

Radical Options for Scotland and Europe



Saturday 12 February 2022

A ROSE Leaflet

DEFEND, EXTEND OUR PARLIAMENT'S POWERS !

The People's Assembly Scotland is to be congratulated on its demonstrations this Saturday. We need to show our anger. Our living standards face a triple whammy. Energy and food monopolies are hiking prices, landlords are upping rents and from April Sunak's national insurance tax will cut wages.

Simultaneously council services will, according to COSLA, see further cuts: limited for the coming year but drastic for the next two as a result of a swingeing three-year financial settlement from Westminster.

At the same time, and so far half hidden, there is a far more cynical and fundamental assault. It is an attack on what remains of our democracy. This is what ROSE is campaigning on.

'Levelling Up' !

It is contained in the legislation currently being forced through Westminster together with Gove's White Paper on 'Levelling Up' published last week.

It has two sides to it. Taking real powers away. And then giving back some limited cash support on conditions that undermine our remaining democratic institutions.

Under the Act setting up the Scottish Parliament in 1998 Scotland gained broad powers over economic and industrial policy, powers that trade unionists had been demanding ever since the 1970s. These included powers to halt closures, give aid to industry and initiate public sector economic development. Even though these powers were limited by EU restrictions on most public sector intervention, they were important for the future.

'Grabbing powers for Westminster'

What has Johnson done? As soon as we were out of the EU, he introduced legislation grabbing these powers for Westminster: powers over state aid and also powers over public sector contracting (in 2019 worth £292 billion – almost 15 percent of GDP at British level).

These powers would have been key levers for regenerating the Scottish economy. Johnson has hijacked them.

His Levelling Up White Paper, and the government's policy announcements during 2021, indicate the cynical way in which he intends to use them.

It is to intervene directly in Scotland, circumventing the Scottish Parliament, building 'partnerships' with consortiums of local authorities, now called 'City Regions' on condition that they work hand in glove with the private sector and lever in new funds.

It's the mirror image of what the city-region mayors are required to do in England.

Thatcher privatised: Johnson plans to finish the job !

Thatcher privatised power, transport, housing and communications. Johnson plans to finish the job, privatising local government, making it dependent on Westminster and marginalising the Scottish parliament. That's why the financial settlement for Scotland is so harsh.

The money is instead going direct to the new Westminster-controlled partnerships and infrastructure projects.

ROSE is campaigning to expose this threat to our democracy. We need instead to defend the powers our parliament gained in 1998 and extend them – particularly to give our parliament appropriate powers to borrow to invest. We need these powers now if we are to develop our economy, defend jobs and restore local government's democratic link to local communities.

And we need to link up with Wales where the Welsh parliament is already campaigning on these issues if we are to defeat Johnson and his plans for big business control.

ROSE has affiliations from a majority of Scotland's Trade Union Councils and three major unions as well as a wide range of individuals. View our YouTube videos https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCC_wtkNbhZLZ10AVjIBeOg.

Our website is www.rose-scotland.org. Individual affiliations (£5) can be sent to Jim McDaid, 41 Crawford Avenue, West Kilbride, KA23 9DP: cheques made out to ROSE.