

Radical Options for Scotland & Europe



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End the Tory EU shambles

GENERAL ELECTION

NOW FOR A LEFT

SETTLEMENT

“Britain faces restrictions on post-Brexit trade and draconian measures to enforce free-market policies because the European Union fears a future **Jeremy Corbyn government. Senior European officials have told *The Times* that concerns over Labour’s economic policies are the main reason for the EU’s insistence on a tough “level playing field mechanism” in a future deal after Britain leaves.”**

This is old news - the front page story in *The Times* on 7 May last year. It was the EU’s response to Corbyn’s Coventry speech.

But it explains a great deal of what has happened since.

“A tough level playing field”

The Tory negotiators and their EU partners have drawn up a deal that incorporates a ‘tough level playing field’ at every level. Competition terms will be enforced in a way that will prevent comprehensive public ownership, stop the public funding of regional industrial regeneration and promote the continued tide of outsourcing and privatisation in the public sector.

It is to the credit of the Labour leadership under Corbyn that they have sought to defend the party’s Left agenda – despite a fierce and unceasing onslaught from their own right wing, from the big business media and from the Tories.

An agenda to win elections

Corbyn has continued to promote the Coventry agenda – an agenda very similar to the one that almost won Labour the last election. He has also continued to argue that a general election should come before demands for another referendum.

It is vital that the trade union movement now engage with this agenda and demands a general election. A Tory government cannot be expected to negotiate anything but a Tory settlement



Corbyn in Coventry 2018

“We would also seek to negotiate protections, clarifications and exemptions where necessary in relation to privatisation and public service competition directives, state aid and procurement rules and the posted workers directive.”

“We cannot be held back inside or outside the EU from taking the steps we need to support cutting edge industries and local businesses, stop the tide of privatisation and outsourcing or from preventing employers being able to import cheap agency labour to undercut existing pay and conditions”

ROSE FRINGE

STUC DUNDEE 2019

Monday 15 April 5.30 p.m.

Committee Room 5

FOR A LEFT EU SETTLEMENT

MICK CASH

HELEN MCFARLANE

TOM MORRISON

Chair Phil McGarry

We say

“That this Congress reiterates its long-standing policy that the Scottish Parliament should have meaningful powers over the Scottish economy. Congress believes that these powers should include the ability to give effective financial support to workplaces threatened with closure, to take key utilities back into public ownership and to contract services in ways that support regional economies and guarantee workplace rights, including trade union membership and trade union bargained wages.

“Congress, therefore, calls on the STUC General Council to use its influence, to ensure that Britain’s future trading arrangements do not compromise this commitment to the democratic powers, present or future, of Scotland’s legislature”

This is the motion from Clydebank Trades Union Council to the 2019 Congress meeting in Dundee.

It poses plainly and simply what is needed for the recovery of the Scottish economy, to rebuild the strength of the trade union movement and to enable local councils to have the powers required to end outsourcing and privatisation and to provide the services needed to restore a more humane and just society.

The motion calls on the STUC to use its influence to ensure that in any future settlement with the EU such democratic powers are both restored and delegated for implementation to Scottish and local government level.

Can the Tories cling to office ?

Currently, early in April, it remains unclear what the current Tory government will do, how far it can secure support for the deal that Theresa May negotiated and how far, even, it can cling on to office.

What is clear, however, is that the Tory deal has two parts. One is an Agreement. The other is a Declaration.

The agreement covers the mutual rights of EU and UK citizens and the future of the Irish Border including the continued inclusion of the North in the Single Market till issues of border customs control have been resolved.

The Declaration is about what both sides INTEND to negotiate but it is not yet a formal agreement. Legally it is the context for the Agreement. But it is not yet fully hammered down.

The movement must discuss

This is why it is so important that the trade unionists discuss the options now as they meet in conferences through the spring and summer. Should Britain’s economy and its social provision be locked for ever within the neo-liberal, privatising provisions of EU treaty law ?

There is still time for change. A Left settlement with the EU can be made if we had a government determined to win it and the mass backing to do so.

Along with our fellow trade unionists in the EU, we need to show the real nature of the EU and win support for radical alternatives here – alternatives that could help roll back the tide of neo-liberal, anti-working class policies across the continent.

Sean Patrick Griffin reviews

The 2019 Red Paper on Scotland



Introducing the 2019 edition of the Red Paper, Pauline Bryan notes that the UK has never experienced a constitutional moment where the contours of the British state were formed in one event such as revolution, civil war or independence.

The amorphous British Constitution instead developed organically over hundreds of years taking many of its foundational ideas and principles from the pre-1707 English Constitution and exists in various forms from various sources, not in one codified text.

‘A constitutional moment’

As Bryan suggests, the UK’s impending exit from the EU, with all of the constitutional complexities and uncertainties it has created as well as the consequent breakdown in the UK’s political system, could precipitate such a constitutional moment for the UK for the first time. In such times, it is important for Left to be ambitious and take full advantage of the potential to rebuild the British state so that power and wealth are distributed fairly and evenly across the whole of the UK and to ensure our constitutional arrangements work for the many, not the few.

While it is important to consider new powers which could be devolved to Scotland, as Neil Findlay MSP has argued, it is also important to view this as part of a wider package of constitutional reform for the whole of the UK, and as Vince Mills has highlighted, could involve the adoption of a new form of radical federalism which empowers the working class across the UK to challenge British capitalism at its heart in Westminster and the City of London as well as across the nations and regions and to stand up for their interests more effectively.

‘Elected Voice of Nations and Regions’

As Bryan highlights, this wider package of constitutional reform could also offer an opportunity to unpick some of the prickliest of constitutional thorns including House of Lords reform. There is no place in a modern democracy for an unelected legislative chamber and rather than representing the cream of the British establishment, the Red Paper is right to suggest it could be the elected voice of our nations and regions as part of a new federal settlement.

‘Fundamental changes to the British State’

What has to be remembered, however, is that such reforms involve fundamental changes to the British state and what has not been considered fully are some of the legal consequences of such reform such as the need for a written constitution and also the appetite for such foundational change in other parts of the UK, particularly in England, where it has traditionally been low, albeit this may be about to change post-Brexit.

John Foster who has contributed to the Red Paper since its inception updates us on the continued externalisation of the Scottish economy and explores the strength of Corbyn’s approach to Brexit and the problems full EU membership would create for a radical programme. Michael MacNeil, a new contributor to the Red Paper, offers a subtle analysis of the SNP’s centralisation of the education service, focussing on curricular as well as structural control.



As well as making reforms at the centre of power, Stephen Low and Tom Morrison are right to draw attention to the twin crises in local government in Scotland both in terms of funding and the diminution in the status and power of local authorities more generally, testament to the hand-me-down Tory austerity and neoliberal agenda of the current SNP administration at Holyrood and their obsession with nation building.

Any radical federal model to be adopted in the future must have local government at its heart to bring power closer to the people.



Stark figures from the EU on recession and uneven development

Eurostat, the EU's official statistical body issued the following figures in March 2019. First that Germany's output declined by 0.1 in the second half of 2018 and, second, that unevenness was increasing across the EU. In Germany business investment was 20 percent up on 2008. In the two other biggest countries by population, Italy and Spain, it was DOWN by 20 percent

AFFILIATE TO ROSE

Individual membership is £5; local organisation £10; Scottish level organisation £50

Name _____

Address _____

Fee
Cheques payable to SCAEF: Jim McDaid, 41 Craufurd Ave,
West Kilbride KA23 9PD

Current affiliates include Scottish Unite, Unison and RMT and Trades Union Councils for Glasgow, Dundee, West Lothian, Mid Lothian, Fife, North Ayrshire, Dumfries, Clydebank and Kilmarnock & Loudon

Banquo's Ghost – The European Union and the SNP's Growth Commission Report

Andrew Ferguson



Given that so-called 'Independence in Europe' is supposed to be the SNP's flagship policy it is remarkable how little attention is given to EU membership in the party's Growth Commission Report (GCR). Indeed Dr Kirsty Hughes, director of the Scottish Centre on European Relations has compared the presence of the EU in the report to Banquo's ghost, because although it makes so few appearances it's 'invisible presence can be felt throughout.'

The GCR recommends, for example, that an independent Scotland should keep the pound for up to 10 years. However, experts have suggested that this could seriously affect the SNP's plan to join the EU, as it would leave Scotland without proper control over monetary policy and make it difficult to comply with the criteria for membership. Andrew Duff (European Policy Centre) has argued that if Scotland did apply for EU membership, while using the pound, the Bank of England and the UK Treasury would have to be involved in any negotiations.

David Phillips (Institute for Fiscal Studies) has also drawn attention to the problems that would be created if trade barriers were erected between Scotland and the rest of the UK. He argues the GCR's figures make no allowance for any negative economic impact from such barriers, which could quite easily outweigh any possible gains from re-joining the EU.

'A glaring omission' – the question of the euro

Yet another glaring omission is the question of the euro. When asked about this Nicola Sturgeon simply dodged the question by declaring that it wasn't SNP policy to join the Eurozone. This is simply not credible. The EU has made it clear that all member states will have to adopt the euro (the only countries with an exemption are Denmark and the UK). Ms Sturgeon is being disingenuous. Indeed, it is clear that the policies and targets outlined in the GCR's section on Public Finances have been drawn up with the convergence criteria for entry into the Eurozone in mind.

The GCR is quite simply a fundamentally dishonest document that claims to be many things that it isn't. It claims to be sustainable when it contains nothing that would promote environmental sustainability. It also claims to be anti-austerity while promoting policies that would lead to further cuts in public spending and lock us into austerity for the foreseeable future.

No programme for how and when EU membership can be achieved

The biggest con trick, however, is the pretence that membership of the European Union would not be problematic in any way. The GCR sets out no programme for how or when membership could be achieved and makes no attempt to seriously address the consequences of EU membership for an independent Scotland.

Banquo's ghost appeared in Shakespeare's tragedy to haunt Macbeth; the Growth Commission's refusal to properly acknowledge the EU's presence in their report, however, threatens not only to haunt the SNP but to reduce the whole thing to the level of farce.

Andrew Ferguson is a member of the Rose Committee and a former member of the SNP

Maurice Glasman speaks in Glasgow



Professor Maurice Glasman, Labour Member of the House of Lords, addressed ROSE's public meeting in Glasgow in March. He came up to Scotland to speak on behalf of the Full Brexit campaign which seeks a withdrawal from the EU that would free Britain from all neo-liberal controls that currently restrict workers' collective rights and prevent democratic control over the economy.

He began by stressing that the current conflicts, in both the Conservative and Labour Parties, were of critical importance for the future of democracy in Britain. He quoted Gramsci comment on Europe's crisis in the 1930s: 'the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear'.

'Today we are in a similar situation – as we were also in the 1970s. Then the crisis was resolved against democracy. Instead of 'an irreversible shift of wealth and power in favour working people', there was a switch to intense neo-liberalism.

"More serious than 1980s"

The question today is whether we win what the working class voted for in the 2016 referendum, a return of real democracy, of control over the conditions of our life and work. Or whether we remained trapped, directly or indirectly, within EU laws. If it is the latter, then the consequences will be even more severe than in the 1980s.

If Labour fails explain the real issues, does not expose the EU for what it is, the joint instrument of big business in its component nations, then the Right and Far Right will fill the vacuum. This is the danger we face now.

That is why it is vital that the Left in the Labour Party and the trade union movement directly combats the confusions created by Blair and Mandelson, with the direct support of the big corporations, that the EU is about internationalism and human rights. It is not. It is about the rights of capital.

The EU's four freedoms are all about the exercise of market power. The EU legal system is based on enforcing market freedoms which means the rights and interests of the biggest beasts in the corporate jungle.

"Democratic Control"

It is about putting everything that was, for two generations after 1945, brought under democratic control back into a big business dominated market: health, housing, education, social care. And allowing big finance to continue its pillage of productive industry.

EU market rules currently block any democratic response – stop the exercise of control over the economy through the use of public ownership, state aid and public procurement.

Labour set out the importance of regaining these powers in its 2017 manifesto. Corbyn re-iterated their importance in his Coventry speech on industrial regeneration in February 2018

These are the issues at stake now, in the current debate over withdrawal, and they relate to the real, immediate challenges facing working people in Grimsby and Newcastle.

This is why the central issue in this EU debate is democracy. Deny it and the consequences will be as Gramsci warned in 1930. Win it, and exercise it for working people, and we will at last rebuild the base for socialist advance.'

ROSE AGM hears Davidson, Carolan and Stringer

ROSE's outgoing Chair Ian Davidson, former chair of the House of Commons Scottish Select Committee, stressed the importance of ROSE's work in bringing together both Remain and Leave supporters to promote a Left agenda in the debate of EU Withdrawal. "Currently this is being smothered by pseudo-issues of hard and soft borders and hard and soft Brexits. The key issue is whether the settlement with the EU gives people a collective say over the economic circumstances that govern their lives"



Jane Carolyn, a board member of the Institute of Employment Rights, spoke about the European Union's bleak record on labour rights. She deplored the TUC for still supporting the concept of "Social Europe" despite the EU's directives which allow employers to override national agreements to impose worse terms. In particular workers in Spain and Greece have borne the brunt of EU policies. She welcomed recent opposition from French unions to President Macron's "reforms".

Graham Stringer MP for Blackley and Broughton and former Leader of Manchester City Council, commenced his talk by saying he doesn't understand why the SNP wants to swop London rule for that of Brussels. 'The EU is fundamentally undemocratic with neo-liberal policies embedded in treaty law.'

'For places like the north-west re-industrialisation is as vital as it is for Scotland. The regions, like the nations, need power over public contracts and outsourcing – as well as the ability to redevelop public control of housing, energy and transport and provide state aid to create viable industrial clusters'

"Most trade unionists voted Leave", says Gordon

Also speaking were **Alex Gordon**, former RMT President, who noted that a majority of trade union members ignored the advice of their leaders and voted to leave, and **Andy Doig**, Independent Councillor for Renfrewshire, who pointed out that 30 per cent of SNP voters had supported leave and that Alex Neil and Peter Wishart were calling on Nicola Sturgeon to drop support for a new EU referendum.