

DECLARATION OF AUTONOMY

As subjects of the British State, we learn that power is to be devolved to a Scottish Parliament. This Parliament has been granted powers to oversee certain responsibilities currently carried out by the Scottish Office in London & Edinburgh.

This is the first Scottish Parliament since a “parcel of rogues” decided to throw in their lot with the English dominated Westminster parliament in 1707. Since then the general populace, reluctantly & not without a struggle, has been granted the vote. We nominally have power to elect our political leaders. No such power exists within the economic sphere, since power is linked to shareholdings in companies, many of whom are multinational.

Constitutionally, however, we are not citizens of Scotland, far less the U.K.. We remain subject to the Crown & State, despite all the talk of reducing the hereditary powers. We are tainted and implicated in a history of colonial and imperial subjugation of people overseas. We have become largely docile, consumers of mass culture, and the insipid participation it entails.

Returning a Parliament to Edinburgh, will it is said reinvigorate the public sphere and generate a pride in our identity and tradition. There is said to have been a similar resurgence since the rebirth of nationhood across central and eastern Europe. Some have exhibited peaceful, more enlightened nationalism like Slovenia or Estonia. Others have seen nationalism equated with linguistic or spurious ethnic identity based on the politics of scapegoating and genocide.

A devolved Scottish Parliament or independent nation will exist within the new European Union and the trend towards the Europe of the regions, common currency with the Euro & standardised regulation decreed by the Commission. It is also a ‘fortress Europe’ as with the Roman Empire, controlling ‘economic migrants’ from outside its boundaries and restricting refugee status. As an emerging economic super-power it is competing with the north american, Chinese and far east trading blocs for investment from multinational companies.

SELF-DETERMINATION

The major constitutional debate, which touches on the question of citizenship, concerns how far will self-determination proceed ? Unlike their Scottish Convention partners, the Liberal Democrats, Labour’s devolution policy is not part of a worked out policy of linking the British Isles as a federal state. Labour’s conception of a Scottish Parliament arose out of their main concern, as a conservative party, to protect the union. The intentions of the majority of the Scottish people, although ambiguous, go beyond the confines of Labour. The current rise of the Scottish National Party draws on the aspirations for self-determination to “rise and be a nation again” in the sense that the genie has been let out the bottle with the vote to proceed with a Scottish Assembly.

Labour’s strategy is that, as in Catalonia with their parliament in Barcelona, within the Spanish state, pragmatism will prevail over sentiment once the parliament is up & running. However, Labour have Tony Blair as Prime Minister. Despite [or because?] his public school Edinburgh background, his concerns are seen as those of ‘middle england’, whose grasp of Scottish affairs rival Margaret Thatcher’s genius for sensitivity. Scottish public opinion has often been to the ‘left’ when it comes to questions such as opposing cuts in services or extending casualisation.

It isn't clear therefore, what the outcome of the devolution process will be. The momentum towards independent sovereignty, as a republic or as a constitutional settlement with a 'peoples' monarchy, as in Scandinavia or the Benelux countries, could be stalled the will of the Scottish people to proceed further.

What is clear, however, is that any self-determination or independence will be subordinated to the global markets and operating costs and priorities of multinational companies. Any political expression of "power to the people" will be extremely limited given that the major forces which shape our lives are bound up with a global capitalist system.

Even if political power arose, in a libertarian sense, from the people as citizens, and elected representatives were subject to recall and mandated to express the wishes of their electors, rather than the Party apparatus to which they belong, they would still be economically subject to the profit motive & fluctuations of the global market. As individuals we are reduced to being wage slave & powerless !

Although the implementation of the Multilateral Agreement on investment has been stalled by nation-states led by France, multinational corporations still have the upper hand in dealings with Governments that try and regulate their dealings or implement green, 'clean it up' policies. Even without the M.A.I., corporations have the power to threaten or withdraw plants if their profits and operations are curtailed.

To invest our hopes for the future in political change, confined to the level at which we are governed and taxed, without a clear approach to the economic dynamic of capitalism, which continues to ravage the planet and exploit us all for profit, is frankly misguided. Independence and self-determination is an illusion within capitalism. No amount of fervour for a Scottish republic can escape this reality. We cannot take our desires for reality within the world as it is.

DEMOCRACY IS AN ILLUSION

We are being positive in declaring these facts. To state that a devolved assembly or an independent Scotland can 'tame' capitalism and significantly alter our lives is "leading people up the garden path". Also, instead of manipulating people, as all Parties, the Left included, by presenting an incomplete picture of how we are able "to make a difference", we prefer to destroy illusions rather than foster them.

We live in a cynical age, it's hardly surprising given the bad reputation that anything political has, from corruption to atrocities. But being 'cynical' is a pattern of adjustment to life as it is. In this "post-modern era" it has become 'common sense' to do people down or act selfishly because nobody expects that people keep to an ethical, caring attitude, or if they do so, they have ulterior motives. Instead of cynicism, we offer skepticism and a streetwise realisation that we are all inherently equal as humans in a world we have no right to destroy. However, many of us are psychologically damaged and distorted in our actions by our adherence to an unjust world and all the false justifications that scapegoat people according to age, sexual preference, disability, gender and race/ethnicity/language. We are all individual and different and have great scope for a diverse contribution to the society around us. Our worth is distorted from childhood and this contributes to how difficult it is for all of us to throw off these shackles & bad attitudes. Don't let them ground you down !

STATES TERRORISE !

The perspective we have today has been trailblazed by others throughout history. In the past century, anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists, libertarian socialists, council communists, situationists and social ecologists have understood the merits of questioning Growth; mutual aid; no justice, no peace; class war against the boss class, etc.. While many made mistakes in this process, it has been the role of States and would-be-States [Parties] to distort this legacy. We are wise today that you cannot blow up a social relationship. However bad one tyrant is, liquidating them leads to another taking their place, accompanied by repression, while the population is mobilised against 'terrorism'. In youth it is easy to be impatient, but unless forced to by circumstances, you have to organise, despite setbacks, in an open way, conscious that tiny minorities cannot bounce people into a new society that is not their own making.

Our alternative isn't simply a 'talking shop'. Around the globe, resistance occurs to companies against exploitation of people and the environment. The example of the Zapatistas from the Chiapas province of Southern Mexico demonstrates that international solidarity can be generated using technology such as the internet to stimulate resistance and debate. Similarly, direct action and mass demonstrations - such as in Hyderabad, India - have occurred against the multilateral agreement on investment and the role of institutions such as the G8 summit, International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

We are not misguided to believe that all of those engaged in a wide variety of workplace, community and environmental struggles are united in support of a Declaration such as this. However, widespread realisation is growing that popular sentiment for self-determination, accountability, autonomy from manipulation, and so on, is limited if there is acceptance that the capitalist system is a fact of existence. Reforming capital-ism other than superficially, is "pie in the sky".

This is the outlook we invite you to share. Those of us who are not distorted by purely selfish or egotistical motives, aspire for a better world for our children. Many of us, even those who have "given up on humanity" are outraged at the destruction of natural finite resources and the creatures that also inhabit this planet. We are all flawed, but we can raise ourselves from our condition by consciousness linked to action. There is no blueprint for change, but at least we have no more illusions !

There is no half-way house to social revolution. We are therefore not drawn into pressing for change which does not significantly undermine the global capitalist economy. National self-determination, even if expressed in an enlightened, liberal fashion, only alters life superficially. If you agree with this perspective we invite you to get in touch, and link up with us.

This text was penned and agreed by clydeside anarchist circle in 1997 in response to devolved Scottish Parliament.. Linked to then, Scottish anarchist network, contact the Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh at 0131 557 6242.

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