

The David Hume Institute

Promoting informed debate on public policy



with Scotland's Futures Forum



Registration is available on our website www.davidhumeinstitute.com

Tuesday 17 April 2012 – 6pm
Venue: Scottish Parliament, Holyrood

Church of Scotland Special Commission on the Purposes of Economic Activity

'Is Our Society Inevitable Inequitable?'

Speaker: Professor Charles Munn

Chair: Ewan Brown

When we eventually reach a true post-recession phase will it just be back to 'business as usual'? Are we really 'all in this together'?

'Let's hope not' and 'No' are the answers to these questions according to the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on the Purposes of Economic Activity, chaired by Charles Munn and including DHI Director Jeremy Peat as one member, which will report to the General Assembly in May this year.

This is not the first time that the Kirk has addressed the problems of our modern economy. Its concern this time round has not been just to address the matters that politicians and others have been dealing with. The Commission's task has been to take a longer term look at the economy and its inner workings.

They have been less concerned about GDP and other matters that concern the Treasury and more interested in questions such as why it is that so many of our people are badly served by our modern economy.

Despite claims that childhood poverty would soon be eradicated it is getting worse. Poor people are getting poorer while the rich are so transparently getting richer. When it comes to sharing out the benefits of economic growth the rich are increasing their share. Inequalities in the UK are growing faster than in any other developed country.

Changes in the workplace in recent years have involved the growth of short and part time working, agency working and growing unemployment. The rise in unemployment and underemployment, and the associated insecurities while living costs edge upwards, are major contributory factors to a wide range of health, including mental health, problems which are particularly problematical in Scotland and which place such a great strain on the NHS.

Poor people, and not so poor people, are paying exploitative rates of interest for consumer credit but there seems to be no political appetite to challenge this situation. Nor are many of the companies that provide this credit regulated by the FSA. Advertising of many of these loans is in breach of government regulations, but remarkably this is somehow tolerated.

There is a case to be made for greater encouragement of mutual organisations and similar bodies, especially in the provision of financial services. There is also a case to be made for much more activity in educating, from an objective and informed basis, the public about personal financial planning. This will help people make better decisions about their financial needs and escape the debt traps into which it is all too easy to fall.

These are just some of the issues that the special commission has considered and which will be the subject of our discussion. Following Professor Munn's talk there will be ample time to debate the key issues. The seminar is timed for when the Commission's report is available but before it is submitted to the General Assembly. Most of the Commissioners should be present to listen and add their voices to the discussion.



Registration

Members/Non-Members

Although there is **no charge for this event, registration is essential.**

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Notification of cancellations should be sent to In Conference Ltd at davidhume@in-conference.org.uk or by telephoning 0131 339 9235. Substitutions may be made at any time.

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