

# Open Research Online

---

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

## The 2014 Scottish independence debate: questions of social welfare and social justice

### Journal Item

#### How to cite:

Mooney, Gerry and Scott, Gill (2015). The 2014 Scottish independence debate: questions of social welfare and social justice. *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 23(1) pp. 5–16.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2015 Authors



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1332/175982715X14231434073599>

---

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

---

[oro.open.ac.uk](http://oro.open.ac.uk)

***The 2014 Scottish Independence Debate:  
Questions of Social Welfare and Social Justice***

**Gerry Mooney and Gill Scott**

**for**

***Journal of Poverty and Social Justice***

**January 9 2015, 2014 (Draft 3)**

**Gerry Mooney is Senior Lecturer in Social Policy and Criminology, The Open University in Scotland ([Gerry.Mooney@open.ac.uk](mailto:Gerry.Mooney@open.ac.uk))**

**Gill Scott is Emeritus Professor of Social Policy, Glasgow Caledonian University ([J.M.Scott@gcal.ac.uk](mailto:J.M.Scott@gcal.ac.uk))**

---

This paper aims to foreground some of the main ways in which issues of social welfare and social policy came to occupy centre stage in the Scottish Independence Debate during recent years, culminating in the September 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum. It considers how issues relating to social welfare and the future of the welfare state more generally were advanced by the pro-Scottish Independence YES camp as key arguments in the overall case for Independence. This then disputes suggestions to the contrary that the pro-YES movement was a campaign driven primarily by issues of Scottish nationalism and national identity. Instead issues of social welfare, social justice and the creation of a more equal Scotland dominated.

The paper considers the key social policy issues that emerged before and during the Independence Referendum, and in particular focuses on the ways in which these were also entangled with the wider question of the future constitutional direction of Scotland. In discussing the fall-out and consequences of the NO vote, the paper also highlights the continuing ways in which social welfare issues have remained central to ongoing debates around the devolution of further powers to Scotland, plans for which are having huge repercussions for the future not only of Scotland, but of the entire UK.

## **Introduction: The Political and Policy Context**

The Scottish Independence Referendum of September 18, 2014, will be recognised by future generations as a historic moment in the history of the United Kingdom. For a number of commentators and observers, despite the majority NO to Independence vote, the future of the UK looks less secure now than it did in the months leading up to the Referendum itself.

The Scottish Independence Referendum reminds us once again that the UK is far from being the unified entity that is often presented to the outside world, not least by the UK Government. But this misunderstands the nature of the UK: as a union state/states of union: a multinational union of different nations (a pluri-national state consisting of more than one country and one nation), coming together at different points in history, sometimes in ways that were uneasy and tense. The history of what we might term the coming-togetherness of different parts of these islands to form the UK matters immensely to where we find ourselves now – and to the many tensions that exist between these component countries – and of course often within them too. The enduring history of the UK's turbulent past works to shape the present and the future:

Nobody asked to design a political system for Britain would ever propose the one it has. The one-and-a-bit large islands (and many smaller ones) that *The Economist* calls home are a hotchpotch of parliamentary systems, unevenly distributed powers and constitutional uncertainties. The set-up is as uneven as Britain's history is eventful, which is no coincidence: the causes of the mess date back centuries. The latest upheaval - Scotland's referendum on independence, which ended with a "no" vote on September 18 - has made things untidier still. (*The Economist*, September 27, 2014).

The Scottish Independence Referendum represents the latest stage in the evolving story of the political and constitutional shape of the UK. However, and while this may also apply to some within Scotland, the external view of the Scottish Independence Referendum, and the issues that drove the demand for such a ballot, have largely been misunderstood and misinterpreted. For many observers this was a nationalist issue; an issue of national identity, of movement for national liberation of some vague kind. In the Scottish National Party (SNP) and other Scottish nationalists, of course, this is very much the case. Here there has been a long-cherished belief in and commitment to the goal of Scottish self-determination, based on the mythical but widely held view that Scotland has historically been an oppressed nation, unfairly controlled by England and by membership of the UK union.

However, to make a jump from recognising the SNPs long-held ambitions in this regard, to interpreting the entire pro-independence YES campaign and wider independence movement as nationalist in this sense would be mistaken and indeed would lead to a mis-understanding of the issues that drove the YES vote and which now, in the months following the September 2014 Referendum, are continuing to unsettle Scotland – as well as other parts of the UK, and the leaders of the main UK political parties too.

Scottish nationalist sentiments and ambitions, to the extent that they did play a part in the pro-independence campaign, were centrally interconnected with other issues that cannot be seen in any simple sense as being 'nationalist', no matter how that might be understood or defined. Core to the entire campaign for Scottish Independence – and this was crucial in shaping the debate that took place since March 2013 when the date of the 2014 Referendum was first announced by Scottish First Minister, Alex Salmond, culminating of course on the September 18, 2014 ballot – were what might be broadly termed social welfare and social justice issues, even if there is continuing ambiguity and contestation around the meaning and politics of the idea of social justice itself (Mooney, 2014a).

There was considerable interest in the Scottish Independence debate and Referendum outside of the UK and Ireland. In Spain, in Catalonia and in the Basque Country, in Belgium and in Quebec, among other places, nationalist movements looked to developments in Scotland for support and inspiration. In other respects, there are wider parallels to the debates in Scotland, as demands for constitutional and territorial reform have become prevalent across parts of Europe and North Americas in the last two decades. Studies in Germany, Spain, Nordic countries, Belgium, Ireland and Canada, for example, offer lessons, but also show that careful and critical analysis is needed, rather than simple notions of policy transfer (Scott, 2014).

In this paper, for reasons of space, we seek primarily to lay out experiences and reflections from the Scottish Independence debate and the 2014 Referendum to inform future wider comparative studies.

### **Scottish Devolution and Social Welfare**

While many academics and observers have focused primarily on post-devolution policy-divergences, historically, long predating any discussion of devolution, there were already considerable policy and practice differences and divergences between Scotland and the three other countries of the UK, not least in relation to education and law/policing. From the very beginning of Scotland's devolution journey in 1999, however, questions of how to

enhance social justice were at centre stage. The first First Minister, the late Donald Dewar, for example, stated that (on the re-establishment of the first devolved Scottish Parliament):

We are committed to promoting social justice and equality of opportunity for everyone in Scotland... we can build on the commitment to social justice which lies at the heart of political and civic life in Scotland. We need to harness the efforts of many to the greater good of all, and establish social justice as the hallmark of Scottish society. (Dewar, 1999)

Fourteen years later politicians on both sides of the Independence debate claimed social justice was a defining feature of Scotland's future. Gordon Brown (2014a), who was to play a key part in the NO to independence campaign in the week before the September 2014 Referendum, argued that social justice lies at the heart of Scottish political values but commended the current union as 'a union of social justice'. By contrast, the SNP controlled Scottish Government's vision for Independence, *Scotland's Future: your guide to an Independent Scotland*, published in November 2013, asserted the centrality of social justice, but within the context of an independent Scottish state:

The Scottish Government's vision is of a Scotland, fit for the 21st century and beyond, which is founded on the fundamental principles of equality and human rights and characterised by our economic success and social justice and the ability of our people to have control over the decisions which affect them: the opportunity for all Scotland's people to play a part in our future. (Nicola Sturgeon, Deputy First Minister, Scottish Government, 2013)

Social justice and a more equitable form of social welfare, have frequently appeared as an essential part of Scottish political rhetoric, a rhetoric which has continuously claimed that social justice goals would be more effectively met by a devolved (but with more policy powers) government or, more latterly, an independent Scottish government. The claims are at the heart of long-standing and on-going controversies about the nature of Scottish society – and of Scottish identity, indeed of 'Scottishness' itself (Mooney and Scott, 2012). They also show that despite changes in the political colour of the Scottish government, from Labour-Liberal Democrat Coalition between 1999 and 2007 and SNP since 2007, notions of social justice, together with related ideas of fairness and equality, play a central role in Scottish political debate and in the rhetoric of policy making. Claims for social justice, moreover, have become increasingly intertwined with the Independence/ Devolution debates – by both sides – though overwhelmingly by the YES side of the argument.

Markedly different responses, for example, to the financial crisis of 2008 by Westminster and Holyrood governments highlight sharply contrasting approaches to social welfare between Scotland and across the UK (Bell, 2010). The Scottish Parliament has disputed and criticised UK Government welfare policies continuously since the start of the 'austerity cuts' introduced by the Coalition Government, and took the unprecedented step in December 2011, of withholding 'consent' from the Westminster Welfare Reform Bill. The automatic support of the Scottish Parliament would normally have been expected for the implementation of such measures in Scotland.

The questioning of the policy direction of Westminster, moreover, became more explicit during the two years prior to the 2014 Referendum. It raised the profile of social welfare in political debate in Scotland to unprecedented levels, and as we review what this means for the future we have to recognise that constitutional matters, territorial issues, questions of national identity and social policy have become strongly intertwined and almost inseparable in the current Scottish political context and in the debates around what future powers may be devolved to Scotland following the report of the Smith Commission in November 2014.

### **The UK Welfare State: Towards Increasing Fragmentation?**

We need to ask at this point whether the political debate highlighted above has produced real differences in the welfare directions of the UK and Scotland. In Scotland this has often been articulated in terms of a commitment to what is seen as a uniquely 'Scottish' form and understanding of social democracy, indeed an uniquely *Scottish* social democracy (Keating, 2007). The flagship policy decisions of Scottish Government since the early years of devolution have included free prescriptions for all, abolition of fees for higher education students resident in Scotland, free travel for the over 60s, and free care for the elderly. They all highlight a growing and deliberate divide between the policies of Scotland and the rest of the UK (Keating, 2010; Greer, 2009; McLean, Gallagher, and Lodge, 2013; Mooney and Scott, 2012; Mooney and Wright, 2009).

Since 1999 then, Scottish Government policies have sought to demonstrate to Scottish voters that devolved administrations could make a difference, but under current SNP control, to also show that it could withstand the austerity cuts and welfare reforms of the UK Government, thereby in some ways reducing their impacts on Scotland (Haydecker, 2010; Lodge and Schmueker, 2010; Mooney, 2014b; Mooney and Scott, 2012).

That welfare issues have become even more entangled with constitutional debates and questions of national futures today is not surprising. Social welfare was central to

discussions in the post-1945 era of Britishness and of the UK itself. UK wide institutions such as the NHS and social security have long been held up as pivotal elements in the Union, a union which in many respects has been a 'welfare union'. There is a powerful narrative that the historical development of the welfare state in post-1945 Britain played an important role in binding the UK together, forging Britain as a nation. This has now being-been deployed in the advancement of the case for Independence for Scotland from that very union. It is the very institutional embodiment of post-war Britishness which is seen to have been eroded in recent decades. The argument is that this erosion comes not from the SNP, but from successive UK Governments which have pursued policies of welfare 'reform', cuts and privatisation, all of which have contributed – alongside devolution – to a sharply declining sense of a unified or UK-wide welfare state and consequently an erosion in a sense of Britishness. The ultimate irony, in a Referendum that has thrown up many ironies, as we will see below, is that 45% of Scottish voters supported withdrawal from the UK union in the hope that in doing so they would in some sense hold onto one of the principle institutional signifiers of post-1945 Britishness, the UK welfare state!

It is this background that many cite, including leading Scottish nationalist politicians such as Alex Salmond, and new First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, when they argue that Independence for Scotland is not just about changing the constitutional settlement, but also about 'preserving' in some ways the founding principles of the post-'45 UK welfare state in Scotland, at a time when the UK Coalition Government is diverging more and more from Beveridgean ideals of large-scale state welfare provision (Mooney 2014b; Scott & Wright 2012; Brown, 2014a). For Salmond, Scotland could act as a 'beacon' to the rest of the UK in this regard.

Nicola McEwen argues that this co-existence of a critique of UK welfare change and the independence debate has been a striking development in Scotland since 2011. She claims that:

The welfare state is being used to bolster support for independence in the current debate, in attempts to underline Scotland's distinctive values, to diminish the appeal of the Anglo-Scottish political union, and portray a picture of an independent Scotland that would preserve the rights of social citizenship. (McEwen, 2013)

In this respect divergences in social welfare as well as in claims for transfers of more power to Scotland are not unique (Keating, 2010; McLean et al, 2013). Indeed Beland and Lecours (2008) study of nationalism and social policy in Scotland, Quebec and Flanders highlight, like McEwen, the importance of social policy as an instrument of territorial differentiation in struggles over political autonomy.

In fact the political and policy landscape of contemporary Scotland has been increasingly shaped by resistance, both at a Government level and on the ground, to social welfare and 'austerity' policy objectives of the UK Coalition Government. The Scottish Government's decision, following widespread popular campaigns, to provide funds to ameliorate the effects of one of the UK Government's welfare key welfare reform measures, the 'abolition of the spare room subsidy' (widely referred to as the 'bedroom tax'), for example, came to prominence not only as a mark of the continuing challenges of policy interdependence which existed in the pre-Independence Referendum era of devolution (housing being devolved and housing benefits being a reserved power), but also as symbolic of growing political difference between UK and Scottish Governments, and between the policy climate in Scotland and England. ~~It became and as~~ a way of advocating the distinctiveness of Scottish values and approaches.

In this context the September 2014 Referendum offered an opportunity for many in both the YES and NO camps to highlight the potential for a Scottish political settlement that further resisted the neo-liberal direction of social and economic policy that has come to characterise what in Scotland has been, and remains, a deeply unpopular Conservative-led UK Government. Arguing for expanding the powers of devolution – for a 'devo-plus' (a few more powers to Scotland), 'devo-max' (maximum devolution of powers but Scotland remains within the UK) or the full Independence solution – became an important route for resisting UK Government austerity policies and welfare 'reforms'. At a time when it appears that the main Westminster parties in the UK see the answer to economic crisis as being more cuts and austerity, as in December 2014, and perhaps renegotiating membership of the EU, the political climate in Scotland is remarkably different.

### **The YES Campaign as a Social Justice Movement**

The SNP were clearly to the fore in the YES campaign, and 53% of all YES voters had previously voted SNP in Scottish and or UK elections. This meant that the, albeit diluted and at times nationalist overtones of the YES campaign worked to perhaps slightly marginalise other groups within the YES campaign. However, the overwhelming majority of the 1.6 million people voting for Independence were not SNP members and could not be considered as Scottish nationalists of any kind. This was not a pro-Nationalist vote. The media, not least the media based in England (and at times in Scotland too), have sought to portray this very much in terms of Scottish Nationalism, as some kind of movement for national liberation. This is to seriously misunderstand the nature of the YES/Pro-Independence movement.

The mobilisation in the YES campaign of tens of thousands of active supporters, way beyond the then membership of the SNP alone, testifies that the YES campaign had a very



broad reach – and in particular among the young. Further, the main issues driving the YES vote, as Lord Ashcroft’s immediate post-referendum snap poll of 2,000 voters showed, were not ‘nationalist’ ones, but were firstly, ‘disaffection with Westminster politics’, that Westminster was increasingly out of touch with the needs of Scotland, not least that the UK Government did not have any mandate from Scottish voters and that Labour was increasingly alienating its heartlands as it sought support from voters in ‘middle England’. Secondly, there was a question about the future of the National Health Service (NHS) and in particular concerns that the NHS in Scotland would follow that in England and become increasingly privatised. In turn these fears around the NHS acted as a vehicle for mobilising other concerns about cuts in public and social services and UK Government austerity measures more generally.

Further evidence from the 2014 Scottish Social Attitude Survey shows that it was expectations of how the Scottish economy would perform in an Independence context that was the key factor in support or opposition to Independence. Alongside this issues of equality and social inequality also influenced the voting intentions of a growing number of voters in Scotland and the great majority of those thinking that income inequalities would be lower in an Independent Scotland supported Independence (ScotCen Social Research, 2014; Eichhorn and Frommholz, 2014).

The wider YES campaign, then, acted as a conduit for a range of discontents over issues such as the impact of austerity, the rejection of nuclear weapons (especially to the location of the UK’s nuclear submarine fleet in Scottish waters), environmental issues and also anti-privatisation. This is evidenced not least by the range of groups and other parties (For instance the Scottish Greens and Scottish Socialist Party) that came together in the wider YES movement – a movement that went far beyond the SNP itself. The success of community-centred campaigns against the ‘Bedroom Tax’ in Scotland over the previous year also lent much energy to the YES campaign, an energy not seen since the era of campaigns against the poll-tax in the late 1980s. However, given that the broad-appeal of the YES campaign spanned many disparate groups and sections of the population, it would be mistaken to suggest that all shared a same commitment to social justice issues. There were of course strong demands for self-determination – irrespective of the shape and policies of any forthcoming independent Scottish Government. Nevertheless many were registering protest against ‘Westminster’ and there were numerous claims about defending the welfare state. However, in different ways, some of the various groupings within the YES movement were also offering visions that went beyond defending existing provision and this included, among other arguments, proposals for a Nordic-type welfare regime and a Scottish welfare state that was organised on a radically different kind of economy from that which

characterises the neo-liberal UK today. In this regard social welfare proposals, and claims that better funding and greatly enhanced provision of public services, would be a feature of an Independent Scotland built upon principles of social justice.

### **The September 2014 Referendum: Themes, Issues and Consequences**

The Scottish Independence Referendum, held on Thursday September 18, 2014, produced a turnout of around 85%. Therefore, the vast majority of the voting population was politically mobilised in the wider constitutional/future of the country debate. As is now well known, the Referendum resulted in a majority NO to Independence vote, with 55 per cent of voters registering NO to Independence and 45 per cent voting YES. While there is no doubt that the NO campaign won overall, that some 1.6m people voted for Scottish Independence is truly astonishing. Few would have predicted a 45% vote in favour of YES for Scottish Independence during most of the two years of the Referendum campaign where the NO side was well in front. Many voters aged 40 and over grew up in an era when the SNP were widely considered to be a group of nationalist extremists on the margins. Not now. In part this could be because the YES campaign, while not completely marginalising national/ist issues, focused almost entirely on social welfare related issues and opposition to neo-liberalism, to austerity and cuts. In this respect alone the YES campaign could be regarded as being highly successful and it was stopped in no small part by the intervention of the UK state, media and the three main UK party leaders hastily making the 'vow' we highlight below in the days before the Referendum itself, promising to give more powers to Scotland.

However, these are not the only factors that helped to secure a NO vote. Importantly, the NO campaign was also successful in focusing upon 'bread and butter' issues in the last week of the campaign. They raised fears, well-grounded fears it must be said, about jobs moving South to England; prices of food items and other costs increasing; uncertainty around Scotland's future under Independence over currency and its ability to be part of a monetary union with the rest of the UK, thereby undermining living standards and pensions. The YES campaign struggled to address these claims. Had the YES campaign been able to satisfactorily answer these issues, and defuse fears around economic issues, the likelihood is that it would have won the Referendum.

Other features of the Independence Referendum result are also noteworthy. In particular this is reflected in the political geography of voting patterns across Scotland's 32 council districts. It was apparent in the early hours of Friday morning September 19 that the income deprived areas were voting YES in large numbers. The four areas with a majority YES vote, Dundee,

Glasgow City and its two neighbouring Clydeside areas, West Dunbartonshire to the West and North Lanarkshire to its immediate East, contain the most deprived areas in Scotland. In areas with a marginal NO vote (of between less than 1% and 3%), Inverclyde (Centred on the towns of Greenock, Gourock and Port Glasgow to the West of Glasgow), North Ayrshire, which is based around Irvine New Town (the largest part), the Garnock Valley (Kilbirnie, Dalry, etc.), East Ayrshire (Kilmarnock and surrounding areas), and in Renfrewshire (centred on Paisley which also returned a YES vote), there was a clear split between areas of poverty and (relative and absolute) affluence.

In general terms it is apparent that the more affluent the area, the more likely it was to vote NO. Scotland's four main cities produced contrasting results: Dundee and Glasgow returned a YES vote, for example, while Aberdeen and Edinburgh voted NO. In some areas there was a split between town and countryside, for instance in Inverclyde and Renfrewshire, in the West of Scotland, the main towns were for YES, while rural parts voted NO, while in the Highlands, Inverness town was for YES, but most of the rural Highlands voted NO. But this was by no means a uniform pattern across the entire country. This highlights a complex and uneven intra-regional political geography of contemporary Scotland, which itself reflects the fractured and divided nature of Scottish society. The relationship between these uneven geographies in voting and issues of social welfare requires more investigation and analysis. While social welfare issues were a key fault line in the wider constitutional debate, it was only one of a number of fault lines that worked to divide opinion and voters.

Why did people vote NO? Fear of the unknown, fear of pensions being lost, fear of economic uncertainty, enduring commitments to a sense of Britishness and to the UK as an entity and also in no small part through a commitment on the part of the majority of its voters, to the Labour Party. 307 years of the United Kingdom means that Britishness will not disappear overnight and there remains some sense of attachment. Further reasons for NO voting in some working class areas may be found in concerns around the future of Scottish industry. The fear of job loss in the oil and gas industries, and in defence, for example at dockyards on the Clyde, and at Rosyth in Fife, which are now entirely dependent on orders from the Royal Navy, helped to secure the support of many Trade Unions for the NO stance of the Labour Party. Propaganda from company bosses about the loss of orders and or companies moving south will also have played a significant role in securing a NO vote among many workers in some of Labour's heartlands.

Economic position and age were crucial factors in the NO vote: the more elderly and affluent the voter, the more likely they were to vote NO. This is the group with perhaps the strongest allegiances to the post-1945 settlement and the idea – if not now the reality – of the

Beveridgean-Keynesian welfare state. Relatedly others were persuaded to vote NO by fears that Independence would undermine the remaining commitment on a UK-wide basis to some kind of collective welfare provision, which in turn would lead to a rapid deterioration in services and entitlements.

Therefore the future of welfare entitlements and the welfare state more generally was deployed by both sides in the debate with YES advocating that the future of the welfare state was only secure with Independence and the NO campaign claiming that Independence would lead to an end to cross-UK transfers and therefore a decline in services. Voters were pulled in both directions around this issue but among ~~the elderly~~older voters there is evidence that the fear of the erosion of UK-wide pensions was a significant factor in helping to return a NO vote from that section of the population.

However, arguably it was also the case that the pro-Independence campaign also failed to use the 2008 financial crisis and the massive budget deficits which it created as an effective weapon against claims that Scotland could not afford to go its own way. Beyond this, the YES campaign failed to engage with other parts of Labour's traditional base – and in particular with the Trade Unions. There was no claim to repeal anti-TU laws or to improve workers' rights or generally improve working conditions. At the same time, however, such an approach if adopted, may only succeed in further weakening sections of the SNPs support in more rural areas, something that was already evident in the 2014 Referendum outcome.

Despite the rejection of Independence, however, it was clear from the 45% who voted for Independence and from a significant proportion of the 55% NO voters, that all parties involved in the debate recognised that more powers than those to be implemented in 2016 as a result of the Scotland Act (2012) (Scottish Parliament, 2012) are needed, even if the degree of further devolution has been hotly contested. During the final days of the Referendum campaign there was the now (in)famous 'Vow' (published on the front page of the *Daily Record* newspaper on September 16), from Labour, Conservative and Liberal parties that further powers would be considered and established within a reasonable time period. '*Permanent and extensive new powers for Scotland will be delivered*' was the stated vow to the Scottish electorate.

On the morning of Friday September 19, David Cameron announced the establishment of a commission under Lord Smith of Kelvin, to report by the end of November 2014, on additional powers for Scotland. However, and in another irony, the results of a Referendum on Scottish Independence and future powers for Scotland came to be tied to how such changes would impact on other countries of the UK, and in particular on England. Since then

the idea of English Votes for English Laws (EVEL) has become common currency in political debate about the future constitutional settlements of the UK as a whole.

Nevertheless a commitment to move towards new legislation for extended powers for the Scottish Parliament by 2015 was a relatively clear outcome of the referendum process. It was clear that both YES, as well as many NO voters, were not voting for the status quo, but for substantial change – indeed for powers that approximate to something close to ‘devol-max’. Gordon Brown, who played a key role in the NO campaign in its final stages, in a speech at Loanhead Miners Welfare Club in Midlothian on September 9, 2014, he announced that with a NO vote there would be cross-party agreement on new powers for Scotland which would be, in his own words, tantamount to ‘*a modern form of Scottish home rule*’. Days earlier in another speech he announced, seemingly with the support of David Cameron and Ed Miliband, ‘*we are going to be within a year or two, as close to a federal state as you can be in a country where one nation is 85% of the population*’ (Brown, 2014b).

According to Lord Ashcroft’s on the day post-result poll, 25% of NO voters voted that way because they believed that Scotland would receive significant devolved powers while remaining as part of the UK (Ashcroft, 2014). The key visible result of this was of course the establishment by the UK Government, in the days following the Referendum, of the Smith Commission (Smith Commission, 2014) to investigate and report on the provision of additional devolved powers for Scotland. **This addressed not simply issues of territorial justice but matters such as taxation, social entitlements, state-provided services, financial institutions and land ownership. The development of the Smith Commission, its key recommendations affecting social security and housing policy and initial responses to them are discussed by Spicker (2014) and Gibb (2014) (this volume).** One difficulty that now affects the main UK parties is that the Scottish Independence Referendum outcome, and the promise of additional powers for Scotland, has raised expectations that are well beyond the proposals which have emerged in the Smith Commission. Further, none of the main UK parties is advocating anything that comes remotely close to the maximum devolution. In turn, of course, plays directly into the hands of the SNP who have become the party, not of Independence, at least in the short term, but the party now campaigning to ensure that the promises made in the September ‘vow’ are fully implemented – that is, something approaching devolution max.

This is now a central fault line between the pro-union and pro-independence parties in the post-Referendum landscape.

### **Looking Ahead: Towards a Further Referendum?**

It was widely claimed that with a NO result, the Scottish Independence Referendum would have 'secured the Union for a generation'. However, relatively few would now in the aftermath of the Referendum put much weight on this claim, not least given the ongoing debates and arguments that have characterised the period after the Referendum. In the weeks that followed there was initially talk of a new and diverse 'YES Alliance' standing in the 2015 General Election and organised, tactical voting against Labour, but this appears to have fallen away. There is considerable continuing fall-out from the Referendum. 45% of voters cannot be ignored or dismissed. The promises made of more devolution for Scotland if it voted ~~No~~-NO by the leaders of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat Parties, Cameron, Miliband and Clegg, which were instrumental in securing a NO vote have, as we have highlighted, already caused massive political eruptions across the UK. In Scotland there is already growing concerns that the well-publicised vow for more powers for Scotland is already being diluted or delayed, as the three main UK parties squabble over the timetable, their respective political futures and the growing emergence of 'the English question'.

For the two main Scottish Political Parties, Labour and SNP, there are contrasting fortunes. Labour appear victorious, but is it a pyrrhic victory? Around 35% of Labour voters voted YES and it is clear that ~~it~~-the party has lost a lot of support in the poorer areas, mainly in its West of Scotland heartlands. Labour has lost members to the SNP and the irony is that in saving the Union (for now?), and therefore enhancing its chances of winning the 2015 General Election, at the same time it might have irrevocably damaged its position in those very heartlands, in turn eroding its chances in 2015. By contrast the SNP's membership has boomed since September 18, from 25,000 to around 100,000 members, making it the third largest political party in the UK. It remains the most popular party in Scotland. An opinion poll at the end of October by Ipsos MORI on 2015 UK General Election voting intentions had the SNP on 52%, with a 29% gap over Labour on 23%, Conservatives on 10% and Greens and Liberal Democrats on 5% each. The Independence Referendum outcome, therefore, can be seen as having sharply contradicting longer term implications for the Labour Party.

In early November 2014 several opinion polls reflected this ongoing fall-out from the Referendum. In an IpsosMori poll (November 3, 2014), 66% of people in Scotland support having another referendum within the next ten years regardless of circumstances; 58% support having another referendum vote in the next five years; 55% support another referendum if the UK votes to leave the EU in 2017, and this has already been demanded by the new First Minister, and SNP leader, Nicola Sturgeon.

It is now commonly accepted wisdom that devolution was and is not a one-off event taking place in 1999, but a long process of gradual change. That more powers have already come to Scotland since 1999 reflects this (and more are due in 2016 under the 2012 Scotland Act which provides some additional powers around taxation, for example (see Scottish Parliament, 2012)). Reflecting on this and on the outcome of the 2014 Independence Referendum, perhaps a similar argument that Independence is not a one-off event either, but a longer process would hold water. For some commentators, as well as for many who are flocking to the pro-YES parties, the 2014 Independence Referendum will mark ~~but~~only the first stage in this historic process.

However, the Scottish Independence Referendum has also re-ignited other though interconnected debates about the UK's territorial arrangements. There are different dynamics and emerging, renewed tensions, contradictions and ambivalences. In all of this social welfare issues are pivotal in that they point to and are utilised in claims about the fair or unfair distribution of resources across the pluri-national UK. These issues are destabilising the UK union in ways that have not been seen before.

Scotland is, despite the NO vote, a very different place post-Independence Referendum. The nature of that difference is working out in ways that had perhaps not been foreseen. The future is perhaps now even more uncertain than that which would have been provided by a clear YES mandate for Independence. The demand for change remains high – and, as yet, unmet. Scotland and the rest of the UK are in a period of transition – which will see new ruptures and tensions during the 2015 UK General Election.

## References

Ashcroft (2014) *Post Referendum Scotland Poll 18-9 September*, accessed at <http://lordashcroftpolls.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Lord-Ashcroft-Polls-Referendum-day-poll-summary-1409191.pdf>

Béland, D. and Lecours, A. *Nationalism and Social Policy: The Politics of Territorial Solidarity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008

Bell, D. (2010) 'Devolution in a Recession: Who'd Have Thought It Would Come to This?' in Lodge, G. and Schmuecker, K. (eds) *Devolution in Practice 2010*, London: IPPR, pp. 60-82.

Brown, G. (2014a) *My Scotland, our Britain: a Future worth Sharing*. London: Simon and Schuster.

- Brown, G. (2014b) 'A stronger Scotland in a stronger UK', *Progress*, September 5.
- Dewar, D. (1999) *Preface to Social Justice – A Scotland Where Everyone Matters*,  
Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
- Eichhorn, J. and Frommholz, G.H. (2014) *How Political Mobilization Can Still Work on Substantive Issues: Insights from the Scottish Referendum*, Berlin: Europa Bottom-Up/European Civil Society Working Papers, Nr. 10.
- Greer, S.L. (ed) (2009) *Devolution and Social Citizenship in the UK*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Haydecker, K. (2010) 'Public Policy in Scotland after devolution: convergence or divergence', *POLIS*, Vol 3, Winter.
- Keating, M. (ed) (2007) *Scottish Social Democracy: Progressive Ideas for Public Policy*, Brussels: PIE Peter Lang.
- Keating, M. (2010) *The Government of Scotland: public policy making after devolution, (second edition)*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Lodge, G. and Schmueker, K. (eds) (2010), *Devolution in Practice 2010*. London, Institute Public Policy Research.
- McEwen, N. (2013) *Independence and the Territorial Politics of Welfare. Research Paper No.4/2013*, Edinburgh: David Hume Institute.
- McLean, J., Gallagher, J. and Lodge, G. (2013) *Scotland's Choices: the Referendum and What Happens Afterwards*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Mooney, G. (2014a) 'Campaigns fight to define what Scottish social justice means'. *The Conversation*, September 15, available at:  
<https://theconversation.com/campaigns-fight-to-define-what-scottish-social-justice-means-31699>
- Mooney, G (2014b) 'Poverty, 'austerity' and Scotland's Constitutional Future,' in J.



- McKendrick, G. Mooney, J. Dickie, G. Scott and P. Kelly (eds) *Poverty in Scotland 2014: The Independence Referendum and Beyond*, London: CPAG, pp. 3-27.
- Mooney, G. and Wright, S. (2009) 'Introduction: Social Policy in the Devolved Scotland: Towards a Scottish Welfare State?', *Social Policy and Society*, 8, 3: 361-165.
- Mooney, G. and Scott, G. (eds) (2012) *Social Justice and Social Policy in Scotland*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Scott, G. (2014) 'Perspectives from Europe and Beyond', J. McKendrick, G. Mooney, J. Dickie, G. Scott and P. Kelly (eds) *Poverty in Scotland 2014: The Independence Referendum and Beyond*, London: CPAG: pp. 239-243.
- Scott, G. and Wright, S. (2012) 'Devolution, social democratic visions and policy reality In Scotland,' *Critical Social Policy*, 32, 3: 440-453.
- Scottish Parliament (2012) *The Scotland Act 2012*, Edinburgh: The Scottish Parliament.
- Scottish Government (2013) *Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*, Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.
- ScotCen Social Research (2014) *Has the Referendum Campaign Made a Difference?*, Edinburgh: ScotCen Social Research.
- Smith Commission (2014) *Report of the Smith Commission for further devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament*, Edinburgh: The Smith Commission.