

SPORT, NATIONALISM AND THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

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In May 1999 Scotland elected a new parliament, the first in Scotland since 1707. The administration of sport within this new parliament is at present somewhat ambiguous. Since coming to power in the 1997 UK general election, the Labour party have done much to redress the damage to school sport brought on by the teachers' industrial action in the mid 1980s. Yet it is the Scottish National Party that have publicly stated their objectives in terms of the governance of sport within a devolved United Kingdom. The other political parties do not seem to view sport as a contentious area. The first two parts of this paper briefly examine the historical relationship between sport and nationalism. The third part critically evaluates the role of the Scottish Sports Council and the viability of the at-arms-length principle. It examines alternative models which could be adopted by the new Parliament.

INDEPENDENCE, NATIONALIST POLITICS AND SPORT

Sport has certainly featured in the works of a number of Scotland's nationalist literary and political figures (Jarvie 1999; Jarvie and Burnett 1999). At different periods in Scottish history such figures have commented upon sport and its place within the politics of nationalist oriented organisations like The Scottish Home Rule Association (1918-1928), The Scots National League (1920-1928), The National Party of Scotland (1928-1933) and the Scottish National Party (1933 - present). The national revivalists of the Scottish Renaissance were essentially unhappy about the surrogate politics of sport (Harvie 1994). Chris Harvie observes that Hugh MacDiarmid contemplated the Ibrox football stadium being transformed into

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a vast lecture hall (Harvie 1994, p.46). Compton Mackenzie, who attended the Irish Free State's Tailteann Games in 1924, wrote

a nation which thinks of the six o' clock bulletin as a tiresome postponement of the football results is marching in blinkers along the road to ruin.

(Mackenzie 1946, p.30).

Eric Linklater was a little more sympathetic in that he viewed the rugby-soccer class distinction as a line of division between the working and middle classes which was inimical to the creation of a national community (Linklater 1959, pp.128-9). To adapt Marx, sport seemed to make the Scots 'of a nation' but not 'for a nation': Scots were conscious that they were 'agin' others, but also that they were internally divided by class, religion, gender and even region.

During the 1930s and 1940s the writer, novelist and Scottish Nationalist Neil Gunn (1891-1973) probed the relationship between symbolism, tradition, nationalism and culture (Gunn 1991; McCulloch 1987). Born in the small coastal town of Dunbeath in Caithness, Gunn asserted that nationalism could only be interpreted out of an awareness of tradition (Finlay 1994, p.117). The importance of sport within a changing way of life did not escape his attention. He questioned the use of the Highlands as a sporting playground for the rich, in particular the nouveau riche from the south. Furthermore Gunn questioned the commercialisation of the Scottish Highland Games and the spectacle of the professional athlete travelling from village to village collecting any money that local labour and patronage could gather (Gunn 1931). Gunn also reflected upon the decline of a Highland way of life in the 1930s, and the intrusion of a more urban, commercialised culture which took little cognisance of tradition, local people and local customs (Gunn 1985). He considered sporting traditions and nationalism to be inextricably linked; consequently the life and death of one was often linked to the life and death of the other (Gunn 1931).

William McIlvanney has commented upon the role of sport, in particular football, in the nation's political psyche. (**Glasgow Herald** 10 September 1988, p.17). The 1979 referendum results on Scottish Devolution occurred one year after the 1978 World Cup campaign in Argentina. During the 1990s McIlvanney was still suggesting that if Scotland had fared better during that World Cup, the result of the referendum might have been different (Jarvie and Walker 1994). The suggestion here appears to be that the exit of the Scottish national football team from the competition may have been a final

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blow to faith in Scotland's capabilities to run its own affairs (Gallagher 1991, p.106). This argument has also been given some weight by Harvie (1994, p.197) who conceded that the publicity machine of Ally Macleod, the Scottish team manager at the World Cup, had managed to convince the Scottish supporters that they were going to win. Reflecting on this in relation to the 1979 referendum, Harvie suggests that

Matters political might have been a lot different had they won, and that the 'we were rubbish hangover' certainly contributed to the 1 March outcome.
(Harvie 1994, p.197).

Thirteen years after the 1979 Referendum the 'sport as surrogate politics' theme was raised again, this time by Jim Sillars, the then deputy-leader of the SNP. After his defeat in the 1992 General Election, Sillars chastised the Scottish electorate for not voting for the nationalist cause, maligning them for being '90 minute patriots' and saving their nationalist fervour for major sporting occasions (**The Herald** 24 April 1992, p.1). At the heart of this assertion was the view that the passion aroused by sport was misleading, since this national pride was not reflected in the political choice for independence. It is a classical expression of the view that sport has functioned as a substitute for political nationalism.

Four years later the SNP leader Alex Salmond put sport, nationalism and Scotland onto the political agenda once again. After the 1996 Olympics he argued that:

Marching on to the field of Olympic competition under a Saltire would not in itself guarantee any Gold medals - but it would in the commentary we get on television, in the political reaction, and in the national mood make for a better spectacle for Scots and the chance of better support and investment for not just the best, but for all who want to take part.
(**The Herald** 20 August 1996, p.16)

Salmond suggested that Britain's 36th position in the Olympic medal table was irrelevant, but that it was also 'strongly symbolic of what is wrong with the United Kingdom and of what Scotland needed to do to improve its position in the world' (**The Herald** 20 August 1996, p.16). In its first policy paper on sport, the SNP argued that sport in Scotland is strongly national and that in an independent Scotland the government (or at least an SNP government) would establish a Ministry of Sport and Leisure that would lead

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to specific support for Scottish sport, which in turn would ensure that the whole nation benefited (Scottish National Party 1996).

The paper acknowledges the role of sport in Scottish life and its potential in an independent Scotland. The '90-minute patriot' syndrome is also evident but the sentiments are incorporated as a positive dimension of the SNP's case for political independence. The Party argues that:

For too many people it is one of the few ways that they express and confirm their Scottish identity. Rather than condemning the individuals, the SNP should take the opportunity to develop this and explain our case for Independence.
(Scottish National Party 1996).

GENERAL ELECTIONS, WORLD CUPS AND DEVOLUTION

1997 was a momentous year in both political and sporting contexts for Scotland. In politics at the General Election, a Labour government was elected for the first time since 1979. It was claimed that after eighteen years of rejecting the Conservative Party, Scots at last had a government that represented the way the majority of Scots had voted. After three months in office, the Labour government published its White Paper for a devolved parliament, **Scotland's Parliament** (1997). This formally started the Scotland FORward campaign for a 'Yes-Yes' vote in the Referendum. A third political success for Scotland was a 'Yes-Yes' vote in the devolution referendum on 11 September 1997. These Scottish political successes coincided with the ongoing campaign of the Scottish football team to qualify for the 1998 World Cup Finals, which they achieved in October 1997. The political campaigns provided many occasions when culture, nationalism and politics intersected, and although these did not always involve the SNP directly, sport was not invisible amongst the party's links with cultural icon Sean Connery and the Braveheart imagery. Perhaps the most powerful symbolic link was with football. During the general election campaign in March and April, when the SNP was running second to Labour in the polls in Scotland, the national football team played three matches as part of its qualifying campaign. Reflecting on the match against Estonia, John Colquhoun wrote:

Politics and football are a heady mix. Even on a sunny afternoon on the West Coast of Scotland, there was to be no escape from the electioneers. Striding to the match, flanked by men who had come dressed as warriors

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from a bygone age, the Scottish National Party were out to capitalise fully on a captive audience who were certain to be in a patriotic mood.

Being excluded from a hypothetical television debate should be of less concern to Alex Salmond now he appears to have the Scottish football team on his side. Heck, stretch your imagination a little and the team even played in the official SNP colours yesterday afternoon.

(Scotland on Sunday Sport 30 March 1997, p.32).

It was not only the team that was (almost) sporting the yellow and black of the SNP. The TV highlights programme that evening showed some fans holding posters displaying the SNP's symbol, as well as the usual Saltire and Lion Rampant flags and tartan. If Argentina was the end of the devolution road in the late-1970s, might a victory over Estonia the month before the election be the signal for a massive SNP vote in 1997? This did not happen. Argentina 1978 was not the (sole) cause of the failed referendum in 1979, and similarly a 2-0 defeat to Sweden on 30 April, the night before the election, was not the cause of the Nationalists' failure to capitalise on the sporting nationalism of 1998. It seems to support the argument that sporting nationalism does not translate into political votes.

Sport was not a major issue for the Scotland FORward campaign although identified in the White Paper as one of the powers that would be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. Where sport did feature it tended to be in one of three ways, none of which could be directly associated with the SNP. First, devolution opponents attempted to undermine the process. For example, anti-devolutionists like Tam Dalyell used the situations of footballers Gary McAllister (the captain of the national football team) and Paul Gascoigne (England and, at the time, Rangers) to question referendum voting rights. The so-called 'Gary McAllister question' (**The Scotsman** 16 August 1997) asked why Scots living outside Scotland (eg McAllister) would not be allowed to vote in the referendum while non-Scots living in Scotland at the time (eg Gascoigne) would. The question did not appear to be a major issue for McAllister who said,

It's up to the Scottish people to decide if they want their own parliament and it's great their views are being listened to.

(Daily Record 10 September 1997)

Second, the pro-devolution Scottish press used sports celebrities' views to endorse the proposals informally linking sport and politics. For instance, Scottish sprinter Ian Mackie observed,

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I back the idea [devolution] - and I hope a Scottish Parliament will back athletics. We are light years behind other countries in sports funding.
(**Daily Record** 10 September 1997)

Although there is no evidence here to suggest that Mackie was advocating the SNP position, nor was the connection made by the press, the athlete's views are not dissimilar to those expressed by the SNP leader in his assessment of the British performance at the 1996 Olympic Games.

A third way in which sport featured in the politics of devolution was the media's use of Scottish sports achievements to mobilise national sentiment. The referendum was scheduled for 11 September which happened also to be the 700th anniversary of William Wallace's victory over the English army at Stirling Bridge. On the morning of the referendum, the Daily Record noted how Scotland's other patriot of that time Robert the Bruce

would have loved Wembley week-end ... Bannockburn in 1314 can't exactly be classified as a sporting triumph - but what the hell.
(**Daily Record** 11 September 1997)

The report went on to reflect on various Scottish sports achievements including triumphs over England at Wembley stadium, Freuchie Cricket Club's 'thumping the English at cricket' in 1985, and Sam Torrance 'a working -class Scot with a pencil behind his ear' raising

his arms aloft as he holed the winning put on English soil which brought the Ryder Cup back home [to Europe in 1985].
(Daily Record 11 September 1997).

Rugby victories over England were also featured, with the 1990 Five Nations championship highlighted: '1314? Scottish rugby buffs are more interested in 13-7 - the final score that historic day'. The report added, 'in an action replay of Bannockburn, Proud Edward's Army went into a hasty retreat' (**Daily Record** 11 September 1997).

In the autumn of 1997 Scotland played two World Cup qualifying matches, the first against Belarus on 7 September, and the second against Latvia on 11 October. Victory in both of these matches secured Scotland a place in the 1998 World Cup Finals in France. The SNP leader, Alex Salmond, reflected:

Along with last month's Yes-Yes referendum win, our World Cup qualifying success gives Scots a famous 'autumn double' to celebrate. The months ahead will be full of excitement for Scotland, since we have

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both a new Parliament and a World Cup campaign to look forward to.
(SNP News Release 12 October 1997)

In the run up to the 1999 elections for the Scottish Parliament, sport again has figured in the politics of devolution. The SNP 1997 general election manifesto commented upon 'the right to Scottish citizenship' and stated that, following devolution, only people resident or born in Scotland would have the right to citizenship. Citizenship was to be based upon residency or birth. In criticising the SNP policy on Scottish citizenship Gordon Brown in a speech to a Scottish Labour policy forum indicated that half of the Scottish football team would be ineligible for Scottish citizenship (**Sunday Times** 8 November 1998, p.2). To provide but two examples:

- Mark Elliot, the Leicester City defender was first capped for Scotland due to having a Scottish grandmother. His previous sole visit to Scotland was apparently on a school trip, aged 12, to Thomas Carlyle's birthplace at Ecclefechen, five miles north of the border.
- Neil Sullivan, the Wimbledon goalkeeper who made his debut for Scotland in May 1997 having been born in Sutton, South London but qualifying for selection through having a Scottish grandfather.

Yet perhaps the most controversial aspect of SNP policy on sport, even though not the most widely publicised, has been the stance taken in relationship to the Scottish Sports Council. The SNP has publicly stated that it would abolish the Scottish Sports Council, which it views as a non-elected quango, and replace it with a cross-party Sport Committee which would dispense money directly to local sports clubs and governing bodies (SNP 1998, p.16). More forcibly the SNP spokeswoman for sport Kim Nicoll pledged that

The Scottish National Party would scrap the Scottish Sports Council and form a new Ministry of Sport and Leisure to improve the health and fitness of the country's children and produce more Commonwealth and Olympic medal winners.

(**Scotland on Sunday** 9 August 1998, Sport 1).

The issue for the SNP, and indeed New Labour, is not just about sport; it is about the very nature of politics and democracy itself. The same spokeswoman has argued that

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the Council is a quango full of unelected representatives and co-optees and it has no place alongside a modern devolved parliament.
(**Scotland on Sunday** 9 August 1998, Sport 1).

As a publicly funded body which is not publicly accountable, she goes on, it distributes millions of pounds on a purely arbitrary basis.
(**Scotland on Sunday** 9 August 1998, Sport 1)

The debate over the future of the Scottish Sports Council has been forced by the SNP but it has also meant that sport alongside ownership of land and health has become a central issue for the new Parliament. There have been many questions but few answers or proposals concerning sport in Scotland during a post-devolution era. It is this issue that is considered in the final part of the paper.

LESSONS IN SPORT FOR THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

The Scottish Parliament could face difficult decisions about sport in Scotland. The truth is that Scottish sport is in poor shape. Physical education and school sport are but a pale shadow of what went on twenty years ago. They have never recovered from the teachers' industrial action of the mid-1980s. The voluntary sector, club sport, is suffering from drainage of willing unpaid helpers. Local authority leisure departments have their backs to the wall in the unceasing round of cutbacks. Who is going to defend large subsidies for public swimming pools when it means closing an old people's home? And, most visibly, our prestige sports are not in the race against other countries. International performance in football and rugby over the past few months have been quite depressing. Scotland's place in the medals table at the Commonwealth Games was disappointingly low.

The proposal by the SNP's spokeswoman that a new Ministry for Sport would be created to replace the Scottish Sports Council was not borne out when the party announced a 20-person 'cabinet' covering sixteen ministerial responsibilities (**The Herald** 23 October 1998). However when the full extent of Scotland's dismal performance at the Commonwealth Games began to sink home it became clear from letters and editorials in national newspapers that the target for criticism was indeed the Scottish Sports Council. The Scottish Liberal Democrats spokesman for sport responded to a highly critical editorial in **Scotland on Sunday** (September 27) with a decidedly lukewarm defence of the Council ('I for one would like to see more democracy on its selection'). The Conservative Party appointed a former

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Minister, Lord James Douglas Hamilton, as spokesman for sport. The Labour Party did not emerge unscathed, and Sam Galbraith seemed willing to leave sport policy to a less than perfect Sports Council (**Scotland on Sunday** 27 September 1988, p.4).

The truth is that politicians, even those with Ministerial responsibility for sport, rely on a long-established principle of sports administration in Britain, - self-government at arms length from government. It is not expected that ministers will be expert in this area or that they will require a large number of civil servants to advise them. The Sports Policy unit in the Scottish Office consists of only three middle-ranking officials compared to the Scottish Sports Council staffing complement of over 100. As the Health Minister, Galbraith deals not only with a vast budget but with issues which profoundly affect the quality of life of most of the population. By comparison, sport comes low on the Minister's agenda. This is reflected in the size of the Scottish Office budgets - £4.624 billion for Health and £9.8m for Sport. By retaining a distance from the administration of sport, Ministers can evade criticism or blame for any shortcomings. However, if a concerted campaign to get rid of the Scottish Sports Council were to build up, the Minister would inevitably be drawn into the argument. In a similar debate about the future of the Scottish Arts Council, Sam Galbraith has commented that the at-arms-length principle has served us well.

Britain's poor performances at recent Olympic Games and world championships have led to the same sort of debate at UK level as that taking place in Scotland. The Labour Party published a sports policy paper **Labour's Sporting Nation** shortly before the General Election in 1997. It was critical of the Sports Councils for the four Home Countries for having apparently abandoned Sport for All (a statement which caused the alarm bells to ring in the Home Countries). It promised to give a much more prominent role to the recently-formed UK Sports Council

Labour believes the new UK Sports Council is the appropriate body to bring together all the major interests in British sport, to produce this national strategy.

This idea of a British strategy, implemented by the four Home Countries Sports Councils, sounds like a federal structure. It could mean that any policies which were specifically Scottish would have to be policed through a British joint committee. The government took a step in this direction at the height of the World Cup fever by announcing the creation of a British Cabinet of Sport, bringing together the relevant ministers for all four

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countries. This is in line with a general government policy to deal with devolved assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland and a parliament in Scotland by creating joint ministerial committees (**The Scotsman** 28 October 1998).

In a joint response to the Labour Party, the five Sports Councils responded predictably, emphasising the separate autonomous status bestowed on them by royal charter, but it was clear that an incoming Labour government would incline to greater central control of sports policy. Presumably, policies approved by the newly-created British Cabinet of Sport will exercise an important influence on the direction of sports policy in the Home Countries, threatening to some extent individual Council's autonomy. This must be a matter of concern for the Scottish Parliament since sport is a devolved function.

Why would members of the Scottish Parliament want to retain a controlling interest in sport? There are three very obvious reasons. Firstly because it is an essential part of the fabric of life in Scotland. Secondly, because sport makes a substantial contribution to the Scottish economy. And thirdly because the Scottish Executive will be empowered to issue policy and financial directives to the National Sports Lottery distributor, in other words the Scottish Sports Council. The sum available to the Sports Lottery is more than three times the annual grant to the Council, and it is important that the awards are seen to accord with the government's social objectives, such as equity, social inclusion, empowerment and local decision-making.

Initially the Lottery funds were restricted to capital projects which relied on partner agencies being able to raise a percentage of the building costs and a readiness to accept responsibility for running costs. This system tended to reward organisations and agencies with the social capital to play the system and militated against the deserving but less well organised majority. Resulting inequities require political control and accountability.

What is it about the Scottish Sports Council which generates such hostile responses? The root of all criticism is that the Council is the paymaster for governing bodies of sport but it has no responsibility for success or failure. It can claim a share of success when women's hockey performs well on the world stage but it can also maintain a low profile when Scotland constantly performs badly at the Commonwealth Games. There are other sources of criticism. For example there is the nature of the organisation. It is a bureaucracy governed by a Council whose members are appointed by the Secretary of State. They are neither representative of other bodies nor elected

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delegates. They are not selected on the basis of specific qualifications or criteria which are available for public scrutiny. They do not report to shareholders. It is not even clear whether they are accountable for the performance of the Council. Presumably the Secretary of State, having appointed them, could also remove them. They are not accountable to governing bodies of sport who have no rights of censure over the Council's actions.

Another major source of discontent is that the Council operates a system of patronage in the disbursement of grant aid. Carroll (1978) pointed out the dangers of a one-way flow of benefits from above to below and the demand from above for accountability. Patronage can breed complacency. The patron does not need to explain or account for his actions which can be based on personal whim. The Council is not self-critical. When the Council produced a national strategy for Scottish sport, **Sport 21** (1997), it contained a wholesale evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of other agencies but no self-evaluation.

Another more serious complaint is that governing bodies of sport are afraid to criticise the Council publicly. They can't afford to bite the hand that feeds them. The sums involved are such that some sports could not possibly operate if Council support was withdrawn. Scottish Athletics will receive £1m over a four-year period from 1998 to 2002 if the sport meets conditions laid down by the Scottish Sports Council. In those circumstances it is unlikely that there will be outright opposition. In reality sports chosen for major investment tend to develop a cosy relationship with Sports Council officers based on compliance. Ideally the responsibility for funding governing bodies should be transferred from the Council to another agency.

How might the Scottish Parliament tackle these problems? It would be possible to restructure the governance of the Scottish Sports Council while retaining it as the principal advisor to the Minister. This would entail identifying agencies which had the right to nominate members of the Council. These would include representatives of the Scottish Sports Association, Scottish Council of Physical Education, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, Scottish Association of National Coaches, Commonwealth Games Federation and the British Olympic Association. This could be a cosmetic exercise if the new Council was not given greater powers to control staff and to determine policies. In reality the full-time professional officers create policies, implement them and pass them to Council for discussion. The Council is always in the position of reacting to policy initiatives despite

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members' power and influence in the areas of sport from which they are recruited. An elected Council would not tolerate the situation.

There is an alternative which also seeks a democratic structure but on a more limited basis. Canada opted for a Sports Council which consisted almost exclusively of governing bodies of sport (Mackintosh and Whitson 1990). This took account of the legislation which made the provinces responsible for local grass roots sport and federal government primarily responsible for elite sport. The Sports Council for Canada took over the allocation of government funds from Sport Canada and it has gradually achieved a harmonious outcome (Kidd 1996).

Another system operates very effectively in Denmark (Thomson 1998). The government recognises three organisations for the development of sport and provides funds through the Ministry of Culture from the Danish Pools Organisation. The DIF and DGI both claim membership of about 1.5 million. They and the Danish government are joint owners of the Pools Organisation which provides about £55 million for sport annually. DIF represents 57 governing bodies of sport and its share of the annual allocation is about £25 million. It distributes 70 per cent to its members; and uses a further 20 per cent for services such as training courses and materials, publications, consulting and assistance with legal, accounting, insurance and regulatory issues. The remaining 10 per cent goes to DIF's administration and the operation of the House of Sport at Bronby which accommodates the governing bodies of sport and the DIF offices. One significant difference between Scotland and the DIF's allocation of funds is that in Denmark smaller governing bodies which have difficulty in attracting sponsors and TV contracts receive proportionately more of the resources. In Scotland the reverse happens with ten strand-one sports receiving substantially more than others.

The Scottish Parliament might take the view that an enhanced profile for sport should be reflected at Departmental and Ministerial level. The SNP is proposing to have a Ministry of Education and Culture which would be an appropriate home for sport if there is to be no separate sports Ministry. Canada was sufficiently convinced about the importance of physical activity to health and the contribution of sport to nationhood to create a post of Minister of Sport at Cabinet rank. This is substantially different from the current Scottish situation where a Minister with other responsibilities includes sport in his portfolio.

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None of the political parties in Scotland has yet proposed the appointment of a Minister of Sport. A standing committee which examined sport regularly might be a compromise solution. This could either exist alongside the Scottish Sports Council or, if the Scottish Office assumed greater powers for sport, it could dispense with the Council. In order to deal with criticism of the Council any new system will have to be more democratic. In any emerging system the national agency must be accountable to the Scottish Parliament.

The creation of a Scottish Institute of Sport provided an opportunity to introduce a more egalitarian approach. Here is a completely new organisation which will take responsibility for elite sport in Scotland. It will be financed by the Lottery Sports Fund and it could be almost completely independent of its parent body, the Scottish Sports Council.

The Scottish Office and the Scottish Sports Council have been locked in discussions for twelve months about the nature of the Institute, and in particular its relationship to the Council. Some people regarded it as a subdivision of the Council and it was even thought at one stage that the Council would have a majority of places on the executive Board. It appears that the Scottish Office has insisted on a large degree of separateness. Membership of the Board is by invitation, leading to the accusation that it is unelected and undemocratic. It is a business model of selecting company directors rather than a system of election based on the governing bodies of sport.

The Scottish Sports Council's **Sport 21** is an excellent strategy document for Scottish sport that the new Parliament might adopt as a starting point. The Council produced it after a massive consultation exercise. Sam Galbraith, the Scottish Minister for Sport, received it with genuine enthusiasm. The vision is exciting enough:

- a country where sport is more widely available to all
- a country where sporting talent is recognised and nurtured
- a country achieving and sustaining world class performance in sport.

It is also about nationhood: what it means to be Scottish expressed through sport. It is tailored to Government philosophies of equity, social inclusion and empowerment, but it is also a distinctively Scottish approach to policy-making that is relevant to Scotland. It identifies some of the barriers to participation, pointing out that the gap between those who can afford to play sport and those who do not have the means to play is widening. Unfortunately, unless there are radical changes in the governance of Scottish

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sport, the goals of **Sport 21** will not be achieved. The legislative base for local authority provision of sport, leisure and recreation services imposes a duty to make 'adequate provision'. This can mean anything the authority chooses to do. The Scottish Office issues circulars imploring local authorities to prepare leisure plans and sports development strategies but it cannot enforce these. **Sport 21** sets out spending plans for the five years up to 2003, amounting to £175 million (capital) and about £4 million for revenue. Nearly two thirds of this must come from local authorities who have discretionary powers but who are also in perilous financial circumstances.

It is also expected that governing bodies of sport will adopt a more professional approach to sports provision. In most cases this is simply wishful thinking. These organisations would need substantially larger grants in order to employ top quality people from business and sport to begin to make an impact. This is the most important group for delivering club and international sport and yet they are profoundly under-funded.

Perhaps sport is just not politically important enough. Yet 86 per cent of people surveyed in a recent System 3 poll (1996) argued that it is 'important for Scotland to have winning teams'. Should it not be even more important to have democracy in sport? Does a new-form of inclusive politics not apply to the institutions that make up Scottish civil society? The choice for the Scottish Parliament is simple. Do members wish to observe continuing mediocrity in performance and declining standards? Do they recognise that the current structures have been failing the Scottish people and will continue to do so? Are they prepared to be more interventionist in reforming the Scottish Sports Council, increasing the central government grant for support of sport, and taking a much stronger line with local authorities about making 'adequate provision' for sport? Finally, democracy in Scottish Sport need not necessitate the abandonment of any 'arms length principle' of sporting governance. However the principle does need to be reviewed in terms of its current modes of operation. There is much to be learned from the 'Danish model' with its 5 million population and an acceptance of sport 'as culture'.

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February 1999