

Gordon Craigie

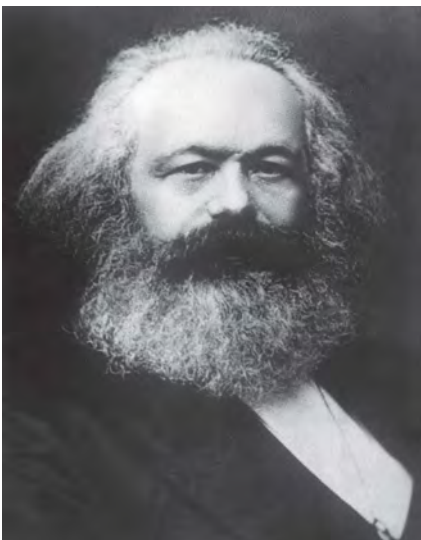


An independent mind...

This month, I'm taking inspiration from a German philosopher, an American comedian, and a Beatle...



Groucho and Karl – not the Marx Brothers!



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REGULAR READERS will be only too well aware that I'm prone to quoting Marx when attempting to analyse or explain some aspect of Scotland's political "situation". I have one quote in particular that I like to use and, in case you've forgotten, here it is again!

Those are my principles, and if you don't like them... well, I have others

I really like this one as I think it perfectly describes the attitudes of the principle-free charlatans who have been masquerading as the UK's recent Prime Ministers, especially the current incumbent. Equally, it applies to most of the British party politicians who bend with the wind in Holyrood with their only consistent viewpoint being "Scotland baaaaad". Yes, Jackie Baillie, we're looking at you!

Another one of Marx's that I've come across more recently seems equally appropriate to these aforementioned impostors, such as Blair, Brown, Cameron, Johnson, Sunak, Starmer, Sarwar, et al:

The secret of life is honesty and fair dealing. If you can fake that, you've got it made

However, in an unexpected twist, this month I'm not using Groucho Marx's words as my actual inspiration, but those of Karl Marx, the great German philosopher:

The oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class are to represent and repress them

Now, there does appear to be some doubt as to whether Karl Marx ever actually said this as the quote is taken from Vladimir Lenin's book *State and Revolution*, so it's more likely to be Lenin's interpretation of Marx's words. Still, it seems chillingly accurate to describe what we're currently living through anyway...

Last year, we witnessed a changing of the (old) guard at Westminster, with an 80-seat Tory majority, gained from only 44% of the vote, being transformed into a 172-seat Red Tory majority, gained from only 34% of the vote. When



Alexander Boris De Pfeffel Johnson won his 80-seat majority in 2019, the Tories' 44% share of the vote was gained from a turnout of 67% of the electorate. In simple terms, the decisive majority that allowed him to enact whatever madcap schemes his particularly shapeshifting "principles" guided him towards was based on less than 30% of the UK electorate voting Conservative. However, Starmer's astonishing 172-seat majority was gained from a turnout of only 60% of the electorate. Again, in simple – yet democratically embarrassing – terms, the current unassailable majority being enjoyed by Starmer, Reeves, Lammy, and all the other incompetents controlling (?) Westminster is based on just 20% of the UK electorate voting Labour... 20%! And people still think the UK first-past-the-post system is fit for purpose? Aye, it's fit for THEIR purpose, and they're never going to change it!

Now, setting aside for a moment the untold harm being done by Labour's actions and inactions on energy, the economy, foreign relations, public services etc., etc., let's have a wee thought about what this situation currently means specifically for Scotland. Our energy resources are being shamelessly stolen for the "greater good" of England. Here's one example, taken from the website www.fuelcellsworks.com:

The Scottish Government is accelerating its plans to export green hydrogen to Germany, with initial shipments set to be transported by ship. This move comes as part of a broader strategy to establish Scotland as a key player in the global hydrogen market. In 2023, the government announced plans for a hydrogen pipeline connecting Scotland to Germany, a project described by acting Energy Secretary Gillian Martin as "a great opportunity" for Scotland. The pipeline, if realised, could provide a third of Germany's energy needs by 2030.

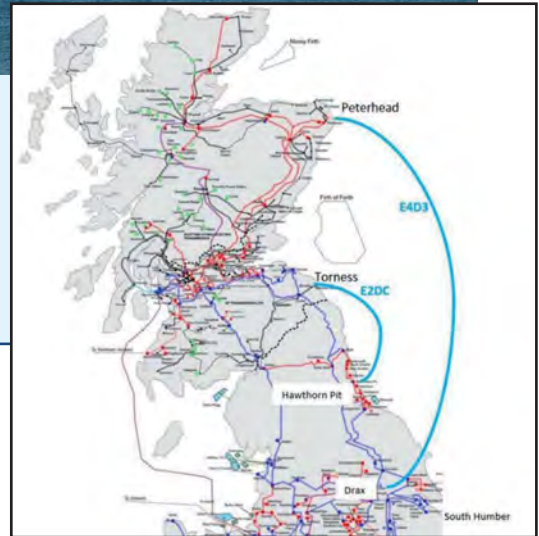
So far, so good, what's not to like? Martin emphasises that: "We will generate more electricity than we can use. We will use the surplus electricity to produce green hydrogen – and we can supply it to Germany." Surely this is a good news story? However, the article then goes on to say:

The proposed pipeline, estimated to cost £2.6 billion ... would run from Scotland through northern England to Emden in northwest Germany

Wait, what? Call me cynical if you like, but why does the pipeline have to go through England? When you add that little morsel of information to what we already know about the subsea cables that are being constructed to transport Scottish green electricity directly from Peterhead to Yorkshire, and from Torness to County Durham, it's not difficult to see the pattern developing here. Actually, it's not developing, it's well established! Add in the utterly irrational closure of Grangemouth – leaving Scotland as the only major oil-producing nation in the world without a refinery – together with greater UK Government investment in English refineries – and we can see without a shadow of doubt that our resources are being blatantly, and shamelessly, pillaged in plain sight.

Meanwhile, the UK Energy Minister, Michael Shanks – who, let's not forget, was a Modern Studies teacher in Renfrewshire only 16 months ago (!) before being elected

Scottish green electricity – from off the coast of Aberdeen directly to England!
Credit (for map): Ofgem: Crown copyright, OGL 3, via Wikimedia Commons



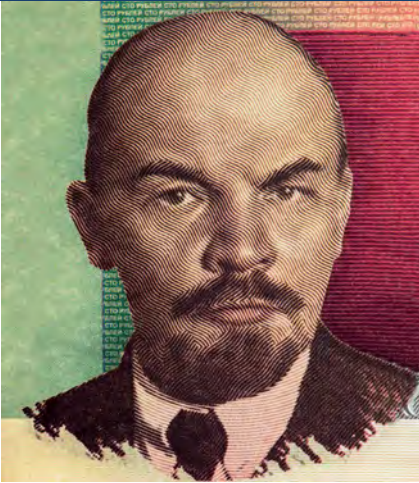
in the infamous Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election – is utilising all of his expertise (?) in energy policy-making to blame the Tories and/or the SNP for the failure of Grangemouth and to spout weasel words about how these great investments in Scottish renewables is securing the energy future for the whole of the UK...

As mentioned last month, rather than investing £60–80 million in a Grangemouth facility that showed a profit of £107 million in the year to 2024, the Labour Government chose to honour the previous Tory commitment to give Ineos £600 million to open a new facility in Belgium which, by the way, will make it the fifth oil refinery in a country which doesn't produce oil! Gordon MacIntyre-Kemp of Believe in Scotland agrees:

Belgium produces almost zero oil but has four oil refineries. Scotland is losing its only oil refinery because the UK Government is paying Ineos £600 million to close Grangemouth and build Belgium a fifth oil refinery. This is utter madness – irrefutable proof that Westminster is deliberately sabotaging Scotland's economy, our energy security, and our future.

Ineos, of course, is majority-owned by Jim Ratcliffe, who just happened to back Starmer for the Labour leadership. But, in addition to that £600 million act of treachery, Rachel Reeves recently announced that Starmer's government will also put £1 billion into the redevelopment of Manchester United's stadium, Old Trafford – is it coincidental that Starmer enjoyed Ratcliffe's hospitality at the stadium only last year? As Kenny MacAskill said:

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propagate the myth that Scotland is dependent on England. To be fair to Nicola Sturgeon – something I’m not liable to do too often these days – she predicted as much at the 2021 SNP Conference:

There’s a double whammy that Scotland must be alert to ... Westminster will use all that damage that they have inflicted as an

argument for yet more Westminster control. By making us poorer, they’ll say we can’t afford to be independent. By cutting our trade with the EU, they’ll say we are too dependent on the rest of the UK. By causing our working population to fall, they’ll say the country is ageing too fast. They want us to believe we are powerless in the face of the disastrous decisions they have taken for us and the damage those decisions [are] doing.

For too long, too many people across the UK believed that simply getting rid of the Tories was the most important thing politically. They closed their eyes and ears to the ever more clear and obvious rightward tack of the Labour Party, and the “sway in the breeze” populist promises of Starmer and his motley crew. They forgot the lies of Blair and Brown, rejected the principled stances of Corbyn and his allies, and believed that things could only get better (again!) under the leadership of the eloquently voice-coached former barrister that would become the first “Sir” to be a Labour Party Prime Minister – his namesake, Keir Hardy, must be spinning!

Meanwhile, for viewers in Scotland, we’ve had the (dis) pleasure of watching a rag-tag collection of increasingly less credible “Scottish” Labour leaders trying to balance lying straight-faced to their Scottish electorate while taking their instructions directly from their real leader in Westminster. The current incumbent, Anas Sarwar, must be getting dizzy from the number of U-turns he’s packed into his short and uneventful tenure. And yet, he maintains the pretence even while one of his predecessors, Henry McLeish, has already let the cat out of the bag regarding the supposed autonomy of “Scottish” Labour leaders. The indefatigable Professor John Robertson published an interesting piece on his *Talking Up Scotland* website, www.talkingupscotlandtwo.com, last year, taken from a transcript of a Radio 4 interview with McLeish:

When I was First Minister, as was Donald Dewar and Jack McConnell, we all had weekly phone calls with the Prime Minister who would then tell us what we were to bring to parliament and what the government was going to be doing over the year. Then in the programme for government, only 20% of the programme was decided by the (then) Labour-Lib Dem Executive, the rest was all decided by Westminster. The SNP is the only party in Holyrood other than the Greens who are not accountable to Westminster which means whenever they make a decision or want to bring a bill to parliament, they don’t need to constantly look over their shoulder and ask permission from the Prime Minister before doing so.

Asked about the prospect of Sarwar standing up to Starmer and acting independently, as he continually promises to do, McLeish added:

The reality is you can’t do this, if you’re a Labour First

Starmer’s Labour are showing their true colours. It’s Ratcliffe’s Manchester United over Team Scotland. Never mind millions for Antwerp when Grangemouth is to close. It’s perverse that Scotland is being deindustrialised while an area around a football stadium, already owned by a billionaire, is going to be redeveloped using potentially a billion pounds of public money. Scotland’s oil should be refined in Scotland and Scotland’s oil riches should benefit jobs and businesses in Scotland – not fund an English fitba club owned by a billionaire!

Also mentioned last month was the perversity of Reeves championing a third runway at Heathrow to “benefit” Scottish exports. She specifically highlighted whisky and salmon, both products that can be exported more cheaply, more efficiently, quicker, and more environmentally friendly, from our own airports – Prestwick, Edinburgh, or Glasgow – or, indeed, our ferry ports. On that point, let’s not forget that the UK Government continues to refuse to fund the start-up costs for the reintroduction of the Rosyth to Europe ferry service, their latest excuse being that the only available fund doesn’t support projects under £20 million – as if that can be a serious reason for not providing the estimated £3 million, which is loose change in government terms, to reinstate our ferry service. Now that *would* benefit Scottish exports! It would also help to clear up some of the doubts that we legitimately have about the gerrymandering of those accursed GERS figures...

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Everything that is being done by this corrupt Westminster government is designed to de-industrialise Scotland even more, and to remove any profitable facilities to ensure that they can continue to propagate the myth that Scotland is dependent on England

Minister and leader of the Labour Party in Scotland, you are 100% accountable to the Prime Minister or Leader of the Labour Party and they essentially dictate what you say at First Minister Questions in opposition too. I tried to change the Executive's name as it was back then to the Scottish Government but the opposition I got from my party was very strong and it was vetoed by Tony Blair. Anas, if he does become First Minister, will be like what the mayors are in England and the Labour Government in Wales, you're accountable [to Westminster] and what you do is dictated to you, which isn't a progressive form of politics.



So, clearly, as many of us have known all along, voting for any of the British parties in Scotland is a complete waste of a vote and will never result in bringing about the country and society we aspire to live in. Indeed, as we are currently witnessing, having Labour in power in Westminster merely means a change of packaging on the regressive, neoliberal policies of the Tory era, and an acceleration of the plundering of Scottish resources for the greater good of Greater England. Adding Farage's Trumpian mob into the equation only exacerbates our need to get out of this unequal union without further delay.

Remember again the words of Karl Marx:

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At iScot Magazine, we keep banging the drum for some form of electoral pact between independence-supporting parties to be established in advance of next year's Holyrood election, some form of the Scotland United principle. We make no apologies for this because this simply must happen. But we cannot leave this solely in the hands of the politicians, we must have civic engagement and actions designed to force the hands of those politicians and ensure there is no more prevarication. Signing the petition currently being considered on the Scottish Parliament website:

www.petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2135 is one action that can easily be carried out by all independistas. The full title of this petition is *PE2135: Implement the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in Scottish legislation*, and is designed to force the Scottish Government to uphold a promise made in 2012: *Parliament acknowledges the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs and declares and pledges that in all its actions and deliberations their interests shall be paramount*

Similarly, supporting Salvo and Liberation Scotland in their quest to have Scotland's case considered by the General Assembly of the United Nations, is another straightforward action. In collaboration with Justice Pour Tous Internationale (JPTi), a human rights advocacy and consultancy based in Geneva, Salvo and Liberation Scotland have now secured an audience with the General Assembly of the United Nations through the C-24 Group, the special UN Committee which considers cases of colonisation. In contrast to the naysayers in our own country, JPTi believes that Scotland has a strong case for the C-24 to decide on, that we have indeed been a colony and not part of the voluntary and equal union that the

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British Establishment continues to maintain. You can read more about this at:
www.liberation.scot/JPTI/The_Waiting_Is_Over.pdf

Remaining optimistic, I see this upcoming year as, potentially, providing a kind of perfect storm of civic and political action, whereby we, the people:

- Force the Scottish Government's hand on PE2135
- Get the colonisation case before the UN
- Persuade SNP, Alba, Scottish Greens, ISP, SSP, and any other independence-supporting parties or independents, to sign up to some form of Scotland United campaign to be implemented in time for the 2026 Holyrood election

So, having gone through a winding argument involving a German philosopher and an American comedian, in order to live up to the title of this month's offering I now have to finish off with a contribution from a Beatle! I might've got away with leaving that reference as a play on the name Lenin, but I do have wise words from Lennon – in a 1968 interview, John said:

I think our society is run by insane people for insane objectives ... I think we're being run by maniacs for maniacal ends. If anybody can put on paper what our government, and the American government and the Russian, Chinese, what they are actually trying to do and what they think they're doing... I'd be very pleased to know what they think they're doing. I think they're all insane!

Lennon's words were true then and, if anything, seem even truer now. While Scotland still has a choice it's time for us – we, the people – to make the right choices, to claim back our sovereignty, and to retake our rightful place in the family of nations. Saor Alba!