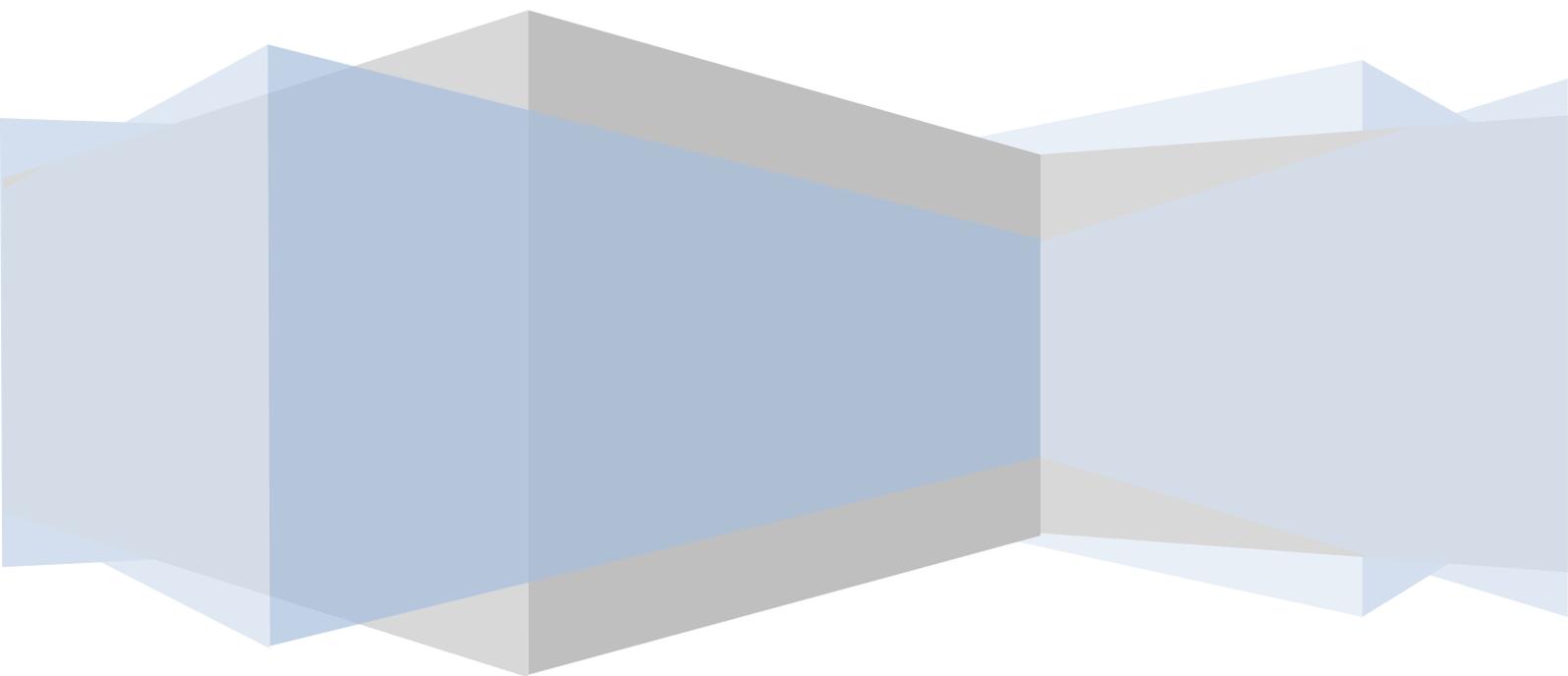




Wales and Europe

Developing a renewed agenda



Ideas Wales is committed to the renewal of political ideas and policy options for Wales. Where achievements have been made we seek to build on them. Where there are continuing problems we seek to think afresh on how to solve them. Where there are new challenges we seek to develop long-term approaches to face up to them. In so doing we will draw on our historical traditions in Wales and Britain; and we will draw on good ideas and practice from around the world. Above all we will seek to overcome the cynical attitude that politics must disappoint, and relate political ideas practically to the lived experiences of people throughout Wales. We will rule no particular approaches in or out.

Seeking to re-launch the debate and exchange of ideas this is the first in a series of papers to be developed across 2013. Our ambition is to start to engage with academics, practitioners, campaigners and Labour Party members across Wales and beyond to develop ideas and policy recommendations for a fairer, sustainable and prosperous Wales under a Labour government.

Last year at the Labour Festival of Ideas we ran a session on the potential for community currencies as a means of developing sustainable local economies in Wales. At this year's Festival we launch a series of papers on Wales and the European Union introduced by Labour MEP Derek Vaughan.

The ideas outlined in this pamphlet seek to start the debate across the Labour party in Wales on the direction its policy should develop. But it is also a starting point for Ideas Wales. Throughout 2013 we will be seeking to build on this paper and develop future papers into other policy areas. We hope that you will engage in this process and participate in Ideas Wales future debates and publications.

Find out more about Ideas Wales at: <http://ideaswales.wordpress.com/>

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FOREWORD

This Ideas Wales paper could not come at a more opportune time with media coverage of the EU at an all-time high, albeit from an angle heavily influenced towards Euroscepticism and rightwing parties.

Wales has a longstanding tradition of internationalism and of welcoming cooperation with others. It is something that we, particularly in Welsh Labour, continue to be proud of and we should not succumb to pressure and shirk away from putting the positive case for continuing engagement within the European context.

The relationships built up between the people of Wales and the democratic institutions that act on their behalf are fluid and subject to ongoing change.

In Cardiff Bay we have devolution, not so long ago derided in some quarters as unnecessary, but which is now a stable and developing process and a settled part of Welsh political life. With a Labour Welsh Government delivering on policies that have social justice at their heart and providing a much needed buffer from the rigid austerity dogma coming from Tory-Lib Dem coalition in Westminster, it is a clear signal of Wales becoming a nation that is comfortable within its own skin.

There is also a clear acceptance that Wales is stronger as part of a United Kingdom than it would be outside it. Support for a breakaway from the existing union is minimal and, although the independence debate in Scotland is high on the agenda there, again in Wales there appears to be no such call to follow their lead on this issue.

It is at the European level that questions have begun to be asked and, therefore, it is vital that we take the time to reassess the roles of both Wales and the UK in the EU, look at the wider aspects that positive and full engagement can bring in economic, social and environmental terms and look at not only what Europe can do for us but what we can do for the rest of the EU.

For far too long the subject of Europe has been seen through the narrow confines of EU funding, immigration and an alleged usurping of our daily lives by a stream of unnecessary and overly bureaucratic regulations issued from Brussels without a second thought as to how they will affect local people. Often overlooked is the valuable jobs and investment created as a result of our links with our continental partners, the increased influence on the world stage we have by being part of a grouping that covers five hundred million people across 27 Member States and the ground-breaking protection of consumer, environmental and working rights that have come from the EU directly benefitting our communities in the process.

Rarely mentioned, of course, is perhaps the greatest achievement by the EU of all - fulfilment of the longest period of peace amongst the major European nations by bringing



people with different languages, cultures and histories together in the pursuit of shared economic and political aims.

The next few years will be key in deciding what kind of European Union it is that we want to be a part of.

First, EU budget setting remains problematic but the priorities for 2014-2020 have already been set out and include smart and inclusive growth, sustainable growth, Global Europe and Security & Citizenship. Major reform is clearly needed in areas such as the Common Agricultural Policy and the crazy alternation between Brussels and Strasbourg as a venue for Parliamentary proceedings in order to make the European Union more efficient and more in line with the needs of the modern world. However the concentration of the Coalition Government appears to be on headline figures only and not the impact on the ground that any sizeable cuts would have in Wales. By arguing for indiscriminate cuts across the board, Structural Funding will take a hit, reducing the level of EU investment in communities across Wales that is required to address long term disparities in education, skills and economic competitiveness. I have been working with the Welsh Government to try and make up any deficit by maximising the utilisation of other EU funding sources and mechanisms and we are hopeful of achieving that aim. The message, though, is clear in that the way future EU budgets are allocated will have a huge influence on the difference that can be made in tackling social and economic problems at home and abroad. If we are not careful, funding which has been successfully used to cushion the blows of austerity policies from Westminster, will soon be subjected to a similarly misguided austerity drive across the EU as a whole.

Second, in May 2014, voters will go to the polls to decide the political make up of the European Parliament. Of great concern is the rise of the far right, both in other Member States but also closer to home in the form of UKIP, and the threat to individual freedoms and liberty that this brings. Undoubtedly, whilst it will be welcome to see greater scrutiny of UKIP policies and candidates, we should never forget their close links in the European Parliament to various groupings that openly push a xenophobic, racist and hate filled agenda.

Each major political party will have their own targets in mind as to what will constitute a successful election campaign but we must do all that we can to increase the number of Socialist MEPs across the board, starting with at least one more in Wales that is currently the case. If Wales is to have a stronger voice in the European Parliament then it is essential that Welsh Labour increases its vote from our position in 2009 to elect another MEP at a minimum. Inevitably the election will be decided by a mix of European as well as domestic issues but our strategy must be based on robust advocacy of reform of the EU, not exit, a clear explanation of the benefits of our EU membership and a comprehensive rebuttal of the anti-EU myths that have become commonplace in political discussions up and down the land.

Last, but by no means least, is the prospect of an in-out referendum, should there be a Conservative majority government as a result of the 2015 General Election. Ed Miliband is right to stand firm in the face of intense pressure and refuse to match the pledge to hold an

ill-defined referendum at an unknown point sometime in the future. David Cameron is playing a dangerous game simply to placate embittered right wingers within his own party and gambling with the national interest into the bargain. By creating unnecessary uncertainty and damaging confidence in our economy, he is putting at risk jobs, growth and inward investment at the worst possible time. It has been embarrassing watching a Prime Minister weakening our influence in the EU and our ability to shape its future when we need to be leading a reforming and constructive policy agenda instead.

I welcome the positive contributions in this Ideas Wales paper and look forward to playing a part in the debate over the next twelve months as we approach the European Elections. Each author sets out the history of their own particular sector within the European context and sums up the challenges that are ahead. It is exactly this sort of honest, realistic assessment and debate that needs to be had if we are to continue to build on the steadfast foundations of the EU for many more years to come.

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Food and Procurement: How the power of purchase can secure values for money

Kevin Morgan

It is well known that governments have been rendered powerless to act by the twin pressures of globalisation and austerity. Well known perhaps, but quite wrong. The notion that governments are powerless victims of circumstance is one of the most pernicious and disempowering notions around today. To counter this noxious idea we need to identify compelling narratives in which the public realm – by which I mean governments at all levels as well as their associated public sector bodies – is promoting sustainable development in its own estate and helping the private and third sectors to follow suit.

This is nowhere more important than in the agri-food sector because food, though it is invariably treated as a conventional sector of the economy, has a unique status in our lives. Why is this? Because we literally ingest food and therefore it is vital to human health and wellbeing in a way that all other products are not. We need to remember this simple but fundamental point because food must never be reduced to the status of a conventional industrial sector.

The rise of urban and regional food policy

Food policy has been dominated for so long by national and international policy-making bodies that one might think that cities and regions have little or no capacity to shape the food system because they lack the powers or the appetite to do so. Even though they may lack “the full toolkit” of policies, they are not without powers to reform the food system. As cities are in the forefront of the new food policy paradigm, let us briefly look at what some urban food pioneers are doing to fashion more sustainable foodscapes.

Within the new food policy repertoire the most powerful food policy that cities have at

their disposal is their very own procurement policy, what I call the power of purchase. The power of purchase has been shown to be very effective when it is part of a healthy public food provisioning programme. One of the most impressive examples of an urban procurement policy is Malmo, the third biggest city in Sweden, which plans to provide 100 percent organic food in all its public catering services by 2020, which includes public nurseries, school canteens and residential care homes. Originally designed as a climate-friendly food experiment, the urban procurement policy in Malmo is also used to promote the city’s public health agenda. Significantly, the extra cost of organic ingredients has been offset by reducing the amount of meat in the diet and by using more seasonal fruit and vegetables, making the organic transition a largely cost-neutral exercise. Although public canteens are an important part of the urban foodscape in many countries, they tend to be a forgotten foodscape because they lack the visibility of the globally branded fast food industry. Malmo merits attention because it is using the power of purchase to convey two very important messages: (i) that public canteens are a vital part of the new urban foodscape and (ii) that city governments are far from powerless to shape these new foodscapes.

Other cities and regions in Europe are also deploying the power of purchase to create a healthier and more sustainable food system. In Italy, for example, cities and regions operate within a national culture that values local and seasonal produce, a tradition that ensures that food is as fresh and as wholesome as possible. This culinary tradition is embodied in one of the most imaginative food education programmes in Europe and it goes under the name of *Cultura che Nutre* – Culture that Feeds. This programme is designed to help children to learn about the links between products and places so that they learn from a very early age what comes from where. This is a big contrast to the British food culture, which has been likened to a Placeless Foodscape on account of the fact that food has been commodified and

rendered anonymous, with the result that the historical connection between places and products has been rent asunder. This helps to explain why so many people in the UK – adults and children alike – know little or nothing about the provenance of their food.

Exploding the Myths of EU Regulation

These contrasting food cultures help to explain a major mystery in European public policy: why are there such big differences in public procurement policy and practice when all member states have to comply with the same EU regulations?

Our research on creative public food procurement suggests that the answer to this mystery lies in the interplay between culture and politics. In Italy there is strong political support for procurement policies that help to foster rather than frustrate the cultural values associated with a fresh, seasonal and sustainable food culture. This Italian experience also explodes the myth – a myth that is widely assumed to be true in many British public procurement circles - that EU regulations are a barrier to the purchase of locally-produced, fresh and seasonal produce for schools, hospitals and other public canteens.

To ensure that public procurement policies are compatible with the European Single Market, the European Commission has designed an elaborate set of regulations to police every stage of the process. Although it is true that these regulations are far too complex for most people to understand – which is why they are currently being reformed – the fact of the matter is that they do not prevent public bodies from using their power of purchase in creative ways if those public bodies have the wit and the will to do so. We need to remember three things when we enter the arcane world of EU public procurement regulations:

First and foremost, all public bodies must comply with the principles of the Single Market – namely, transparency, non-

discrimination and equal treatment of all tenderers;

Second, contracting authorities are not obliged to choose “the lowest price” tender because they have the option of awarding the contract to “the most economically advantageous tender”, in which case they have to use criteria linked to the subject matter of the contract in question (such as quality, price, technical merit, aesthetic and functional features, after-sales service, delivery date etc);

Third, the precedents set by case law have driven recent innovations in award criteria, especially the use of social and environmental criteria. In the famous “Helsinki Bus Case”, the European Court of Justice set a new legal precedent when it ruled that the City of Helsinki was justified in using an environmental criterion – the amount of pollution created by different types of bus – as the basis for awarding a contract for a new generation of buses in the city, a ruling that laid the legal basis for green and sustainable procurement in the EU.

The advent of social and environmental criteria should make it easier for public bodies to use their power of purchase to buy healthier and more sustainable food for their clients. The public realm needs to be in the forefront of this process because their clients – pupils, patients, pensioners and prisoners for example – are among the most vulnerable people in society and we have a special duty of care towards them. EU regulations do not prevent public bodies discharging this duty of care through the provision of healthy meals. Although it is illegal to specify the use of a local product – like Welsh lamb – in a public contract, it is perfectly legal to specify a whole series of quality criteria – like organic, seasonal, fairly-traded, certified etc – which enables public bodies to purchase locally-produced products in all but name.

This is the “secret” of public procurement policy in Italy, where they use quality criteria to ensure that public bodies comply with EU regulations even when they are using their power of purchase to secure values for

money. Public bodies in the UK have been much slower to realise the simple truth that EU regulations enable as much as they constrain if – and it is a very big if – the public sector has the competence and the confidence to use the regulations in a creative fashion.

Deploying the Power of Purchase in Wales

With the advent of democratic devolution, Wales has been in the forefront of the debate about sustainable food policy, though all too often the reality has lagged behind the rhetoric. Procurement is one of the key instruments through which the public realm can help to fashion a sustainable food nation in Wales, so let us explore the scope and limits of this policy.

After taxation and regulation, public procurement is the third major policy instrument through which the public realm can effect major social and economic change. In Wales the public procurement budget is more than \$4 billion per annum, of which \$71.35million was spent on food according to the 2010 Welsh Public Sector Food Purchasing Survey. The value of Welsh food within that total was estimated to be \$16.4 million. This represented a growth in total public food purchases of 23% in the period 2003-2009, compared to a growth of 39% in the value of Welsh origin purchases over the same period. Clearly, progress is being made, albeit slowly, and we await the results of the 2012 survey to see if progress has been maintained.

Two factors have stymied the growth of local food procurement in Wales: (i) a highly fragmented public sector and (ii) a chronic public sector skills deficit.

The fragmentation of the public sector in Wales stems from the fact that there are some 100 public sector bodies purchasing food in Wales, though the most significant sectors are local authorities, NHS and higher education. Although collaborative procurement is becoming more common, there is still far too much variability between

leaders and laggards in the Welsh public sector, especially in the local government sector.

The chronic skills deficit is an even greater problem. A simple good practice rule in public procurement circles recommends that every \$15 million of public spending should equate to one qualified Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply manager. When applied to Wales in 2012 it was found that the Welsh public sector was short of some 174 professionals. If a public body lacks competence it will also lack the confidence to innovate, with the result that good practice is likely to be the exception rather than the norm. Creative food procurement is possible even in conditions of public sector austerity, but it is not possible in the context of a public sector skills deficit. The Home-Grown Talent project, managed by Value Wales and funded by the European Social Fund, will go some way to plug this chronic skills deficit, but it will not solve it. Value Wales, the procurement agency of the Welsh Government, needs to be better resourced if it is to help public bodies in Wales to deploy their power of purchase more creatively, above all to counter austerity and promote sustainable development in the public realm.

Wales in Europe: Five Policy Proposals

Five policy proposals would seem to emerge from the above analysis:

First, the need to ensure that public bodies in Wales have a better understanding of EU public procurement regulations. Without a better knowledge of the “rules of the game” the public sector in Wales will be unable to deploy the power of purchase to promote a more sustainable food system, which is the foundation of health and well being;

Second, the need to appreciate the implications of the EU reform of public procurement that will take effect in 2014. The aim of the reform is to simplify the regulations and to make it easier to use the regulations to

promote the interests of SMEs and socially-excluded sections of the population;

Third, the need to utilise the new round of Structural Funds for the 2014-2020 programming period for projects that have a transformational impact. One of these projects could be to scale up the ESF-funded Home-Grown Talent project, which is designed to counter the procurement skills deficit in the Welsh public sector;

Fourth, the need to think beyond the Structural Funds and realise that the Horizon 2020 programme¹ of research and development, one of the flagships of Europe 2020, offers an unprecedented opportunity to use public procurement to address the societal challenges of climate change, healthy ageing, renewable energy, sustainable mobility and food security;

Finally, and most importantly, the need to use the public realm to disseminate the idea that all institutions have a food policy: some practice it by design to ensure that good food is served on their premises, others practice it by default and are oblivious to the quality of the food on their premises, which means they have abdicated their duty of care to their employees or clients. As a major food producing nation, with a population that has some of the highest rates of diet-related disease in Europe, Wales has the need and the duty to be in the forefront of public policies that promote sustainable development.

¹ Horizon 2020 is the financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union, a Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness

What does PISA mean for education in Wales?

David Egan

Introduction

The results of PISA (The Programme for International Student Assessment) undertaken by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) in 2006 and 2009 have led to considerable debate about the quality of our education system in Wales. The 2009 results, in particular, played a major part in the decision of Leighton Andrews, the Welsh Government Education and Skills Minister to introduce a radical action plan designed to improve educational performance in Wales.

This reaction to PISA and the outcomes it has led to, have not been without their critics. Respected policy academics and policymakers inside and outside of Wales have suggested that PISA is only one indicator of the quality of an education system and needs to be considered in the round alongside other measures of student achievement. Some of these critics have also argued that PISA as a technical measure of comparative student ability across very different education systems has potential and actual weaknesses. This has led to the suggestion that politicians in some, but by no means all, administrations have used a partial and imperfect measure of student ability as evidence to drive a political reform agenda? Should international test results drive national education policy, they ask.

This paper will argue that PISA does indeed have important messages for the education system and future education policy in Wales and that the outcomes of PISA are consistent with other important indicators of national educational performance. It concludes that whilst the action plan introduced by Leighton Andrews on behalf of the Welsh Government is the right response to the challenges we face: that implementation of these policies will need time to become embedded. In

particular, it argues that the key factor of improving equity of performance will require new approaches to delivering education policy that reach beyond schools and unite them with family and community interventions.

In this respect Europe is critically important. The next round of EEC Structural Funding for Wales which begins in 2014 provides a unique opportunity to address the issues of improved performance and equity in Wales, if the PISA effect on the education system in Wales is to be as profound as it should be, that opportunity must not be missed.

PISA: Some Facts

PISA are skills based tests taken by an agreed sample of 15 year olds across participating OECD nations at three year intervals. Unlike GCSE or the assessments undertaken by our children at the ages of 7, 11 and 14 they do not test knowledge and understanding of a prescribed curriculum, but assess the generic skills of students in mathematics, reading and science. The tests are practical and present students with problem solving approaches.

PISA tests have been set since 1997. The Welsh Government decided in 2005 that it would participate for the first time in PISA in 2006. This was a recognition that a devolved Wales should look towards international comparisons for its increasingly distinct education system and move away from the historic comparisons that were generally made between England and Wales. This was in line with the policy of the Welsh Government set out in its highly regarded education policy statement The Learning Country of 2001 that committed Wales to developing a world-class education system.

The outcomes of the 2006 PISA tests for Wales were disappointing, but provided a baseline for future participation. The performance of our 15 year olds was the weakest of the UK nations and towards the middle range for OECD countries as a whole. The most significant response of the Welsh

Government to these outcomes was the development of a School Effectiveness Framework. This was based on the evidence that the most successful education systems in the world ensured that high performance was generalised across the schools system and that the quality of teaching and of school leadership were strengthened as being the key contributory factors to this.

The 2009 PISA results came as a considerable shock. Relative to our 2006 performance, compared to other UK nations and against international comparators our performance worsened. This all suggested that more radical responses may be required to improve the performance of the education system in Wales.

Before moving on to consider what these responses have been, it is worth noting one of the major dilemmas that the PISA results had thrown up for education policy in Wales. Generally other indicators of educational achievement had suggested that steady progress was being made. Assessments carried out by teachers (to national guidelines) of 7, 11 and 14 year olds all showed steady progress over the ten years of devolution. GCSE results for 15/16 year olds showed similar levels of progress in students achieving 5 or more GCSEs at any grade (known as a Level 1 qualification) and 5 or more GCSEs at the higher grades of *A-C(a Level 2 qualification).

Even before participation in PISA, however, there were in fact counter-indicators that challenged this rosy picture. Achievement by children in Wales at ages 7 and 11 were generally ahead of those in England. At the age of 14, however, and particularly in GCSE outcomes at ages 15/16 (the same age when the PISA tests were being sat) gaps had opened up in the comparative performance of Welsh and English students. Part of this could be explained by the differences in the socio-economic make-up of Wales as a nation compared to England, but in fact when comparisons were made with similar regions of England, the gaps still existed.

Why was it that student achievement appeared to be ahead of England at the ages of 7 and 11 and only slightly behind at 14 year olds and why if all of these indicators appeared to be moving in the right direction, accompanied by Estyn consistently reporting on good progress within the Welsh education system, were our 15 year olds not doing well in both GCSE results and international tests at the age of 15?

In this respect the reliability of teacher assessments at 11 and 14 have been called into question. It is a moot point as to whether these became less reliable after 2001 when Wales began to move away from national testing (SATS) and rely solely on teacher judgements, but they clearly were out of line with PISA skills tests at the age of 15.

It has also been argued that comparisons between Wales and England in relation to Level 2 outcomes are unfair, as English schools were encouraged under the Labour Government to widely adopt equivalent vocational qualifications in a way that had not been promoted by the Welsh Government or taken up by secondary schools.

This is of course true, but given that the more recent key measurement in England and Wales has become what is known as Level 2+ (or Level 2 Inclusive): 5 or more GCSEs at * A-C including English and Mathematics, this is a much better fit with the PISA concentration on levels of literacy and numeracy. Here the picture seems much more consistent: students in Wales are performing below the other UK nations and many international comparators in the achievement of a level of educational competence by the age of 15 that will enable them to proceed to a good post-16 (AS/A level or vocational equivalent) course of their choice and hopefully on to further and/or, higher education and eventually employment.

What employers, colleges and universities would be seeking as a key indicator, far too few, therefore, of our 15 year olds were

achieving. Whatever inconsistencies and infelicities there may be about how we measure the achievement of our children at the ages of 7, 11 and 14, when they reached the ages of 15 and 16 far too many of them were not reaching the levels that would enable them to fulfil their potential, to enjoy future prosperity and to deliver the world-class education system that Wales as a devolved nation had made one of its key objectives. Whatever technical or presentational issues might exist in relation to PISA, this could not be ignored. In relation to the Welsh Government's decision to enter PISA, it had done what it said it would do 'on the tin'.

Responding to PISA

The, then, recently appointed Education and Skills Minister, Leighton Andrews, reacted decisively to the outcomes of PISA 2009 when they were announced. Over the period that has evolved since, he has resolutely developed an action plan designed to improve achievement in the education system in Wales and its future performance in PISA.

The headlines of his reform programme include:

Encouraging and supporting much greater focus in Wales' schools on the PISA tests.

Developing a National Literacy and Numeracy Framework, including national reading and numeracy testing, designed to ensure that these key areas for PISA and GCSE outcomes are strengthened.

Strengthening the quality of teaching in schools through the sharing of effective practice, the introduction of the highly successful Teach First programme into Wales and the creation of a unique Masters in Educational Practice that is available to all newly qualified teachers.

Transforming local authority support for schools in Wales through the introduction of Regional School Improvement Consortia and

consideration of further reforms influenced by international evidence on the important role which an effective 'middle level' between national governments and schools can have in achieving outstanding education systems.

Supporting the new inspection cycle in Wales which has seen sharper Estyn judgements of schools and particularly local authority performance.

Can These Responses Work?

It is too soon to tell how effective this reform will be. GCSE Level 2 and Level 2+ outcomes are improving slowly but are still behind those being achieved in England and in comparable regions in England. The next round of PISA tests were sat in the autumn of 2012 and the results will be known by the end of the year. There is not a general air of optimism about the likely outcomes for Wales and perhaps an acceptance that it will be too early to judge of the reform programme introduced since 2010 has begun to work. It is generally agreed that the PISA outcomes of 2015 will be a much stronger indicator.

Can this approach, eventually, work? I would suggest that the answer is yes, but with significant provisos. There is now a good body of evidence from our own education system and from those around the UK, Europe and the world on how the performance of educational systems can be maximised. Whilst we know that templates do not work, with 'policy learning' being a far more effective approach than 'policy borrowing', most of that body of evidence, building upon the School Effectiveness Framework, has been appropriately adapted and skilfully applied by Leighton Andres and his department.

Will that alone be enough? The answer has to be probably no. There are two reasons why this is likely to be the case. The first is the issue of equity in the education system in Wales. The second is the related context of what we know about low educational achievement and how to overcome it.

Educational systems around the world are inequitable with the greatest gap being between those who live and don't live in poverty. Some are more equitable than others: Wales is typical of those with the greatest amounts of inequity. There are various ways of presenting this, but in essence it can be portrayed starkly by reverting to the Level 2+ indicators which, by common consent, is a powerful indicator of the future life trajectories of our 15/16 year olds.

In most areas of Wales about 50-60% of young people who do not live in poverty will attain this outcome. In the case of children receiving free school meals and living in poverty, this will be less than twenty per cent and can be as low as 15%. Thirteen years in the education system in Wales and up to 85% of 15 year olds leaving without a level of qualification which at that time should gain them a good place in college, a chance of apprenticeship, a possibility of going to university and a decent job with career progression.

This is the great fault line in education in Wales; it sits below all the performance indicators, the GCSE scores and of course the PISA results.

This situation is fully recognised in the plans of the Welsh Government. Leighton Andrews has three national priorities: to improve literacy, to improve numeracy and to narrow the gap in performance associated with poverty. He constantly reminds anyone who will listen of this and never has the profile of the poverty agenda in Welsh education been higher. What he has inherited is the historical legacy of an industrial nation where skills were often acquired in work and qualifications were for those who wanted a different trajectory and of a post-industrial society where this has never been fully faced up to. We now have a Government and an Education Minister that get it.

So what to do to tackle this huge challenge? This is where the knowledge base that we have on low educational achievement comes

into play. Schools, teachers and learning make a big difference, particularly to those students who need them most and who generally are those living in our poorest homes and communities. They do not, however, matter the most. The evidence from school improvement projects, practice and research from around the world makes clear that the influence of schools can add up to about 20% of the difference in student performance. Much more influential is the influence of parents, families and the communities they come from.

If we are to get it right in Wales- and we can- we have to recognise this and that the Tackling Poverty Action Plan of the Welsh Government has a key role to play: ensuring that policies aimed at families and communities (Families First, Communities First and others) are aligned to the Education Action Plan in order to achieve the necessary holistic approach to tackling educational disadvantage and closing achievement gaps.

Whilst the analysis has focused on a comparative analysis between England and Wales, it is through a link with Europe that the necessary holistic approach can be provided. The next round of Structural Funding can play a hugely significant role in achieving this holistic response, through its focus on poverty, early intervention and developing the skills profiles of our most disadvantaged communities.

PISA has and will continue to play an important part in the development of education policy in Wales. It is, however, but the tip of an iceberg formed by the deep inequity of educational performance that is present in our educational system Wales.

Conclusion

What then would be my five policy ideas to ensure that we have learned from PISA enables us to develop education policy in Wales to meet these challenges?:

Persist relentlessly with the Education Action Plan developed by Leighton Andrews and the Welsh Government.

Ensure that the Welsh Government Tackling Poverty Action Plan develops a school/family/community approach focused on educational inequity.

Use the next round of European Structural Funds to support both of the above.

Develop the Harlem Children's Zone model¹ of the Obama administration in the USA as a community-based approach to tackling educational low achievement in Wales.

Develop a Co-operative model of school governance in order to achieve stronger family and community involvement with schools and education.²

¹ See <http://hcz.org/index.php>

² See last year's Ideas Wales Thoughts Vol I on Co-operative Councils:
<http://ideaswales.wordpress.com/2013/01/18/co-operative-councils-a-welsh-approach/>

Constitutional Change in Europe and the UK: what might it mean for Wales?

Francesca Dickson

For Wales, famously and unhappily omitted from the map of an enlarged EU in 2004, two very different types of constitutional debates are casting a long shadow over the future of relations with our European neighbours. On the one hand, a proposed UK-wide referendum on membership of the EU looks likely to take place early in the next Parliament. Not only are the potential implications of a 'no' vote unquestioningly profound, the simple presence of this question on the front-benches of UK, and particularly English, politics could have equally important implications for a second referenda: that on Scottish independence. Indeed, this ballot, scheduled for autumn 2014, forms part of a wider series of constitutional debates currently taking place in some of Europe's most powerful regions and sub-state nations. Far from questioning whether or not to remain inside the EU, these regions are contemplating independence; the prospect of joining the Union as a sovereign Member State forming an essential tenet of such proposals.

The two-year period between 2010 and 2012 saw a succession of 'nationalist' parties either take or consolidate control of regional parliaments across Europe. In Catalonia, popular protest, spurred by a deep dissatisfaction with Catalonia's accommodation inside a Spanish state steadfastly refusing to recognise national differences, led a coalition of Catalan separatist parties to power. Though secession remains illegal under the Spanish Constitution, a vote on independence has been scheduled by the Catalan coalition for 2014. In Flanders, the nationalist New Flemish Alliance are now the biggest political force, though the government has played down talk of secession, and instead is pushing for the

establishment of a Belgian confederation in which the Dutch-speaking north has fiscal independence. We in Wales know the Scottish story well, but it is worth re-emphasising here both the scale of the SNP's electoral success in 2011, achieving an outright majority for the first time, and the fairly accommodating manner in which the UK Government has responded to the prospect on an independence referendum.

Though dissatisfaction with the status quo is much deeper, with its roots firmly in cultural, historical or linguistic matters, in each of these cases economic factors – and in particular the issue of financial subsidy, have reared their heads. Certainly, both Scotland and Catalonia have become poster-children for other regions discontent with devolved or federal arrangements, and in the oppressive context of economic stagnation. Italy's Lega Nord and the Basque National Party will be following these developments very closely indeed, but the debates have also catalysed interest in regions with relatively weak separatist movements, such as Bavaria.

Given the political and economic profile of 'stateless nations' such as Scotland and Catalonia, a move towards pursuing independence – as opposed to working to achieve maximum autonomy and policy input for a distinct regional level within the EU, undoubtedly changes the context that other cognate regions now face. Any wind remaining in the sails of a 'Europe of the Regions' movement may well have been finally knocked out by the effective loss of some of its key proponents.

Wales, as part of the UK state and as a relatively strong European region, thus finds itself somewhere between a rock and a hard place. Amidst the fervent debates taking place following UKIP's recent successes, and a subsequent hardening of the rhetoric on all things European, how can Wales ensure that its, some would argue pro-, but certainly pragmatically European, voice continues to be heard both at the UK and EU levels? Speculating further into the future, how

would Wales' input into European policy making be ensured if Scotland's referendum proves affirmative, and the make-up of the UK itself is fundamentally recast? Lastly, with the attentions of powerful European co-regions elsewhere, and in the context of a deep financial crisis dominating the attention of EU institutions and Member States, how can regions such as Wales ensure that the regional layer of EU policy maintains its all-important momentum?

Essentially, the challenges facing Wales in the context of these very different genres of constitutional debate are twofold. Firstly, there is the continued ability of Wales to effectively upstream its European policy preferences to the UK government and to maintain the relatively privileged position that it holds in terms of direct access to European policy making. Secondly, there is a somewhat more amorphous challenge that is manifested directly at the European level. This is related to the role of the regional tier of government, per se, in the European project. If one accepts the principles of subsidiarity, of decisions being made at the lowest appropriate level, then there is certainly a normative argument to be made for the proper representation of regional interests at the European level. For regions such as Wales, without a dominant independence movement yet with considerable devolved competences (competences which often overlap with the EU's own areas of responsibility), the challenge is thus ensuring that 'multi-level governance' continues to operate effectively, in spite of the shifting priorities of some powerful EU regions and the inevitable tensions that these debates arouse among Member States.

European policy, and certainly EU membership itself, is not in the official competence of the devolved nations; it remains the prerogative of the UK Parliament. However, a legitimate devolved interest in European policy, where it overlaps with devolved competencies, was acknowledged right at the outset of the devolution process in 1999. Indeed, due to this overlap of

competencies at the sub- and supra-national European levels, and the key role that regions have in implementing EU policy, there are important reasons for regions such as Wales to take a proactive stance towards their European engagement. In terms of direct responsibilities, the Government of Wales Act 2006 makes it clear that any EU obligation of the UK Government is a Welsh obligation where it applies to devolved functions; and thus Wales must ensure that it is compliant with all relevant legislation. Wales also has a responsibility with regards to subsidiarity monitoring: ensuring that legislation is made at the lowest appropriate level. Finally, Wales has a vital role in engaging with the EU's legislative formulation process, to 'upload', as far as possible, Welsh interests (in its areas of competence) before it is then obliged to implement such legislation 'on the ground'.

In light of these responsibilities, the 'stakes' for Wales in the context of a proposed referendum on EU membership are undoubtedly high. Nevertheless, perhaps of most immediate relevance is actually the impact that uncertainty surrounding the UK's membership of the EU may have on Scotland's referendum in 2014. This may have been an unintended consequence of David Cameron's decision, but it certainly has the potential to undermine one of the main arguments of Scotland's 'No' campaign: the uncertainty of an independent Scotland's EU membership. According to Brian Taylor, the BBC's political editor for Scotland, it will now be much more difficult for the UK Conservative Party to challenge the SNP on this issue, which they have previously done 'with vigour'; "now what do the Tories say on this topic? Reject the SNP, stick with the UK – and we will offer you the prospect that a vote across the whole of these Islands may take you out of the EU, perhaps in contradistinction to the opinion in Scotland". Quite how Wales would fare in the event of Scottish independence, as part of an 'R-UK' which is dominated to a much greater degree by the English nation, is a question that must not be too far from the minds of politicians of all ilk in Cardiff Bay.

Indeed, it is in the devolved nations that the 'mood' of Conservative and UKIP parties over Europe sits most uneasily. Carwyn Jones responded angrily to David Cameron's decision to hold a referendum, arguing that 'a UK exit from the EU would be 'an unmitigated disaster for the Welsh economy'. Even before Cameron's infamous speech, the First Minister had speculated on the problems that would be posed following a referendum on EU membership in which a vote to exit was 'carried by the weight of English votes against the preferences of other parts of the UK to remain in membership'. Though still spoken of in largely hushed voices, this scenario has become a much more serious prospect in the past few months.

In the interim period, prior to a UK referendum and in the midst of David Cameron's attempts to 'renegotiate' the terms of our membership, Wales' attempts to influence EU policy making are taking place in clearly muddled waters. The key channel of influence for Wales in the EU arena has traditionally been through direct dealings with the UK government. From a comparative perspective, the devolved regions have a high degree of access to the UK's EU policy making machinery, however this access is also highly conditional (Bulmer et al., 2006). The political incongruence between Wales and Westminster since 2010 poses a threat to such access (as, crucially, did that between Scotland and the rest of the UK in 2007), and given the tenor of debates taking place within the UK Parliament, it is difficult to envisage anything other than a further divergence of raw interests between the Welsh and UK Governments when it comes to EU policy. In the context of largely informal mechanisms of IGR¹, lacking any of the formal structures for co-decision making often found in Federal systems, the current lack of coalescing interests between London and Cardiff may be felt particularly acutely.

¹ Inter-governmental relations

Underpinning many of the tensions surrounding devolved input into EU policy making are the constitutional 'quirks' which have their genesis in the current devolution dispensation. The 'Bridgend question' is a case in point here. Carwyn Jones has spoken of a perceived inconsistency in the situation that, in areas fully devolved to Wales, such as agriculture, it is (by implication) the de facto English minister who represents the UK's position in EU negotiations. While there have certainly been instances where Wales has been successful in influencing the UK's position on EU issues (for example over the protection and promotion of minority languages, or cohesion policy) this has tended to be in relatively uncontroversial domains, where the UK government has little or no interest (Cole and Palmer, 2011:84). Current mechanisms of IGR are 'binding in honour' only, and not legally enforceable. This means that Welsh input into the UK's EU policy is premised on the goodwill of both governments (Bulmer et al., 2006:86), a condition that was met much more easily in the relatively benign climate that typified the years leading up to 2010.²

Meanwhile, at the heart of a second set of challenges facing regions such as Wales, catalysed by ongoing constitutional debates, is the loss of 'the big mo': momentum. The attentions of EU institutions (dealing with the Eurozone crisis), Member States (dealing with the fallout from unpopular austerity measures), and some of the 'strongest' European regions (busy building support for independence) are all elsewhere. During the same period between 2010 and 2012, which saw 'nationalist' movements in Scotland, Catalonia and Flanders gain such prominent support, the EU's focus was firmly on the European Fiscal Compact – in other words, on

² The Economic and Social Research Council recently held a seminar series looking at the effects of incongruence on IGR in the UK, and as part of this programme dedicated a session to the Europeanization of intergovernmental relations. The briefings from this session can be accessed at www.institute-of-governance.org/__data/.../IGR_Briefing_EU.doc

a process which, for perfectly legitimate reasons, gave regions very little voice in the proceedings.

Contrast this context with previous decades. The 1990s was characterised by the feverish expectation that the regional level would continue to grow in significance. By the 2000s, this hope was not yet fully dashed, and indeed the enthusiasm of a new cohort of regions with legislative power, such as Wales, served to stave off the abandonment of the Europe of the Regions thesis. Later in this decade, the Lisbon treaty process allowed the regional voice to cohere around a set of objectives, eventually seeing the role of the Committee of the Regions (though a profound disappointment to many of Europe's more ambitious regions (Scully and Wyn Jones, 2010) enhanced, and the principle of subsidiarity forming a key part of the Treaty's drive to create a 'more democratic and transparent Europe'. At this time, it was between regions with legislative powers and weaker 'administrative' regions that the main differences in EU agendas were manifest; with the network of regions with legislative power (REGLEG) calling for special recognition for their status in higher level EU decision making, mainly through privileged and institutionalised influence on Member State positions in the Council of Ministers (Jeffery, 2004:616).

Fast-forward to 2013. The divergence of interests among Europe's legislative regions is now the salient divide. Whilst, on the one hand, Catalonia and Scotland are preparing for independence referenda, other key legislative regions (the German Länder) are increasingly wary of what is seen as the EU's encroachment on their competences. Additionally, the 'big debates' currently taking place within the EU simply are not those of regional input and multi-level governance. Instead, they are the 'high politics' of the Euro-zone crisis and economic restructuring. When this shift in priorities is combined with the inevitable sensitivities surrounding questions of independence, Spain being the Member State most clearly hostile to such

debates, then it is evident that the environment within which legislative regions such as Wales are now operating in is far less favourable than it has been in recent decades.

In light of the limited formal competence that Wales has in EU affairs, the number of policy options that one could suggest are necessarily limited. Wales cannot, for example, legislate to ensure greater access to the UK Government's EU machinery. Nor does Wales have a 'seat at the top table' in the Council of Ministers, where high-level European decisions are made. What is left, therefore, are options to improve the efficiency of Welsh engagement with the EU, both directly and via the UK Government. On that note, several suggestions follow below. Some of these are short-term adjustments, which are within the competence of Welsh institutions to enact almost immediately. Others are very much longer-term proposals, requiring either a change in the mechanisms of UK inter-governmental relations, or even more fundamental shifts in the devolution dispensation, requiring the consent and participation of the rest of the UK.

The National Assembly for Wales could find ways of strengthening both its scrutiny of the Welsh Government's EU engagement, and direct scrutiny of EU policy making itself. Potential avenues for strengthening this function would include: reinstating a specialised committee overseeing the Assembly's strategic approach to the EU; the designation of a European 'rapporteur' on each subject committee; mandating that EU affairs comprise a core part of the remit of the newly established Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister; ensuring that regular Plenary debates are held on European issues.

A specialised Ministerial Forum could be established within the Welsh Government to ensure that European issues were more effectively encompassed and coordinated across all areas of devolved responsibility (i.e. not simply the structural funds or the CAP).

The current Concordat on the Coordination of European Policy Issues could be amended so as to place devolved access to the UK's EU policy formulation on a statutory footing. The need for this depends to a great extent on the attitude of the UK Government in the lead up to both referenda.

A UK-wide constitutional convention, as has been proposed by the First Minister, could fundamentally re-examine the basis on which devolved nations are able to influence EU policy directly related to their competencies and national interest.

Wales could establish or lead the reinvigoration of an EU-wide network for legislative regions, such as REGLEG, cooperating with cognate regions to ensure that independence debates do not dominate discussions of regional politics within the EU. A 'Team Wales' approach, bringing in MEPs, Committee of the Regions Members and both the Welsh Government and National Assembly would best facilitate this initiative.

Essentially, the strategies that Wales has traditionally used to gain access to EU policy making: mediating or indirect strategies (through the UK Government) and direct strategies (attempting to influence EU institutions directly) may well both be stymied by events outside Welsh Government control. At the same time, engagement with the EU, and particularly in networks such as REGLEG, may occasionally seem like 'low hanging fruit'; vulnerable to calls for rationalisation and economic cuts because, when tangible results can be borne, these are often gradual, and cumulative. However, Wales has a very real national interest at stake in its EU membership. The onus is therefore on Welsh actors to take a proactive stance in the face of those constitutional debates currently dominating the EU and UK policy spheres; ensuring that their own structures and mechanisms are in the best possible 'shape' when it comes to achieving their European ambitions.

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Europe, what did it ever do for Women?

Emily Warren

Introduction

In the ravaged aftermath of the second world war the creation of the EEC was a significant societal change. The construct of a 'United Europe' cemented through its political, military and trading union, was a change so significant, it was almost unimaginable. Equally as unimaginable was the idea of achieving gender equality, with men and women as equals in all that they do. A significant transformation, which no longer seems an unimaginable aspiration.

Gender equality has been a key principle of the EU ever since the Treaty of Rome introduced the principle of equal pay for men and women in 1957. Using the legal basis provided by the Treaties, the Union has now adopted thirteen directives on gender equality since the 1970s. These important measures have ensured, among other things, equal treatment concerning access to work, training, promotions and working conditions, as well as equal pay and social security benefits.

Equality between men and women is now understood to be a fundamental right, and a common principle of the EU. It is also a key element of sustainable and inclusive economic growth, which is of critical importance in today's economic climate. Although the gender gap remains, research published by the European Commission¹ shows that reducing the gender gap in employment and education would enhance economic growth, representing an important contribution to the EU economic recovery, and an important asset for the EU in a time of downturn.

¹ Report on Progress on equality between women and men in 2012, (European Commission)

This contribution to growth is of significant resonance in the midst of a global economic crisis, and we must ensure that Labour in power in Wales, is able to deliver policy and legislative choices, which reflect the European principle of gender equality, contributing to a healthy and growing economy, in which women play an equal part.

There have been countless directives, treaties and reports issued by both the European Parliament and Commission, reflecting that gender equality is a core principle of the EU, from the bloc's founding treaty in 1957, which included the principle of equal pay for equal work, to the Charter of Fundamental Rights which recognised the right to gender equality in all areas.

Although inequalities still exist, such measures have led to significant progress over recent decades. This is mainly thanks to equal treatment legislation and gender mainstreaming. The latest suite of measures includes the European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015, to promote gender equality in all the Commission's policies, supported by the directive 2004/113/EC, which implements the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services. In addition both the The Lisbon Treaty and recent Charter of Fundamental rights, affirmed the principle of gender equality and established policies to further achieve this.

But, whilst our focus has been on increasing employment and supporting an effective economy, have we overlooked the particular contribution of women in maintaining this effective political and economic union? Can we, through collective action, purge ourselves of the poor statistics? At present these statistics indicate that gender equality remains an achievement as far way off.

Reframing the debate

In Wales we have a society which relies on the European Union for our trading links, growing the Welsh economy, and the important income derived from the European Structural Funds. It is both a key partner and asset, in building our own strong political and economic structures. But have the economic benefits of our membership been accompanied by social and economic safeguards for women in our society?

The reality is that the picture looks bleak; in terms of our economic contribution there is a global economic recession, and a coalition policy of ruthless welfare reform, both of which are wreaking a disproportionately adverse impact on women. Add to this mix, statistics published by the Electoral Reform Society which reveal fewer women in public life, fewer women on company boards and there is cause for great concern.

This is a burgeoning cocktail of nasties, and should governments not work constructively to take action collectively at a European level, then gender equality, will remain as aspirational as a political union in Europe once was. Labour must be bold, and radical in our commitment to reducing the gender gap. Through the policy choices of our Labour government, Labour leadership in local government, and across wider civil society, we must continue to work to improve access, equity and aspiration, both here in Wales, and through an effective contribution in Brussels.

With a Tory Party haunted by the ghosts of its euro sceptic past (and present), and losing out in the face of a resurgent UKIP, Labour must be seen to be at the forefront of a debate, which places the UK at the centre of a progressive, constructive and effective union. The UK Government has recently come under fire from EU Commissioners, for not being bold enough in developing policies to improve gender equality, delivering little progress against the Charter of Fundamental rights, which committed to "equality between

women and men to be ensured in all areas". As Labour, we must rise to the challenge, continuing to advocate in Europe through strong committees like the Women's Rights and Gender Quality Committee (FEMM) sharing our successes here in Wales, and learning from our European neighbours.

Labour in Wales must lead our active commitment, in the face of a weak response from Westminster, through the powers now invested in the National Assembly, and through the contribution of the centre left parties working together in Brussels. Improving Childcare, increasing representation of women across the public, private and political sectors, taking measures to reduce gender violence, and removing barriers to employment, education and training are critical contributions that the National Assembly must address in reducing the gender gap.

We must continue to build on success; we must be clear and proud of past achievements, such as having the first gender balanced legislature, in our National Assembly, and we must promote new innovations led by Wales, such as becoming the first country in Europe (and possibly the world) to introduce trade union equality representatives. This is a new role based within public sector workplaces and will encourage equality in a new and innovative way. It shows that bold policy choices can be made, delivering difference, and showing that equality is still high on the Assembly's agenda. It shows that Wales can set an example for other European countries to follow.

But whilst, Wales has a record of which to be proud, we must not go backwards. In Wales our politicians must ensure we maximise the benefits of the European Unions overarching policy directives, reframing policies where devolved competence permits, with an urgent and committed focus to reducing the gender gap.

This is not just a matter of equality and democracy. It has very real implications for

how laws are passed, policies are formed and services are delivered right here in Wales.

Looking at the spread of women in key roles in Wales, the 'Welsh power report' published by the ERS, reveals that if the current pace of progress is maintained, women will not have an equal voice in Welsh local authorities until 2076. The report also argues that institutions with fewer than 30% female members lack the critical mass needed to drive change forward. If Wales is to continue to build on our economic and educational links with Europe to drive change, it is critical that we quicken the pace of progress. The report concludes that 'The list of Welsh institutions and offices with fewer than 30% members is stark'² and reflects that across our political parties, local authorities, police and civil service, the 30% baseline remains somewhat aspirational.

Such figures demonstrate that much more needs to be done, drawing on good practice from our European neighbours. Wales must ensure that we are able to stand up and buck this disappointing trend through decisive and ongoing action. In a nation where we have been ahead of the game, setting the pace of change, we must not let a reluctance from the UK government to embrace European innovation, to affect the ability of women in Wales to achieve their potential.

In March 2013, the European Parliament backed the Commission's pledge to create binding rules to increase the number of women in top jobs, if member states had not voluntarily taken action to redress gender imbalance in the workplace. Even though some European countries - including Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain - have set targets for corporate boards, Britain and Sweden have led the charge against introducing such measures. Something for which they have come under fire for from EU Commissioners .

² The Welsh Power Report: Women in Public Life. ERS (2012)

Welsh Labour must be radical in reflecting that there is a Welsh way, which embraces the partnership and support offered by Europe, rather than the Tories approach of rejecting innovation on outdated ideological grounds. In a seminal report for the Welsh Government in 2006, Jeremy Beecham³ stated that 'Our fundamental conclusion is that Wales has a marvellous opportunity, emanating in part from its traditions and in part from its scale, to lead the way in what we call "small country governance", ...in a way that its larger neighbours may find more difficult. Wales must, of course, like any other country, be prepared to learn from the experience of others in the UK or wider world, but we believe it will have much to share, too'.

Our size, our history and our continued strong sense of community, enable us in Wales to make and implement policy choices which may not be so easily achieved elsewhere in the UK. Equally our track record and continued commitment to gender equality throughout our society stand us ahead of our UK partners. We must bring together our proud history, of supporting gender equality, and maximise the potentials of small country governance, led by a party committed to the agenda. It is time we reflected on the success of the past, and the challenges of the future, to ensure Wales wields a strong and progressive voice at a European level, at a time of such critical juncture around the role and focus of the EU.

Welsh Labour have a clear role, in reflecting the Welsh commitment to collaboration and partnership working, and using policy tools at a European and national level to act as incentives to prioritise improving gender equality. We know what the issues are, and together maximising the benefits of multi level governance, we must generate bold and brilliant policy choices to welcome women, as a mainstay of the social, economic and political agenda.

³ Beyond Boundaries: The Beecham Review (2006)

First, we must look to Europe to ensure that existing policy directives are mainstreamed through all future legislation, as a priority and ensure that on the ground there is not a perceivable gap between policy and implementation.

Second, we must actively work with our European partners to collect and share best practice in meaningful ways, promoting new ways of working, sharing innovation and demonstrating a real and lasting commitment to gender equality.

Third, we must consider how, through our emerging legislative framework, we can maximise gender equality, refreshing old strategies and embracing new powers.

Fourth, we must respond positively to EU directives on gender equality, and be ambitious in how they are implemented on the ground. Embracing targets and quotas whilst reflecting their value, in language that our public and private sectors will embrace. These must be fit for purpose for Wales, a collective commitment to valuing women, and supporting continued achievement.

Achieving our aspirations of gender equality is an ambition our generation must deliver. Like the generation before us, who came together to create the foundations of an economic and political union after the second world war, we must not be fearful of our ambition, or lack the progressive will to be radical in our policy choices. In Wales we have the power, the partnership, and the vision.

We must now act together to implement a policy agenda, that with the support of Europe, and an unnerving will to achieve our aspiration, ensures equality once and for all.

Global Ageing: An example of one response for Welsh Communities

Bev Reategui

Context

The catalyst for the design of Ageing Well in Wales was the European Year of Active Healthy Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, commonly referred to as the EY2012 for AHA. It was launched by the European Union in 2012 after vigorous campaigning by pressure groups that called for politicians and senior decision makers at all levels of government to come together and demonstrate strategic leadership to determine strategies for action that would ensure that society and social and fiscal policies changed quickly to accommodate the impact of an ageing society.

Ageing is an unprecedented global phenomenon, but will soon be the norm for the future. Thankfully! Everyone can relate to the benefit of longevity - the alternative is not that pleasant. Yet longevity without good health, adequate funds to live comfortably or without someone to love and share life's blessings is an unsavoury and less welcome option. Sadly today this is the experience of many ageing citizens living in Wales. In approximately thirty years from now the numbers that we can expect to live beyond 100 years is staggering. A child born today has a one in four chance of living way beyond one hundred years. Consider this for a moment. If we apply today's thinking just with one example of employment - that means someone could live at least 30, 40 or 50 years in retirement by today's measures. Excellent we all say but how do we want to experience our added years that technology and better standards of living have given us? How do we need society and our attitudes to change, the provision of health and social care services, employment law and pensions, housing design that can adapt to allow us continued independence and living in our own or family homes and so the questions go on. Not a

single part of our daily lives nor policy will remain untouched by the phenomenon of demographic change.

We are unlikely to meet this challenge if we do not act now and if our responses are planned in isolation with traditional silo thinking underpinning our policies that will create disconnected priorities and targets. Or policies that are designed without the voice and input of the very citizens for whom these changes must respond to their needs. Failure to harness sound evidence or to adopt best practice to implement change will see a widening of inequalities, costly mistakes in the redesign of our physical environment and will give enhanced lives for some but not for everyone living in Wales.

The financial landscape is not helpful and will remain so well into the next decade. Rising costs, relentless strain on health and social care services and increasing health inequalities between different segments of the population could propel us where we do not want to be. It is true that progress continues for some health and social care challenges. Historic public health challenges such as cancers and child diseases are abating but in their place are new 21st century challenges such as the burden of chronic disease, poor mental health such as anxiety and depression and levels of physical abuse and discrimination continue to occur against vulnerable people.

A tough challenge exists for Welsh Government and our other key decision makers. But Wales is not alone in facing these issues and the EY2012 and a subsequent initiative from the European Commission known as The European Innovation Partnership for active health ageing (EIP) does hold out some helpful clues and possibilities if we engage in this process.

With these new initiatives coming from Europe and the prospect of a Phase three of the Older People Strategy for Wales in 2013 for a further ten years, new legislation for Social Services and Housing plus a

consultation on the merits of a Public Health Bill for Wales, fertile ground in the latter part of 2012 created the opportunity to devise a strategic response that could play a vital part in the overall strategy for Wales to respond to demographic change. With support and vision from the Older People's Commissioner for Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association resources were found in the latter half of 2012 to devise an All Wales approach focusing on upstream measures that would help local agencies to respond quicker to their local pressures. This strategic programme continues to be developed during 2013.

Ageing Well in Wales

The EY2012 called for all governments to raise awareness of global ageing during 2012, to establish initiatives to increase the pace of change and importantly define actions that would continue well after the years' focus had ended. Agencies created legacy statements and plans and policy makers signed manifestos and new strategies for ageing at the latter end of 2012.

Ageing Well and its four themes were endorsed in November 2012 by the Welsh Government in a written statement, as their legacy response with the support of the NHS in Wales, Welsh Local Government, the Public Health Wales Trust, the umbrella organisation Alliance Wales for the national third sector agencies and academia via OPAN (Older People and Ageing Research Network) The Beth Johnson Foundation joined to provide invaluable knowledge of intergenerational practices and asset based approaches.

Ageing Well differs from previous national change programmes. First, it has not been established with a programme budget to underpin and commission specialist support and fund "pilot or pathfinder" sites in the hope that solutions are found and transferred elsewhere across Wales. Second, it operates for Wales in the *European context* with as much time and effort donated to working with colleagues in Europe as across different

parts of Wales. Finally it will deploy a unique bottom up approach to engagement that if successful, will see innovation and small scale action multiplied across Wales with a speed that can only be achieved when individuals living in communities join together to make change.

Age Friendly Environments

Global ageing requires us to make a fundamental change to our living and working environment if our social model is to be sustainable and fair for all generations. It requires a multi-dimensional approach to ageing. In 2005 the age friendly cities initiative conceived by World Health Organisation led the way as major cities and conurbations took a whole scale approach to adapting the physical environment and the places frequented on a daily basis by their residents. Age friendly environments need to be accessible and the starting point is the demolition of the barriers that often inhibit people from going outdoors or joining in and using the services on offer. Age friendly environments are for everyone to enjoy not just those who are of older age, but if we are to remove barriers, many parts of Wales have a considerable way to go.

Ageing Well is participating in a European Action Learning Group for independent and supportive environments, to share knowledge, innovation and tools that will enable our local agencies, principally local authorities across Wales to achieve age friendly status. The work in Wales will have a different focus whilst remaining true to the principles of the WHO. Wales is a country of community's not sprawling cities. As such the WHO principles and the experiences of participants will need further adaptation. Working with other parts of the UK and Europe who share similar characteristics, the adaptation will be more efficient than left to our own devices.

Wales has an opportunity to make a considerable contribution to this process

drawing on its knowledge and experience of what works for individual communities.

New approaches in Wales for regeneration, housing and homes for the future and sustainable policies and practice all offer ways to create a more age friendly Wales. Their aims need to be mutually supportive, coherent and with funding available in Wales to regenerate some of our decaying and neglected coastal and valley towns, the opportunity exists to employ age friendly approaches within these future plans. After all, a high percentage of the recipients to benefit from the changes will undoubtedly be between 50 and 90 years old.

Dementia Sensitive Communities

Without doubt one of the greatest medical challenges of our time is to find a cure for dementia. Until such time, people living with dementia need support to carry on with their lives for as long as possible, and their families who bear the lion share of the caring role, need help and support themselves. Although not a necessary outcome of growing older, dementia is more prevalent with age and the numbers of people in Wales living with dementia will require a fundamental change in behaviour and support systems to accommodate their needs. Without doubt one of the most effective strategies we can adopt is to create environments and behavioural change within our communities to enable people to remain independent and to employ digital and technological advances in their homes and for individuals themselves.

Prevention of Falls

The third theme of *Ageing Well* is to work with existing collaborative networks and local innovation to increase the adoption of best practice consistently across Wales, better record information so we can screen and prioritise people with greater risk of falling and to overcome the perpetual misunderstanding that falling is a natural consequence of older age. A very successful European network offers considerable insight

into best practice, use of technology and information and risk assessment tools. Ageing Well is very active in this action group.

Employment for 50+

The final theme of *Ageing Well* is to stimulate more ways to give people over the age of 50 a chance for new employment, to remain in work, and to overcome age discrimination. Opportunities to learn new skills and set up businesses must become more prevalent amongst this age group if we are to retain a sustainable economic future. Older people already contribute over one billion to the economy and new approaches to labour policies are necessary for a vibrant Wales.

A National Call for Commitments to action

In June 2013, a national Call for Commitments will be launched for twelve weeks under the auspices of *Ageing Well* across Wales. Big or small, innovative ideas and action will be sought and if the commitments propel Wales towards achieving the aims of the key themes listed above, participants making the pledge will automatically become a member of *Ageing Well* thematic networks and members of the Ageing Well programme. This is not a call for funding but a call to join like minded groups of people who are keen to do something positive to improve their local situation.

Themed networks will provide peer support, ideas, and knowledge to transfer to others, access to specialist ideas and leading innovation and a forum to design Wales-wide solutions to minimise wasted effort and secure cost effective solutions. Building on grass root action, so typical of Welsh culture, the approach will not exclude or demoralise those traditionally not engaged in planning structures or plans rather momentum will be generated to create genuine locally sensitive solutions. This approach is modelled on a similar initiative of the EIP and through engagement with Europe has been adapted for Wales. When launched in 2012 the EIP received over 3000 commitments to action

from across Europe and unleashed a unprecedented display of innovation and enthusiasm for change.

Wales and Europe – opportunities for improving the health and wellbeing of people in Wales

The First Minister has reaffirmed that Wales must take advantage of being part of the European Union for there is much to gain for us all. The Ageing Well programme would not have occurred if not for our engagement in Europe and the opportunities to find innovation and collaborative partners. But it comes at a cost and needs upfront investment in order to participate and to develop relationships. Capacity is spread too thinly across Wales and many people are prohibited from participating either because of the cost of travel which is seen as wasteful or prohibitive, or they simply do not know of the many initiatives on offer. A strategic response to building capacity, with expert knowledge and people freed up to participate in EU wide events and action groups is the way forward.

New funding streams – are we ready?

As a new round of EU funding programmes commences next year until 2020, early signs show that health and wellbeing and responding to demographic change will be a priority for investment by the EC. An estimated 9 billion euros is earmarked for one programme alone, (demographic change and wellbeing) whilst several other funding instruments will allow Wales to draw down resources to take the ageing well agenda forward along with national strategies.

Other countries and regions will be chasing these resources and larger scale collaborative bids with partners will be the order of the day. Is Wales in a position to respond? Do we have the necessary capacity and expertise to develop high calibre funding proposals for health and wellbeing initiatives? What is our track record in drawing down funding for innovation within health and social care and how are we to position ourselves to give us

the best possible chance of finding innovation and securing vital resources to help us face our challenges?

A Celtic Innovation partnership / alliance

For collaborative efforts to be successful a sense of shared ownership to the problem needs to exist but also a common basis for developing and implementing ideas. Culture community sensitivity and localism lie at the heart of Welsh life but also for our fellow countries that traditionally are known as the Celtic region. There are advantages of recreating such a partnership to engage our Celtic colleagues to work together to implement innovation and find new ways to support our communities age well. A collaboration consisting of Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, Ireland, Brittany and Galicia would be able to generate ideas and solutions drawing on our rich heritage of the arts, music, drama and cultural diversity. Such a mechanism may well offer insight and a solution to transferring transnational ideas for policy making and practice at a faster pace than left to chance and through informal and ad hoc collaborative mechanisms. Wales will make an important step towards this via a Memorandum of Understanding between Irish and Welsh Governments in 2013.

Engaging in Europe and participating in collaborative ventures is essential for Wales to find the solutions and resources it needs to tackle the impact of demographic change. The Ageing Well programme has dipped its toe in the water and is continuing to maintain a presence in Europe so that relationships can be made and innovation discovered and brought back to Wales.

If we are serious about playing a full role in Europe, Wales has many advantages to draw upon to go forward. Integrated policies, cross party support for many policies, strong networks through integrated health bodies and local government and a rich array of third sector and people participant networks. Our challenges to respond to an ageing population

in Wales are significant. Can we afford not to participate?

Policy Recommendations

Is Wales in a good place to find solutions to improve the health and wellbeing of our citizens and access future funds from Europe? What do we need to do to improve our collaborative efforts in Europe and who is best placed to lead this?

Would a Welsh Government Cabinet Minister with direct responsibility for strengthening engagement in Europe working across Ministerial portfolios help or hinder this process?

What can we do to overcome the barriers to participating in Europe – would a dedicated invest to save fund help which could set specific targets for drawing down funds from Europe over a five year period?

Would a central independent development unit that combines research, action learning and expertise in funding proposals be one way forward for this agenda?

Labour needs to get tough on deficit reduction

Why Labour needs a progressive plan to reduce Europe's democratic deficit and how Wales can show the way

Stephen Brooks

From the food that we eat, to the air that we breathe, from protecting our wellbeing at work to defending our national security; Europe plays an enormous, positive role in our everyday lives.

Like the NHS and education, Europe should be a 'Labour' issue. Working together for a common prosperity in a way in which power is exercised and distributed equally, is democratic socialism in action. Yet as a party, we have had a troubled relationship with Europe. Our 1945 manifesto contained strong commitments to international organisations like the UN and the Commonwealth, but was silent on how we might work with our European brothers and sisters to forge a peaceful future. In 1983 we were committed to withdrawal, and in the late 1990s the party carefully tread the Euro tightrope with 'five key tests'.

Wales' future depends on the UK's continued membership of the EU; and as such, it is vital that Welsh Labour plays an active role in shaping the UK party's policy. So far, the debate has been polarised between a constitutional argument against Europe and an economic case for Europe. The UK Labour party needs to learn from Welsh Labour's approach to devolution, and recognise that as with devolution, there is a positive constitutional *and* economic case for Europe. That does not mean we should argue for the status quo, far from it. Labour, in partnership with other socialist parties, must develop a progressive constitutional reform agenda for Europe; an agenda that seeks to place power in the hands of the people.

Despite the best efforts of groups like British Influence, the European debate has largely been defined by UKIP and the Tory right. The right's narrative is simple and compelling: the EU interferes. It kills jobs through excessive regulation. It keeps British borders ajar. It prevents us from deporting terror suspects because of human rights legislation that no British politician can repeal. Everyday decisions that affect us all but taken outside of Britain. The pull of an in/out referendum in the next Parliament grows stronger by the day.

Across the political spectrum, there appears to be three-schools of thought, and a desperate need for a fourth alternative. Predominantly on the left and centre are the Euro-enthusiasts: those that view EU membership in purely economic terms – constitutional issues about democracy and accountability are second order.

Largely, but not exclusively, on the right are the Eurosceptics. For them, the economic benefits are clear, but national sovereignty is the first order issue, and as such powers must be repatriated to the nation-state.

Finally, there are the Europhobes. Britain is, in every sense, better off out.

The conversation in the country and the media is increasingly focused on the division between Euro-sceptics and Euro-phobes; yet within the party our debate is how far we should stray from our recent Euro-enthusiastic past and embrace elements of Euro-scepticism. The Euro-enthusiasts' economic case against a referendum, while strong on paper and forcefully put by the likes of Blair and Mandelson, has yet to achieve cut through with voters. At the same time there's a growing body within the party lured by the sirens of Euroscepticism. Lord Prescott is the latest heavyweight to champion the tactical advantage that would be gained from backing an in/out referendum.

All three views are wrong.

Markets should serve people; people should not serve markets; and the recent anti-democratic drift across Europe – where individual member states can have governments installed and budgets changed by other member states and European officials, is profoundly undemocratic.

The Eurosceptics clings to a romantic, pre-globalisation view of national sovereignty. Capitalism, crime and terror, and pollution and climate change do not recognise national boundaries, and can only be tackled and tamed by supra-national action.

And the Europhobic view is based on a prejudiced distrust and dislike of ‘the other’.

It is time the European Left shifted the debate on to the small matter of democracy. Despite a commitment that “every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union”, the EU remains profoundly undemocratic in many areas. With 27 members, a population of 0.5 billion people and a combined GDP of \$15.8 trillion, the EU packs more weight than the world’s only remaining superpower, the United States of America. Yet unlike the United States of America, the European Union’s ‘constitution’ is complicated and its institutions remote from its citizens.

The European Council remains one of, if not, the most important driver for decision-making in the EU. Officially, the European Council holds no formal legislative power, but, according to the Lisbon Treaty, defines “the general political directions and priorities” of EU. Headed by a president, Herman Van Rompuy, the European Council consists of the 27 heads of state/government, with the president of the European Commission and the Commission’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs also attending. It works through a system of monthly summits, and most decisions are taken unanimously. It is, essentially, an elite-driven form of decision-making that favours the bigger member states above the small, and provides little to

no voice for devolved governments within member states.

Then, there is the European Commission. The Commission has, overtime, emerged as a combined government and civil service for Europe. Headed by former Portuguese prime minister José Manuel Barroso, the Commission is a powerful body: it proposes legislation; manages and implements EU policies, and crucially the budget; enforces European law; and represents the EU internationally. Officially, the 27 commissioners act for the benefit of the whole of the EU, not their respective member states; though as the 2010 geopolitical jostling showed, which country gets which post matters.

The only truly democratic element of the EU landscape is the European Parliament. It is the only directly elected EU institution, comprising of 736 MEPs (and 12 observers). In the past, the Parliament has been labelled a talking shop, and MEPs have been viewed by some as mouthpieces with no teeth. But in 2004 it asserted itself, rejecting the composition of Barroso’s first commission, and forcing the president to return with a reshuffled team. Under the 2007 Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament gained significant new powers, but the political legitimacy or mandate of the institution is still questioned by some. In Wales, turn-out in the 2009 European election was 30.5%.

Since 1999, MEPs from across the EU have been elected using proportional representation. In Wales and across the rest of Great Britain voters use the Closed Party List system. Essentially people vote for a party (not an individual candidate) and the seats are allocated according to share of the vote. In Northern Ireland voters there use the Single Transferable Vote and so are able to use preferential voting to back individual candidates. As a consequence of EU enlargement the number of MEPs allocated to the UK has been cut, with Wales now represented by just four MEPs in the Parliament.

If the European Parliament is considered by many as 'the lower house', then the Council of the European Union is often seen as the 'upper house'. Just like our own upper house, the House of Lords, the Council is not elected. Not to be confused the European Council, the Council of the European Union, or the Council of Ministers as it is often known, comprises of government ministers from across the member states. Individual ministers vote on their own policy areas, so those with ministerial responsibility for farming will, for example, take decisions on the Common Agriculture Policy. Decisions are taken using the Qualified Majority Voting system: 55% of member states representing 65% of the population are need to agree a position. Unlike the European Council, Wales or rather the Welsh Government does have some input into the decision making process of the Council of Ministers. The UK delegation to the meeting of the Council of Ministers will include ministers from devolved governments if that area of policy is devolved.

However, the corresponding UK department is still in control and has no duty or obligation to agree a common policy position with ministers from devolved governments. It is a scenario First Minister Carwyn Jones calls the 'Bridgend Question', a riposte to the old West Lothian Question. Essentially, English ministers (most often in the field of agriculture) can effectively set policy for the whole of the UK regardless of whether Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland agree. Just like the UK upper house, the UK's contribution to the Council of Ministers gives little recognition to devolution, and the need to do things differently.

But at a time of fiscal austerity and economic stagnation – can we afford to worry about the mechanics of European governance? Is not such a debate a distraction from the more pressing need to grow the economy, raise living standards and create jobs?

No. The time has come that we can no longer ignore the now urgent need for institutional

reform inside of the European Union. From the SYRIZA in Greece to the emergence of Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement in Italy, or indeed to the rise of UKIP here; traditional parties of the left and right are, electorally, being hit hard. Labour last won a European election in 1994 (under the acting leadership of Margaret Beckett) and out of the seven European elections since 1979, has won just two. In 2009, the party came third with just 15.7% of the vote, and in Wales Labour lost its second seat.

Public attitudes to Europe in the UK are worsening. In November 2012, the Fabian Society commissioned YouGov to undertake comprehensive polling of public attitudes to the EU. If a referendum was held on leaving the EU, some 46% of the British public would say 'yes' and exit, 10% above those who would say 'no, let's stay'. Amongst 2010 Labour voters, those favouring continued EU membership lead those who want to leave by just 4%. Within the curiously composed region of 'the Midlands and Wales' (like the Council of Ministers, YouGov also needs to catch up with devolution) those favouring exit number 55% against 35% who would stay in. It might be argued that Eurosceptic voters in the Midlands are masking pro-European sentiment in Wales, but even in Scotland (who get their own, separate YouGov polling data) those favouring continued membership lead by just 4%.

Perhaps the rise of anti-EU sentiment in the UK is a result of increasing concerns about immigration? While the Fabian study shows immigration is a key factor (65% of voters agreeing that the UK would have been better off to act alone rather than cooperate with other member states); other policy areas like agriculture and employment are viewed with Euro-suspicion. Some 58% of those sampled thought the UK would be better off acting alone on farming and agriculture (against 18% who saw the benefit of European cooperation). On workers' rights, some 45% of those sampled thought Britain is best acting alone (against 32% in favour of EU cooperation). Only on international trade and

protection against unfair competition do those sampled favour EU cooperation, and then only by a margin of 7%.

The British public do not view the European Union as an abstract, political construct in the same way they might the United Nations. For voters, the EU plays a crucial (and perhaps unwanted) role in public policy. As the Wales Governance Centre discovered with its work with Edinburgh University for the IPPR, when it comes to the perceived level of importance in decision-making which affects every day life, UK voters are alone in Europe in seeing the EU as the most important body.

It is clear that the UK's membership of the EU is in Wales' national interest, but there is a growing threat that anti-EU votes in England could outweigh pro-EU majorities in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and lead to Wales' exit from the European Union. For the left in Wales, Welsh Labour especially, there is, therefore, a particular responsibility to defend the European social and economic dream whilst generating ideas on how to resolve some of the EU's democratic nightmares.

How might such a responsibility be exercised?

For a start, Labour should be positive about the contribution the EU makes to the prosperity of Wales and the UK. Following defeat, all too often Labour can be shy of highlighting its achievements in office. We cannot afford to be shy about Europe. We have enjoyed un-paralled decades of peace in Western Europe. It was a Labour government that rightly signed the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty, and it was a Labour chancellor that, rightly in my view, prudently kept us out of the single currency. Alongside playing Europe's greatest hits, we should also explain why Europe matters for the future. We need to find a better way of explaining that many of the problems facing Wales and the UK affect other European countries too. That in a globalised world, threats exist on a global level, and should be tackled if not on a global level than at least on regional level. On

trade, policing and justice, defence and counter-terrorism, environmental protection and tackling climate change; Europe is stronger together. And on a practical level, so many people in Wales buy goods and services, and travel for work or pleasure to other parts of the EU, that continued membership is practical, cost-effective common sense.

But Labour should not avoid the more troublesome issue of how to resolve disengagement with European politics in the UK. Labour should generate a democratic deficit reduction plan: a set of workable ideas that will shift power from Brussels but not to London, but to the people. Ahead of the 2015 general election, the party is already thinking about how the next Labour government can revitalise politics and reform our ailing constitution. But we need to extend this debate to include the EU, and we need to cooperate closely with our European socialist sister parties. The next UK Labour Government should lead a coalition of the willing; member states in favour of radical democratic reform. As a guiding principle, existing democratic elements within EU governance framework should be strengthened, starting with the European Parliament.

The EU's relationship with devolved governments in member states should also be reformed, and the 'Bridgend Question' resolved. An enlarged National Assembly should give greater time to the scrutiny of European business, and the old European & External Affairs Committee should be re-established. Examination too is needed of the Committee of the Regions and how its work can be bolstered.

Derek Vaughan does an excellent job for us in Europe and in Wales, but greater thought needs to be given as to how our MEPs link with CLPs and vice versa. Could we introduce European Officers for all CLP executive committees in Wales to foster closer working?

And to connect more strongly with the electorate, Great Britain should adopt

Northern Ireland's method of electing MEPs. Using the Single Transferable Vote in Wales would restore a vital link between voter and individual candidates whilst at the same time ensuring the principle of fair elections was maintained.

There is no silver bullet to solve the public's disengagement with European politics, and well-meaning proposals like a directly elected European president risk alienating parts of the EU still further. But the answer must be found, and it is up to the Left, in Wales and the UK, and across the EU to lead that debate.

The Welsh Language and Europe

Colin H Williams

The most profound and enduring relationship between the Welsh language and Europe has been the movement of people and ideas over time, either in relation to small-scale cultural exchanges, the hosting of cultural festivals, the twinning of schools and towns, or the more structured attempt to network, to integrate and to build on initiatives in fields as varied as science and religion, politics and tourism.

Wales earned a solid reputation for innovation in the sixties and the seventies in relation to its early pioneering developments in the field of bilingual education, language revitalization and cultural vitality. This occasioned a great deal of fruitful interchange with other Celtic communities, the Basque Country, Catalonia and several Commonwealth countries, most notably Canada and New Zealand.

The development of an influential forum for the mutual encouragement of struggling linguistic minorities was realised in 1982 in the shape of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL). This Irish government initiative brought together local government representatives, academics, teachers, students and journalists from across Europe to exchange ideas, good practice and experiences. It also sponsored study trips abroad and acted as a lobby group both in respect of European institutions and nation states. In Wales, Ned Thomas and Dafydd Orwig were dynamic and influential advocates of a pan-European approach to language policy and cultural innovation and did much to generate an increased awareness of the feasibility of Welsh-medium local government and media developments. Indeed the development of S4C and Gwynedd's approach to public administration were an inspiration to many minority communities in Europe, most particularly Ireland, Brittany and the Basque Country.

Radio and television rather than the popular press were effective means of demonstrating that it was possible to establish a separate, pluralistic broadcasting domain which did much to nurture new talent and open up new industries giving the minority language a more tangible instrumental rationale than hitherto.

Today the Mercator Network founded in 1988 is a reflection of this early dynamism. The Mercator Institute for Media, Languages and Culture at Aberystwyth which concentrates on the media and minority languages is a major player in this field. It currently hosts projects on Mercator Media, Literature Across Frontiers, Wales Literature Exchange, Mercator Network of Language Diversity Centres and the Broadcasting Compliance Monitoring and Research Unit. It acts as a portal to developments within European contexts and is an important resource for Welsh cultural and socio-linguistic action.

The development of Welsh language legislation, the Welsh Language Acts of 1967, 1993 together with the Wales Education Act 1988 also initiated a new language planning regime with the Welsh Language Board, in particular, hailed as one of the more innovative, responsive and purposeful language planning agencies in Europe.

Research on early bilingualism, family language transmission, the development of Welsh nursery education, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and the raising of children bilingually through the TWF initiative, was matched by innovative work on community language planning thought the work of the Mentrau Iaith. Each of these initiatives drew a great deal of attention from European neighbours increasingly from central and eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet system. During the period 1993-2012 the Welsh Language Board has played a pioneering role in European language revitalization efforts, in bilingual and multilingual education and in tackling the several non-linguistic issues which face the reproduction of lesser-used languages in Europe.

Research of a more fundamental scientific nature into the psychology of bi- and multilingual personalities, the development of cognition, understanding and communication within multilingual communities made rapid progress within Welsh universities, while the ESRC Centre for Bilingualism at Bangor University (2007-2012) was a mechanism for showcasing shared Welsh-international research projects and drew experts from around the world.

However, from the mid-nineties onwards Wales was beginning to lose both its mystique and world-leading reputation as more complex multilingual contexts began to command attention and as more powerful, influential university research centres developed within the USA and Canada, Australia, Hong Kong. The willingness and capacity of the Welsh University system to respond to these global trends was limited and Europe witnessed the establishment of major academic centres focussing on multilingualism in cities such as Stockholm, Barcelona, Utrecht, Tilburg and London. In part this was also due to the enormous pressures which new migrants had placed on the infra-structure and ability of major cities to cope with a steady influx of new residents, often with little or no knowledge of the local dominant language. Now it was the need to integrate people of Turkish, North African, Latin American and South Asian origin which animated the drive to mutual understanding and the creation of new speakers within a multilingual Europe. Indigenous minorities might have much to teach such migrants in terms of local adjustment patterns and the formation of new educational models, but the real need was for the hegemonic majority to adjust to the present reality of people who not only had a command of a different suite of languages but in many cases also a quite different set of religious and cultural precepts. Tension and violence were never very far below the surface in the great multilingual metropolises such as Paris, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Berlin and London.

In Wales, the city-regions of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea are faced with the dual issue of absorbing new speakers of English and the Welsh-medium school system has the additional challenge of seeking to make their educational option a valid choice for these new migrants.

There was also a realisation that the urgent needs of minority language communities were not being recognised by European decision-makers who were perhaps understandably pre-occupied with the competition between hegemonic languages such as French, English, Spanish and German. This played out in both the corridors of the European institutions, Parliament, Union and the Council of Europe and more pertinently for most people in the corridors of their primary and secondary schools where the adoption of English signalled the formal beginning of a multilingual curriculum.

In order to regulate the demands both of indigenous and migrant communities a great deal of attention was paid to legislative initiatives and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages offered a framework through which progress towards the identification of discriminatory behaviour and the specification of language rights might be advanced. The Charter came into force in 1998 to frame the use of the Regional Minority Languages within the 47 member Council of Europe. The UK government has ratified 52 of the potential 68 undertakings for Welsh divided into seven fields, education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life and transfrontier exchanges. Within the Council of Europe and the European Parliament the Welsh language receives a little attention, but more often it is as a result of civil society and professional association networking, UK agencies such as the British Council and occasional Welsh government initiatives that Welsh is discussed at a formal European level.

Historically the recognition of linguistic minority demands is a very recent

phenomenon. The main European Parliament resolutions related to the situation of so-called lesser-used or minority languages were those promoted by Members of the European Parliament as follows: -Arfè (16 Oct. 1981); Arfè (11 Feb. 1983); Kuijpers (30 Oct. 1987); Killilea (9 Feb. 1994); Morgan (13 Dec. 2001) and Ebner (4 Sept. 2003). Together they have laid down the conceptual basis for the recognition of a body of EU procedure relating to minority languages. This has been accompanied by several European Commission initiatives since the early 1980s designed to protect and promote regional and minority languages and cultures within the European Union. (European Commission 2010 http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/languages-of-europe/doc145_en.htm)

Over the years the EU, specifically the European Commission, has sporadically promoted and sustained a lesser-used language involvement within larger EU projects through a variety of mechanisms over and above formal declarations and agreements. To this end it established a Budget line B3-1006, supported the European Bureau for Lesser-used Languages (EBLUL) which operated between 1982 and 2010, co-financed the Mercator networks (since 1982), promoted the EU Study Visit Programme, financed the Euromosaic and SMILE Study (2003), sustained a number of relevant activities through other programmes and developed an Action Plan for Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity.

Equally significant there has been raft of legislation and declarations upholding the rights of minorities to use their languages in several domains, most notably those overseen by the Council of Europe whose various resolutions have resulted in the emergence of basic standards for language rights. However, these applications are inconsistent and do not have the same force in law as do appeals to the European Court of Human Rights. In consequence linguistic minorities still face many structural barriers to their full participation within the EU system. Although

it is understood that historically complex trajectories are very pertinent to the full interpretation of how minorities have been able to chart their routes within the major international institutions, it is still amazing just how inconsistent is the whole patchwork of judicial and organisational maze that many minorities have to navigate in order to be accepted as full and equal citizens of their own continental political system.

Early in 2007 the EU set forth its strategy for promoting linguistic diversity. Leonard Orban from Romania was appointed as European Commissioner for Multilingualism and a strategic planning meeting was convened in Brussels for representatives of language minorities such as the European Language Planning Boards, Mercator, EBLUL, the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) and the Youth of European Nationalities. After the meeting the Commission announced that it would provide financial support for eight to ten language networks including a network for the regional- and minority languages. A second meeting in Amsterdam at the end of January 2007 formalised the shape and constitution of the European regional and minority language network and designated the Welsh Language Board as the secretariat to administer the network. In consequence, the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity emerged as the prime instrument for the promotion of such languages within an international frame. Its secretariat and chief executive, Meirion Prys Jones, are based in Cardiff.

The linguistic needs of the languages included in the NPLD vary considerably, from the languages with a legislative basis and full governmental support, to languages which are in imminent danger of extinction. Stronger languages can offer support and guidance to languages in a more precarious situation and can provide invaluable expertise and partnerships for projects. The NPLD has a considerable presence within the new Member States of the EU, and includes a much wider range of languages than previous

network.¹ Much of its success is determined by the degree to which language planning agencies in the more influential polities such as Catalonia, Ireland and the Basque Country, can bring about real lasting reform within their own territories and use these exemplars as a boost to the promotion of similar structural reforms and instruments of good practice in other legal regimes. In seeking insights at how some of these structural reforms might play out it would be worthwhile to undertake a systematic analysis of the relationship between language promotion, policy and planning on the one hand and language legislation, rights and implementation on the other in a large sample of some twelve or so European contexts, ranging from the most powerful such as Catalonia, through medium sized cases such as Finland to some of the weaker examples such as Sardinia.

The passage of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure in 2011 and the establishment of a Language Commissioner operative since April 2012, has also allowed the Welsh language some additional purchase in European and international affairs. The granting of official status to Welsh was a significant symbolic and functional development. Official status of Welsh allows for a certain degree of acceptance, if not full legitimacy, within several European institutions and agencies. It

¹ Full members include the Irish Government, Foras na Gaeilge; Estonian Government, Department of Education; Welsh Government, Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg until March 2012; Scottish Government, Bord na Gaidhlig; Swedish-Finnish Government, Folktinget; Breton Regional Council, Department of Education and Culture; Frisian Government, Department of Education and Culture; European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages; the Catalan Government and a representative of Linguamon, Barcelona. Associate members include the Council of Europe; the Mercator Centres; Åbo Akademi, Finland; Cardiff University, Wales; the Cultural Council of Brittany; Meän Akateemi, Sweden; ADUM and Lingua Mon, Catalonia, The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Other individual members are drawn from NGOs; Universities and Research Centres.

may yet have long term implications both for the capacity and opportunity to use Welsh in international contexts.

The establishment of a Welsh Language Commissioner as a promoter and regulator of Welsh also boosts the salience of Welsh internationally as it takes its place among a suite of such Language Commissioners, sealed with the formation of an International Association of Language Commissioners at Dublin on May the 24th 2013 and hosted by Sean Ó Curreain, An Comisínéir Teanga. In time Commissioner Meri Huws will be able to share best practice from Wales and contribute to this growing family of Ombudspersons. The Language Planning, Policy Research Unit of the School of Welsh at Cardiff University offers advice and case experience to this association and undertakes commissioned research on Welsh in international comparative context.

A major potential growth area for Welsh in European context is in the field of Language Technology. This field is both of interest in its own right and as a means of overcoming language barriers and normalising Welsh within the pantheon of world languages. The particular strengths of this development is the creation of social capital among speakers, the development of CAT machine-readable translations, speech recognition, the development of Welsh medium digital services and the enhancement of Welsh language digital content including the dependent growth of a corpora for Welsh language applications in IT. In order for these aims to be realised five parallel processes have to be encouraged.

- The first is the technical demands of accessible technology;
- the second is the embedded structures of Welsh in terms of its terminology and linguistic innovation to advance the parameters of the language,
- the third is the willingness and ability of the population to use the newer opportunities created;

- the fourth is the development of a skills-based industry together with software enthusiasts to exploit the new technologies and to capture the full range of IT's potential for multilingual communication;
- the fifth is government leadership and policy development so that advances in this field can be mainstreamed to cognate areas such as education, local government, healthcare delivery systems and the like.

This latter feature is a major consideration for government for if its current policy for the Welsh language in education and society is to be realised in full this requires significant investment in the means to deliver Welsh-medium content and services across the full range of policy areas and domains. Cloud technology, as a means of institutionalising the default use of both Welsh and English in the public sector, will soon be a norm and should allow for the default incorporation of new advances in both working languages as a matter of course. European leaders in this field, such as Catalonia and the Basque Country, offer platforms and best practice examples, but continued investment in Welsh universities, such as Bangor's Canolfan Bedwyr and other more localised centres and nodes is necessary if these developments are to continue apace.

Historically the Welsh language has punched above its weight in European terms, but that was in a period devoid of official standards, regulations and norms. Each and every innovation was hailed as an advance. Today when European norms and directives are more robust there is an acute need to anticipate the medium term future of the Welsh language and its speakers in a variety of domains. Given the scale of this task it is vital that government is not only aware but fully active in relation to what its European partners are doing so that the expectations of Welsh speakers within the newly fashioned language regime are fully met.

Rebirth through hard times: aims for Wales NHS in the EU, 2014

Julian Tudor-Hart

It is said that we are entering an era of exceptional uncertainty. I wish this were true, but I fear it is not. We have not yet entered any new era, that is the trouble. Along with the rest of the EU, we're trapped in the ruins of an old era.

Whatever we do, there is no escape in less than five years. It is already certain that everything will have less funding, including Wales NHS. Wealth will still flow away from those who have least, towards those who already have most. Decisive power will remain where wealth is, because as yet, no serious political party can get elected on a manifesto proposing even the beginning of an end to the global capitalist economy.

The organized profit motive is an almost irresistible force, a giant appetite without conscience or vision, blundering into a future of potentially catastrophic climate change. Everyone knows that, but it has vanished from polite conversation. Having lost most of the political literacy we once attained, we have only the vaguest ideas about any alternative. Fascism, "the socialism of fools", is rising again as a serious force.

Democratic socialism is not just a nice idea, it's a serious responsibility. In UK, we already have experience of a fundamentally different economy, which has already begun to develop answers everyone can understand. For its first 30 years, the NHS was the most cost-effective health care system in the industrialised world.¹

¹ Schieber GJ, Poullier J-P. Overview of international comparisons of health care expenditures. OECD Policy Studies No.7 *Health care systems in transition*. Paris: OECD 1990. pp.9-15; Culyer AJ. Cost containment in Europe. *Ibid*, pp.29-40; Evans RG, Barer ML. The American predicament. *Ibid*. pp.80-5.

It was so popular among voters of all political parties that no leading politician ever dared openly to propose returning health care to the marketplace.

From 1948, when the service began, to the early 1980s, when Margaret Thatcher began to coax the NHS back to commercial culture, health care was available free for every citizen who needed it, funded almost entirely from income tax. It ceased to be a profitable commodity, and became a social gift.

According to classical economic theory, goods at zero price generate infinite demand. Tested in practice, this never materialized. This was confirmed by the Guillebaud inquiry into NHS costs in 1956.² Generally speaking, people took from the NHS what they thought they needed, which was about half what they actually needed.³ The NHS created a protected space in which we could learn how to live, work, and think in a new way, appropriate to co-operative rather than competitive society.⁵

Though nobody can foresee the future in detail, this much we know: in a world of ultimately finite resources, survival of civilized society will depend on learning to share resources, working together for all our children and grandchildren. The NHS, as it was before commercializing reforms began tinkering with it, was a space for learning how to serve human needs directly, rather than as a byproduct of pursuing profit. We did this without descending into the bureaucratized and dehumanised societies seen in command economies of Russia, China, and other countries trying to build socialism before capitalism had run its course.

² *Report of the [Guillebaud] Committee of Enquiry into the cost of the National Health Service*. Cmd.9663. London: HMSO, 1956.

³ Hannay DR, Maddox EJ. Incongruous referrals. *Lancet* 1975;ii:1195-7.

⁴ Hart JT. Rule of Halves: implications of underdiagnosis and dropout for future workload and prescribing costs in primary care. *British Journal of General Practice* 1992;42:116-9.

⁵ Webster C. Overthrowing the market in health care: the achievements of the early National Health Service. *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians (London)* 1994;28:502-7.

In 1993, Andrew Wall said:

"Organisations need to have the capacity to learn if they are to be flexible and adapt to circumstances. At a very fundamental level of work, anyone at any level of the hierarchy will have ideas about how their job could be done differently and better... People and organisations are motivated by the prospect of being able to have a significant say in their futures. Rob them of that, and they become lacklustre, unimaginative, and in the end obstructive, if only to attempt to recover some sense of power."⁶

That applies particularly to health care, which must apply the generalized knowledge of biosciences to the unique problems of individual people, families, and communities.

In 1983, Margaret Thatcher invited Sir Roy Griffiths, director of Sainsbury's supermarkets, to review the NHS and make it more businesslike. Staff morale has gone downhill ever since, through one reorganization after another, each pushing the NHS further into industry and commerce. Driven by corporate power, similar steps have now been taken throughout Europe. The idea has been a disaster, because it fails to recognize the inherently labour-intensive, and in many ways unpredictable nature of personal health care, and ignores the immense potential of patients as co-producers of health gain, rather than acquisitive consumers.

Commodity production for the market needs less human labour as technologies advance. The massive unemployment now facing young people throughout the EU is mostly structural. Even as business starts to recover, new techniques of commodity production will need less labour than before.

⁶ Wall A. Reforming the reforms. In: Iliffe S, Mostyn J, Ross R (eds). *From market chaos to common sense: papers on future policies for health*. Medical World/Socialist Health Association 1993: 2-3.

The opposite is true of health care. Though clinical interventions, particularly of the most invasive kind, do increasingly use machines, their safe, intelligent and appropriate use depends on ever larger, more diverse, more educated and specialized staff teams. All these in turn depend on more time for primary care staff to listen to patients and understand the full range of their problems, and the contexts within which these treatments must be applied. Production of health gain expands life. It offers limitless scope for growth, and limitless future demand for labour of a most imaginative and satisfying kind.

This truth is concealed when NHS output is measured not by health gain in populations, but by counting processes. These measure activity, not useful output. For anyone concerned with healthier births, lives, and deaths, they are meaningless. But for companies contracted to supply process rather than outcome, measures of process represent their bottom line.

In 1991 my primary care research team reported an apparently large (28%) difference in premature death rates between two otherwise similar valley populations over a 5-year period. Over the previous 20 years, a control population in Aber-Blaengwynfi had received traditional demand-led GP care of better-than-average quality. Over the same period, our trial population in Glyncorrwg had received proactive care - active search for ill health throughout the population, over and above demand-led care.⁷ Our programme was planned, depending on structured information, frequent internal audit, and active recall of defaulters. Nobody at any higher level of NHS authority seemed in those days to care much what we did, so long as we gave them no trouble. So though data handling took much of our staff time (this was all in the pre-desktop computer days) our staff and patients could see for themselves its relevance to patient care. Our incentives were not higher personal

⁷ Hart JT, Thomas C, Gibbons B, Edwards C, Hart M, Jones J, Jones M, Walton P. Twenty five years of case finding and audit in a socially deprived community. *BMJ* 1991;302:1509-13.

incomes, but the immense satisfaction of seeing less misery, pain and premature death among patients we knew to be at very high risk.

Our experience influenced (then Conservative) government plans,⁸ but only after bashing it to the shape of competitive enterprise. Our style of work had required more primary care staff, with new attitudes to their work. Of course more staff have to be paid, but these new attitudes never depended on cash incentives. So in 2004 UK government introduced a fee-for-item-of-service system in a new GP contract, the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF), designed to ensure systematic data collection and treatment for common chronic health problems, because about one-third of practice income would depend on it.

QOF was evidence-based, and is now updated from time to time by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) as new evidence accumulates. QOF incentives have indeed promoted a lot more activity, chiefly more routinely collected and recorded data relevant to management of chronic health impairments.⁹ However, if we look at detection and control of high blood pressure (BP), the single most common and potentially effective proactive clinical activity, results are disturbing. Hypertension is the main contributory cause of stroke, often leading to gross disability or premature death. Average level of BP is closely related to these outcomes: the higher the value, the higher its risk, at every level of pressure. Risk is continuously distributed, with no clear threshold between normal and abnormal values. Rational definition of high blood pressure therefore depends on evidence that risks of non-treatment substantially exceed risks of treatment.

⁸ Rivett G. *From Cradle to Grave: fifty years of the NHS*. London: King's Fund 1998:330, 359, 411.

⁹ Doran T, Fullwood C, Kontopantelis E, Reeves D. Effect of financial incentives on inequalities in the delivery of primary clinical care in England: analysis of clinical activity indicators for the quality and outcomes framework. *Lancet* 2008;372:728-36.

QOF rewards GPs for reducing any BP above a threshold (defined by the International Society for Hypertension and agreed by similar national associations) to values below a target similarly defined. As reported by QOF, average BP target achievement of British GPs is now better than those achieved by well designed research studies.¹⁰ Yet a major study of the effect of QOF on the management and outcomes of hypertension in the United Kingdom showed no effect on any clinical outcome.¹¹ Hypertension remains under-detected and poorly controlled, and care is fragmented as never before. The 2010 Health Survey for England found that among adults aged ≥ 16 years, 30.2% had hypertension, but only 10.6% (around one-third) were controlled; 7.1% were being treated but were not controlled, and 12.5% were untreated.¹²

For reputable research studies, steps are taken to avoid biased measurements. No such steps are taken by GPs. Why would they, if their practice income, and thus incomes of nurses or care assistants who actually measure BP, depend on what they record? A review by the King's Fund in 2011 concluded that QOF had "promoted a medicalised and mechanistic approach to managing chronic disease which does not support holistic, patient-centred care and self management."¹³ A large proportion of medical staff time in primary care is now used for recording and reporting data required primarily to ensure practice income (not just for GPs personally, but to pay staff and run a public service), but often little used for clinical decisions.

¹⁰ Richards J. Is there an elephant in the room? *British Journal of General Practice* 2009;59:376-7.

¹¹ Serumaga B, Ross-Degnan D, Avery AJ et al. Effect of pay for performance on the management and outcomes of hypertension in the United Kingdom: interrupted time series study. *BMJ* 2011;341:322.

¹² Quoted from Baker R. Commentary: James Mackenzie 1921, still relevant in 2012. *International Journal of Epidemiology* 2012;41:1523-5.

¹³ *British Medical Journal* 2011;342:944-5.

Experience of fee-for-service practice in USA should have taught us that though cash incentives certainly promote activity, they stifle critical thought. Beyond doubt, treatment of severe hypertension can improve outcomes dramatically. As even severe hypertension rarely causes symptoms before it has already caused irreversible organ damage, it should be sought proactively, and be energetically treated for the rest of patients' lifetimes. But a Cochrane review of major controlled trials of treatment of borderline hypertension (BP 140/90-159/99) showed no effect on deaths from stroke or heart attacks over 5 years compared with placebo. However defined, the hypertensive population is a pyramid, with a few people at exceptionally high risk at the top, many at marginally increased risk at the bottom, and the rest in between. Treatment of the many at low risk at the bottom is easy. Most of their measurements would fall to so-called normal values even without treatment, as they simply become more accustomed to the procedure. But if it makes money, for GPs or for pharmaceutical companies, this becomes a laudable process of wealth creation, however futile scientific evidence has shown it to be. Why do expert professionals, who still insist on defining hypertension as though it were an affliction that patients either have or have not got, rather than a continuously graded risk, still endorse thresholds for treatment unsupported by evidence? Perhaps through inertia induced by excellent meals enjoyed at the expense of transnational pharmaceutical companies, which pay for most of the conferences where research is discussed? Those long in this field have tales to tell.¹⁴¹⁵

There is plenty of scope for savings through less indulgence for profitable overtreatment. For

¹⁴ Hart JT. Overtreating mild hypertension: historical footnote on the treatment of mild hypertension. *BMJ* 2012;345:e6297.

¹⁵ Robertson JIS. Trials of antihypertensive drug treatment: the strange phenomenon of steadily improving studies yet regressive evaluation. In, Birkenhäger WH, Robertson JIS, Zanchetti A (eds). *Handbook of Hypertension*, Vol.22. Elsevier, 2004:487-503.

affordable care in Wales, all care should be evidence-based. It has been estimated that if evidence-based guidelines developed by NICE were fully applied, NHS costs could fall by around 30%. Even NICE decisions have not been immune to commercial pressures,¹⁶ though they're generally the best available. Hypertension is not the only disorder now commonly overmedicated; the same probably applies to type 2 diabetes.¹⁷

Wales needs its own GP contract, relying less, best not at all, on cash incentives for more imaginative care, but much more on leadership within practices, and from area Health Boards. This must come from staff with personal experience of work in primary care, as well as some public health training.

Consequences of imposing commercial culture on NHS care have been dramatically illustrated by the estimated 400 to 1200 unnecessary deaths at NHS England's Mid-Staffordshire Foundation Hospital Trust. The Francis Inquiry admitted that management had further reduced an already insufficient nursing workforce, in pursuit of Foundation Trust status to help it compete with other hospitals. No attention had been paid to possible effects on safety and quality of care.¹⁸ We need also to beware of giving higher priority to routine collection of clinical data than to elementary needs of patients for sympathetic human contact, food, and water.¹⁹

Five specific health care policy objectives

1. Offer full reimbursement of student

¹⁶ Kmietowicz Z . NICE told to break its close links with pharmaceutical industry by WHO adviser Kees de Joncheere. *British Medical Journal* 2003;327:637.

¹⁷ Hall H. When is a target an inducement? *BMJ* 2009;338:1159.

¹⁸ Francis R (chair). *Report of the Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust Public Inquiry. Executive Summary*. February 6 2013. House of Commons document 947. Stationery Office, 2013.

¹⁹ Mills M, Davies HTO, Macrae WA. Care of dying patients in hospital. *BMJ* 1994;309:583-6.

fees and living expenses for all medical and nursing students, in exchange for commitment of graduates to full-time work for the NHS or related public services for 10 years after postgraduate training.

2. Provide clinical leadership for GPs at Health Board level, using experience in Bro Taf as a model authority. This should make it possible to recruit an expanding salaried workforce, able to think and act in public health rather than shopkeeping terms. Aim to reduce average list size per GP to 1,500.
3. Negotiate a new GP contract: reduce, and ultimately eliminate, fees-for-process; support continuity of care for all staff; provide central public health leadership, while encouraging peripheral staff to set their own targets, and reach them in their own ways, based on local evidence.
4. Restore gatekeeper roles for GPs for all except life-threatening emergencies.²⁰²¹ Integrate the work of primary generalists and referral specialists by including plans for shared follow-up of all referred patients. Encourage GPs to organize out of hours care through local co-operatives.
5. Establish a Welsh Committee for full implementation of NICE guidelines throughout Wales NHS. This should be led by people with research experience and independent of commerce, but include a majority of members elected every 5 years by public vote.

Wales NHS should aim to provide a model of democratic socialism for the EU as an alternative to marketed care.

²⁰ Loudon I. The principle of referral: the gatekeeping role of the GP. *British Journal of General Practice* 2008;58:128-30.

²¹ Lone IA. Reducing emergency admissions: GPs used to be effective gatekeepers. *BMJ* 2012;345:e6907.

Wales, Trade Unions and Social Europe

Martin Mansfield

Introduction

The current public debate within the United Kingdom about the European Union rarely touches upon the impact the Tories proposals to repatriate powers from the European Union would have upon ordinary working people.

The speech that David Cameron gave in January on Europe has now faded in people's memories but trade unionists will remember as it was the time that he declared openly his intention to repatriate control over workers' rights from the EU to the UK.

Cameron's record on workplace rights has been universally hostile whether they derive from Brussels or Westminster. The toxic Beecroft proposals to scrap great swathes of workplace rights have been beaten back by union campaigning. The abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board removes the last vestige of a wages safety net originally erected by Winston Churchill, and the removal of strict liability from health and safety law means that injury victims seeking fair and just compensation will have to prove negligence even when their employers have blatantly broken the law.¹

The one area of employment law the Conservatives have been unable to touch has been those rights established across the European Union, such as the Working Time Directive.

But it is worth us all remembering what life was like across the UK before the Working Time Directive gave workers the right to paid holidays for the first time (sometimes underpinning entitlements unions had negotiated, but giving millions of workers their first paid holidays at all). Exhausted junior doctors making fatal errors in surgery, truck drivers falling asleep at the wheel – the longest working hours in Europe, often unpaid.

Fortunately, here in Wales, the onslaught on the trade union movement has been softened by the Labour Welsh Government. An emergency bill has been introduced to ensure that Wales' agricultural workers are protected², a public commitment to continue to guarantee equality to workers threatened by outsourcing and a social partnership is being developed across the public and private sectors.

It is against this backdrop that the relationship between Wales and 'social Europe' can be further explored.

'Social Europe'

European workplace rights are now among the most popular aspects of the EU, and without them, workers and unions would have little interest in defending UK membership. Indeed, historically, the British unions were always sceptical of the Common Market. Like much of the labour movement, we spent the 1970s arguing for withdrawal, and only Jacques Delors' agenda of marrying social rights with the single market – along with a large dose of anti-unionism from the then Thatcher Government – turned the TUC into a pro-European movement.

¹ From an article by Frances O'Grady, TUC General Secretary in Chartist - <http://www.chartist.org.uk/articles/europe/mar13ogrady.htm>

² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-23049218>

The Single European Act was supported enthusiastically by Margaret Thatcher until she realised, too late, that it included enhanced social provision. Jacques Delors then included a Social Protocol in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 which allowed unions and employers to negotiate European-wide agreements. The UK Government opted out of the so-called Social Chapter until 1997 when the incoming Labour Government ratified it.

Lord Monks, former General Secretary of the TUC and ETUC has written “apart from the outstanding issues about posted workers (aims to stop employers using migrant labour to undercut terms and conditions of employment), the social agenda of the EU is slim compared to the Delors years. There is no agreement, including among unions, on whether European minimum wages should be established, or whether there should be a European-wide right to strike. But the pressures of the economic crisis are leading to new thinking in the ETUC about these and other matters. This is more powered by the actions of the EU in the present crisis than by trade union initiative.”³

Owen Tudor, Head of Europe and International Relations at the TUC, expands an argument about the future of ‘social Europe’ on the Touchstone blog.⁴ Summarised here, the debate goes like this – there are two ways to look at the concept of social Europe: transactional and transformational.

The transactional argument is about “what’s in it for us”: social rights in return for a free market. In times of economic hardship, that transactional approach is likely to have less to offer. There are still bargains to be struck, of

course, but such deals are defensive rather than progressive and if the balance sheet shows more losses than gains, worker and union support for Europe will ebb away.

The time has, therefore, come for the transformational dimension: the case that the left needs to make is that social Europe can make Europe a better, fairer place to live and work. A return to what used to be part of the mission of the European Union: creating greater equality between poorer and richer economies which means addressing the imbalances between creditor and debtor, or surplus and deficit countries.

Tudor concludes that “a transformational approach to Europe, which I think is difficult to imagine without a social dimension, is more likely to offer the EU a way out of the current crisis and back to growth.”

Social Europe in a time of austerity

As part of a wider trade union movement, the Wales TUC shares the concerns expressed by the TUC General Secretary Frances O’Grady in her recent article for The Guardian newspaper⁵. Here she highlighted that David Cameron’s pre-election instruction to the Conservative party ‘not to bang on about Europe’ has been well and truly trashed, leaving the right wing of the Conservative party (and the monkey on their back that is UKIP) to blame Europe for all Britain’s ills while he falls in behind them. Meanwhile the British economy is flatlining, jobs are less and less secure and family budgets are squeezed as real wages fall for the fourth year in succession.

³ <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/1436.pdf>, p25

⁴ <http://touchstoneblog.org.uk/2012/02/social-europe-life-raft-or-life-support>

⁵

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jun/02/britain-economic-recovery-europe/print>

We argue that instead of obsessing about our relationship with the EU, we should be using our membership to rebuild and rebalance our economy, tackle the crisis in living standards and give our young people a future.

At the end of May, the European commission finally began to admit⁶ that the grand experiment of cutting our way to growth has failed, and failed young people in particular. It issued explicit recommendations to the British government to tackle the housing shortage, family poverty and youth unemployment.

The European austerity consensus may be beginning to crumble but the UK Government seems determined to plough on regardless. Furthermore, George Osborne's resistance to sensible EU measures like a financial transaction tax and a cap on bankers' bonuses is presented as a form of patriotism. Equally, the bid to back out of European legislation that has given us all rights to paid holidays and equal treatment for part-time and agency workers is portrayed as a way of standing up for Britain when the real purpose is attacking workers' rights.

The Prime Minister is playing politics with Britain's future prosperity to appease the Eurosceptics. His dithering about a referendum is deeply damaging to Britain's economic interests, threatens our trade relationships and creates uncertainty which is harming investment prospects, especially in manufacturing.

The UK Government has made clear their intention to take away the rights working people have gained over the last thirty years from the European Union. Social Europe has provided working people with more equality,

more protection from redundancy, more information about what's happening in their workplace, as well as a shorter working week and paid holidays.

The smokescreen the Tories have created hides their plans to launch further attacks on ordinary people's employment rights and could put thousands of jobs at risk.

The trade union movement is unanimous in arguing that Europe needs to turn its back once and for all on austerity measures that are impoverishing millions of Europeans and stifling any possibility of recovery, whilst driving unemployment upwards. We continue to fight for alternative policies in favour of growth and employment for all.

Social Compact for Europe

The TUC is part of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Twelve months ago, the ETUC proposed a Social Compact for Europe⁷, urging solidarity and cooperation to counter the Europe of competition and deregulation. We continue to call for urgent and different political choices to be made to get the European Union out of the dangerous downward spiral in which it finds itself.

The European social model should be promoted, not attacked. As much as fundamental rights, wages also contribute to getting out of the crisis, whereas deregulation has contributed to an increase in unemployment and widened inequality to the point of creating an untenable economic but also political situation.

We believe that it is through social dialogue that we will be able to seek fair and efficient solutions in response to the grave crisis that

⁶ <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/22348284-c7a6-11e2-be27-00144feab7de.html#axzz2V3r4wyOD>

⁷ <http://www.etuc.org/a/10024>

the Union faces, that we here in Wales face. But, regrettably, we see democracy at work and social dialogue often being disregarded, attacked and undermined.

Three key elements make up the proposed Social Compact:

1. Collective bargaining and social dialogue;
2. Economic governance for sustainable growth and employment; and
3. Economic and social justice.

Social dialogue in Wales

There is a strong history of social dialogue in Wales that pre-dates the National Assembly for Wales but that has been greatly strengthened since its inception. The most noticeable examples of this are the Public Sector Workforce Partnership Council and the Council for Economic Renewal – bodies where employers, trade unions and the government work together. As a small nation we have an opportunity during these difficult times to mitigate the impact of spending cuts being imposed by the UK Government.

The Wales TUC is resolved to engage in social dialogue to identify ways of managing with a decreased budget whilst protecting jobs and services. There has been some progress towards our aims and the widespread immediate public service job cuts that have been seen in England, have so far been largely avoided in the devolved public services in Wales. There are 332,000 people employed in the public sector in Wales and we are fighting hard to keep it that way.

It is noticeable that in areas where this dialogue is entrenched, such as the health service, the Wales TUC has been able to accept the general direction of travel proposed by the Health Boards on their latest round of massive service reconfigurations.

The trade unions have concerns about implementation and funding of these changes but the whole picture provides a stark contrast with other public service reforms currently on the table.

Social dialogue proved very effective in the early stages of the current economic crisis when the CBI Wales and Wales TUC⁸ were able to pull together a 7 point action plan out of which grew the widely-recognised success story of the Welsh Government Pro-Act scheme.⁹

More recently the Wales TUC have commissioned the New Economics Foundation to produce looking ‘Towards a Welsh industrial strategy’¹⁰. The report makes compelling arguments regarding the long term structural weaknesses of the Welsh economy and provides pointers towards an active industrial strategy designed to drive economic recovery. In response to this, Wales TUC conference agreed at the end of May to “work with Business Wales and individual employer organisations as appropriate to seek agreement on the measures required to revitalise the Welsh economy... where we can agree we have an obligation to work jointly with social partners to achieve the best for workers in Wales.”

Conclusions

A generation of young Europeans is growing up without work, opportunity or hope. Social Europe – the unique bargain that has underpinned the EU’s historic success and defined our continent as a place to live and work – is under real threat.

⁸ <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/business/business-news/cbi-tuc-join-forces-solve-2146526>

⁹ <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2010/56/en/1/EF1056EN.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/towards-a-welsh-industrial-strategy>

When Jacques Delors, back in 1988, famously won over the TUC with his vision of a Europe with common employment rights and social benefits he said that these would provide a counter balance to the single market and stop a race to the bottom. But, while Europe remains an important source of jobs and investment, and vital to our export markets; the promised balance between business freedoms and protection for working people has been broken.

Cuts in real wages, pensions and public services are the order of the day. In the UK, the average worker is worse off in real terms than they were a decade ago.

For a decade or more unions have been on the back foot over Europe and inequality has grown, but now David Cameron's transparent attempt to take away our rights has given us the space to advance the case for a different, better, fairer Europe.

Frances O'Grady argued in her recent speech to the ETUC that "for starters, we should be developing a youth guarantee (a commitment to getting every young person into a job, an internship or training within four months of their becoming unemployed) worthy of the name."¹¹

This is a Europe-wide programme, returning to the days when vast numbers of qualified young people had to emigrate to find work, leaving their native economies short of the skills and talent needed to build recovery. Irish youth were the first to pack their suitcases but now the Greeks, Portuguese and Spanish are too. And this is a Wales problem

– with over 4,500 18-24 year olds claiming jobseekers allowance for more than a year.

The Trade Union movement has been instrumental in pushing for the Robin Hood tax across Europe. Britain should join the 11 EU member states that are negotiating for its implementation, not taking them to court as Osborne is doing, having comprehensively lost the vote. We need to work together with our European partners to take back control of the finance sector from the professional gamblers who treated the real economy like their personal roulette wheel.¹²

Faced with a real and immediate threat, the future of 'social Europe' as the trade union movement now understands it, the ETUC's social compact offers a real alternative. We have to work towards a Europe-wide approach - an approach advocating that wages are the motor for the economy, promotes growth and jobs and develops better co-ordination of collective bargaining with the aim of boosting purchasing power. Only this approach will generate demand and reduce income inequality.

Five things for Wales to do now to support the ETUC Social Compact....

The Wales TUC believes that the Welsh Government needs to:

- Build on the excellent existing support programmes such as Jobs Growth Wales to deliver a guaranteed job or training for every young person in Wales within four months of their becoming unemployed (a Youth Guarantee);
- Produce a new Industrial Strategy for Wales forming part of a European recovery programme that creates good jobs, builds affordable homes

¹¹

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jun/02/britain-economic-recovery-europe/print>

¹² taken from

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jun/02/britain-economic-recovery-europe/print>

and stimulates research and technology;

- Keep pressure on the UK Government to sign up to the Robin Hood Tax across the European Union;
- Entrench social dialogue in all aspects of the Welsh Government's policy-making, ensuring that the trade union voice around the table is heard;
- Work with trade unions to introduce the Living Wage for their direct workforce and encourage all public and private sector employers to do the same – providing a significant boost to local economies throughout Wales.



<http://ideaswales.wordpress.com>