

Sturgeon quits – where next for Scotland?

Nicola Sturgeon's resignation as First Minister of the Scottish Government and leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) has dominated the news across Britain and even internationally, *writes Mike Picken*.

In one sense, the standing down of a political leader in what can be regarded as a small 'regional'/devolved government should hardly create many ripples. The fact that it was regarded as so significant speaks volumes about the current state of British politics. It overshadowed completely the fact that on the same day as Sturgeon resigned the main Scottish teachers' union, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) representing over 80% of school teachers, voted unanimously to reject a 6% pay offer and reaffirmed two days of strike action on 28 February/1 March that will close every Scottish state school and have a huge effect across the country.

Media glee

The mainstream British press and media, almost entirely unionist and conservative, greeted the resignation statement with uncontained glee – '*Huge boost to unionism*' shouted the Times; '*Sturgeon brought down by trans row*' and '*without her the SNP is nothing*' screamed the Daily Telegraph, 'house journal' of Britain's Conservative Party membership, in what must rank as one of the most inaccurate front pages in its history. '*Independence dream fades*' trumpeted the 'i' newspaper. The tabloid press charge was led by the Daily

Mail with '*Sturgeon ... dreams in tatters*' while Andrew Neil exclaimed '*Her Legacy of Failure*', all in block capitals of course. This is the paper that supported the fascist blackshirts. Even the supposedly liberal Guardian displayed its unionist credentials in talking about the SNP being '*thrown ... into turmoil*'.

Across the globe, Donald Trump led the global reactionary charge describing Sturgeon as a '*crazed leftist*' and '*failed woke extremist*'. Though in an indication of his grip on reality he also seemed more exercised at the £15M loss made by his Scottish golf courses, blaming Sturgeon personally for their failure.

Compared to the chaos of the recent resignations of UK Prime Ministers Theresa May, Boris Johnson, and the 49-day catastrophic reign of Liz Truss, Nicola Sturgeon's press conference in Edinburgh was a calm and controlled affair. She explained that after over eight years at the helm of the devolved Scottish government and nearly 30 years in front line politics in Scotland, she had simply had enough and wanted a bit of a rest on the backbenches of the Scottish Parliament. But she also clearly stated she was not giving up on politics and '*would be around*' for some time to come. Unlike the Conservative shambolic Prime Ministerial resignations last year, she took questions from the media and answered them confidently, even receiving plaudits from seasoned political journalists like the Independent's Paul Waugh, taking a brief step back from the overwhelmingly hostile environment of the British press.

Sturgeon's resignation received a rather more respectful response in Europe's capitals, with the Irish Taoiseach and the leader of Sinn Féin applauding her stance against the UK's Tory Brexit.

Tory Prime Minister Rishi Sunak struck a more restrained mood, perhaps befitting his constitutional role and attempt to

steady the Tory 'ship of state', than the more gleeful Scottish Tory opposition leader, Douglas Ross. Both Labour leader Keir Starmer and his Scottish subordinate, Anas Sarwar, praised Sturgeon's public service.

But behind the scenes they will all be rubbing their hands with glee at the prospect of moving British politics firmly to the right, now that what is seen as the progressive and left wing Sturgeon is 'out of the way'.

The press and political commentators immediately started a frenzy at the prospects for a Starmer landslide at the next UK general elections. The irony that it came on the twentieth anniversary of the largest demonstration in British history against his mentor Tony Blair's support for the US war in Iraq, appeared lost on Keir Starmer. He began the day pronouncing that like Blair he too would ignore the wishes of Labour members in refusing to allow former leader Jeremy Corbyn to stand as a Labour candidate in the north London constituency he has represented for forty years.

For Labour's increasingly right wing leadership it was seen as a successful day – 'Corbyn Out, Sturgeon Out' – in what they now see as Starmer's passage to becoming next British Prime Minister.

But what is the reality of both Sturgeon's period in office and the prospects for what will follow her resignation?

Socially progressive

Nicola Sturgeon is undoubtedly a consummate political performer, perhaps the most talented mainstream politician in the British Isles, compared to the buffoons that have headed Tory UK governments at Westminster. In only eight years as

Scottish First Minister, Sturgeon saw five of them go through the doors of 10 Downing Street. She also saw out three UK Labour leaders and five leaders of the Liberal Democrats (a one time governing party at both Westminster and Holyrood).

Her calm and measured response to the Covid pandemic through her daily broadcasts on TV had a major reassuring effect on Scottish people, particularly compared to the chaotic disarray of the UK Westminster government, as she became the most popular political leader across the UK state ... by a long way.

But Sturgeon is also highly socially progressive. An outspoken supporter of feminism, she had defended abortion rights absolutely unequivocally since entering politics and in the words of left wing writer Owen Jones *"she'll go down as a hero to LGBTQ people"* for her defence of LGBTQ rights.

The Tory and unionist press overwhelmingly claim that public opinion is against her stance in the recent 'row' on trans rights and even claim that this has caused her demise. Sturgeon is depicted in the Tory press as the 'architect' of the recent Gender Reform Recognition (Scotland) Bill that passed the Scottish Parliament last December and was struck down by the Tory Government at Westminster last month in their right wing 'culture war' against trans people. But the GRR Bill was passed by an overwhelming two thirds majority in the Scottish Parliament and as well as most in Sturgeon's SNP, three other Parties voted strongly for it – Scottish Labour, Scottish Greens and the Liberal Democrats. The latter also joined the SNP and other opposition parties at Westminster, but not UK Labour, in opposing the unprecedented striking down of the progressive legislation.

As with previous progressive social legislation in the UK – ending capital punishment, decriminalising homosexuality, gay marriage – lawmakers can lead public opinion, and reforms that elicited reactionary vocal opposition at the time become mainstream soon after, even if they do have to be constantly

defended. The support for de-medicalisation and self-ID in the GRR Bill is overwhelmingly supported by medical and health professionals across Scotland and the British state. It is also backed by those campaigning for women's rights and supporting victims of sexual abuse, by the LGBTQ community, and, significantly, by the vast majority of young people in Scotland. It even has support from the United Nations, World Health Organisation and an increasing numbers of states – most recently the Spanish state and Finland have legislated for similar processes.

The recent conviction of rapist Isla Bryson and her imprisonment briefly in an isolation wing of a Scottish women's prison has become a 'cause célèbre' amongst reactionary opponents of trans rights, keen to put the labels 'trans' and 'rapists' in the same sentence. We've seen this before when it was almost impossible to read a newspaper article without the word 'paedophile' being included with the word 'gay'. But in fact Sturgeon intervened immediately in the Bryson case, an independent action by the Scottish Prison Service, to say that she agreed 100% with the Scottish Rape Crisis organisation, a supporter of the GRR Bill, that a rapist should not be accommodated in a women's prison.

The brutal murder of trans teenager Brianna Ghey in a Cheshire park and the announcement by the police in the last few days that they are now investigating it as a potential 'hate crime' has sent shock waves through the LGBTQ and young community as the anti-trans rhetoric has been dialled up by Westminster Tory politicians presenting an 'anti-woke' agenda to the declining Tory party faithful. The turnout by young people at massive vigils across the British state



Over 1,000 people join vigil for murdered trans girl Brianna Ghey in Glasgow's George Square on day after Nicola Sturgeon's resignation

presents a counter trend and to most of the young people in Scotland Nicola Sturgeon is identified, in Owen Jones' words, as a heroine rather than a villain.

While the recent abuse that Nicola Sturgeon has received over her support for trans rights has created a vile political atmosphere, it is wide of the mark to suggest that it is the main reason for her resignation.

Independence at crossroads

While the trans rights issue has dominated recent media attacks on Sturgeon, the underlying concern of the British ruling class remains the prospect of Scottish independence and the potential break up of the UK state.

Sturgeon was first elected to what was then the new Scottish Parliament in 1999. The SNP has defined itself as 'within the mainstream of European social democracy' for decades and

narrowly became the ruling party at the Scottish Parliament in Holyrood in 2007 holding government leadership throughout the 16 years since, with Nicola Sturgeon being a permanent feature: firstly as Deputy First Minister and Health Secretary, then taking over as First Minister from Alex Salmond in 2014.

In 2011, the SNP won a freak majority at Holyrood under an electoral system that was deliberately designed by the Labour Party to prevent such a thing occurring. The SNP manifesto contained a commitment to a referendum on independence and sensing an easy victory then Tory UK Prime Minister David Cameron agreed to the Scottish Parliament legislating for such a referendum. Support for independence began at just 25% in opinion polls, but by the time of the referendum in 2014, shocked Westminster politicians saw polls indicating a majority. A huge rearguard last minute right wing action and a promise of 'jam tomorrow' in the form of a 'Vow' by the Westminster parties led to a 45/55 defeat of independence in the referendum, but with the highest turnout in any Scottish or UK election and the enfranchisement of both 16/17 year olds and all EU citizens living in Scotland. A key part of the argument for staying in the UK was that an independent Scotland would be outside the European Union and unable to join due to a veto by states opposed to secessionist movements, particularly the Spanish state.

But a major part of the shift to independence was among Scottish working class communities who turned out in large numbers to vote, alarmed at the austerity policies being pursued by the Tory/LibDem coalition at Westminster that Scotland hadn't voted for (Scotland voted overwhelming Labour for most of the twentieth century). The Labour Party's alliance with the Tories in a joint 'Better Together' campaign against independence created a huge swing away from the party among its traditional working class base.

The joy of the right wing parties at the defeat of

independence was short-lived, however, as the SNP under the new leadership of Sturgeon surged at the 2015 UK general election winning nearly 50% of the vote and 56 out of the 59 Scottish seats – with the Labour Party losing 40 of its 41 seats, a cataclysmic result for Labour after generations of domination of Scottish politics.

In 2016, the Westminster Tories again gambled on a referendum, this time over UK membership of the EU. But while the shock result at a UK level was 52/48 in favour of leaving the EU, Scotland voted overwhelmingly 62/38 to remain in the EU (the north of Ireland also voted 56/44 to remain). The Tory party rapidly became taken over by the extreme right wing politics of the UK Independence Party (UKIP). Although Nicola Sturgeon proposed a compromise of the UK state leaving the EU but remaining in the single market (the so-called 'Norway' option), this was rejected by the rightward moving Tories, intoxicated with the 'Brexit' process and encouraged by the elevation of Donald Trump to US president.

Sturgeon, the SNP and the wider independence movement began agitating against Brexit and for a further referendum on independence on the grounds that if the UK state left the EU the circumstances in 2014 had changed significantly. Sensing the possibility that a second Scottish independence referendum ('indyref2') could result in victory for independence, the Westminster parties, including the Labour Party then led by Jeremy Corbyn, closed ranks to deny that such a referendum would take place.

There are many reasons why the UK state fears the disruption that would be caused by Scottish independence to its continuity as one of the leading imperialist powers. But central to the debate is the issue of nuclear weapons. The UK state holds a seat on the UN Security Council by virtue of its ownership of a nuclear arsenal. These weapons are now exclusively located in Scotland, in the Trident missile system within submarines stationed just along the Clyde river at

Faslane, just 40 miles from the centre of Scotland's biggest city of Glasgow. There is nowhere else in the rest of the UK state where such weapons could be located, at least in the short term. The SNP has always been a pro-independence party and moderately social democratic, but has also opposed nuclear weapons and is committed to an independent Scotland removing nuclear weapons. Even though the SNP reversed its position to one of supporting membership of NATO in 2013 under previous leader Alex Salmond, and there are some in the party who would be willing to compromise over a 'Guantanamo-style' leasing of the Faslane base to the rump UK state, the majority of the party including Nicola Sturgeon remain committed to removing nuclear weapons.

Sturgeon has repeatedly said that as well as joining the SNP as a 16 year old teenager opposed to the Tory attacks on the working class community she was brought up in, equally she also joined the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) to oppose nuclear weapons at the same time.

For this prime reason, acceptance of Scottish independence is totally unacceptable to the British ruling class – and therefore it is unremittingly hostile to both the SNP and to Sturgeon.

Since the 2016 EU referendum, the British ruling class has therefore used everything at its disposal to prevent Scottish independence by blocking a referendum. Despite this and in the face of the increasing economic calamity for Scottish workers represented by the Brexit process, the SNP together with Scottish Green Party put forward in their manifesto for the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections the demand for a second independence referendum in the early part of the five year parliamentary session. The SNP and the more left wing Scottish Green Party won a clear parliamentary majority and following a governmental agreement between the two parties that saw two Green ministers enter government for the first time anywhere in Britain, Sturgeon and the SNP/SGP proceeded

to prepare a Bill for an independence referendum regardless of whether the increasingly dysfunctional Westminster government approved.

But the legal basis for a referendum was not established and there was much caution in SNP circles including from Nicola Sturgeon that a constitutional referendum was the only option. The Scottish government legal officer therefore asked the UK Supreme Court for a ruling, that took place last autumn. The legal basis for referendums is actually quite well established in the UK state even though it is a relatively recent phenomenon (since 1973) and there were some legal hopes of a positive ruling. However the conservative judges in the UK Supreme Court took a particularly narrow legal view of the statute establishing the Scottish Parliament and the wider framework for referendums, and ruled unanimously (and unsurprisingly) against any unilateral action by the Scottish Parliament.

Given the stubborn and anti-democratic refusal of the UK Tories to approve a referendum, Nicola Sturgeon set out the case for 'Plan B' – using the next UK general election in Scotland as a 'proxy' referendum.

This is filled with problems and has created a huge debate within both the normally disciplined SNP and in the wider independence movement. A special conference of the SNP was due to take place on 19th March – reportedly it is being thrown into uncertainty by Sturgeon's resignation, though Sturgeon herself actually gave the ability to take a decision on tactics unfettered by the impact on leadership as one of the reasons for the timing of her resignation.

While Sturgeon is seen in the UK media as unremitting in her opposition to Brexit and support for independence, the effect of her constitutionalist tactics has been to stall the independence movement within Scotland, which as recently as 2018 had been able to mobilise 100,000 on the streets and

polls in 2021 showed a significant move towards a sustained if small majority. The lack of a sustained substantial majority for independence and the lack of a tactic to achieve independence from the SNP has had an effect on the movement. While still strong and while creating a clear electoral divide that has given the SNP between 40 and 50% of the vote in elections, it is not yet strong enough to achieve success. The dangers of a Quebec-style second lost referendum are significant.

Some in the independence movement have become frustrated and this led to a split in the SNP in 2021 when former SNP leader Alex Salmond set up a rival party, Alba, ostensibly to 'game' the Holyrood electoral system and win an overwhelming pro-independence majority. But since the unsuccessful prosecution of Salmond on sexual assault charges alleged to have been committed while he was First Minister, he has become a highly divisive figure. Even though found not guilty, his behaviour towards women was judged, even by himself, to be 'inappropriate' and this has had a significant effect on his popularity. The Alba party also became a repository for those engaging in conspiracy theorists who believed that Sturgeon conducted a vendetta against Salmond, while those who defend Sturgeon point out that she simply stood up for women's rights in the workplace and had no part in the legal case. The Alba Party flopped electorally and has increasingly become a repository for reactionary politics – it strongly opposed the GRR Bill for example, and has joined the chorus of those accusing Sturgeon of being a 'destroyer of women's rights'.

So, the independence movement now faces a watershed. Despite the hopes of the Westminster Tories, Labour and the media, the movement is not going away even despite Sturgeon's departure from centre stage. Young people including many of those who voted at 16 in the 2014 referendum are overwhelmingly supportive of independence, with polls showing 75%+ support and that reflects in electoral support for the SNP and

Scottish Green Party. In fact among those of working age and those who have been through tertiary education, there is a clear majority in Scotland for independence. Polls show that those in the lowest paid jobs (working class) are more strongly in favour of independence than those in highly paid work (middle class) and again this maintains a strong SNP electoral support. But there is a large section of retired older and generally less educated people who are strongly against independence and these factors lead to the current 50/50 balance impasse.

The demographic changes however are in favour of a substantial majority for independence as a long term goal, despite all the short term routes being largely closed by Westminster.

The key question for the independence movement is how to 'reboot' the movement as a long term struggle and avoid the short termism of being side-tracked by the machinations of constitutional politics at Westminster and Holyrood. In order to build a permanent majority in Scottish society, the movement needs to focus on an alternative vision of life in an independent Scotland. This means ditching the 'business-as-usual' approach to Scottish independence that simply sees it as a continuation of the current SNP regime with more levers and recognition on the international stage.

Independence poses a paradigm shift, with the opportunity to develop working class interests and a different form of society that is more socially progressive and supports those affected by the ravages of capitalism. While there are aspirations for a single united movement, an 'Independence Convention' is put forward by Alex Salmond, there is a real problem with the toxic nature of those in the movement who have a socially conservative or reactionary position on issues such as trans rights that probably makes coexistence difficult if not impossible. This has been shown by the demise and disappearance of the 'NOW Scotland' movement and the decline in attendance for marches by 'All Under One Banner'.

A key issue is the climate and ecological crisis. Most activists recognise that independence would give the opportunity to tackle Scotland's economic over-dependence on fossil fuel extraction and give a more rapid transition to renewables. Friends of the Earth Scotland supports Scottish independence. The hosting of COP26 in 2021 in Glasgow gave the climate crisis a major focus. While most of the issues are controlled by the UK government at Westminster, the Scottish government and parliament does have an important role to play. In general the SNP, which championed oil extraction in the 1970s, has been slow to respond to the climate emergency seeing the jobs tied up in fossil industries as a priority. The Scottish government does lack the legal and fiscal resources to effect a really significant 'just transition', even if it wanted to, but it can be a much more effective vehicle for making the case. Instead its initiatives tend to be marginal. But that doesn't mean the battle should not be continued and there are active groups in Scotland protesting the UK government's massive expansion of oil and gas fields, such as the Cambo and Rosebank fields, and continued dependence on fossil fuel industries. Groups include Climate Camp Scotland direct action group and Extinction Rebellion Scotland. Such campaigns cannot wait for Scottish independence or the SNP to get their policies right and must be taken up vigorously now. So far the involvement of the Scottish Greens in the government has been disappointing in its outcomes, free bus travel for young people up to 21 is a step forward but we are still a long way from a full free public transport system to tackle poverty and the climate crisis. The need is for the climate justice movement to head up mass protest at the UK government, while the need for independence and a strategy for ecological change needs developing and fighting for.

The opportunity is therefore presented to those groups such as the Radical Independence Campaign, Socialists for Independence and the Scottish Socialist Party to put aside tactical

differences and seek to build a wing of the movement that supports strikes, defends abortion and trans rights, fights government cuts, challenges climate change and looks instead to putting the case for a better Scotland for the many. In doing so they could win support from those who might see Labour as the solution to 13 years of Tory rule at Westminster. In the longer term there needs to be a left wing party able to challenge both the SNP and Labour on the electoral terrain.

SNP elects a new leader

The SNP leadership election is the first contested election for nearly 20 years. However in 2004, the last time the party had to ballot its members, its membership was only 6,000 and it had won just 27 seats at Holyrood and 5 seats at Westminster, a very narrow pool. Now it has around 100,000 members, and has won 64 seats at Holyrood and 48 at Westminster.

Sturgeon has dominated the party in recent years such that there is no obvious successor so it seems likely there will be quite a few candidates coming forward.

A real and genuine fear is that the party could lurch to the right on social policy. The Finance Secretary Kate Forbes is seen as a challenger – despite being articulate, educated and a Gaellic speaker from the Highlands, she is fiscally conservative and an active member of the ‘Wee Frees’, the tiny conservative Free Church of Scotland that bans gay marriage among its congregation. She is on maternity leave currently and so was not required to vote on the GRR Bill, which she had voiced opposition to. It would be a real problem for Scottish LGBTQ politics if she were to get elected, as would a proxy

candidacy for her from Ash Regan, the only SNP minister who resigned over the GRR Bill.

Much more likely is a duller male candidate. John Swinney, the current Deputy, has been leader in the past but would not be a particularly impressive candidate. More likely is the equally dull but considered 'safe pair of hands' or even 'continuity Sturgeon' figure of Angus Robertson, former leader of the party at Westminster and current Constitution and Culture Secretary. However other candidates could emerge and there will be significant jockeying for position in the days ahead, though the candidate will have to be an MSP due to the role of First Minister, so that rules out any of the Westminster figures.

The SNP constitution states the election takes 133 days but that is almost certainly likely to be shortened.

Labour Prospects

In the recent period of impasse over independence, attention across Scotland has focussed more on the cost-of-living crisis afflicting working people across the UK state. Soaring energy bills are causing massive instability and wages are not keeping pace with rapidly rising inflation on basic foodstuffs leading to the current wave of strikes – of which the most prominent current examples in Scotland are school teachers, civil servants, postal and rail workers and university staff. The SNP administration at Holyrood has attempted to buy off some sections of the public sector workforce from striking, for example in the National Health Service (NHS) and on the ScotRail train franchise it now runs, by offering slightly higher pay offers than those employed through the Westminster government. A temporary rent freeze has given some respite on

costs, but this has recently been rolled back. The Scottish Government has a cash-limited budget allocated by Westminster, no borrowing powers and only limited tax raising powers of its own. That cash is running on empty and seems to have reached an impasse with the current claim for 10% pay rises by Scottish teachers. The school strikes on 28 February/1 March are now hugely important as a test of the union resistance and the administration in Holyrood.

The Scottish government budget from 1 April faces many significant demands, with the priority for health services in the wake of the covid pandemic being unavoidable. This has led to huge pressures on other aspects of the budget particularly those for local councils. The SNP minority administration at the largest council in Glasgow faces a staggering £100 million pounds of cuts to jobs and services. The council budget crisis is also causing tensions between the SNP and their Scottish Green Party allies with councillors expressing worries about the impact of the cuts.

For the Scottish Labour Party the current strike wave and the likelihood of council cuts has seemed like a lifeline to rebuild support among working class voters. In a totally opposite way to Starmer's UK Labour Party at Westminster, the Scottish Labour Party has urged its elected members to support strike pickets and protests called by unions.

However across Scotland, 30 out of the 32 councils have no single party in a majority. The UK Labour Party instruction is that there should be no coalition with the SNP as this would be seen to endanger the chances of Labour winning support among English voters at the next UK general election. In fact polls indicate that most voters in England, including Labour voters, are actually pretty relaxed about the question of Scottish independence seeing it as a question largely for Scottish people. The Labour Party in Wales has a governmental agreement with the pro-independence Plaid Cymru and has permitted a governmental commission on the constitution to

consider independence, with no apparent adverse effect on electoral support for Labour.

The refusal to make any agreement with the SNP, despite them holding nearly twice as many council seats as Labour, means that in council areas where Labour is stronger, typically in second place, they have made agreements to take control with the Tories and other unionists, including in one council a fringe ultra right wing party. This tactic seems certain to backfire as some Labour councillors are forced into making cuts, while screaming that it's all the 'bad SNP's fault'.

A fundamental change has taken place since 2014 in Labour support in Scotland. While the press is hyping up the prospects for Labour in the aftermath of Sturgeon's resignation, the reality on the ground is somewhat different. Even with a much duller leader like Angus Robertson, the SNP will still be a formidable electoral force. A small decline in support for both the SNP and independence is likely, but the SNP is miles ahead of Labour and Tory support, particularly among young people and workers. Labour's desperate support for the union, with Starmer routinely appearing with not one but two union flags behind him, does not endear them to Scottish voters any longer.

Many of Labour's proposals in their General Election manifesto will seem a pale imitation of already existing SNP policies at Holyrood – Starmer is even prepared to drop Corbyn's opposition to student tuition fees, a policy that was long swept away by the SNP. Every time Starmer goes on TV promising to end a few Tory policies in England, Scots voters will think little of it. Starmer's tepid policies on energy and support for continuing domination by profiteering oil and gas corporations will impress no-one. The tactics of Scottish Labour depend entirely on a collapsing Tory vote that has nowhere else to go but into Labour. But there seems little chance of them eating into the mammoth SNP vote that they need to restore their fortunes. Labour has sunk to the low

watermark of one seat and could well win a half dozen more (though every seat they gain from the SNP, the SNP are likely to gain one from Tories). The return of right wing Labour has-beens like Douglas Alexander and Jim Murphy, the architects of 'Better Together' and the loss of 40 seats in 2015, is unsurprising as they sniff the prospect of seats in a Labour government at Westminster.

Conclusion

The resignation of Sturgeon represents a sea change in Scottish politics. She is an adept politician in every way – highly principled in some respects, but deeply tied to constitutionalism, fiscal conservatism and constrained in other respects. But the predictions that her departure means the end of the battle for independence or for socially progressive politics is wide of the mark. There is a small danger of a lurch to the right, but more likely is a continuation of SNP dominance but failure to break the impasse. Labour's electoral prospects will probably rise at the margins, they could scarcely get lower. But the radical wing of the independence movement needs to grasp the mettle – focus on working class economic interests, progressive politics, and an alternative vision of Scotland to neo-liberal capitalism.