



Transcription of Professor Tom Devine's lecture:
Tuesday 6 December 2005

Professor Phil Hanlon:

I'm Phil Hanlon and I'm Professor of Public Health at Glasgow University and it's my privilege to chair today. As far as the format for this afternoon is concerned, once I have made the introduction Tom Devine will deliver his lecture and that will last about 45 minutes or so, after which there will be an opportunity for questions. As I said to Tom, it's a proper stand-up lecture, you know, it's none of your usual kind of conference stuff, so it gives our speakers a chance to really develop their ideas and put these forward and that's, I think, been one of the hallmarks of success of this series. In fact, one of the things I would say is that this has been a remarkable series and I think there is testament by the large numbers of people who are gathering for them. They have been of high ideas; ideas that are much broader than any one of our particular disciplines and I think that's another one of their strengths.

This afternoon's presentation comes from Professor Tom Devine. Now, if you want to look up Tom on the internet you can find a long list of academic accomplishments of books, book chapters and other publications. You can find a position that he currently occupies in Aberdeen which is very long and complicated which I didn't write down and I'm not even going to attempt, but it's basically to do with history and Scottish history and the like. However, he is moving from Aberdeen and he told me that he was on his farewell party last night so we cut him some slack for that this afternoon *[laughter]* because he takes up the most prestigious of academic history positions in Scotland at Edinburgh University from the first of January next year and we congratulate you on that appointment. Tom I've heard on a number of occasions and he has... I'm not going to in any way try and steal his thunder or even begin to anticipate his arguments, but I've found what he has said to be very challenging and very relevant to the work that I do and very important, in fact, for Scotland and where we stand now. So for that reason when Andrew *[Lyon]* and others were considering the seminar series we thought it very important to give him the opportunity to come along and share these ideas and insights with us. So what we have is a thunderous round of applause and welcome and then it's over to Professor Tom Devine for the lecture, after which we will tell you how the question and answer session goes. Tom, you are most welcome.

[Applause]

Professor Tom Devine

Thank you. Well thank you very much Phil for those very generous introductory remarks and it's very good to be back in Glasgow again after my temporary sojourn in the northeast.

I have looked at the previous programmes and particular lecture themes in this very intriguing series and I'm also aware the load may have changed for tonight at the broad social and professional composition of those who attend the series. I certainly don't think you have been addressed by an historian before but also perhaps not by an historian whose about to commit *traison de clerc* (*laughter*) by, if you like, moving outside history to current affairs. The presentation title tonight is 'The Transformation of Scotland: 1980 to 2005' and one of the difficulties about such a presentation, the most obvious one, of course, is that I don't have the clear time perspective or even the capacity of hindsight, which is usually the historians tremendous advantage. But there is probably an overwhelming majority in this audience who know more about the processes that occurred during these years than I do.

What I'm going to try and do, therefore, is lend a degree of coherence to our understanding of this, I think, seminal period, not simply in recent years, obviously, but the seminal period in broad Scottish historical development. Really to shape what I want to say I'm going to talk about it in three parts and running through the three parts, hopefully emerging once we get to part two, will be a sense of paradox, a sense of conundrum, if you will; a sense of a problem starting to emerge which requires a degree of attempt at explanation.

In the first part I want to try and convince you that although change in human history is obviously a constant, the last quartile of a century in the history of Scotland has been a period of pronounced structural change which has not been experienced in Scotland, or by the Scottish people, on any scale since the classic industrial and agricultural revolutions of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. That will be, in a sense, the manifesto of part one. I'll then go on to look at, and to worry a bit about, an aspect of our understanding, our perception of modern Scotland which I find, to a degree, especially when placed alongside part one of my presentation, could be regarded as mystifying because I do think that much public discourse in Scotland, not least in the media, can be extremely negative and melancholic and, indeed, even pessimistic. I've actually thought about part one of my presentation over the last couple of years and it will actually end up as a chapter at the very end of one of my most recent books 'The Scottish Nation', taking the Scottish nations story from 1998 to 2007. I've finished the chapter so it's not simply current affairs you're getting it's going to be speculative history as well, writing, if you like, a theme which ends in 2007, at the end of the year 2005. But if you go to that second part, that issue of a degree of lugubriousness in Scottish public discourse which, perhaps to some externalise might seem to be too extreme, especially in relation to some of the factual data in part one. I then want to move on to, which is me is one of the more intriguing aspects and interesting aspects, and to fly some ideas which will try to reconcile the apparent paradox of improvement, prosperity, massive (in a sense) material advancement, but at the same time a commentary... a commentary laced with pessimism and doubt in some of our public prints and some of our television and radio analyses.

So if we go then to the first part. I want to begin here with, essentially, what is the basic material foundation of society and really to give you perspective, just a very quick reference back to that great set of revolutions in the late 18th early 19th centuries. What essentially happened then was at a speed which was faster than any other economic situation in Europe, Scotland moved from a subsistence, agrarian structured society to the second most industrialised nation on earth by the census of 1821. By the census of 1851 it was even more industrialised by census occupational referencing than England, the first industrial nation. The urban development in the period was colossal. It produced massive social costs, particularly of course in the city we are in today, where annual mortality rate started to rise again despite the wealth making capacity of the city in its hinterland through the 1820s and 30s. The market penetrated all parts of this land during that period from the Outer Hebrides (that's the background to Clearance) right down to the Borders with a great sheep latifundia in that period. Now, the code of this ladies and gentlemen was the industrial process and by about the 1840s I would suggest to you that the broad industrial structure which was to govern the lives and indeed, even identities of the Scottish people for the following hundred odd years, was in place. After an early start in textiles the industrial basis of Scotland became heavy manufacturing and related activities. Still astonishing to think that in 1901, a decade or so before the First World War, the River Clyde down there launched two fifths of all commercial vessels in the world - that did not include war ships. The North British Locomotive Company, 'the titan of its trade' as it was called, again with a worldwide array of exportation and particularly linked into the Empire because the Empire is very much relevant to this particular special set of developments in Scotland. So we have an overwhelmingly heavy industry economy of ship-building, steel, iron-making, engineering activity which, of course, is partially founded on the great coal mining industries of Scotland in that period.

Moving much more rapidly up to date. The perspective that history gives is that this, by our standards today, this ancient economic system which had been developed in the course of this irresistible time of modernity in the 19th century was literally still growing as late as the 1950s. It did not disappear or disintegrate in the great crises between the world wars. Of course those were horrible for people: up to 20 to 25 per cent of the male workforce unemployed in 1932 to 33. But three things perpetuated the 19th century, if you like the Victorian manufacturing system. One was (and it's very important indeed, I think, to the way in which the later revolution of the 80's and 90's occurred) Scotland did not experience a second industrial revolution in the first half of the 20th century. For basic economic and resource reasons Scotland was not able to produce, if you like, the Midlands or London effect of concentrating on small scale but increasingly profitable consumer-based industries, like car manufacture, electrical goods manufacture and the rest. Simply because the domestic market in Scotland was so weak and so relatively poor in the 20s and 30s and also because the shape of the old industrial structure was really not relevant to light engineering and the growth, particularly, of scientific based activity.

So that was the first reason why people, the majority of people probably above the age of 40 in this audience at least, can still remember Scotland's heyday as a great manufacturing nation, especially in the heavy industrial framework. The second reason is simply the two wars. The Clyde and the West of Scotland area became the great arsenal of Empire during those wars and therefore, despite the difficulties in the market situation normally, the heavy industrial complex actually extended and further intensified and then finally in the 40s and 50s there's the process of replacement. There's the end, for a brief period, of Japan and Germany as competitors. So we find that as late as 1960, 15 per cent of the world's shipbuilding industry was still located on the Clyde, a river now internationally famous for its silence.

These material structures, therefore, ensured that the Scotland of 1950 was, in my view, closer to the Scotland of 1850 in a range of things from employment structure through to the very important significance of religion and Presbyterian values, than it was to the Scotland of 2000 or 2005. The critical decade, ladies and gentlemen, is the 1980s. The old industrial structure literally melted away in the course of a few years. The result of that in the short run at least, but I suspect in some of the neighbourhoods and communities of, if you like, the engine houses of the old industrial framework... the results of that in the short term, and for others perhaps in the longer term, through this de-industrialisation process were very costly in social terms. But what happened by the early 1990s is that as a result of this industrial, economic, material transformation, at a pace even greater than that of the industrial revolution of the late 18th / early 19th centuries, Scotland by the early 1990s had a brand new economic system, an economic system based on the public services, service activity more generally, tourism, oil and gas related work, light manufacture, computer based activity and a variety of other activities such as bioscience and the like. I would argue that whatever the social costs in the short term of that process, whatever as Willie McIlvanney used to argue, the loss for a brief period of Scotland's sense of identity because so much of the nation's identity was built on its international reputation as a maker of things, not least, the big ships of the Clyde, the railway engines from Springburn and the like... Despite the great impact it had on the nation's collective psyche, the scar, for most people at least, relatively quickly healed by the early to mid 90s. We have an economy today which is diverse, which in my view is much more resilient than the specialised and overcommitted heavy industries of the early 19th, mid 19th, late 19th and early 20th centuries.

There may be some entrepreneurial nostalgia in Scotland. Addressing a group of businessmen at Gleneagles a year ago it was quite obvious there was a sense among them that the great days of the Scottish economy had gone, that they belonged to the 19th century. I think you should investigate, if you come through with that kind of assertion, the extraordinary low wage rates, the mass poverty that went with the old imperial economy because Scotland's world-beating economy in that period was essentially a low wage economy, and by the 20s and 30s even the market economy, and the international forces upon it, were not really delivering for the majority of Scots. That is why I would argue also that we embraced the welfare state in the 40s and early 50s with such enthusiasm and why, very quickly, state intervention and the role of the state whether local or national in people's lives offering if you like cradle to grave security became itself almost a part of Scottish identity which explains to some extent the aggressive Scottish reaction to the Thatcher years of the 80s because of the perceived threat that the government policy of those successive Tory majorities... the threat it seemed to pose to this collective left-wing consensus.

I always liked to quote to my undergraduates, when I used to teach them, because since I went to Aberdeen I really only had PhD and Master students... but when I was addressing a large number of undergraduates like this I use to always tell them Stuart Hood (the eventually quite famous television producer) fought through North Africa and into Sicily and Italy with the 51st Highland Division. His diary in 1944, because the troops were beginning to read Sir William Beveridge's report in succinct version... Hood's conclusion was the division will vote left, the division will vote left and, of course, that was the background to the apparent surprising results for the Great War leader Winston Churchill was toppled from office in 1945.

So my first semi-conclusion in part one of my presentation is we have lived through an economic revolution of substantial proportions, it has been essentially as significant as earlier transformational times in Scottish history, it's hardly, however, made aware to the Scottish people today in term of public discourse or indeed, even in media comment. It's almost been a silent revolution. Its consequences were profound. The most obvious one, which you can see with your eyes as you walk round the streets of Glasgow or Edinburgh or Dundee or even Aberdeen in the year 2005, is a very significant increase in general affluence. Average real incomes in old Scotia in 2005 were almost triple those, almost triple those of the 1950s. From having almost an eastern block type commitment to public housing in the 50s and 1960s, now around two thirds of Scottish homes are owner-occupied. We are facing increasingly the social, economic and resource and climatic costs of affluence, as anybody trying to get into Glasgow, or any of the other big cities, in the morning rush hour will tell you. There has been an explosion in car ownership and all the other goodies of the modern economic system.

So the prosperity which came from this revolution for the majority of Scots is undeniable and possibly that intervention will be answered hopefully when I get to part two and three of my presentation. But for the majority it is undeniable there is a greater degree of comfort in this society, material comfort, leave aside other forms, in the year 2005 than there were in the days of our grandparents and great-grandparents. A third area, which is important to note, is that alongside these material changes, of course, which were extremely important, was the impact they and other developments had on social formation. The family, the relationship between men and women, the whole issue of gender, again, has been transformed over the last 20 to 25 years. The classical family of two parents and two children, married, is no longer the norm. There is fluidity, a set of relationships, which to the generation of the 1950s and early 1960s, would seem to be quite radically different from their own particular experience. We are producing fewer children, the producers of those children, the men and women, whether they are in wedlock or in partnerships, are producing them later. There is even a sense of a demographic time bomb building up in Scotland. In terms of women, over 52 per cent of women are now in full or part-time employment; the first time in recorded history that has been the case. It's partly to do, of course, with the impact of contraception, it's partly to do with the impact of domestic appliances, but it's also to do with this burgeoning of these new employments, particularly in areas like education, in health services and light engineering.

So what I'm saying to you is that although the changes may at root be material, one could go on perhaps for most of the night teasing out various ways in which these material changes also produced a set of social changes which I think can be regarded as truly radical and revolutionary compared to the 70s, 60s, 50s and before. I sense, in other words, using the criteria I have already adopted, a kind of decisive change; a decisive change not simply of pace, but of social structure and of many human norms gathering speed, perhaps being traced back to the 60s, but certainly gathering speed in accelerated intensity in the 1980s and 1990s.

Now, the next area I want to focus on and still really on this first, if you like, compartment or category of my presentation trying to convince you that we have indeed lived through this kind of transformational experience, albeit the degree of that transformation and its implications vary rarely discussed in any depth or systematically in public discourse. The area I want now to look at is a kind of broad, connected set of issues, which I would call identity and politics. Basically what the French historians call the *mentalité* of the people and its implications for both Scottish politics and Scottish identity in the later part of the 20th and early part of the 21st century. Again, if I can go back to give some perspective on this. During, or nearing the end of the first phase of the great material revolution of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, with assimilation between England and Scotland growing, as I put it in a recent presentation, Scotland now in bed with an elephant which threatened to crowd out the rest of the bed by moving over. The smaller nation, both in politics and economic clout, being at risk in terms of identity, through a process of Anglicisation and the very real danger that Scotland would emerge as North Britain. Sir Walter Scott: "what makes Scotland Scotland is fast disappearing". That was the 1820s. Henry Lord Cockburn, the great Whig lawyer, 1832: "this is the last truly Scotch age". And yet they were not alone. Some of the great Enlightenment thinkers not only lusted after this result, hoping that closer association with England and the development of Scotland as North Britain, with England as South Britain, would not only complete the union, but bring a more civilised set of influences on Scottish human literary and social development. So we have William Robertson, the greatest historian of the Enlightenment period in the 18th century saying, in 1752: "in due course the union will make us one people". And recent work, trying to understand the emergence of Britishness in this particular period, has seen it underscored by a joint Scottish and English commitment to Protestantism; a fear of the other (in this particular case, France); eight titanic global conflicts fought over the 18th century for essentially what was the mastery of the world, and culminating only with the victories at Waterloo and Trafalgar in 1812 and 1815; and, not least, Scotland's increasingly important role, not simply in the Union, in the marketplace of Union, but in the Empire.

I still like the phrase used by one of my colleagues at St Andrew's University who concluded his brief section exploring the over-representation of the Scottish elites in what was the greatest territorial Empire the world has ever seen. It was this that produced, if you like, the Victorian arrogance of Scotland, that they were world players that, in fact you could argue, in terms of management, they were the senior partners in this extraordinary imperial enterprise. Alan's phrase is: "the Scots claim not simply a reasonable, but a quite indecent share of the spoils". It's only now that historians and scholars are beginning to understand the sheer scale of that activity.

So you have by the 1840s a mixed sense of gloom, but others looking to the future positively as England and Scotland meld an English influence which becomes predominant. We know it didn't happen; Scottish identity survived. Instead of that we got what is still the case to this day the so-called 'dual identity' (if you want to see it in simple or crude terms) of Scottishness and Britishness. In the 20th century that dual identity was further fortified by the two world wars. 1914 - 18 Scotland lost more per head of population of all competent nations than any other nations apart from the Serbs and the Turks, because of the persistent use of Scottish frontline troops as assault troops. But the Serbs and the Turks mainly lost to disease. It was the sheer killing power of the Golgotha of the western front and Gallipoli that resulted in Scottish losses. You can see that extraordinary evocative monument in Edinburgh Castle, the Scottish war memorial, built in the 1920s. It is iconically Scottish, but it is also iconically imperial. It is, in fact, a monument to the dual identity. The Scots were proud of their fighting regiments, but they knew they were fighting also for King, Empire and Britain. The total war of the 1939 to 1945 period gives a further emphasis, a further force, because really for the first time in even history the ordinary human populations were engaged in this struggle as well as those who fought at the front, or in the sea, or in the air. And then what I think is probably still the most important glue of union, because there aren't very many glues of union left, the welfare state from 1947 onwards. It is interesting to think that the foundation of the National Health Service and the end of Empire in India played out, inevitably, by the pipes to the tune Auld Lang Syne, not Will Ye No Come Back Again, or anything like that.

I mean, if you go to 1997 then and the last major British colony goes, the Garrison Regiment in Hong Kong in 1997 were the Ghurkhas, but it was almost inevitable that a kilted regiment would be flown in (first in, last out) and sure enough a small detachment of the 42nd Regiment of Foot, better known as the Black Watch, was flown in three weeks before and Chris Patton, the last governor, as he looked at the Union Jack being lowered, a lone piper played the same famous tune as had been played when the British Empire left India. But the interesting thing is, in terms of chronology ladies and gentlemen, the chronological connection is that there is a two-year gap between the foundation of the National Health Service and the beginning of the end of Empire with the searing of India and its independence and that National Health Service together with employment insurance and all the other state supports became by the 50s and early 60s, the new union connection, the new union foundation.

So what I'm saying to you is this, to use Harold McMillan's famous phrase: "You've never had it so good". By the 1950s who could have predicted that Scotland now has its own parliament, its own government, voted for consensually and emphatically in the referenda of the late 1990s. The dual identity, remember, was still there in the 50s and 60s. Britishness may have had the great public image, but don't forget in the late 1940s over a million and a half Scots signed a national covenant seeking a form of home rule for Scotland and not all of them were fake signatures and not all of them were dead either. The dual identity is alive and well in the 50s and early 60s, then you have the assault of the SNP. The sense by the 70s and early 80s that some of those foundations which had created the dual identity and the sense of Britishness were disintegrating. The protestant religion was no longer the value system in terms of influence that it had been in that earlier period. The Empire had gone. Britain seemed to be suffering from relative economic decline and it was almost perhaps inevitable that a stronger sense of Scottish identity would prevail, but this is where we once again come back to the 1980s and early 1990s as the seminal departure period for most of what I'm talking tonight.

Three weeks before he died Donald Dewar, the first First Minister of Scotland, gave his last public address to an organisation of which I was at that point the convenor, the Irish Scottish Academic Initiative meeting in Trinity College, Dublin before an audience of Irish dignitaries, academics and others and he was in pretty good form. But it was immediately obvious after the lecture and the odd questions that had come after it when we took him to dinner that he was so tired that he couldn't even make a response to some of the speeches made in his honour after dinner. I was sitting next to him and I was kidding him on about this 'father of the nation' tag because he always liked what in the Scottish medieval tradition is called flighting, that is ritual humiliation of the opponent by verbal violence. Being a former debater he was very interested in it and he said, of course, this is absolute (he didn't actually use the word bullshit, but this is what he meant) rubbish. But there has been a 'mother of the nation' and that is Margaret Thatcher. We both agreed that if you could have taken the decade of the 80s, all the trauma associated with that decade, a series of democratic deficits where the Scots voted one way and Britain voted another, mainly because of the vast population majority in England... If that decade with all its association had not taken place, the existence of a Holyrood Parliament today would be most unlikely.

I do not think that the economic processes that I described in the first part of my presentation, the social repercussions, the beginnings of erosion of deference, the beginnings of erosion of authority, the questioning, a much more educated people as university entrance started to expand, the huge implications of comprehensive education from the mid 1960s onwards. Changing Scottish identity and a deeper sense of Scottishness, whereby in the year 2001 nearly two thirds of sample Scots think of themselves either as exclusively Scottish or mainly Scottish and, of course, the manifestation of that stronger identity, that much more robust and I would actually argue, more confident identity is to be seen in that controversial building at the bottom of the Royal Mile; is to be seen in the actual implementation of devolution. But I stress, before leaving this particular part, we are not talking about the end of the Union. The Union may not... Gordon Brown, for example, has himself stated (a very strong Unionist, very committed Unionist) has himself stated that it is much more difficult now to argue for the Union than it was 50 years ago; the rational foundations are more difficult to explain. But I would suggest to you ladies and gentlemen, there are three, at least three reasons why devolution, at least at the present time, will not necessarily lead to full scale 'independence' because, of course, independence is somewhat different nowadays from what it was a hundred years ago. The first is inertia; one of the most important forces in human history is inertia, the immobility of issues and the difficulty of moving them on. The second is the very deep cultural, familial, personal connections between the two nations going back for nearly 300 years. And I think the third element possibly is there may be a new other coming over the hill. Not like Nazi Germany or like France in the 18th century, but perhaps, if things intensify the war on terror might start to play the same kind of fusion role on a sense of British identity and a sense of keeping the Union intact that other forces did during the second world war and during the wars in Napoleonic France.

Finally, in terms of this first part of the presentation, the range of occupations that have developed as a consequence of the economic revolution have resulted in very substantial social mobility. The virtual crushing, unfortunately, of the old semi-skilled and unskilled labour class, the casual labour class, is finding it extremely difficult in a society where credentials are becoming even more important. There are profound social costs to this more meritocratic society; this society where knowledge is increasingly important. As one writer put it, but what if you don't have the knowledge? You can't really participate very effectively in the new processes which are going on or are beginning to develop at such frightening speed. But there are good aspects to the story as well. I'll just give you one because of time. One of Scotland's most ancient social problems has been, if you like, the plight of the dissemblance of the immigrant catholic and protestant Irish of the 19th century. The Irish in New York, Chicago and Boston reached what is called 'occupational parity' with the American norm as early as the census of 1901. By the census of 1981 their counterparts in Scotland had come nowhere near that. But the most recent evidence from the Census and from the Scottish Household Surveys of the early 21st century is that, at least for those below the age of 35, from that background, they have now achieved broad occupational parity. That is in fact also part of a social revolutionary situation because the simple fact that, in my reckoning, modern Scots who can trace their ancestry back to those great inward movements of the 19th and early 20th century probably make up about 1.2 millions of the 5 million or so Scots that live in Scotland today.

Moving on to the second part of what I want to say tonight. I've tried to indicate to you that the changes which have occurred during this very short period of time that I have been analysing in some detail, as from about the late 70s early 80s to today, are by previous standards, by previous developments in this country, especially significant and many of them are positive. And they put, for example, big question marks over issues like, is Scotland a confident nation? Any nation which has undergone and come through this transformational process that I have identified, especially in industry... an old economy remember, much more difficult to achieve than the Celtic tiger across the Irish Sea because the Irish never had a modern economy, they were starting from scratch. For Scotland it was a process of renewal and that renewal has been virtually accomplished; we do have now a new structure. To read, however, the press; to read, however, elements, important elements in the public discourse; to read the opinions of some of our leading commentators, you would constantly get the impression that this nation is going down the tubes, that it's a condition of virtually doomsday It's the 'Private Fraser analysis' as I would call it, or 'the Prozac analysis' of Scottish history. The recently retired head of the Highlands and Islands Enterprise, who himself is an historian of the Highlands and Islands, Jim Hunter, giving his final report to MSP's: "We simply do not do optimism in this country, especially in the area of economics". And he went on to declaim that we use to pay ministers of the Church of Scotland pittances to tell us we are all going to hell, but now we pay senior journalists vast amounts of money to give us the same message in modern rhetoric.

So, I mean, clearly what I'm saying to you is a caricature because there are fairly balanced journalists out there, thinking particularly of people like Alf Young, who are able to see that economic statistics and other issues are political footballs and it's very difficult to get any sense of proportion. But I give you just one set, I think, of semi-uncontroversial statistics to demonstrate the point I'm making. Between 1980 and the year 2001, UK annual growth rates over that period were round about two per annum and if you look at it (can everybody see that? *[referring to slide]*) if you look over there you will find that the Scottish average is slightly less. But that is not, in any sense, a disastrous sequence for a number of reasons. Firstly we now know that particularly the English rate of growth in this particular period, in this special period that I'm analysing this evening... the English rate of growth is to a large extent influenced by, managed by and generated by the hot house of London, and the south-east in general. If you disaggregate the Scottish and English regions and the Northern Irish regions you will find that Scotland is ahead of seven English regions over this period and ahead, also, of Northern Ireland and Wales. And remember this is a time (it may be coming to an end now) but it's a time when the British economy outpaced most of the economies of the modern world including those in Western Europe. And, quite rightly, those distinguished American economists who came to the Fraser of Allander lectures, which were given a year or so ago said, or concluded, that far from a concern of despair, the Scottish economy had, in fact, been doing reasonably well and, in particular, doing reasonably well given the need for these transformational changes which I've tried to describe to you earlier in the presentation.

So the final part of my lecture is to try and square the circle. Is it possible to see... is it possible to decipher from the complexity of recent times, why an apparently favourable set of outcomes, by any standard... we have now got a devolution that our ancestors going back into the 1880s and 1890s were trying to achieve, it's there; we are living in a society much more affluent than any Scotland there has ever been; there is a much greater degree of personal choice and independence. So here are some things really for you to think about which are beginning to be formulated in my own mind. The first I think is... and I don't have to tell this audience (and this goes back to the gentleman over there who accused me earlier on of talking nonsense) that the scale of change has been such that not everyone, in Scottish society, has actually benefited from it. I mean, what you can see from this slide, ladies and gentlemen, is, in a sense, the professionalisation, almost the creation of a middle class Scotland. You will see the occupations, which are growing and, in some cases, growing rapidly, but you will also see those elements, which were so much part of the old industrial economy which are in a virtual state, not only of erosion, but of collapse, especially unskilled and semi-skilled labour. And it's no coincidence that, in the west of Scotland, the old powerhouse of that old economy, the role of the state is now so significant. Over 50 per cent of the Scottish economy is powered by resources coming from the State. In Ayrshire, Dunbartonshire and parts of Lanarkshire, it's more like 75 per cent. It's an extraordinary and colossal role for the local and national state. So behind the apparent virtuosity of Scottish economic performance, I think what we are beginning to see is not simply the excluded, those who are not, in a sense, part of this revolution, but we are also, perhaps, beginning to see an in process, an historical change of axis. It is no coincidence that the two major regions of Scotland, which are below 40 per cent in terms of state support, are both in the east, are both the Grampian area and Edinburgh and its Lothians hinterland with its finance and insurance company and tourist activity dynamic. Could it be that in this late 20th century / early 21st century period we are seeing the seeds of an historic movement back to medieval and early modern Scotland when the east was the pre-industrial generator and the west is comparatively under-developed? I'll leave it just as a question.

So behind the optimism, behind the, in some ways I think it could be described, although a different type, an economic miracle of the last 25 years, there are down sides. Those down sides become immediately apparent from this slide. There is no doubt in my view from this kind of information here, but also from other data, that one of the concerns that we have perhaps implicitly, perhaps this doesn't come through often explicitly, but our suspicions are that we are actually living in a much more divided society in the year 2005 than say for example in 1950s. As the wealth quotient has increased, social mobility has accelerated, but relative deprivation, perhaps, I emphasise the word relative, may also be on the increase in some of the old industrial heartlands of Scotland.

You could argue that central Glasgow has renewed itself, has remade itself, but the areas that really intrigue me are the Harthills, the Overtouns, the Muirkirks of this world. Settlements established for very good economic reasons in the 19th and early 20th centuries. What now is their economic rationale? There are similarities between some of the adverse social effects going on and the experience of industrialisation in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The problem of the handloom weavers who were overtaken by technological change, the problem also of the Western Highlands and Islands whose infant industrial growth points were cut off by the supremacy of Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and the Glasgow conurbation in general. Southern England in difficulties in the early 19th century, while Manchester and Liverpool were booming. One way to square the circle, therefore, is to say that the results of the social revolution have been territorially (regionally, locally) and socially diverse; that we can talk in terms of averages, but behind the averages lurk enormous and very, very dramatic differences. And I think what seems to give further power to this objective reality is the subjective dimension which, of course, is extremely difficult for any historian to discuss so I therefore throw it out once again as a semi-speculation.

Economists, and I think one of them has actually addressed this assembly in the past, are increasingly trying to measure subjective wellbeing, what we might sometimes call happiness. From my inexpert view of their work, they seem to be suggesting that despite the material affluence that I have been describing tonight, there has been no significant increase in that sense of communal wellbeing since the 1960s and 1970s. And it might well be that in terms of the stories, if you like, the narratives of our novelists, our poets, our film makers, our media people that they may be putting their finger on a pulse which escapes the more academic investigator; the sense that there might have been an accelerating decline of neighbourhood and community; that this is a much more narcissistic society. Individualism is good in terms of choice, but perhaps bad from other perspectives.

So, really because of the time constraint, in the last few seconds I have available, can I say that I personally move from an analysis which, in indicating transformation, implicitly and explicitly attacks the pessimistic critics. But I've tried to move on tonight from that examination of putting objective realities of the 80s and 90s early 21st century before you, moving on to, in a sense, a more challenging set of questions. Why is it that people, perhaps, have not only not fully realised the scale of this development, but perhaps find aspects of it unacceptable or less acceptable than they might if we judged human life by bread alone? Thank you.

[Applause]

Professor Phil Hanlon:

We move to a vote of thanks. I've heard Tom now three or four times and I've not got a module in my own presentations which is my treatment of some of what he says. It doesn't do justice to it all, but there are certain truths about it. What we have heard tonight is a nation that got (and because I'm medical I use the word dose) and extraordinary dose of enlightenment, an incredible dose of industrialisation, of migration from the countryside to the towns. An extraordinarily rapid dose of urban growth and then that all collapsed later and more rapidly than in other places and then all that we, at least, are sharing in. And, you know, you add that to what you said about our deaths in world war one and other factors and you end up saying we're not doing too badly are we.

Professor Tom Divine:

That's a tremendous statement you have just made Phil.

Professor Phil Hanlon:

I expect it's that kind of Scottish understatement stuff that Carol [*Craig*] speaks of. You know, 'it's no bad' which is the best compliment we can pay, I think [*laughter*] and I sometimes ask myself, why is it that I've been part of what you've described? In health terms we are sometimes guilty, aren't we, of painting that litany of Scottish woes? There are some real concerns to be grappled with and I like the way, in the third part of your presentation, you teased out these issues of inequality and of insecurity. And I think we should be grateful to you for that tonight because what you've given us is that historical perspective, an honest examination of these tensions we live in. And the need to reflect on whether we need a new story, a new angle, a new life – let's hope we can find it. But for tonight let's thank our speaker, enjoy some time together in conversation, but really we show our appreciation to you for a fabulous night.

[*Applause*]