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PRACTICAL POLICIES FOR THE REDISTRIBUTION
OF WEALTH, POWER AND OPPORTUNITY

Fringe meeting

The Labour Manifesto

17 February 2001. Held at Labour Spring Conference, Glasgow Moathouse Hotel.
Organised in association with Tribune

Speakers:

Isobel Lindsay

(University of Strathclyde, Scottish Constitutional Convention, Scottish Civil Forum)

Cathy Jamieson MSP

(Deputy Leader of the Scottish Labour Party)

John McAllion MP & MSP

The meeting was chaired by Barckley Sumner, Deputy Editor of Tribune.

Barckley Sumner

The meeting is loosely titled 'The Labour Manifesto'. Speaking to a number of people what is very noticeable after years of Policy Forums and the like is that while we have a lot of policies, we don't seem yet to have any big ideas for the election campaign. Certainly in 1997 there were some very high profile policies such as the New Deal, the windfall tax, the minimum wage, and devolution for Scotland and Wales – policies which the Party and the country could get excited about. It doesn't seem that as yet any policies like that have emerged for the second term agenda. So hopefully the speakers will touch on these.

Isobel Lindsay

This is not just speaking from a Scottish perspective when I say that constitutional reform has totally transformed the political landscape in the UK as a whole. And it has opened out great opportunities for the left, if the left learns to navigate the system. There are exciting opportunities here, and perhaps people haven't entirely realised the full potential of these because it does involve, in some ways, a new form of politics in the UK context. This is important both in terms of where we have got to now in the constitutional reform agenda, but also particularly for England. This issue must not be lost in the coming manifesto, in terms of the whole situation of the English regions, and also around voting reform as well. There's a range of issues there that are fundamentally important to opening up political reform, and opening up potential for the left.

If we look at the new centres of initiative that constitutional reform has brought, we are beginning to see new political directions being taken in different places. And for the most part the direction is likely to be more to the left than coming from the centre. We have seen this particularly in Scotland and I'm sure that Cathy will say much more about this. Look at the outcomes; don't just look at some of the messy processes by which we get to these outcomes. If I had to identify a theme that has emerged over the past year or so arising out of Scottish devolution, it is a reassertion of the values of an inclusive welfare state. That has been a big issue, and a big winner in the Scottish context – around university fees and a limited reintroduction of grants, around the implications of

the Sutherland report, around the recent settlement on teachers' pay, and on educational reform – a whole range of issues of this kind. What we've been seeing is that where the Parliament as a whole is going to is in the direction of reasserting the importance of that inclusive welfare state.

There are fewer powers obviously in the Welsh context to do this. For example, Wales would not have the power to abolish tuition fees. But it would have some powers to introduce some level of grants; there are provisions there. There are interesting things going on in Wales around sustainability, around that whole environmental concept, including social sustainability. We've got to watch what happens in Northern Ireland, and really try to bring them into this picture, into this scene too, around the policy developments it gets. And although the Greater London Authority has very limited power we have already seen the way in which it is possible to use the system around the London Underground issue at least to get some concessions out of the centre.

This process is only beginning. But if we are going to use it effectively then it is going to mean – I hesitate to say 'networking', but it is going to mean good communications, it is going to mean being clever about alliance building. I have been tempted to say that we might define this process as 'ganging up on Westminster', but this might not be too tactful at this point in time! But in many ways the essence of that is here. The problem is that the left in the post-second world war settlement thought: yes, the big powerful central state, that is what we need to deliver. And okay, for a short period, it delivered. But over the past 50 years we have lost more than gained from that big powerful centralised state. Whereas with the growth of devolution what we can see is the opportunities. It's rather like the trade union bargaining strategy of picking key points in the system where you can make gains and then use that in order to try to press through further gains in other points in the system. But we're only going to extend this if we're all aware of what each other is doing, and we cannot depend on gaining that awareness through the national media – because, quite frankly, the national media are extremely poor at reporting what is happening in the rest of the UK outside the metropolitan context. So we have to build up the links to do this ourselves – to keep in touch with the kind of people who are pushing similar agendas in similar devolved assemblies, or parliaments, or authorities, in the UK, and try and do some coordination on tactics and strategy. This is a very promising opportunity for the left if it picks it up.

But that does leave the big issue for England – what happens to England and what happens to English regions. Because just now the situation, as someone put it to me recently, is just a confused mess in the English regions, without real coherence. I think it's very much in the interests of the left to prioritise that issue of regional decentralisation in the English context. It does not have to be something that is done uniformly. Something we argued very strongly in Scotland was: let's take the areas where there is a demand, let's build up the potential there, and let's again see the opportunity of developing new policy initiatives without the dead hand of the centre.

I'd like to say just a couple of other things. One is around what I said about alliance building. There is the geographical aspect of this. My main involvement is around civil organisations and we're already doing that to an increasing extent. For example, the Civic Forum in Scotland, the Civic Forum in Northern Ireland, the newly created Civic Forum in London, are having joint meetings. So we're trying to build this up in that context, but we need to do this around the more explicitly political context as well. But the alliance building has got to be wider than within one party. Because, and I know there will be different views here on the issue of Proportional Representation (PR), but I believe having PR in the Scottish has opened possibilities for the left, for radical politics, which would never have been there without it. It's all right saying: get a centre-left government into power with a big majority and then it will deliver. We know the results of that. Whereas when you have the situation in which you have the potential for different issues to build up different alliances you can get things through that are more radical, I believe, than you can with that solid majority which becomes often more and more establishment and reactionary as time goes on. So we have to be prepared to broaden out. One of the possibilities that PR systems such as those adopted in Scotland and Wales bring is that we may begin to see more single issue groups managing to get into the parliament through the list system. We've yet to see this but we may do in the future. This might not be thought to be in the interests of political parties, but I think it is in the interests of radical politics. We may very well see this around the pensioners. It may not always be issues that all of us would approve of, but the one good thing this does is that it opens out the system, opens out the debate and that must be good for us.

The final point that I want to make here is on the lack of a big theme, a big vision. Now one of those big themes that we desperately need is to reassert the value of public service, and to make this a big thing, and a consistent thing. Because while there have been good aspects of the past four years in terms of the government's performance, one of the worst aspects is the way in which we had the continued undermining of the concept of public service. We had the undermining of so many of the workers employed there, the undermining through the constant auctioning of jobs, the threats hanging over people's heads, and the bullying involved. Only when you have a crisis like teacher shortages or nursing shortages do you start getting the big words about 'you're heroes and we want you'. Having seen so much inconsistency – primarily, I may say, in the English context more than the Scottish context – it's going to be difficult to get this back again, but not impossible. There must be a vision there, around the concept of public service. Unless we do this then it's not enough just to improve pay and conditions and put some money in. That is vital. But there also has to be a bit of idealism projected there, into the idea of a contribution to the wider community. I hope that's one of the issues that will be raised, will get through, and will change the whole strategy and tactics in the next few years.

Cathy Jamieson

The Catalyst paper that has been circulated is talking about 'practical policies for the redistribution of wealth, power and opportunity'. Now I think that's one of the reasons why I joined the Labour Party in the first place – because I was interested in practical politics that would make a difference to the lives of ordinary people in the kind of area that I lived in, and in the kind of area that I now represent. And I don't think that my principles have moved from that in coming in to the Scottish parliament.

We're talking about the next manifesto, and it led me to wonder, are we really talking about the manifesto for the election coming or are we really talking about having to develop policies for the manifesto after that? If we are talking about policies for a future manifesto then we have to look at what are we going to aim to achieve in a second term of a Labour government, and I don't think at the moment anybody's pretending that all the work that ought to have been done, or ought to be done, by a Labour government, has been done. You will hear that throughout most of the speeches that have been made at this conference, you know the buzzwords: 'a lot done, a lot still to do'. But there is a great element of truth to that. Because I certainly wanted to see a minimum wage, I certainly wanted to see greater recognition in terms of trade union rights, I wanted to see improvements in childcare, I wanted to see improvements in education, I wanted to see the big constitutional changes, the setting up of the Scottish Parliament, loads of other things that have actually been achieved. But I want to see how we're going to take that forward. I want to see improvements in the minimum wage, I want to see greater role for the trade union movement in terms of working in genuine partnership with government, I want to see further improvements in terms of how we treat children and young people, I want to see more improvements in how we tackle pensioner poverty and child poverty, and I want to see a greater role for involving people in the political process.

But if we're talking about moving further on to a big idea, I actually don't think we need to look all that far away to find what could potentially be the big idea for the general election, and the Scottish election beyond when I'll hopefully be standing again for the Scottish Parliament. As a member of the cooperative movement I'm a Co-op MSP, and I believe that one of the things that we should be putting on the agenda is new forms of social ownership. This could be a real opportunity for the mutual sector as an alternative to everything being located within either the private sector (which it increasingly has been recently) or the old forms of public sector.

That's not in any way to diminish the work that the public sector has done over the years. I'm certainly very conscious of what happened during 18 years of Tory government in Scotland, when it was Labour-controlled local authorities that really were the only people who were standing up and protecting poor people in disadvantaged communities and working on their behalf. Many – and I was one of them, a public sector worker at the time – were putting ourselves, and at times our jobs, on the line in order to do that.

But we have new opportunities to look at a way forward. As Isobel was speaking I was thinking of all the ways in which the whole idea of cooperation and the mutual sector, social ownership, gives us opportunities that

we can take that forward. I scribbled down in relation to my own constituency area: 'from farmers to football'. Suddenly farmers in my constituency area have discovered that actually it's better to own things in common, and to work together in order to sustain their industry in the setting up of cooperatives, rather than to be competing against one another and putting one another out of business. People might be wondering what the football connection is about, but in every aspect of people's lives there's an opportunity for cooperation and the mutual sector. People may be aware of the Supporters Direct initiative that was launched through a lot of work that was done by the cooperative movement to ensure that people had an opportunity to take an ownership in the game, the sport that everybody loves, for people to be absolutely actively involved in the process. Why should it be that all the proceeds from sport, and from football in particular, go into the pockets of private shareholders, when that is coming from the fans that have built up the game?

So there are opportunities right through there as well as in the financial sector. Some of the most successful financial institutions are in the mutual sector, not the private sector. I hope everyone here does their banking with a mutual, gets their insurance with a mutual, rather than with the organisations that have converted to PLC status. If we're talking about taking things forward we can look to see how can we redistribute wealth and power. One of the ways of doing that is actually to involve people in ownership in the process practically and also intellectually, so that people feel that they actually have an ownership. That means that they have to have a say in what's going on and the actually have the opportunity to vote in the system.

Isobel mentioned some of the issues in terms of the welfare state and some of the things that the Scottish Parliament has been doing. There was a comment that was reputed to have come from a Westminster MP, saying: 'I see that you're rebuilding the welfare state in Scotland!' Well I don't actually think that is a bad thing to be doing. If you look at the areas that the Scottish Parliament is responsible for in terms of health, education, the justice system, social justice and anti-poverty work, that's exactly what we ought to be about.

There are tensions, as Isobel pointed out, about being able to do things differently in a Scottish context. We do have a different system in relation to tuition fees. We have a different system, or we are going to have a different system, in relation to the concessionary travel scheme for the elderly that's come through the Transport Bill. We do have a different system in relation to teachers' pay. Now some of those areas were areas where there were already differences. We've had a different justice system in Scotland since time immemorial and nobody has been stamping around the place over that. So when it comes to the discussion on Sutherland and the issue of long term care for the elderly, it's interesting to note that suddenly that has become a main issue as if somehow we were not entitled to things in Scotland differently in a different context. That's exactly why the Scottish Parliament was set up and it shouldn't come as any surprise to people that we would have decided the best use of resources in a Scottish context.

Isobel mentioned also what should happen in England in the future. Now I never used to like when people came and told me what we should be doing so I would hesitate to say to people in the English regions what you ought to be doing in terms of your political processes. But I do think there are lessons that can be learned from the devolution settlement in Scotland. There are lessons that can be learned from the way the Parliament operates. Some of the successful bits of this Parliament are the way that some of the committees have operated. Where there has been cross-party work taken on to deal with challenges about domestic abuse, there's been agreement in the committees and one of the committees is going to take forward a Bill on that. We had cross-party agreement on the issue of poindings and warrant sales, which actually made a big difference in changing the Executive's mind in order to get that through. We've had differences of opinion around a number of other issues, but the Health Committee produced a very useful report on the future of long-term care for the elderly. The Transport and Environment Committee is currently undertaking an inquiry into the future of the water industry in Scotland and again I suspect that there will be some cross-party moves on that when the time comes for a Bill to be put to Parliament.

But – and this is where I probably do digress from what Isobel was saying, and this is another issue where John McAllion and I always disagree – I actually don't think that the form of Proportional Representation that we've got in the Scottish Parliament has been an unadulterated success. Because what we do have is a number of

Members of the Scottish Parliament elected under the First Past The Post system – I'm a constituency member – who have constituency areas to work to and who have a clearly defined electorate to be accountable to. Then there's a number of Members who have been elected in the list system who, frankly, have not always taken on board what the ethos and the expectations were, that they would be involved in this wider consensus-building policy debate, but have chosen to become shadow members to the constituency members, and they're spending their time shadowing an individual member and trying always to run a perpetual election campaign. I don't think that was the spirit of what people who were trying to get that system up and running – and Isobel was one of the people involved in that. I don't think that was really the spirit in which it was intended. You have a coalition in the Scottish Parliament between Labour and the Liberal Democrats, and there are tensions there undoubtedly, but what we have at times as well is a coalition opposition. Instead of a consensus-building process, what we see is the Executive putting forward something and the other parties coming together to oppose that. So I don't think that the PR system – and again I'm sure this will be controversial and will lead to further debate – is necessarily the way to ensure consensus.

The other point I wanted to make was in relation to the single-issue groups. It is good that people with particular campaigning issues have the opportunity to be involved in the process. But I'm not sure that they will necessarily want to be in the parliamentary process or whether they will want to see a better way of linking to the parliament. There are ways at the moment through the Public Petitions Committee which John McAllion chairs, through access to the other parliamentary committees which are much more accessible than Westminster ever was, with many of the cross-party groups in the parliament, where those groups can come along and have direct contact and be involved in the policy making process. So I'm not sure that the Pensioners Forum will want to stand candidates or not. That would be up to them. I'm not sure whether it's not better that we concentrate on increasing the access for different groups to come forward and be involved in the process.

The final thing that I wanted to say is about the local communities and people being involved, and to link that back to what I was talking about, the big idea, seeing the way forward in terms of social ownership. Community politics at its best leads towards a cooperative way of working. If you look at things like the credit union movement, with people in their local areas are coming together to tackle some of the problems that are in those local areas and to solve the problems with support, then you get an example of the best way of working and taking that forward. If you look at some of the work that's been done in some of the areas where there are Social Inclusion Partnerships, where the different agencies and organisations have come together with the local people and with the local people driving the agenda of what they want to see in their local areas, that also is a good example of the way forward.

So if we're going to move towards future manifestos – and there will be a number of them that we have to work towards – I would like to see us concentrating on how we can begin to take some of those ideas forward alongside the issues that Isobel's raised in relation of the value of public service, and getting the notion across to people again that we have a responsibility beyond our own immediate sphere of influence, we have a responsibility to wider society. We can begin to influence that; we can begin to think about how we operate in our own communities, and how as politicians we are listening to what local people are saying. We can begin to put pressure on for new and different forms of social ownership and involvement, and we can begin to put pressure on the private sector to take a much more socially and ethically responsible role in what they do.

John McAllion

I've been asked to talk about what I think Scottish Labour will expect from a second term of Labour government in Westminster. The first thing that comes to me is that I'd like them to leave us alone! Because the Scottish Parliament is doing very well in Scotland, and we're beginning to see the emergence in our country of a kind of progressive consensus that's slowly but surely beginning to move politics back to the left again, after a long, long period in which politics was only moving in one direction – to the right, and to the right again. You just have to ask the teachers in Scotland whether they see a difference – of course they do. You just have to ask the elderly in Scotland whether they see a difference – of course they do, they're going to get free personal care, which you

wouldn't be able to get anywhere else in the United Kingdom. Ask the students – and I know upfront tuition fees being abolished is not enough, there's along way to go, but at least it's a beginning, it's a start. We're beginning to see the Scottish Parliament having a real effect up here, and I think if we're left on our own to get on with it we could go much further and actually finish the job.

If I was asking the second term of Labour government for anything it would be to ensure that what the Scottish Labour Party has on paper in the constitution of the party is actually put into practice here on the ground. By that I mean that policymaking is actually put back into the hands of the party. Not the Scottish party in the Parliament, but the Scottish party in the country, so that they take the decisions about what kind of policies are that we fight the election at the Scottish and British level were.

I'd like a few other things. For example I'd like a few more powers for the Parliament. I know we're not supposed to say that but I would like – nothing great, or sensational, it's just that, between ourselves, we would like to tax the rich a bit more! And to redistribute wealth, to tackle inequalities, or to actually fund public services the way that we want to fund public services, not to privatise schools and hospitals and all the other things that are having to be done at the moment under PPPs.

Apart from that I'd be quite happy to leave everything to the Westminster government – maybe with the exception of Trident of course! Tommy Sheridan and George Galloway were denounced in the press this week for getting themselves arrested at Faslane last week and for being some kind of socialist – I think 'showbiz socialists' they called them, but these days to be called any kind of socialist is actually a compliment. But I'm proud of the fact that the policy of the Scottish Labour Party is to scrap Trident. It being the case that policies of the British party are different, that should be devolved to Scotland as well, which would be very popular up here and probably down in England as well.

Maybe one or two other things: I'd like to be able in Scotland to treat asylum seekers with the same dignity and respect as everyone else. I'd also like to do something about the conjunction that we have in this country now between the benefits system that punishes the poor and a tax system that's soft on the rich. Somebody's got to do something about that, and I'm prepared to do that in partnership with the Westminster government if they're prepared to devolve it to us.

I'm kind of half-joking with that – I'm not *really* joking. Because these are very serious issues, which if the Labour government in Westminster doesn't begin to tackle in a progressive way will lead slowly and surely to the gradual erosion of support for the Labour Party here in Scotland, and a rise in support for the SNP. It will make much more likely the separation of Scotland from the rest of the United Kingdom unless the Labour government in Westminster begins to tackle that left radical agenda.

I know that many people dismiss what I say as the rantings of an old dinosaur who really hasn't got anything to contribute to modern politics because I'm incapable of shedding the oppositionist skin that I've grown over 18 years of fighting the Tories here up in Scotland. And it is true that there is an oppositionist mentality on the part of the Scottish Labour Party and it's been there for a very long time. In 1979 and others we opposed just about everything that Thatcher and Major were trying to do to our country, and discovered to our great delight that it was actually popular to oppose whatever governments in Westminster were trying to do to Scotland. In fact we discovered that in Scottish politics it actually works to just say 'no' – no to the poll tax, no to local government reform, no to social spending cuts, no to privatisation, and so on. We won every election in Scotland from 1979 right up to 1997. As we prospered on the back of opposing what the Westminster governments were doing to Scotland, the party in Scotland that tried to defend what Westminster governments were doing to Scotland went in exactly the opposite direction. The Tories went from a reasonably high peak of support in 1979 to being absolutely obliterated in the general election of 1997. There's a lesson to be learned in there somewhere about how we get the politics of the Scottish Labour Party right and how the Scottish Labour Party reacts to the rest of the party in the United Kingdom.

Shortly after the 1997 general election, Gerry Hassan wrote an article in *Tribune* about what he described as the 'uncertain state' of the Scottish Labour Party. He argued that this mix of oppositionism and nationalism, which had served the Scottish party so well under the Tories, would now no longer do, because the Tories were

no longer around to kick, and in any case we've now got a majority Labour government in power at Westminster. New Labour as a government in Westminster is unlike the party in Scotland, and had a very different experience in England during the Thatcher and Major years. It had been forced to undergo a Blairite modernisation, a revisionist process that made that a very different political animal from the political animal that existed up here in Scotland, that had done reasonably well during the Tory years. Gerry, perceptively I felt, described the differences between the parties, the one in Scotland and the one south of the border, as 'fault lines' between Scottish and British Labour. They've been there since 1979, and they're still there, and there is still an ongoing struggle, not just for the soul of the Scottish Labour Party, but for the soul of the British Labour Party as well.

If you think of Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle's book *The Blair Revolution*, and Anthony Giddens trying to find 'The Third Way', or even Gordon Brown and Douglas Alexander's pamphlet *New Scotland New Britain*, they are all in their own ways attempts to write a Blairite version of Lenin's monumental pamphlet *What is to be done?* This is an attempt to shift the whole axis of party debate in Scotland and Britain and to take us away from the oppositionist, nationalist and class-obsessed past and to try to create a new kind of political discourse where the only argument left, or the only economic argument left, is about what would be the model of capitalism that best serves Britain. While socialism as such is taken to be as dead and as buried as Kier Hardie and Jimmy Maxton, whom Gordon Brown is so fond of talking about in the past but not so keen on imitating here in the present.

We all know the arguments that have been used to try to justify this switch away from what the Labour Party was to what it now is becoming. The individual is now at the centre of what Labour's about, rather than the collective. Freedom and opportunity for all is much more important than equality. Responsibility is just as important as rights, if not more important, in the lexicon. The people are benefiting from hands up and don't need a handout. While we have education, education, and education, it's now going to be in specialist schools where selection is built in, and not what were described as 'bog standard comprehensives'. And that doesn't say anything about the PPPs, which are an offspring of PFI, and the welfare reforms that are threatening daily to actually change the whole nature of the welfare state in this country. These are momentous political shifts that are taking place in politics in this country. If they are successful, and 'the project' is successful even without Peter Mandelson, then it will create a new kind of political party. Whether it's called 'New Labour' or not doesn't matter. It will be a new kind of political party and a very different political party from the party that I joined in the mid-1970s.

During that process the left have been losing that struggle and losing it very badly. I was reading an article the other day that described the Labour Party between 1920 and 1980 as being 'punctuated' by outspoken leftwing dissent. You can trace the history of the left wing in the Labour Party, thinking back to the old ILP, and those that supported the Popular Front, the Bevanites, CND and all the way through to the Bennism of the 1980s. The article described the situation as being like the sea coming in and out. There's all these high tides for the left of the Labour Party, but the high tides were never quite high enough, and the tide always receded, and the Labour Party went back to being a very centrist party. The article wrote off the left at the end, by saying that they were noisy rather than being effective inside the Labour Party. I think if we're honest with ourselves that's the truth. And since the last big Bennite uprising in the 1980s, when Tony Benn almost became Deputy Leader, we haven't even been all that noisy, if the truth be known. If we want to save the Labour Party that most of us still love then we're going to have begin, not only to be a lot more noisy than we've been in the past, but also to be a lot more effective than we've been in the past.

That's why I welcome a platform like this. It's good that *Tribune* has not gone down the New Labour road. It's good that *Catalyst* can go off message. With the *Scottish Left Review*, and *The Citizen* which is the mouthpiece of the Campaign for Socialism here in Scotland, and with *Campaign Group News* down in Westminster and with *Red Pepper*, we've got to create a broad left platform that actually challenges the direction that politics has been taking for a very long time in this country. We've need to try to put together a programme, a 'broad left' programme – I know that's a very old fashioned way of putting it, maybe somebody out there can think of a new way of describing it in a more hi-tech way. But a programme which brings the left together and unites them around ideas and proposals which don't defend the status quo, which are not opposed to change, but which are radical and socialist and progressive, and which offer a different vision to people in this country and around the

world of what we could make of the new global economy. It doesn't have to be capitalism.

What always strikes me as absurd which is just over a hundred years old and has never really been tried anywhere is regarded as being written off, but capitalism, which is more than four hundred years old, and which is slowly but surely strangling our planet and killing off huge numbers of people is regarded as unchallengeable. That's unacceptable in my book, I believe that the left not only have to for their own sake fight back and start to win the Labour Party again, but for the sake of everyone they've got to do it.

Questions

1. How can we persuade people of the long-term implications of demutualisation when they see a short-term way of making a bit of money?
2. Hasn't devolution strengthened nationalism? Isn't there a tension there with socialism?
3. There's a danger that meetings like this are viewed as disloyal by the party.

Cathy Jamieson

The first point is about the banking and financial sector. Obviously that's a reserved matter and we'd be expecting Westminster to do something about that. But there are issues about people, particularly young people, not being clear and not seeing the difference. They see the glossy adverts and the stuff flashed up on the internet and they don't stop to think about what kind of organisation or institution they're being part of. Some people who think that they're very good socialists actually have maybe not clocked onto that either. So there's a challenge to people. In the next few years I would like to see a UK Cooperatives Act that gives the cooperative and mutual sector a level playing field in order to take some of those things forward.

On nationalism – I'm in the Labour Party because I'm a socialist. I have no time for the narrow nationalist perspective that only looks at what goes on in their own area without looking at the global context, and it is important that we put the focus on what we're actually trying to achieve for the greater good of people. The real danger in the Scottish context is that the debate becomes about the constitution again, and it becomes solely about the issue of whether there should be separation for Scotland, without actually looking at what we are trying to achieve for people. That's why I choose to remain within the Labour Party and work within the Labour Party in order to get a better deal for people.

One delegate made the point about being worried about being in this room. I worry that people still feel like that because I don't think that we should be making any apologies for wanting to have a debate and a discussion of policy matters. One of the reasons I was persuaded to stand for the position of Deputy Leader of Labour in the Scottish Parliament was in order to try to pull some of those strands together – strands from the trade union movement, from the cooperative movement, from all sections of the labour movement, because at the end of the day we all have to work together collectively as well. I would like to see us begin to think about how we can actually work inside the Labour Party to achieve the ends that we want the Labour Party to take forward. That is vitally important, and it means having debate and discussion without people feeling that they have to do it somehow secretly. That's why meetings like this and publications like *Tribune* and others are vitally important to taking forward the debate and the argument.

Isobel Lindsay

On nationalism – internationalism is not about saying there will be international standardisation, that people will not have distinctive historical and cultural identities. Because, let me tell you – human beings will have distinctive historical and cultural identities whatever we say. The thing is to make the important distinction between a civic nationalism which is open and an ethnic nationalism. And, yes, to emphasise internationalism and cooperation. But one of the reasons why the Labour Party in Scotland was much more successful in the 80s and the 90s was that nationalism in that context was something that had a left face. It was acquired by the left. One of the problems for Labour in the English context was that nationalism was hijacked by the right. I think we've got to take the Gramsci route, identifying and building on what is there in human societies, and using it in a progressive direction.

John McAllion

Demutualisation is in essence a capitalist takeover. Capitalism is brilliant at making loss leaders. In the short term it'll offer you anything because it knows in the long term it'll rip you off and it's in its interests to do so. You just have to look at how the road contracts have worked in Scotland recently to see that that's the truth. We have to do a lot more about that. The future of the Scottish water industry should be as a mutually owned institution, whether all the people of Scotland have shares in it, or whatever. It should not be handed over in any sense to the private sector. These are real live issues and I hope the Westminster parliament and the Scottish parliament do tackle them in the future.

Like Isobel, I think nationalism's a two-edged sword. Its darker side cannot get darker. We've seen that across the world throughout history. But it does have a positive side. Cuban nationalism, in my view, is a force for good in the world at the moment – you just have to ask people in South Africa or Angola or all round the world what the Cubans do for them in the form of an internationalism which is based very strongly on a fiercely proud nationalist culture in Cuba – which is also socialist, by the way, and there's no contradiction whatsoever. I always think that Tony Benn has got the ability to win back nationalism for the English people – the way he speaks about the Levellers and the Chartists is brilliant, and is exactly the positive kind of English nationalism which should be out in the open so that the right wing don't get a monopoly of what English nationalism is. I'd like to see Benn, and others like him, doing a lot more of that in the future.

On building a broad left – take what we've been doing up here in Scotland. We've just established the *Scottish Left Review*, a website magazine which is open to *everybody* on the left – inside the Labour Party, outside the Labour Party, in the trade unions. Cathy, Isobel and I are on the Editorial Board, so are SNP members, so are old Communist party members, whatever they call themselves now, and so on. It tries to create the kind of debate across the broad left that should be taking place but isn't because we're all hiding behind our party barricades. Get the barricades down; let the left begin to talk to each other again because that's the only way forward.

Questions

1. Gordon Brown and Tony Blair are now talking about full employment, an idea of the left. This should be the big idea for the manifesto; we should take this up.
2. If you in Scotland can't influence the Scottish MPs who are now cabinet members, how are we in England to have any hope?

Isobel Lindsay

First of all on that last point – we really do need a bit of rebellion on the English side, a bit of upfront organising. I hope we'll see more of this. I really welcome it when some elements in the North East and North West of England, and Yorkshire and Humberside, start to say, 'well look we want something similar, we want to get more democracy here more opportunity for choice'. But you're not going to get it unless you create trouble, unless you threaten rebellion. The trouble is you've left it a bit late, because it's just too close now. This really should have started six to nine months ago, to threaten serious rebellion unless you got x, y and z into the manifesto. But still you've got to keep up the temperature on this one. They will only yield to pressure. One of the things we have seen is the ease with which they will yield to certain kinds of pressures that are big enough, but they've got to be troublesome pressures.

On full employment – of course, absolutely central. But one thing that's got to go with it, and one respect in which perhaps Labour will not gain from full employment currently, is that it's not just full employment now, today, that matters, it's people's perceptions of what is going to happen tomorrow and next year. It's the insecurity in employment, and the way in which many of the employment policies in the public sector as well as the private sector have created and continue to create a climate of insecurity, even though people might be in jobs right now.

John McAllion

I very much agree with Isobel's last comment. Just a couple of weeks ago in my constituency in Dundee, 250 workers were told they were getting laid off because of the changes in the market situation internationally. That was just after Christmas, just after they'd got themselves into all kinds of debt and suddenly they were facing within 90 days redundancy. The kind of capitalist economy we've got in Scotland is one where there's a group of core workers who are in very well paid, very secure jobs, mostly white-collar and managerial, who can look to the future with confidence, and a much larger peripheral workforce which is constantly in and out of employment and really up against it, and often very low paid and low skilled employment which is really not good enough. If that's what we mean by 'full employment', we're not going to get many votes on the back of that. The left have got to come out with their version of full employment, which is not the version we're necessarily getting from the leadership of the party at the moment. That's a whole agenda we need to work on.

The question about exercising influence – there's lots of parliamentary rebellions, I know, I've been part of them many of the times, down in Westminster. But it doesn't matter because we've got a majority of 177 and we ignore them. But if they start to connect with the party in the country, and to begin to have meetings in the country, and to begin to get the party in the country to take their side, then that could be the way forward, not only for England, for Scotland as well – we don't have enough of that here. Cathy was right at one point when she said earlier on that Holyrood is not the big success that some like to think it is sometimes. It is in many ways becoming another Westminster, because we've created a coalition precisely to create the same conditions at Holyrood that we've got at Westminster where all the backbenchers are whipped into line and the Executive gets its policies through come hell or high water. Anybody that doesn't toe the line from Westminster is not going to be given the same scope that you had at Westminster, because I can see a number of us being deselected the next time round. That won't be happening at Westminster but it's got every chance of happening at Holyrood simply because they need every vote at Holyrood to get their policies through.

Cathy Jamieson

I'd just like to support what's been said about full employment. I represent a constituency that's a former mining area, where although unemployment has come down and there's no doubt about it, it is still one of the highest unemployment rates in the whole of the UK. I want to see decent jobs in that area, and I want to see sustainable jobs, and I want to see the folk in my constituency be able to say that they've taken a job that is actually going to work them out of the poverty trap. That is the kind of full employment that we want to see taken forward.

On John's point about rebellions and so on: one of the challenges that we might have to think about for the left in the future is, when you get to the point of having a rebellion does it actually mean that you've failed to change people's opinions? One of the challenges for us is to try and get involved at a much earlier stage in the policy process and to be making the kinds of demands and to be raising the kinds of issues that have been brought out here today. For people to be going to their elected representatives and saying: this what we want to do. We should be going to the Policy Forums, however much people agree or disagree with them, and be involved in conferences and be involved in events, not just within the Party but also in local communities, and really connected with people at that kind of level. That's what's made the difference for the Scottish Parliament and if we take that forward and genuinely connect with people, then we do have the opportunity to do some good work in the future.

Resources

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| The Scottish Parliament | http://www.scottish.parliament.uk |
| Scottish Civic Forum | http://www.civicforum.org.uk |
| Social Inclusion Partnerships in Scotland | http://www.scvo.org.uk/sip |
| Scottish Left Review | http://www.scottishleftreview.com |
| Supporters Direct | http://www.supporters-direct.org |
| Association of British Credit Unions Limited | http://www.abcul.org |
| Save Our Building Societies | http://www.sobs.org.uk |
| Campaign for the English Regions | http://www.cfer.org.uk |
| Tribune | http://www.tribune.atfreeweb.com |