

# Edinburgh International Book Festival – Alex Bell and Dominic Hinde \*\*\*\*

Political journalists Alex Bell and Dominic Hinde hit the ground running at the Edinburgh International Book Festival with fighting talk and a political platform discussing where Scotland goes from here.

Chaired by political author and journalist David Torrance, both Bell and Hinde provided eloquent arguments on how we can make the world a better place.

With his Scandinavian background, Hinde referred to his new text, *A Utopia Like Any Other*, to provide something journalistic in terms of the Nordic model, but with elements of academia.

Incorporating accessible utopian ideas, he mentioned that the book was to provide context for argument, in a discursive essayist format. Part travelogue, part academic primer and part reflection on our own need for utopias, the book takes readers on a journey from the 1930s to the present day and from an Arctic iron mine to the suburbs of Shanghai. It tackles each of the things Sweden is famous for; however providing more weighting on each than the standard eight hundred word articles that we are acquainted with.

Alex Bell, former BBC news presenter and correspondent, paced the stage in a pale yellow suit, as he condemned the politics of the Scottish National Party. His new book, *The People We Could Be*, considers what we need to do to prepare for the future, looking at how the two recent referendums on independence from the UK (2014) and that from Europe (2016) and how they are relevant to this, as there can be no such thing as independence in the modern world.

Alex Bell argued: "We have no choice but to change. The referenda of 2014 and 2016 have stemmed from global politics." He exclaimed : "The state we presently run is unaffordable. Change rests within your own independence and own anger." Not short of opinion, Bell articulated : "The whole of Europe is going through need for process of change. Great Britain is going through the aftermath of a crisis but not quite knowing what that crisis was."

In terms of Scotland, Bell pointed out : "We are empowered, we have our identity. In terms of poverty and inequality, we are getting better and we are shifting things." Hinde looked at inequality, saying: "Economic growth in Scotland will not see equality – look at Aberdeen for example – lots of jobs, but massive inequalities."

Despite not providing a clear conclusion the two opened up an interesting discussion and provoked the Book Festival audience on a Monday afternoon.

For more on their arguments, *A Utopia Like Any Other* is already out on Luath Press, and *The People We Could Be* is out very soon on 18<sup>th</sup> August, also published by Luath.