

Labour voices on

Scotland's future



Powers for a purpose

How a fairer and more equal society can be delivered in Scotland and across the UK

A Red Paper Collective publication

supported by



May 2013

Introduction

Scottish Labour has published the interim report of its Devolution Commission, *Powers for a Purpose - strengthening devolution*. It seeks to build on Labour's home rule tradition by strengthening the current constitutional arrangements to meet the aspirations of the Scottish people for greater devolution.

Powers for a Purpose sets out some initial ideas around greater devolution of taxation powers, including income tax. It also argues for maintaining common pensions and benefits across Britain. Finally, it supports the principle of subsidiarity with powers being decentralised, not just from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament, but on to local government and communities.

Scottish Labour is seeking views on this report by 31 October 2013. There is a dedicated website at which the report can be downloaded and views submitted: www.scottishlabour.org.uk/campaigns/entry/devolution-commission.

The Devolution Commission report was launched at the Scottish Labour Party conference in April 2013. There followed a debate on the constitution that included a number of speeches that challenged Scottish Labour to be bolder on the purpose of constitutional change. These included members of the Red Paper Collective who argue that constitutional change is only a means to an end.

Labour needs to set out a positive vision for Scotland that shows how a fairer and more equal society can be delivered in Scotland and across the UK.

In this context, we thought it would be helpful to produce a compendium of these speeches as a further contribution to the debate. The Red Paper Collective has already published papers on key areas of the constitutional debate and will be publishing a major book in the late summer. We welcome contributions to our work at our website www.redpaper.net.

Red Paper Collective
May 2013

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Anas Sarwar MP

Deputy Leader of the Scottish Labour Party

Conference, This time last year almost every political pundit was telling you that the SNP were unbeatable. That Alex Salmond was invincible and that independence was inevitable.

12 months on under the leadership of Johann Lamont and because of the hard work and determination of you, our members, we meet in Inverness with majority Labour councils not only in Glasgow - but in West Dunbartonshire, Renfrewshire North Lanarkshire and in South Lanarkshire now too. And with hundreds of other councillors, we are forming the administration in more than half of Scotland's councils. Those elections demonstrated that when the Labour movement comes together, works together, we win together.

516 days from now the people of Scotland have a big decision to make. It's a massive decision, It's one that will affect you and your family, the community you live in, the country you love. It's a decision forever. And in the debate over the coming weeks and months there will be a number of voices, all making their own case for Scotland working together as part of the United Kingdom.

But one voice that must be heard is the Labour voice. Better Together is a campaign that transcends party lines. Supporters of the UK come from all parts of Scotland and from supporters of all parties and none. They have made an excellent start in dissecting the case being made by Yes Scotland and the SNP.

But just as we recognise that Better Together have a job to do, we also recognise their job comes to an end the day after polling day. Labour's job goes on.

And let's be clear, our vision for Scotland is not the same as that of the Tories or the Lib Dems. And what makes Labour different from the nationalists is that they have only one cause - independence. For them, the limit of their ambition is 18 September 2014.

But unlike them, we don't and never will define our politics by an allegiance to a flag. We define our politics by the values and principles of the labour movement, a global movement. Our values of solidarity, fairness, equality, community and social justice. Values that aren't limited by borders or lines on a map.

Our future is more than one based on sentiment or temporary economic or political advantage or even on emotion but on shared values, Labour values, values for today and values for tomorrow. These values are not a remnant of the past but forces for good in the future

Now, I believe we can win the referendum on the history question. A history where Scottish values aren't just part of the union, a history where Scottish values helped shape the union. We don't just have a political union. Because of the contribution of Scots we have an economic union and a social union too.

As we recognise the uniqueness of Labour achievements of the past, we must come together to build on them. The NHS, where you are treated on the basis of need. The National Minimum Wage, the same wherever you are in the UK. The same right to a pension, whether you are from Dumfries or Carlisle. A country where companies pay the same tax wherever they do business.

Not a country where the good is undercut by the bad, the bad undercut by the worst. A country where we recognise not just our shared rights but also our shared responsibilities. Responsibilities that don't stop at the bottom of your street, the end of your town or at a line on the map somewhere south of Gretna. A country where we are proud to say we have as much in common with the people of Liverpool or Newcastle as we do the people of Aberdeen or Inverness.

A country where we recognise and celebrate diversity and difference. A country where we know there is nowhere better but belong to something bigger, that we are bound by more than simply common interest. It's the recognition that no matter the issue, no matter our differences, we all share common ground.

But just as I believe we can win on the history question, I fundamentally believe we win the referendum convincingly if we win the future question. And in the debate on the future of Scotland there are some who

will try and claim that the Scottish Parliament and devolution is either a process that leads to independence, or it is a project that has failed and Independence is the answer to every question. As the party of devolution, from the days of Keir Hardie, through to the Constitutional Convention, the referendum, the parliament, the Calman Commission, we not only have a record of commitment, we have a record of delivery we can be proud of.



**When we launch the
Scottish Labour referendum
campaign we will do so with
a compelling Labour case**

But others seek to airbrush the success of devolution from the history books. From land reform to the smoking ban, the powers held by the Scottish Parliament have made a real difference to the lives of Scots. That is why, with Scottish Labour's Devolution Commission, we continue to examine further devolution and the Interim Report of the Commission is now available on the Scottish Labour website. Devolving power to individuals, families and communities to have a greater say in their own lives and to help deliver social justice – a Labour outcome. Not powers for a building but powers for a purpose!

But not for others, who use the language of social justice as a building block for independence but not the principles of social justice to build a better Scotland now.

When we launch the Scottish Labour referendum campaign we will do so with a compelling Labour case. A Labour case that has at its heart a vision that sees a strong and confident Scotland playing its full part in the United Kingdom, working alongside friends and comrades in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

History has shown us that when the labour movement and the Labour Party come together, work together, we deliver together. Today we have to come together again. Not just to get the right result in the referendum but more importantly so we can help create a fairer and more just Scotland. A Scotland based on your values, our values, Labour values.

Dave Watson

UNISON Scotland

UNISON and most of the trade union movement have not as yet taken a position on the referendum, but we are participating in the debate and want to see credible arguments being presented to our members.

I appreciate that a referendum campaign has to have formal yes and no campaigns, most of us in the labour movement have a huge difficulty with any campaign that includes the Tories. That's because we don't share a common analysis of the constitutional position and certainly not a common vision of the sort of Scotland we want to live in. If Thatcher taught us anything, it is that we should never forget the politics of class.

So far the Better Together campaign has had it fairly easy. The YES campaign's pitch in several policy areas is less than credible. Just two that I have highlighted in Red Paper publications are currency and energy. In both areas the SNP want to remain within a UK framework. Now that's a perfectly understandable position, but it begs the question what is the point of independence. If you hand over monetary and fiscal policy, or energy policy, to another country, how can you deliver a different approach that reflects specific Scottish requirements. It's like Panama to the US. A strange role model for an independent Scotland.

Nicola Sturgeon spins an attractive vision of a socially just Scotland. But it simply doesn't match with their Laffer curve tax policies and the cut in corporation tax in particular. We should be shutting down tax havens and the corporate tax dodgers that use them. There is nothing socially just about Scotland the tax haven.

And on the subject of MPs, I would say to those unnamed comrades spitting their dummies out this week. Get over it and engage in the party consultation. Devolution was delivered by Labour and as Donald Dewar said it's a process not an event. You have an important role in representing Scotland at UK level, but subsidiarity means that further powers will be devolved. And I would also say to MSPs that devolution doesn't stop at Holyrood. Subsidiarity means devolution of Holyrood powers to local democratic control.

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I also welcome the publication of the interim report of the Devolution Commission as a basis for consultation. It doesn't have everything in it that many of us might wish, but it's the start of our internal process, not the end. This conference agreed the statement establishing the commission last year and it's right that we should take a position on this issue as a party before the referendum.

Now some argue that we don't need to consider further devolution to win the referendum. That comrades is a mistake. It's a tactical mistake because just being against independence is not enough. We have to develop a positive vision of the sort of Scotland we want to live in. This is the strength of contributions to the debate from the Red Paper, the STUC's *A Just Scotland* and UNISON's *Fairer Scotland* papers. But it's also wrong in principle. Scottish Labour is the party of devolution we should not abandon that territory to others. We must embrace it.

But we must also engage in, and win, the battle of ideas. The YES campaign's strongest arguments for independence relate to the weaknesses of past Labour governments in areas like Trident renewal, inequality and workers' rights. Just rubbishing the SNP is not nearly enough.

So let us never forget that constitutional change is only a means to an end. Labour needs to set out a positive vision for Scotland that resonates with working people. One that demonstrates, in Scotland and across the UK, how a fairer and more equal society can be delivered.

Pat Rafferty

Unite the union

We welcome today's announcement that there is to be a distinct Labour pro-devolution campaign. From the outset of this debate Unite has expressed concern about the restrictions of a No coalition involving the Tories. We also welcome the Interim Report of Scottish Labour's Devolution Commission, which recognises that in addition to progressing Labour's historical position as the party of devolution, we need to advocate this in the context of democratic and social change based on the principles of redistribution of wealth - as well as power.

On 18 September 2014, we will all be asked the question: ‘Should Scotland be an independent country?’ And, as forthcoming legislation is expected to confirm, people in Scotland from the age of 16 and up will have the opportunity to exercise their vote.

Increasingly, we are witnessing good, healthy and engaging civic debate around the issues. Trade unionists have been central to this. But time and again it seems some politicians are more concerned about pleasing the private interests moored in the harbours of tax-havens like Monaco, than real Scottish citizens living and working everyday across our country.

It’s got to be better than that because the importance of the issue demands it. Between now and September 2014, the eyes of the world will be on our democracy.

Trade unions have already come under extreme scrutiny from the media and we’ve had to contend with, quite frankly, some lazy expectations of us. So let’s be clear: We have been told be our members - many of whom are undecided - that they won’t be bounced into taking sides in this referendum. Our members shape the policies of our unions, in our workplaces and communities.

This shouldn’t be an election where it’s about leaders or political parties. It’s a decision on the future of a nation and everything that entails. So we’ll continue to create as much scope and provide as much help as possible for our members to make an informed decision on 18 September 2014.

What choice best serves the defence of our essential public services? What choice best serves innovation and growth in our private sector, boosting jobs, skills and pay? What choice best serves the development of tax justice - a fair and progressive system of taxation? And what choice will best maintain and protect a universal welfare state?

Because we’re not a ‘something for nothing’ society. And we’re not a ‘something for something’ society either. We are a decent society where the vast majority of us contribute to the common good and we want to know who will support our fight for our welfare system and the principle of universalism.

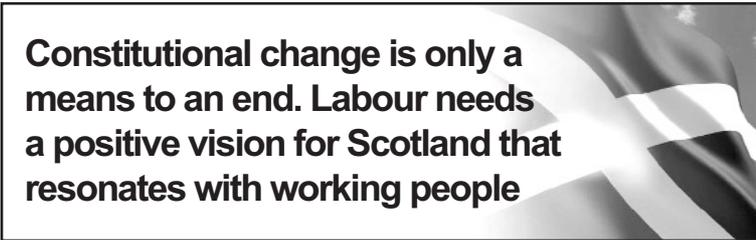
The STUC’s *A Just Scotland* interim report has already

laid down the challenge. And both sides of the argument should have no doubts that we’re not interested in flogging the dead horse of neo-liberalism. For us, whatever constitutional arrangement emerges, it must advance the position of working class people in Scotland.

Richard Leonard

GMB Scotland

Let me start with a gentle reminder. Our goal in this movement is not and has never been about shifting power from one parliament and one set of politicians to another. Our goal is about shifting power from those who own the wealth in this country back to those, who through their hard work and endeavour create the wealth in this country.



Constitutional change is only a means to an end. Labour needs a positive vision for Scotland that resonates with working people

That’s the decisive struggle for us. That’s the real division in our society. Not between Scotland and England, but between working people and the money men. And our demand is not to bestow sovereignty in the people for fifteen hours one day next September. The demand of this movement and of this party is for a permanent and irreversible shift in power back to the people.

Comrades, the coalition government’s attempts to destroy the NHS in England and to dismantle the welfare state right across the UK has nothing to do with their Englishness and everything to do with their Tory ideology.

Raids on our members’ public sector pensions, attacks on the weakest in society, removal of protection against unfair dismissal, Cameron’s plan to “kill off the health and safety culture for good” - are not anti-Scottish. They are anti-working class. They are anti-trade union.

Don't let these issues be blurred by the nationalists at the very time they should be in sharp focus

People are discontented. They are hungry for change. But the change they crave will find no answer in nationalism or patriotism, Scottish or British, and every answer in socialism and democracy. And that's why, now more than ever on the independence question we need a distinctive Labour campaign. And I'm not even talking about moving to the left or to the right. Old Labour or New Labour. For goodness' sake let's just have a Labour Party campaign.

Let's get out of the slipstream of the nationalists and the unionists and be ourselves. Because it's no good simply saying what we are against. We need to tell people what we are for. Because it will be ideas that will inspire and mobilise people in the referendum next year.

So let's get our organisation right, our campaigning underway and let's get some fire in our bellies too. We have a proud Scottish Labour tradition of our own. Human rights, democracy, peace, common ownership, including as we meet here in the Highlands an underlying belief that the earth itself is a common treasury. A tradition of internationalism and of course we are the Party of Scottish home rule. They're the roots of our faith. That's our inheritance.

So it's about time we started remembering that we are the heirs of Keir Hardie, of Jimmy Maxton and of Jennie Lee. And it's about time that we started acting like it too. In this movement we have our own liberation causes. Liberation from useless toil. Go and look at the old trade union banners. They do not say 'Longer Hours and Shorter Life' but 'Shorter Hours and Longer Life'. And liberation at work because in the words of our good comrade who we lost so recently, Alex Falconer, we need industrial democracy and economic democracy too

Dignity in retirement. Humanising work. Not just managing the economy but fundamentally changing it. Building a society around human need not private greed. Re-awakening our spirit of audacity. Re-discovering our sense of injustice. Re-invigorating our faith in our socialism

If we do that, then nothing and no-one can stop us.

Neil Findlay MSP

Comrades, thankfully and at long last the constitutional debate has begun to move from process issues to issues of substance. We can now get down to examining the nitty gritty of the SNP's proposals and promoting our alternative agenda. Because if there is a yes vote it will not be the Green party's agenda, not the SSP's agenda and not the SWP's version of independence that will be implemented - it will be the SNP's version.

And you know independence should be an easy concept to understand. All powers held in Scotland, all taxes raised here, all money spent here. As a certain meerkat says: 'simples!' Well, sorry Mr Meerkat - this version of independence just isn't. As the SNP seek to be all things to all people their version of independence is based not on the politics of principle, but the politics of the focus group and opinion poll. They have polled people and found out they don't like the Euro, or the idea of MSP Christina McKelvie who proposed the Yen as the currency, or Mike Russell who proposed a currency called the Ducat. Comrades, where I come from a 'dookit' is not the currency, it's where you keep your pigeons.

But because people feel secure as part of sterling we are now apparently going to have something called a sterling zone. So a foreign bank - the Bank of England - will be the central bank and the lender of last resort and the regulator. But with no MPs at Westminster, influence over city policy would be nonexistent. We are told we will still be part of the UK energy system and a member of NATO and the EU and god bless her we will still have the monarch as the head of state. I have been trying to come up with a phrase to summarise their all things to all people position, but I could do no better than one online journal that recently described the SNP policy as pork barrel politics - with the Queen perched on top!

And of course some on the far left tell us that independence is just naturally progressive as it will smash the imperialist British state. Well I'm sorry to tell them that this debate is not a retrospective vote on the ills of British imperialism - it's a vote about Scotland's future and the quicker they realise that the better.

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And some others try to tell us that the SNP are progressives - well please ask yourself if these policies are progressive. The council tax freeze? Their colleges policy? Their public sector pay and pensions policy? Lowering personal taxation? Failure to support the European transaction tax? Failure to use the powers of the Scottish Parliament to protect all tenants from bedroom tax?

Was it progressive on 30 November 2011, the biggest day of industrial action since the general strike, to cross the picket lines at the Scottish Parliament? A policy of cutting corporation tax to one of the lowest in Europe - sucking hundreds of millions from our public services - is that progressive? I think you know the answer!

But it's not enough to shoot fish in a barrel and take apart the case for independence. We need a positive Labour party and labour movement alternative that will deliver change in Scotland. This first report from the Devolution Commission is a good start and picks up on many of the themes of the Red Paper Collective who have been working hard to develop the movement's thinking on this issue.

We need policies that unashamedly act in the interest of working people. It's class, not nation and flags, that is important in this debate. So I want us to have further powers not just for power's sake but for a purpose. And that purpose is to deliver radical social and economic change. To create a fairer more equal society based on redistributive policies financed by progressive taxation with no race to the bottom on business taxes. And a properly regulated taxation system that stamps out the scandal of tax avoidance and prevents companies engaged in it from securing public contracts. And we should retain UK economic solidarity through the Barnett formula or similar.

We need to free up and re-empower local government from the centralised shackles it is currently under. And we need an industrial policy to get our people back into decent jobs paying a living wage as a minimum and with improved employment and trade union rights. These policies will be popular, they will galvanise and build confidence in the labour movement and allow us to positively campaign for our agenda. And they will give those who are desperately seeking an alternative to the snake oil on sale from the nationalists something to positively campaign on.

Iona Macdonald

Aberdeen South and North Kincardine

Chair, conference, it's your future and it's my future. I was born on 2 March 1998. That means that I will be voting for the first time in the Scottish referendum next year. And, I will be one of the youngest to do so.

The result on 18 September 2014 will affect us all, but it will affect Scotland's young people the most. We need to get this right - and I believe one of the ways to do this is to get young people involved. Involved in the campaign, involved in the referendum and involved in their future.



We need policies that unashamedly act in the interest of working people. It's class, not nation and flags, that is important in this debate.

And I think the way to involve young people is to find out what they think is important. So, I asked my friends. Vikki believes that if we want peace in Britain, we should not be divided. Catriona's sister lives in London and Catriona doesn't want London and her sister to be in a foreign country and Chloe just says that we'll go bankrupt.

Once we know what young people care about, we need to campaign on those issues. We need to show how Scotland is safer as part of Britain. We need to argue that families and friends don't stop at the border. And we need to make the case that our economic future will be stronger and more certain as part of the UK.

Once we've made those arguments, we need to get young people out to vote so that my generation have a say in our future. If Alex Salmond thought that giving the vote to people my age would boost support for separation, then he's got another think coming.

The Red Paper Collective

Working to put class into the referendum
www.redpaper.net

We are a group of activists: trade unionists, academics, politicians. Our purpose is to provide a labour movement alternative to the sterile nationalist v unionist debate around the referendum.

We are more interested in the politics of class than the politics of nationalism, in social and economic change rather than constitutional change.

Through publications and debates we are looking at where power really lies - and how it can be put in the hands of working people.

The answer to the real problems facing people in Scotland is not to be found in a flag, a border or even a list of powers in Edinburgh and London. It is what you intend to do with these powers and for what purpose.

To support our campaign or to invite a speaker to your trade union branch, Trade Union Council or Labour Party constituency, contact us online at:

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