Class not Party: Deindustrialisation and Gordon Brown's Scottish Labour Movement Approach to Devolution

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Student ID: ████████

Supervisor: Dr Jim Phillips

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Abbreviations

CSA	Campaign for a Scottish Assembly
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
GCUAC	Glasgow Caledonian University Archive Centre
LPA	Labour Party Archive
MTFS	Medium Term Financial Strategy
NCB	National Coal Board
NEC	National Executive Committee
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUMSA	National Union of Mineworkers Scottish Area
SNP	Scottish National Party
STUC	Scottish Trades Union Congress
STV	Scottish Television
UCS	Upper Clyde Shipbuilders

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Glasgow, 2018

Introduction

Gordon Brown, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, made a series of high-profile interventions in the closing stages of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum campaign. On 8 September, he outlined proposals for the devolution of further powers from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament at Loanhead Miners Welfare and Social Club.[1] And, on 17 September - the day before the referendum - he delivered a speech at the final pro-union 'Better Together' event in Maryhill Community Central Hall in Glasgow, in which he set out his rationale for supporting Scotland's continued membership of the UK, emphasising themes of 'comradeship', 'solidarity', and 'sharing'. He called upon the Scottish people to vote 'No' to independence and instead 'to fight for … what is our dream … a world not of a separate state but a world of social justice that people can believe in.'[2]

Brown's contribution to the independence referendum campaign - which extended to masterminding the 'Vow', a pledge made by the leaders of the three main UK parties to devolve more powers to Scotland in the event of a 'No' vote - received widespread media attention.[3] Although the impact of Brown's interventions is subject to debate, [4] Alex Salmond, Scotland's former First Minister and leader of the pro-independence 'Yes' campaign, has suggested that Brown's role was decisive in securing majority support - 55% of those who voted - for Scotland's place in the union.[5] This is a view shared by Baroness Shirley Williams, the Liberal Democrat peer and former Labour minister, who argued on the BBC's *Question Time* in

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[1] Jim Phillips, 'Contested memories: the Scottish Parliament and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike', *Scottish Affairs*, 24:2, 2015*,* pp.193-194.
[2] Gordon Brown, Speech delivered on 17 September 2014 at Maryhill Community Central Hall, Glasgow. Quoted in Gordon Brown, *My Scotland, Our Britain*, (London, 2015) pp.ix-xiii.
[3] Tom Devine, *Independence or Union*, (London, 2016) p.241.
[4] Devine, *Independence or Union*, p.252.
[5] *Daily Record*, 8 January 2015, www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/former-first-minister-alex-salmond-4940746.amp, accessed on: 3 December 2017.

December 2014 that 'those of us who care about Scotland … would be living through tragedy at the moment … if Gordon Brown hadn't had the guts to get up and face the 'Yes' campaign.'[6]

The significance of Brown's interventions in 2014 is, then, acknowledged by both the 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns. Another theme to emerge from analyses of Brown's role in the referendum is that it might lead to a reassessment or to a deeper understanding of his wider political legacy. The political commentator Steve Richards – writing just hours after Brown delivered his speech in Maryhill – argues that:

> Earlier this year the election expert John Curtice told me that Brown alone in the pro-union campaign was framing messages that would appeal to the 'don't knows' … Yes. Brown is famously flawed, but too many assessments of politics since 1992 have failed to appreciate the multi-layered, nerve-shredding constraints on him as he made his moves…he is one of the most significant and misunderstood figures in postwar British politics. There are far more important issues at stake in the referendum vote but perhaps afterwards he will be understood a little more.[7]

This sentiment is echoed by John Crace, who suggests that 'Brown's referendum speech [in Maryhill] shows … the true Brown', and that his emphasis on the labour narratives of 'solidarity' and 'comradeship' reveal 'the radical freed from the necessity of sweet-talking middle England'. 'If this was to be his political epitaph', Crace argues, 'it was a hell of a way to sign off.'[8]

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[6] *Question Time*, (Originally broadcast: BBC One, 4 December 2014).
[7] *The Guardian*, 17 September 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/17/gordon-brown-found-his-voice-union-scottish-referendum-vote, accessed on: 15 July 2017.
[8] *The Guardian*, 17 September 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/sep/17/gordon-brown-final-scottish-referendum-speech-forces-of-hell-alex-salmond-snp, accessed on: 4 December 2017.

It appears likely, therefore, that Brown's role in the independence referendum will feature prominently in future debates about his legacy. This dissertation seeks to inform such discussion by providing an original analysis of the roots of Brown's approach to the Scottish constitutional debate.

Literature Review

Brown is presented as a party-political figure in the historiographical literature of late twentieth century Scotland, and it is suggested that his priorities were shaped by the prevailing ideological orthodoxies of the period. This is evidenced in Hassan's analysis of the evolution of Brown's political thought, which he uses as a case-study of 'Labour's journey from Socialism to social democracy'. He argues that Brown 'is a man imbued with the uniqueness of Labour and its ways, and who understands how it sees itself, its culture values and history; in short, the importance of labourism,'[9] but suggests that 'Brown's politics represent a fatal embrace of the governing orthodoxies of the last few decades: of social democracy's compromise and collusion with neoliberalism, and the failure of the Labour Party to attempt to make the political weather after Thatcherism.'[10]

Turning to the devolution debate, Cameron argues that Brown's *Red Paper on Scotland,* published in 1975, seeks to 'adapt socialist views to the Scottish national framework'. He suggests that 'the importance of the *Red Paper* is not that it was influential, but that it represented a view which was not prominent in the debate over devolution … and a more wide-ranging discussion of Scottish politics and society which never took place'. The notion that Brown's approach to devolution during the 1970s differed from that of the established Labour

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[9] Gerry Hassan, 'Labour's Journey from Socialism to Social Democracy: A Case Study of Gordon Brown's Political Thought', in Gerry Hassan (ed.), *The Scottish Labour Party: History, Institutions and Ideas,* (Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 2012)*,* p.211.
[10] Gerry Hassan, 'Don't Mess with the Missionary Man: Brown, Moral Compasses and the Road to Britishness', *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No.1, (2007), p.97.

Party position is also emphasised by Devine, who suggests that Brown was part of 'a new generation of Labour politicians who had started to become interested in devolution as an effective means of dealing with Scotland's special needs.'[11] So there is a clear focus on Brown's role in the devolution debate within the context of the party-political environment in which he was operating during these years. However, this literature does not offer a detailed analysis of the factors – beyond party politics - that influenced Brown's approach to the devolution. This is representative of a broader gap in the literature on important political figures identified by Mitchell, who argues that they should be placed 'within the wider social, economic, and political context', because such analysis 'can offer perspectives otherwise absent in less humanized forms of writings.'[12]

There is a voluminous literature on the modern history of the Scottish Labour Party. Hassan and Shaw's *The Strange Death of Labour Scotland* offers an important long-term perspective which charts the decline of the Labour Party's electoral strength in Scotland, and argues that the Labour Party's complacent, and perhaps neglectful, approach to its electoral base in the west and across the central belt of Scotland in particular was the key factor in explaining the party's decline.[13] There is also a concentration of literature that focuses on the party during the 1970s. The predominant interpretation of Labour's approach to devolution in this decade is that it adopted the policy reluctantly as an 'expedient' response to the rising electoral popularity of the SNP.[14] During the 1980s, the literature suggests, the party's approach evolved significantly,

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[11] Devine, *Independence or Union*, p.130.
[12] James Mitchell, *The Scottish Question*, (Oxford, 2014), p.296.
[13] Gerry Hassan and Eric Shaw, *The Strange Death of Labour Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 2012).
[14] For example: Bob McLean, 'Labour in Scotland since 1945: Myth and Reality', in Gerry Hassan (ed), *The Scottish Labour Party: History, Institutions and Ideas,* p.40; Colin Kidd, *Union and Unionisms, Political Thought in Scotland, 1500-2000,* (Cambridge, 2008), p.31; Tom Devine, *Independence or Union*, p.130 and James Mitchell, 'Contemporary Unionism' in Catriona Macdonald (ed), *Unionist Scotland 1800-1997*, (Edinburgh, 1998), pp.131-132.

as it came to see devolution as a means of resisting the economic and social policies of Thatcher's UK government.[15]

While party politics was certainly an important element of the devolution debate in Scotland during these years, Phillips argues in the *Industrial Politics of Devolution* that the 'economic and industrial basis of this history [of devolution] has often been underplayed, with devolution more normally understood – or explained – essentially in political and cultural terms.'[16] To this end, he suggests that industrial change – and the belief that successive UK governments ineffectively managed this change - was a crucial factor in explaining the growth of devolutionary sentiment within the Scottish trade union movement during the 1970s. Industrial change was also a central feature of Scottish life in the 1980s when, Christopher Harvie suggests, Scotland experienced 'instant post-industrialisation' - a consequence of the monetarist policies pursued by the Thatcher UK government.[17] Perchard draws out the political consequences of this process in his analysis of Scottish coalfields, where he argues that it contributed to the growth of devolutionary sentiment and to the prolonged period of electoral decline of the Conservative Party in Scotland.[18]

The literature shows, then, that the roots of contemporary debate on Scotland's place in the union can be traced to the economic, social and industrial change that occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. It also identifies Brown as an important party-political figure who was engaged in the devolution debate during these years. However, the literature on Brown is largely problematic because although it relates, in some detail, his approach to the politics of the Labour Party, it does not offer a sustained analysis of the extent to which broader economic

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[15] Ewen Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle,* (Edinburgh, 2010), pp.338-343.
[16] Jim Phillips, *Industrial Politics of Devolution*, (Manchester, 2008), p.7.
[17] Christopher Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes*, (Edinburgh, 1993).
[18] Andrew Perchard, '"Broken Men" and "Thatcher's Children": Memory and Legacy in Scotland's Coalfields', *International Labour and Working Class History*, 84, (2013), pp.78-98.

and social forces shaped his approach to devolution during the 1970s and 1980s. This dissertation offers an important and fresh perspective, which moves beyond the traditional party-political interpretations of Brown's approach, and relates his conceptualisation of devolution's potential to industrial developments in Scotland during these years.

Methodology

The dissertation makes use of Brown's extensive written contribution to the political debate in Scotland during the 1970s and 1980s and complements this material with parliamentary records which illuminate Brown's contribution to debates in the House of Commons during the 1980s. This makes it possible to establish Brown's approach - firstly as a campaigner and then as a Labour Party MP - to the economic, social and political issues prevalent in Scotland during these years.

The dissertation also utilises material from the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) archives at the Glasgow Caledonian University Archive Centre (GCUAC), which holds the minutes of the STUC's general council and committees from the 1970s and 1980s. It also holds correspondence relating to the joint Labour Party-STUC 1978-9 'Scottish labour movement Yes campaign' and the records of 'Joint Action Group' meetings between the STUC and the Scottish Labour Party during the 1980s. This material is complemented by the STUC's Annual Reports from these years. The dissertation draws too on records held at the Labour Party Archive (LPA), located at the People's History Museum in Manchester, including material from Brown's 1979 general election campaign and papers relating to the Scottish Labour Party in the late 1970s - when Brown was a member of its executive. This documentary material helps to identify Brown's role within both the devolution and political campaigns of the Labour Party and the wider labour movement during this period.

Brown's recent writings, including his book *My Scotland, Our Britain* – first published during the independence referendum campaign – and his memoirs, *My Life, Our Times*, published in 2017, also feature in this analysis.[19] It should be emphasised that although these works are treated as primary evidence, the dissertation recognises the constructed nature of the narratives in them. Therefore, when evidence is drawn from these retrospective accounts, it is contextualised carefully within the secondary literature and, where possible, alongside documentary material from the period being discussed. In doing so, it is demonstrated that Brown's retrospectively constructed narratives are consistent with those he articulated during the 1970s and 1980s.

Finally, a broad range of historiographical literature is engaged with throughout the dissertation to contextualise Brown's writings and the documentary archival material within a framework of the economic, social and political issues of this period. This makes it possible to consider, in detail, how these issues helped to shape his approach to devolution during these years.

A Scottish labour movement approach

As outlined above, the environment in which Brown was operating in Scotland during the 1970s and 1980s was one of industrial change or, more specifically, deindustrialisation. This dissertation adopts Tomlinson's definition of deindustrialisation: 'a radical decline in the proportion of the workforce in industrial employment' and a 'process' which had 'major economic welfare and broader political economy consequences'. [20] Chapter one, which explores the roots of Brown's approach to devolution in the period 1967-1979, shows that Brown conceptualised devolution during the 1970s as a means to arrest the decline of Scottish

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[19] Gordon Brown, *My Scotland our Britain*, (London, 2015) and Gordon Brown, *My Life, Our Times*, (London, 2017).
[20] Jim Tomlinson, *Managing the Economy, Managing the People*, (Oxford, 2017), p.231.

industry and to improve the living standards of the Scottish industrial workforce. Chapter two then focuses on Brown's approach to the debate during the 1980s, when – under the premiership of Margaret Thatcher – the pace of industrial change accelerated rapidly. It was in this context that the emphasis of Brown's devolution narrative shifted from class towards nation, as he integrated his rationale for devolution with a national narrative that emphasised what he saw as the country's distinct social justice consensus. Finally, the dissertation concludes with a discussion of the evidence presented in the preceding two chapters, and its broader implications.

The central argument that will be developed in the dissertation is that Brown was an important figure in both the Labour Party and the wider Scottish labour movement's approach to the devolution debate during the 1970s and 1980s. In particular, it will suggest that Brown was influenced by the STUC's 'labour movement' way of thinking and analysis more so than he was by the 'reluctant' or 'expedient' Labour Party approach to devolution during the 1970s. It will also show that Brown played a significant role, along with the STUC, in moving the Scottish Labour Party towards the position of unambiguous support for devolution that it adopted by 1989. These findings, it will be suggested, demonstrate that Brown was motivated primarily by class, and not party, considerations during this period – a valuable conclusion that informs our understanding both of Brown's role in the 2014 independence referendum campaign and, importantly, of his wider political legacy.

1. Deindustrialisation and the 'Red' Brown, 1967-1979

> Scottish Socialists cannot support a strategy for independence which postpones the question of meeting urgent social and economic needs until the day after independence, but nor can they give unconditional support to maintain the integrity of the United Kingdom and all that entails – without any guarantee of radical social change; the question is not one of structure or territorial influence, but of democracy – how working people in Scotland can increase the control they have over the decisions which shape their lives … and in doing so aid the struggle for a shift of power to working people elsewhere.[1]

This extract from Gordon Brown's introductory essay to *The Red Paper,* a socialist critique of Scotland's economic and social condition published in 1975, reveals the twenty-four-year-old Brown's understanding of the conflating politics of class and nation in Scotland. Brown's essay helps us to understand his political priorities in 1975 and, importantly, is the first published account of his thinking on Scotland's place in the Union. In this period of industrial change, in which the devolution debate featured prominently, Brown was a self-described 'Scottish socialist' and his commitment to socialism was rooted in his belief that it would improve the living standards of the country's working class by stimulating rewarding employment and facilitating the redistribution of wealth. *The Red Paper* shows that in 1975 Brown sees state direction of the economy as key to advancing these priorities. This chapter contextualises Brown's contribution during this period by exploring some of the key political, economic and industrial episodes from 1967-1979 in Scotland – what Phillips characterises as 'a crucial period, when Scotland's economic and political transition – from a predominantly industrial

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[1] Gordon Brown, 'The Socialist Challenge', in Gordon Brown (ed.), *The Red Paper,* (Edinburgh, 1975), pp.8-9.

society, firmly embedded in the United Kingdom, to an increasingly service-based, post-industrial society, with a regenerated position in the Union – began to accelerate'.[2] This chapter also utilises Brown's book *My Scotland, Our Britain* and his autobiography *My Life, Our Times,* thus benefiting from the proportion of these books devoted to his earlier years in Fife – and how he conceptualises their importance in shaping his approach to the political and constitutional debate. It will show that although Brown clearly supported devolution by the late 1970s, he did not do so for the reasons of political 'expediency' that now characterise most accounts of the Labour Party's approach to devolution during this period. Instead, in this first important phase, he conceptualised political devolution as a means to advance socialism in Scotland and so to ameliorate the impact of deindustrialisation on the Scottish working class. This chapter argues that Brown's pursuit of devolution in the 1970s should be viewed in class – rather than in nationalistic or party-political – terms and that this approach can trace its roots to his experience of industrial change in Fife and to the campaigning narratives of the Scottish trade union movement.

1.1 The deindustrialisation 'bombshell'

In *My Scotland, Our Britain*, first published during the 2014 independence referendum campaign, Brown writes that 'I have had a front row seat from which to witness the dramatic transformation of the Scottish economy and Scottish society over fifty years, and…the disruption, dislocation and turbulence in which movements for change can grow and thrive'.[3] He notes the 'impact this transformation had on who we believe ourselves to be' and contrasts Scotland's contentment with its place in the Union in 1951 – the year of his birth – with the

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[2] Phillips, *The Industrial Politics of Devolution,* pp.2-3.
[3] Brown, *My Scotland, Our Britain*, p.24.

'flux' of Scotland's economy by 1967.[4] Brown turned sixteen and started university in Edinburgh in 1967 and so it represents a personal milestone, but it was also a significant year – in economic and social terms - for Fife and Scotland as a whole. To this end, Brown characterises 1967 as a 'turning point for me personally, and for Scotland' and suggests that 'it was impossible to miss what was happening at home in Fife'.[5] Brown's attachment to Fife is emphasised in *My Life, Our Times,* where he argues that he is 'at once a Fifer, Scottish, British and European',[6] and he refers regularly in his writings to his experience of deindustrialisation in Fife. For example, he describes the closure of a textile factory just a few hundred yards away from his home as a 'bombshell', noting that this resulted in 450 Kirkcaldy workers losing their jobs. He also describes Kirkcaldy as 'one of the very special close-knit communities at the heart of our coal-mining industry' and thus describes as 'catastrophic' the effect of the 'even more extensive mining job losses as the pits of Fife fell one by one in a devastating domino crash lasting right through to the late eighties'.[7]

Coal mining, it will be remembered, was an important industry in Fife. In the year of Brown's birth, 1951, Fife was the pre-eminent coal region in Scotland, where the National Coal Board (NCB) employed 24,111 men.[8] Beginning in the 1950s, coal mine closures were 'sought by policymakers' at a UK level 'in pursuit of greater economic growth',[9] and government policy was geared towards the 'release' of workers from 'labour-intensive' industries such as mining to facilitate their employment in 'capital-intensive enterprises', with a particular focus on assembly goods manufacturing.[10] This strategy was pursued within a 'moral economy'

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[4] Ibid, p27-29.
[5] Ibid, p29.
[6] Brown, *My Life, Our Times*, p.395.
[7] Brown, *My Scotland, Our Britain*, pp.29-30 and Brown, *My Life, Our Times*, p.36.
[8] Jim Phillips, 'Deindustrialisation and the Moral Economy of the Scottish Coalfields, 1947-1991', *International Labor and Working Class History,* No.84, Fall 2013, p.100.
[9] Ibid, pp.111-112.
[10] Ibid.

framework whereby alterations to working conditions, including pit-closures and job losses, were implemented following bilateral consultation between the NCB and workers' representatives, chiefly the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).[11] Thus, closures would only be permitted where representatives were satisfied that suitable alternative employment, whether in mining or in another industry, was guaranteed. The scale of the restructuring that took place in Fife is illustrated by comparing coal mining employment data in 1951 with 1971. There was a sixty-six per-cent drop in the number of males employed in coal mining in Fife over this twenty-year period, with their number falling from 24,111 to 8,040.[12] In Scotland as a whole during the 'restructuring' phase of 1958-1967, there was a six per-cent per-annum average drop in employment in the coal industry, with the number of men employed as miners falling from 81,000 to 32,000.[13] The moral economy framework outlined above helped to preserve the economic security of many of those who would otherwise have been left unemployed by this industrial restructuring.

In response to this industrial change, the pursuit of multinational inward investment to Scotland was established as a central component of the UK government's economic policy in the immediate post-war period. In particular, incentive-based regional policy was developed to encourage US corporations to invest in Britain and, by the 1960s and 1970s, the policy had taken on greater significance, becoming an important means of 'sustaining' industrial employment.[14] It helped to create 70-80,000 jobs in the 1960s,[15] and Scotland received a disproportionate share of investment from American corporations relative to the rest of the

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[11] Jim Phillips, 'The Closure of Michael Colliery in 1967 and the Politics of Deindustrialization in Scotland', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 2015, pp.554-555.

[12] Phillips, 'Deindustrialisation and the Moral Economy of the Scottish Coalfields', p.100.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Jim Tomlinson, 'Imagining the Economic Nation: The Scottish Case', *The Political Quarterly,* Vol. 85, No. 2, April-June 2014, p.173.

[15] Ibid.

UK.[16] While the employment opportunities this investment offered should be emphasised, it is nevertheless notable that the employee-employer relationship – particularly in relation to American employers – was often characterised by tensions. Knox and McKinlay suggest that from the mid-1960s the 'emphasis shifted away from mechanical engineering and towards electronics…accompanied by the decline of highly paid, male, craft jobs and an increase in… semi-skilled operations.'[17] The slower growth of skilled employment after 1967 – Brown's 'turning point' year and the peak year of manufacturing in Scotland - coincided with growing 'management expectations of high-speed production … [which] inevitably clashed with traditional craft notions regarding the intensity of work.'[18] The external control of these operations resulted in culture-clashes between a traditionally male, skilled workforce that was being asked to undertake comparatively less-skilled work than previously and employers with unfamiliar managerial practices. Furthermore, Cameron argues that the 'issue of economic sovereignty' – concerns about Scotland's industry increasingly being controlled outwith Scotland – 'was a significant one, especially when there is considerable evidence that such firms viewed the Scottish factories as 'branch plants' to carry out fairly low-level assembly and distribution work.'[19] Without disregarding the notable, and largely positive, contribution regional policy made to the Scottish economy it is the case that its promise – of comparably good, stable employment in the place of traditional industry – was not wholly fulfilled. And so those men who had been 'released' from their skilled employment in staple industries – at the behest of UK government policy and, in the case of miners, within the moral economy framework – increasingly found themselves working in lower status occupations with reduced workplace autonomy. This factor, when considered alongside broader concerns about the loss

[16] Bill Knox and Alan McKinlay, 'Working for the Yankee Dollar: American Inward Investment and Scottish Labour, 1945-1970', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations,* (7), 1999, p.4.
[17] Ibid, p.5.
[18] Ibid, p.7.
[19] Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, p.256.

of Scottish economic sovereignty and the growing view that the post-1945 strategy of regional policy had reached a definite point of diminishing returns in Scotland, contributed to the development of a popular understanding that the country's economy – with its distinctive needs - was being poorly served by the UK government.

It is important to understand the human impact of these developments and, turning again to Brown's retrospective contribution, it is clear that he conceptualises the 'bombshell' of the industrial restructuring Scotland underwent from 1967 as a negative experience shared by communities throughout Scotland. This view is broadly supported by Perchard, who uses oral testimony to establish that 'deindustrialisation occupies a prominent place in the Scottish national narrative', and that this captures 'the very real and bitter experiences of individuals and communities'.[20] Perchard draws a link between deindustrialisation and the broader political debate, arguing that the image of an 'industrial male worker … as a symbol of the Scottish nation was firmly embedded in the popular cultural consciousness, reinforcing an industrial DNA of sorts for Scotland'.[21] Thus, the resulting human experience of deindustrialisation, 'measured in the loss of workplace and community networks, as well as occupational status and esteem', contributed to the development of a broader negative national narrative around industrial change.[22]

These practical and emotional implications of deindustrialisation reveal that the 'catastrophic' 'bombshell' of deindustrialisation – as characterised by Brown retrospectively – was real and was rooted in genuine personal experience of industrial restructuring. The human experience of deindustrialisation in Fife during this period, and particularly in Kirkcaldy, would have been apparent to the young Brown, whose father was then the local Church of Scotland Minister.

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[20] Perchard, '"Broken Men and "Thatcher's Children"', p.80.
[21] Ibid, p.83.
[22] Ibid, pp.87-94.

The personal testimony revealed in Perchard's analysis would have been part of a contemporaneous local narrative to which Brown - the son of the manse - would have been exposed. In *My Life, Our Times,* Brown suggests that his father's 'Ministry was woven into my life' and that his father taught him 'to treat everyone equally – subservient to no one, and condescending to no one … We often answered the doorbell to find homeless beggars to whom he always gave money.'[23] Brown's exposure to the poverty prevalent in Kirkcaldy informs our understanding of his contribution to *The Red Paper* in 1975, where he writes:

> Any study of Scotland today must start from where people are, the realities of day-to-day living, extremes of wealth and poverty…The gross inequalities which disfigure Scottish social life (and British society as a whole) have been obscured by a debate which merely poses the choice between separatism and unionism.[24]

Brown therefore presents his approach to the social and economic issues facing Scotland in 1975 in class terms, rather than in what he sees as the 'obscuring' debates of separatism and unionism. It is also revealing that Brown makes reference to Britain as a whole and so, while prioritising Scottish concerns, emphasises his concern for the working class elsewhere in the United Kingdom. In these terms, Brown's argument bears a resemblance to the narrative that was developed by the Scottish trade union movement between 1967 and 1972.

1.2 Devolution and the Scottish trade union movement

The developments in the coal industry and regional policy discussed above shaped the trade union movement's approach to Scotland's industrial restructuring in the period 1967-1979 and the efforts of the STUC in particular during these years played an important role in contributing

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[23] Brown, *My Life, Our Times*, p.38.
[24] Brown, *The Red Paper,* p.9.

to increased public support for the devolution of legislative power to Scotland. The internal debate in the STUC, lasting from 1967-1972, that led to it adopting this as a key priority was a response to the diminishing returns of the post-1945 industrial diversification strategy that had privileged the pursuit of multinational inward investment. This debate, it should be emphasised, preceded the Labour Party's political debate, underlining the important linkage between the STUC's advocacy of devolution and its concerns about the management of the Scottish economy at a UK level.

In 1969 Michael McGahey, the President of National Union of Mineworkers Scotland Area (NUMSA), presented his union's support for legislative devolution at the STUC's annual conference as a response to the Scottish people's belief that 'they were alienated in terms of political decisions of the highest importance'. Furthermore, he argued that NUMSA 'did not believe in total separation' and instead 'approached the National question in class terms.'[25] Moreover, Phillips suggests that the militant nature of the Scottish element of the miners' strike of 1972, although 'not consciously engaging in nationalist or even devolutionist politics', contributed to the growing notion that Scotland's economic issues could be 'corrected through devolved forms of governance'.[26] This argument is mirrored in developments during the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS) work-in. The work-in was a response to the Conservative UK government's proposal to withdraw credit from the UCS, which would have resulted in up to 8,000 UCS workers being made redundant.[27] Phillips argues that the 'politics of the work-in were complicated, and drew essentially on the occasionally parallel but frequently overlapping forces of class and nation' and that by actively seeking to 'mobilise a Scottish agenda, designed to maximise its support and to increase the prospects of saving the yards' the leaders of the

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[25] STUC, *72ⁿᵈ Annual Report*, (1969), pp.233-234.
[26] Phillips, *Industrial Politics of Devolution,* p.120.
[27] *BBC News*, 1 October 2011**,** http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-15128642, accessed on: 1 September 2017.

campaign 'de-emphasised the class interest involved, and cultivated further the idea … that Scottish Home Rule could ameliorate industrial insecurity'.[28] Following the conclusion of the UCS work-in, which saw the UK government fund initiatives to the tune of £35 million that kept three of the four yards open, the leading UCS steward Jimmy Reid argued that this outcome had been 'a victory not just for the workers but for the whole Scottish community.'[29] So while these episodes could trace their roots to class-based origins - namely concerns about the political management at a UK level of Scotland's industrial restructuring - the nature of the workers' campaigns during this period was such that they integrated concerns about this restructuring with broader conceptions of Scottish nationhood. This narrative, when considered alongside Perchard's thesis of Scotland's inherent industrial DNA, understandably proved to have a potent effect on the Scottish national debate. Having identified the failure of remote political administration at a UK level as a significant factor in explaining Scotland's difficulties, and as a valuable campaigning narrative to be exploited, the STUC adopted legislative devolution as a key objective.

On 14 February 1972, the STUC convened a 'Scottish Assembly' in Edinburgh's Usher Hall. The event was attended by workers' leaders, business leaders and politicians – almost all of whom were broadly supportive of the notion that 'Scotland's economy required distinctly Scottish solutions.'[30] It was here that James Jack, the General Secretary of the STUC, argued for what he described as a 'workers' parliament'.[31] The STUC's General Council presented a charter of proposals at the Usher Hall, in which they argued that:

> Unemployment has reached a disastrously high level... So far efforts made to reduce
> unemployment have been unsuccessful. The solution lies in creating demand and

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[28] Phillips, *Industrial Politics of Devolution*, pp.95-96.
[29] Quoted in: Mitchell, *The Scottish Question,* p.147.
[30] Ibid, pp.147-148.
[31] Ibid.

confidence…[and] the only way this is likely to be achieved is on the basis of decisive action by Government on an unprecedented scale.[32]

As the decline of traditional industry continued through the 1970s, and the UK government's attempts to ameliorate this became diminishingly effective, the STUC's advocacy of legislative devolution to Scotland became more pronounced. Although the STUC held consistently to the line that it was 'committed to the political, social and economic integrity of the UK' and that the 'responsibility for economy and trade must be shared between Westminster and the Assembly', its commitment to devolution did, on occasion, take on a quasi-nationalistic tone.[33] The distinction between the STUC's support for devolution and its continued opposition to separatism is an important one. Although it identified UK political administration as being insensitive to Scotland's particular needs and as having failed to manage effectively the industrial restructuring taking place in the country, it did not identify the UK government as the root cause of Scotland's difficulties. So James Jack's suggestion that a Scottish Assembly would be a 'workers' parliament' – and, by extension, that a devolved Scotland was likely to adopt different policies from those being pursued at a UK level – can be seen as the exemplification of the overlapping politics of class and nation that occurred within the trade union movement during the 1970s. This commitment to devolution transcended unionist and separatist politics and was rooted in the belief that legislative devolution would allow Scotland to take a distinctive path within the framework of the United Kingdom.

Brown's view of the industrial restructuring Scotland faced during the 1970s resembles the position articulated by the STUC. In *The Red Paper* he is critical of the UK government's

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[32] Glasgow Caledonian University Archive Centre (GCUAC), Records of the STUC, STUC General Council Minutes, 8th December 1971 – 17th April 1972, STUC Charter of Proposals for the Scottish Assembly, Presented USHER HALL, 14th February 1972, p.908.
[33] STUC, *81st Annual Report*, (1978), p.541. See also: STUC, *79th Annual Report*, (1976), pp.200-201; STUC, *80th Annual Report*, (1977), p.339.

'failure to create much needed jobs and so to eliminate the disparities between Scottish and UK rates of unemployment; the inability to develop a new economic base for sustained economic growth; and the increased level of external control over the Scottish economy.'[34] Furthermore he argues that 'there has been little use of state purchasing policy as an instrument of regional economic policy and little publicly sponsored and publicly controlled industry developed in Scotland' and so echoes the STUC's belief in the need for increased state control of industry and its concern about the loss of economic sovereignty.[35] Revealingly, he concludes that:

> … the social and economic problems confronting Scotland arise not from national suppression nor from London mismanagement (although we have had our share of both) but from the uneven and uncontrolled development of capitalism and the failure of successive governments to challenge and transform it.[36]

Brown's argument here is a nuanced one. On the one hand, he refutes the notion that Scotland's difficulties can trace their roots to 'mismanagement' at a UK level, but on the other argues that Scotland has been adversely affected by the 'failure' of successive – including Labour led – UK governments. He identifies deficiencies in the UK government's approach to the amelioration of Scotland's industrial difficulties and suggests that the speed, extent and social effects of deindustrialisation have been aggravated by the 'failure' of UK government policy. However, while he suggests, like the STUC, that the consequences of deindustrialisation have been accentuated by UK policy, he does not seek to portray the UK government as the cause of these problems and instead identifies the 'uncontrolled development' of capitalism as the source of Scotland's difficulties. This explains why Brown's approach is not nationalistic but is instead, like McGahey and NUMSA's, class-based. His concern about the loss of economic

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[34] Brown, *The Red Paper,* p.11.
[35] Ibid, p.13.
[36] Ibid.

sovereignty and the lack of state direction of the Scottish economy finds expression in his support for socialism and what he sees as its potential to provide an effective response to the issues facing the country. It is, then, Brown's belief that a Scottish Assembly would belong, as James Jack suggested, to the working class that underlines his support for devolution by 1975. The similarities evident in the respective class-based approaches of the STUC and Brown to industrial restructuring during this period contextualise our understanding of his relationship with the internal political debate that engulfed the Labour Party in Scotland from 1974.

1.3. The politics of devolution

The discovery of oil one hundred miles off the coast of Aberdeen in 1969 and its subsequent piping onshore from 1973 are important moments in the debate on Scotland's position in the Union.[37] This vast resource in Scotland's territorial waters gave credence to the Scottish National Party's (SNP) economic arguments in support of independence, with Cameron arguing that it allowed them to offer 'limitless prospects of employment … in an independent Scotland.'[38] It is to this end that McLean argues 'Devolution was reborn in 1974'.[39] Kidd suggests that by 1974 'Scottish nationalism was no longer viewed as the unrealistic vision of cranks and romantics', and highlights that in the second of two UK general elections held in 1974, the SNP won eleven seats and gained thirty per-cent of the total vote share in Scotland.[40] It was between these two elections that the Labour Party committed a 'U-turn' on devolution by reversing its opposition to it and Mitchell argues that the 'electoral threat posed by the SNP'

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[37] Phillips, *Industrial Politics of Devolution*, p.164.
[38] Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, pp.293-294.
[39] Iain McLean, 'Challenging the Union', in Tom Devine and Jenny Wormald (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History*, (Oxford Handbooks Online, 2013) p.540.
[40] Colin Kidd, *Union and Unionisms, Political Thought in Scotland, 1500-2000,* (Cambridge, 2008), p.31.

was the 'main reason' for this change.[41] The prevailing consensus in the literature on Labour's re-adoption of home rule is that it was 'imposed on' the Scottish party by the UK Labour Party and its leadership in London.[42] At a special conference in August 1974 the Scottish party 'reluctantly agreed' to support the creation of 'An Assembly with legislative powers within the context of the political and economic unity of the United Kingdom'.[43] Although the scepticism of the Labour Party in Scotland is notable, Devine argues that during this period the party fell under 'the increasing influence of a new generation' – which, he suggests, included Gordon Brown - who identified devolution 'as an effective means of dealing with Scotland's special needs'.[44] This approach was also about 'extending democratic accountability rather than simply as a defensive response to nationalism.'[45] Despite the emergence of this new generation, the Labour Party in Scotland was split over the issue of devolution by the mid-1970s. Devine provides a summary of the different lines of thought present in the party at this time:

> Some in the party still believed … that strong British centralist powers were needed to solve Scotland's economic problems. Others thought that identity politics were a barrier and a diversion to final success of class struggle. The more pragmatic took the view that devolution was essential to stop the SNP bandwagon but were strongly opposed by others who were convinced that conceding anything to the nationalists would be the slippery path to the final break-up of the UK.[46]

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[41] Mitchell, 'Contemporary Unionism', pp.131-132.

[42] See, for example: Bob McLean, 'Labour in Scotland since 1945: Myth and Reality', in Gerry Hassan (ed.), *The Scottish Labour Party: History, Institutions and Ideas,* p.40; Colin Kidd, *Union and Unionisms, Political Thought in Scotland,* p.31; Tom Devine, *Independence or Union*, p.130; and James Mitchell, 'Contemporary Unionism', pp.131-132.

[43] Quoted in: Mitchell, 'Contemporary Unionism', pp.131-132 and McLean, 'Labour in Scotland since 1945: Myth and Reality', p.40.

[44] Devine, *Independence or Union*, (2016), p.130.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

It is difficult to place Brown in any one of these categories because the roots of his approach appear to lie not in the party political considerations that characterised Labour's approach during this period, but in his class-based conceptualisation of the value of legislative devolution as a proactive means to pursue socialism in Scotland – and not, therefore, principally as a bulwark to halt the rise of the SNP. Indeed, in *My Life, Our Times,* Brown argues that he 'put the case for devolution' during this period 'before the mainstream of my party came around to it.'[47] This supports Devine's proposition that Brown was part of a 'new generation' in the Labour Party which viewed Scotland's social and economic predicament from a different perspective. *The Red Paper*, it should be emphasised, was published in 1975 – the year after the Labour Party re-adopted its historical commitment to legislative devolution. And so Brown's contribution was made in a political climate increasingly polarised by concepts of unionism and nationalism. It is in this context, then, that Brown describes the purpose of *The Red Paper* as being 'to transcend that false and sterile antithesis which has been manufactured between the nationalism of the SNP and the anti-nationalism of the Unionist parties' and asks 'when the question of freedom for Scotland is raised, we must ask: freedom for whom? From what? For what?'[48] In these terms, Brown's essay in *The Red Paper* is instructive of the fundamental forces guiding the labour movement in Scotland at this time. It was a response to the re-birth of devolution as a salient political issue and to the increasing levels of support for the SNP. Above all though, it was a socialist critique of Scotland's social and economic condition and so when Brown identifies devolution as a solution to Scotland's difficulties – he does so because he views it as being the best means of improving the condition of the working class in Scotland. In the extract from *The Red Paper* first referred to at the beginning of this chapter, Brown argues that the solution to Scotland's frailties lies in increasing the 'control'

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[47] Brown, *My Life, Our Times*, p.397.
[48] Brown, *The Red Paper*, p.8.

working people have over their lives and that he views this as a means to support the 'struggle for a shift of power to working people elsewhere'. Brown's dislike of the 'sterile' political debate that revolved around unionism and separatism was shared by the STUC, which privately expressed a desire that 'devolution should not simply be seen as a stick with which to beat the SNP'.[49] Brown's approach to devolution in 1975 was, therefore, not rooted in internal Labour Party debates but instead resembles the STUC's stated belief that devolution would 'improve the democratic process' by allowing 'greater time to be spent on those issues of a Scottish character',[50] and mirrors its firm opposition to 'separatism'.[51] This reveals the important influence the labour movement – broader than the Labour Party – had on the development of Brown's approach to the devolution debate during this period.

Despite internal opposition, the Labour Party went in to the autumn election of 1974 committed to the devolution of legislative powers to Scotland in the form of an elected Assembly. McLean describes the subsequent process of legislating for the Scottish assembly as a 'marathon' which took the best part of three years, from November 1975 to July 1978.[52] Continued opposition from some in the party saw the government's legislation watered down and, through the machinations of arch-unionists MPs, an amendment was imposed that required a minimum of forty percent of the electorate to vote 'Yes' as a prerequisite for validating the referendum's result.[53] In 1976 Brown – aged only 25 – was elected to the Scottish Labour Executive and Hassan describes him as being 'intensely disliked' by the right of the party 'who saw him as over-enthusiastic … and not sufficiently respectful of his elders.'[54] Hassan notes, however, that

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[49] GCUAC, Records of STUC, Devolution Campaign, STUC Devolution Sub Committee: Reports, Minutes and General Correspondence, Minutes of meeting of the Devolution Sub Committee, Monday 28th November 1977, (Uncatalouged).
[50] GCUAC, Records of the STUC, Devolution Campaign, Publications and Papers, 1970-1984, STUC, *Devolution to Scotland and Wales: our changing democracy,* 17 February 1976.
[51] Ibid.
[52] McLean, 'Labour in Scotland since 1945: Myth and Reality', p.41.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Hassan, 'Labour's Journey from Socialism to Social Democracy', p.196.

'Brown's commitment to Labour was underlined in the turbulent devolution decade', particularly in the context of Jim Sillars' establishment of a 'breakaway' party which advocated a more radical approach to the constitutional debate.[55] Brown notes that at the 1976 conference of the Scottish Labour Party he:

> … entered into perhaps the most divisive debate I had seen in Scotland – championing the case for devolution. A large number of Labour leaders whom I respected saw devolution as a diversion from the effort to secure a Labour government in the UK. In response, I argued that a commitment to devolution was rooted in Labour's ideals …[56]

Brown's commitment to devolution is demonstrated by the leading role he played in the party's official pro-devolution campaign. Still in his twenties, he took the 'risk' of becoming the Chairman of Scottish Labour's devolution campaign and, although the role has been described as a 'poisoned chalice', it helped to establish Brown as a national figure in Scotland.[57] Brown suggests that he 'threw' himself 'into this new role: in the last seven days of the campaign, I addressed thirty meetings … I wanted us to run as positive a case as possible on the difference a Scottish Assembly could make to people's lives.'[58] The party ran a joint campaign with the STUC and this is significant because – as has been shown – the rationale that underpinned Brown's support for devolution in the years preceding the campaign mirrored the STUC's. The STUC and the Labour Party worked together in close proximity in the months leading up to the referendum, as evidenced in the discussions they shared on the financing of the campaign's expenditure.[59] And, notably, on 11 December 1978 Brown was present at the meeting during

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[55] Ibid.
[56] Brown, *My Life, Our Times*, p.55.
[57] Hassan, 'Labour's Journey from Socialism to Social Democracy', p.196.
[58] Brown, *My Life, Our Times*, p.56.
[59] GCUAC, Records of the STUC, Devolution Campaign, STUC Devolution Sub-committee, Reports, Minutes and General Correspondence, June 1976- January 1979, Scottish Trades Union Congress General Council, Letter to All members of the Devolution Sub Committee, 24th November 1978.

which the Scottish Labour Party and the STUC agreed that their umbrella campaign would be called the 'Labour Movement Yes Campaign'.[60]

Brown's relationship with the STUC by the late 1970s was not limited to the devolution debate. In 1978 and 1979 he represented the Labour Party on the STUC's Economic Committee, at a time when it was focusing on the issues facing Scottish industry.[61] At a meeting Brown participated in on 24 January 1978, concerns about the steel industry were raised and a draft leaflet was presented to the committee which noted that 'The past twenty years have seen tens of thousands of jobs lost in Scotland's traditional industries. The steel industry has suffered worse than most.'[62] At this meeting, consideration was also given to a paper that was to be presented by the STUC's General Council to Denis Healey, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The paper sought 'a two-fold assurance. The first is that the reduction of unemployment must become the Government's first economic priority …. The second is that regional economic policy be re-instated to its former priority in terms of financial allocation and political commitment.'[63] These examples provide only a brief insight into the issues taken up by the committee when Brown was a member. However, the committee's concern for the employment situation in Scottish industry, coupled with its desire to see a more activist response from the UK Labour government, closely resembles the class-based argument for increased state direction of the economy that Brown set out in *The Red Paper* three years earlier. More broadly,

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[60] GCUAC, Records of STUC, Devolution Campaign, STUC Devolution Sub Committee: Reports, Minutes and General Correspondence, Report of a "Labour Movement Yes Campaign" meeting, held in Keir Hardie House, Glasgow, 11 December 1978, (Uncatalouged).
[61] GCUAC, Records of the STUC, STUC General Council Minutes, 11th January – 5th April 1978, Minutes of Meeting of the Economic Committee, held on 24 January 1978 in congress office, pp.7889-7900; and STUC General Council Minutes, October 1978 to November 1978, Minutes of Meeting of the Economic Committee, held on 20 September 1978 in Congress Office, p.940.
[62] GCUAC, Records of the STUC, STUC General Council Minutes, 11th January – 5th April 1978, Minutes of Meeting of the Economic Committee, held on 24 January 1978 in congress office, pp.7889-7900.
[63] GCUAC, Records of the STUC, STUC General Council Minutes, 11th January – 5th April 1978, Paper to be presented to RT Hon D Healey MP, Chancellor of Exchequer, p.7918.

it reinforces the argument that Brown and the STUC shared a common position on a set of issues beyond the constitutional debate.

The devolution referendum, held on 1 March 1979, has been variously described as an 'ordeal' and a 'debacle', and although the outcome of the referendum was ultimately a disappointing one for those who campaigned for a 'Yes' vote – owing to the forty per-cent threshold imposed during the legislative process – a majority of those who did vote, voted in favour of the creation of an Assembly in Scotland.[64] McEwen argues that during this period the Scottish contingent of the Labour Party 'never fully rejected the idea that Scottish grievances would only be resolved by radical economic policies on a UK scale'.[65] If, as much evidence does appear to show, the Labour Party re-adopted the policy of devolution in 1974 as an 'insincere' and 'pragmatic' means of 'undermining' increasing levels of support for the SNP,[66] then, by contrast, Brown's approach in this period was rooted in his broader conceptualisation of devolution as a mechanism that could improve the economic and social condition of the Scottish people by facilitating the pursuit of socialism in Scotland. This point is emphasised by Brown's words when he moved a motion on behalf of the Labour Party's Scottish Executive at a special conference, held in the weeks after the referendum, which 'reaffirmed' its commitment to devolution. Here, he argued that 'devolution should be built on the rock of justice [and] not the shifting sands of nationalism'.[67] This was an approach he shared with allies in the STUC which had, in the months preceding the referendum, emphasised in internal discussion the long standing, and therefore non party-political, nature of its commitment to the

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[64] Phillips, *Industrial Politics of Devolution*, pp.170-171, and Hassan, 'Labour's Journey from Socialism to Social Democracy', p.196.

[65] Nicola McEwen, 'Pragmatic Nationalists? The Scottish Labour Party and Nationalism' in G. Hassan (ed.), *The Scottish Labour Party: History, Institutions and Ideas*, (Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 2014), p.163.

[66] Mitchell, 'Contemporary Unionism', p.131.

[67] Labour History Archive and Study Centre (LHASC), Labour Party Archive (LPA), *Labour Weekly*, "Assembly Policy Backed", 16 March 1979, p.5.

'decentralisation of the decision making process' and to the 'conception that the Scottish people have a greater say in Governmental process within Scotland'.[68]

The referendum outcome was a significant setback for the Labour government. The failure to secure sufficient support for the devolution proposal, together with a series of industrial disputes during the winter months of 1978/79, around which the Conservatives successfully constructed a narrative of economic crisis – the so-called 'Winter of discontent' – weakened the government and ultimately precipitated its downfall.[69] Tomlinson describes this period as one during which 'the core notion of British social democracy, that a prosperous and expanding industrial economy would provide the resources for a relatively painless expansion of publicly funded social welfare, came under severe challenge.'[70] On 28 March 1979 a motion of 'no confidence' in the government was passed narrowly in the House of Commons and a general election was subsequently called for 3 May 1979. Brown stood as the Labour Party candidate in the Edinburgh South constituency at this election but, despite securing an increase of 4,000 in the Labour vote,[71] was defeated by the Conservative candidate Michael Ancram. Brown's election campaign literature offers an insight into his political priorities in the aftermath of the devolution episode. Significantly, he seeks to move the debate on from the constitutional debate, arguing that the 'central concern of this election is not … devolution', but is instead 'the direction in which Scotland and Britain is to move in the years to come - and what programme can ensure a society in which all people have the best chance to achieve their full

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[68] GCUAC, Records of the STUC, Devolution Campaign, STUC Devolution Sub-committee, Reports, Minutes and General Correspondence, June 1976- January 1979, Scottish Trades Union Congress General Council, Report of meeting between the Labour Party Scottish Council and the Devolution Sub-committee, held in congress office on Thursday 30th November 1978.
[69] Colin Hay, 'Narrating Crisis: The Discursive Construction of the "Winter of Discontent"', *Sociology*, Vol. 20, No.2, (1996), pp.260-261.
[70] Tomlinson, *Managing the Economy, Managing the People*, p.73.
[71] Brown, *My Life, Our Times*, p.58.

potential.'[72] He juxtaposes this vision of society with the 'extremism' of the Conservatives and the SNP[73]:

> I believe Labour stands for the future most of us want. An end to the rat race and the greed which makes the rich richer and where the weakest go to the wall. The creation of a caring community in which the people next door matter … That's the future I want to see. A society grounded in meeting people's needs – not pandering to their greed. And co-operation at work through industrial democracy and in our communities through schemes for more control over our own affairs.[74]

It is clear then that by April 1979 Brown still viewed state direction of the economy as a key priority: 'our aim is to create a million new jobs through public investment in the next five years'; and that he continued to believe in the importance of social solidarity: 'the people next door matter'.[75] It is also evident that in the absence of the devolutionary settlement for which he had campaigned throughout the 1970s, Brown sought to make the case for socialist policies at a UK level. His class-based preoccupation with the deteriorating condition of industry is also demonstrated when he notes that 'I want to protect existing jobs in industry … and make them secure.'[76] So by April 1979, in the aftermath of the devolution 'debacle', Brown's underlying priority remained the one that had motivated him to pursue devolution in the first place: the consolidation of communal and industrial security through state direction of the economy. This finding contextualises our understanding of Brown's approach during the 1980s – the subject of the next chapter.

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[72] LHASC, LPA, General Election, 1979, Leaflets and Manifestos, *Gordon Brown Students' Newsletter,* Undated, presumed April 1979, (Uncatalogued).
[73] LHASC, LPA, General Election, 1979, Leaflets and Manifestos, *Action for a Better South Edinburgh*, Undated, presumed April 1979, (Uncatalogued).
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

1.4. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that in the period 1967-1979, Brown identified the administration of political power at a UK level as an aggravating factor which was accentuating Scotland's industrial difficulties - an approach that appears to be rooted in his personal experience of deindustrialisation in Fife. Importantly, Brown's support for devolution in this period did not draw inspiration from the politics of nationalism. However, although he did not identify the UK government as the root cause of the structural frailties inherent in Scottish industry in the 1970s, he was critical of its imperfect management of deindustrialisation. This led him to identify legislative devolution as a means to deliver socialism in Scotland, which, he believed, would improve the lives of working people in the country by contributing to the creation of more fulfilling and secure employment through increased state direction of the economy. Brown shared these objectives with a broader constituency than devolutionists in the Labour Party and it is the Scottish trade union movement's class-based advocacy of devolution – as opposed to Labour Party's 'expedient' support for it at an institutional level – with which Brown can most readily be associated during this period. Brown's relationship with the unions was not, it should be emphasised, limited to the devolution debate – as evidenced by his membership of the STUC's Economic Committee. If Brown's commitment to devolution between 1967-1979 is best understood in class terms, then the next phase of the debate – coinciding with the premiership of Margaret Thatcher – saw an evolution in his and the labour movement's approach, as they came to see devolution as a means to shield Scotland from the rapid, and disruptive, economic restructuring propagated by her Conservative UK government.

2. From Referendum to Claim of Right, 1979-1989

The STUC remained committed to pursuing the devolution of legislative powers to Scotland after the 1979 election, but the policy was 'temporarily sidelined' at a political level following the Labour Party's defeat.[1] However, during the 1980s, the perceived 'threat' 'Thatcherism' posed to Scottish economic and industrial structures reignited the sentiment that the extant political structure was insensitive to Scotland's needs. During this period, the STUC adopted a narrative that identified Thatcher's government as an administration which did not have a mandate from the Scottish electorate to institute changes that would have a destabilising effect on industrial employment and social security.[2] This narrative was, in stages, adopted by the Labour Party over the course of the decade and, by 1989, the Scottish labour movement was united behind the view that devolution was a mechanism to preserve Scottish industry and values in the face of 'attacks' from the UK government.

The 1980s was an important period in the development of Brown's thinking on devolution. By 1989 Brown had come to view legislative devolution as a means of protecting what he describes as 'distinctive Scottish values' of 'social justice' from a UK government that he believed was no longer simply aggravating Scotland's industrial difficulties, but was itself the root cause of them. Writing in 2014, Brown argues that the rapid industrial restructuring propagated by Thatcher in Scotland was 'a form of social vandalism' which saw the government undermine assets that provided security for Scottish workers and industrial communities.[3] This conceptualisation, which embodies a shift in emphasis from class towards national imperatives, mirrors similar developments in the narrative articulated by the STUC during the 1980s, thus

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[1] Devine, *Independence or Union*, p.153.
[2] STUC, *85th Annual Report,* (1982), pp.424-456.
[3] Brown, *My Scotland, Our Britain*, p.156.

reinforcing the argument developed in chapter one: that Brown shared a position on devolution with a broader constituency of the labour movement than devolutionists in the Labour Party. This chapter will also suggest that Brown played an important role – alongside the STUC – in moving the Labour Party to a position of wholehearted support for devolution.

2.1 Thatcher's first term

The Labour Party won forty-four seats in Scotland in the May 1979 general election - double the number of seats won by the Conservatives. However, at a UK level, the Conservatives made substantial gains and won a total of 339 seats, while the Labour Party won 269. Following Thatcher's victory, her government repealed the 1978 Scotland Act and Devine argues that as a result the 'outlook for devolution seemed bleak indeed.'[4] The Thatcher government embraced the economic doctrine of monetarism, prioritising the control of inflation over all other economic indicators, and so departed from the Keynesian orthodoxy of demand-management that had formed the basis of economic policymaking in post-war Britain. Tomlinson argues that in the government's first two years it implemented 'incoherent' policies and pursued 'a radical policy shift with little serious analysis of what might follow for the level of economic activity or employment.'[5] This, he suggests, 'can reasonably be called "adventurism"'.[6] The 1981 budget was 'politically crucial' because it led to the 'reassignment of responsibility for unemployment' from the state to the unemployed,[7] and so marked a clear break from the post-war cross-party consensus that had accepted the central role of government in targeting an employment level. Thatcher's pursuit of deflationary fiscal measures – embodied by the

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[4] Devine, *Independence or Union*, p.153.
[5] Jim Tomlinson, 'Mrs Thatcher's Macroeconomic Adventurism, 1979-81, and its Political Consequences', *British Politics* 2 (2007), p.4.
[6] Ibid, pp.4-5.
[7] Jim Tomlinson, 'Thatcherism, Monetarism and the Politics of Inflation', in B. Jackson and R. Saunders (eds.), *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge University Press: 2012), p.75.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) – led to a rapid appreciation in the exchange rate, which contributed to accelerated deterioration in Scottish industry that Christopher Harvie describes as 'instant post-industrialisation'.[8]

To this end, Devine argues that although Scottish industry 'was in serious difficulty for decades before the 1980s … when the end came in that decade, it was frightening in its speed and for a time brought in its train devastating social consequences for the mining and industrial regions of Scotland.'[9] There were a number of industrial closures in Scotland in 1980 and 1981, including the Linwood car plant, which ceased operations in 1981.[10] A strong emphasis on market forces, 'marketness',[11] was illustrated by the Coal Industry Act (1980), which required pits to be 'self-funding' and 'unsubsidised' by 1983-4 – further destabilising the already fragile Scottish coal industry.[12] As it had been during the 1970s, the labour movement's response to this industrial instability was the driving force that put devolution back on to the political agenda.

The last chapter highlighted the important contribution NUMSA made to the growth of devolutionary sentiment in Scotland during the 1970s, and demonstrated that the union's efforts led to the STUC adopting devolution as a key policy objective. NUMSA continued to advocate legislative devolution during the early 1980s and, at the 1980 Annual Conference of the STUC, George Bolton – Vice-President of NUMSA – outlined what he saw as the 'invaluable role that a Scottish Assembly in Edinburgh could have played in the fight to defend Scotland against the economic and political policies of the present Government'.[13] Bolton's conceptualisation

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[8] Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes,* pp.164-173.
[9] Devine, *Independence or Union*, pp.156.
[10] G.C. Peden, 'A new Scotland? The Economy', in T.M. Devine and J. Wormalds (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History*, (Oxford Handbooks Online, 2012), p.557.
[11] Ewan Gibbs, 'The Moral Economy of the Scottish Coalfields: Managing Deindustrialisation under Nationalization c.1947-1983', *Economy and Society*, (2017), p.24.
[12] Jim Phillips, 'Workplace Conflict and the Origins of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike in Scotland', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.20, Issue 2, (2009), pp.156-157.
[13] STUC, *83rd Annual Report*, (1980), p.707.

of an Assembly's potential to 'defend Scotland' points to a narrative that came to dominate the STUC's advocacy of devolution during the 1980s. In 1981, it moved a motion that 'underlined the urgent need for a Scottish Assembly to protect and advance Scottish interests',[14] while a year later, in discussion around a further motion in support of an Assembly, it was stressed that 'if there had been an Assembly in Scotland, it could have acted against the worst attacks of the Tory government. The most vicious attacks had been precisely in those areas, where the Assembly would have had control'.[15] The notion that damaging policies were being imposed externally, without democratic legitimacy, served to reinforce – and add urgency to – the STUC's campaign for devolution. It is therefore unsurprising that in 1983, on the eve of that year's UK general election, the STUC carried a motion that called for the 'establishment of a Scottish Assembly as a priority by the next Labour government with a firm commitment to legislation early in the Parliamentary programme.'[16]

By the end of Thatcher's first term, then, the STUC's approach to the constitutional debate had evolved. Instead of presenting devolution as a mechanism primarily to improve the living standards of the industrial workforce in Scotland and to nurture struggling Scottish industry, it started to present devolution as a means to 'protect' Scotland from the 'attacks' of a government which lacked democratic legitimacy north of the border. Although the underlying class concern that motivated the STUC's advocacy of devolution pre-1979 remained the most important element in explaining its approach during Thatcher's first term, by presenting devolution as a means to confront external attack on Scotland's economy and society, the STUC consciously shifted the emphasis of its devolutionary narrative from class to nation.

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[14] STUC, *84th Annual Report*, (1981), pp.538-541.
[15] STUC, *85th Annual Report,* (1982), pp.424-456.
[16] STUC, *86th Annual Report,* (1983), pp.496-500.

The introduction of national imperatives to the devolution debate by the STUC provided the foundation upon which a broad coalition of support for legislative devolution would be built as the 1980s progressed. Building this coalition was an issue Brown grappled with in his PhD thesis, completed at the University of Edinburgh in 1982, on the history of Labour Party in Scotland during the years 1918-1929. In an appendix to the thesis, titled 'Home Rule and the Labour Movement', he explores the Labour Party's approach to the constitutional debate during these years. He concludes that 'lying behind Labour's inability to meet its policy on home rule was the fact that the sense of Scottish separateness was never sufficiently strong to force Labour into a more decisive stand,'[17] a theme, it should be noted, he also emphasises in *The Politics of Nationalism and Devolution* when discussing the Labour Party's approach to the 1979 devolution referendum.[18]

The Labour Party's reluctance to embrace devolution during the 1970s was one of the key themes to emerge from the previous chapter. The party's developing position on devolution is evidenced in a paper presented to the Scottish Executive in January 1982, where it is argued that although 'Scotland's fundamental economic problems cannot be solved in isolation from those of the rest of the UK', 'it is recognised that much can be done within Scotland, not least because of the increased sensitivity which Assembly control of some of the levers of economic power could bring.'[19] The paper concludes that:

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[17] Gordon Brown, *The Labour Party and political change in Scotland 1918-1929: the politics of five elections,* (University of Edinburgh, PhD Thesis, History, 1981), https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/7136, accessed on: 28 August 2017, p.527.
[18] H.M. Drucker and Gordon Brown, *The Politics of Nationalism and Devolution, (*London, 1980), p.130.
[19] GCUAC, Records of the STUC, Scottish Council of the Labour Party: Scottish Executive, *Discussion Paper on devolution*, January 1982, p.3.

> ... there is now widespread acceptance in the Party and the wider movement in Scotland that the early establishment of a Scottish Assembly by the next Labour government will represent … a massive increase in democracy in Scottish life ...[20]

So by 1982 the Labour Party in Scotland had moved from 'reluctant' to 'widespread' acceptance of the policy of devolution. However, while this is an important change, the narrative articulated in the discussion paper is not imbued with the same national imperatives propagated by the STUC. There is no mention of 'attack' or of an 'alien' ideology, but instead an attempt to frame devolution as a means of increasing democratic accountability in Scotland – suggesting that although the Labour Party had embraced the STUC's democratic arguments by 1982, its rationale still differed in emphasis.

Brown had, of course, played a key role in the labour movement campaign for devolution in 1979 and, having failed to win election as the Labour Party candidate in the Edinburgh South constituency in 1979, he became a TV journalist and producer for Scottish Television (STV).[21] So it is understandable that his public contribution to the political debate during Thatcher's first term was limited primarily to analyses of an academic nature. It is clear, however, that he remained committed to devolution during these years. In 1982, Brown became the vice chair of the Scottish Labour Party, and Mitchell suggests that by this point he had 'joined the voices questioning the legitimacy of Conservative rule of Scotland', when he argued that 'the job of Scottish secretary should be made "untenable" in the event of a Conservative victory across the UK if Labour won in Scotland' at the next general election.[22] Brown reflects on this period in *My Life, Our Times*, and argues that in the context of the ideological divisions that engulfed the Labour Party during the early 1980s, he consolidated his position as a close ally of the

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[20] Ibid, pp.6-7.
[21] *BBC News*, 27 June 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6743875.stm, accessed on: 30 September 2017.
[22] James Mitchell, *Devolution in the UK*, (Manchester, 2011), p.127. Brown also quoted on p.127.

Scottish trade union movement, with whom he had worked closely, on a range of issues, during the 1970s:

> … the Bennite group on the Scottish Executive persistently tried to thwart any initiatives I took. In 1982, matters had got so bad that they voted to prevent me, even though I was vice chairman of the party, from addressing the Scottish Labour conference. But they could not stop me from becoming chair in 1983 because I had the support of all the major unions in Scotland.[23]

Although the Labour Party included a commitment to legislate for devolution in its 1983 election manifesto, its approach remained distinct from Scottish the trade union movement, which placed devolution at the centre of its campaigning narratives. The trend was, however, clearly one of convergence – a finding which contextualises our understanding of events during Brown's chairmanship of the Scottish Labour Party.

2.2 'No mandate'

The 1983 election saw Labour and the Conservatives lose three seats and one seat respectively in Scotland, although Labour remained the dominant party north of the border. At a UK level, the Labour Party lost fifty-two seats, while the Conservatives consolidated their majority, gaining thirty-eight seats. 'Because of this', Devine suggests, 'the first mutterings were heard that the Thatcher government did not have a mandate in Scotland.'[24] Brown was elected as the Labour Party's Member of Parliament for the constituency of Dunfermline East – which included his hometown of Kirkcaldy, thus marking the start of his three decades long career as an elected politician representing his home area. As noted above, Brown attributes his elevation

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[23] Brown, *My Life, Our Times*, pp.60-61.
[24] Devine, *Independence or Union*, pp.155-56.

to the position of chair of the Scottish Labour Party to the support he received from the trade union movement. He also suggests that his relationship with the unions paved the way for his selection as a parliamentary candidate in 1983, arguing that it 'had nothing to do with me being a lecturer or working in television – it was about local connections, local people, local trade unions …'[25] Having been selected as the party's candidate, he was then supported during the election campaign by visits to the constituency from prominent trade union figures including Lawrence Daly, general secretary of the NUM, and Jimmy Reid, one of the leaders of the 1972 UCS work-in.[26]

The 1983 election was also an important moment in the devolution debate because, McEwen suggests, 'after the re-election of the Conservative government in 1983, Labour in Scotland increasingly regarded devolution as a means of resisting Thatcherism.'[27] This can be seen in the devolution narrative adopted by the Labour Party, and by the close bi-lateral coordination that developed between the party and the STUC on devolution, following the 1983 election. In July 1983, a paper produced by the Scottish Council of the Labour Party adopted the STUC's narrative of external attack, and suggested that the party had 'a clear duty to do what we can to protect the people of Scotland from the worst excesses of the present Tory Government', noting that the 'threat is no longer to companies in Scotland, it is to whole industries'.[28] The democratic arguments in support of devolution are also emphasised in the paper, where it is argued that 'We are aware that the Tories have no mandate in Scotland.'[29]

In a 'Joint Action Group' meeting, held in Glasgow on 16 September 1983, a cross section of the labour movement – including the Labour Party, the STUC and Scottish Labour MPs –

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[25] Brown, *My Life, Our Times*, p.61.
[26] Ibid, p.62.
[27] McEwen, 'Pragmatic Nationalists? The Scottish Labour Party and Nationalism', p.164.
[28] GCUAC, Records of the STUC, The Labour Party: Scottish Council, [Paper discussing the action by the Labour Movement within Scotland over the course of the next few years], July 1983, pp.1-3.
[29] Ibid.

discussed 'the way forward for the Scottish people following the re-election of a Conservative Government'.[30] It was noted that 'already we have seen attacks' and, in a paper titled *Facing the Future,* presented to and agreed by the joint meeting, it was suggested that the Scottish labour movement's task was to 'fight – and win – the immediate battles which will be necessary to defend the people of Scotland from the attacks of the Tory government'.[31] The paper restates that the labour movement 'has consistently maintained its support for the unity of the UK, but equally consistently supported the case for devolution to Scotland' and, in a narrative that was to come to dominate the Labour Party's approach to the constitutional debate in Scotland, the paper argues that 'the discrepancy between the Scottish and English results – now becoming more substantial and wider in congruity than previously – demands that the present constitutional arrangements be altered to reflect this reality.'[32] By embracing the STUC's devolution narrative, which emphasised both class and national imperatives, the Scottish Labour Party under Brown's chairmanship adopted a significantly different approach to the reluctant one it had taken during the 1970s. This was an important development that united the Scottish labour movement behind a common position on devolution.

It is perhaps not surprising that this convergence took place when Brown - the chair of Labour's devolution campaign in 1978-9 - was chairman of the party. It has been suggested that Brown was an influential party chairman, and that he played an important role in 'discouraging the wider manifestations of Bennite zealotry' in Scotland when it had gripped the Labour Party across the United Kingdom.[33] Although it is difficult to determine how influential Brown was in moving the party in Scotland to its new position on devolution, the evidence does appear to support the view that his chairmanship contributed to a heightened level of urgency in the

[30] GCUAC, Records of the STUC, Statement arising from Joint Action Group held in Glasgow, 16 September 1983, p.1.
[31] Quoted in STUC, *87th Annual Report*, (1984), p.3.
[32] Ibid, p.144.
[33] *The Observer*, 6 November 1988, p.13.

party's approach to the constitutional debate. There can be little doubt that having a long-standing, and increasingly high-profile, devolutionist at the top of the party in Scotland played a role in moving it towards its position of wholehearted support for devolution.

Importantly, the class concerns that motivated Brown's approach to devolution during the 1970s continued to preoccupy him when he became an MP. This is demonstrated by two contributions he makes to the political debate in the latter half of 1983.

Brown delivered his maiden speech to the House of Commons on 27 July 1983, and he used the occasion to set out the impact of deindustrialisation on his Fife constituency. Focusing on the coal industry, he argues that his constituents now 'live in a constituency which was once at the heart of the mining industry … yet today there is not one pit in my constituency, and only six in the county of Fife.'[34] He adds to this a critique of the failure of the 'promised or expected' jobs of the new industries to materialise, and suggests that although the official unemployment figure for his constituency stood at 4,000, 'there are nearly 6,000 men, women and teenagers without a lasting job worthy of the name'.[35] He then moves to the broader Scottish context, and notes that 'In 1979, 405,000 people were dependent on supplementary benefit. There are now 750,000 men, women and children depending entirely on means-tested benefits – one in seven of the population of Scotland.'[36] He concludes his contribution by describing the Thatcher government's 'assaults on the poor' as 'devoid of all logic, bereft of all morality and vindictive even beyond monetarism.'[37]

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[34] Gordon Brown, Maiden Speech to the House of Commons, House of Commons Debate, 27 July 1983, *Hansard*, Vol. 46, cc1226-84, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1983/jul/27/social-security, accessed on 15 September 2017.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

Brown's preoccupation with the consequences of Thatcher's monetarist policies in Scotland is further illustrated in *Scotland: The Real Divide* – a collection of essays edited by Brown and the future Labour Cabinet Minister Robin Cook, published at the end of 1983.[38] Like his maiden speech, no reference to devolution is made in its 251 pages - a surprising omission, but one that fits with the position agreed by the labour movement in September 1983 – as outlined above - that its task was to 'fight – and win – the immediate battles'.[39] Brown, Cook and the collection's contributors direct their concerns towards what they saw as the 'immediate battle': the growth in inequality and poverty that had taken place during Thatcher's first term. In his introduction to the collection, Brown argues that:

> … the new problem for the poor is that the welfare services which were established from 1945 onwards are now, themselves, endangered by a new Tory social ideology which is doing to the legacy of Beveridge what "monetarist" dogma has done to the heritage of Keynes.[40]

To this end, he suggests that it is time for the 'Left to reassess its social strategy' and 'to guarantee a living standard that enables today's victims of poverty to participate more fully in their communities' – key to advancing what he conceptualises as 'social justice'.[41] Brown's emphasis on 'social justice' – instead of socialism – is, Hassan argues, an important development in his broader political narrative.[42] Notably, however, the use of 'social justice' as a campaigning narrative was proposed – and agreed – at the Joint Action Group meeting held three months before *Scotland: the Real Divide* was published,[43] demonstrating that the

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38 Gordon Brown and Robin Cook (eds.), *Scotland: The Real Divide*, London, (1983).
39 Quoted in STUC, *87th Annual Report*, 1984, p.3.
40 Gordon Brown, 'Introduction' in Gordon Brown and Robin Cook (eds.), *Scotland: The Real Divide*, (1983), p.16.
41 Ibid.
42 Hassan, 'Don't Mess with the Missionary Man', p.88.
43 STUC, *87th Annual Report*, (1984), p.3.

arguments Brown makes in the book are in line with the strategy of the broader labour movement in 1983.

2.3 The Miners' Strike and 'Scottish values'

Devine suggests that although Thatcher 'merely hastened [the] process of dissolution', she and her party 'eventually paid a heavy political price for the collapse of Scottish industry.'[44] An analysis of industrial episodes in Scotland during Thatcher's second term of office (1983-1987) draws out some of the key issues that contributed to the decline of the Conservatives' electoral popularity, and the growth of devolutionary sentiment, in Scotland. The Miners' Strike of 1984-5 necessarily features in any discussion of Scotland in the Thatcher era because, despite being a British-wide phenomenon, it revealed more clearly Scotland's distinct economic and social characteristics. After Thatcher's election in 1979, the 'moral economy' framework of bi-lateral consultation that had governed restructuring in the coal industry for the preceding three decades was 'radically altered',[45] part of the government's strategy of 'redistributing wealth from lower-income to higher-income groups, and moving authority within workplaces from employees to employers.'[46] Thatcherite 'assaults' on the coal industry in particular, and nationalised industry in general, were, Perchard suggests, 'more acutely felt in a Scottish economy proportionately far more reliant on those jobs than England.'[47] He draws the conclusion that mining communities in Scotland conceptualised their defeat in 1984-85 – a result, it has been argued, of a combination of strategic errors and the government's

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[44] Devine, *Independence or Union*, p.157.
[45] Jim Phillips, 'Deindustrialisation and the moral economy of the Scottish coalfields, 1947 to 1991', *International Labor and Working-Class History,* 84 (1), p.109.
[46] Jim Phillips, 'Containing, Isolating, and Defeating the Miners: The UK Cabinet Ministerial Group on Coal and the Three Phases of the 1984-85 Strike', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 117:41, (2014), p.140.
[47] Perchard, '"Broken Men and "Thatcher's Children"', p.80.

'remorseless' commitment to defeating the miners - as 'the abandonment of the nation-state and society's responsibility' to them.[48]

Although Brown does not explicitly link the Miners' Strike of 1984-85 to the devolution debate, there is a recurring theme in his contemporaneous contribution to debates surrounding the strike: the government's handling of the dispute exacerbated the already apparent social and economic consequences of restructuring on industrial communities. In the House of Commons on 9 May 1984, he draws attention to measures taken by the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) that he argues 'are depriving the wives and children of miners now engaged in an industrial dispute of social security benefits to which they are legally entitled.'[49] He suggests that, as a result of these measures, they 'will lose almost all' of the benefits otherwise entitled to them under the social security system.'[50] He links these concerns to a broader argument about a lack of democratic accountability when he argues that the 'shameful decision' was taken and implemented without the approval or consultation of Parliament. Brown concludes by arguing that:

> … there has been a sinister distortion of the spirit and letter of decades of social security legislation. A long established practice has been totally disregarded and a new and deeply offensive principle has been invented and applied deliberately to exacerbate poverty and hardship.[51]

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[48] Phillips, 'Containing, Isolating and Defeating the Miners', p.140; Peter Ackers, 'Gramsci at the miners' strike: remembering the 1984-1985 Eurocommunist alternative industrial relations strategy', *Labour History,* Vol. 55, No.2, p.156; David Howell, 'Defiant dominoes: working miners and the 1984-85 strike', in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds.), Making Thatcher's Britain, (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.164; and Perchard, '"Broken Men and "Thatcher's Children"', pp. 90-91.
[49] Gordon Brown, Contribution to Mining Dispute (Social Security Benefits) Debate in House of Commons, 9 May 1984, *Hansard,* vol.59, cc885-7885, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1984/may/09/mining-dispute-social-security-benefits, accessed on: 15 September 2017.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

This 'poverty and hardship' was, it might reasonably be argued, used by the government as a weapon against communities engaged in the strike across the UK, with the aim of lowering the value of the communal resources available to protect the threatened pits and jobs. A further important feature of government intervention in the strike – coordination with the police - is drawn out in a report that the leader of the Labour Party, Neil Kinnock, asked Brown to co-research and co-author with the former Home Secretary Merlyn Rees in 1985.[52] Brown and Rees express concern in their report about the conduct of the police during the strike and call for an investigation to be launched into the coordination that occurred between government ministers – including the Home Secretary Leon Brittan – and the police.[53] The criminalisation of striking miners was part of the government's broader strategy to raise the social and economic costs of striking. The 'respectable' nature of working class culture in Scotland was arguably offended by arrests, convictions and sackings – and the criminalisation of miners who had a strong self-image of law-abiding responsibility is a particularly acute example of this. To this end, Wight suggests that employment is 'central' to 'men's moral identities',[54] and that 'for working class people [in Scotland] … being respectable was experienced primarily through the maintenance of boundaries between "nice folk" and "the 'wasters'".'[55] Thus, the criminalisation of miners – prominent symbols of the Scottish industrial workforce - could be conceptualised as having offended this 'respectability' by blurring the important distinction between the 'nice folk' and 'the (criminalised) wasters' within Scottish industrial communities.

The broad thrust of the literature on the strike is that it contributed to a hardening of devolutionary sentiment in Scotland because it 'accelerated … the disintegration of support for

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[52] *The Daily Record*, 1 July 2013, http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/former-pm-gordon-brown-calls-2013947, accessed on: 14 October 2017.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Daniel Wight, *Workers not Wasters*, (Edinburgh, 1993), p.238.
[55] Ibid, p.73.

Conservatism and an unreconstructed United Kingdom in Scotland.'[56] At the 1985 conference of the STUC, George Bolton restated NUMSA's support for a Scottish Assembly by setting out, in clear terms, the class and national imperatives of devolution. He argued that an Assembly would 'beyond question … heavily involve the Scottish Labour and Trade Union Movement.',[57] and would provide a 'powerful bastion against Thatcherism', 'at a time when this Government is attacking in Britain and in Scotland, democracy and democratic practice in every shape or form.'[58]

It should be emphasised that the 'liberalising pressures' of Thatcherism – exemplified by the Miners' Strike - also offended professional and middle-class opinion in Scotland. The desire to embed market forces, or 'marketness', in social values was, Clark and Gibbs suggest, at odds with the prevailing sentiment of the Scottish 'communitarian' tradition.[59] Therefore, opposition to Thatcher's policies was also formed outside the labour movement during the 1980s, and this led to the development of a parallel-track 'Civic Scotland' campaign for devolution – organised around defence of the public sector and the welfare state - that encompassed the country's 'dominant political parties and civil society institutions'.[60] The rationale underpinning the 'civic' campaign for devolution differed in emphasis from the labour movement's class-based approach, and instead placed Scotland's distinct values of 'community' at the heart of its narratives. Paterson et al. suggest that this came 'from the sense that government itself had

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[56] Jim Phillips, *Collieries, communities and the miners' strike in Scotland, 1984-85*, (Manchester, 2012), p.175.
[57] Ibid.
[58] STUC, *88th Annual Report*, (1985), p.271.
[59] Gibbs, 'The Moral Economy of the Scottish Coalfields: Managing Deindustrialisation under Nationalization', p.24; and Andy Clark and Ewan Gibbs, 'Voices of social dislocation, lost work and economic restructuring: Narratives from marginalised localities in the "New Scotland"', *Memory Studies*, (2017), p.6.
[60] Clark and Gibbs, 'Voices of social dislocation', p.6.

never been distrusted in Scotland in the way that it seemed to be by Thatcher and her allies: belief in public action long pre-dated social democracy'. [61]

Brown and the leadership of the STUC, it might reasonably be argued, helped to bridge the gap between these parallel-track devolution campaigns by introducing national imperatives to the class-based labour movement campaign for devolution in the early 1980s. In doing so, they provided the framework of nation under which the two campaigns could be brought together, and then integrated, as the decade progressed. By the mid-1980s Brown had certainly come to view the UK government's policies as offensive to what he saw as the distinctive Scottish 'community' values of social solidarity. This is evident when Brown, reflecting on his upbringing in Kirkcaldy, argues that:

> … what united the community of Kirkcaldy in solidarity with the unemployed was not simply the belief that it could soon enough happen to any one of us, but also a sense that worklessness offended our values … we felt affronted on their behalves … We didn't think of it as something that *might* happen to any of us, but as something that *was* happening to all of us – because we were all part of the same moral community. [62]

And so, he suggests that Thatcher's 'disdain for the very idea … that some communities or professions have their own ethos and obligations and measures of professional pride and distinction beyond profit and loss' explains why she and her government became deeply unpopular in Scotland. [63] This leads him to conclude that there are distinctive 'Scottish values', rooted in a 'special commitment to social justice that stirs the Scottish heart'. [64]

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[61] Lindsay Paterson, Frank Bechhofer and David McCrone, *Living in Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 2004), p.153.
[62] Brown, *My Scotland, Our Britain*, p.129. (Author's original emphasis).
[63] Ibid, p.133.
[64] Ibid, p.135.

This notion of Scottish distinctiveness is echoed by Devine, who suggests that the particular strengthening of home rule sentiment in Scotland during the Thatcher years was grounded in the notion that her government's policies were a 'threat to Scottish identity'.[65] Writing in 1999 with the Scottish Labour MP Douglas Alexander, Brown draws a link between Thatcher's perceived insensitivity to 'Scottish values' and the growth in devolutionary sentiment that her premiership propagated:

> The constitutional consequences of Mrs Thatcher – unintended by her though they were – are that in Scotland at least, another Mrs Thatcher can never again represent the same threat. No second Mrs Thatcher could ever inflict such damage on Scottish civic life again.[66]

Thatcher's policies helped, then, to define more clearly a distinct Scottish position. This appears to have contributed to a shift in Brown's approach to the devolution debate during her first and second terms of office, as he came to see devolution as a means of providing a democratic guarantor of the distinctive 'Scottish values' of social solidarity to which he believed her policies, which had not been endorsed electorally by the Scottish people, posed a threat. This represents an evolution from the approach he adopted during the 1970s, when he identified devolution primarily as a path to socialism and as a means of improving the condition of the working class in Scotland. It is important to note, however, that the class interest that motivated Brown's approach during the 1970s appears to have remained the key factor in explaining his approach during the 1980s. His retrospective conceptualisation of Thatcher's policies as representing a 'threat' to distinctive 'Scottish values' is grounded in his belief that

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[65] Devine, *Independence or Union*, p.182.
[66] Gordon Brown and Douglas Alexander, *New Scotland, New Britain*, The Smith Institute, (1999), p.10.

these values are an enduring part of the collectivist make-up of the Scottish psyche – where class is an important element.

2.4 An 'Alien' Government and the 'Claim of Right'

Denver et al. suggest that 'thanks in no small measure to the policies and actions of successive Conservative governments, working-class identities and national identity [in Scotland] came to reinforce each other.'[67] This argument is evidenced in the Scottish result of the 1987 UK general election. Although the Conservatives retained power at a UK level, they suffered substantial losses in Scotland – losing eleven seats, leaving the party with ten Scottish MPs – while the Labour Party gained nine seats, taking their total to fifty seats. This outcome represented the 'doomsday scenario',[68] whereby despite Labour winning a substantial majority of constituencies north of the border, it remained in opposition at a UK level. Davidson suggests that there was a particular 'strengthening of Scottish national consciousness' after the 1987 election, because the third successive election victory of the Conservatives appeared to represent the end of 'the cycle by which Labour governments replaced Conservative ones in succession.'[69] As a result, the 'no mandate' argument, which had called into question the legitimacy of the UK government during Thatcher's second term, became more pronounced.[70]

The STUC reaffirmed its commitment to the principle of devolution at its annual conference in 1988, where a motion was carried that emphasised this democratic argument:

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[67] David Denver, James Mitchell, Chris Pattie and Hugh Bochel, *Scotland Decides, the Devolution Issue and the Scottish Referendum, (London, 2000).* pp.48-49.
[68] McEwen, 'Pragmatic Nationalists? The Scottish Labour Party and Nationalism', p.165.
[69] Neil Davidson, *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood*, (London, 2000), p.1.
[70] Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle*, p.331.

In the light of the outstanding result achieved at the last election by the Labour Party, Congress believes that there is an irrefutable case for the establishment of … an Assembly … An Assembly would improve the democratic structure of politics in Scotland, allowing the people of Scotland a direct political input on all matters affecting Scotland.[71]

In response to the motion Bill Speirs, Deputy General Secretary of the STUC, outlined the role that the STUC intended to play in the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly (CSA), noting that Campbell Christie, the General Secretary, would serve on the campaign's National Executive Committee (NEC).[72] Christie's 'tactic was to build alliances that … reached far into civic Scotland' – and this was 'particularly relevant to devolution'.[73] The CSA resembled the STUC's 1972 'Scottish Assembly', and was a cross-party initiative – established after the 1979 devolution referendum - which encompassed the broad cross-section of civil society that Brown and the STUC had helped to bring together. Until 1987, however, it had been 'a voice crying in the wilderness'.[74] Bolstered by the growth of devolutionary sentiment after that year's election, the CSA created a steering committee charged with establishing a Scottish Constitutional Convention 'to examine the case for an assembly and outline the measures that should be taken to achieve it.'[75]

Further impetus was added to the Convention's efforts as 'Thatcher became more abrasive, patronising, defiant and even cocky in equal measure as she chided the recalcitrant Scots.'[76] In 1988 her government announced that it was to introduce the community charge (the poll tax)

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[71] STUC, *91st Annual Report*, (1988), p.296.
[72] Ibid, p.298.
[73] *The Guardian*, 30 October 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/oct/30/campbell-christie, accessed on: 14 November 2017.
[74] Devine, *Independence or Union*, pp.191-192.
[75] Ibid, p.192.
[76] Ibid, p.176.

in Scotland one year before it was to be rolled out in the rest of the country.[77] The poll tax was a regressive, flat-rate levy to be paid by all adults to part-finance local-authority spending.[78] It proved deeply unpopular and was, Devine suggests, 'the policy more than any other which convinced many Scots that they were being ruled by an alien government.'[79] The labour movement campaign against the poll tax was superseded in many communities by a militant non-payment campaign which was, it should be emphasised, critical of labour leaders such as Christie, Speirs and Brown. Gibbs argues that 'non-payment of the poll tax was the largest act of civil disobedience in recent Scottish history … but was led by political forces in conflict with the leadership of the labour movement and had little basis in workplace action.'[80] The STUC opposed this non-payment strategy,[81] but because the 'bitterly resented' poll tax was seen to have been implemented without a 'democratic mandate',[82] non-payment helped to reinforce both a distinct Scottish position and the increasingly prevalent 'democratic deficit' argument.

Writing in 1999, Brown and Alexander emphasise this notion of illegitimate, external imposition, arguing that 'what, in particular, Scotland resented was Scottish institutions and their values being attacked',[83] and they suggest that 'nowhere in a political context was this threat more obvious than in the imposition of the Poll Tax'.[84] 'Devolution', they argue, 'previously desirable, now became essential.'[85] When the poll tax was implemented in 1988, Brown had risen to prominence at a UK level, owing, in particular, to his 'crackling indictment

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[77] *The Observer*, 16 November 1988, p.13.
[78] Devine, *Independence or Union*, p.179.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ewan Gibbs, 'Historical tradition and community mobilisation: narratives of Red Clydeside in memories of the anti-poll tax movement in Scotland, 1988–1990', *Labor History*, 57:4, (2016), p.441.
[81] Ibid, p.452.
[82] Ibid, p.441.
[83] Brown and Alexander, *New Scotland, New Britain*, p.6.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid, p.8.

of Thatcherite economics' when he responded to Chancellor Nigel Lawson's budgetary statement in the House of Commons in October.[86] Brown's performance in this debate prompted a series of press profiles to be published, which described him variously as the 'High-flying son of the manse',[87] 'the evangelist',[88] and the 'Shadow boxer who will rule the ring'.[89] Each of these profiles refers to Brown's involvement in the labour movement's campaign for devolution in 1979, with one noting that 'while he was still in his 20s, he was one of the leaders of the pro-devolution movement … sharing a platform with a Labour Prime Minister … when most budding Labour politicians are preparing to fight their first council seat.'[90] Even when Brown had become a prominent member of the shadow cabinet, he was, therefore, still largely defined by his long-standing commitment to Scottish devolution. One of the profiles concludes with a discussion of the growing nationalist sentiment in Scotland and quotes the 'respected radical writer' Tom Nairn:

> I think of Gordon as the moderator of Scottish Labour politics. What he eventually decides will be important. If he were to go against the official line, he could emerge as leader of a much more nationalist Scottish Labour Movement.[91]

In the event, Brown did not chart a different course from the established labour movement position in Scotland. At the end of 1988, the CSA produced the 'Claim of Right', which declared: 'We acknowledge the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of Government best suited to their needs.'[92] Brown signed the document on 30 March 1989 at the General Assembly Hall in Edinburgh, along with every Scottish Labour MP – other than the

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[86] *The Observer*, 6 November 1988, p.13.
[87] Ibid.
[88] *The Guardian*, 19 December 1988, p.19.
[89] *The Guardian*, 1 November 1989, p.23.
[90] Ibid.
[91] *The Observer*, 6 November 1988, p.13.
[92] *BBC News*, 29 June 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/special_report/1999/06/99/scottish_parliament_opening/380989.stm, accessed on: 16 October 2017.

arch-unionist Tam Dalyell. Later that year at its annual conference, the STUC celebrated the role it had played in the formulation of the 'Claim of Right'.[93] Ten years after Brown had campaigned alongside the STUC in the 'Labour Movement Yes Campaign' for devolution, he and the STUC still shared a common position on the constitutional debate and, importantly, they had taken the Labour Party with them.

2.5 Conclusion

Two main conclusions can be drawn from the evidence presented in this chapter. Brown's passionate defence of the interests of industrial workers, their families and communities during the 1980s was articulated in terms that closely resembled the narratives of the STUC and, together, they moved the Labour Party in stages towards its 1989 position on devolution. Brown and the STUC's shared approach to the constitutional debate during the 1980s was a response to the escalation of industrial closures and to the intensification of pressure on Scotland's economic structures – the substance of communal security – and so was an extension of the approach they adopted during the 1970s. However, the political divergence of the Scottish nation from the rest of the UK during the 1980s – evidenced in the declining electoral popularity of the Conservative Party in Scotland – led to the growth of a 'democratic deficit' narrative which called into question not just the sensitivity of the UK government to Scottish interests, but the legitimacy of the political structure itself. This was the distinguishing characteristic of Brown and the STUC's approach during the 1980s, and saw the emphasis of the devolution debate shift to the national imperatives of devolution - thus helping to secure the support of a broader cross-section of Scottish society for devolution than had been achieved in the previous decade. Notably, as in the 1970s, Brown's relationship with the trade union

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[93] STUC, *92nd Annual Report*, (1989), pp.217-220.

movement during this period extended beyond devolution, and the unions actively supported both his chairmanship of the Scottish Labour Party and his candidacy for the Dunfermline East constituency. From these positions, Brown appears to have played a role in encouraging the Labour Party in Scotland to adopt the devolution narrative of the trade union movement and so to embrace fully the policy of devolution. By the end of the 1980s, Brown's commitment to addressing the issues facing working people in Scotland clearly remained his underlying priority. Devolution was not, in his eyes, a means only to 'protect' Scotland or, it should be emphasised, the electoral interests of the Labour Party, but was instead a means to advance the interests of the working people and industrial communities of Scotland.

3. Conclusion: Class not Party

Devolution featured prominently in the 1992 UK general election, which was again won by the Conservative Party despite Scotland returning only eleven Conservative MPs to Westminster.[1] The Labour Party retained its commitment to devolution throughout the 1992-1997 parliament and went into the 1997 general election, under the leadership of Tony Blair, on a manifesto commitment to legislate for a Scottish Parliament. Brown was one of the strategic architects of 'New' Labour's political revival in 1997, which saw the party win a landslide majority in the House of Commons. The Labour government duly introduced legislation that paved the way for a referendum on devolution to be held on 11 September 1997, at which 74 per cent of Scottish voters endorsed the devolution proposal.[2] On 12 May 1999, ten years on from signing the 'Claim of Right' and twenty years since he had played a leading role in the 1979 devolution referendum, Brown attended the opening of the Scottish Parliament as Chancellor of the Exchequer – and the most senior MP representing a Scottish constituency - in the UK government which delivered devolution to Scotland.[3]

Brown has, therefore, been a central figure in each of the crucial episodes that have made up the Scottish constitutional debate since the 1970s. Focusing on the first two decades of this period, the dissertation has shown that the roots of Brown's approach to devolution can be traced to the industrial change Scotland experienced during the 1970s, when he conceptualised devolution – in socialist terms - as a means to alleviate industrial insecurity and to improve the living standards of the Scottish working class through state direction of the economy. This

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[1] Phillips, *Industrial Politics of Devolution*, p.178.
[2] McLean, 'Challenging the Union', p.541; and *BBC News*, 8 September 2017, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-41189455, accessed on 11 December 2017.
[3] Brown, *My Scotland, Our Britain*, p.234.

remained his underlying priority during the 1980s as he sought to defend the interests of the industrial workers and communities whose economic security was threatened by the rapid industrial restructuring propagated by Thatcher's Conservative UK government. The Thatcher government's desire to dis-embed market forces from social values, and so to shift responsibility for employment from the public sector to the individual – in opposition, it should be reiterated, to the prevailing sentiment of the Scottish electorate – led Brown to integrate his class-based rationale for devolution with a wider national narrative that emphasised Scotland's distinct 'community' tradition and the 'threat' posed to it by Thatcherism.

The dissertation has also confirmed the broad thrust of the existing literature that recognises the important role Brown played as a Labour Party figure in the devolution debate during this period. However, it supplements this interpretation with the finding that Brown's approach to devolution during the 1970s and 1980s was influenced by the campaigning narratives of the Scottish trade union movement. This is reflected in the role Brown played, as Chair of the Scottish Labour Party's 1979 devolution campaign, on the STUC's devolution committee and by his role as a member of the STUC's economic committee. This linkage extended to the 1980s, when the trade union movement helped Brown to secure his election to the House of Commons and his position as Chair of the Scottish Labour Party. From these positions Brown, along with the STUC, helped to move the Labour Party to a position of clear support for devolution, thus uniting the wider labour movement behind a common position on the constitutional debate by 1989.

Brown's approach to devolution during the 1970s and 1980s was, it has been demonstrated, a distinct Scottish labour movement approach - a finding that contributes to our understanding of his role in the 2014 independence referendum. Brown's important, and perhaps decisive, interventions in 2014 utilised the labour movement narratives of 'solidarity' and 'social justice', and so represent an extension of his 1970s and 1980s class-based approach to

devolution. Moreover, Brown's ability to construct narratives around devolution in 2014 that appealed both to traditional Labour Party supporters and to a broader constituency of opinion – as recognised by John Curtice – was, it might reasonably be argued, grounded in his experience of doing so effectively during the 1970s and 1980s.

The devolution debate in Scotland during these decades was, like the 2014 independence referendum, more than a constitutional debate. It was about how economic security is affected by policy and how policy is shaped by the priorities of governments and the governed - which vary across national frontiers within the UK. This dissertation has shown that the pursuit of economic security for industrial workers motivated the Scottish labour movement campaign for devolution throughout the 1970s and 1980s. By aligning himself with the labour movement approach to devolution during these years, Brown also prioritised the defence of the long-term economic welfare of Scotland's industrial workforce. This finding reveals that in the foundational years of his political career, Brown's primary motivation was not the electoral interests of the Scottish Labour Party, but the class-based pursuit of stable and rewarding employment for Scottish workers and economic security for their families and communities.

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