

# FOR A MODERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC



Colin Fox



**Scottish  
Socialist  
Party**



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**Scottish Socialist Party national co-spokesperson**

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

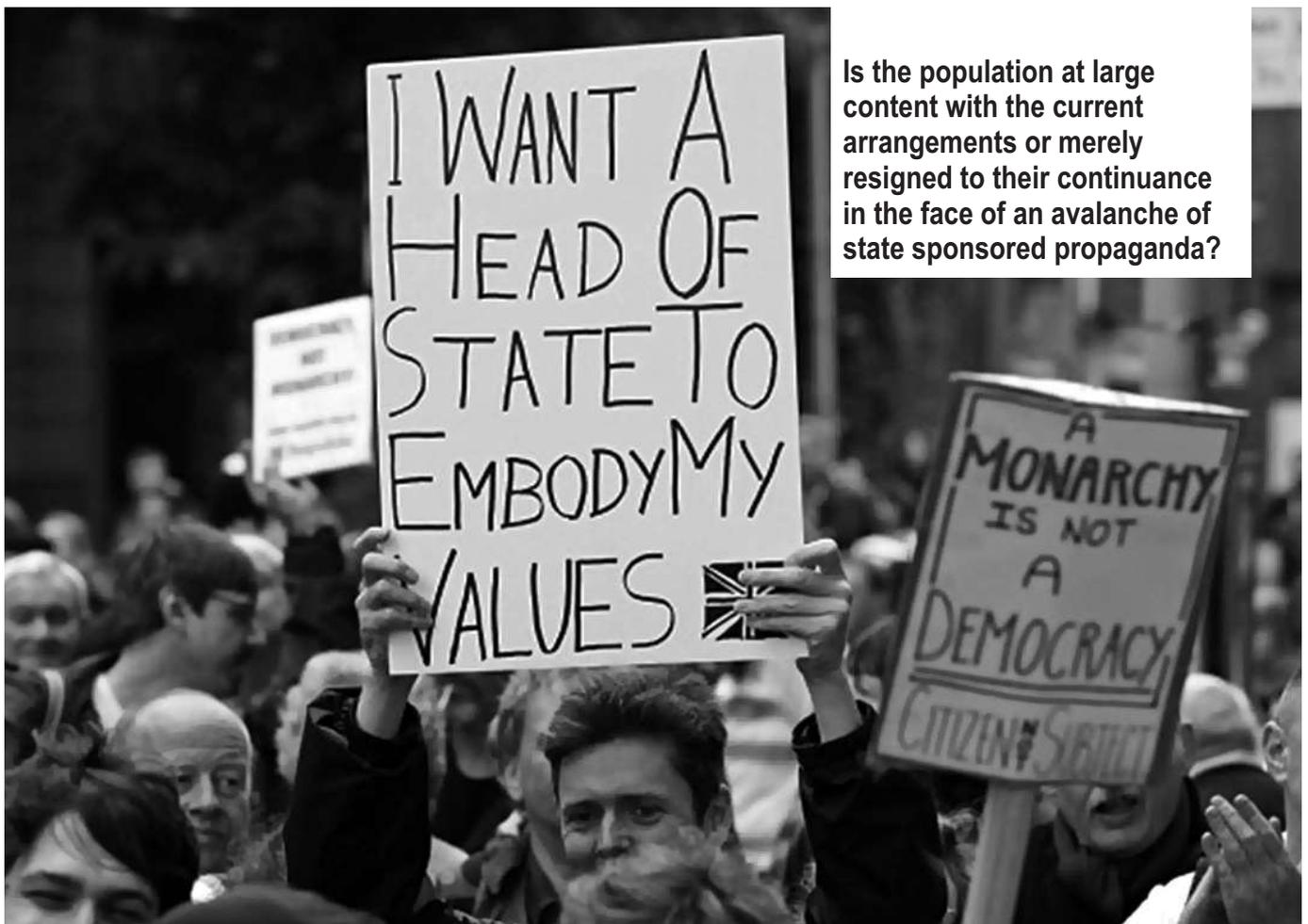
**SCOTLAND HAS A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF** history on 18 September. The independence referendum offers not only self-determination and sovereignty to a nation denied it for 300 years, but ends the political union that is ‘The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland’.

The Scottish Socialist Party believes the break up of the United Kingdom is a welcome development. We support a Yes vote in September’s referendum because Scotland’s working class majority will be better off free from the neoliberal, warmongering chains of the British State. Scotland’s citizens are best served by constructing the kind of society the majority wish to see. And that includes, as far as the SSP is concerned, replacing the monarchy with an elected head of state answerable to and representative of the people they purport to serve. We set out the case for an independent socialist Scotland in a booklet published last year. This pamphlet makes the case for a modern democratic republic and in doing so debunks the myths surrounding the monarchy and the facile arguments offered in its defence.

For the SSP the independence referendum raises crucial questions about the type of country we are attempting to build in the 21st century. There are profoundly important issues at stake in this debate over the constitutional future of Scottish society. Democrats the world over abide by fundamental principles of modernity, liberty and equality. Monarchs on the other hand fail such tests, as they are by their very nature archaic, anti-democratic and elitist.

Those who argue this is the wrong time to make the case for a republic as it might inhibit some royalists from backing independence do not persuade. For if the Yes case is built on pillars of prosperity, fairness and democracy it surely cannot be right to deny the rights of a sovereign, free people to elect our own Head of State. Moreover, there is a danger those looking for significant change and meaningful

## INTRODUCTION



Is the population at large content with the current arrangements or merely resigned to their continuance in the face of an avalanche of state sponsored propaganda?

improvement in an independent Scotland will be discouraged from voting Yes if all they see are conservative commitments to keep the pound, stay in NATO, maintain the hegemony of finance capital and retain an unelected, unaccountable and unrepresentative Head of State as the uppermost goals of our new nation. We know from polling evidence that many Scots from working class backgrounds particularly will vote No unless they see real change coming down the line. The SSP believes it is our duty therefore to make the case for a modern, democratic, republic in this debate. There is plainly very little prospect of it occurring within a UK context and a golden opportunity for advance lies in front of us.

The case for a modern, democratic republic stands in our nation's finest democratic and egalitarian traditions. The same spirit of enlightenment and progress that propelled Francis Hutcheson, Alexander Campbell, David Hume, Adam Smith, Dugald Stewart, Thomas Reid, Robert Burns, Adam Ferguson, John Playfair, Joseph Black and James Hutton in their rational, scientific search for progress and improvement in the 18th century is evident today. Our case for extending reason and democracy today belongs in that Scottish Enlightenment tradition. Feudal institutions based on hereditary privileges and divine rights

passed down to monarchs from 'The Almighty' have no part to play in modern political structures and democratic constitutions let alone at their apex. The British monarchy is clearly not modern, it is patently not democratic and it is certainly not egalitarian. Yet such values are uppermost in working class people's ambitions today for the type of world we wish to see.

People have been making the case for a republic courageously throughout the ages in the face of dreadful intimidation and severe punishments. They posed questions, as we do again today, because they arise inevitably and because the British political establishment continuously fails to provide satisfactory answers. Can the monarchy ever be defended on democratic grounds? What political role does the Queen play in UK society today? Is her role really as benign as her defendants would have us believe? Or does she in fact hold substantial 'Crown Powers' in reserve? Is the population at large content with the current arrangements or merely resigned to their continuance in the face of an avalanche of state sponsored propaganda? What obstacles do those who advocate a modern, democratic republic face in trying to raise the issues involved and secure change?

Over the next six chapters these questions and others will be answered and many brave voices from history who defended democratic rights and progressive ideals will be called upon to help answer them. None more so than the remarkable political activist and author, Thomas Paine, who posed many of the most apposite questions in his groundbreaking and astonishingly popular book, *The Rights of Man*.

*'All hereditary government is in its nature tyranny... mankind is not heritable property. To inherit government is to inherit people, as if they were flocks or herds. Kings succeed each other, not as rationals, but as animals.'*

**Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, 1792**

Supporters of monarchy today often unwittingly take the debate further than they intended to and end up dismantling their own case. Take the example of Tory MP Nadine Dorres who typically claimed on television<sup>1</sup> recently that The Queen's presence on the throne has brought much needed order, stability and continuity to

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1. The Daily Politics, BBC1, 28 January 2014

## INTRODUCTION

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Britain for more than 60 years. If so, this common justification for the monarchy exposes its defenders to some very serious charges indeed. For the question inevitably arises where did she get those powers? After all monarchists like Dorres like to claim The Queen's is largely a ceremonial role? Clearly they cannot have it both ways. Either The Queen is responsible for half a century of political stability and order or she is merely a figurehead, a wee woman wheeled out to show the King of Swaziland or other 'world leaders' a good time when needs must. The undeniable truth is it is the former. And those powers, which are listed in Chapter three, are indeed extensive.

No one familiar with the history of the Scottish Parliament, for example, will forget that MSPs are compelled, as their first official act to swear an 'oath of allegiance', not to the people who elected them, but to 'The Queen, her heirs and successors'. Failure to do so prevents 'the duly elected member' from taking their seat. They are legally denied the right to represent their constituents until they do so. Thus a democratic mandate given by the people in free elections is rendered useless by this benign institution and the powerful forces that lie behind it.

Another more surprising advocate of the monarchy perhaps is Alex Salmond. In an interview with the TV news channel Russia Today in September 2013 he began his defence of the monarchy by pointing out "Scotland and England shared a common King for a hundred years before the Act of Union in 1707" referring to the Union of the Crowns of 1603 when James VI of Scotland became James I of England. He did so to infer there was nothing new or unusual about the SNP's current political position of sharing The Queen in a post independent Scotland. But he noticeably failed to mention the seminal episode that occurred soon after the Union of the Crowns when the British Isles became in effect a republic.

The English Revolution of 1648-1660 was a time of great political tumult. The fledgling democracy was confronted by the absolutist tyranny of The Crown. This was a great turning point in British political history. Parliament had to go to war twice to defend the embryonic democracy from attack before finally beheading an incorrigibly treacherous King.

The 17th century English Civil War was a battle between Parliament and The Crown, between the people and the monarch, between emergent capitalism and feudal aristocracy, between progress and backwardness, between democracy and tyranny. There was a time when Alex Salmond would not have erased this crucial period of UK history from his mind.

And the 18th century Scottish Enlightenment marked by the pursuit of reason, scientific explanation, rational debate and the extension of the democratic intellect further embedded these key political values into the British psyche.

But in the last analysis Alex Salmond clearly calculates that people today do not care about the legacy of the English Civil War or The Scottish Enlightenment. His insistence that “Her Majesty will remain the Head of State in an independent Scotland” is an odd boast for someone who wishes to extend sovereignty and self-determination. It wasn’t always thus. As a member of the left wing ‘79 Group’ within the SNP he advocated a modern democratic Scottish republic and was expelled from the party because of it.

Should Scotland become independent, surely decisions such as whom we elect as our head of state must be decided by the people? And it is surely to them, if anyone, MSPs should swear allegiance? Moreover, if it is right for Scotland to determine our own destiny it is surely also appropriate that we have the power to decide whether to become a modern, democratic republic or not.

No other party has the Scottish Socialist Party’s record of challenging the monarchy and upholding democracy. Our MSPs protested at having to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen. We drafted the Declaration of Calton Hill – included in the index of this pamphlet – and gathered to repeat our call for a modern, democratic, republic with thousands of others rather than attend the official opening of the new Holyrood building in 2004 where the Queen presided. Ours was the only party to do so. No party in Scotland can hold a candle to the SSP’s commitment to a modern, democratic republic. Our view will be clear from these pages, our record is just as principled.

There are many in these Isles who have over centuries courageously confronted the monarchical powers of the British State. I salute their efforts and achievements. This pamphlet is for them. I also wish to thank John Gallagher and Lorna Bett for their help in bringing this pamphlet to fruition.



## CHAPTER TWO

# MONARCHY OR DEMOCRACY?

*'Monarchy is the supremest thing upon this earth; for kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself are they called gods.'*

***King James I of England and VI of Scotland, speech to Parliament, 1610***

**THIS QUOTE FROM KING JAMES I OF ENGLAND AND VI OF SCOTLAND** illustrates why 'democracy' and 'monarchy' are in such substantial conflict. The definition<sup>2</sup> of democracy is "government by the people, in whom the supreme power is exercised by the people through a system of representation involving free elections with the absence of privileges". Monarchy on the other hand is defined as "a state ruled by a monarch occupying a commanding or pre-eminent position".

For James VI divine rights and heavenly privileges were his unchallengeable privileges. The Scottish Socialist Party prefers democratic principles to hereditary ones. The arguments in favour of monarchy listed in this chapter reveal just how anti-democratic, outmoded and unrepresentative the institution is today in a world seeking liberty, equality, enlightenment and progress.

This debate raises profound questions about the nature of the UK state, democracy and political power in Britain today. Can it ever be appropriate, for example, to have an unelected, unaccountable and unrepresentative Head of State? Can a monarch ever be held up as a symbol of democracy, inclusion or equality to future generations? Is the role of the UK monarch today simply ceremonial and titular? And if the Queen really is responsible for 60 years of stability, order and continuity, in the fifth most powerful country in the world, as her defenders claim, from where did she get those powers and that political authority? Are these powers

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2. Longman Concise English Dictionary, published by Longman Group Limited, Essex, 1982

held in check or can they be deployed anytime the monarch deems it necessary? Can it ever be democratic for the monarch to overrule the will of an elected Parliament? With its hereditary privileges, unaccountable power and divine rights isn't the monarchy the very antithesis of modernity, democracy and equality? Why does the UK political establishment defend the monarchy so vociferously in the face of such powerful accusations? And if the monarchy is as popular as its advocates insist why are 64 million people ritually denied an honest debate on the matter? And why are those 64 million people still referred to constitutionally and legally as 'commoners' and 'subjects' of Her Majesty rather than 'citizens'? Where are the dissenting voices criticising this fundamentally backward, anti-democratic and inaccessible institution? Where are the university departments critiquing this arrant nonsense and promoting enlightenment and democracy instead? Where are all the bright young things from Oxbridge with their satirical magazines lampooning this ridiculous spectacle at the heart of the UK political establishment? Where are the writers exposing the nonsense of it all? Surely they are not all guilt ridden and compromised by their private school education, their privileged backgrounds and their access to our elite universities? Surely they are not all dutifully waiting in line for their own 'gongs' or coveting invitations to the Buckingham Palace Garden Party? All these questions will be addressed in the course of the next few chapters.

First we consider the most common, and often contradictory, justifications for the monarchy put forward by its defenders.

### ***The Queen has no real powers and those she does have are largely ceremonial.***

This is the most common defence of the monarchy. Inherently, this argument presents the view that the economic and political power of British capitalism has long since shifted from the landed gentry and aristocracy to a multinational corporate elite. In other words the owners of capital in the City of London and corporate boardrooms are firmly in charge of 'UKPLC' and have long since reached a political accommodation with 'old money' and 'blue blood' that sees the latter in effect reduced to the role of lapdog.

To the British capitalist classes then, 'Her Majesty' is in effect a trophy. Instructed by the Prime Minister, she is answerable to the capitalist classes. And those remnant powers of Britain's constitutional monarchy are, as far as they are concerned, held in reserve for a time – God forbid it should ever arise – when their power is challenged and their order cannot otherwise be maintained by

current political arrangements. Why do the capitalists not just get rid of the monarchy in Britain just as they have done elsewhere in the world? The answer is that they have reached a political accommodation with the monarchy where it plays a role for multinational capital.

The establishment in Britain likes to maintain the deceit that 'Her Majesty The Queen' is there simply to represent the democratically elected government during State occasions and to entertain foreign dignitaries. Constitutionally speaking they argue the British monarchy was restrained by Parliament four centuries ago during the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

However the potential powers of the monarch remain extensive, as we shall see in Chapter three. As well as being Head of State she is also head of the Judiciary, Head of the Armed Forces, the Police and the Church of England. She appoints all members of the Privy Council and the House of Lords, establishes quasi-judicial Royal Charters and wields the infamous, if rarely used Crown Powers through the Privy Council which convey upon her many wide-ranging powers Parliament cannot reach.<sup>3</sup> And this leads us to the second most common defence of the monarchy in Britain today.

***The Queen is responsible for 60 years of political and constitutional stability, order and continuity and we should never forget that.***

This argument is of course the complete mirror image of the previous one, nonetheless, they are often used together as we shall see. And, as was mentioned earlier, this common justification for the monarchy exposes its defenders to some very serious charges. For the question inevitably arises where did she get those powers to ensure such 'stability, 'order' and 'continuity'?

The inference here is clear, that revolutions, political turmoil and coups d'état don't happen in Britain because 'Her Majesty' is able to rise above politics, act as a stabilising force and a never ending reference point in an ever-changing world.

This view contradicts the previous argument that she is powerless but, nonetheless, hints at a wider and more honest truth that the British ruling class keeps the powers of the monarchy in reserve for more turbulent times when it might indeed be needed. And as recent articles in the Daily Telegraph and The Guardian have revealed, the monarchy is not content to keep out of politics, far from it.

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3. See <http://www.royal.gov.uk/monarchy/queenandthelaw.aspx>



The Telegraph reported<sup>4</sup> in January 2014 that “at least 39 Bills subject to Royal Approval have been vetoed by senior royals using their power to consent or block laws in areas such as higher education, paternity pay, child maintenance and Iraq”.

The article reveals that The Queen and Prince Charles repeatedly impeded the passage of Bills awaiting Royal Assent over the past 30 years in order to press for their preferred changes, thus defying the democratic will of Parliament. “Internal Whitehall papers prepared by the Cabinet Office lawyers,” says The Telegraph “show that on one occasion the Queen vetoed the Military Actions Against Iraq Bill in 1999, which aimed to transfer the power to authorise military strikes against Iraq from the monarch to Parliament.”

Legal scholar John Kirkhope has concluded: “There has always been an implication that the monarch’s prerogative powers are quaint and sweet but actually there is real influence and real power, albeit unaccountable.”

It is clear not only that the powers of the monarch are real but they are exercised

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4. ‘Queen and Prince Charles using power of veto over new laws, Whitehall documents reveal’, Daily Telegraph, 15 January 2014

with astonishing regularity. And The Guardian has been locked in a nine-year legal battle with the government over a Freedom of Information request, which they were granted, to access correspondence between Prince Charles and successive Prime Ministers that it is alleged show the heir to the throne repeatedly tried to impede the will of Parliament. The Guardian<sup>5</sup> has been seeking access to the correspondence only to be repeatedly thwarted by the UK Attorney General's Office on the grounds that it could cause "constitutional problems that would seriously damage the Prince's ability to perform his duties when he became King as it casts doubt on his political neutrality". For nine years, the newspaper has sought this information and been denied access despite the courts finding in their favour. The government has argued publication of the correspondence "may undermine public support for the monarchy".

These episodes are of course merely the tip of the iceberg as far as the monarchy's conduct is concerned but remind us of those powers held in reserve for rather more profound challenges to the constitution.

***There is nothing wrong with the 'Divine rights of Kings', 'hereditary powers', 'subjects' and 'commoners' as it is compensated by a surplus of democracy elsewhere in our political system.***

This argument is perhaps the most reactionary proposition of all, and the weakest offered by advocates of monarchy. This traditional right wing defence of monarchy put greater emphasis on order, tradition, stability and continuity.

It maintains that the present arrangements are in the natural order of things, that Britain has had a monarchy for hundreds of years, and must continue to do so. Advocates of monarchy insist these anti-democratic, archaic and elitist values are perfectly acceptable as they are compensated for elsewhere in our political system.

The Edinburgh based historian, Michael Fry, encapsulated the essence of this argument when he insisted on Newsnight Scotland<sup>6</sup> in July 2013 that we have "too much democracy already in Britain". He insisted that the divine right of kings and hereditary principles are perfectly acceptable because they are more than offset by a surplus of democracy elsewhere in the British political system. He cited elected local government, a Westminster Parliament, devolved Assemblies, EU

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5. 'Prince Charles letters: attorney general acted unlawfully, say senior judges', The Guardian, 12 March 2014

6. Newsnight Scotland, BBC2, 29 July 2013 – presenter Glenn Campbell hosted a live studio debate.

elections, elected Mayors and referenda as evidence of our apparent democratic “glut”. An elected, accountable and representative Head of State is not, therefore, needed we are told. And neither do we need to change the laws that refer to people as subjects of Her Majesty and commoners rather than citizens.

Fry’s Tory colleague the MSP Jackson Carlaw speaking on the same Newsnight Scotland programme argued Her Majesty enjoys “the consent of the governed”.

Millions of people across Britain will inevitably ask ‘when did I give my consent?’ Fry added his own anti-democratic contempt, saying “Everyone knows our politicians are corrupt and scandalous”. As well as being an implicit attack on democracy itself, his clear inference is that monarchs are not.

### ***The monarchy is not ideal but a presidential alternative would be worse.***

This argument also shows contempt for democracy, accountability and representative leadership. It insists an elected president would be ‘political’ and therefore divisive in a way that, they argue, The Queen is not. She apparently ‘unites the country’ (again making the perennial mistake of describing Britain as a country instead of several countries combined in a political union) by being apparently apolitical.

An elected president, it is claimed, would see politicians constantly jockeying for position and mean future candidates would always be jostling for popularity and advantage. The fact that hundreds of states across the world seem to manage appears to have escaped their attention.

It is also argued the monarchy is more stable and cheaper than a presidency. The very dangerous inference in both these political propositions of course is that democracy itself is both unstable and too expensive.

Both these arguments form the basis for attempts to prevent democratic advance throughout history. Just as the lessons of democratic advance should not be erased from British history or culture, neither should the arguments that were used to prevent progress.

The advocates of constitutional monarchy insist The Queen is above politics and brings much needed detachment and decorum to the role of Head of State, as well as certain historic stability and a unifying influence.

When pressed these loyal defenders of the status quo such as Jackson Carlaw attack the democratic alternative to monarchy saying it would mean ‘some party political hack becoming president, our figurehead Head of State would then be a

divisive figure and lead to instability'. This argument should not be underestimated, however, as it won the day for monarchists in the Australian referendum of 2002. Faced with defeat they sought not to defend the existing constitutional arrangements in Australia (where the Queen is Head of State) but argued instead that the alternative, an elected president, would be politically divisive, less benign, less regal and more expensive to maintain than a monarch.

***Now is not the right time to raise this issue why not let us revisit it when Charles takes over.***

Some alleged anti-monarchists suggest the time for this debate is not now but rather when King Charles III is about to take over. They accept he is not as popular as his mother and suggest we should leave the issue aside for the moment until a time when the public may be more inclined towards change.

This 'leave it alone' approach is of course dishonest and naive. It is contrived and deceitful. It suggests this is not a good time to debate the issue (for monarchists there is never a good time) and it deliberately and knowingly ignores the inevitable royalist clamour that will greet the death of The Queen. In such circumstances the demand for the Coronation of a new monarch, with all the pomp, circumstance and public conditioning that involves, will overwhelm any rational debate. In such circumstances monarchists will not stand by and allow a prolonged constitutional debate. They will demand full popular backing for the new King. 'The Queen is dead, long live the King' they will yell and tap into 'a national mourning' to reinforce their view and to further postpone this debate.

So we can see in this scenario how the debate is so often manipulated and in fact never welcomed by the British political establishment.

***The Queen brings a lot of tourists to this country and they would not come if we got rid of the monarchy.***

This is another particularly weak and transparent defence of the monarchy. The UK economy benefits hugely from the pomp and circumstance of monarchy it is claimed and if she were not there then tourists would not come here in such numbers. This is of course a truly specious reason for maintaining an unelected, unaccountable, unrepresentative Head of State. In fact, the Queen's home at Windsor Castle was only the 24th most popular tourist attraction in the UK last year. As the campaign group Republic points out York Railway museum drew

more crowds than any Royal attraction last year. So perhaps we should make Thomas the Tank Engine our Head of State? And the argument based on the public purse benefiting from monarchy is also defeated by the fact they are net recipients of £200million of taxpayers funds annually. The Crown Estates and the income they generate already belong to the Whitehall Treasury.

Nonetheless there are still academics perpetuating such myths that the monarchy is economically beneficial to the UK. Dr Jenny Wormal of Edinburgh University is one of them. She argued on Newsnight Scotland that “the British monarchy attracts millions of tourists who come to see her. She is good for tourism and brings in £1.5billion a year from tourism. And Scotland benefits enormously from this”. The fact is the monarchy is heavily subsidised by UK taxpayers. We are net contributors to the monarchy not the other way round.

The Queen is the 58th richest person in the UK. She owns land from Cornwall to Scotland and yet we taxpayers support her. As our Head of State she costs 112 times more than the Irish President (their Head of State) costs them. The truth is tourists scratch their heads and ask how on earth this feudal relic survives in an industrialised, developed state such as Britain. They wonder why the British have so little self-respect to allow this feudal institution to wield such power over them.

***The Queen was born into the role, she works really hard and no one has the right to criticise her.***

Typical of proponents of this view is the self-described ‘liberal’ Guy Keleny who wrote a lengthy piece<sup>7</sup> in The Independent newspaper in December 2013. “The chief value of monarchs,” he attests “is that they are there not by their own will or anybody else’s *but by pure chance*” [my emphasis]. At its heart this nonsense also shows his contempt for democracy. He says, for example, “the will of the people is a will o’ the wisp, frequently invoked by crooks and tyrants”. Keleny adds: “At bottom your attitude to the monarchy is a matter of temperament. Me, I owe my allegiance to a person put in authority over me by God.” His argument essentially has it that the monarch provides ‘reassurance’ and ‘continuity’ and ‘symbolising the nation’ is able to ‘humanise the state’ thanks to God’s grace.

This entire line of argument rather trivialises the issues involved in this debate. It is nonetheless an oft used one which seeks to undermine any suggestion that

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7. ‘Liberals can love the Royals too’, The Independent, 26 December 2013

we should replace the monarchy arguing it is a slight on the Queen herself which is seen as unreasonable behaviour towards someone who has sacrificed so much over the past 60 years as monarch.

### ***The Queen is popular and The Royal Family add much-needed colour to British life.***

The popularity of the Queen is seldom accurately tested and reasoned debate on their role is rare. But the Scottish Tory MSP Jackson Carlaw nevertheless claimed on Newsnight Scotland (in Sept 2013) that “People are content to keep the monarchy. The Queen works hard and is liked. Young people are especially comfortable with the monarchy.” There has been an orchestrated campaign in recent years to turn the UK monarchy into celebrities. Of course the danger with celebrity status is that it can be short-lived and counter productive. There is a large industry now promoting the Royal family! And the media coverage ranges from the obsequiously cringe-worthy to the downright sycophantic. The BBC is particularly guilty of insulting our intelligence. Their Royal correspondents Jenny Bond and Nicholas Witchell would make Josef Goebbels blush. As the state broadcaster one might expect a rational and even critical examination of the monarchy and its role today. But the BBC provide no such thing as they bow, scrape, fawn and courtesy as obsequiously as any other ‘lackey’. And yet, inherent in their coverage is a fear of scrutinising the issues involved rationally.

### ***There are more important matters demanding our attention than this.***

This is a defeatist argument heard more often on the left. What is actually being said is that this is not a battle that can be won, so why bother raising the issue? Such conservative voices suggest that because the Royalist forces are so entrenched it will be a long and arduous struggle to force the democratic changes required. Our energies are, therefore, best spent fighting elsewhere it is argued. This argument rather surrenders with a sigh and is a variant on the one that says ‘there are republics all over the world which are no more democratic than Britain and no better places to live’. The Scottish Socialist Party does not share this surrenderism.

Let us turn then to the most common and in many ways the most serious of these claims, that the monarchy has no real power and that British democracy is under no real threat to consider it in some detail.



## CHAPTER THREE

# THE POWERS OF THE UK MONARCH TODAY

*“Her Majesty’s Ministers exercise the Royal Prerogative via ‘The Crown in Parliament’ avoiding the House of Commons altogether, make Orders in Council [Privy], declare war and make peace, recognise foreign governments, sign treaties, grant Royal Pardons, grant Royal Charters, confer Honours, confer patronage, establish Royal Commissions – not an exhaustive list but neither is it a record of impotence.”*

**Christopher Hitchens,**

***The Monarchy: A Critique of Britain’s Favourite Fetish, 1990***

**WHILST NO ONE WOULD ARGUE BRITAIN’S POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS ARE** run directly from Buckingham Palace it would be equally foolish to suggest the monarchy plays no role in British political life. It is most certainly not an institution content to amuse tourists, entertain foreign dignitaries or fill the pages of Hello magazine. The State Opening of Parliament is after all not yet a privilege afforded to Posh and Becks or the latest winner of I’m a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!

No, ‘Her Majesty’ is there to remind us of the class nature of British society and its pecking order. Both Houses of Parliament (one anti-democratic and unelected, the other corrupted by big business and its cash) are frequently summoned to attend ‘Her Majesty’. The House of Lords with its cadre of establishment lackeys royally rewarded for decades of loyal service is required to display devotion and fidelity to the Crown at all times. Is it any wonder the rest of the world scratches its collective head, so to speak in disbelief at the democracy exercised by ‘The Mother of Parliaments’? Visitors can barely fathom why this vestige of feudalism is still intact in Britain 400 years after the English Civil War. They consider it an affront to democrats everywhere. And yet there are reasons why the British monarchy is still defying political gravity as it were, still defying democratic principles and still vetoing the wishes of Parliament after all these centuries.

### **Britain's constitutional monarchy**

Britain has a constitutional monarchy with political authority vested in Parliament, wielded by the government through an elected House of Commons. The unelected House of Lords – all appointed by the Queen – plays the role of a 'second chamber' check on the Commons.

The Queen, as Head of State, formally opens and dissolves Parliament. No Bills passed by Parliaments at Westminster (or Holyrood) can become law until they receive her 'Royal Assent'. The Queen is also Head of our Armed Forces, the Judiciary and the Police and she regularly exercises her 'Royal Prerogative'.

### **The Royal Prerogative**

The Royal Prerogative is a body of customary authority, privilege and immunity recognised as powers at the sole prerogative of the Sovereign. Since the 19th century the monarch remains constitutionally empowered to exercise this Royal Prerogative against the advice of the Prime Minister or Cabinet but is said to cover only what they decide are emergencies or where existing precedents do not apply. It applies primarily, but not exclusively, to foreign affairs, defence and national security. Otherwise the Royal Prerogative is largely in the hands of the Prime Minister and government officials. Every Act of Government lawfully carried out without the authority of an Act of Parliament is done by virtue of the powers conferred in the Royal Prerogative. The other route used to bypass Parliament is via 'Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council'.

### **Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council**

This is a formal body of advisors to The Queen made up mostly of senior politicians. Its policy decisions are now exclusively in the hands of The Cabinet. And the Privy Council formally advises the monarch on her use of the Royal Prerogative. The Privy Council meets monthly and its members, all appointed by The Queen, usually sit on it for life. It has power to bypass Parliament altogether. The workings of the modern Privy Council were unveiled publicly most recently when it was widely reported that the newspaper industry had lost its bid to halt the Royal Charter<sup>8</sup> on the regulation of the press being introduced in 2013: "The Privy Council meeting held at Buckingham Palace decided to establish a cross party

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8. 'Newspapers to fight on after losing 11th hour bid to block Royal Charter', The Scotsman, 31 October 2013

Gough Whitlam on the steps of Parliament House in Canberra in November 1975, after he was sacked as Prime Minister by Australia's unelected Governor-General, using powers vested in him by The Queen



Royal Charter to protect freedom of the press while offering real redress when mistakes are made.” Our normally supine and sycophantic newspaper media were uniquely heard to bleat “the UK monarch and her politicians wield powers other dictators/potentates can only dream of”. Indeed!

### **The Glorious Revolution of 1688**

To fully understand the nature of the British constitutional arrangements today it is advisable to study the events of The Glorious Revolution of 1688 when King James VII was deposed in what was in effect a military coup d’etat engineered between Parliament and the Dutch Sovereign. The Catholic King James VII was routed by a Dutch invasion led by Protestant William of Orange, who with the backing and open connivance of the English Parliament (and the Pope) subsequently assumed the throne. In return for Parliament’s support William agreed to a severe curtailment of his monarchical powers and a Bill of Rights was passed which cemented his subservience to Parliament. The Bill of Rights made it illegal for the monarch to interfere with Acts of Parliament from then on and although the King remained Head of State the monarch’s powers were further curtailed by the Act of Settlement in 1701, The Claim of Right in 1707 and by further restrictions implemented after World War One.

### **Gough Whitlam's Labour government in Australia**

Those who argue the monarch would never use any of their extra-parliamentary powers to threaten the democratic settlement might wish to consider the lessons learned from the dismissal of the Australian Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, in 1975. Whitlam's Labour government was removed from office not by the electorate but by the country's unelected Governor-General using powers vested in him by The Queen. Following a political stand off between Australia's elected Prime Minister in the House of Representative and the Senate (The Upper House) the Australian Governor-General, using previously unused powers as The Queen's representative, dismissed the democratically elected government and invoked a General Election which was won by the Opposition.

### **A Very British Coup**

Closer to home there was also the famous occasion, referred to in Peter Wright's book *Spy Catcher* and in Chris Mullins's thriller *A Very British Coup*, where Lord Mountbatten acting on behalf of the monarchy was heavily involved in plans to overthrow the democratically elected Labour government of Harold Wilson in the 1970s. So alarmed were sections of the British ruling classes at the left wing rhetoric coming from sections of the Labour Party, they sought to use the monarchy as popular cover for a coup d'état to overthrow the democratically elected British Prime Minister. There are important lessons for democrats to learn from both these episodes.

And there can be no doubt the ongoing struggle for basic democratic rights in many parts of the world today – The Arab Spring of 2012 for example – was nothing if it was not a struggle of the ordinary people against their unelected Heads of State. People protested in favour of basic democratic rights and their associated economic needs. It was a struggle for democracy and better economic conditions which often go hand in hand.

Hereditary political privileges have no place in the modern world whether in Egypt or the UK. Such feudal remnants have rightly been challenged and replaced by democratic elections, the right of recall, universal suffrage and accountability. In other words you can have democracy or monarchy but not both.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# DO PEOPLE CARE?

*“We [English] are not descended from a past when the institution of monarchy was uncritically accepted.”*

**John Milton (1608-1674)**

**ACCORDING TO THE CAMPAIGN GROUP REPUBLIC, SOME 20 PER CENT** of Britons favour replacing the monarchy with an elected head of state<sup>9</sup> (the percentage is said to be far greater in Scotland). If so this is a remarkable figure given that rarely a week goes by without monarchist propaganda dominating the news in one way or another. Such soporific coverage does not of course happen by accident. Buckingham Palace employs a multi-million pound PR operation to ensure they are ‘soft-soaped’ by the media. So, whether it is Royal visits to Australia, Royal births and weddings or Royal health updates the monarchy is a constant feature of British news headlines.

Of course the coverage says much about the editorial policy of our broadcasters and our ‘free press’. And it begs the question, do the Royals make the news or do the media make the Royals? Paul Weller of The Jam once hinted at the conditioning the public undergoes, others might call it state propaganda, when he wrote in the song Going Underground, “the public wants what the public gets”.

But much as Nicholas Witchell and the BBC would have you believe everyone is content with all this ‘pap’, ten million Britons view it with contempt and refuse to succumb to the conditioning. And no wonder.

The BBC propaganda is an insult to our intelligence. Nicholas Witchell’s coverage of the recent visit to Australia by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge,

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9. Republic base their conclusion on the findings of an opinion poll conducted by MORI regularly over the past five years.

or William and Kate as intimates know them, is a case in point. Witchell opined contentedly that “support for a republic here in Australia is at a 30 year low” and then evidenced his claim by quoting that day’s Sydney Morning Herald newspaper which showed support for a republic was at 44 per cent! Some low point!

On a speaking tour of Australia I made in 2003 as an SSP MSP, I learned that Melbourne for example is the world’s ‘second biggest Greek city’ and ‘the second biggest Serbian city’. It also has a huge Asian community. None of these groups have any affinity or connection to the British aristocracy in London. Modern Australia now trades mostly with its neighbours in the Pacific and South East Asia.

And the New Zealand Prime Minister publicly predicted, during the recent Royal Tour, that he too fully expects his country to be a republic within the decade.

### **MORI estimates there are ten million people in Britain who prefer a republic with almost half the population of Scotland preferring that option.**

People in Britain have been rebelling against the monarchy for centuries. The eminent Scottish historian and scholar George Buchanan (1506-1582), for example, did much to provide the intellectual ballast to encourage the dissent. Buchanan, described as ‘the most profound intellectual 16th century Scotland produced’, was influenced by the Renaissance and the Reformation which he observed while working in Paris. He wrote the groundbreaking book *The Art and Science of Government Among the Scots* (1579), wherein he was the first to lay down the democratic doctrine that “the source of all political power is in the people” and that “the king is bound by those conditions under which the supreme power was first committed into his hands and that it is lawful to resist, even to punish, tyrants regardless of rank”. His work was so powerful that the monarchy tried to suppress it for a century. They ordered all copies of it to be edited of those sections they considered ‘offensive’. Notwithstanding such orchestrated state censorship, Buchanan’s scholarly work influenced thinkers and activists for centuries after his death.

The lawyer, John Cooke, for example, who successfully prosecuted Charles I for High Treason in 1649, picked up on Buchanan’s themes to establish the legal basis for bringing political tyrants such as monarchs to justice. Cooke, defiant until the end, said at his own show trial twelve years later: “We are not traitors or murderers or fanatics but true Christians and good commonwealthsmen, fixed and constant in the principles of sanctity, truth, justice and mercy, which the Parliament

No other party has the Scottish Socialist Party's record of challenging the monarchy and upholding democracy



and army declared and engaged for, and to that noble principle of preferring universality before particularity. We fought for the public good and would have enfranchised the people and secured the welfare of the whole groaning creation, if the nation had not more delighted in servitude than freedom.”

And getting to the crux of the matter as he so often did the late Christopher Hitchens wrote, in his book, *The Monarchy*: “The latent power of the British monarchy is obscured by the widespread belief that it has no power at all.”

Britain’s apparent inability to debate the monarchy rationally was again evident in that dismal discussion on BBC Newsnight Scotland in July 2013. The low level of debate again revealed how democracy and our right to elect our Head of State are treated so lightly. But this inability to debate the matter maturely and rationally really is no laughing matter.

Britain’s noble history of dissent over the monarchy is inspiring and includes, for example, The Levellers who published manifestoes entitled *Agreement of the People* between 1647 and 1649 in the midst of the English Civil war. The Agitators and The New Model Army advocated freedom of religion, equality for all under the law, the extension of the voting franchise, an end to imprisonment for debt, the

abolition of corruption in Parliament and the election of annual Parliaments the first time such democratic ideas had been demanded by a political movement.

The English author and activist, Thomas Paine (1737-1809), was another outspoken supporter of the French Revolution and American Revolution. He advocated a republic for Britain and the extension of democratic rights.

The poet John Milton (1608-1674), another English polemicist, wrote the epic poem *Paradise Lost*, reflecting his own regret at the failure of the English Revolution and the republic. He was an articulate supporter of a republic who argued for the disestablishment of the church and state, and denounced corruption in the church.

The poets Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), Lord Byron (1788-1824), William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) and our very own Robert Burns (1759-1796) frequently made their sympathies for a republic known. Burns for example writes defiantly in the lines of his poem *Does Haughty Gaul Invasion Threat* written in 1759 amidst the fear of a French military invasion that:

“Who will not sing God Save the King, shall hang as high’s the steeple.

“But while we sing God Save the King, We’ll ne’er forget The People!”

Such noble and brave voices seem in such short supply today and none more so than among the cowardly British political classes.

### **The political debate in Britain today**

The Tories and Liberal Democrats are dyed in the wool monarchists, as we have seen in the comments of Tory MP Nadine Dorries and the liberal Guy Kellenny earlier. They defend the monarchy in the face of rational, reasoned, democratic argument to the contrary. Neither of these parties have a record of extending democratic or progressive advance for that matter. And democratic advance in this sphere, as in so many others, will not come from this quarter.

What about the British Labour Party then?

New Labour’s support for privilege, an undemocratic elite and the divine right of kings flies in the face of everything the party was established to advocate 100 years ago. The first resolution passed by the very first Labour Party conference promised to abolish the House of Lords and challenge the monarchy. A century later, Labour strongly advocates keeping the unelected House of Lords. Today’s Labour Party clearly has nothing in common with its founders. The late Tony Benn put it best when he said the Labour Party “started out as a party that aimed to

change the world and ended up as one that changes people to accept that world". Labour's founding values of democracy, meritocracy and equality are nowhere to be seen today in Ed Miliband's support for the monarchy. To be fair he is no worse than his predecessors, but like them he has shown no moral courage on this democratic principle either.

And the Scottish National Party's position is unfortunately no better.

Their White Paper on independence, Scotland's Future<sup>10</sup>, acknowledged as the SNP's most comprehensive vision yet of what kind of country it wants Scotland to become, illuminates their own weakness towards the monarchy. It states for example (on page 43): "On independence, Her Majesty the Queen will remain our head of state. Scotland will be a constitutional monarchy." But as if to emphasise their unease at the lack of democracy inherent in the constitutional status quo they breathlessly qualify this vow with the caveat "for as long as the people of Scotland wish us to be so". And in chapter ten, ironically entitled 'Building a Modern Democracy', it informs us that "Scotland will remain within the Union of The Crowns with Her Majesty The Queen as our head of state". This is also immediately qualified by the promise "but we will have a modern, written constitution...based on the sovereignty of the people [in the] best interests of the people [with] equality and human rights [to the fore in] a Scotland fit for the 21st century".

Our new society and state left to the SNP is therefore to be a country where we maintain a feudal monarch and a huge democratic deficit continues to hang over the heads of the citizens of Scotland.

The White Paper is, as any honest examination of it must surely accept, all at sea on this matter. Either you retain an unelected, unrepresentative and unaccountable monarch as your Head of State or you have one where sovereignty rests in those who have voted through the mandate of the ballot box. Anything less is a democratic denial where the people of Scotland are not sovereign at all but remain subjugated.

In truth, the SNP's position smacks of political cowardice. Fearful of alienating conservative opinion in its North East of Scotland heartland it surrenders democratic principles to insist Scots must keep the monarchy. Alex Salmond calculates that in the last analysis the majority of Scots are not really bothered about the monarchy. Such attitudes do the SNP great damage.

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10. Published in November 2013



Christine Graham MSP illustrated a party deeply divided on the issue when she said on Newsnight Scotland, “The SNP wishes to retain the monarchy in an independent Scotland. Most parties have their share of monarchists and republicans”. Without blushing, this well-known advocate of a republic then added meekly, “There are more important issues to concentrate on”.

“The monarchy,” she now insists, “is important to some people in times of crisis, the Queen brings comfort and sense of security”. This line is simply not good enough for the party of government in Scotland.

Chapter seven will examine the very substantial challenges facing those who wish to replace the monarchy with a republic. But first the case for a modern, democratic republic itself.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# DEMOCRACY, EQUALITY, SOVEREIGNTY AND MONARCHY

*“And is there anything more absurd than the hereditary principle? It is as absurd as the hereditary mathematician, or a hereditary poet laureate. The vanity and presumption of government from beyond the grave is the most ridiculous and indolent of tyrannies.”*

***Thomas Paine, The Rights of Man, 1792***

**THE SCOTTISH SOCIALIST PARTY SUPPORTS A MODERN DEMOCRATIC** republic for Scotland. For us, democracy is a powerful force and woe betides anyone who would stand in its way. The entire concept of monarchy on the other hand is, from a progressive, democratic perspective antiquated, class ridden and anachronistic. The world today is guided as far as the eye can see by values of democracy, accountability and equality, which are the very antithesis of monarchy.

The SSP stands alongside those who seek to extend democracy and equality worldwide. We support a wide range of democratic reforms, including economic and local, which we believe are urgently needed. We advocate a written Constitution, a Bill of Rights and greater Parliamentary accountability where those caught fiddling their expenses for instance can be instantly dismissed. We support the immediate right of recall over disgraced MPs. We believe in freedom of speech, religious tolerance, full trade union rights and universal suffrage. We believe MPs should be paid an annual salary which is the same as the people who elected them and decided by the people. We believe their income and expenses should be annually audited by their own constituents.

We believe in representative government as MPs are elected to carry out the wishes of their constituents and they should do so. If not they should be immediately deselected.

These and many other reforms are long overdue. Many were first suggested by The Levellers 400 years ago. They considered Parliament “an assembly of rich men answerable to other rich men and conducting the business of yet other rich men”. Sound familiar? How little has changed today?

### **Abolition of the House of Lords**

The House of Lords is an affront to democracy. It is unelected, unaccountable and unrepresentative. We are not persuaded by the argument that suggests we somehow benefit from the experts and people of unique experience and insight that allegedly sit there. It is a sinecure for establishment lackeys and should be replaced by an elected second chamber.

The very name Lords is of course a complete anachronism in the modern age. Sitting there in our unelected and unrepresentative Upper Chamber, completely detached from reality are Earls, Dukes, Marquises, Duchesses, Baronesses, Cardinals, Bishops, Lords and Ladies!

### **Universal suffrage and voting reform / Proportional Representation**

*“All men are equally and alike born to like propriety, liberty and freedom. All men are born equal with equal natural rights. Equality is the natural state.”*

*Thomas Paine, The Rights of Man, 1792*

The demand for universal suffrage was revolutionary in its day. The idea that all men were equal and should therefore be allowed to vote represented a real threat to the power of the elite, the wealthy, the landed gentry and the aristocracy. Needless to say they opposed it vociferously arguing that the masses were unqualified (either by property ownership or education and breeding) or too stupid to be allowed to vote. Forced to concede demands for the vote, they rendered it impotent by corrupting democracy elsewhere.

In an insightful book written by Ken Livingstone he quipped “if voting changed anything they would abolish it,” pointing out that the powers that be had managed to defuse the revolutionary threat of universal suffrage by ensuring that all the candidates were supine and belonged to them.

And today politics in Britain is thoroughly corrupted by the role of big money, where the four mainstream parties spend tens of millions of pounds on election campaigns. Money largely provided by big business and it is to them the ‘democratic’ process is consequently beholden.

**For an end to politics dominated by big money where every MP is ‘for sale’**

*“The rank is but the guineas stamp, the man’s the gowd for a’ that”*

*Robert Burns, Is There for Honest Poverty?*

Politicians today are held in unprecedented contempt and that really is saying something considering how low they have been regarded throughout history. But today MPs are seen as greedy and morally corrupt. Anger at the outrageous Westminster expenses scandal has for the moment forced even the European gravy train into a publicity siding. The scandal came as no surprise to the SSP. It has been clear for a long time now that most MPs are in it to make money. It is their main motivation for entering politics. The SSP on the other hand is guided by the principles espoused by the legendary Scots socialist James Connolly who said “rise with your class not out of it”.

Consequently each elected SSP MSP takes a worker’s wage to make clear we represent working class people and remain connected to their economic reality.

**The Automatic Right of Recall**

The case made by The Levellers and others for Annual Parliaments was driven by a similar disgust at the corruption and its lack of redress open to the electorate. The case for introducing such measures today in light of the unending financial and political corruption at Westminster is stronger than ever.

**Where is our so-called ‘representative democracy’ today?**

*“We’ll hae ane fae amang ourselves, A man we ken and a’ that”*

*Robert Burns, The Ballad of Mr Heron’s Election, 1795*

Most MPs come from business and the professions like the law, accountancy and higher education. Where are the working class’s representatives? There are none. Consequently, Parliament continues to be completely out of touch with the people they purport to represent.

**Political democracy and economic democracy**

*“Either poverty will use democracy to win the struggle against property, or property, in fear of poverty will destroy democracy.”*

*Anuerin Bevan, In Place of Fear, 1951*

The Scottish Socialist Party also believes in extending democracy to business, industry and culture. We favour public ownership not privatisation in industry and

public service provision. End imprisonment for debt was also a demand made by The Levellers 400 years ago. And this long-standing demand has taken on a real poignancy in 2014 as there are finally plans to halt the imprisonment of those (mainly women) jailed for not paying their TV licence. It is a measure long overdue to move this 'offence' from the criminal code to civil debt recovery?

In the 1640s, The Levellers argued that "Parliament is run by rich men for rich men". True then it remains true today and few in Britain would surely contest the point. We are told that 40 per cent of voters no longer vote because they do not trust the political classes to represent them.

### **Extending and improving local democracy**

*"The greatest characters the world has known have risen on the democratic floor."*

*Thomas Paine on the French Revolution of 1792*

Lesley Riddoch's work, Blossom (2013), has many excellent suggestions to make in extending democracy in an independent Scotland comparing the level of civic involvement in all levels of government here with our Scandinavian neighbours. The turnout in local government elections is now so low that it endangers the democratic principle at its centre. There are frequently local government by elections where the turnout barely reaches 20 per cent. This level of engagement provides no meaningful mandate.

*"All men are born equal with equal natural rights. Equality is the natural state. Government by King was indefensible. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."*

*Thomas Paine, Common Sense, 1776*



## CHAPTER SIX

# INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

*“To elect, and to reject, is the prerogative of a free people everywhere.”*

*Thomas Paine, National Intelligence, 1802*

**IN REPLY TO A LETTER I HAD PUBLISHED IN THE SCOTSMAN ON THE NEED** for a modern democratic republic (published on 20 December 2013), columnist Joyce McMillan took me to task, claiming “[Colin Fox’s] idea that democracy and monarchy are incompatible just isn’t true; indeed if the Nordic states of north-west Europe represent a possible independent Scotland’s best role models, as small and prosperous countries in our part of the world, then it is surely worth noting that three out of five of them – Norway, Sweden and Denmark – have a constitutional monarch as head of state, despite being widely regarded as perhaps the most seriously democratic countries on the planet.”

Whilst Joyce McMillan points out our Scandinavian neighbours have frequently been referred to in the independence debate it is not because they have a constitutional monarchy but rather because they are examples of small, independent and largely social democratic countries with high standards of living and high quality public services. They also have higher levels of civic involvement than Britain.

But no one in this entire debate has extolled the fact they refuse to extend social democratic, egalitarian and modern values like elections and representative democracy. In Norway, for example, the Socialist Left Party has proposed abolition of the monarchy and enjoys considerable support. And in Sweden the monarch was stripped of all Executive Powers in 1975, including the power to appoint Prime Ministers and the Royal Assent. The monarch is no longer even the nominal Chief Executive in Sweden. Whilst there are constitutional monarchies in Sweden, Denmark and Norway they are equally anachronistic, criticised widely at home and unlikely to endure if their more influential ‘British cousins’ disappeared.

## INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

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Many will have noticed that Joyce did not tell us which other members of Britain's key competitor states in the G20 have a constitutional monarch as their Head of State? France? The USA? Germany? Italy? Russia? China? Brazil? India? No, no, no and no. Indeed in looking around the world today we note none of Britain's economic and political competitors employ the same constitutional arrangements as we do to enshrine their rule. And no wonder. Britain is the odd man out as the population sadly need reminding. We are completely out of step with a world striving for, and sometimes dying for, greater democratic rights and equality under the law.

Alex Salmond now insists "The Queen is Head of State of 15 Commonwealth countries and could easily perform the same function in an independent Scotland". But he fails to mention that 53 other Commonwealth countries refuse to have her as their Head of State<sup>11</sup>. And in Australia, for example, which has had three referenda on the matter in recent years, half the country want to end monarchical rule altogether. Jamaica, another one of the 15, has just voted to drop the Queen as their head of state and become a republic. The New Zealand Prime Minister went on record earlier this year saying he expects his country to be a republic by the end of the decade. And had Quebec secured its independence from Canada in its referendum it would have replaced the Queen as Head of State forthwith. Why doesn't the First Minister mention these facts? Could it be he feels himself to be on very shaky ground? Ultimately, Alex Salmond pits Scotland against the democratic tide worldwide.<sup>12</sup>

For the SSP the monarchy belongs in the middle Ages. It is a relic best referred to in a museum. It affronts our democratic intellect and enlightened sensibilities. The rest of the world is not full of admiration and envy of Britain's monarchy, as many would have us believe, rather they laugh out loud at the nonsense of it all. Britain's invented pomp, ludicrously choreographed ceremony, enforced deference, class hierarchy, its sinister overtones, celebration of totalitarian brutality and history of enslavement. These are not values the rest of the world envies, they are in fact often horrified by its implications.

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11. The official website of The British Monarchy [www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk) lists all 15 states that have the Queen as Head of State including Tuvalu and The Bahamas and the 53 others that do not which include India, South Africa, Pakistan, Cameroon and Sierra Leone.

12. First Minister Alex Salmond has also demanded a separate Scottish Coronation for 'King Charles III' post-independence, The Sunday Post, 20 April 2014.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# HOW DO WE SECURE A MODERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC FOR SCOTLAND?

*“We the undersigned call for an independent Scottish republic built upon the principles of liberty, equality, diversity and solidarity. We believe that sovereignty rests in the people. The government of a country is servant to the people, not master of the people.”*

*From The Declaration of Calton Hill, 9 October 2004*

**THE DESIRE FOR A REPUBLIC IN BRITAIN HAS BEEN PART OF OUR HISTORY** and culture for centuries. And it is a brave one for it involves a fundamental and powerful challenge to the British establishment. But those who seek to establish a republic must appreciate the full implications and be under no illusions about the seriousness of the task or the attacks that will confront them.

Our opponents will go to any lengths to maintain the status quo. They have powerful economic, social, political and military forces at their disposal. The British ruling classes have had no qualms about unleashing them.

Whilst republics are not inherently radical in and of themselves it is clear the British State will not give up the monarchy lightly. The United States, France, Germany, Russia, Italy and China all threw off their monarchs many years ago. Whilst none of them are great examples of modern democracies today they have, nonetheless, achieved something Britain has not as yet secured.

So under what circumstances could a republic be established in Britain in future? The 21st century oligarchy of unelected corporations might presently have no need for the Royal family other than to decorate their boardrooms and protect their profit-taking. Should the monarchy ever get in their way they would have no hesitation in arranging for its removal. There would however need to be a fierce conflict and schism between so called old money and new for such a threat to be



posed. Equally the organised working class might find the monarchy lined up against them too.

In chapter one, we posed the question: if it is right for Scotland to determine our own destiny surely our next step is to secure the power to elect our own Head of State in a modern, democratic republic?

### **Under what circumstances then might the monarchy be replaced?**

As a result of a democratic vote? Yes, certainly. The struggle for a modern, democratic, republic can only be won and maintained through democratic means.

After a profound constitutional and political crisis? Probably.

Perhaps via an abdication like that of Edwards VIII, who had clear sympathies with the Nazis? Or where the monarchy invokes widespread popular anger and opposition? Or where they are seen to impede the neoliberal power of capital? Or after a failed military coup such as the one that involved Lord Mountbatten plotting against an elected Labour government in the 1970s? Or where the ruling classes are forced to give them up in order to stave off wider political concessions or defeat?

Might Scottish independence precipitate a break with the UK monarchy?

Yes. If Scotland secures its independence should we have a referendum on

whether we want to keep the Queen as our Head of State or not? Yes, certainly.

In the course of these pages all the arguments offered by advocates of monarchy have been outlined and exposed. They present a case that is fundamentally outmoded, anti-democratic and irrational. For the Scottish Socialist Party, the British monarchy is an anachronism with no place in a world striving for greater equality and greater democracy. The SSP believes Scotland should use the opportunity this independence referendum brings to embrace a modern, democratic republic.

### **How do we campaign to secure a modern, democratic republic for Scotland?**

The first point to realise is what we are up against. Those who risk trivialising this very important issue will fail. For any campaign to secure a modern, democratic republic for Scotland to be successful it must enlist the support of the Scottish working class who are after all the vast majority of the population. And to do that means linking the issues of democracy and economic conditions. In other words we need to show how the material standard of living of the vast majority of Scots will be improved by such a step. Supporters of a modern, democratic republic must be able to illustrate how our goal of greater political democracy means greater economic democracy and higher living standards for the Scottish working class. The way forward must therefore involve building a strong democratic alliance that has majority support behind it and is based on the inviolable principles of democracy, equality, modernity and economic liberty.

Clearly the best way to campaign for such a goal is to join forces with those of like mind. There are many people who support a republic across Scotland. They may be attracted by the democratic arguments or the case against inequality and elitism. They may be socialists. They may not. There will be those who see the route to a Scottish republic via independence or those who see a UK-wide republic as preferable. The SSP is committed to working alongside all those determined to build a modern, democratic republic.

The London-based campaign group Republic advocates the abolition of the monarchy in favour of a British republic. The SSP is affiliated (see [republic.org.uk](http://republic.org.uk)).

*“Though we have been wise enough to shut and lock the door against absolute monarchy, we at the same time have been foolish enough to put the crown in possession of the key.”*

*Thomas Paine, Common Sense, 1776*



## INDEX

# THE DECLARATION OF CALTON HILL

**WE THE UNDERSIGNED CALL FOR AN INDEPENDENT SCOTTISH REPUBLIC** built on the principles of liberty, equality, diversity and solidarity.

These principles can never be put into practice while Scotland remains subordinate to the hierarchical and anti-democratic institutions of the British State.

We believe these principles can be brought about by a freely elected Scottish Government with full control of Scotland's revenues.

We believe that the right to self determination is an inherent right, and not a boon or a favour to be granted to us whether by the Crown or the British State.

We believe that sovereignty rests in the people and vow to fight for the right to govern ourselves for the benefit of all those living in Scotland today, tomorrow and in future times. The Government of a country is servant to the people, not master of the people.

We believe that a written Constitution will guarantee, under law, everyone's right to freely vote, speak and assemble; and will guarantee the people's right to privacy and protection, and access to information on all its Government's doings.

We vow to fight for the power to refuse to send our sons and daughters to kill and die in unjust wars in foreign lands.

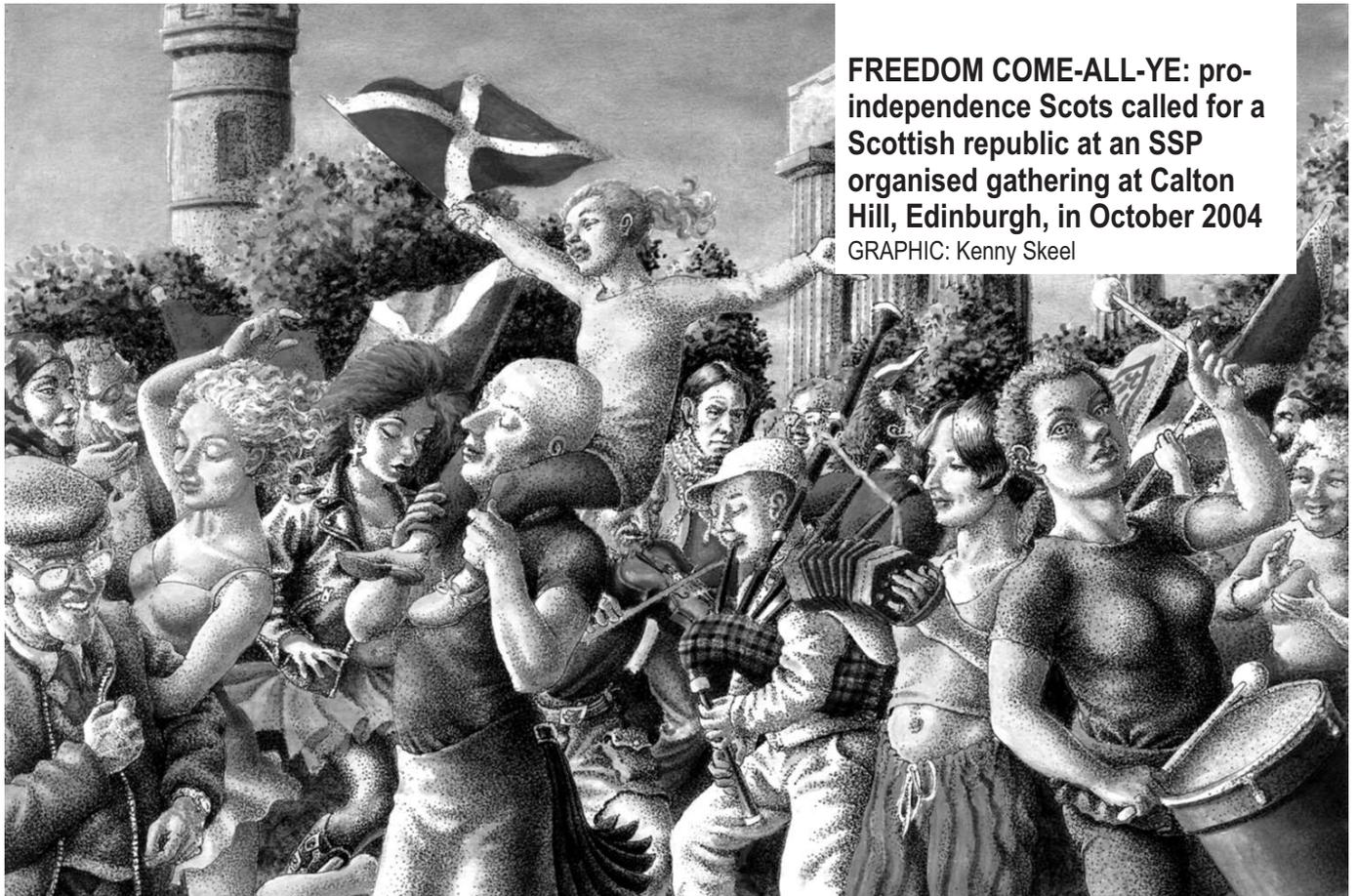
We vow to fight for the power to banish nuclear weapons of mass destruction from our land.

We vow to fight for the power to acquire and restrict the use of property or lands controlled by individuals, corporations or governments from beyond Scotland's borders.

We vow to fight for the power to turn our depopulated land into a haven for those fleeing famine and persecution.

We vow to fight for the power to build a more equal society, free of poverty, through the redistribution of our vast wealth.

We vow to fight for the power to protect our soil, seas and rivers for our children



and for the generations to come. We swear to oppose all forms of national chauvinism, imperialism and racism. We swear to oppose all forms of discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnic origin, religion, place of birth, age, disability, sexuality or language.

We aim for an independent Scottish republic in which people may live with dignity and with self respect, free from exploitation, assuming the responsibilities of free women and men.

An independent Scottish republic will negotiate freely and as an equal with governments of other lands.

Our aim is not to erect walls of separation, but to build an outward-looking, Scotland that will extend the hand of friendship to all the peoples of the world.

We vow to continue the struggle for a free, democratic Scottish republic for as long as it may take.

The fight is for freedom.

Sincerely,  
The Undersigned

9 October 2004

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# Donate to the SSP's indy appeal

**THE SSP** has registered with the Electoral Commission as a Yes campaigner for the independence referendum in September. The SSP, unlike the Tory and Labour joint-unionist campaign, have no friends in big business to bankroll our campaign. Our independence campaign appeal fund has a target of £50,000. Although this is a massive amount for the SSP to raise, we will achieve our target with your continuing support.

- Make a PayPal payment to: jim\_sspfinance@gmail.com
- Send a cheque to 'SSP Independence Appeal Fund' and return to Jim McVicar, SSP National Treasurer, Suite 307, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD
- Text 07810205747 with your pledge amount and email address if you have one
- Bank transfer: SSP Appeal Fund Account, Co-operative Bank, Sort Code 08-92-99 / Account No. 65094637

- Or donate via your local Scottish Socialist Party branch

If you want to help with the appeal fund, or if you need any more details, contact Jim McVicar on 07810205747 or email: jimmcvicar.scottishsocialistparty@hotmail.com

However you choose to pledge, please text Jim McVicar the details so we can keep track of all donations. Thank you.

The SSP's pamphlet on socialist independence by SSP co-spokesperson Colin Fox. Order your copy: [scottishsocialistparty.tictail.com](http://scottishsocialistparty.tictail.com)  
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**Our case for extending reason and democracy today belongs in that Scottish Enlightenment tradition. Feudal institutions based on hereditary privileges and divine rights passed down to monarchs from 'The Almighty' have no part to play in modern political structures and democratic constitutions let alone at their apex. The British monarchy is clearly not modern, it is patently not democratic and it is certainly not egalitarian. Yet such values are uppermost in working class people's ambitions today for the type of world we wish to see.**

**Those who argue in favour of keeping the monarchy on the grounds that she brings in millions of tourists might wish to reflect on the fact the Queen's home at Windsor Castle was only the 24th most popular tourist attraction in the UK last year. As the campaign group Republic points out, York Railway museum drew more crowds than any Royal attraction last year. So perhaps we should make Thomas the Tank Engine our Head of State?**

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