

***Policy Note:***

***Agenda for Action at Holyrood 2016***

**Seven Subject Asks for newly elected MSPs**

Introduction

The JRF has published a number of research and policy papers over the last couple of years on a number of subjects and organised a number of events (see our website <http://reidfoundation.org/> ). Based upon these, the Foundation makes these ‘asks’ of MSPs, from all parties, as we want our research and evidenced-based policy recommendations put into practice across Scotland.

**1. The Trade Union Act should not be implemented in Scotland.**

When the First Minister (FM), Nicola Sturgeon, delivered the Third Jimmy Reid Memorial Address in November 2015, she set out why she opposes the UK Government’s Trade Union Bill. The FM acknowledged that joining a union for the representation of one’s interests is a fundamental human right.

* Citing its obligations to positively comply with the ECHR, under Section 57 of the Scotland Act 1998, the Scottish Government should refuse to implement the UK government’s Trade Union Act as it is a disproportionate approach to a non-existent problem in Scotland. We call upon the Scottish Government to give a pledge that where it is the direct employer, it will not seek to enforce the new balloting mandate thresholds or the new picketing requirements; it will agree to the extension of balloting mandates; it will support measures to introduce e-balloting; and it will agree to notice of action remaining at one week. We also call upon the Scottish Government to use its influence with those public bodies which it directly funds to do the same.
* The Scottish Government should add internationally defined economic and social rights to those currently enforceable in Scottish courts.

To read the FM’s full speech go to <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/Speeches-Briefings/Jimmy-Reid-Memorial-Lecture-1fa2.aspx>

**2. Economic and Industrial Democracy**

Currently, both Scotland and Britain are in the bottom half of the European league table for democracy at work. The Foundation does not believe the Fair Work Convention’s ‘Fair Work Framework’ will drastically change this situation because it has no statutory underpinning. The Scottish Government should adopt a strategy which gives workers the means to control their work and working lives which will then enable the economy to thrive. Therefore, the Foundation asks that:

* The Scottish Government should adopt an industrial democracy framework which provides for: workplace and sectoral collective bargaining; recognises that right to take industrial action is a fundamental human right eg Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights; co-determination so that workers can have their own representatives on the board of directors of the organisations that employ them, a strategy of encroachment upon the managerial prerogative, public ownership, worker cooperatives and tripartism.
* The Scottish Government should fund a public debate, hosted by the STUC, to agree a coherent and radical set of proposals on the framework’s detail eg what are the pros and cons of the German and Swedish systems and which of their particular components would we wish to see implemented in Scotland? Also, what thresholds (if any) should be proposed for eligibility of workers exercising their workplace rights?

To read the full policy paper go to <http://reidfoundation.org/2016/02/democracy-at-work-launch-of-jrf-report-on-economic-and-industrial-democracy/>

**3. The Fair Work Convention**

The Scottish Government established the Fair Work Convention in order to engage in a limited form of social partnership with unions and employers. The Convention has published the framework document by which it hopes to facilitate this social partnership. Many legislative powers relevant to the FWF are reserved to Westminster but the Scottish Government can use its limited devolved powers to make an impact. Therefore, the Foundation asks that:

* The Scottish Government should adopt a fair work strategy in respect of the public procurement mechanism. Scarce public resources can be used to achieve fair work and support from the public agencies – finance and expertise – can both encourage and reward fair work practices. Recent coverage on the future of the UK steel industry has prompted the UK point out that the Scottish Government is entitled under EU directives, to take economic and social issues into account when awarding public contracts.
* The Scottish Government should give this lever teeth eg by having an accreditation system (like the independent living wage system has).
* The Scottish Government should create a regulatory system for fair work eg to enforce sectoral collective bargaining where the Scottish Government is ultimately the employer as it is the paymaster Any regulatory system should also have periodic reviews built in to it.

To read the full policy paper go to <http://reidfoundation.org/>

**4. Scottish Government’s Block Grant**

The Scottish Government’s block grant (BG) has been adjusted now that the fiscal settlement has been agreed to cover Scotland’s increased devolved powers from Westminster via the Scotland Act 2016. The negotiating processes for the fiscal settlement have resulted in a poor deal for Scotland. For example, that the adjustment to the abatement to the Scottish Government’s BG should be calculated using tax revenues in rUK (i.e., the amount of tax collected) rather than tax base (the aggregate of taxable incomes). The effect is to expose Scotland to a whole new class of risk as the amount which is subtracted from Scotland’s BG will grow, in some way or other, in line with growth in rUK tax revenues. All such arrangements have the effect of pitching Scotland into an economic race with rUK: if you don’t grow your tax revenues as fast, you will be penalised. Therefore, the Foundation asks that:

* The ‘no-detriment’ principles set down by Smith, while at the same time maintaining the existing Barnett formula, have not been honoured, therefore the Scottish Government must secure a fundamental re-assessment of the funding regime of the UK’s devolved governments.
* More robust data and better analysis is needed to make key decisions in that re-assessment process, which should be undertaken in public to ensure transparency and accountability.
* Given the Scottish government’s limited economic powers within the devolved settlement, a fixed real indexation factor for the block grant adjustment may be an acceptable way to proceed.

To read the full policy paper go to <http://reidfoundation.org/2016/01/adjusting-the-scottish-government%e2%80%99s-block-grant-taking-the-wider-perspective/> For an update on the fiscal settlement read Jim Cuthbert’s latest article for the Scottish Left Review at <http://www.scottishleftreview.org/article/flawed-process-2-damaging-deal/>

**5. Soundly Based, Timely Statistics are Essential** **for Economic Growth**

Two problems remain to be addressed if the Scottish Government is to increase competitiveness, tackle inequality and move onto a more balanced growth path which better withstands global economic shocks: decide if the current management of trade support agencies is likely to achieve the objectives of the Scottish Government’s economic strategy; whether the quality of the databases available, the most fundamental tool by which to judge performance, are up to the task in hand. Therefore, the Foundation asks that:

* As the Scottish Government becomes more responsible for managing Scotland’s economy, it should devise, monitor, and evaluate its economic strategy using robust data. Currently data is woefully incomplete and inaccurate, is unjustifiably time-lagged, does not cover all sectors, is sketchy on sectors covered, and is based upon low return rates from respondents.
* Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Development International must be required gather timely, good quality data on how well Scotland is performing on trade and, eg, analyse trends, make the connections between trade patterns and trends in the economy. This requires a radical change in attitude, in systems, and in working methods. Learning from the past will improve future trade performance and economic growth to make substantive inroads on austerity.

To read the full policy paper go to <http://reidfoundation.org/the-library/>

**6. Scottish Ports**

Scotland’s major ports are inadequate, outdated, and expensive. Freight traffic moving through Iceland, Ireland and Flemish ports is far greater than in Scotland despite our economic growth depending on trade expanding. The Scottish Government must act to enable our economy to benefit from direct access to international markets via advanced, low-cost ports in Scotland and related shipping services. The impact of frequent international shipping connections to Scotland rather than England, makes existing trade more competitive and to develop new trade flows due to ports. Thus, the Foundation asks that:

* The Scottish Government must be proactive and adopt a Maritime Transport Policy, adequately resourced to ensure Scotland is able to provide world class port facilities offering strategic and sustainable international shipping connections with the European continent and elsewhere.
* As much of the current major port capacity in Scotland is now technologically obsolete, new port capacity is required, quite possibly at more optimal locations, so a public investment strategy is needed to build and operate required ports and terminals.
* The Scottish Government should establish a new Maritime Authority for Scotland to manage an enforcement regime that requires port owners to adequately maintain and improve existing facilities, to better regulate port charges and ensure forward planning so that port capacity enables trade to expand and the economy to grow.

To read the full policy paper go to <http://reidfoundation.org/the-library/>

**7. Human Rights**

The Scottish Government should give effect to its high level commitments on human rights by changing the framework for respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights. Specifically the Foundation asks that the Scottish Parliament should:

* Set up a Human Rights Committee to focus on compliance with international human rights law across all business.
* Amend the Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006 to: allow the Scottish Human Rights Commission to undertake casework, and to advise people thinking of taking a case.
* Require Audit Scotland to include compliance with human rights law into their annual work with Scotland’s top 200 public bodies.

To read the full policy paper go to <http://reidfoundation.org/2016/03/human-rights-protection-in-scotland-raising-the-bar/>

**About The JRF**

The Jimmy Reid Foundation (JRF) was established in 2011 as a non-party political, independent ‘think tank’ which works to secure a more progressive future for Scotland. It is managed by a Project Board, which initiates and informs dialogue to achieve better public policy decisions. In the last eighteen months this has included publishing eight policy papers and holding the third Annual Jimmy Reid Memorial Lecture ‘Workers Rights are Human Rights’ which was delivered by the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

**To Support the JRF**

We rely on donations and voluntary effort to deliver our work. If you are able to support us financially then please make a donation at <http://reidfoundation.org/sign-up/> To those of you who already support us, thank you!

[**www.reidfoundation.org**](http://www.reidfoundation.org) **May 2016**