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# Scottish Socialist Voice

## STOP FILLING THE TROUGH

• **Bosses gorge on profits as workers suffer pay cut of £50-a-week**

• **We demand a £10-an-hour minimum living wage for workers**

TESCO



by *Richie Venton,*  
*SSP national workplace organiser*

“**ALL ANIMALS** are equal, but some animals are more equal than others”, was the memorable satirical line in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. Well the pigs with the biggest snouts in the trough here and now in capitalist

Britain would agree. As millions of people work to remain poor, we have a new obscenity on parade: the UK’s best-paid boss, Simon Peckham of Melrose engineering investment company, last year ‘earned’ £31million! That means he grabbed 2,238 times as much as the annual wage of a worker on the so-called Living Wage of £7.65 an hour. Put another way,

whereas it would take a worker a whole year on £7.65 an hour to earn £13,923, this chief executive only has to spend 49 minutes to get that much. The mind boggles! And your blood should be boiling, your resolve to fight poverty pay hardened by such examples of the worst levels of inequality ever recorded.

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*by Allan Grogan*

**FOR THE** last two and a half years I have campaigned within Labour for Independence to win a Yes vote at the referendum. Not only did I feel that this was an incredible opportunity for Scotland and it's people but also it provided a real chance to return the Labour Party to it's founding principles. Back to becoming a real Labour Party again.

Throughout the campaign, debating with the likes of Margaret Curran, Lynsey Roy and Anas Sarwar has made me realise that a Yes vote was the last chance to save the soul of the Labour Party. Unfortunately the referendum result did not go our way; and after much soul searching I realised I could no longer be a member of the British Labour Party.

The final straw for me personally was seeing the Scottish Labour leader Johann Lamont outside Asda, smiling for a picture because they had announced raised prices in an independent Scotland. What a vile act for someone claiming to be Labour, let alone the leader of the party. Regardless of her voting preference the fact she should take enjoyment out of rising prices that will effect the poorest and the working class the hardest is unconscionable.

### **Filling the void**

I am incredibly proud to have been the co-convenor of Labour for Independence throughout this campaign and look forward to continuing within the group as it becomes a campaign and political education-based organisation.

Personally I feel that there is a void that needs to be filled by a major political party in Scotland. The position is the real Labour values or to put it another way... socialism. At the post referendum LFI planning meeting I made my opinion clear that due to dramatic influx of members into other Yes parties that while there is a prospectus of huge Real Labour/Socialist vote in Scot-

## **Labour For Indy leader joins SSP**

# **'PUT SOCIALISM BACK AT THE FOREFRONT OF POLITICAL LIFE'**



**ALLAN GROGAN:**  
"The SSP reflect the real socialist values that I have campaigned on during the referendum and throughout my life as a Labour Party member."

land. It would have to come from one of the existing Parties.

Throughout this referendum I have been especially impressed with the hard work, commitment and cross party work of members of the Scottish Socialist Party.

It was a great pleasure to have worked with them throughout this referendum. As most people are aware the party have had issues which has held them back in the past but thanks to the terrific leadership of Colin Fox and Sandra Webster they have helped to bring socialism back to the political debate in Scotland.

I was pleased to hear that the party's membership has risen rapidly since the referendum. It is clear that they are the only party which reflect the traditional or real Labour sentiments which so many in the Labour Party still cling to... Put it another way, they are the only political party that represents socialism and the inherent values which was the basis for creation of the Scottish Labour Party in 1888.

It is for this reason that I have

decided to join the Scottish Socialist Party. I do so as I believe they reflect the real socialist values that I have campaigned on during the referendum and throughout my life as a Labour Party member.

I am aware that the SSP is currently considered a minority party in Scotland, however I am confident after speaking with many within the party that there is real determination to create something much bigger. I am delighted to add my name to this and work hard to ensure the SSP becomes a major player in Scottish politics.

### **Fringe to mainstream**

John Smith once said that to succeed in politics you have to be prepared to take a risk. It is time for the Scottish Socialist Party to step out from the comfort zone of the political fringes, to begin to campaign for the 40 per cent of Real Labour socialists who are lost and without a home, to step into the political mainstream bringing forth our values and ideas, showing the Labour move-

ment that the SSP is the home you have been looking for.

The referendum debate created a more involved, more democratic people, the opportunity for serious, sensible socialism is at hand. I am fully confident that with the leadership of Colin Fox and Sandra Webster we can further professionalise our operations, create a political thunderstorm and put socialism back at the forefront of political life in Scotland. I am committed to doing all I can to further our cause both at local and national level.

While disappointment prevails after the referendum, there is much to be hopeful about. After 18 September we were plunged into darkness but we should not fear. Darkness is just the other side of light it's what comes before dreams. Our day in the sun is yet to come comrades, we will have an independent socialist republic in Scotland and the SSP will continue to play a major role in that.

I look forward to working with you all to achieve a better way.



by Ken Ferguson

**JUST WEEKS** from the No vote, the bitter reality behind the cynical promises of the Westminster parties about caring and sharing Britain grows ever clearer.

Not only have the worthless promises of the supposedly sacred "vow" gone into the wheelie bin of history but the pitiless policies punishing the poor have been further ratcheted up.

From the infamous remarks of Lord Freud labelling the disabled as worthless to the endless scapegoating of the low paid and claimants by hard faced Tory ministers such as Iain Duncan Smith and Esther McVeagh Westminster's key aim is to smack down the many in favour of the fat cat few.

Perhaps the most striking example of this emerged from union research showing that the UK's fattest fat cat, Simon Peckham, boss of transnational engineering firm Melrose, earned the annual living wage demanded by the TUC—in around half an hour!

### Growing revolt

Mr Peckham reportedly received a total package of £31million last year although a company spin doctor challenged the figure saying that Peckham earned "only" £409,800 last year.

Meanwhile in Scotland 800,000 live in poverty and those in work have lost the equivalent of £50 a week through frozen pay.

This is the background to what is a growing revolt not just against the Westminster parties but with the bitter consequences of the austerity policies that they all endorse.

In Scotland this is seen most dramatically seen in the vortex of crisis engulfing the once all conquering Labour

# Fat cat rule under pressure as No camp's lies are unmasked



**UK'S TOP-PAID BOSS:** the chief executive of engineering investment firm Melrose, Simon Peckham, takes less than an hour to earn the annual living wage

Party now gripped by a cold terror that their once Eastern European style dominance of Scottish politics is fatally damaged.

Already under pressure for their slavish servility to Blairite worship of markets and profits they were not helped by hapless leader Johann Lamont's now notorious labelling of Scottish welfare policies as "something for nothing".

However what looks like the last straw for Labour voters was the spectacle of their leaders getting into bed with the detested Tories and their Lib Dem soul mates in the misnamed Better Together alliance.

Although the lies and fear mongering won the day for the No camp, for Labour it proved a hollow victory with key Labour areas such as North Lanarkshire and Glasgow ignoring them and voting Yes.

The Labour party now looks rather like a football fan who went to the Scotland end of an England V Scotland game

wearing the wrong scarf.

Even the supposed wisdom of grumpy Gordon Brown and the famous Daily Record cooked "vow" has blown up in their faces as Cameron ditched it within hours of the No vote.

As thousands flood into the Yes supporting parties the mass movement built around the left of the Yes movement is now also turning to address the consequences of the No vote and what can be done about it.

### Demands

For the Scottish Socialist Party this means engaging with the demand that the promises given by No camp are not only met but exceeded and that is the core of the SSP submission to Lord Smith.

It calls for powers over all money raised in Scotland to be spent here but also for powers to scrap the anti-union laws, introduce fair pay, tackle the housing crisis, scrap the Council Tax and introduce free public

transport. This submission was sent to the noble Lord despite his decision to exclude the SSP from his cosy "consultation" with all the other parties from the Yes and No camps.

However, important that this is, the SSP is under no illusions that a few polite meetings over coffee and shortbread with Lord Smith will deliver real answers to the democratic, social and ecological problems facing Scotland.

That's why we welcome the thousands of people who have joined us and look forward to taking our case for immediate change and long term socialist solutions onto Scotland's streets, communities and trade unions with their help.

Scottish politics are changed utterly by the referendum and the momentum for change not just democratic but social and economic too is immense.

It must be grasped and the slogan that another Scotland is possible made a reality.

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

# POLITICS MOVES RIGHT IN ENGLAND – LABOUR FACES SCOTTISH MELTDOWN

## UNIONIST POLITICIANS

have tried to spin the result of the referendum as an irrevocable defeat for the very idea of Scottish independence. Describing the No vote as “decisive”, the Coalition’s Scottish Secretary, Alistair Carmichael, called on the new SNP leadership to rule out any future referendum.

His shadow in the Commons, Margaret Curran, hailed the No vote as “historic” and crowed that devolution rather than independence was now the “settled will of the Scottish people”.

The referendum result can, of course, be interpreted differently. In a record poll, close to half of Scottish voters supported the break-up of Britain—an outcome that would not have happened in any other constituent part of the UK.

Mainstream British politics remains anchored in Westminster. The Yes vote has already signalled that politics in Scotland is on a different trajectory from the politics of the rest of the Britain and in particular from the politics of England.

## Alienation

There is, across the island, widespread disillusionment with the big Westminster political parties. This alienation, however, has taken very different forms on either side of the border.

In Scotland, the unionist parties face a massive grassroots challenge from the left as tens of thousands of activists sign up for membership of the main Yes parties. The referendum may be over, but resistance to the austerity politics of the Westminster parties is growing in strength.

The thousands who joined the recent STUC march on George Square included both Yes and No voters. What united them was opposition to the austerity programme espoused by the Tories, Lib Dems and Labour alike.



**THE RISE AND FALL:** while the pro-Yes parties attract unfathomable numbers of new post-indyref members, Labour’s Scottish membership continues to wane PHOTO: Craig Maclean

Meanwhile, in England opposition to the Westminster parties has come from the right and has morphed into the rise and rise of UKIP.

Once written off by the Tory Prime Minister as a bunch of “fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists”, UKIP have romped to a by-election victory in one formerly safe Tory seat and came within an ace of winning what had been a safe Labour seat.

At the time of writing they are the main challengers in another by-election in Tory-held Rochester and Strood. They had already become the first party other than Labour or the Tories to win a national election in last May’s European poll.

The UKIP challenge from the right is being fuelled by anti-immigrant fears and hostility to the European Union and the principle of the free movement of peoples. The Tory and Labour leaderships alike now find themselves being dragged by UKIP onto political territory they would rather avoid.

Cameron has already conceded an in/out referendum on EU memberships and has been increasingly ensnared in plans to cap immigration from East-

ern Europe that are illegal under EU law. Miliband now finds himself forced to appease UKIP voters by telling them that “it is not prejudiced to worry about immigration.”

More worryingly from a unionist perspective has been the implosion of Labour north of the border. Following the referendum, the Labour Party in Scotland is in total disarray. While the SNP, Scottish Greens and the SSP attracted thousands of new members in the aftermath of the referendum, Labour’s Scottish membership has continued to wane.

Owen Jones, the left-wing columnist for *The Guardian*, recently described Scottish Labour as having become “a brand scarcely less toxic than the widely reviled Tories” in Scotland.

The Party’s leadership in Scotland is all over the place. Former Labour First Ministers are in the press arguing that Scottish Labour has lost its purpose and vision and that its plans for more devolution are being frustrated by its own Scottish MPs in London.

Gordon Brown meanwhile continues to make policy state-

ments on the hoof that embarrass the current leadership. His reference in a Commons debate to the “lethal cocktail” of Scottish control of income tax and English votes for English laws would not have been welcomed by Johan Lamont who has in the past indicated her own preference for devolving all income tax to the Scottish Parliament.

The formation of a new grassroots group calling itself “Labour for Scotland” has made it even more difficult to define where Labour in Scotland stands on further devolution. Claiming past and present MSPs and senior trade unionists as members, the new group of activists are “open-minded” about full Scottish control of income tax rates and bands as well as wanting to see greater Scottish control of welfare and employment issues.

## Disarray

However, the party’s actual representatives in the all-party talks on more devolution have the weakest position of all of the five parties involved—a complicated mechanism for giving Holyrood control over 15p of the basic 20p rate and flexibility to raise but not cut the top rate.

This disarray is being reflected in the opinion polls. The SNP are now 10 points ahead of Scottish Labour in relation to voting intentions for next year’s UK general election.

In voting intentions for the 2016 general election, the SNP are 16 points ahead of Labour and on course to form another majority Scottish Government. Labour’s long held domination of Scottish politics has been broken. In the longer term, this will inevitably destabilise a union that depended on Labour to deliver Scottish votes for Westminster government.



# SSP goes from strength to strength

by Colin Fox,  
SSP co-spokesperson

**THE SSP** meets in Edinburgh for our annual conference this weekend, basking in the glow of an exhilarating independence campaign and record numbers of applications to join.

We have won thousands of new supporters across Scotland for the way we pursued our goal of an independent socialist Scotland these past two years. Many have complemented us on the way we helped to shape the biggest grassroots political campaign Scotland has ever seen.

The referendum campaign and the unprecedented rise of the Yes movement have changed Scotland forever. The SNP, the Scottish Greens and ourselves have all won praise and respect for way we worked together in the coalition.

## Smith Commission

But not everyone was impressed by the SSP's achievements. Lord Smith of Kelvin for example excluded us from his Commission to consider what new powers should be devolved to Holyrood—the only one of the six parties formally engaged in the referendum to be so ignored!

Using the feeble excuse that we did not have any MSPs, our views were not sought. But, as I pointed out in a letter I sent the noble Lord, the referendum was not a parliamentary event but an historic national plebiscite conducted in every city, town and village in Scotland. And the SSP was ever-present.

The SSP has never, nor will we ever, let anyone tell us our view is not to be heard. So we sent in our submission on what powers should now be devolved to Holyrood all the same (read it on the SSP website).



**SOCIALIST INDEPENDENCE:** the SSP marries the struggle for self-determination with the equally important struggle to emancipate working class people from the yoke of free market economics

In it, we reiterated that all fiscal and economic powers should be devolved to Holyrood in order to eradicate the appalling levels of poverty and inequality that so blight our wealthy nation. We called for all taxes raised in Scotland to be spent here. And we insisted on the Scottish Government securing the right to intervene in industry to protect and sustain jobs and services.

We also challenged Lord Smith to bring forward recommendations that allow Scotland to harness and channel all the latent energy and enthusiasm for politics the referendum demonstrated and for example pick up the proposal made by Yes Scotland for a written constitution enshrining the social democratic and socialist values Scotland supports.

The SSP held around 100 public meetings on the socialist case for independence in the last year. Close to 3,000 people applied to join since 18 September and this unprecedented level of interest led one member to wonder 'what would it have been like if there had been a Yes vote?'. The Scottish Socialist Party has established several new branches across the country in recent months and

recruited many talented people. Uppermost in the deliberations at this year's conference therefore will be questions such as; what does the independence movement do now? How do we best advance the cause in next years general election?

And where stands the class struggle in Scotland today? These questions will be debated this weekend as we gather and greet hundreds of new members.

We are also delighted to welcome Jonathon Shafi from the Radical Independence Campaign, Councillor Maggie Chapman from the Greens and Allan Grogan from Labour for Independence, who has joined the SSP (see page 2), as they deliver fraternal greetings.

## Living wage

The SSP conference will decide our campaign priorities for the year ahead and these will certainly include furthering our goal of an independent socialist Scotland, campaigning for a living wage of £10/hour, counter-acting the pernicious influence of UKIP, planning our 2015 General Election campaign and above all on how we can return SSP MSPs to Holyrood in 2016.

Those political analysts who talked of 'the post-SSP political

landscape in Scotland' back in 2012 when last we met in conference look decidedly foolish today. Then again the SSP has grown used to such people writing our political obituaries many times over the past 16 years.

These are usually the same 'wise' people who sneeringly insisted 'public meetings were dead' ahead of Yes Scotland's myth-busting endeavours and deemed 'political parties are dead too' just as 60,000 Scots joined the three independence parties in one single weekend!

With wages for working people having fallen by £50 per week since 2008 in real terms [source: TUC] the need for the Scottish Socialist Party is more important than ever. That's why the SSP were present both on the independence campaign trail and on the STUC march 'For a just Scotland'.

The SSP marries the struggle for self-determination with the equally important struggle to emancipate working class people from the yoke of free market economics.

That's the unique dual role the SSP plays in this country.

Let our enemies beware as we go from strength to strength.

• See [scottishsocialistparty.org](http://scottishsocialistparty.org)

• *continued from page 1*

The directors of the top 100 companies in the UK only need spend one single day at work to earn a year's Living Wage; their incomes average £3.195million.

Most companies studiously conceal the facts about the incomes of their top dogs compared to the workers they hire to produce their profits. And no wonder! Just one example in retail tells the story they don't want told.

NEXT shops CEO Lord Wolfson last year grabbed a modest £4.6million for himself, which is 459 times as much as the average annual wage of workers in NEXT. They are paid a miserly £6.70 an hour—if they're 'adults'!

And three out of every 10 jobs in NEXT are 12 hours a week or less—one of the common causes of crucifying poverty in retail, where profit-crazed employers want workers at their beck and call, with very few guaranteed hours a week, but pool of labour to work additional hours at busier times, without the overheads of holiday and sick pay for longer contracts.

And of course many big companies go the whole hog and rely on Zero Hours Contracts, the ultimate in casualised, low-paid labour.

We are told daily about the economic recovery. "What recovery?" is the universal reply of the army of workers who slave away without the reward of a share of the booming national wealth.

A clutch of charities published figures in March showing that a devastating 870,000 people in Scotland live below the poverty line. And although it was ancient news for some of us, their Report's most damning indictment of capitalist employers and capitalist politicians was the revelation that over half of those in poverty—436,000 of us—are in jobs, working to stay poor!

### **Tory class war**

Some 80,000 kids in Scotland in 2014 suffer the hunger, disappointment, and stunted ambitions of growing up in poverty despite having one or more parent in work.

A more recent report confirmed that the root cause of this national scandal is the blindingly obvious: low hourly rates of pay. 372,000 workers in Scotland—18 per cent of the national workforce—earn below the £7.65 Living Wage, which has been calculated as the bare minimum required for access to a decent life. 93 per cent of these workers are in the private sector: by far the biggest proportions are in retail and hospitality.

Throughout the Referendum campaign we in the SSP warned of the horrendous consequences of remaining under the heel of Westminster Tory dictatorship for the working class majority population. We warned a No vote would usher in assaults on pay, benefits and public services on a scale unprecedented. But even we underestimated

# DEMAND A SCOTTISH £10/HOUR MIN. WAGE

## Resist Tory class war

just how swiftly this revenge attack would be unleashed. Within a week of the No vote being achieved by a cocktail of lies, scaremongering and false promises for 'far more powers for Scotland', the Tories launched full-scale class war on workers and working class communities.

The obnoxious George Osborne declared war on benefits—including child benefits, working tax credits, income support and other in-work benefits—robbing an average of £480 a year off a million Scots, ten million across Britain. He further announced plans to rob people under 21 of Housing Benefit, and of all Job Seekers Allowance after six months unemployed.

In shameless contrast the same Cameron-Osborne Tory dictatorship slashed taxes on the rich, awarding the well-off at least £1,900 a year in tax reductions, and even more outrageously announced what Osborne boasts is "the largest reduction in the burden of Corporation Tax in our nation's history." Corporation Tax is to slump to 20 per cent next year, the lowest in the G20 richest capitalist nations. That will mean £8billion less in big business taxes in 2016; £8billion less for vital services, job creation or—God forbid!—a decent minimum wage.

And it's not as if the big companies that hire the majority of workers—often on pitiful pay—are in need of a handout. Just the FTSE 100 com-

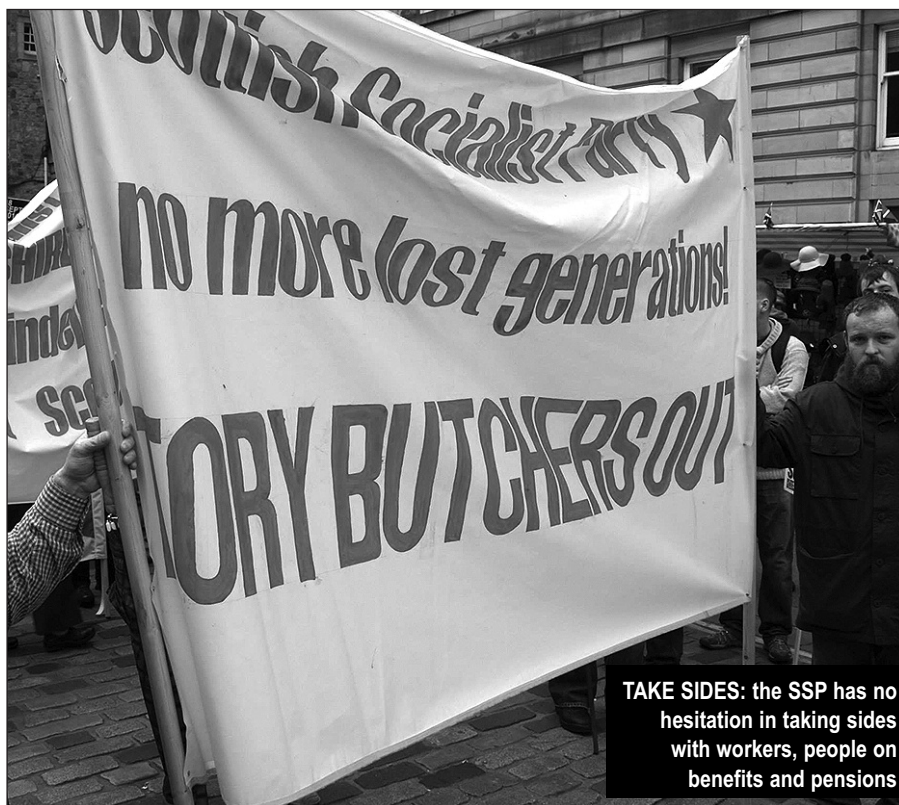
panies alone have already stashed away a monstrous £53.3billion in what is politely termed 'cash piles'; wealth they refuse to invest in jobs, or modernization of their business, or improved wages. That's close to twice the annual budget of the entire Scottish government, salted away in the vaults of a mere 100 companies, waiting to be added to when they have to pay even less in Corporation Tax next year.

People in work are amongst those who have to swallow their pride and traipse to food banks for a handout in this rich, food-exporting nation. People are literally starving whilst those at the top of the pile of wealth gorge themselves shamelessly, grabbing a year's Living Wage in a day.

We face another winter where many elderly people will suffer a cruel, avoidable death through hypothermia because they can't afford to eat and heat their homes. Because their pensions are the worst in Europe compared to average wages, while the supermarket bosses and the Big Six energy companies rake in utterly immoral levels of profit and personal perks.

The urgent need however is to fight to banish the root causes, fight fire with fire in the face of the Tories' class warfare. For most of this year, the SSP campaigned on the streets with the slogan "Vote Yes for a decent living minimum wage", arguing that independence would open the door to





**TAKE SIDES:** the SSP has no hesitation in taking sides with workers, people on benefits and pensions

organise and demand such a central anti-poverty measure. We didn't get independence—yet! So now we need to link the battle to banish rock-bottom wages with the debate over what powers are to be granted to the Scottish Parliament.

The trade union movement, including the STUC, should join the SSP in demanding that Holyrood must have the powers to set the level of guaranteed minimum wage in Scotland; that's a key financial issue! There's a lot of confusion around terms like Minimum Wage and Living Wage. The National Minimum Wage is legally enforceable by government legislation—and the vigilance of the trade union movement, to outlaw wage-dodging cowboy employers. But it is set at a pathetic level: £6.50 an hour for over-21s, and the slave-wage £2.71 for Modern Apprentices.

### **Class division reminder**

It is a recipe for poverty—and brazen profiteering by employers, who are more than happy to let taxpayers subsidise their low pay through Working Tax Credit. As a reminder of the class-divided society we need to change, if the national minimum wage had kept pace with company chief executives' pay rises since it was introduced in 1999, it would now not be a miserly £6.50, but £18.99 an hour!

The Living Wage is the product of research and laudable campaigning by the Living Wage Foundation, Poverty Alliance and others. It is calculated as the bare minimum required for a basic standard of decent life, currently set at £7.65 an hour. But it has two fundamental flaws: it is still far too low to match the mounting cost of living, and it is en-

tirely voluntary, relying on the whims and fancies of employers. Employers are under no obligation to pay it; they can volunteer to do so and win 'Living Wage Accreditation' from the SNP government-funded Poverty Alliance/Living Wage campaign. But to highlight the problem, a mere 23 companies in Scotland have signed up so far!

What is needed is a legally enforced national minimum wage, set at a level to guarantee a decent life. A decent, living minimum wage. Which is why since 1998 the SSP has fought for such a minimum to be set at two-thirds male median earnings—about £10 an hour in today's figures. And that £10 an hour was agreed as the national minimum wage demanded by the recent TUC congress in Liverpool—unanimously!

The recent STUC march to 'challenge poverty' needs to be urgently built upon with a systematic campaign in workplaces and on the streets demanding the powers to implement a £10 Scottish minimum wage—for all at 16, with abolition of the lower youth rates, and equal pay for women. Further rallies, demos, pickets of low-paying companies and support for workers who strike for better pay needs to accompany the demands on the Smith Commission.

And alongside that central demand we need a drive for other powers and policies to tackle poverty in 21st century Scotland. Powers to transform our lives. The power to implement a living level of state pension in Scotland, linked to a £10 minimum wage. Full powers over welfare and benefits to reverse the savage assault on the sick, disabled and unemployed by the millionaires' Westminster boot boys. And a critical issue is re-

peal of the battery of anti-trade union laws implemented by Thatcher, retained by 13 years of Labour governments, and made even worse by the current Coalition. Handcuffing workers and their unions was a central strategy in the fundamental redistribution of wealth and power to the rich and big business by successive Tory and Labour regimes. As recent academic reports confirm, inequality in Britain was at its lowest, i, in the years when 58 per cent of workers were in trade unions and 82 per cent of wages were covered by collective bargaining. Now, by 2012, only 26 per cent are in unions, and a mere 23 per cent of wages are determined by collective bargaining, by the combined efforts of workers banded together through their unions. And the gap between the highest and lowest incomes is the greatest it's ever been since records began.

The link between poverty and the most repressive anti-union laws in the whole of Europe is glaringly obvious. And the position needs to be reversed, if we are serious about banishing the poverty and inequality that scars the face of Scotland. Likewise, the leaders of the 630,000-member trade unions in Scotland need to face up to a simple truth: begging and cajoling employers for a decent wage doesn't work! There's no excuse for poverty pay, or poverty pensions, or skinflint benefits. There's oceans of wealth surrounding us—but it's in the hands of 'the 1 per cent'.

So those who fought for independence, plus those who didn't, should demand the power to tax the richest minority and big business by Holyrood, to fund decent pay, benefits, pensions and public services.

### **Take sides!**

The Tories have launched ruthless class war on the rest of us in defence of the rich. That's in their political DNA, so no surprise there. Labour is at the hip in joined at the hip with this pursuit of profit for the millionaires and poverty for the millions. It's time the trade union leaders woke up to that reality too, and stopped funding a party that declared their own war on workers with plans for cuts of £27billion by 2017.

And those who have rushed to join the SNP should pause and ponder some fundamentals: you can't appease the profit-hunger of the multinational corporations—including with pledges of even far lower levels of Corporation Tax than the Tories' 20 per cent—and at the same time hope to banish the crushing poverty of nearly a million Scots. When the rich and their political puppets unleash class warfare, you can't stand in the middle, or take both sides. The SSP has no hesitation in taking sides with workers, people on benefits and pensions, the millions in open conflict with those in charge of the massive wealth created by nature and generations of working people.

by Roz Paterson

**THERE WAS** a story in the *Daily Mail* a while back, maybe you missed it, concerning the tragic case of some affluent homeowners whose houses had suddenly become, relatively, valueless.

Their mock Tudor mansions, set in the bosom of the leafy English countryside, had gone, almost overnight, from being worth nearly a million smackeronees, to less than the price of a two-bedroomed maisonette in Glasgow. If that.

"I've been a Conservative voter since I was 18," said one hapless victim, "I'm now 60 but it's the last time I will vote Conservative because they have sold Lancashire down the swanny with no regard for people's health and well-being."

Precisely what, you may ask, has caused such a volte-face in this staunch Tory? Fracking, that's what.

## Contamination

It seems that, when someone starts blasting the earth's crust with water, sand and dangerous chemicals, in a bid to fracture the rock and extract fossil fuels, at the risk of triggering earthquakes, contaminating the groundwater and causing major air pollution, all within spitting distance of your

# The anti-fracking battle is not lost

home...it negatively impacts on house prices.

And fracking, if you live in Scotland, is just about to get up close and personal. The Westminster government has now issued licenses for fracking across the Central Belt, including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Falkirk and Fife, where 80 per cent of the population live.

This vast swathe of Scotland was identified, by the British Geological Survey, as having significant shale gas and oil reserves; alas, you need to crack the ground open to get them out, at a significant environmental cost, not to mention a social and economic one, for those who live nearby.

Not that the companies who are snapping up the newly issued fracking licences care. And why should they? While you were scrabbling about trying to find enough money down the back of the sofa to get through Xmas, and the majority of the House of

Commons were propping up a free bar somewhere, the crafty old Tories were shoving through a spot of legislation that ensures it is no longer necessary to seek the permission of every householder before fracking the hell out of them.

Commenting upon this fateful 20 December legerdemain, Nick Boles MP (Tory) opined that it was "unnecessarily excessive" to have to actually ask folk before you wrecked their homes in pursuit of fossil fuel millions. No one else noticed, it seems, because on 13 January 2014, this passed into law without fuss.

Then, in June, the Labour Party, the mighty protectress of the poor, the hard-working, and the home-owning, waded in to do battle...and supported the ConDems in removing householders' rights to object via the trespass laws.

Thus, in the grim morning after the No vote on 19 September, Scotland finally

woke up to the fact that our most densely populated areas are now at risk, and we are almost powerless to do anything about it. Almost. But we'll get to that.

Since the 28 July, orders for licences have been flying in, and one of the lucky winners appears to be Ian Wood, the man who said there were only a few wee cans of oil left in the North Sea, and whose Wood Group are red-hot keen on fracking.

And Ineos, based in Grangemouth, the company that threatened to shut the whole operation down when the union tried to stand up for itself last year, thereby throwing an entire workforce out of a job.

## Health implications

Yes, they're doing nicely too, thanks for asking, with a controlling stake in a Petroleum Exploration and Development Licence (PEDL) for 400 square kilometres of Scotland's Midland Valley, and an 80 per cent stake in a PEDL for the adjacent 329 square kilometres, including Grangemouth itself.

Such heavy investment signals a clear intent to pursue this controversial and damaging exploration and, with no legislation to hinder them, why wouldn't they?

It is extremely profitable, in crude terms, if you discount the harm it causes along the way.

The US fracking industry notched up \$76billion in profits in 2010, though it also left a trail of destruction in its

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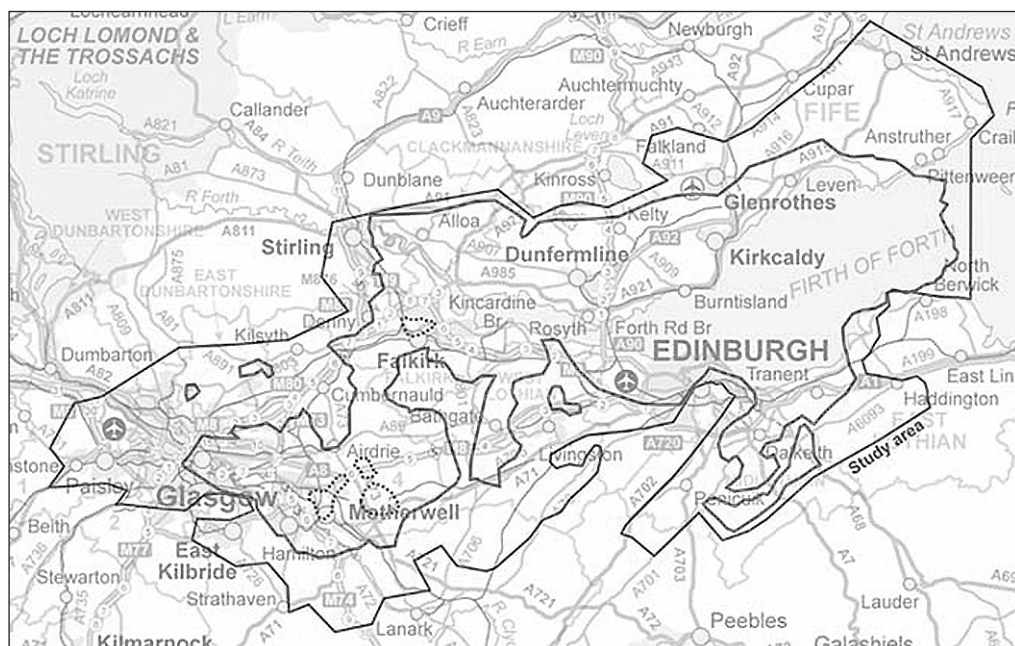
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**FRACKING IN SCOTLAND:** the Westminster government has now issued licenses for fracking across the Central Belt, including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Falkirk and Fife, where 80 per cent of the population live

wake, including endocrine-disrupting chemicals entering the water supply, which could have potentially very damaging implications for human health.

### Concerns

Researchers from the University of Missouri and the US Geological Survey Columbia Environmental Research Center raised concerns on this issue, with regard to fracking, in a report published in the peer-reviewed journal *Endocrinology*.

Unfortunately, this research is in its early stages and further, more conclusive studies are unlikely to be

conducted before a fully-fledged fracking industry is up and running.

Such is the way of these things.

Other startling side-effects of blasting open the planet's skin to find things to set fire to include building subsidence—coming soon, perhaps, to Edinburgh's New Town, Morningside and even the Scottish Parliament itself; earthquakes—the fracking map of Scotland shows that the proposed fracking zone actually falls within two known faultlines, and major disturbances in such areas are known to cause earth tremors; and calamitous

house prices (see *Daily Mail*, all editions).

Not only that, but given we are witnessing unprecedented, man-made, and catastrophic climate change, surely pursuing ever more inaccessible fossil fuels is not the way to go?

Even Mark Carney, governor of the Bank of England, has added his weight to the 'carbon bubble' theory that, if a global agreement on limiting carbon emissions is reached, companies who bet heavily on fossil fuels could see their assets rendered valueless.

In effect, most of the gas and oil the frackers seek to

extract cannot be burnt if we are, warns Carney, to avoid catastrophic climate change caused by a rise of more than two degrees in global temperatures.

So not only is fracking anti-social in the extreme, it is also a potential financial dead-end.

Did I say we were almost powerless? The Scottish Government has, so far, failed to make a strong stand against fracking, but it could still oppose it, through planning and environmental regulations, which are devolved to Scotland.

### Political will

Unlike Mr Former Tory of Tudor Mansionville, we have some powers at our disposal and we can fend off the worst excesses of Westminster, if the political will, and the political pressure, is there.

Incidentally, the *Mail* published another story, on the eve of the referendum, claiming that a Yes vote could burst the 'housing McBubble' in Edinburgh by, er, causing uncertainty and, er, something or other. Ironical, really, that the No vote has achieved, in terms of a plummeting housing market, what those wicked Yessers, with their class envy and hatred of success, could only dream of.

• See [bgs.ac.uk/shalegas](http://bgs.ac.uk/shalegas)



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by Bill Bonnar

## MAJOR CELEBRATIONS

broke out in Bolivia and throughout Latin America on October 12 at the stunning election victory by MAS—The Movement Toward Socialism led by President Evo Morales.

This will be the president's third term in office. MAS won a landslide 60 per cent of the vote with Democratic Unity; a coalition of right wing parties winning 25 per cent of the vote. In his acceptance speech he dedicated his victory to Fidel Castro. MAS were founded in 1996 out of a struggle of coca farmers which merged into a nation-wide struggle against neoliberal policies, austerity, privatisation and a political and economic system dominated by a wealthy white elite and under the US's thumb.

They overwhelmingly draw their support from the indigenous peoples who make up the majority of the population with Evo Morales the first indigenous head of state in Latin America. MAS are a broad movement of socialists, environmentalists and trade unionists and are the nearest equivalent of a Red/Green Alliance in Latin America.

## Industrialisation

For the past eight years they have pursued a strategy of 'progressive modernisation'. This includes a programme of industrialisation, state intervention in the economy, social and political inclusion, environmental protection and ambitious social programmes.

In terms of foreign affairs they have regularly denounced American intervention in Latin America and are close allies of Cuban and Venezuelan governments.

There have been two landmark achievements. The Hydrocarbon Law which nationalised large parts of the fossil fuel industry providing a Development Fund which diverts 50 per cent of income into government programmes. The second were radical changes to the constitution which strengthened democracy and transferred substantial powers to the hitherto largely dis-

# Bolivia's Evo Morales wins historic third term



**BOLIVIA: under Morales, poverty levels have been slashed while living standards have risen faster than any country in Latin America**

enfranchised indigenous people; ending what they described as the system of internal colonisation.

Since coming to power in 2006 the record of the government has been impressive. Key sectors of the economy have been nationalised, there have been huge investments in health, education and housing, poverty levels have been slashed while living standards have risen faster than any country in Latin America. All this while recording some of the highest economic growth rates on the continent fuelled by high levels of public expenditure.

In contrast to Venezuela where the Right forms a powerful and united block the MAS government has successfully divided and destabilised the opposition. This was not always the case. Five years ago a revolt took place in the wealthy opposition controlled Santa Cruz region which threatened to break away from the 'Marxist terrorist regime' in La Paz bringing the country to the brink of civil war.

The government faced down the challenge and has since managed to incorporate some of the right wing forces in a broad coalition for change. This has meant a watering down of some of the more radical aspects of its programme to accom-

modate these elements and to encourage foreign investment which is now at record levels.

The government's declared aim is socialism although there is no timetable attached to this aim or strict definition as to what it means by socialism. At the moment it is defined as an economy where the state will play a central role but not exclusive role, the end of poverty and economic inequality, the creation of a society based on equality important in a country where ethnic divisions have featured strongly and the linking of the struggle for socialism in Bolivia to the Bolivarian struggle across Latin America.

## Criticisms

Its strategy is to lock the country into a specific path of development by turning MAS from a broad based social movement into an institutional party of power that dominates the state at every level.

This has raised some criticism including from sections of the left within MAS who are worried by some of the elements now flocking into the movement from the right, a business community many of whom have developed a new found enthusiasm for the government and the fear that MAS may turn from a

vibrant grass roots movement into a one party state.

Nevertheless overall developments in Bolivia will be welcomed by socialists throughout Latin America and the world.

One last thought—47 years ago, Che Guevara was murdered in Bolivia by the government on the orders of its pay masters in Washington. Today, Che Guevara and the Cuban and Bolivian fighters who fought with him have the status of national heroes feted by a government which claims to be the heirs of that movement.

In fact Evo Morales sees himself as a leader very much in the mould of Fidel Castro who he described as the most important person in Latin American history since Simon Bolivar, Che Guevara and Hugo Chavez.

Whatever happens in the future the contrast with the pre-MAS period could not be sharper. A country characterised by appalling poverty, equality, exploitation and underdevelopment. A country lacking in the most basic services and infrastructure. A country ruthlessly divided on ethnic grounds ruled by a white elite based on violence and corruption and more concerned with satisfying their allies in Washington than the needs of their people.



by Jonathon Shafi, *Radical Independence Campaign*

**AFTER A** two-year independence campaign it is important that we all take a moment to reflect. For the Scottish left, we can look back with a great deal to be proud of.

Not only did we impact the politics of the debate, but we delivered on the ground. We collectively managed to revitalise radical politics, and make it connect with people all over the country. We stayed true to our internationalist principles and ensured that class politics took centre stage.

In my honest opinion, I believe had it not been for the intervention of the politics and organisation of the broad sweep of the radical left, we may not have won Glasgow or delivered in Labour-voting communities up and down the country in the same way.

There's nothing self-aggrandising about us registering that, it is to say that genuinely, we walked the walk.

## Momentum

But now we face massive challenges to keep the momentum of the left going. That means a few things.

First, that we continue to develop the Radical Independence Campaign, which has become known internationally for its success.

We need to explore together how we do that, and have a broad ranging discussion about its priorities and focus.

The conference in November, set to see around 3000 people gather to engage with such a discussion can be a staging post for the next phase of extending radical ideas into the present context.

In addition, we have to talk about the SNP. The SNP is a hugely popular party amongst



**BIG GIG: Radical Indy's 2014 conference is on Sat 22 Nov at Glasgow Clyde Auditorium**  
PHOTO: Craig Maclean

# Challenges and opportunities

working class heartlands, and is managing to buck the trend of the crumbling mainstream parties by recruiting to the extent that they are now a mass party.

On the one hand, we need to engage with their mass membership who have joined post referendum. The SNP has done a very good job at relating to big progressive issues such as Trident and welfare 'reform'. We also know that the SNP are at the core a neoliberal party.

They are effective managers of the economy for middle Scotland. We should encourage the SNP when they are moving left, and work with those thousands of new SNP members who like us are looking for real change, while also developing an explicitly anti-neoliberal poll of attraction.

That is one view, but there is clearly a debate amongst the radical left about the SNP, especially as many on the left have joined the organisation, and it is an important one that we should have.

Then we have the question of the Labour party who are going through a profound internal—and external—crisis. We are all well read on the reasons for this, and it is

unclear about how they might get out of it, if they can at all.

One thing we do know is that we must present a challenge to them from the left. Here, it is also interesting to think about the unions. We could be thinking about how we can connect the democratic revival in society as a whole into the workplace. If we could recruit into the unions the thousands of left-wing Yes-voting workers who are now politically engaged like never before, we could transform them.

## Mass resistance

And that is where we face another challenge. How can we build the best possible organisations to resist austerity. The waves of cuts and attacks on our rights that are coming and must be met with mass resistance.

It will not be good enough to simply advocate independence as the solution—though that must be an important part of our argument. At the same time we will need action in the here and now: demonstrations, occupations, strikes and so on.

Again, this raises questions about the SNP. They will

implement the cuts, but how will the movement react to this? Will the focus be on Westminster forcing the Scottish Government's hand? Do we raise the idea of running a deficit budget? Lots of questions, and lots of things we need to debate and discuss.

We have learned thanks to the independence process that when the left comes together we can do great things.

And here is the other big challenge that the socialist movement faces now.

Can we continue to use our collective strength in a post-referendum Scotland? I am very confident that we can.

Of course there will be disagreements about the way forward, but it is a real step in the right direction that we can have such debates together, while ensuring the left is a major part of the Scottish political scene.

Many reading this will have experienced those tiny public meetings in pubs, put on just to keep radical ideas afloat. Now we are filling out the Clyde Auditorium.

Change is never easy, but it is always easier when the forces advocating for it are united in their purpose.

by Sandra Webster,  
SSP national co-spokesperson

**IN THE** lead up to the referendum vote, the future of the welfare state was one of the issues referred to by the Scottish Government. Nicola Sturgeon talked of a fairer welfare state with little detail but the hope rested there in the ether.

Unfortunately, the No vote will impact on many peoples lives of all ages, gender and abilities and lead to the further dismantling of the welfare state.

As the SSP meets for our first post-referendum conference, it is important to be aware of some of the benefit cuts which are coming our way and will affect those both in and out of work.

While Cameron spoke of giving Scotland greater powers and the Queen purred asking us to remain in the union, it was obvious that some members of the ConDems were particularly quiet. Iain Duncan Smith and Lord Freud waited in the wings to see if they had been given the green light to continue with their campaign of benefit cuts which impact on some of the most vulnerable in society.

Now the status quo of Westminster is not under threat, in the next few years they can continue the dismantling of the safety net of the welfare state. So what will the near future hold for those of us who rely on benefits to top up poverty wages to exist?

## Controversial

Almost immediately after the result, Iain Duncan Smith announced a faster roll-out of Universal Credit, a controversial benefit which many charities have raised concerns about, as all benefits will be paid into one account.

Claimants will have to access this online and there are worries for those without access to a computer. The payment of Housing Benefit may mean that some people with more chaotic lifestyles may find it difficult to budget and may fall into arrears with their rent.

The under-25s in particular will be among the hardest hit. Cameron, when announcing an end to Housing Benefit to young people, claimed it would “nag and push” people into work and employment.

Most of those who currently receive housing benefit are young parents—some have been forced to leave home due to difficult family circumstances.

The ConDems are pushing the family unit as the safety net for young people but sadly, for many, this is not a safe place for them. For the first time ever, younger people are more



## Let's target the real scroungers

likely to be worse off than their parents' generation, as youth unemployment continues to rise and only dead end jobs or zero hour contracts are available.

A young comrade working for a fast food company told me how he had to pay a £50 deposit for his uniform which he would only get back after he leaves if it is in pristine condition, and how he has to hire his shoes for £5 a week.

Young people especially also seem to be targeted for benefit sanctions and forced to live on half of the amount the government say you need to live on.

Cuts are also on the agenda for those with disabilities and their carers. The Scottish Government estimates a 100,000 Scots will lose income with the roll-out of Personal Independence Payments.

While day centres and centres continue to close, disabled people and their carers are forced to choose direct payments.

Demeaning Work Capability Assessments will continue, when a pre-referendum pledge may have meant the end of them in Scotland. The cuts in child benefit will impact on women and children who again will be among the groups bearing the brunt of the cuts.

There are very difficult times ahead in the communities we live and work in. The ConDems will continue to attack the most vul-

nerable and use those in receipt of benefits as nothing more as cannon fodder in the race to the next election.

They are also ignorant of what it means to be vulnerable in today's society.

Lord Freud—the benefit reform “expert” for both Labour and ConDem governments—has shown he does not even know the difference between learning disability and mental ill health.

## Real scroungers

For them, anyone in receipt of benefits is a “scrounger”. We know who the real scroungers are though. Those who have made money in these dark days of austerity.

We have a lot to do, comrades, to highlight the attacks on the poor and to stand up for those most affected, because they are not ‘other people’ but our friends and family. They’re us.

I know we will continue to fight the cuts and we will need to watch out for those we care about. There is strength in numbers, and I could not wish for any better people to be there watching the backs of many of my friends.

As we continue to grow, let us ensure that we continue to highlight and tackle austerity and continue to fight for an independent socialist Scotland.