

John Finnie MSP: a Yes Alliance could rock the establishment in 2015

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Women for Indy: Sandra Webster on empowerment and the exciting times ahead for women

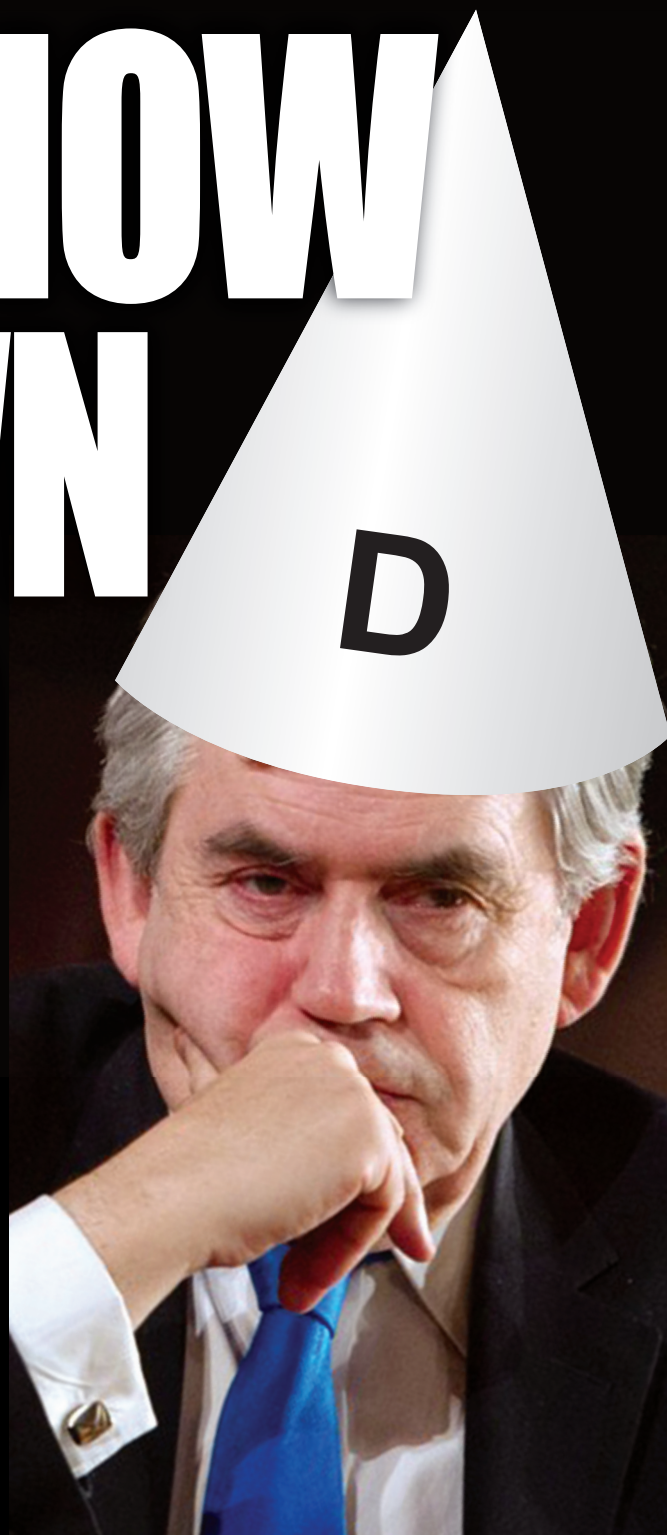
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Scottish Socialist Voice

HOW NOW BROWN VOW?

As the unionist parties fight like ferrets in a sack over implementing the supposedly unbreakable 'VOW', all Scotland asks: "Is Gordon Brown a fool or a rogue?"



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Can Yes candidates challenge Westminster elites?

by John Finnie MSP

THE VOTES have been counted and our tears have been shed. Yet, within hours of the result it was becoming apparent that far from the eternal triumph of the status quo, the referendum had left Scotland, and many in the wider UK too, fizzing with determination for change.

Rather than the downward spiral of depression which would have been an understandable response to the referendum defeat, the invigorated Yes movement is already mounting up for the next stage of the campaign, with the three Yes parties – the Greens, the SNP and the SSP – seeing meteoric rises in their membership.

Now there is much talk of the campaign rolling into the 2015 UK General Election on 7 May behind Yes candidates. With all three parties rightly guarding their unique identity, how realistic is that?

Firstly, it would be important that the three parties recognise that there will be some in their ranks who would not wish to see that identity lost in the UK general election campaign.

Credible candidates

By weight of numbers, you could envisage some in the SNP ranks would wish to go it alone or see themselves as having the right to have the other parties stand down.

Some in the SNP ranks might cite their constitution which, I understand, states they must contest each seat. Others might legitimately point out that ‘where there’s a will there’s a way,’ as was the case when the SNP chose not to contest Shetland giving the Shetland Movement access to all available non-Liberal votes.

I could see a much greater attraction to joint candidates from both the SSP and the Greens. Allocating winnable seats to credible candidates such as Colin Fox and Peter McColl would greatly enrich any collective campaign.



I imagine that the whole issue hangs on what future role, if any, there is for the wider Yes movement. Many Yes activists held no party political allegiance and were motivated by the opportunity to make things better.

To unionists who smugly invoke ‘the settled will of the Scottish people’ and expect I, and 1.6 million like me, to dispense with our notion of social and environmental justice within an independent Scotland, I say: dream on. We live in a liberal democracy and of course we respect the result, but our aspirations will never be extinguished.

Within a week, good old “Great” Britain had sorted that oil problem, agreed to fracking under your house and had us back at war. We said throughout that campaign that that’s what they do, but the pressing question now is: what will we do?

The public meetings haven’t ended, with queues out the door at branch meetings of all three Yes parties as re-energised Yes activists crave opportunities continue their campaign for change. Some Yes shops are staying open, and many of the self-organised groups that

made up the Yes movement, such as Women for Independence and the Radical Independence Campaign, are still going strong. That momentum can – and must – be harnessed.

The key player will be Nicola Sturgeon, soon to be First Minister and Leader of the UK’s second-largest party. The 7th of May is not far off, and the parties are still to have their conferences. Will those conferences pick up on this energy? I hope so.

Let’s assume that the three Yes parties do agree a strategy for fighting next year’s UK election. How will they do it? An agreed division of the seats? An agreed agenda? Who will be consulted? It’s only a few months away and there will be no room for egos to hamper what could be a glorious opportunity.

Scotland has been ill-served by the Conservative/Lib Dem coalition.

The once mighty, now rather pathetic, Labour Party is committed to a programme of continuing austerity. 60 per cent of those cuts are still to come, along with a new benefits attack on younger folk, while of

course money is no object when it comes to the renewal of the UK’s nuclear arsenal.

Scots will have every reason to want to punish the parties that told them everything would be Better Together.

Have non-aligned politicians a role to play? Imagine Dennis Canavan standing in Falkirk or Charlie Kennedy facing former Lib Dem Council Leader, and Yes supporter, Michael Foxley in the Highlands? What an eclectic mix we could send to sort Westminster out!

When they get there, they would need to work in a way that respects the diversity of the movement that sent them. I’d favour some form of common agenda of essential principles, with the MPs given autonomy to deal with issues outwith that agenda as dictated by their own conscience and judgement.

Many might see this approach as being opportunistic. Yes, it is. The UK elite that continues to rule us extracts soaring profits for its own members, while over 200,000 Scots children languish in poverty and the queues at the food banks grow. There is no virtue in spurning any opportunity to challenge that elite.

True face of Labour

Anyone who has seen footage of the young Scottish woman asking Ed Miliband and Joanne Lamont why they can afford to renew Trident while she can’t get a house, and watched Miliband walk off as if she meant nothing to him, saw the true face of Labour today.

And in the short period since our disappointment we’ve seen the Conservative government, which Labour refuse to meaningfully oppose, act exactly as we should expect: in the explicit interests of the few at a terrible cost to the many.

If there is a genuine will for Scotland to stand united in opposition to these unionist parties of the elites next May, it can happen. For the millions suffering under the heel of those parties, in Scotland and beyond, it must happen.

by Ken Ferguson, editor,
Scottish Socialist Voice

SELDOM CAN the cruel reality behind the smiling mask of the British establishment been so rapidly and comprehensively revealed as in the days after the No vote in the independence referendum.

The first casualty was the much trumpeted “vow” by the three Westminster party leaders of vast new powers for the Scottish parliament which was duly splashed across the front page of the ultra-unionist *Daily Record*.

Described by failed former-premier Gordon Brown as “close to federalism” these were due to be delivered in an unbreakable timetable. It soon broke.

Away from the panic about a possible Yes vote, the “vow” quickly became the centre of the pre-Westminster election backstabbing with the Tories, past masters of the art, first off the starting blocks. Cameron’s demand that further devolution to Scotland be linked to change in England.

At a stroke, the hue and cry went up from the Tory pack for “English votes for English laws” a demand almost certain both to delay the delivery of the “vow” and snaps shut the jaws of a political trap on Labour.

Wrangling

Now they either agree to restrict the votes of Scottish Labour MPs and endanger their prospect of majority government, or oppose it and hand the “English card” to the Tories.

Of course this is before the wrangling on powers, tax rates, Barnett formula and all the arcane constitutional wrangling backed by an army of experts from Oxford and Cambridge, all making the “vow” a fading prospect.

Meanwhile the main parties of the British state have united behind a renewed war in Iraq and vowed (that word again) to plough on with hard times and austerity to keep the wealthy

Westminster parties ‘vow’ more austerity



and the bankers safe. Stripping away all the window dressing, the main choice offered by Tory and Labour is simply how swiftly to wield the cuts axe with Tories promising £25 billion cuts in two years and Labour £27 billion in four.

It is against this sombre background that the losing Yes side in last month’s referendum not only has not been crushed but in fact has remained active and mobilised. One sign of this has been the unprecedented growth in the three pro-independence parties as thousands have joined the Greens, SSP and SNP in a show of determination that independence may be deferred but it is not defeated.

Alongside this, Women for Independence report a surge of support and have had to move their national meeting to a larger venue, RIC are looking at a mammoth conference next month and several alternative media projects to combat union-

ist bias are under way. The consolidation and development of the energy and creativity of the Yes movement is the absolute prerequisite for driving home the message that the unionists must deliver their “vow” and that independence remains the only sure way to create the basis for a renewed socially just Scotland.

As an immediate task, we need to articulate the demand—apparently promised by Brown during the indyref panic—for the fullest economic and social powers to be devolved to Holyrood.

Such a demand is not just a reflection of the democratic will expressed on 18 September but it puts the unionist parties—most centrally Labour—to the acid test of delivery which, on current form, they will fail.

Given its shameful role in the referendum, and the fact that much of its political heartlands voted Yes, the heat has to be focused on Labour who will now

ask those same voters who voted Yes to support a manifesto with £27 billion cuts for the poor and Trident missiles on the Clyde.

We can be sure that service-cutting, banker-friendly, war-supporting Labour MPs will seek support with the slogan “the Tories are coming” as if they were worse. However, the truth is that any differences are only of degree and both support austerity and war.

Faced with this grisly choice, some have called for an SNP vote but, although superficially attractive, this option both fails to express the diverse views of the wider Yes movement or provide a vehicle which allows Labour-supporting Yes voters a choice.

Candidates endorsed by the three pro-indy parties contesting even a limited number of key Westminster seats and targeting unionist big wigs could send a powerful message to London that Scotland rejects austerity and war.

Yes co-operation

Such candidates would also expose the hollow nature of the “vow”, demand devo max and keep the issue of independence firmly on the agenda. The delivery of such an agreement, while complex, needs at least serious consideration. Turning to Holyrood 2016 again, there is much to commend the idea of turning the poll into a vote for independence with the Yes parties co-operating to ensure a pro-indy majority.

With the No vote, we are entering period of sharper cuts, attacks on the poor and a widening war in Iraq and Syria. Coupled with the likely failure to deliver the promised powers to Holyrood, the Westminster system will come under renewed, intense strain.

In these circumstances, the mass Yes movement with its electrifying democracy, respectful pluralism and optimistic vision of a fairer Scotland, can both inform and guide parties and movements both to defend Scotland against the cuts and keep the demand of independence on the table.

by John McAllion, former Labour MP and MSP, now an SSP member

LABOUR SET TO BE BIG LOSERS AFTER NO VOTE

SCOTTISH LABOUR originally tried ignoring "Labour for Independence" after its launch in 2012. When the group began to attract media attention in 2013 it then turned to mockery in an attempt to dismiss Labour support for independence as "insignificant".

The Labour List website suggested the pro-independence organisation could boast "just one Labour member". Deputy Scottish leader Anas Sarwar parodied it as "nothing more than a sham and an SNP front". The party challenged the SNP to condemn the "masquerade" of SNP members posing as Labour activists and supporters. If the Scottish Labour establishment thought Labour for Independence was a joke back then, it is not laughing now. The old Labour heartland areas of Dundee, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire all returned Yes majorities on 18 September.

Other core Labour areas like Inverclyde and Renfrewshire marginally missed out on Yes majorities. Glasgow's seven sitting Labour MPs now face a general election in the spring of next year knowing that most of the voters whose support they are chasing want rid of the parliament in which they want to sit.

Post-indyref boom

Meanwhile, the "defeated" Yes parties are experiencing a post-referendum boom. The SNP has more than doubled its membership to around 70,000 in just one week. Yes activists are also flocking in their thousands to join the Scottish Greens and the Scottish Socialists. Working class Scotland remains unbowed by a No coalition "victory" that was built around Scotland's bourgeois establishment.

As the visible Scottish face of that establishment coalition Labour now finds itself cut off



from what used to be its working class base.

The panic in Scottish Labour ranks is now palpable. Before the vote Johann Lamont vilified what she referred to as the "virus of nationalism". After the vote, she finds herself forced to salute the "passion" and "commitment" of the independence supporters she had previously disparaged and who had abandoned her party in their droves.

Before the vote, Margaret Curran denigrated nationalism as "divisive", and "reactionary". After the vote she too has had to announce a tour of former Labour heartland constituencies to try to pacify what is a grassroots rebellion against the reactionary British state that she represents.

Lamont and Curran are the senior ranking politicians in Scottish Labour and so are vulnerable to the accusation that the party's core working class base has been dismantled on their watch.

Right wingers in the Scottish ranks immediately took advantage of the UK party conference in Manchester to brief against

both politicians and to float the idea of the Blairite Jim Murphy replacing first Curran as Shadow Scottish Secretary and then Lamont as party leader.

It is perhaps fitting that as their core working class vote crumbles in housing schemes across Scotland, that Labour is turning towards an MP whose parliamentary constituency is centred on the old Eastwood seat once the safest Tory constituency in Scotland.

Labour is also on course to be the loser in Scotland's post-referendum political struggles. Gordon Brown's impassioned call during the campaign for a federal UK in which everything but defence and foreign affairs is devolved to national parliaments and regional assemblies has not the remotest chance of being delivered.

Already the vow to deliver additional but undefined powers to Scotland has run up against the barrier of "English votes for English laws". It is simply unfeasible for either Osborne or Balls to concede devolution-max or anything like it while their common priority

is to get rid of the UK's massive deficit by iron control of UK spending. Whatever offer the No parties make, it will not satisfy the widespread demand in Scotland for a powerhouse Parliament.

Labour is also handicapped by their decision to match Coalition cuts in 2015-16 "pound for pound". Ed Balls speech to the Manchester conference was spun as "fiscally responsible" and a signal to British Business that Labour was serious about reducing the deficit. It may have reassured the CBI but it did nothing for ordinary Labour Party members and supporters.

His announcements on cutting child benefit, means-testing winter fuel allowance and adopting the Coalition cap on welfare dismayed an already dispirited rank and file. At the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy fringe meeting in Manchester he was labelled "a disaster" who was prejudicing Labour's chance of winning in 2015.

Shameless

Scottish Labour's leadership shamelessly used the referendum campaign to warn that a Yes vote was a threat to public spending, pensions and the British welfare state.

Within days of the campaign ending, their own UK leadership has signalled that the real threat to all of these comes from Westminster based and Treasury-dominated politicians on both sides of the House of Commons.

Their common default position is austerity for years to come whichever party wins the next election. That is no basis on which to build a fairer and more equal Scotland or Britain.

Even those who voted No will come to see this in time.

Independence deferred as 2,500 join SSP

by Colin Fox, SSP co-spokesperson

THE SENSE of relief felt by the British ruling class after the referendum No vote was palpable and stands in stark contrast to the resolve of 1.6million Yes voters that independence has simply been deferred rather than defeated.

Yes activists initially deflated by the result now recognise that winning 45 per cent of the vote was an astonishing and unprecedented achievement.

Support for independence has never been this high before. And when you consider what lengths the UK establishment went to and what they threw at us with their unrelenting negativity, their manipulation of everything from the international money markets to the output of the British Broadcasting Corporation it is remarkable that so many voters refused to wilt.

Analysis of the referendum result shows that it was the elderly and the 'well to do' that were the mainstay of the No vote. Edinburgh's conservative financial services sector, Aberdeen's oil industry, the professional classes and rural Scotland all rejected self-determination.

Greatest defiance

On the other hand, the poorest urban Scots living in some of the country's most deprived conditions and those with young families showed the greatest defiance of what the UK state threw at them.

Notwithstanding the No vote, Scotland is changed forever by this result. The Westminster parties must deliver extra powers for Holyrood or face an independence vote landslide next time and they know it.

And the extraordinary success of the biggest grassroots political campaign in Scottish history has led more than 50,000 people to join the three independence parties. In five days following the referendum, 2,500 people applied to join the Scottish Socialist Party. So much for political parties being dead! That claim is exposed today as starkly as the one that earlier claimed 'public meetings are dead', as thousands of people packed into village halls and community centres the length and breadth of Scotland, night after night.

The Scottish Socialist Party has never seen such a level of interest before. No socialist party in these isles ever has. We spent £1,900 on postage alone sending out 2,500 member-



GROWING INTEREST: last month in Easterhouse, one of the SSP's many public meetings in the run up to the indyref

ship packs. (Financial donations to help offset our costs are of course always welcome.) And we are proud to have responded to each application within 48 hours.

SSP members in Edinburgh, already exhausted by their efforts to get out the Yes vote and up all night at the Ingliston count, responded wonderfully to the call for volunteers to help with 'Operation Welcome'. Our local branches are now following up each new member with an invitation to get involved in SSP activities.

The new political situation poses many new challenges for the independence movement. How do we keep the issue uppermost in the public mind? Some people have called for the broad independence movement to all vote for the SNP in next years Westminster elections for example.

The SSP will not do so. Our central objective remains the building of a mass socialist party in Scotland capable of leading the working class to an independent socialist Scotland – a modern democratic republic. On the other hand, there has been talk on social media about standing 'Independence Alliance' candidates in all Scottish seats at that election.

The SSP will of course explore all such suggestions as may emerge in the weeks to come and continue to work alongside all others in a genuine broad, multi-party 'alliance'. But we will not abandon our central mission of building that mass socialist party.

The SSP is also surprised to hear of socialists joining the SNP. Our advice to socialists in this country today is, as it always has been,

'If you are a socialist you should join a socialist party, not develop illusions that non-socialist/capitalist parties will advance our cause.'

The SNP is not a socialist party and, to be fair, has never claimed to be. This week, another one of its MSPs John Wilson from Central Scotland left the party over its pro-NATO stance. So we re-iterate the only socialist party in Scotland with the experience and the capacity to attract mass support happens to be its most successful one, the Scottish Socialist Party. That is clearly the conclusion another 2,500 people reached last week.

This time next year we may find none of the extra powers promised by Gordon Brown in the last ten days of the referendum have materialised.

'Independence elections'

The Tories may be back in power and conducting an 'In/Out' referendum on Europe. In such circumstances Jim Sillars has suggested making the 2016 Holyrood elections the 'independence elections'.

His plan sees the SSP, Greens and SNP making it clear that if these three parties emerge with an overall majority we will immediately begin negotiating the terms of Scotland's independence.

The 2015 Westminster elections and the Holyrood elections of the following year therefore offer the independence movement in Scotland the chance to raise the issue afresh, in new political circumstances, and show that the important matter of self-determination has indeed been deferred and not defeated.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES: not another wasted generation!

by Richie Venton, SSP
workplace organiser

THOSE WHO fought and voted for Scottish independence are entitled to feel gutted at the result. And angry at the lies and scare stories deployed for two years to preserve the profits and prestige of the British ruling class and their hired politicians.

But it's important to stand back a pace, ponder the reasons behind the vote, look at what we achieved, and above all look at prospects for Scottish independence and socialism.

In the 1951 Westminster elections 81 per cent of Scots voted; candidates advocating independence won a minuscule 7,299 votes!

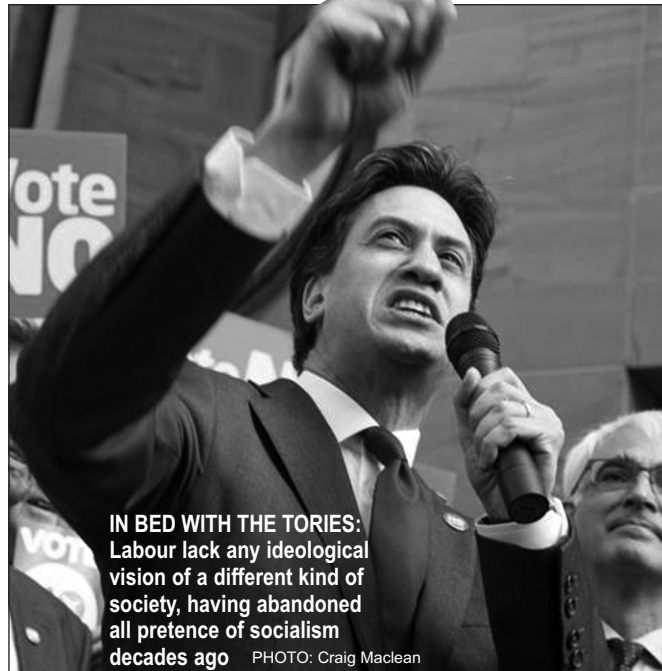
Last weekend marked the 16th birthday of the SSP. At the meeting to form this new socialist party to challenge the pro-capitalist, big business agenda of not only the Tories but also Labour and the SNP leadership, we adopted the central aim of an independent socialist Scotland. Back in 1998 this was still very much a minority viewpoint in society.

Class factor

Even two years ago polls showed under 25 per cent for independence. Fast forward to the referendum: a magnificent 45 per cent Yes – 1.6 million people for democratic self-determination, a Scottish government with full powers to shape Scotland's future.

An incredible achievement, considering the mountain of lies, filth and scaremongering these men and women had to climb to see a vision of a better future.

Most fundamental of all truths: class was the key determining factor in the vote. Big working class centres like Glasgow, Dundee, West Dunbartonshire and North Lanark-



IN BED WITH THE TORIES:
Labour lack any ideological
vision of a different kind of
society, having abandoned
all pretence of socialism
decades ago

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

shire all voted Yes. Inverclyde almost did too, and North Ayrshire and Renfrewshire weren't far off.

This point about class is underlined in red by the central paradox: those areas voting Yes are Labour strongholds, whilst big SNP-voting areas voted No.

It's an incredible fact that all eight Glasgow constituencies, every one of them with Labour MPs, voted by clear margins for independence.

Working class conurbations decided they'd had enough of Tory dictatorship, their brutal assaults on workers' lives and livelihoods, and voted for a better society. This was not a nationalist movement, but a movement for independence, with progressive social and economic aims at its heart.

Something the Labour leadership either never understood, or chose to set their faces against in their devotion to the UK, its imperial pretensions, its capitalist system, and the personal stake the tops of Labour have in its continuation.

They lack any ideological vision of a different kind of society, having

abandoned all pretence of socialism decades ago, and eagerly got into bed with the Tories to defend the capitalist status quo. Labour was the chief obstacle to a Yes vote, but they will also be the chief losers from the No vote!

Those who queued up to register to vote did not do so to keep things as they are! They voted alongside other working class people to radically improve their lives, for a more equal, less poverty-stricken Scotland.

In stark contrast, the better-heeled middle classes of rural Scotland, Edinburgh, and the leafier suburbs turned out in their multitudes to vote against such change, with over 90 per cent polling in such districts. That included hordes of SNP voters in the likes of the rural North. Many swallowed the scare-mongering about loss of security under independence, fearing for their relative personal comfort. Some are small c-conservatives, resistant to radical change.

Yet there was actually a Yes majority among all voters under 55! A

remarkable harbinger of the future.

Scare tactics were central to winning the No majority. Better Together director Blair McDougall has blurted out what we all knew at a Labour conference fringe meeting: scare tactics were essential, he confessed.

The Ashcroft post-referendum survey of No voters identifies three overwhelming reasons why they voted No: 47 per cent out of fear and insecurity, 27 per cent due to strong attachment to the UK, and 25 per cent because of the last minute 'vow' by Labour, Tories and Lib Dems of 'extra powers' for a devolved Holyrood parliament.

To win 1.6 million votes for independence in the face of ruthless opposition is an incredible achievement, and a powerful platform to continue the struggle for independence and socialism from.

Capitalist terrorism

No wonder Cameron went from panic to smug gloating and childish gossip about the Queen "purring down the phone" when he told her the result. No wonder the FTSE stock market share prices rose after the No vote. Class interests were at the heart of this referendum.

Labour was the chief obstacle to the Scottish working class winning the democratic right to elect our own governments. After all, who in the Scottish working class would listen to Cameron and his endangered political species? Or to Clegg's 'Mini Me' Tory collaborators? The UK ruling class desperately needed Labour leaders to exploit their residual roots in the working class to defend the rich from a movement that threatened to go far beyond changing flags or government headquarters to demanding a change to the entire economic and social system.



YES GLASGOW:
all eight Glasgow constituencies, every
one of them with Labour MPs, voted by
clear margins for independence

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

One central plank in this betrayal was the last ditch intervention of Gordon Brown for ‘substantial extra powers’ provided we voted No. This followed months of pleas to vote No in 2014, vote Labour in 2015, and proceed to a land of milk, honey and ‘justice with Labour’.

This became the infamous ‘vow’, plastered over the front page of the mass readership Daily Record, with Cameron, Clegg and Miliband vowing more powers for Holyrood provided the Scottish people answered their cooing ‘Please don’t go’ message.

The pledges from Brown and all three unionist parties were a mixture of very vague and downright deceitful. It promised to defend the Barnett Formula. But five days after the No vote the London *Times* carried a front page announcement of plans to slash it!

The Vow refers to additional income tax raising powers, control of some welfare. What is critically missing is control over the fundamental purse strings – for instance Corporation Tax on big businesses.

Without the ability to raise adequate funds for the public purse, a Scottish government would either face resorting to some form of privatisation/private investment to shore up the NHS and other services, or use whatever Income Tax

powers conceded by Westminster to levy higher taxes on the working class and lower middle class.

The Vow is not only a late concession to mass pressure from a panicky ruling class – especially their Labour lieutenants – but also a cunning trap. To ensnare Scottish governments in passing on cuts and austerity dictated by Westminster; a devolved government taking the blame for measures they don’t have the economic levers to fully combat.

So what should we do about it?

Punish Labour

We should demand and campaign for ‘The Powers to Transform our Lives’. Powers including the ability to implement a £10-an-hour national minimum wage, agreed unanimously at the recent TUC conference. Powers to reverse all attacks on benefits – not just the Bedroom Tax. Powers to tax the very rich and big business precisely to defend our NHS and other services.

And the power to end fracking and take the energy companies into public ownership, to combat fuel poverty and pollution. Powers that fall short of independence, but would avoid the trap being set by Westminster for Holyrood to implement and take the blame for cuts dictated by Westminster.

Labour deserves to be punished

for their central role in denying the Scottish people democracy.

In the trade unions, we should help stem the tide of resignations from union membership in disgust at union leaders who told members to vote No, and used members’ fees to help finance Better Together and/or United with Labour.

Instead of leaving the union, leaving workers defenceless at work and leaving even more control in the hands of undemocratic national union officials, we should organise mass withdrawal from payment of members’ fees to Labour in those unions affiliated to Labour, demanding instead that the unions make the break from Labour.

Labour’s UK conference add enormously to the reasons why trade unions should stop funding their New Tory exploiters: support for the Tories’ cuts plans; means testing of pensioners’ Winter Fuel Allowance; cuts to child benefits; regionalised capping of welfare payments; and support for dragging us into another war mere days after a referendum where they told us we are ‘better together’.

In the 2015 Westminster elections, we need a Yes Alliance, a pro-independence slate of candidates embracing the three parties that were in Yes Scotland – SNP,

SSP and Greens – and others in that coalition.

A continuation of that successful alliance in May’s general election would be one important strand to sustaining the struggle for outright independence, as well as hammering Labour for their treacherous role. And such a multi-party alliance could reach Labour voters that the SNP on its own would never win over, given the tribalism of SNP-Labour loyalties.

A far greater prize in the staging posts towards independence and socialism is the 2016 Scottish parliament elections, a mere 18 months away! The tens of thousands who fought for a Yes vote could fix their sights on winning an absolute majority of pro-independence MSPs in 2016.

The SNP leaders speak of independence being off the agenda for another generation, in some cases a lifetime (70 years!). They are wrong. Referenda are but one means of winning independence.

The democratic election of a majority of pro-independence MSPs in 2016 – SNP, SSP, Greens, Independents – would surely be equally a people’s mandate for Scottish independence?

Organised socialists

That is a short term opportunity that shouldn’t be spurned by talk of “waiting another generation”.

We should all be immensely proud of the 1.6 million who conquered mountainous obstacles to vote Yes, and also wide open to the hordes of No voters already bitterly regretting having listened to the lie machine.

We should be proud and confident of the tens of thousands who will keep up the fight to win self rule – not in 70 years or even ‘a generation’, but in the foreseeable future.

And we should celebrate and embrace the 2,600 – in the first five days after the referendum – who said ‘The time has come to be an organised socialist, I’m joining the SSP!’

The struggle continues – our day will come.

SSP FINANCE APPEAL

HELP US RAISE THE FUNDS WE NEED TO FIGHT FOR SOCIALIST INDEPENDENCE

by Jim McVicar, SSP
National Treasurer

THE RESULT of the Scottish independence referendum was a body blow to every one who had worked so hard in the Yes campaign over the last two years. However, that 1.6 million people in Scotland still voted for independence and Yes took 45 per cent of the vote is a magnificent achievement for the movement. A sleeping giant has been awoken, with thousands of Scots being politicised and joining pro-independence parties. Scottish politics will be transformed in

the run up to the Westminster elections in 2015 and the Holyrood elections of 2016, where the pro-union parties, particularly Labour, will pay the price at the ballot box for their support for the union.

The Scottish Socialist Party received close to 3000 membership applications since the referendum results and, thanks to the Herculean efforts of a team of party members in Edinburgh, all those applications have been sent a SSP membership pack and already the party has seen some magnificent results with 71 people attending one branch

meeting in the southside of Glasgow, 30 people in Dunfermline and a new branch established in Aberdeen.

The SSP going from strength to strength, with plans for many more meetings and new branches throughout Scotland in the run up to our national all-members conference in Edinburgh on 25 October.

We hope as many of our new members as possible will be able to attend.

The recruitment campaign and all the related follow up work has of course placed an unexpected strain on the party's finance and, as I am sure you're

aware, the SSP has no rich friends to bankroll us.

We depend solely on the financial support of our friends, members and supporters.

We've spent around £2,000 sending out new recruitment packs. I am appealing to you as SSP members and *Voice* readers to make a donation to the party to help us raise the money for the membership packs, leaflets and cost of meetings which are all so crucial in building the SSP and helping the party grow in every part of Scotland.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your continuing support.

HOW TO PLEDGE AND DONATE TO SSP APPEAL FUND

- Online at scottishsocialistparty.org/donations
- In person via your local SSP branch
- By cheque, payable to 'Scottish Socialist Party' – send to Jim McVicar, SSP National Treasurer, Suite 307, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD
- Text 07810205747 with your pledge amount and email address if you have one
- Bank transfer – SSP Appeal Fund Account, Co-op Bank,

Sort Code 08-92-99 / Account No. 65094637

- Via PayPal: jim.sspfinance@gmail.com

If you want to help further in any way, or if you want more details, contact Jim McVicar on 07810205747 or email: jimmcvicar.scottishsocialistparty@hotmail.com

However you choose to pledge, please text Jim the details so we can keep track of all donations. Thank you.

ScottishSocialistVoice.wordpress.com

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New left party shakes up Spanish politics

by Jack Ferguson

2014 HAS been a dramatic political year, and not only in Scotland. In the Spanish state, a completely new party founded only in January is now being talked about as a serious contender for power in the general election next year.

Podemos ('We Can' in Spanish) was launched with a YouTube video and a radical manifesto, that called for redistribution of wealth, defence of public wealth from privatisation, real direct democracy, and respect for the rights of nations within the Spanish state to determine their future with independence referenda.

The authors put the call out online, and then asked for 50,000 signatures in two weeks to see if the idea was wanted by the public. They hit their target the same day. In the European elections just four months later they won an incredible 1.25 million votes, gaining five seats in Brussels.

'We can do better'

I recently met one of those newly elected MEPs, chemist Pablo Echenique:

"My political trajectory is very short. Last December I was a full time scientist, and when I say full time I mean full time; when you are a scientist you not only work Saturdays and Sundays, but also sometimes in your sleep.

"Then in January, I heard about Podemos, and I thought 'That's a good idea,' so I became involved. It's shameful that here, in rich Europe, there are people who need to look for food in the garbage. People evicted from their homes. We can and must do better."

The members that rapidly set up local groups, known as Circles, of which there are now over 1000 throughout Spain and beyond. The circles discussed poli-



PODEMOS: poised to overtake the PSOE, the Spanish equivalent of the Labour Party

cies and a programme for the new party, but discussion was also taking place online. From the start, Podemos has seen use of the internet as key to the way they seek to do "citizen politics".

Everything about the party is completely open – anyone, member or not, can vote on their candidate selection, contribute ideas to their programme or view their accounts.

When they held open primaries to select their candidates, they took laptops into the street to allow people to vote, and over 33,000 took part. This allowed many who, aren't able to be regular meeting attenders, a real chance to participate. One of the first things the new members did was to hand deliver thousands of letter to neighbours, reading:

"This letter has not come to you by mail, because to mail every person in Spain costs €2million. Ask the parties who did mail you where they get their money from. If you're reading this it's because someone who lives near you wants to change things for real."

Their collectively drafted election manifesto calls for both higher wages and a universal basic income; for participatory democracy and the people to be consulted on

all important positions; bringing key industries into public ownership; and ending the brutal treatment of migrants on the EU frontiers of the Spanish coast.

Their candidates are subject to term limits if elected, and accept only three times the Spanish minimum wage in , the rest being to the party and the movements from which it sprang.

Coming fourth in the European elections, for a party that is only four months old, was an extraordinary achievement. Activists believe just one week more campaigning and the result would have been even more spectacular, such was the volume of support coming in each day of the campaign.

EU austerity

Since the election, they have rocketed up the polls, and currently standing at around 20 per cent. This leaves them poised to overtake the PSOE, the Spanish equivalent of the Labour Party, which has disgusted many voters with its capitulation to EU imposed austerity.

If Podemos can find a way to work together with the United Left (the more traditional party to the left of the PSOE), the possibility

of radical left government taking power in Spain at the end of next year is raised. Echenique is confident: "What will our problems be when we win the election? I think we will win. What can we do about that We won't be able to do anything but win. We will have to be responsible and put in place a programme that will improve people's lives.

"We have strong restrictions now, our political class are cowards. When they are told what to do, they capitulate. We will not, we will be brave."

After its wild success, the members of Podemos are currently working hard to collectively develop proposals for the long term structure of such a direct democratic, open, new kind of political party. These will go to their upcoming founding conference. As Echenique puts it:

"Now we are discussing frantically. We are running very fast. We plan to keep running fast. Because we have punched these guys in the stomach, and they are out of breath. We will not let them recover their breath. We will keep punching."

• Read a longer version of this article at: messyreality.net

by Bill Bonnar

THE EBOLA crisis which has ravaged parts of West Africa has gripped world attention. Around 3,000 deaths; perhaps many more caused by a virus which ignores state boundaries.

Despite strenuous efforts by national governments and a large if belated international response there appears little evidence that the epidemic is being contained.

Most observers expect that things will become much worse before they get better.

All this poses a central question. Why did the outbreak occur in West Africa?

Ebola is a 'third world' disease where deaths are caused as much by lack of basic health resources and lack of state structures as the virus itself.

If the Ebola virus had broken out in Britain it would have been contained within days and become a footnote in next week's news. Which poses a question; why are health services in this part of the world so poor?

Health services

The standard argument is one of underdevelopment but this argument increasingly falls short. There are many 'third world' countries with relatively well developed and resourced health services where such an outbreak would have been dealt with efficiently and effectively. Cuba springs to mind.

The problem with many of these countries is not the lack of economic development but the nature of that development.

According to the *Financial Times* if you made a league table of the countries which currently have the highest levels of economic growth in the world; half of them would be in Africa. As it happens most of these are in the West

Ebola crisis linked to neoliberal economics



LIBERIA: the hardest-hit country has seen 3,000 cases of Ebola and almost 1,600 deaths

African countries most affected by the outbreak.

These countries often combine the worst of all worlds. Underdeveloped state structures and rampant free market capitalism.

This means that economic growth largely benefits a rich and corrupt elite who spent their money on luxury goods or sent it out of the country.

Little of this money actually trickles down to the vast majority of the people who live in poverty or is invested in productive parts of the economy.

At the same time the combination of poor state structures and weak corrupt governments mean that little is spent on infrastructure programmes such as education, housing, transport energy and of course health.

The contrast is the economic model being practised in those Latin American countries government by left wing

governments which combines economic growth with social justice programmes and long term investment in the infrastructure of society.

The failure of the model of social and economic development in West Africa graphically highlighted by the Ebola crisis is a massive blow to those who argue that the key to tackling underdevelopment in Africa and elsewhere is neoliberalism; that heady mixture of free market economics, non-government interference and increasing integration into the global capitalist economy.

Growing inequality

Where this model has been successfully applied in places like the Ivory Coast, Liberia, Ghana and Sierra Leone, the outcome has been stark with disjointed economic growth, growing inequality, increased corruption, floundering public services and governments

more concerned with enriching themselves that planning for the future.

As for the link between capitalist economics and the furthering of freer and more open societies; all the evidence points in the opposite direction.

This model needs to be replaced by one of 'progressive nation building' to quote the late President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere. The combination of democracy and strong state institutions, long term investment in social infrastructure and an economic model based on promoting the wellbeing of the majority of society.

Above all protecting the country from global capitalist interests which Nyerere described as predatory.

To paraphrase from a widely used slogan, Another Africa is possible – one where outbreaks such as Ebola are consigned to the history books.

by Sandra Webster

Listening to and empowering women – post-referendum

LIKE MANY of my sisters, I have come on a long journey during the referendum. We have spoken at public meetings small and large throughout the campaign and have forced ourselves to be central to the debate.

Women for Independence provided media training for women who had never voted before, never mind engaged in political issues.

Women are used to being wooed and promised the Earth by politicians during election periods, and this one was no different.

“Women’s issues” such as high quality childcare were on the agenda. This time is different though as we have found our voices and politics may never be the same again. The challenge to those of us on the left is to encourage and support these new voices which must be heard.

It is usual for the political classes to expect post any election for business to continue as usual but this time it is different. Instead of tributes of flowers, Yes voters are bringing shopping bags to George Square.

Women energised

Thousands have applied to join Yes supporting parties, including the SSP. The people are no longer content to leave matters to the politicians in the parliaments but want to take matters into their own hands.

It is the same for the thousands of women who have been energised by the Yes movement. We want change and recognition.

The political parties on the left have a challenge. How do we continue the reaction which is shaking politics?

How can we ensure women become more centre stage? How can we ensure women feel welcomed and remain active?

Both the campaigns Yes and No were guilty of stereotyping women. Yes with its emphasis on childcare as a universal panacea



CHANGE AND RECOGNITION: thousands of women have been energised by the Yes movement PHOTO: Craig Maclean

and No with its “ordinary housewives” and cups of tea.

The reality is that although we share a gender and common struggles we are all different and unique.

This referendum journey has made us much more aware of just how patronising politicians especially male ones can be and it is something we won’t tolerate any longer.

The next few years will be interesting for us. The next round of Westminster cuts will again put women and children first.

The Labour Party announced at their conference they would freeze child benefit. This is a universal benefit that everyone agrees is a major weapon in the fight against child poverty.

We know we can expect no kindness from any future Labour or Conservative governments. The cuts at Westminster will be backed up by cuts to local services. Women must unite to fight these. To testify to the impact on our lives.

There will be more demands for the infrastructure of politics to be more equal. To allow more people especially women to be able to participate.

After all that is all we ask for equality. It will be up to women ourselves to challenge the attitudinal barriers we face.

We shall of course require the support of our male comrades to ensure when we speak out we are listened to with respect.

End ‘shouty politics’

As a friend said, this new exciting period of Scottish politics may mean an end to “shouty politics”.

This may mean a time when listening is just as important and just as much as a strength.

This is an exciting time when many women have found their confidence so structures should fit around us. We should not be expected to know the unwritten rules because with the new politics comes the opportunity for a new way to work together.

Women from all backgrounds are meeting together to plan too.

Women For Indy are meeting this week. They have had to move from their original 300 seater venue as over 1,000 women have applied to attend their post-referendum meeting.

I would personally on behalf of everyone in the SSP welcome the hundreds of women who have applied to join us.

I promise we will ensure your voices are listened to. We look forward to all we have to learn from you.

This will be a dialogue of equals where we can learn about all our backgrounds and we hope you continue to gain confidence in your political journey.

Exciting times ahead sisters and we will support you to feel able to be part of it.

Thanks too to all my sisters who have been campaigning for years in their branches and as part of the Yes campaign.

Remember this is not the end, just the beginning.



THE MASSES AGAINST THE CLASSES: (top) one of two Scottish Socialist Party meetings in Glasgow on 25 September, (left) Dunfermline SSP meeting on 24 Sept and (right) 29 Sept SSP meeting in Stirling

SSP records fastest growth ever as thousands join fight for independent socialist Scotland

by Ken Ferguson

WHILE DAVID Cameron's son wore tartan pyjamas and the queen reportedly "purred" as the No vote was announced, pro-independence socialists across the country reacted rather differently.

Although on the losing side in the referendum, they spelt out loud and clear that they were not defeated by contacting the Scottish Socialist Party—first in tens and then hundreds and finally thousands—and joining it in the fight for an independent socialist Scotland.

In this decision, they clearly recognised the principled campaign waged by the party in the long referendum campaign both as key players in the broad Yes campaign where we worked with all sides of the movement and as partisans of our own distinctive vision of Scotland as an

independent socialist republic. Of course, for those who saw through the usual media stereotypes of the party and knew of its consistent championing of a socialist republic alongside our work on fuel poverty, against Trident, combating racism and sexism, backing workers in struggle and a myriad of other struggles, this came as no surprise.

But for thousands of others who met the SSP in meetings, whether called by Yes or the party, heard its case on stalls and doorsteps and read our views in the *Scottish Socialist Voice*—still the only socialist newspaper written and published in Scotland—it was a revelation.

The reality of a united socialist party guided by a core of policies and principles but working with others from the SNP, Greens and all the many individual groups and organisations blew away the fog of

distortion and misinformation which, however perpetrated, served only the opponents of independence and socialism.

As the thousands flooded in to join, dedicated party members worked tirelessly to ensure that each of the 2,500-plus applicants received a mailed response and information about the party within two days of contacting us.

These contacts are now being followed up individually, and new members contacted with details of their local branches—which are also multiplying in numbers—to allow them to participate in the struggles ahead.

This unprecedented growth in membership has been a major boost for the SSP and its capacity to play its part in the struggles that lie ahead but it will also strengthen both the Scottish left and the wider, ongoing Yes movement.