

SCOTTISH AUTONOMY AND THE FUTURE OF THE WELFARE STATE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Scottish autonomy and the Scottish welfare state have been inseparable, each inconceivable in its present form without the other. On the one hand, the nature of Scottish government has been shaped by the development of the welfare state since the mid-twentieth century, drawing also on the legacy of autonomy from previous constitutional settlements with the rest of the UK. In these respects, Scotland is a paradigm of the position of many small nations in this era.

On the other hand, the welfare state in Scotland has depended intimately on the relative autonomy which Scotland has enjoyed in relation to the rest of the UK. That, too, is not dissimilar to the ways in which the welfare state elsewhere has evolved: the implementation of apparently uniform policies has depended everywhere on adaptation to local conditions, many of these shaped by nationalist pressure on the states which emerged from the nineteenth century or earlier.

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The future of the welfare state, then, can be fruitfully debated by setting alongside each other two debates about the nature of the state in small countries such as Scotland. The first debate concerns the character of the welfare state generally. The question here is: how can the centralised structures of the welfare state be renewed, in response not only to market-based assaults from the new right, but also to the widespread popular wish for greater influence and even participation that the welfare state itself has helped to foster? The responses which have been given to that question are outlined in section 3. The second debate is about the nature of the autonomy which small nations such as Scotland have enjoyed. Put bluntly: is a managerial type of national autonomy enough, either politically or culturally? This question is discussed in section 4. Section 5 then brings the two debates together, allowing each to illuminate some of the obscurities in the other.

Before embarking on assessing the debates, however, it is useful to outline in more detail the character of Scottish government in the twentieth century, and its relationship to the character of the welfare state: this is done in section 2.

2. SCOTTISH AUTONOMY IN THE WELFARE STATE

The starting point for an understanding of the twentieth-century state in Scotland lies as far back as the system of government which emerged from the Union between the Scottish and English parliaments in 1707. (The argument in this section draws heavily on Paterson (1994); see also Fry 1987; McCrone 1992; and Morris 1990). The important point for our purposes is that the Union was partial. In return for surrendering its parliament, Scotland kept control of the key agencies of an incipient civil society - a separate legal system, a system of local government that was beginning to assert its independence of the state, and a thoroughly independent and supremely self-confident presbyterian church.

These agencies then shaped the Scotland which emerged with the industrial revolution. Local government was reformed in 1832 in a largely successful attempt to modernise it for the new age. Equally influential thereafter was the emerging network of boards and committees which oversaw growing parts of state activities in Scotland - for example, education, the poor law, a rudimentary system of public health, and so on. These structures were given coherence by a continuing attachment to presbyterian philanthropy (undisturbed despite organisational schisms in the presbyterian church), by a

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strong preference for Liberal politics, and by the increasingly important edifice of Scots law. The legal system not only gave a philosophical shape to the regulations and practices of the local agencies. At the local level, it also supplied the unifying figure of the sheriff, primarily, but by no means merely, the local judge: the sheriff organised many of the boards and committees, and was an efficient means by which local issues were communicated to central government in Edinburgh. Nationally, the legal system also gave the closest which Scotland had to a central government, in the Faculty of Advocates, in the supreme courts of law, and in the Lord Advocate, the chief legal officer of the central state, whose main task was to articulate to London the preferences which came up through these networks, and who was usually charged with translating these into legislation wherever that was necessary.

The details of this governing system are not directly relevant to our discussion of the twentieth century. Two points matter for the legacy it left. It operated relatively independently of the London government, the UK state then being mainly concerned with foreign and imperial matters. In that sense, Scottish autonomy was at least as great as that of many small nations elsewhere in Europe: it resembled the governing systems of places that did have their own parliament (such as Finland and Norway) rather more than it looked like places which did not (such as Bohemia or Catalonia), where recurrent bouts of repression by an imperial state encroached on what remaining autonomy the local civil societies might have inherited. The solid bourgeois Scottish men who ran the system were well aware of the rather good bargain Scotland had: autonomy in domestic matters, and access through free trade and migration to the biggest empire the world had ever seen. For an economy based on trade, and for a middle class that had developed an excellent system of meritocratic education, these opportunities could hardly be rivalled by any alternative constitutional arrangements.

The other way in which the governing system of nineteenth-century Scotland matters for the present discussion is that it provided the context in which a more interventionist state grew in the twentieth century. To understand that process, the key point is the growth of a professional bureaucracy as the main arm of government, something which happened throughout the developed world. Poggi (1978) and others have called this system technocracy, government by professionals (Bell 1976; Held 1984; Keane 1988; Kumar 1978). It grew readily out of the nineteenth century settlement: it was easy for rule by lawyers and doctors to become government by civil servants and medical scientists.

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There was not much that was peculiar about Scotland in this respect: as elsewhere, the welfare state grew as a response to mass democracy, and, as in many other places, it was shaped by a dominant social democratic party. In Scotland, however, the pragmatic dullness of technocracy responded not only to socialist agitation: it was equally a displacement of nationalist pressure for a separate Scottish legislature. The one agency served both purposes: a separate Scottish arm of the welfare-state bureaucracy, in and around the Scottish Office. Although founded as long ago as 1885, this body rose to become the embodiment of Scottish national government in the 1930s, shaped by the same forces of 'middle opinion' which also devised the technocratic ideas that underpinned the welfare state throughout the UK. Since then, the Scottish Office has grown to be in charge of most areas of social policy, the main exception being social security (Brown et al 1996; see Scottish Office 1996).

In the absence of a Scottish parliament, it might appear, of course, that a separate bureaucracy was not much of a political prize. But that is true only insofar as the liberal-democratic theory of the state is true, and political science has long taught us to be sceptical of its claims. Parliaments are not the most important part of the state; indeed, they may even not matter much at all for understanding how policy is made and implemented. Rather more significant is the pluralistic bargaining that accompanies the development of policy, in which parliament is at most one player, and in which the civil service can extract consensus from a variety of bodies in civil society, by more or less corporatist means, and relying on more or less formal networks of groups and individuals (Raab 1992).

As the welfare state grew in Scotland, all of this pluralistic process was relatively independent. Most Scottish professions were organised autonomously of their counterparts elsewhere in the UK, as were most pressure groups. Thus the key debates about education, or housing, or health, or child welfare could take place in a context that was Scottish first and British after that. Of course, it was also, in a sense, 'universal': for example, teachers in Scotland had similar concerns to teachers in, say, Germany or Canada. But they also had their own traditions and principles, just as their counterparts elsewhere did, and these then informed the character of the education system that emerged, either because they were influential on the civil service as it devised policy, or because - a Scottish instance of the impossibility of perfect implementation (Hogwood and Gunn 1984) - the preferences of professionals were bound to be a significant influence on daily practice whatever the civil servants or MPs might say (Paterson 1997a). A similar point can be made about the unique system of child welfare in

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Scotland, which was inaugurated in 1968 (Murphy 1992). It was universal in the sense that it incorporated the central features of international thinking on child-centred approaches to juvenile justice and family services. But it was deeply Scottish insofar as - unlike in England - that approach had become the consensus among the relevant professionals in Scotland (Murphy 1992, pp.156-161).

To infer, or explain, Scottish distinctiveness from this, we need to go further, however, and refer again to the legacy from the nineteenth century. Scottish practice was distinct, not only in random local ways as it would be in, say, a region of England, but also systematically, because Scotland inherited a distinct culture and a distinct set of political and moral preferences, a social ethos which has been described as 'secular presbyterianism' (Maxwell 1982) or communitarianism (Storror 1990). The UK governing system, in fact, was federal rather than unitary. Federalism is not so much a matter of constitutional structures as of social practices, 'the forces - economic, social, political, cultural - that have made the outward forms of federalism necessary' (Livingston 1952, p.83). In that sense, the quasi-federal character of the UK in the mid-twentieth century allowed Scotland at least as much scope for autonomy as the formal federations of, say, Germany or the USA gave to their component parts (Jeffery and Savigear 1991; Jeffrey-Jones and Collins 1983; see also the article by Jeffery in this issue of **Scottish Affairs**). The reason why this is so is that the freedom granted to the parts in a federation lies much more in the details of implementing legislation than in determining the broad sweep of that legislation in the first place - the very details over which the Scottish Office and Scottish civil society had significant influence. As Collins says of the USA since the New Deal:

Since the 1930s, the federal government has been the planner, provisioner and primary entrepreneur in domestic policy, even though much scope has been left for state and local variation on grand federal themes.
(Collins 1983, p.viii)

Substitute 'UK' for federal, and 'Scottish Office' for 'state', and we have a reasonable description here of the scope which Scotland has had in most of the same period.

The Scots accepted all this for broadly the same reasons as in the nineteenth century. The Union continued to give access to economic opportunities, through direct trading outlets, and in the greater resources which a large state could offer for an expensive system of public welfare. If nationalism was

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about asserting the interests of the Scottish people, then the main criterion of success was meeting these interests by whatever means, as opposed to taking risks with them in a possibly rash project of national independence. Somewhat similar reasons also help to explain why, in Scotland as in many other places, socialist radicals, too, were satisfied with the technocracy of the welfare state even though they may have started with revolutionary aims. Better to have houses, health, and literacy today, it was felt, than an indefinitely postponed utopia. In common with people everywhere in the developed world (Marshall 1950), Scots as Scots, and Scots as - broadly - social democrats, opted for a significant expansion of social citizenship, even though that meant forgoing any radical development of political autonomy.

3. PROBLEMS WITH THE WELFARE STATE

Summing up the problems facing the welfare state at the end of the twentieth century, Hirst has argued that

modern publics have become more demanding, better educated, and less deferential. Their attitude to public services has changed from one of gratitude to a consumer consciousness. They demand higher quality and also more diverse services of greater complexity.
(Hirst 1995, p.344)

In support of this analysis, we can cite the evidence of numerous surveys in several European countries, showing a widespread popular scepticism about the state (although not about public welfare): see, for example, Halpern (1995), Inglehart (1990), and Taylor-Goodby (1989). Hirst's points have implications for many features of the welfare state, but what concerns us here is their relevance to the ways in which it has been governed. Numerous critics - politicians, activists, and academics - have now pointed to the inadequacies of the old statist means by which welfare was provided in the middle of the twentieth century. But, despite the diversity of the critiques of statism, they have some common elements. Probably the most important one is an assertion that politics is unavoidable. Poggi puts it thus:

Liberalism and democracy have the advantage over socialism of directly addressing some key problems arising from the necessity of rule, instead of down-grading such problems to the status of technical matters to be settled unproblematically after a resolution in the control of the means of

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production.
(Poggi 1978, p.148)

Poggi forgets the tradition of libertarian socialism, but the main point is clear, and would indeed be accepted by people in that tradition. In particular, when political consensus breaks down, leaving power in the hands of bureaucrats seems especially obnoxious. Similar points come from feminism and from other new social movements: social democracy has been too managerial (Wainwright 1994; Keane 1988). Famously, another similar critique has come from the right. Thus we have Hayek arguing that

it is not the powers which democratic assemblies can effectively wield but the powers which they hand over to the administrators charged with the achievement of political goals that constitute the danger to individual freedom today.
(Hayek 1960, p.116)

Also broadly from the right, public-choice theory has pointed to the same set of problems. Pierson sums up its conclusions:

under liberal democratic procedures, collective choice through state actions ... will always tend to yield outcomes that are less efficient or desirable than outcomes determined by private choice through markets.
(Pierson 1991, p.45)

The political response to these critiques has involved trying to reconstruct the governing systems of the welfare state (Pierson 1991; Sullivan 1994; Timmins 1996). Despite the rhetoric of the new right, none of these political projects has attempted to abolish the welfare state outright; and, as the new right experiments have run their course in the 1980s and 1990s, the enthusiasm for market-type reforms has abated somewhat, and has converged towards the different thinking on restructuring that has come from the left. In our context, debating the future of Scotland, the most relevant source of ideas is on the left anyway, because - as in many European countries (but probably not in large parts of southern England) - that is where the country's political centre lies.

The left's response to the problems of governance has involved asserting some mixture of strengthened citizenship and strengthened civil society. As Pierson argues, an attention to citizenship is the response to the right's capturing of the word 'freedom' in the past half century (Pierson 1991, p.196). But the left has good reason to try to regain this ground, because it

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was an aim of the welfare state from the start. Weale points out, for example, that asserting common rights based on common citizenship must rest on the principle that

all persons are entitled to respect as deliberate and purposive agents capable of formulating their own projects, and that as part of this respect there is a governmental obligation to bring into being or preserve the conditions in which this [individual] autonomy can be realised.
(1983, p.42).

Ringen, similarly, notes that, however intrusive state welfare may have been, effective policies for redistribution actually stimulate individual autonomy (Ringen 1987, p.206). The whole point of welfare was to free people from collective constraints which they had not chosen. Now that a large majority (though not all) of the citizens of the welfare states have indeed been freed from the worst of these constraints, it is hardly surprising that they are demanding that the state now offers scope for exercising individual autonomy in unprecedented ways (Paterson 1997b).

Civil society originally offered less familiar ground for the left (and, indeed, Marx himself distrusted it as the site of bourgeois power), but it has become the principle on which social democratic theorists have placed greatest emphasis in their response to the new right (J.A.Hall 1995; Hirst 1994; Keane 1988; Marquand 1996). Marquand has described the institutions of civil society as 'the indispensable foundation stone of civility and sociability', and a source of new solidarity in communities, of 'a politics of negotiation, discussion and mutual education' (Marquand 1996; see also Marquand 1988). But he and others also acknowledge that the civil society of which the left has traditionally disapproved was a source of inequality of power, being dominated by white, middle-class men. Therefore civil society can become the basis of a renewed welfare state only if it itself is transformed through a growth in voluntary activity (Deakin 1987, pp.188ff; Pierson 1991, p.200; Putnam 1993). Pierson summarises the attractions of voluntary activity for the left as being sensitivity to individual needs, resistance to domination by professionals, the capacity to advocate rights independent of government, and the scope to empower people through their own activities.

These debates have not yet been conducted in any detail in Scotland, because the left has reacted largely defensively to the market-type reforms of the Conservative government since the 1980s: there has been no Scottish Stuart Hall (1989), Hirst (1994), Marquand (1988), or Wainwright (1994), although Stephen Maxwell is a notable exception, having consistently advocated this

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kind of position in Scotland since the 1970s (Maxwell 1976). Insofar as parts of the Scottish left have adapted to a 'new realism', it has largely accepted these reforms on the right's own terms, modifying them only so that they would not disrupt too severely the popular preference for public welfare. But the general problems in the welfare state to which these debates relate have provoked a specifically Scottish response, largely based on nationalism, which has stimulated democratising pressures of its own. So it is to this second critique of mid-twentieth Scottish government that we now turn.

4. PROBLEMS WITH MANAGED AUTONOMY

Nairn has recently restated eloquently the nationalist case against Scotland's system of government (Nairn 1995). Since his essay included a critique of the book on which section 2 above draws, it is particularly relevant in the present context. A similar nationalist position can be found in many other territories throughout Europe and North America (see, for example, Brown et al 1996, chapters 2 and 9; Keating 1996; Kellas 1991; Moreno and Arriba 1996; Tremblay 1996). In these discussions, 'nationalism' includes not only the parties that agitate for a separate state (such as the SNP in Scotland) but also those which seek a significant transfer of state power and state structures from the centre, such as, in Scotland, Labour and the Liberal Democrats: for a discussion of this wider definition of 'nationalism', see, for example, Brown et al (1996) or Keating (1996).

Nairn's main point is that a merely managerial autonomy involved opting out of history. It entailed accepting that real politics would happen elsewhere, in the imperial capitals to which Scotland could gain no direct access. In particular, we could add to this that the Scottish nationalism of the welfare-state era was not a real welfare-state nationalism, of the nation-building sort which underpinned the legitimacy of other states (Held 1989, p.168). That type of nationalism lay in the British realm. So, in Nairn's critique, the Scottish welfare state grew up as a British project, having no intimate links to Scottish nationalism. Therefore Scottish national identity came to seem quaintly anachronistic and firmly unpolitical, linked to, in Nairn's terms, 'lower case' rather than 'upper case' nationalism.

Similar points have been made by other critics of the position outlined in section 2. Andrew McPherson (in a personal communication) has questioned the functionalism inherent in an account that places so much emphasis on managerial adaptation to technically defined social needs. Nairn sums up a similar point by alleging that Scottish nationalism is a *deus ex machina* here:

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an unexplained force acting on the governing system, to which it pragmatically responds, rather than a source of real social change, producing in turn real political and constitutional change.

Nairn has also pointed to the allegedly debilitating cultural effects of a managerial autonomy. Others have made similar points. Thus Garland (1996) (also reviewing Paterson (1994)) mentions the insidious effects on a national culture of choosing to accept that real power is permanently unavailable. From the political right, Michael Fry argued some time ago (1987) that twentieth-century Scottish politics has been characterised by dependency on handouts from London; he includes the Scottish Conservatives in this accusation as much as their opponents. Nairn claims that a permanently powerless nation indulges in what he calls 'display identity', by which he means not mainly the kind of thing seen on football terraces, but more importantly the empty rhetoric of Labour politicians apparently asserting the rights of an entity they call 'the Scottish people', but not following that through into a determined assertion of national autonomy.

According to these views, the current nationalist agitation in Scotland is a popular attempt to re-enter the mainstream, both politically and culturally. Indeed, although we have been looking at the writing of academics here, in a sense the critique started off in popular politics, drawing in fact on Scottish instances of some of the general concerns about the welfare state which were outlined in section 3 above (Brown et al 1996, especially chapter 3). But, when we examine these popular processes, we find a tension that points to an unresolved conflict between the leftist and nationalist critiques of Scottish government.

On the one hand, part of the critique of the Scottish Office is that it has been insufficiently democratic. This can be immediately recognised as a version of the more general criticism of the welfare-state technocracy coming from Poggi and others. Thus critics point to the sheer spending power of the Office (in 1995, 62% of all public expenditure that can be identified as relating to Scotland: see Scottish Office 1996). They then note the lack of transparency in the policy process there, especially in the network of quangos and other consultative mechanisms through which the Office negotiates with its favoured partners in Scottish civil society. This democratising critique would therefore find support in the leftist arguments for a renewed civic activism (Brown et al 1996, chapter 3).

On the other hand, two other sources of popular dissatisfaction with Scottish government would seem to lead to a strengthening of the central Scottish

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state, even possibly at the expense of local civic bodies. The first is a Scottish instance of the breakdown of the consensus that underpinned the welfare state. The lack of accountability of the Scottish Office might not have mattered so long as the governing party in Westminster was the same as the majority party in Scotland, or so long as the two main parties broadly shared an ideology. But the two majorities did not coincide between the 1950s and the mid-1990s, and the ideologies have diverged since the 1970s (Brown et al 1996). Casting the problem in this way - as a contrast between the Scottish and English majorities over a period of several decades - encourages a strengthening of central political institutions in Scotland so that they could reflect the Scottish majority.

The other point in the nationalist critique is equally centralist in its implications. The experiences which have provoked anti-statism elsewhere have, in Scotland, provoke anti-British-statism. The problems of the welfare state have been interpreted by Scottish nationalism not as a reason to doubt the efficacy of state-delivered welfare as such, but as a reason to doubt the efficacy of the British state in particular. The old British nationalism of the welfare state in its early years is therefore ceding to a new nationalism of the Scottish welfare state.

Thus the salient contrast between the nationalist critique of Scottish managed autonomy and the leftist response to the problems of the welfare state can be summed up in an apparent paradox, all the more puzzling in that Scottish nationalism is itself broadly of the communitarian left. Whereas the left internationally has been claiming that the problem is too much statism, Scottish nationalism has, on the whole, been saying that the problem has been too little.

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It is not satisfactory merely to dismiss one or the other of the critiques, because both the nationalist and the leftist positions on the welfare state are cogent, and - more importantly - both are popular and therefore simply cannot be ignored. Making sense of the paradox therefore requires a redefinition of what we mean by politics and the state. This revision is needed not only in the practical political sense that the state and so on have to be reinvented, but also in the theoretical sense that our academic tools have not really served us very well in understanding the welfare states of relatively small, semi-autonomous communities. To see this, consider the light which each of the two critiques casts on the other.

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On the one hand, the general leftist critique of the welfare state - as outlined in section 3 - does seem to confirm the reality of Scottish autonomy this century, but only if we adopt a more radical definition of politics than is current in the debates around Scottish (or other) nationalism. The politics of everyday life matters, as the critique of the welfare state has taught us. This matters not only in the negative sense that the welfare state has politicised some things which, in the nineteenth century, were regarded as intrinsically private - most notably, the internal organisation of households. It matters also, more positively, because the engagement of the state with these private concerns enabled politics to relate directly to the worries of its citizens. Sullivan (1994, pp.144-9) points out that one of the strengths of social democracy, in contrast to its main rivals to the left and to the right, was that it rooted its interpretations and claims in specific social phenomena, rather than in abstract theory - seeking access to housing or health-care or schooling, for example, rather than agitating for a vaguely defined utopia. That, of course, has been a guiding principle of feminism too, and also one of the explanations of its impact over the last two decades (Sassoon 1996, chapter 15).

So the whole point of the welfare state has been to make politics banal. In Pierson's words, the welfare state 'is extraordinarily mundane'. And yet, at the same time, it is historic, 'one of the dominant, if sometimes unnoticed, institutions of the modern world' (Pierson 1991, p.221). It is because of this everyday character of welfare-state politics that new governing structures are needed - systems which do not pretend that the important politics of welfare can be conducted adequately in forums which are removed both physically and psychologically from the mainly local or even private places where difficult decisions are taken.

So when Nairn claims that Scottish managerial autonomy is not about real politics, he does not acknowledge that we are possibly seeing a shift in what counts as real politics. Such a shift would respond to popular dissatisfaction with forms of provision that have relied on the state ('real politics'), and to a growing preference for popular agency (Paterson 1997b). This shift is partly a product of the welfare state itself, for the reasons indicated in the earlier quotation from Hirst ('modern publics have become more demanding, better educated, and less deferential'). Thus it is conceivable that the forums that the Scots settled for in the mid-twentieth century are actually forerunners of the places where some of the most important political debates will take place in the future: 'lower case' nationalism is more important now than the 'upper case' sort. If the welfare state has made all politics banal, then nationalism of the Scottish sort fits well into it, being similarly 'banal' in its pragmatic

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rootedness in everyday life. The concept of 'banal nationalism' as expounded by Billig (1995) explains the Scottish case extremely well (even though he does not acknowledge the importance of nationalisms such as this which are potentially in conflict with the state): nationalism in Scotland, as in the states which he analyses, is most influential when it is part of the taken-for-granted context of politics, rather than the inspiration for revolutionary flag-waving.

If that is true of politics, it is also at least as true of culture. Far from Scotland's having been confined to the margins of serious culture by its semi-autonomy, the fragmentation of the 'grand narratives' which dominated politics until the middle of the twentieth century has pointed to the centrality of incoherence, relativity, and provisionality (Brown et al 1996, chapter 9). This is not the same as claiming that post-modernism is a sufficient account of our cultural condition, but is, rather, a denial that the privileged vantage points are in the same place all the time. As Craig has put it,

core cultures are ... , by definition, abnormal, since cores are few and peripheries many. Cultural analysis has operated largely through the application of values which are themselves the cultural consequences of core conditions, highlighting integrity, unity, coherence, sustained development. But those are not in fact cultural values: they are the application to culture of the structural values required, within a certain pattern of the world economy, if a nation is going to maintain its core position.

(Craig 1996, p.116)

The nationalism which corresponds to this new incoherence is something like Cohen's 'personal nationalism' (Cohen 1996) - a means of relating to and interpreting a community, not an overarching identity that engulfs all others. Once again, the Scottish experience could be said to anticipate what is now a much more common condition, although - as Craig indicates - it was probably always part of the cultural experience of most small cultural groups. More generally, this view of identity as pragmatic and personal rather than imperative and abstract could be part of the explanation for the legitimacy of the welfare state everywhere. We have already noted Held's point that the welfare states were nation-building projects, but in that sense they introduced the official nation into people's private lives for the first time, just as they did for politics. In Britain, it was not only the BBC which brought a shared access to national culture; it was also the new mass education system, the shared experience of medicine, and the sharing of risks for old age or unemployment. When you share an experience or a risk, you

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implicitly put yourself in the shoes of another. So, if nineteenth-century nationalism was about imagining a national community in the abstract (as Anderson has argued (1983)), the welfare state was about experiencing it in the concrete - the entry of the political nation into the banality of everyday life (Billig 1995).

In that analysis, too, we could find an answer to the claim by Nairn and others that managerial autonomy provides for no means of social or political change, which, in this context, is change to governing structures. The force that can provoke change is precisely the popular and rather boring nationalism that is expressed through the kinds of unspectacular autonomy which Scotland has had. The 'masses' do not exist; but masses of individual people do; and they exert their incremental pressures on professionals, on bureaucrats, and on politicians, and thus get things to change, slowly and, for that reason, surely.

However, for all that the nationalist position can be criticised on these grounds, it does not go away: after all, the point being made here is not that politics, community, or nationalism do not matter, merely that they have to be reinterpreted. In that case, the nationalist position also can be turned back on the general critique of the welfare state, to point up some gaps there. As is now quite widely appreciated, the problem with unalloyed enthusiasm for citizenship and civil society is that these are not always good things. Marquand adds to his praise of civil society the recognition that it is 'Janus-faced', just like any other human institutions. Pierson (1991, p.202) notes that citizenship depends on the state for its very existence - for legal guarantees of rights, or, more positively, for action to counter the actual inequalities of power which individual citizens or individual bodies in civil society experience (see also Hills 1993, pp.83-4).

Attempts to counter this concern by the values of 'civic republicanism' or 'civic virtue' do not work either (J.A.Hall 1995; Seligman 1995). Even if it were possible to imagine a society in which a sense of civic duty was so pervasive that no-one exploited anyone else, the objection would remain that getting there would require an inconceivable exercise in totalitarianism. We have to live with 'moderated hypocrisy', a phrase which John Hall (1995) draws from the thinking of the Enlightenment Scots. What matters is not how people are, but how they behave. The welfare state could be said to be a monument to that principle: unlike its revolutionary rivals, it did not seek to change people (although its long-term effects might have been to do that), but rather sought to counter, by means of collective action, the worst things which people do.

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So some 'centre' does have to continue to act, above society, to sanction equal rights, to counteract inequalities and to promote common welfare (McLennan 1995, p.85). And, for all the cogency of the recent insistence on civic activism as the way of democratising the welfare state, it is difficult to imagine any other way of legitimating this for the foreseeable future than by some type of civic nationalism, because, almost everywhere, the territories across which these rights and common belonging will be experienced will be nations. If the English left have been much more creative in their thinking about the state than the Scottish left has been in recent years, they have nevertheless continued their age-old suspicion of national identity, and have a lot to learn from small nations such as Scotland.

Support for this conclusion can be drawn also from MacCormick's recent exploration of the possibility of a fundamentally liberal nationalism, developing the concept from Tamir (1993). Liberalism, he argues, is the only social order that is compatible with respect for the autonomy of individuals, but nationalism is necessary also because national allegiance is, politically, the main context in which individuals associate with each other (MacCormick 1994; see also Maxwell 1976). This point is not contradicted, he argues further, by the emergence of supra-national institutions such as those of the European Union, because national levels of authority will not vanish: the role of the EU, indeed, is to provide a framework in which to debate rival claims to territorial jurisdiction. It can be added to this point, for our discussion here, that the same can be said within nations in relation to civil society: the state remains an important forum for arbitrating among the demands of conflicting groups in society. The state will retain that role for so long as people keep some strong allegiance to the nation, and the evidence to date is that national identity remains much stronger than a European one (Brown et al 1996, chapter 9).

So, if the gap in the nationalist critique of managed autonomy was that it does not accept a broad enough definition of what counts as politics, the gap in the leftist critique of the welfare state is that it has not acknowledged the inescapability of national allegiance as a way of legitimately monitoring the behaviour of civil society, perhaps because it has not imagined new types of civic national allegiance that have been helped into existence by the welfare state itself. The potency of civic nationalism might be especially strong where it has origins further back still - as in the communitarian traditions of Scottish presbyterianism and Catholicism (Storror 1990), or in the ideals and (to some extent) the reality of a 'democratic intellect' in which issues of public policy are debated throughout society (Davie 1991).

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It is possible that a polity the size of Scotland provides more opportunities to get the balance right between a new type of politics and a new type of nationalism than anything bigger or smaller. It may be, moreover, that the constitutional debate has reached such a stage that only an assertion of sovereignty (however constrained) and its acceptance by the wider world will serve to re-legitimate the state in Scotland, by which I mean serving to make a connection once again between the banal experiences of everyday welfare and the structures of politics by which the welfare is regulated. The problems of the welfare state in Scotland come partly from the breaking of the old connection in which the experiences and the structures were linked to the old cultural balance between Scotland and Britain.

But if sovereignty is required, it will be a radically new version of that idea, not a regaining of something that was lost three centuries ago. It will have more to do with forging in a symbolic way an emotional tie between individual and national identity. It is helpful to consider two meanings of 'autonomy' in this connection. There is the national autonomy which has been the main topic of this article, and there is the autonomy of individual persons, the securing or strengthening of which - as we saw earlier - was a goal of the welfare state. Insofar as individual autonomy has indeed been deepened over the last half century, and insofar as the resulting personal identity in Scotland is overwhelmingly Scottish, the further underpinning of that individual emotional security does seem to require an assurance of national independence. This is the current Scottish instance of Cohen's 'personal nationalism': the purpose of the nation is to confirm the identity of the people who feel they belong to it. Given that a prospective national autonomy thus rests on an unprecedentedly individual autonomy, the form of the state (or semi-state) which might emerge in Scotland simply cannot be of the old sort if it is to retain and develop the legitimacy which is the reason for its creation. It will have to promote individual freedom if it is to be able to entrench its claim to serve the Scottish interest at all, and it will have to justify its interventions in civil society always in terms of promoting the individual freedom of individual Scots, rather than the collective freedom of the nation as a whole (Cohen 1997). In more mundane terms, if the new Scottish parliament ignores the popular wish for choice and freedom to which Margaret Thatcher appealed authentically in England, then it will risk not only its own authority, but also, possibly, the communitarian consensus which has sustained Scotland's opposition to the new right, forcing a separation for the first time in two centuries in Scotland between the public realm and individual freedom.

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No amount of theory can tell us the route which the Scottish welfare state will take: the answer, as always in politics, will be worked out in practice. But one thing does seem clear if the analysis offered here is accurate. Social democracy and nationalism remain intimately linked to each other, as they have been for a century. Social democracy depends on a renewed nationalism to provide a legitimate means of limiting the freedom of individuals and social groups. And nationalism depends on the new politics of the welfare state to accept that history lies not in the grand narratives, but in the daily conduct of our ordinary lives. Scotland has had quite a lot of experience of that type of pragmatic nationalism and of that type of mundane politics, and so might offer, modestly, some portents for the future.

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