

Dumbocracy

The New Scotland

Sponsored by the Herald, New Statesman and The Fabian Society, the conference "The New Scotland" was organised by the little-known **Centre for Scottish Public Policy (CSPP)**. In the last two days of May they hired out most of the arts venues in the Trongate area in Glasgow and charged entrance fees of at least £10—presumably to keep the riff raff out. There was almost no publicity for the event—most venues knew next to nothing about the organisation they housed. Press reports of the conference told us nothing of the CSPP—they barely mentioned their name—even although simple investigation reveals them to be the organ grinders and suppliers of most of the monkeys. Press reports offered no information enabling anyone to judge the objectivity of the event. They did condescend to report that during Donald Dewar's introductory speech there had been a "demonstration by the National Petition Against Poverty" and that the organisers had dutifully called the police. Thus the CSPP's first act was to try to get people (probably violently) arrested. I heard that all that happened was that a woman had loudly and clearly pointed out the brutal realities of poverty in the city. Donald Dewar had this to say:

"If they have a genuine complaint to make, this is not the way to do it."¹

If offering people some stylistic advice while behind their backs moves are made to get them arrested is all Dewar has to offer, then it is another indication of betrayal; and sadly, things to come. But it is not a case of "if" there is poverty. Poverty is a self evident fact. The poor are the truth.

But in Scotland the Labour Party are ruled by fear, not by truth. Their fear of "activism" or "direct action" or even "the left" is simple cowardice—a fear of direct contact with the people they have betrayed. This fear manipulates them. Their world is littered with guilty secrets. People have been driven to suicide. These days adherence to Orwellian double-think is practically in their constitution. There will be no re-distribution of wealth, well certainly not downwards. Dewar, no doubt, automatically apologised for the lower classes turning up and lowering the tone of the proceedings. It frightens away nice rich upper-class people who get queasy and nervous at the sight of beggars and begin to fear and fret for the safety of their belongings. Best let the police deal with that sort of thing, and then get back to endlessly talking about fighting poverty with the managerial classes while de-regulating the bankers. This conference should have been called "Criminalising the poor—how can we make money out of it?"



Against boardrooms even the gods contest in vain

The CSPP used to be called The John Weatley Centre, and was named after the respected Independent Labour Party MP who passed through legislation enabling government action on Glasgow's Housing Problem, arguably the chief cause of misery in the city at the time. Old socialists (and their socialism) are not welcome round these here parts no more²—so the name has been changed. There are similar organisations like this springing up like poisonous mushrooms and the new Scottish parliament is acting like a vicious fertiliser.³

Their web page for the event states that: "The centre is not aligned to any political party." Their brochure describes the CSPP as "independent of political parties." and "...managed by a Board drawn from a wide cross-section of Scottish society." Judge for yourself—this is the board according to the Centre:

Dr. Alice Brown: Dept. of politics Edinburgh University.

Gordon Dalyell: Solicitor, Wheatley Centre on Law Reform.

Mark Lazarowicz: An Advocate, and former Labour councillor. He stood in the 92 election as a Parliamentary Labour candidate in the Edinburgh Pentlands seat, losing to Malcolm Rifkind by 4,290 votes. It had previously, in 87, been a Labour majority of 1,859. He is the convener of the CSPP.

Anne McGuire: Labour MP, recently appointed Donald Dewar's Parliamentary Private Secretary. Shortly after the conference she was the principle "gate keeper" who drew up the list of prospective (i.e. acceptably right-wing) Labour candidates for the new parliament. An ardent sycophant she took the opportunity of PM's question time to ask: "Does the prime minister recognise that our emphasis over the past year on the economy, health and education has kept faith with the voters."

Rosemary McKenna: Labour MP. On the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee which is enquiring into "welfare to work." The Herald of 24/3/97 reported that McKenna's appointment to the seat of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth was accompanied by the purge of the Home rule faction of the local party at the conference in Inverness. Fears were voiced that this had been "engineered to give a clear run to councillor Rosemary McKenna, who is a leading figure in Network, the pro-leadership grouping which orchestrated the Inverness slate". The Network has been described as "garrulous college leavers anxious to be seen doing the leader's bidding."⁴ Its origins are said to be in Jim Murphy, another new MP and responsible for the acceptance of student loans while President of the NUS. He was assigned as "special projects officer" by those in the Scottish Labour Party hierarchy anxious to be seen as Blairite. The big "success" of the network was McKenna's election. Jim Murphy also spoke at the conference.

Henry McLeish: Labour MP. Donald Dewar's second in command. Minister for Home Affairs, Devolution and Transport, was opposition spokesman on social security—now the country's chief exponent of workfare.

David Martin: Labour MEP and has been Vice-president of the European Parliament, (which funds the CSPP) for ten years—an ex-stockbroker's assistant.

David Millar: Formerly a clerk in the house of Commons, then director of research at the European Parliament, now with the Europa Institute, Edinburgh University.

Kenneth Munro: European Commission.

Matt Smith: Scottish Secretary of Unison one of the biggest unions in Scotland and the UK.

The Thatcher period was marked by scores of "non-partisan" but ideologically directed research institutes, who financed and publicised the work of approved

"experts." The CSPP's pathetic disguise of their political connections relegates them to similar forms of intellectual prostitution. That period also witnessed a huge increase in what was officially called "public diplomacy" a new doublespeak term for what used to be known as government propaganda. We can now re-name this "public policy."

As a result of the conference, the CSPP has an advisory board and a board of directors totalling thirty-eight people. There are eight new directors including Paul Thomson: the editor of "Renewal" (a magazine devoted to pushing New Labour propaganda), Ronnie Smith: the General Secretary of the EIS, Grant Baird: the Chief executive of Scottish Financial Enterprise, and some academics. The advisory board has been padded out with Councillors from Glasgow and Edinburgh and more academics. Twenty-nine of the total of thirty-eight spoke at the conference, which had fifty-five speakers on day one and seventy-four on the other. CSPP members were scattered throughout the three sessions each with eight different seminars per day. More or less half of the talks were non-political and largely arbitrary cultural themes and these ones they avoided.⁵ Some talks contained nothing but CSPP members. I think it is fair to say we were somewhat shepherded into hearing the views the organisation is pushing. No one mentioned this in the press.

The CSPP aim to set agendas for the Scottish Parliament, attack home rule, advocate coalition politics and promote the EU—where the Social Democrats and the Labour Party merge into one in the European Parliament.

They are in the business of manipulation. I think they are a part of larger manipulative attempts within the Labour party to push the party towards the right in Scotland and silence any criticism. There are no attempts—one begins to doubt whether there is even the capability—to understand this within the mainstream media. Complicity (perhaps unwitting) could easily be argued. The Herald and New Statesman (who are desperate to re-invent themselves) were after all joint sponsors of the event. It could mean nothing, but several journalists from the Scotsman, STV, Scotland on Sunday, Sunday Times and the Economist all chaired seminars at the conference.

'Follow the Money'

On their web page it states that they receive money not only from the EC but also from an organisation called the **Friedrich Ebert Foundation**. This is another example of covert government sponsorship and funding. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation focused on involving trade union leaders in "independent" programmes for Third World unions. Its board comprises of "high ranking members of the Social Democratic Party and [it is] financed by government, business and unions. A parallel Christian Democratic body exists, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation...About the Friedrich Ebert foundation...there are quite clear parallels between the expansionist German foreign trade policy and the work of this foundation."⁶

They told me that they received this funding to stage a members meeting with the European Movement. Back in the early 60s:

"The European Movement, the elite international pressure group which takes much of the credit for the founding of the Common Market, took secret US funding...about £380,000 of US government money passed secretly from the CIA-controlled American Committee to the European Movement"⁷

The CSPP are to an unknown extent funded by government or quasi-government organisations, some of whom have since the 50s moved the Unions and the Left towards the right—by semi-covert and covert means. They are (perhaps unwittingly) straying into territory dominated by the non-parliamentary right and the psychological operations of the secret service.

"The main organisational focus points for the trade union right in recent decades have been Industrial



William Clark

Research and Information Services (IRIS), the Jim Conway Foundation [JCF] and the TUCETU (formerly the Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding). One single funding conduit links all three organisations...the Dulverton Trust.

JCF facilitated contacts between anti-Scargill factions of the NUM and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the wealthy foundation for the promotion of social democracy linked to the German SPD.¹⁸

Historically a main thrust of this was to establish connections with the anti-Communist efforts of the USA. Both US and UK governments were willing to help Union leaders from both sides of the Atlantic get together. The years after the war saw the forces which would become NATO (the military, foreign policy and multi-national wings of the USA, UK and German State) exacerbate moves towards concentrated subversion of Union organisations and the left in general; all as part of the "cold war." In Germany secret funding helped Social Democrats "solidify" the German Federation of Labour.⁹ CIA funding came into Europe to encourage the Unions to be anti-communist—they had themselves more or less set up the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Besides domestic subversion this nexus also operated as an attack on South American, African, Indian and Indonesian workers organisations attempts to resist the effects of multinational exploitation which operated under the sanction of the foreign policies of the large industrial nations, and which worked closely with numerous dictatorships, as they still do today:

*"The importance of this network in stabilising and pacifying workers' organisations in countries where the transnational corporate operations are flourishing has never been adequately dealt with. The strategic value of this network, as a fifth column, waiting with cobra fangs to strike out to poison, and where possible, to destroy popular attempts to terminate transnational corporate domination has never been realistically weighed. The massive nature of the training programmes which successfully inculcate US-government political and social values has a dramatic importance even before one considers the plots and counterplots which make up the daily life of the US labour network in Latin America."*¹⁰

The Guatemalan election of 1984 was won by the Christian Democrats. The election was procedurally fair, but the population lived in permanent fear. The US press, when they both to look, selectively focused on one to the exclusion of the other and termed the new government centrist, moderates, who were troubled with 'rogue elements' within them—the death squads they just somehow couldn't manage to control. The history of centerist parties—whatever their guise—has been as a front for corruption of the worst kind. The South and Central American US puppet states run by dictators all had moderate centrist, consensus-loving 'political' parties. Anyone can run them—for any reason.

The German government of the sixties and seventies that, while its security services were run by Hitler's ex-security chief, outlawed parties of the left was also a centrist party. These facts elude the vast majority of British politicians used to the lies and bribery of their own party and who generally have no socially useful political convictions anyway. Centre parties are especially useful to society's institutionalised financial exploiters since the social order remains unchallenged, despite utter abuse of the democratic system. Centre parties are not alone in being open to the influence of think-tanks and factionalism. Since politics is no longer required, in Japan political parties don't really have policies as such, politicians need something to say and do. The post-war tradition has been a roll back of political freedom. The rhetoric which surrounded this is of 'a tinkering with reform'—in reality an effort to spend the taxes

drawn from the people on the rich rather than the poor. The accent is on procedure—as it was in Guatamala.

"Truth is there's nobody fighting because nobody knows what to say"

In "A Parliament for the Millennium," the first talk I attended, the panel consisted of: David Millar of the CSPP executive committee who wrote their "definitive publication" entitled "To Make the Parliament of Scotland a Model for Democracy." He was joined by Robert Beattie—also a CSPP director but here wearing the mask of an employee of the multinational IBM—who has similarly produced a CSPP "report" called "A Parliament for the Millennium". The third speaker, Mark Lazarowicz as mentioned before is the CSPP convener and one of the organisers of the weekend. His "CSPP Policy Paper" is called "Proportional Representation". These publications were shamelessly endorsed. If this talk was about contributing to the constitution of the new parliament then it was as if they were saying "and just to save some time here's one we made earlier". One would simply have to be crazy to imagine that this was a genuine objective discussion

Unleashing the "bow-tied-affable-old-duffer routine" Millar's talk was on procedure. He assured us that: "parliamentary procedure grants the right of minorities." He informed us that back in the days of the Scottish Constitutional Convention¹¹ it was decided that the "Scottish parliament should have as little to do with Westminster as possible". On reflection it would seem that this was where he, a retired clerk in the House of Commons, began pottering with the perverse hobby of dreaming up guidelines for the Scottish Parliament. He used to be an information officer—the Director of Research at the European Parliament and perhaps cannot come down from the high. A lifetime of shuffling papers has on its own initiative qualified him to "not just come here and tell you how it's going to be." No no no, "give us your views". He described everything as a clean sheet then rhetorically asked "how have the government started off putting some things on the clean sheet?" Eventually once all the "consultation" is in from conferences like this the Constitutional Steering Group will make the big decisions. It has at its head the Minister for Devolution, Henry McLeish who is a director of the CSPP. I couldn't stop myself from wondering why they couldn't have done all this at the last CSPP committee meeting? Millar read to us what they the Constitutional Convention—or was it what he—or was it what we—have all agreed to. He said it has thought up four key principles (this quote includes his theatrical asides):

- (1) Parliament is to embody and reflect the sharing of power between people, legislators and the government. That is as far as you can get from Westminster as possible.
- (2) The Government to be accountable to Parliament—that's a change from Westminster too—both it and the government to be accountable to the people. This is red revolution in parliamentary terms.
- (3) Parliament is to be accessible, open and responsive. Procedures enabling participation in policy making and designation.
- (4) Parliament to recognise the need for equal opportunities for all in the widest sense of the term, ahem!"

Millar insisted that the Scottish parliament will not suffer from the folly of Westminster: "...the absurd confrontation will be transformed into accountability...the buck stops in Edinburgh... Proportional representation creates a climate of coalition...All that left and right stuff, we and them, employers and workers. All that stuff will,

over a period, change - its absolutely certain."¹²

So is Mr Millar terminally naive, wilfully ignorant, a "lone assassin", a useful idiot for others or what? On the issue of equal opportunities—he sees the task ahead as "meaning sensible working hours" for the people in parliament. The big struggle it would seem, is to ensure that those inside parliament do well out of all this, the rest of us hopelessly outside this Athenian Democracy are on our own. He went on: "start at ten, finish at five, home to have your tea at seven, no overnight sittings, no nonsense about hours which exclude long hours [sic]." Oblomov couldn't have put it better—so much for the price of democracy being eternal vigilance. He thanked the CSPP for "very kindly agreeing to publish his and Bernard Crick's work," without mentioning the fact that he is on the board and that the guy they will send it to, McLeish is also on the board of the CSPP—why burden us with meaningless details.

The next speaker was Mark Lazarowicz, the convener of the CSPP. He believes that if a parliament is "more responsive" it is "therefore more democratic." Responsive to who? Probably the class of people and their associations who set it up. He also believes that:

"The government and all the political parties should be congratulated for responding to the public wish for there to be this type of thinking about what kind of parliament can there be, how can it be different. The Constitutional Steering Group...which are the party leaders, and also key people in the eh...academic em... constitutional convention campaign, trades unions, business community..."

He started to tail off there... I was going to prompt him with "the CSPP", but he picked up the threads and outlined that "the Steering Group has not just been speaking to itself." There has been "a mail out of 800" asking for "views." That leaves about 4,999,200 to go. He tried to appear business-like:

"One of the things that we want to do—as the CSPP—from today's discussion is we're going to put in a proposal...em...I mean a response to the government...after Sunday."

Even as the organiser Lazarowicz was having trouble with all the underlying twists and turns of who is who in this conference. The exact point where the CSPP is a consultative body representing independent viewpoints, a Labour Party front, the Labour party, the government or the voice of the people depends on who they are talking to. The big message is democracy need not involve all of us. Lazarowicz eventually got to the point: "quangos and the business community should draw up proposals...and be at the start of the policy making process," adding seconds later, "matters might take a few weeks to go through parliament." After leaving it wide open he offered to close the stable door after the horse has bolted:

"There is also a danger of course that coalition politics can become a bit too cosy. One of my nightmares is a situation where the three, four, five thousand members of what is effectively the Scottish political elite... the five thousand people or so who have a lot of influence in different ways on the political process —and are the ones who run Scotland; and they'll have a lovely time taking part in all these little forms of discussion and communication..."

I don't remember anyone voting for a coalition and consensus, but according to Lazarowicz that's what we're getting. What will offset any danger of this "amorphous coalition" is:

"The need for this process of openness to go not just to those within the political process in various ways, but in... in... in... at a wide level as well." Following this line of thought the economic need of the people will automatically displace the economic reality of the elite—the rich. We would be as well to wait for a shooting star and make a wish. This man stood for parliament.

After all that the person chairing the meeting then addressed us with a taste of the bathos to come:

"In the spirit of participation I'm not expecting the





audience to ask questions of the panel. We'd have very little time if everyone would respond."

"Did the Scottish rejection of Thatcherism indicate a class-based devotion to real socialism or a nationalism-based rejection of anglocentric centralism? Is this a new dawn for the left, or a false dawn?"

The above quote—perhaps my favourite one—is from the conference brochure and introduced the next talk, amusingly called "What's left of Labour." The speakers were billed as:

"Tommy Sheridan, the Scottish Socialist Alliance Councillor; Jimmy Reid The Herald; Robin Harper, Scottish Green Party."

There would be no problem picking this up on the tape recorder. Sadly Jimmy (There will be no bevvying) did not turn up. Tommy (Brothers and sisters I'll be brief) Sheridan thinks he is a dead cert for the Parliament. Robin is not so sure about his chances. You need a certain percentage. That was about the gist of it. For his amusing anecdote on the difficulty of getting people to actually vote Tommy regaled the nice middle-class audience with a tale revealing how stupid he thinks the electorate are in general and his are in particular:

"I remember being outside giving out leaflets encouraging people to vote for myself as the candidate, and these two guys came out and says "Tommy where do we put the mark. Do we just put it beside your name" Because what they'd done is went in the polling station and brought out the voting slips [laughter] they marked it outside and then took it back in [louder laughter]. The point about that was they're twenty-nine years old and this is the first time



they've ever voted."

Both speakers, if elected—obviously they were only here to punt themselves—will fight poverty. Everyone in the whole weekend seemed to have pledged themselves to this cause. That and ignoring the distinction between what people say and actually do.

I knew the last talk of the Saturday would be on my home ground as it were.

"A New Deal for Scotland's Unemployed

Venue: Transmission Gallery

Speakers: Alan Brown, Director, Employment Service Scotland, Dr Fran Wasoff, Dept. Sociology, University of Edinburgh, John Diownie, Scottish Parliamentary Officer, Federation of Small Businesses, Alex Pollock, BT Scotland Executive Team

Chair: Agnes Samuel, Executive Director, Glasgow Opportunities."

Alan Brown the director of the so-called Employment Services will be the man in Scotland enforcing the "New Deal". He had this to say:

"This government strongly believes that the best form of welfare is to seek to get people into work, and I'm happy enough to speak here this afternoon and take part in any debate that takes place. But as a Civil Servant—I'm quite happy to explain and defend government policy—but Civil servants have to be careful in one sense that—you know there are certain areas I think where the conversation goes where you probably won't find me able to express my personal opinion about things..."

At least Pontius Pilate actually produced a small bowl and physically washed his hands of things. Since questions were thus rendered pointless no one bothered to ask Alan whether the £3.5bn the government "took off" the privatised utilities would be spent on the unemployed, people like himself who administrate the

unemployed or the privatised utilities who will get the money back. No one asked whether the "New Deal" will achieve just as much as all the other workfare schemes which have been discredited everywhere they have been tried. And no one mentioned that the unemployed are criminalised under the new system—if you're unemployed you do community service, if you commit a crime you do community service. Brown laughed at the notion that the programme might reduce the number of existing jobs because it will provide a dispensable and cheap labour pool, and as such have a detrimental effect on the unions and conditions of work generally—despite YOPS, YTS etc. becoming by-words for this. It's not affecting his wages.

A few people who work in the "unemployed industry" will admit that it is all "a load of shite and counter-productive". After this talk I met up with a guy who runs one of these extra-tenner-a-week courses where you get to play with computers. I had been on his and we occasionally got into conversations. He had no illusions about it at all, in fact he bent and broke the rules every day because they were impractical, counter-productive or futile. As everyone (apart from the people paid to lie) knows. The last time I passed his place it looked shut down.

This talk took place in Transmission Gallery which some years ago I had been instrumental in building and running. All the committee members were unemployed at the time and technically we were all disqualifying ourselves from our dole cheque. Many of the

other arty venues the conference inhabited could say the same. The point is we wanted to do what we did—it was purposeful, some people built careers on the back of it. The new deal is little more than a punishment scheme. If an individual refuses to comply s/he is reduced to complete poverty and could easily end up homeless. The new scheme targets the young. As the director of all this it is all very well of Alan Brown to wash his hands of any responsibility—OK so he keeps his job and has a mortgage to pay—but this is to just sit back and watch people suffer.

We could have also been spared the disgusting spectacle of watching him defend what he seemed to earlier indicate were lies, while one of his employees, sitting right in front of him, endlessly nodded like a donkey and agreed out loud with every single word he said. This typifies the level of degradation that this class of people have sunk to and try to infect others with. A mentality depriving itself of all human instincts towards self-respect. Hideous twisting of the brain and soul. The nightmare of institutional "thinking". The Orwellian Ministry of Truth came to the fore with Brown drooling over his power to cut people's benefit:

"Compulsion goes back a long way...always been the case."

Is that what everything will come down to with this new parliament? Is this the height of our political aspiration—to make the callously indifferent the janitors of other people's lives. *I'm sorry we cut your money, I'm sorry you can't pay your fine I'm sorry your in prison, I'm sorry your child died—but I don't make the rules.* Meanwhile those on a higher public subsidy—such as MPs and civil servants can bask in the glorious rhetoric of the glorious parliament empowering the masses. When do we get to live Mr Brown? ¹³

'Stale Porridge'

Sunday. Passing up on one talk with A.L. Kennedy and Julian Spalding speaking as representatives of a "cultural renaissance"; and another with "Tartan, haggis, bagpipes, Whisky, festival, golf. Smack, razors, hard men. Is Scotland doomed always to be romanticised or will we ever see more realistic representations of ourselves?" I had decided to start the morning with:

"An Arts Agenda for Scotland

How can the arts best contribute to the life of Scotland and enrich our culture and society? How can we judge success; reflecting Scottish experiences or ¹⁴ proving to be major players on a world stage?

Speakers: Magnus Linklater, Chair, Scottish Arts Council; Graham McKenzie, Director, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Ruth Mackenzie, Director, Scottish Opera; Dominic d' Angelo, freelance arts activist; Mary Picken, consultant."

In case anyone had any doubts about just how obscenely smug we were going to get here, Magnus Linklater had conveniently written something ingratiating about the conference overnight, which appeared in *Scotland on Sunday*:

"...we were all there...talking about the usual things. There was Alf and Ruth and Joyce and Peter and Lindsay and Rosemary and Isobel and the others, collected together to discuss the future. It was good to see them all again, though I must admit it doesn't seem all that long since we last met."

He then describes the weekend's conference as "the widest spectrum of Scottish society." For Linklater a Saturday afternoon with all his chums is the "widest spectrum of Scottish society". He should get out more. He ends the article by saying: "There is nothing to be gained from being small-minded." Well, he ended up chairman of the Scottish Arts Council.

Both McKenzie and Mackenzie (they seem to be twins) gave talks which followed an identical pattern. First they drooled over the preposterous amount of public money their organisations receive, then they tried to impress on us how elite their organisation's qualities were, then they engaged in a liberal, condescending patronisation of the poor as a justification of their funding. The implausibility of this led them to

get caught up in lunatic flights of fancy and extravagance with, for instance, Mackenzie stating that Scottish Opera is engaged in "combating poverty". We were told that some of the millions her organisation is in receipt of is occasionally used to fund stalwart missionary work in the nasty bits of the city. The "poverty of aspiration" that she witnesses motivates and touches her heart—she "caught them before they're out in the streets joy riding...how many 16 year olds are burning cars?"

McKenzie's talk was similarly peppered with allusions as to how culture will be brought into the city—as if it was famine relief or oxygen in a cultural vacuum. This mind set seemed a continuation of the moral squalor of the last talk on unemployment. The working class are deemed criminal, they have no culture. I had thought that this "missionary position" was a thing of the past in "community arts"—but here it was loud and proud. Do they really have to pretend that they find virtue in this—would they not be better off adopting a smarter way to patronise us? Could they please rehearse the faking of sincerity a bit more thoroughly next time?

Magnus Linklater of course is only in it for the money, as he made clear in his petulant salary negotiations before he got the job. I have nothing to say about the other two contributors.

I was getting a bit fed up by now. There is only so much of this kind of stuff you can take. I felt like I was sinking into a vat of stale porridge. Out of a sense of duty I dragged myself up to the Women's Library to hear the next talk. They kindly gave me some coffee and for a brief moment I felt quite comfortable—the place has quite a warm atmosphere. It was raining outside.

This talk was on the Scottish Media, with Arnold Kemp, formerly the editor of the Herald¹⁵ Jane Sillars from a media studies department and Maurice Smith the business editor of BBC Scotland. In this as with all of the seminars everyone seemed to know each other, speakers, chairperson and audience would all call each other by their first names. To let some late-comers sit down I moved away and ended up behind a library bookshelf. I couldn't actually see anything and tiring of taking notes I started to look at all the books leaving my tape recorder to pick up all the drone. Kemp thinks that there will be no serious attempt to cover the new parliament and that the news is now completely commodified. He is probably right. He also said that "the Scottish press adopted a defiant stance against Thatcherism", there he is definitely wrong.

This event—timed as it was—just before the party conventions, was in one way an attempt to merge various factions together, to bury the hatchet and of course stab people in the back: opportunists who extolled the virtues of Thatcherism are now welcome to extol the virtues of Blairism. On the other hand it was an opportunity to vet Labour people. I got to won-

dering what the press response would be if in London a conference was organised by a group which contained Gordon Brown, Robin Cook, Peter Mandelson and Jack Straw and was introduced by a speech by Tony Blair and then tried to pass itself off as having "independent of any political party," or a body which can represent the views of the public.

I dragged myself to the last talk.

"Where is Radical Scotland?"

Is Scotland really a left-wing nation? Why does the legacy of Red Clydeside remain potent to many on the left and what was the lasting impact of Thatcherism?

Speakers: Isobel Lyndsay, department of Government, University of Strathclyde; Pat Kane, writer and broadcaster. Chair Mark Lazarowicz"

All I can bring myself to say is that this one was a sick joke.

The Scottish Parliament will merely take over the work of the Scottish Office, and I don't remember anyone ever getting that worked up about them. The Scottish Parliament will have no power over:

"...pensions; abortion; broadcasting; road transport; shipping; telecommunications; weights and measures; employment; railways; airlines; the Crown Estate Commission; "all fiscal, economic and monetary policy"; natural resources (Westminster reserves the right to control the exploitation of, the ownership of, and the "exploitation of ownership, and the exploration for North Sea gas and oil"); the issue of banknotes (including Scottish ones); banking regulations; most aspects of Scotland's minerals; electricity generated by nuclear power; trade & industry; the transport of radioactive materials; drugs; immigration; what is "an official secret"; firearms; film censorship; betting; gaming and lotteries; trout & salmon farming; the civil service; the defence of the realm; national security; social security; foreign affairs; and relations with the European Union"¹⁶

Add to that the fact that a great deal of former public sector activity was privatised by the previous government (and will under the present one still be privatised under the Private Finance Initiative). Thankfully for most of the people involved in this conference that still leaves room for bullying and making money out of the poor.

Notes

1. *Herald* May 30.
2. When I phoned the CSPP to get more information I asked them why they had changed their name and they said that "nobody had heard of John Weatley."
3. The Scottish Policy Institute is being funded by the Barclay Brothers who own the Scotsman newspaper. It will advocate market-based policies for Scotland and probably make much the same noises as Andrew Neil, the editor of the Scotsman.
4. *Private Eye* 920.
5. Some of the speakers although not directly connected with the CSPP demonstrated the influence of their material. John McAllion MP, for example, spoke at the seminar on (naturally

enough) coalition politics. On the Saturday in the *Herald's* reporting of the conference, he is quoted as advocating a form of "politics by petition" which came straight out of David Millar's talk at the first seminar I attended and is itself expounded in Millar's CSPP publication.

6. *Where were you Brother?* Don Thomson and Rodney Larson, War on Want, 1978.
7. *Dirty Work (The CIA in Western Europe)*, Editors Philip Agee & Louis Wolf, Zed, 1978.
8. New Labour, New Atlanticism: US and Tory intervention in the unions since the 1970s, David Osler, *Lobster* 33, 1997.
9. "...the Americans sponsored and funded the European social democrats not because they were social democrats, but because social democracy was the best vehicle for the major aim of the programme: to ensure that the governments of Europe continued to allow American capital into their economies with the minimum of restrictions. This aim the revisionists in the Labour party chose not to look at." Robin Ramsay, *Prawn Cocktail Party (The Hidden Power behind New Labour)*, Vision, 1998.
10. *CIA and the Labour Movement*, Fred Hirsh & Richard Fletcher, Spokesman Books, 1977.
11. David Millar and Bernard Crick (an academic, at London and Edinburgh University) wrote a work which purported to revise the Standing Orders of the 1991 Scottish Constitutional Convention and they are trying to 'revise' them again having written the pamphlet 'To make the Parliament of Scotland a Model for Democracy' in '95, which of course was funded by the CSPP.
12. Millar & Crick have proposed that the role of the speaker should be replaced by a presiding officer/president, who should "enter the political fray." A "bureau" would work out the agenda and a "Business Committee" would offer costed policy options. One can just feel the layers of bureaucracy fall away. He ended with the exhortation "go back to your political parties, to your kirk session, golf club, tennis club start getting people talking."
13. The academic at this marvel of doublethink, Dr Fran Wasoff, sat in front of the fire exit the whole time - which will serve as a metaphor for her contribution (well meaning - in the way). The guy from BT when "explaining" BT's involvement in the scheme actually passed round a phone card which they are giving to the 18 - 24 year-olds who are forced to work for them. I now know what a phone card looks like. That too will serve as another quick metaphor.
14. Notice that it is an either or situation.
15. When it ran all manner of disinformation from Paul Wilkinson and Patrick Laurence.
16. *Private Eye* No. 948, 17th April '98.