



Neo-Liberal Scotland: Class and Society in a Stateless Nation

Neil Davidson

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'Neoliberal Scotland' argues that far from passing Scotland by, as is so often claimed, neoliberalism has in fact become institutionalised there. As the mainstream political parties converge on market-friendly policies and business interests are equated with the public good, the Scottish population has become more and more distanced from the democratic process, to the extent that an increasing number now fail to vote in elections. This book details for the first time these negative effects of neoliberal policies on Scottish society and takes to task those academics and others who either defend the neoliberal order or refuse to recognize that it exists. Neoliberal Scotland represents both an intervention in contemporary debates about the condition of Scotland and a case study, of more general interest, of how neoliberalism has affected one of the 'stateless nations' of the advanced West. Chapter one takes an overview of the origin and rise of neoliberalism in the developed world, arguing that it repudiates rather than continues the thought of Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment. Part one addresses the fundamental issue of social class in Scotland over three chapters. Chapter two attempts to locate the ruling class both internally and externally. Chapter three explores the changing nature of working class membership and its collective experience. Chapter four follows the working class into the workplace where heightened tensions in the state sector have provoked an increasingly militant response from trade unionists. Part two engages with the broader impact of neoliberalism on Scottish society through a diverse series of studies. Chapter five assesses claims by successive Scottish governments that they have been pursuing environmental justice. Chapter six examines how Glasgow has been reconfigured as a classic example of the 'neoliberal city'. Chapter seven looks at another aspect of Glasgow, in this case as the main destination of Eastern European migrants who have arrived in Scotland through the international impact of neoliberal globalisation. Chapter eight investigates the economic intrusion of private capital into the custodial network and the ideological emphasis on punishment as the main objective in sentencing. Chapter nine is concerned with the Scottish manifestations of 'the happiness industry', showing how market-fundamentalist notions of individual responsibility now structure even the most seemingly innocuous attempts to resolve supposed attitudinal problems. Finally, chapter ten demonstrates that the limited extent to which devolved Scottish governments, particularly the present SNP administration, have been able to go beyond the boundaries of neoliberal orthodoxy has been a function of the peculiarities of party competition in Holyrood, rather than representing a fundamental disavowal of the existing order.

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