

Radical Options for Scotland & Europe



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2019 Scottish Trades Union Congress **WE NEED ‘MEANINGFUL POWERS OVER THE SCOTTISH ECONOMY’**

“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.”

Passed unanimously

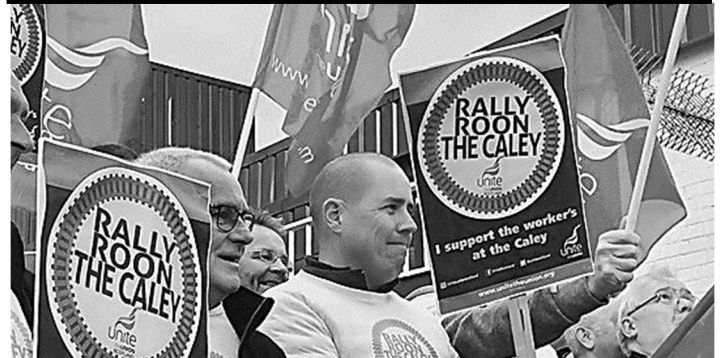
This motion, submitted by Clydebank Trades Council, was moved by its Secretary Tom Morrison and passed unanimously at this year’s Congress of the STUC at Dundee.

The STUC is therefore now committed to use its influence during the coming negotiations over the country’s new trading arrangements with the EU to ensure that they do not compromise any radical programme to regenerate the Scottish economy.

Congress also passed, though with a very significant number of abstentions, a General Council statement which committed the STUC to campaign for the maintenance of all progressive elements of the EU’s legislative framework and oppose any form of No Deal Brexit.

The very well attended ROSE fringe heard Mick Cash, General Secretary of RMT, describe the battle by railworkers across the EU against the EU’s Fourth Rail Package and further privatisation and commit himself to campaigning for a progressive Left withdrawal. Helen McFarlane, Labour PPC for Airdrie and Shotts, stressed that Labour’s radical programme for public ownership and democratic control depended on winning an exit outside the Single Market.

SPRINGBURN RAIL WORKSHOPS



‘State aid rules mean it is not possible to take over the site’

The Caledonian railway workshops, currently run by Gemini UK, are scheduled to close this July with the loss of 200 jobs – ending Scotland’s last remaining centre for rail engineering.

Local MP Paul Sweeney noted: ‘Having been involved in the meetings with the Transport Minister this week, I was taken aback at his point-blank refusal to consider taking the strategically vital St Rollox railway maintenance facility in Springburn back into public ownership – this despite the offer of £1 million from the current private owners to help facilitate this transition.’

New EU leaders appointed

The three key office holders have now been appointed. All are on the centre right of the political spectrum. The new President of the EU Commission Ursula Von der Linden is a member of the German Christian Democrats. Christine Lagarde was a minister in Nicholas Sarkozy’s government and then president of the IMF. President of EU Council is Charles Michel a former Belgian PM and a member of the Liberal Party.

We say

The outcome of the Tory leadership contest, and the character of the contest itself, underlines the critical importance of developing an active campaigning alternative that can uphold Left and socialist principles.

No Left programme of social and economic transformation is possible within the Brexit deal negotiated by Theresa May. This Deal, as it currently stands, commits us to the competition rules of the EU Single Market – blocking all the powers of economic intervention called for by the STUC this year in Dundee. Little chance of Boris Johnston fighting to change this.

Nor will a No Deal Brexit be any better if the subsequent trade deals are negotiated with Trump's USA.

This is why we need a General Election preceded by a Left campaign that can unite as broad a spectrum of opinion as possible for a Left alternative that frees us from both EU and US neo-liberalism

This issue of the ROSE Bulletin carries articles by Professor John Pinkerton from Belfast, Vince Mills of the Labour Party and Joint Secretary of ROSE, and Councillor Andy Doig, a long-standing Scottish socialist who recently parted company with the SNP over its increasingly neo-liberal policies.

Democratic Control

Each presents a distinctive analysis of the way forward. Each, however, demands a common opposition to the EU's neo-liberal agenda and any deal that continues to impose regulations which prevent the development of democratic control over the economy.

Professor Pinkerton lambasts the opportunism of the leading parties in the North of Ireland, both the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Fein. The DUP, a party claiming to represent the Unionist working class, has shown no opposition to May's Political Declaration that would submit both Britain and the north of Ireland to EU competition terms. What future now for Shorts engineering complex recently abandoned by Bombardier !

Unity without Sovereignty

Sinn Fein even more surprisingly have deserted their previous opposition to the EU as a neo-liberal institution. They now see prospects of power in the Irish Dail in coalition with Fianna Fail – and some interim special status for the North as a step towards Irish unity. But, as Professor Pinkerton notes, it will be unity 'without sovereignty' – a new edition of the 'Redmondism' against which James Connolly ceaselessly warned.

Vince Mills outlines the prospects for Progressive Federalism in providing Scotland, Wales and the English regions with the powers required to regenerate their economies – but critically dependent on the development of a class unity, founded in the trade union movement, that can impose Left policies at British level.

Only such active, mobilised class unity can, he argues, overcome the concentration of power and wealth in the South East of Britain and the City of London and counterbalance the pro-capitalist power of the British State.

Andy Doig looks at the alternatives for real Scottish independence on Left terms and not trapped in the EU – a Scottish version of Redmondism as currently represented by the SNP

These are strongly divergent perspectives. But all demand a common Left campaign for alternatives to the neo-liberal terms that will be the outcome of any settlement negotiated by a Tory government.

An Alternative View from Northern Ireland

Professor John Pinkerton, Queen's University Belfast (in a personal capacity)

The received wisdom is that Northern Ireland (NI) along with Scotland is opposed to leaving the European Union (EU) and that the Belfast Agreement which marked the start of the peace process is in jeopardy because of the 2016 Referendum result.

As with most received wisdom on the EU it is worth considering whether there might be an alternative view that pays attention to the complexity and dynamics of the politics involved and is more concerned to address the political, social and economic future than to preserve the status quo and those who are benefitting from it.

'Potential for building unity'

Recognition needs to be given to the potential that leaving the European Union has for building the unity needed to move Northern Ireland out of its present stalemate which has left it without an Executive for two and a half years.

It is the case that in Northern Ireland the Referendum recorded a Remain vote of 56% and a Leave vote of 44%. That said it is not unreasonable to add that in a UK Referendum how regions vote is actually beside the point. In addition, it could be argued that given the 63% turn out in Northern Ireland, actually not much more than a third of those eligible to vote actually expressed support for Remaining.

However, more significant, and depressing, is the split in the voting along political sectarian lines.

The right wing populists of the Democratic Unionist Party rowed in behind the Tory Brexiteers and have been trying to leverage whatever influence that gives them in a hung Parliament – though to what end is unclear given that they managed to crash the Northern Ireland Assembly which is where they might have been able to make use of the rewards of their new found influence.

Also unclear is why Sinn Fein has moved so far from its one time opposition to the EU to being one of its most uncritical cheer leaders. Only 10 years ago its present leader Mary Lou McDonald was pointing out clearly and angrily that the EU through the Lisbon Treaty was lowering wages and crushing family farms. Yet now Sinn Fein, alongside the SDLP, the Alliance Party and the Green Party NI, urge that any opportunity to overturn the referendum decision should be taken and that May's withdrawal deal deserved support as mitigating the worst impact of Brexit

'Unity without Sovereignty'

One explanation for Sinn Fein's position is the siren call of power in an Irish coalition government where EU loyalty would be required. Another explanation is that they see an opportunity to get 'special status' for Northern Ireland as part of a Brexit deal and that would be a step towards Irish unity – albeit unity without sovereignty.

This view of the so-called 'back stop' arrangements makes a fundamental misreading of what far from being prompted by concerns for the peace process is the insertion of EU single



Progressive Federalism and EU membership

Vince Mills on why class politics must come first

The fault line of inequality in the distribution of power and wealth in Britain is class.

market and customs union hooks into the UK – potentially and probably to be applied to the UK as whole. It is not to protect against the return of the ‘Troubles’ but against any effective overthrow of the EU neo-liberal economic imperatives when full agreement is reached on the future UK-EU relations.

Whatever their reasons, Sinn Fein are holding back from being part of the left opposition to the EU that is trying to make it clear that the far-right Tory Brexit being advocated by the DUP is not the only version of leaving the EU on offer.

A left alternative that sees leaving the EU as opening the door to planned, public sector led economic regeneration and the end of austerity needs to be supported both sides of the political sectarian divide. That unity would provide a much better place from which to further the debate about not just a new Northern Ireland but also a new Ireland and a new Europe.

Democratising the state from a class perspective requires a political partnership between the Scottish working class and its institutions, principally the unions and the Labour party, with the rest of the British Labour movement in order to achieve political control of heart of the British state, that is, Westminster and the city of London.

In light of this, the Left needs to develop a strategy for progressive federalism which gives maximum autonomy to Scotland that not only safeguards the Labour movement’s capacity to confront the power of British capitalism at a British level but supports the advance of the other regions and nations of the UK. This requires an approach that makes our economy democratically accountable at all levels; enables redistribution of wealth within the UK and within the nations and regions and consolidates and builds on class solidarity across borders.

Consider the alternatives

Consider the alternatives: with the publication of the SNP’s growth commission report it is clear that both the Tories and the SNP have only variants of neo-liberalism to offer Scotland. Both parties prioritise financial services, with the Tories happy to keep them headquartered in London and the SNP in Edinburgh. And although the SNP want to remain in the EU and Tories technically want out, both would retain all its impediments to active industrial policy.



Vince Mills

Labour’s approach is coming from the left. UK Labour’s spending plans would transform the Scottish economy through its National Investment Bank (NIB), National Transformation Fund (NTF) and UK Spending Policy Commitments. There would also be additional revenue because of money that would come from the Barnett formula as a result of UK Labour Government’s spending plans. A two term Labour Government would see an additional investment of £70bn.

This sum dwarfs capital allocated by the SNP to their Scottish Investment Bank and would boost the Scottish economy and allow the serious assault on class inequality, through a programme of social ownership and economic democratisation.

“Seriously hampered if we remain in the EU”

Of course, Labour’s capacity to do this will be seriously hampered if we remain in the EU or exit on the basis of the deal arrived at by Theresa May and still proclaimed as the only exit plan possible by the EU leadership. Nationalisation will not be possible, especially of the railways; using public procurement to intervene to save plants like Bifab will not be permitted and the creation of a national investment bank - beyond support for small and medium sized enterprises - disallowed. **Scotland needs progressive federalism, but outside the confines of the EU rules.**



NEW ROSE LEAFLET

This July ROSE has launched a new leaflet already distributed in Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow. It argues that Scotland must be outside the formal rules of the Single Market if governments are to be able to implement policies based on public ownership and democratic control of the economy.

It warns that the current May deal incorporates Single Market rules on state aid and competition and would block policies of the kind advocated by the Labour Party and recently called for by the 2019 STUC. Copies can be downloaded from the ROSE website <https://radicaloptions.scot/>

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. Vice Presidents include Elaine Smith MSP, former Labour MEP Alex Smith and former deputy leader of the SNP Jim Sillars.

Thoughts on the EU Election results and the Strategy of the Left

The constitutionalisation of British politics – Brexit Party versus the Liberal Democrats



Councillor Andy Doig

Whilst it is worth reflecting on the fact that Euro elections come and go, with little long term political impact, for example the Green landslide at the 1989 Euro elections and the UKIP surge at the 2014 Euro elections, there are signs that this year's Euro results may be more significant. Just as Irish politics was constitutionalised between 1922/2010, and Scottish politics appears constitutionalised currently between the SNP and the Scots Tories, is this also the case for British politics between Leave and Remain, between the Brexit Party and the Liberal Democrats? If so, what does the Left do about it?

A positive vision of Lexit

Unfortunately the lack of a Lexiteer vision led millions of working class people across the UK to vote for a former city speculator who attended public school, and who wants to privatise the NHS and many other public services. We must never be in that position again of failing to offer a Left alternative as this not only fails to give a balance to the EU debate but creates the fatal impression that all Brexiteers are free market right wing ideologues.

The changing face of the British Right – Farage, Johnston, Rees Mogg

The rise of Nigel Farage, be it in his UKIP guise or Brexit rebrand, represents a kind of anti-democratic politics that has not been seen in these islands since 1912 when senior Tory politicians helped to arm, and train, the original UVF.

This is highly relevant because Farage is setting the agenda which the Tory right, like Johnston and Rees Mogg, will seek to follow. The dilemma for Labour is particularly stark, because having chosen to align with the Tories over the Scottish constitutional debate and the Scottish leadership being even more vehemently opposed to a second independence referendum than the UK leadership, they then vacillated on the EU constitutional debate and found themselves squeezed across the UK as a result.

The politics of Brexit, Scottish independence and Irish re-unification

ROSE is rightly focussed on providing a platform for Lexiteers/Yexiteers who primarily wish to highlight the opportunities for Scotland outwith the neo liberal straightjacket of the EU. Yet it is not immune to shifting external events. If the British Tory Party splits over Brexit, which it could still do, it would be replaced by a much more right-leaning Brexit Party. The prospect of this, rather than diminishing constitutional politics, seems to be turbo-charging it. And the Left cannot ignore this. The fear of a new free marketeer Brexit Party government is the strongest recruiting sergeant pushing up support for both Scottish independence and Irish re-unification.

If the British state is falling to bits then it is pointless to raise the ghost of British working class unity. Irish unity and Scottish independence would free Labour from the log jam of constitutional politics, and lead to progress. English Labour must look to the authentically English radical traditions of the Peasants Revolt, the Levellers, and the Chartists, and marry a progressive sense of Englishness to a decentralised and democratic socialism which could propel them to outflank and defeat the Empire loyalists of the Brexit Party.

Andy Doig is an independent councillor on Renfrewshire Council; he was for many years a leading member of the SNP.

EU FISHERIES POLICY HAS RESULTED IN DESTRUCTIVE MONOPOLIES

Pauline Bryan

The EU Common Fisheries Policy has an aim of conserving fish stock. It has however resulted in unintended consequences, most particularly that of dumping the unwanted element of the catch when the vessel has met its quota. Some fish will already be dead, and others will die shortly after. The EU rules have been adjusted to make it obligatory to land a catch with almost no discards.

What this will result in is the landing of fish that cannot be sold and a loss of income to those fishers who had worked hard in often difficult and dangerous conditions to bring the catch in.

This is one example for why the Fishing sector has had an uneasy relationship with the EU. So the withdrawal from the EU's Common Fisheries Policy would be well received in Scottish fishing communities but it will not simply be a return to the old pre-Common Market system. As things stand the UK fisheries management regime will remain in place, but the repatriation of power does give an opportunity to question this regime root and branch.

Globally there has been a move to privatise and marketise fish stocks which in Scotland, as in the rest of the UK, has resulted in a market in the sale of quotas between those catching fish. Once the initial allocation of a catch is awarded (without charge) a secondary financial market trades these licences for quotas of fish which then take on a significant market value. This scheme naturally favours the larger vessels. Greenpeace gives an example of just one Dutch trawler holding the license for 23 per cent of England's entire quota.



Not only do the profits from fishing go overwhelmingly to large companies but the system has also created a market in derivatives for traders to make money from the sale of quotas.

When the Scottish Government has responsibility for fishing in Scottish waters it should work with Scottish fishing communities to develop sustainable fishing in a rational way that does not involve wastage and supports smaller fishing vessels. The encouragement of cooperatives at both fishing and processing stages would bring much needed investment into neglected communities.