



EU Deal must reflect needs of working people

SCOTTISH TRADES UNION CONGRESS CALLED TO CAMPAIGN ON EU DEAL

Economic powers essential

The 2019 Scottish Trades Union Congress in Dundee unanimously adopted a resolution for meaningful powers over the economy to be delegated to the Scottish Parliament as part of any British settlement with the EU.

Reject the EU's Competition Terms

For the 2020 Congress in Perth Clydebank Trades Union Congress has tabled a motion calling on the STUC to intervene in the current negotiations to ensure that such powers are secured and that Johnson's government does not accept the competition terms of the EU's Single Market.

These limit state aid, prevent comprehensive public ownership, the free use of public procurement and require private competition in the provisions of public services. These terms also require a legal 'right of establishment' for EU firms that has most recently been used to undermine trade union rights in Norway.

Protect Scottish Interests

At the same time Vince Mills, joint secretary of ROSE, is tabling a petition for the Petitions Committee of the Scottish Parliament calling for it to intervene in the current negotiations and to protect Scottish interests – particularly the fishing rights in Scottish waters and effective powers of economic intervention.

Mr Mills argues that today it is essential to secure a new unity on the Left to demand the basic democratic rights for the Scottish Parliament.

'There is a window of opportunity to secure a change. On it will depend whether Scotland does at last have the capacity to use its own skills to build a new infrastructure to combat climate change, to harness green energy, to use its scientific expertise in life sciences and protect its engineering heritage – and to do in a way enhances workers rights and is democratically accountable.'

France opposes Macron's EU-mandated cuts on pensions



France is entering its fourth month of industrial action to halt President Macron's pension cuts.

Public opinion is swinging in favour of the strikers – from 51 per cent in December to 60 per cent at the end of January. Macron's proposals will increase the pension age from 62 to 64 and do away with earlier retirement in some physically strenuous occupations. Pensions themselves will be reduced. One worker estimated the loss at 250 euro a month.

The French government committed to deliver these pension cuts in its 2018 EU Reform Plan which promised 'systemic pension reform'. France remains under sharp pressure to meet the EU's Stability and Growth Pact deficit limits. In October 2019 the European Commission wrote to the French Government: 'this effort falls short of the required structural improvement of 0.6% of GDP.'

We say

Britain has left the EU under a populist Tory government that now has less than ten months to conclude, or not conclude, a deal.

The outcome will determine the context of Scottish politics for the coming period. More than that. It will profoundly affect the well-being of all those living in Scotland.

ROSE was founded in the wake of the 2016 referendum to develop unity on the Left in Scotland around 'radical options'. This was understood to mean campaigning for a new relationship with Europe that could help realise the historic commitment of the trade union and Labour movement in Scotland to greater control over the conditions of economic and social life.

Next ten months critical

The next ten months will be critical for this outcome. The EU is currently framing its bargaining strategy. So is the Tory government. Johnston and his ministers have been seeking to widen their options – and the EU to close them down.

Johnson has posed the possibility of concluding trade deals elsewhere before any agreement with the EU. He has demanded control of fishing rights in British waters and complete exemption from EU law. He has talked about freedom from at least some of the conditions for the EU Single Market: the ability to provide state aid and to use public procurement to stimulate local and regional growth.

The EU is demanding the maintenance of fishing rights – economically significant for the French, Dutch, Danish and Irish economies. Michel Barnier, in his speech in Belfast on 25 January, stressed that the Single Market terms were non-negotiable and 'integral' to the fabric of the EU – which means continuing adherence to the neo-liberal competition terms which mandate big business dominance.

Big Business Lobbyists

In Britain big business lobbyists are lining up to press their case. The City of London banks and investment companies, mainly owned overseas, are demanding privileged access to the EU. Their mouthpiece, the Japanese-owned *Financial Times*, points out that the City provides over 7 per cent of Britain's GDP and fishing just 0.1. It is highly unlikely that Johnson will ignore this pressure as future big business relationships with the US, Japan and Switzerland depend on it. Equally, Aerospace, Britain's military-industrial complex, is making demands for full access.

So the question is which of Johnson's bargaining chips will be surrendered. This is the immediate challenge facing the Left in Scotland and it is one that demands action now. Fishing is important but most important of all is the democratic power of a Scottish parliament to intervene economically: to protect employment, take into public ownership, provide state aid and actively use public procurement.

Powers must be secured

Last year the STUC passed a motion calling for such powers to be devolved. But first they must be secured. This is the key current battle. It is one which Scotland's parliamentarians must not be allowed to ignore. On it will depend the well-being of all those who work in Scotland and of the communities that depend on them. Will the power of democratic intervention in our economy be lost or gained?

Why we need Progressive Federalism

Pauline Bryan, Labour Peer

In this short article I will try to look at how Labour and particularly Scottish Labour, lost voters from what it would have once considered its core supporters.

The left is always facing big battles but rarely at a time, or on issues of its own choosing. This was certainly true in Scotland when we struggled in the independence referendum, and for the left in the whole of the UK when we failed to establish a clear socialist case for Brexit.

These two issues dominated the past decade at a time when the strength of the labour movement was needed in the fight back against the Tory Lib-dem coalition's vicious attack on welfare and disability benefits through their austerity programme made worse by further attacks on workers' rights and massive cuts to local government.

Inspid coalition

In Scotland, meanwhile, Labour was punished for its failure to deviate from the Blair Government. Its lack of ambition in the Scottish Parliament with an inspid coalition with the Lib-dems, opened the door for an alternative, and the only one on offer was the SNP.

When in 2010 it gained a majority in the Scottish Parliament, the SNP immediately focused on independence. It did not lead a fight back against the Tory's cuts, but instead passed them on claiming that all would be well in an independent Scotland. Labour's response to these events was poor. Ed Miliband accepted the Tory characterisation of the skivers v strivers and did nowhere near enough to oppose austerity. Labour failed to build its support in the towns and cities, devastated by years of under investment and the closure of manufacturing, steel and coal.

Impact on manufacturing base

Neither the SNP nor Labour considered the impact of the EU on the UK's manufacturing base or on the ability to support local manufacturing and supply chains.

In Scotland during the 2014 referendum Labour formed an alliance with the Tories and Lib-dems, the very perpetrators of austerity, in 'Better Together'. It ceded the anti-Tory ground to the SNP who built the 'Yes' coalition across a wide spectrum including the independence supporting left. This led many Labour members and supporters to write Labour off as a party of the working class.

The Red Paper Collective, formed in 2011, tried to develop a left position on independence, rejecting the SNP's nationalism and arguing that Scotland could have used its Parliament to adopt radical priorities building an alternative to the neoliberalism of the Tories and LibDems.



Pauline Bryan

The idea of a third option in the 2014 referendum that would have resulted in more powers for the Scottish Parliament was dismissed before there was time to build support for it. It was, therefore, hard for the left to get a hearing in the debate. The SNP were happy to incorporate left independence supporters in their campaign, but quickly dropped them after the referendum. The left who opposed independence had very little coverage because 'Better Together' was seen as the only alternative to the Yes campaign.

Over this whole period the SNP's failure to make the most of its powers often went unchallenged. The SNP left was uncritical, and the leaders of the Labour Party couldn't challenge from the left while they were locked into an alliance to save the Union rather than advance socialism.

By the time Jeremy Corbyn was elected the push for a referendum on the EU had gained momentum. It would not have been his preferred focus for his first year as leader. The Party never had a proper discussion on the EU. There was an assumption of support for EU membership without taking the trouble to look at the impact EU membership had on the UK economy or listen to the position of members, many in the North of England, who were more sceptical. Between these two issues Labour lost support from its base in both England and Scotland and to parties that are to its right. In Scotland to the SNP that did not challenge neoliberalism, indeed its "Growth Commission" promoted it. And in England to the Tories who wanted their own, British brand of neoliberalism rather than the EU version.

Labour desperately needs to reflect and understand why it lost and while I can't do justice to that debate in this article, I will say that there can be no recovery for Labour unless it ensures a powerful voice to the 'left behind' in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the regions of England and a vehicle for identifying common problems and common solutions. A federal system would do that as long as it is underpinned by: Redistribution of power and wealth; Democratisation of the economy; Subsidiarity and Solidarity.

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.

EU boosts military expenditure

President of the EU Council of Ministers Charles Michel, former Belgian Liberal PM, has called for the EU to ramp up military expenditure in circumstances where the EU may have to act independently of the US.

This follows from the EU's November 2017 PESCO agreement ('permanent structured defence cooperation') for an increase of both central and national defence budgets and for weaponry to be 'interoperable' – mainly to boost the potential of the EU's military industrial complex.

145 billion euro defence budgets

The EU's 2021-27 budget includes 13 billion euro for military research and 34 billion for border defence. Individual national defence budgets have also been increased. The combined defence budgets of France, Germany, Italy and Spain in 2018 amounted to 145 billion euros and are scheduled to increase further. Russia's is estimated to be 55 billion euros; Britain's is 50 billion.

Tensions with US increase as EU economies stagnate

The meeting of world heads of state at Davos saw threats and counter threats exchanged between US and EU spokespersons.

EU Tariffs

Trump attacked the EU's tariff structures and French proposal to tax US tech companies – threatening in return for January 2020 100 per cent tariffs on French wines and cheese. Ursula Von Leyden, EU Commission President, expressed hope for a trade agreement with the US but concern at US attempts to close down the WTO trade dispute court.

These conflicts come in the context of a continuing US trade deficit with the EU, particularly Germany where it stands at \$280B, second only to China's. It also comes at a time when, overall, the EU's economy is stagnating.

EU industrial production declining

The most recent eurostat figures for January 2020 show EU Industrial production as actually declining. In October 2019 it was 0.1 per cent lower than in October 2018 and the most recent figures for business investment, for the third quarter of 2019, show it to be down by 6 per cent on the previous quarter.



Jim Sillars says

There is an agenda for the Left to seize

I have never known the Left in Scotland to be in such a bad condition, and I don't mean the heavy defeat of the Labour Party as the measure of it. The problem goes much deeper. The Left is divided and scattered, no powerful single vehicle it can use in the political field, no clear idea of how to combat modern capitalism as it embraces the AI revolution, all rendering the working class weaker than it has been at any stage since Labour lost power in 1951.

The dynamic has gone, a socialist movement that once had coherence and political muscle, that thrived with debate, could create bodies of policy in which the working class could believe, and rally to, is paying the price of being divided and scattered. Socialism is contained or, more accurately captured, within the two main parties that seek the working class vote – SNP and Labour, while there are little islands of socialists to be found elsewhere in a state of impotency.

The SNP 'Social Democratic' ?

The SNP calls itself 'Social Democrat,' a label, like a marshmallow, you squeeze and find no substance. Socialists within it are neutered. It has a 15,000 strong trade union group, without any sign of influence on policy. It has no guiding ideology, so it has adopted managerialism as its purpose. The Labour Party lost its way in the Blair years, with its intellectually bankrupt state fully revealed now by the fankle it is in over a second independence referendum – which is not going to happen for some time, until Brexit is fully understood. Scottish Labour is an irrelevance.

The tragedy is that there is an agenda for the Left to seize; an agenda of need in the working class community staring us in the face; an agenda calling out for action at a time when people know from bitter experience that underneath the PR-presented modified capitalism of today, they have a weak bargaining position in the capital-labour equation. They also face this fourth revolution, the AI one, with deep concern, but leaderless.

There is a housing shortage, with over 137,000 on social housing waiting lists; against which the house building programme is totally inadequate. We have homeless people dying in the street. Scottish education is tumbling down the international comparators, not because other countries are rising but because our standards are falling. We are a low wage economy, our young, and others, are trapped in zero hours contracts. The trade union movement needs to be rebuilt. The NHS from hospitals to primary care requires urgent attention. Our resources are making fortunes for multi-national companies – 80 per cent of Diageo's profits from whisky goes abroad, and the wealth from the vast new Clair oil field, also passes us by. The Scots don't own even a cupful of the black stuff. How does a nation discover oil but 613,000 households remain in fuel poverty? How have we ended up with a Scottish parliament devoid of the economic powers necessary to tackle these issues?

Nye Bevan

Nye Bevan said 'the language of priorities is the religion of socialism.' There is a whole agenda of priorities for the Left to address and campaign on. But where is the instrument, the organisation, that will do so? On what single ground can our divided and scattered Left gather and act? Time for a real Scottish Labour Party?

When some of us tried to establish the SLP we failed, primarily because the UK Labour party, with its strong trade union base, left no space for us to gain a permanent place. Forty four years later, all has changed.

Jim Sillars is former deputy leader of the SNP

LeFT rallies supporters in Wigan

Supporters of our English-sister organisation Leave Fight Transform met in Wigan on 15 January. Chair of the Labour Party Ian Lavery opened the meeting speaking about his feelings of dismay at being proved correct that by adopting a de facto Remain policy to appease Lib-Dem voters in a minority of Remain-voting constituencies mainly in the south of England, Labour had been the architect of its own general election defeat. He recalled being told before the election that he didn't understand his own constituents (who voted 70 per cent Leave) by shadow cabinet members armed with opinion polls funded by pro-Remain groups.

Paula Barker, newly elected MP for Liverpool Wavertree, previously Unison's regional convener in the North West spoke of the impact of European Court judgements such Alemo-Herron which entrench low wages and inequality for outsourced. Paula pointed out that leaving the offers fresh relevance to socialist policies of public ownership and investment.

Jonathan Trickett, MP, Shadow Minister for the Cabinet Office, lambasted cabinet colleagues who had pushed the Labour Party away from its principled position of endorsing the democratic decision of the 2016 referendum.

A recording of the full meeting can be found on the Leave Fight Transform website <https://leftcampaign.org/>

THE NEW ROSE LEAFLET

Copies can be downloaded from the Radical Options website radicaloptions.scot

Scotland's Parliament needs powers to secure economic and social justice

SIGN THE PETITION

Go to the ROSE website www.radicaloptions.scot

Currently we face a chaotic system in which transport, power and communications are privatised or franchised out to the private sector and the Scottish Parliament has very limited powers of intervention in the economy.

It is a situation that leaves Scotland dangerously exposed and unable to tackle the key problems of our time: ensuring meaningful employment for the next generation and tackling the causes of climate change. The two are related. Neither can be addressed without coordinated powers of intervention.

On paper the Scottish Parliament should possess considerable powers to intervene – all those not specifically

reserved. In practice over the past two decades it has not been able to exercise these powers because of the competition terms of the EU.

This year Boris Johnson will be negotiating an EU settlement. The EU will be demanding the inclusion of its Single Market competition terms which prioritise the rights of big business and limit state intervention.

This is why the Scottish Parliament needs to act now and demand a settlement that does not impose these terms. Sign the ROSE petition calling on the Scottish Parliament to demand a settlement that excludes Single Market terms.