in Khartoum.

LONG-TERM SOLUTION

Our task, therefore, in negotiating a long-term solution to the problems of the Sudan is to seek a federal or devolved solution with shared administration and resources conducive to national cohesion, stability and prosperity for all, including the centre, in a largely secularised state.

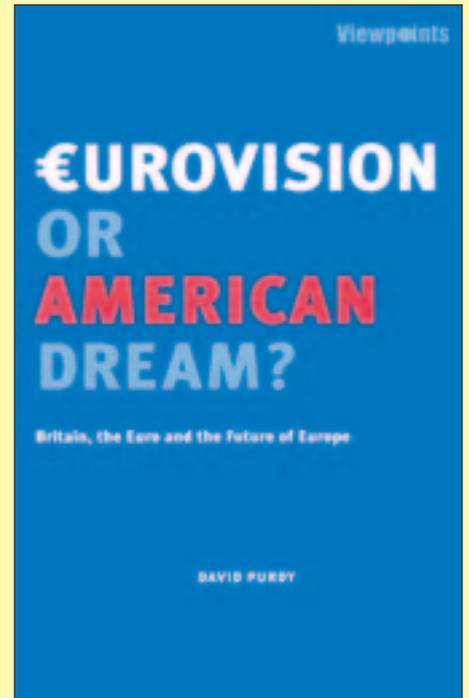
The African Union is playing a vital role in monitoring the situation and Nigeria is hosting the peace talks in Abuja to which I have been invited to act as consultant and advisor. The role of the international community and especially that of the British, is vital in holding the Sudanese Government to its pledge to withdraw its forces while a settlement is being negotiated. The opposing forces have agreed to stop any violent reactions on their part, despite local provocations and there is now an agreed common policy to present at the peace talks in Abuja.

It is very encouraging that African countries are playing an important part and we can afford to be reasonably optimistic, but Britain and the United States have the power to influence the Sudanese Government to devolve power and redistribute resources to the regions. We also need to demonstrate to the Khartoum Government that short-term stop-gap measures are inadequate and that it is in their own enlightened long-term self-interest to come to an agreement on these aspects, leading to a vision of peace and prosperity for all.

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