

**Election 2015: meet the
SSP candidates who
are fighting for workers**
• see pages 8, 9 & 10

**International Women's Day:
we look at the daily struggles
of women across the globe**
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£1 • issue 453 • 27th February – 12th March 2015
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Scottish Socialist Voice



SIR MALCOLM RIFKIND
£1,619/hour



JACK STRAW
£5,000/day



LOW PAID WORKER
£6.50/hour

AUSTERITY HYPOCRITES ALL IN IT TOGETHER

**Rifkind: 'unrealistic'
for MPs to live 'simply
on £60,000 a year'**



**Low paid workers
receive 20p 'boost'
to minimum wage**



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by Ken Ferguson

ONCE AGAIN the harsh spotlight of publicity has lit up the two faced money grasping hypocrisy behind Westminster's pro-austerity politicians.

Two of the supposed Mother of Parliament's "honourable gentlemen"—both ex-foreign secretaries Tory Sir Malcolm Rifkind and Labour's Jack Straw—were caught offering their services for hire to what they thought was a Chinese firm but turned out to be a journalistic sting.

Rifkind, a failed Edinburgh MP moved to upmarket Chelsea, explained that it was "quite unrealistic" for MPs to live "simply on £60,000 a year". Research by the *Daily Telegraph* and Channel 4 revealed that the going rate for Sir Malcolm's services was £1,619 an hour.

This from a man who was Secretary of State in Thatcher's government enforcing the Poll Tax, who has loyally backed sackings, cuts and the demonising of so called scroungers while peddling the lie that "we are all in it together".

Britain's spooks

As chairman of the Commons intelligence committee which oversees Britain's spooks, he might have been considered to be exactly the type of well-connected figure well worth buying by influence-seeking capitalists.

Straw's pay rate seems, compared with his Tory opposite number, almost modest at an economical £5,000-a-day.

He already earns a cool £60k a year (about the same as his MPs' salary) from a commodity firm and boasted to the undercover reporters of how he operated "under the radar" to get clients needs met. His background is as a



supporter of war and mayhem and a key figure in the long running New Labour drive to destroy their party as one representing working people to one guarding the interests of the super rich, oligarchs and speculators.

Both men spotlight the rotten "don't do as I do, do as I say" culture underpinning super rich rule in today's Britain.

We have of course been here before in the world of duck houses, John Lewis lists and, ultimately, prison cells.

However important as the exposure of individual wrong doing is the real issue is the existence, in Westminster, of a cosy club insulated from reality by a voting system which all but excludes all but a narrow band of opinion friendly to the gilded world of wealth and privilege.

That club was shaken by the mass movement sparked by last year's referendum and the rejection of the dismal drumbeat of austerity and war that resulted. It seems likely that one of the key

players in the defence of it, the Labour Party, is about to pay the price for their Better Together partnership with the still toxic Tories come May.

Of course all of this makes exciting copy for the opinion formers, pollsters and political scribes but we need to remember that both of the likely election winners in May favour a continuation at an increased tempo of the regime of cuts, sackings and privatisation.

Mass movement

Whatever the outcome then—minority/majority/coalition—a mass movement of action to defend the majority from the greed of the powerful minority will be essential if real change is to be won.

Here in Scotland of course the Westminster poll is a curtain raiser for next year's Holyrood elections and it is essential that maximum pressure be kept up for the widest possible powers to be delivered to Edinburgh and that they be matched by a

politics which can harness them to meet the needs of people and planet.

That's why in May the SSP is contesting seats in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Paisley to put the concrete alternatives that need to form part of that new politics before the voters.

Demands such as a £10 minimum legally enforced wage, banning of zero hours contracts, ban on fracking, equal pay for women and crucially MPs and MSPs paid a workers wage are at the heart of the SSP work both in the election and in workplaces and communities.

The forces mobilised and the hopes raised by the broad Yes movement for a more equal, just and sustainable Scotland remain very much alive and must continue to inform both the work of the wider left and progressive movement and those tens of thousands seeking real change putting people and planet before profit and greed.

Countering UKIP's myths with fact

by Colin Fox, SSP
national co-spokesperson

THE SCOTTISH Socialist Party's new booklet on 'UKIP, Europe and Immigration' offers a timely warning to socialists everywhere about the potency of unchecked right wing ideas.

It examines the rise in support for UKIP in order to equip SSP supporters with the arguments needed to counter them.

Dismissed by David Cameron as a party of 'fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists' in 2012 UKIP now has 40,000 members and hundreds of elected representatives. The 'secret of their success' has been to blame the decline in living standards on immigrants and claimants thus concealing the real culprits in the City of London.

Many mistakenly describe UKIP as 'fascists'. They are not. Fascism evokes the primacy of the state, argues for protectionism and intervention by the state in all aspects of society. That is anathema to the unfettered 'free market capitalism' of Nigel Farage.

Xenophobic

He is a right-wing conservative, a xenophobic 'Little Englander' who wants Britain to leave the EU because he sees it evolving into a centralist 'European Super state' he calls 'the EUSSR'.

The need to completely reform the European Union was again emphasised this week when the new Greek Government tried to renegotiate its crippling debts. The talks showed how the EU is ultimately run in the interests of its bankers.

If it is ever to be run in the interests of the peoples of Europe, all 500million of us, then a democratic, socially just pan-European plan needs to be set out and implemented. The SSP is committed to working in a pan-European alliance to achieve a



FACT: it wasn't immigrants, it was bankers, spivs and speculators who caused the financial crash, and we insist they pay for their misdeeds

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

socialist federation of democratic European nations.

Working class people are being fed an illusion by UKIP [and others] that leaving the EU will make things better. It will not. Leaving the EU puts the British working class at the mercy of those right-wingers behind Farage who will feel emboldened by their success.

There can be few other issues as incendiary as immigration in Britain today and UKIP exploits fears that surround it. This pamphlet provides a wealth of information to undermine UKIP's myths. A report for example published in November 2014 by University College London revealed 'Immigrants contributed far more to the UK Treasury than they took out since 2004, in the case of EU Immigrants £5billion more. And when fixed costs such as defence are taken out of the equation the figure reaches £10.5billion.'

Professor Christian Dustman—co-author of the report—found 'Immigrants are 43 per cent less likely than UK citizens to receive state benefits such as

tax credits and 7 per cent less likely to live in social housing.'

It made nonsense of UKIP's claim that workers moved to Britain for our 'generous welfare benefits'. They came here for work. Half of UK businesses now employ migrant workers [British Chamber of Commerce Nov 2014]. They tend to be younger, more qualified and desperate.

But of course UKIP has nothing to say about employers who exploit migrant and indigenous labour. Yet such behaviour is widespread. One case reported on BBC Radio Four's *Today* programme [19/12/14] exposed employers in Wisbech in Cambridgeshire caught paying Lithuanian migrant workers a £1/week to pick leeks which were then supplied to all the country's leading supermarkets.

If there is one country that should know about emigration and immigration it is surely Scotland. People have been leaving our shores for centuries in search of a better life. The brutality of the Highland Clearances

forced many thousands of Scots families to emigrate in the 19th century and Thatcher's 'industrial clearances' of the 1980s forced thousands more to follow suit. Whilst many have left others have arrived here in search of a better life.

My grandpa Mackin—himself the son of Irish immigrants—reflecting a widespread sympathy for immigrants would often say to me 'The poor souls. It must be bad where they were if they have come to Motherwell for a better life!'

The SSP welcomes migrant workers for they make this country economically, socially and culturally richer by coming here. They made a brave decision to leave their homeland to try and improve their lives often at great personal sacrifice.

Yet in return they often face employers who exploit them and hostile politicians who seek to scapegoat them for society's ills.

Blame the bankers

The Scottish Socialist Party is determined to stop UKIP and others from victimising working class people whether they are immigrants or not. After all it wasn't Romanians who caused the worst recession in 80 years or Bulgarians who bankrupted the economy. It wasn't immigrants who embezzled £100 billion by avoiding their tax obligations since 2008.

It wasn't immigrants who introduced the bedroom tax or sold off the Royal Mail. It wasn't immigrants who forced one million households in Scotland into fuel poverty. It wasn't immigrants caught red handed stealing hundreds of millions of pounds in the LIBOR scandal or insider trading on currencies.

It was the bankers, spivs and speculators who caused the crash and we insist they pay for their misdeeds.

by Hugh Cullen

IT WILL be no surprise to find out who wears the trousers in Downing Street's ConDem coalition. No matter how much spin he tries to put on it, the electorate have realised that the Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats have allowed the Tories to implement five years of destructive austerity and have failed on almost all of their campaign promises.

Even the bills that they were allowed to send to parliament as part of the coalition agreement; House of Lords and voting system reform; were watered down and bombed out in a commons vote.

Report

In October, a long awaited Home Office report could have changed the way that future generations look back on this government and the way that Nick Clegg goes down in history.

Lib Dem MP Lynne Featherstone spent a year looking at how other countries tackle drug use and came to the conclusion that most sociologists already know. Prohibition doesn't reduce drug use. At the time, we thought that this report could pave the way for one of the

Drugs laws furore costs lives

WHAT'S THE COMMOTION?
the herb is more than just a powerful potion



most progressive pieces of legislation that a Tory government has ever produced. After all, there is even a strong right-of-centre argument for legalisation on the grounds of personal liberty and freedom. The Conservative party has even had various think tanks on the issue over the years.

Instead, the right wing tabloid media sensationalised the story and the Tories soon pulled the plug on Nick's wee project for fear of losing even more traditional Tory votes to UKIP. David Cameron defiantly announced that he "doesn't want to send a message to kids that taking

drugs is acceptable". Thus reassuring the middle/upper classes, who don't typically have problems with illegal drugs, that he was a reliable dinosaur that they could put their faith and money into.

Did the Prime Minister read Mrs. Featherstone's report?

If he did then he would have found out that it doesn't really matter what message an Oxbridge toff broadcasts into the schemes of urban Britain, cannabis and harder drugs are readily available and generation after generation will turn to them to try and escape from the poverty created by his neoliberal agenda.

The Home Office report examined cases of cannabis decriminalisation, which are becoming more frequent every year in every continent.

The report found that it can take the supply and profit out of the hands of gangs and into a taxable process, reducing crime which is often seen as the most dangerous part of the cannabis trade.

Age restrictions can also be implemented on the purchase of a plant that world leaders (including our very own Mr Cameron) have admitted to using in their youth and is far

less damaging on your health than alcohol and tobacco.

Harder drugs like heroin are very different; there is no doubt that they are very bad for your mental and physical health. However, making the users criminals is counter-productive and unfair. Addicts are victims. Victims of a failed society and governments who have let them down for generations.

The report examined the Swiss solution to spiralling heroin and cocaine use in the country, for the state to provide heroin to addicts in state run facilities. The study found that treating heroin like a medical, not a criminal, issue made it easier to treat and fight the addiction.

Addicts were using clean needles, not having to steal to fund their habits, surrounded by healthcare professionals and provided a safe place to live while they got better.

This method works in Switzerland and other countries where it has been tested in reducing heroin consumption.

Decades behind

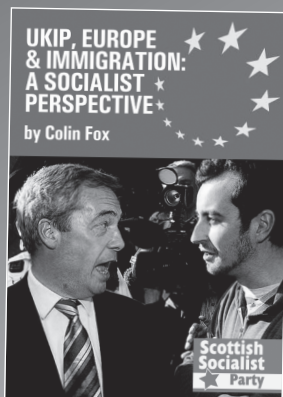
The lesson that the British political class should have learned from this report is that we are decades behind the rest of the world and our outdated approach to social problems is counter-productive and costing the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.

It shows that progressive thinking and compassion are more effective than hounding and locking up people who should be treated as victims.

Should we expect anything else from our out of touch government of millionaires who have no idea what really goes on in their country?

The SSP's new pamphlet on UKIP, Europe and immigration by SSP co-spokesperson Colin Fox. Order your copy: scottishsocialistparty.tictail.com

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Jack Ferguson unwraps the real story

A NEW study by the *British Medical Journal* is the latest to reveal the astonishing influence of the food industry in the UK over government policy on what we eat.

Sugar: Spinning a Web of Influence found that for the last decade two key government research committees advising the government on health and nutrition have undertaken studies with huge amounts of funding from private industry.

The studies that have helped shape government policy in relation to sugar were paid for by organisations such as Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestlé, the Institute of Brewing and Distilling, Weight Watchers International, NutriLicious (a public relations firm specialising in conveying “nutrition and health messages” for the food industry), Sainsbury’s, W K Kellogg Institute, and GlaxoSmithKline.

Substandard

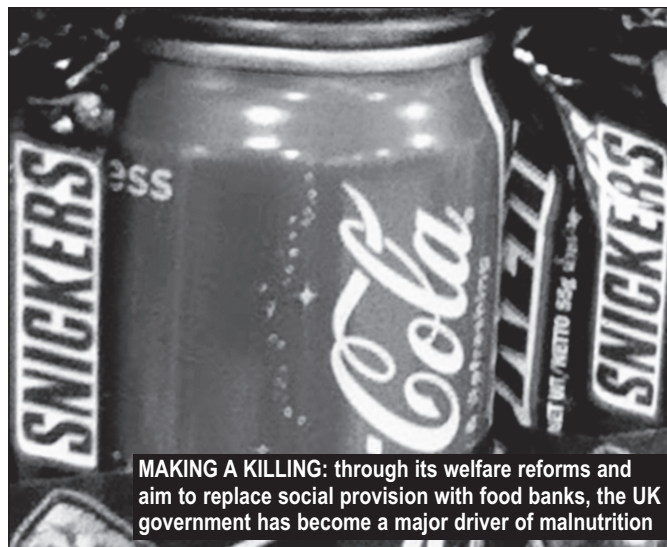
Their fear is that government policy could begin to mandate levels of sugar that it is legally permissible to add in to our food, as has happened to some extent in recent years with salt.

However, for many producers of processed food and ready meals, this poses a serious threat to the future of their business model, which is built on disguising substandard ingredients with plenty of the magic white stuff. Without it, much of their produce would taste disgusting.

This comes on top of last year’s news that five members of the government’s Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, charged with drawing up advice on the consumption of carbohydrates, had worked for the food industry previously, including Coca-Cola and Mars.

Medical pressure group Action on Sugar called on the group’s Chair, Ian MacDonald to step down, saying his failure to do so

JUNK FOOD BARONS’ STICKY FINGERS IN UK POLICY PIE



MAKING A KILLING: through its welfare reforms and aim to replace social provision with food banks, the UK government has become a major driver of malnutrition

raised “real concerns about prejudice by commercial concerns rather than scientific public health priorities.” His response was to promise he would “not attend advisory board meetings at Coca-Cola and Mars Europe at least until the...review is completed.”

These are part of a string of revelations that have detailed the extraordinary power of the food and pharmaceutical industry to shape state policy on what we put into our bodies.

While the UK food chain continues to provide substandard, mislabeled food that can endanger consumers’ health, they also fund expert advice in order to downplay issues any potential response by society.

As a result, UK food policy is only interested in the continued success of multinational firms producing industrialised commodities on a mass scale, with minimal government intervention over something as crucial to life as our food.

The consequences can ultimately be seen in the recent scandals over fake food, most notoriously horse meat sold as beef, but also including “crab” that is mostly fish paste and animal products of all kinds that are

mostly water. The government delayed as much as possible the publication of an independent inquiry into the scandal, fearing it would hit food profits.

When it was eventually published, the report found that an ideological commitment to deregulation had left the door wide open for organised crime to penetrate right into the heart of the British food system, meaning that meat barely fit for pet food was being recycled into human consumption, under lying labels.

All this has been drastically exacerbated by the impact of austerity since 2010, with laboratories and employees that allow local testing of the food quality hit hard by spending cuts.

Emblematic of the scandalously low levels of oversight of the UK food industry has been the career of Tim Smith.

As head of the Food Standards Agency, he was responsible for food regulation, and upholding the quality of what we eat. However, in a move reminiscent of so many other revolving-door careers that have seen senior government employees go work for the companies they were supposed to be regulating, he left in...to work for Tesco.

At the time David Cameron approved the move, on the condition that he did not lobby the government or civil servants for two years. However, even this minimal commitment proved too much to keep to for such a key corporate asset with unprecedented insight into the political side of food.

Last year *The Guardian* revealed that he had directly approached senior civil servants involved in investigating the shocking supply of dirty chicken in Britain—meat which spreads the potentially deadly *Campylobacter* bacteria. He argued that if the results of the studies became well known, people might shockingly enough be less inclined to buy chicken.

100 deaths a year

Campylobacter is the most common form of food poisoning in the UK, and causes the deaths of around 100 a year, and thousands more to get sick. Its spread is greatly facilitated by unhygienic, disgusting conditions in the mass production of chicken carcasses by an industry that fears little in the way of inspection.

Here we see in most stark relief why it’s not good enough for our elected representatives to see their job as ensuring the profitability of the food industry, rather than ensuring the public has a proper supply of decent, nutritious and affordable food.

Indeed, the government itself has, through its welfare reforms and aim to replace social provision with food banks, become a major driver of UK malnutrition. The need to build political opposition to the food industry’s power, and able to provide the regulation backed by science that our food supply needs, is ultimately a matter of life and death.

by *Richie Venton, SSP
national workplace
organiser*

A TALE of two classes; or two planets, more like!

All that is rotten and unequal about the capitalist economic system is reflected in the accompanying political system and the capitalist politicians, regardless of whether Tory or Labour.

Tory MP Malcolm Rifkind shamelessly asserted “it’s quite unrealistic to believe MPs will go through their parliamentary career being able to simply accept a salary of £60,000 a year”, as he told us mere mortals that he is “entitled” to earn “far, far more than that”.

With unfortunate timing for those who want working class people to put up with what we get and shut up from complaining, the annual Low Pay Commission’s report recommended a whopping 20 pence an hour rise on the national minimum wage next October! That’s £6.70 an hour if you’re 21 or over; apprentices should be suitably thankful for the 7 pence rise the LPC has proposed for them, to a giddy £2.80!

Great wages robbery

The bosses’ CBI has no hesitation in telling the working class to shut up and count their blessings. Spokesperson for the engorged rich, Katja Hall, said the CBI “welcomes this balanced approach”, adding:

“Any artificial increase due to political expediency will help no one and ultimately damage one of the most successful government policies of recent years.”

Artificial increase?! If the national minimum wage had increased by the 243 per cent rise enjoyed by company executives in the 15 years since it was introduced, it wouldn’t be £6.50, or £6.70,

MPs and Workers: a tale of two classes

but £18.89 a hour—now!

These creatures at the heart of big business buy politicians to do their bidding, shaping the tax laws, employment legislation and rampant privatisation that fattens their profits with obscene success.

Systematically driving down workers’ wages as a share of national wealth has been a central mission of successive Tory and Labour governments for the past 40 years. Otherwise, if wages as a percentage of GDP were at the same level today as they were in 1975, a worker currently on £12,000 would be earning £21,300; one on £20,000 would instead enjoy £31,300; and a worker on the current average wage of £27,200 would instead be on £35,931!

Two former government Ministers who played their part in hampering workers’ trade unions, hammering workers’ wages and helping boost capitalists’ rent, interest and profit are the disgraced reprobates Sir Malcolm Rifkind and Jack Straw.

Rifkind obviously takes the ‘far, far more than £60,000’ that he believes he’s ‘entitled to’. In fact he’s on £81,936 as

an MP and chairman of a Westminster Select Committee. Not to mention the £800,000 he’s grabbed in the last five years from the five jobs outside parliament that he actually declared.

Labour’s Jack Straw admits he earns—in one day—nearly as much as the annual wage of a worker on the £6.50 minimum on a 20 hour contract: “Normally if I’m doing a speech or something it’s £5,000 a day, that’s what I charge”.

Bloodsuckers

Up until he was caught on tape boasting about the price he can be bought for, Straw subscribed to Labour’s promise of an £8 minimum wage...but not until 2020, making it barely any more than today’s pathetic £6.50.

When Tory millionaire David Cameron told the assembled business fat cats of the British Chambers of Commerce that “Britain needs a pay rise”, you know there’s something happening in the real world.

First and foremost, there’s a general election in two months’ time. Secondly, the ruthless ruling class Cameron is part of

are increasingly scared a revolt is growing against the outrageous system of poverty pay these exploiters rely on to make record profits, directors’ bonuses and dividends to the big parasitic shareholders.

That’s how the three richest families in Scotland own more wealth than the poorest 20 per cent of people, and how Britain’s richest family has more in their pocket than 12.5 million people in the UK!

These capitalist bloodsuckers have drained workers dry, leaving one in five workers below the breadline; creating the longest, deepest fall in real wages since 1856; making the average Scottish worker £1,900 a year worse off than in 2010.

One of the central issues in the general election is poverty pay and galloping inequality. People face stark choices in those seats where the SSP has been able to afford to stand candidates.

Vote for Labour to continue their obnoxious track record of suppressing workers’ wages with the help of the Thatcherite anti-union laws they retained in government.

Vote for their bogus headline



VENDETTA TOGETHER: Tories fear a revolt growing against poverty pay

of an £8 minimum wage, ignoring the stark reality they are only promising this figure five years from now, 2020, with inflation meantime wiping out any meaningful increase this figure would mean.

Vote SNP, with their welcome but extremely limited support for the £7.85 Living Wage. Limited, because the level is still far below what is required to match the mounting cost of living, and limited because it's entirely voluntary, not legally enforceable, left to the whims and fancies of employers.

MPs workers' wage

Or people disgusted by corrupt politicians can vote for the SSP, and our relentless, determined campaign for a £10 minimum living wage for all over 16—now, not in 2020 or some other distant date.

MPs are so divorced from the struggles of everyday life faced by the rest of us that they have no interest in combating poverty pay.

Their current basic salary is £67,060. That's set to rise to £74,000 after the elections. But even that is not enough for many of them.

When the body that sets MPs' salaries—the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority—surveyed MPs' views on what they thought they should be paid, back in 2013, the AVERAGE response was £86,250!

Socialist measures

Of course MPs from all the 'mainstream' pro-capitalist parties will gladly pocket the full 'rate for the job'—and on top, many of them grab hundreds of thousands more on jobs outside parliament, treating being an MP as their 'day job'.

In contrast, any SSP MP or MSP will only take the average skilled worker's wage, to stay in touch with the working class we seek to represent and help fight for a sweeping redistribution of wealth through socialist measures.

Two classes; two planets! The SSP knows which class we fight for. And the despicable Malcolm Rifkind once said "The future is not what it used to be"! Let's make sure of that by organising for a socialist future than banishes poverty, inequality and corruption.

Cross Country tries to gag union over sacking of Edinburgh RMT member

by Voice Reporter

AS THE *Voice* went to press, rail union RMT accused Cross Country trains of trying to ban the distribution of fact sheets for the public and staff as the union continues balloting Cross Country staff at Edinburgh Waverley for both strike action and action short of a strike over the wholly unjustified dismissal of union member Charlie Letham.

In a letter, which is a measure of just how rattled the company are as the truth of their brutal treatment of Mr Letham comes under public scrutiny, they threaten to use the Railway Byelaws and to bring in the police to try and block the dissemination of official union material publicising the facts behind the dispute which has led to the current strike ballot.

Charlie Letham has been dismissed by Cross Country for allegedly missing his revenue targets despite the fact that the company procedure quite clearly stipulates that any underlying issues shall be taken into account when the "CRISP" assessment is applied. This was very clearly important in the case of Mr Letham who has suffered from medical and personal problems. In fact, both his GP and the company doctor made several recommendations to the company to assist them in aiding our member in the workplace.

However, management simply refused to acknowledge Charlie Letham's underlying health problems and ignored the recommendations from the medical professionals before proceeding to sack him.

'Threats and intimidation'

RMT General Secretary Mick Cash said:

"RMT is appalled that rather than sitting down and resolving this dispute Cross Country has chosen to resort to threats and intimidation to try and gag the union and prevent the dissemination of the facts which have forced us into this strike ballot.

"Charlie Letham has been a loyal union member for 15 years and has done everything he can to continue working in his normal capacity. However, Cross Country management decided that the easiest solution was to dismiss our member despite the weight of medical evidence.

"This is not a situation that can go unchallenged and is a shocking abuse of power demonstrated by the company management. As a result, the union's executive committee has decided to ballot our all our Cross Country members at Edinburgh Waverley for strike action and industrial action short of a strike, to force the company to re-employ Brother Letham.

"RMT remains available for talks aimed at resolving this dispute, talks which would make a lot more sense than the issuing of these provocative and inflammatory threats by the company."

SSP ANNOUNCES GENERAL ELECTION CHALLENGE

THE SCOTTISH Socialist Party's preferred option following last year's historic referendum was to present 'Independence Alliance' candidates in the 2015 General Election, uniting the Scottish Greens, the SNP and the SSP.

It was and remains our belief this approach would have provided the best chance for our movement to unseat the greatest number of Labour MPs in Scotland and increased the chances of securing the maximum devolution of powers to Holyrood.

In the absence of such an agreement, the SSP will fight a limited number of seats in May, to present our own unique case for independence and to spell out the extra powers that a progressive Scottish Government could use to improve the lives of most Scots.

Powers to benefit millions

We favour powers which will benefit millions of Scots such as:

- **The introduction of a £10-an-hour living wage for all and an end to zero hour contracts**
- **Opposition to austerity, cuts to local services and privatisation**
- **Building 100,000 high quality public housing for rent**
- **Replacing the Council Tax with an income based alternative called the Scottish Service Tax**
- **The expansion of green energy programmes including wind, solar and hydro electric generation under public ownership to combat fuel poverty**
- **Nationalise railways and make Scottish public transport free**
- **Scrap Europe's most repressive anti-union laws**

In contesting seats in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Paisley, the SSP puts forward policies to benefit Scotland's working class majority and ensure our natural resources are used to benefit the people as a whole, not merely a tiny, rich elite and tax dodging corporations.

It's time to move to a society which puts people and the planet before greedy profiteers—an independent socialist Scotland—that is the SSP's message for the May election and beyond.

Sandra's soapbox tour

by Sandra Webster

YOU MAY find this unusual but I have never stood for election before. I have been the leafleter and the canvasser the woman who stood at stalls.

I always persuaded myself that I was not a politician just someone who wanted to make a difference.

Then I became a member of the SSP and with the encouragement of my branch stood as co-spokesperson of the SSP. The past couple of years have helped me find my voice. I have spoken all over Scotland for the SSP, Women for Independence and the Yes campaign. I have learned so much.

This has led me to the place where I stand today as a candidate for the General Election in Paisley South and Renfrewshire the seat currently held by Douglas Alexander.

I do feel weight on me and am mindful I am the only female candidate. I feel I have a responsibility to all the women in the party and those who have stood in the past and our future candidates.

I want to make this a positive campaign with no political attacks. Just spreading the message that as a party we can dare to be different and offer an alternative to voters.

Look of disdain

I decided to stand when on referendum night, I saw Douglas Alexander shake hands with a Tory who was there representing the No campaign outside my local primary school. I called him out and he looked at me with such disdain. I will never forget that.

The tribal system of two party politics suit Westminster well. They can take turns to be in opposition while churning out the same old policies. It suits them they can continue to draw their wages of sin while gently complaining. Meanwhile we are offered nothing but the same old way.

Enough is enough. It is time for a change.

In our election campaign we are going to remain positive. We also intend to visit all or as many as the working class areas in the electoral ward. I say

we as I am lucky to have a great team around me who help with press, and offer great support.

We were mindful of the Margo mobile but don't have the resources to fund a vehicle so we decided to have a Soapbox and encourage local activists and local people to come along and meet me and say what they want from our elected representative. We will have live music and distribute leaflets most of all let them know they have someone who is a neighbour and can represent them.

The soapbox tour started on a wet and windy day in my local area. It was grim weather but people were interested to hear our message especially around zero hour contracts.

As the weather improves we will be having soapbox events throughout the campaign and have local people sharing the mike.

#GetDougietelt

I am the only candidate who stays in the ward. We are standing against the political apparatus of the larger parties. We know though that our policies are second to none and we are proud to share these with the local community.

I'll mostly be emphasising that I'm a true neighbour who understands the impact of other parties' policies on individual lives. We will keep this campaign upbeat and not get involved with personal attacks just other party policies.

I see this as an opportunity to "Get Dougie telt" and let my neighbour know what a true socialist alternative can deliver.

This will of course build on the elections coming up in 2016 and 2017.

We will all learn from this experience. So, a few busy months ahead. Please like our VoteSandra4PaisleySouth our FB page and like me the candidate.

If you can come along to the Soapbox tour we will print dates on the FB page.

We would be grateful if you could come and help us with leafleting and canvassing. Looking forward to a few busy months ahead where we remind my community they have a choice of who they vote for and they can dare to be different.

Meet the SSP election candidates

Colin Fox Edinburgh South

Colin Fox is the Scottish Socialist Party's candidate in Edinburgh South for the General Election in May. Colin is the SSP's national co-spokesperson and lives in The Inch with his wife and two teenage children. He is a "well kent face" in the constituency having served as an SSP MSP between 2003 and 2007. No one has credentials to match Colin Fox for standing up for working people in Edinburgh South.



Bill Bonnar Glasgow South West

Bill Bonnar has been active in the socialist movement in Scotland, London and North Africa since the early 1970s. A founder member of the Scottish Socialist Party, he is currently its co-chairperson. Since leaving university, Bill has worked in the field of Community Development and Economic Regeneration. This includes two years as a Community Worker in South Lanarkshire, nine years as Development Officer for two community-based projects in Drumchapel, nine years as Regeneration Officer with housing associations in Cambuslang, Govan and Castlemilk and five years as Social Enterprise Advisor with Glasgow Regeneration Agency. He has a strong connection with the Glasgow South West constituency; particularly with the Greater Govan area. As stated earlier, he worked for nearly two years for Govan Housing Association and when Glasgow Regeneration Agency became Jobs & Business Glasgow, he worked for two years in their Govan office. He is married with two daughters.



Sandra Webster Paisley & Renfrewshire South

"I am standing in the Paisley and Renfrewshire South constituency. I am the only local person standing in the constituency and am a true neighbour. Not the type who pops round every four year and expects to get elected now. I believe our policies can deliver so much to my community and am proud to be able to share them. This campaign will be community led and we will be targeting voters who have not voted before. We offer an alternative to the continuing austerity which a vote for the major parties will mean. I have such a strong, hardy team behind me who I can't thank enough for their time, patience and effort. We will remind people that we are here and build on the vote for the 2016 and 2017 elections. This is my first time standing as a candidate and I am looking forward to the challenges ahead. We will learn lots and come out on the other side with a smile on our face if a bit exhausted. Hope to see you on the campaign trail."



Liam McLaughlan Glasgow East

Liam is an 18 year old history and politics student who also works part-time as a sales assistant. Born and brought up in the East End for all of his 18 years, he lives in a rented housing association flat with his mum who has brought him up as a single parent. Liam became active in politics at the age of 16 after researching a solo talk on Scottish independence for his standard grade English class. He has appeared in the BBC *Question Time* audience twice, and joined the SSP in late 2013. Liam was co-founder of the Glasgow North and East branch of the Radical Independence Campaign and the RIC School Students Network. He has a deep knowledge of Glasgow's East End and a passionate commitment to making it a better place to live in for all.



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by Calum Martin,
Edinburgh South &
Midlothian SSP

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

across Scotland must be echoing with the sound of grating steel this week, as one after another, council administrations have begun sharpening their axes. Cuts are coming.

In Edinburgh the fragility of the claims of Labour and SNP to be truly anti-austerity was revealed, as the Labour-SNP administration of the city council committed itself to some £22million pounds of cuts this year.

Some 1,200 council workers will lose jobs during these first rounds of cuts, and plans have been announced for a total of £67million worth of cuts by the end of 2018.

It's not just Edinburgh. In the Highlands Local Authority, run by a coalition administration involving both Labour and the SNP, it was reported that almost 1000 council workers were set to have their jobs lost as the council considers some £64million worth of cuts.

SNP: cuts 'desirable'

Meanwhile the Labour majority administration of Glasgow City Council has forced through at least £28.9million of cuts. The list goes on. The length and breadth of Scotland the axes are falling. Yet both these parties have argued that setting and implementing austerity budgets doesn't mean they're not anti-austerity!

Indeed SNP councillor Alasdair Rankin, the finance leader for the Edinburgh City Council administration, even went so far as to argue that these cuts were in some way desirable, describing them as being aimed at building a "leaner, fitter and more agile" council, which would be more

Service Tax challenge to council austerity budgets

"user-friendly for residents and the business community".

The reality? These cuts will continue to get worse. With most wage rates effectively stagnating—or worse, facing real term falls—already hard pressed families and individuals will find things getting worse, and as always seems to be the case under the austerity management of 21st century Scotland, it will be the most vulnerable in our communities who will be hardest hit.

At the end of the day, the SNP and Labour councillors have all broadly agreed on

manner. Whilst these parties perform their Punch-and-Judy routine attacking each other for cuts they themselves are complicit in, neither have ever made use of these powers to implement the measures necessary to avoid these cuts—and it doesn't take a radical move to do so!

The Scottish Service Tax is the Scottish Socialist Party's answer to the claims that nothing can be done to avoid these cuts. The proposition is simple, the case undeniable.

Holyrood has full legislative power over Scottish local

the vast majority be either substantially better off, or at least no worse off in terms of tax burden—significantly improving the intended effect of the council tax freeze; but the total revenue raised nationally would be sufficient not only to avoid cuts, but to actively invest in the future of our public services.

There is a new SSP pamphlet currently being written with further information and statistics on the Scottish Service Tax.

Scottish Socialist Party MSPs and Local councillors never have and never will vote for a single cut. Moreover we can stand proud in a record of having consistently advocated clear and effective alternatives to austerity that remain well within the scope of the powers of Holyrood and of local councils.

The Scottish Socialist Party has consistently argued that Holyrood should scrap the Council Tax and replace it with a local income tax – or 'Scottish Service Tax' – based on six bandings:

The first £0-£10,000 would go tax free
Income between £10,000 and £30,000 would be taxed at 4.5 per cent
Income between £30,000 and £40,000 would be taxed at 15 per cent
Income between £40,000 and £50,000 would be taxed at 18 per cent
Income between £50,000 and £90,000 would be taxed at 21 per cent
Income above £90,000 would be taxed at 23 per cent

Example: on an income of £14,000 a year, the first £10,000 is under Band 1, so you would pay no tax on that. The following £4000 would be taxed at 4.5 per cent, under band 2, giving you a total annual bill of £180

their story. They frequently appear arguing that a simple managerial exercise; that they have no option but to pass austerity budgets because of Holyrood. The problem with that is that they have both in turn been in charge at Holyrood!

Whilst we need more powers, Holyrood does already have the power to implement policies to not only avoid council austerity altogether, but to do so in a manner which fundamentally redistributes wealth from the rich to the poor in a progressive and equitable

government, and that includes the Council Tax.

The SSP has consistently argued that Holyrood should scrap the council tax and replace it with a local income tax, based on six bandings (see table above).

For an example, on an income of £14,000 a year, the first £10,000 is under Band 1, so you would pay no tax on that. The following £4000 would be taxed at 4.5 per cent, under band 2, giving you a total bill of £180 each year under this example.

Under these proposals we would find that not only would

Clear alternative

Councillors are not meant to be elected to make cuts. Councillors are meant to stand up for our communities, not push them down. If you want to see the job local councillors are meant to do, just look at Jim Bolland, the SSP councillor in West Dunbartonshire and you'll the difference a representative on our side can make: standing up with working people, to protect communities, not to attack them.

We have a clear alternative to austerity, and a clear way to deliver it. It's time to challenge austerity not just at a Holyrood or Westminster, but also at home. No cuts. Not Now. Not Ever.

by Bill Bonnar

New Cold War at heart of Ukraine crisis

DURING THE Cuban missile crisis of 1963 the American Government declared that it would never accept enemy nuclear weapons located near its borders nor would it ever tolerate the establishment of any kind of hostile military base. Even if this meant the start of World War Three.

Now look at Russia. Since the fall of the Soviet Union; Russia has been systematically surrounded by countries which have joined Nato, have foreign military bases established on their territories and in many cases are launch pads for nuclear weapons targeted at Russian population centres.

Yet when Russia takes action to stop this encroachment it is branded an aggressor. It is all part of a newly emerging Cold War.

Vladimir Putin may be an autocratic President at the head of a regime of corrupt oligarchs and therefore someone the West should be happy to deal with but his pursuit of Russian national interests is seen as undermining strategic western interests.

Yeltsin's sponsors

How they must long for the days of the alcoholic and mentally unstable Boris Yeltsin always happy to do a deal with his western sponsors.

This new Cold War is being actively promoted by the United States keen to build up its extensive military presence in the region in particular through its support for a range of corrupt and despotic dictatorships in former Soviet republics. It is also being driven by a rapacious arms industry always looking for new contracts and markets.

Much has been made of Russian intervention in Ukraine; in the mostly Russian east of the country. Yet look at the facts. It is estimated that more than 6000 people have been killed. Almost all are ethnic Russians killed by Ukrainian forces. A third of a million people have fled to refugee camps along the Russian border. Almost



AUTOCRAT: Putin is seen as undermining strategic western interests

all are ethnic Russians fleeing Ukrainian attacks. In fact the main complaint by these people is not intervention by Moscow but the lack of such intervention.

There needs to be a negotiated political settlement within Ukraine and between Ukraine and Russia. This settlement must be based on recognition of Ukraine's territorial integrity, the rights of minorities within Ukraine and Russia's strategic interests in the region.

Western interference in this area to date has consistently undermined this process; encouraged Ukrainian reactionary forces and threatened Russia's national interests. Proposing that Ukraine join Nato would be viewed in Moscow almost as a declaration of war.

Joining would mean the establishment of American military bases on Russia's western border with nuclear missiles and would be seen as a direct threat to Russian national security. It would be the equivalent of Russia establish-

ing a military base on the Mexican-American border with missiles pointed at Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The failure to comprehend Russia's security concerns was highlighted in a recent House of Lords report. Defending its borders from potential attacks is the central factor governing Russian foreign policy and is rooted in its modern history.

In the months after the Russian Revolution the Bolsheviks signed the Treaty of Brest Litovsk with the German Government ending Russia's involvement in World War One.

Germany imposed a harsh settlement annexing huge areas of territory. During the Russian Civil War between 1918 and 1921 the country was invaded by the armies of fourteen different countries supporting the counter revolution and with an eye to acquiring Russian lands.

During the Second War the country was again invaded by Germany. Twenty million Rus-

sians died and almost the entire country devastated. This last invasion is burned into the collective folk memory of modern Russians particularly when they look at events in Ukraine.

During the German occupation many Ukrainians sided with the Nazi's and it was from its advanced positions in Ukraine that Germany was able to launch a wider offensive against the rest of the country.

Aggressive Nato

This is certainly not the situation today although pictures of Ukrainian militias sporting Nazi regalia don't help the Ukrainian cause.

Nato, an aggressive instrument during the Cold War, has been expanding since the end of the Soviet Union. Driven by American imperialism and by the huge American arms industry it is constantly on the lookout for its next war. Having destroyed Iraq and Libya it has been actively building its presence in North Africa and the Middle East with the establishment of permanent military bases to ensure American hegemony in the region.

In Latin America its equivalent has been consistently expanded particularly under the Obama Administration ready to intervene against progressive governments and roll back the tide of history on that continent.

Since its establishment in 1949 it has been an instrument of war and aggression; the military wing of global capitalism. When Scotland finally wins independence, one of the first items on the agenda will be the withdrawal from Nato. If an independent Scotland is to play a progressive role in world affairs it cannot be as a member of this nuclear club.

by Sandra Webster, Katie Bonnar,
Hollie Cameron, Jenni Gunn and
Christine McVicar

'MAKE IT happen' is the theme of this year's International Women's Day. The day we celebrate the uniqueness we offer the world and celebrate our tenacity in difficult times.

It is a time to look to the past and the brave women such as Rosa Luxemburg, Mary Barbour, the suffragettes who campaigned for women's rights. They offer us some much needed support and courage in our day to day struggles and our desire to create a more equal society.

Their voices from the past call out to us that we can make it happen. We also remember the struggles of women across the globe and we are mindful of the women of Greece who have had to cope with the impact of austerity on their own and loved ones lives.

Austerity kills. In Greece, a 56 year old quadriplegic woman died when her power supply was cut off by her energy supplier due to a debt. Her family are now engaged in a legal battle for justice.

Suicide

Many women have also taken their own life. According to the BMJ Open there was a 35.8 per cent increase in the number of women who committed suicide. The most vulnerable are those most affected.

A local Greek charity, SOS Children villages saw a 45 per cent increase in single parent's asking for support.

Dr Makon of Kalmata General Hospital observed a 39.2 per cent increase in women's heart attacks.

The cause? There was no access to the medication they needed.

Greek women in these dark times have had to make it happen. They have created creches, offered free medical care taken up the role of the state. They were also front and central in Syriza.

IWD 2015 celebrates the power and tenacity of women who make a difference wherever they live. They change the world in local communities and are everyday heroines who light the path as amazing women always have and always will.

"Go home and sit still". This is what

8th March: International Women's Day

LET'S MAKE IT HAPPEN!

PHOTO: Craig Maclean



Elsie Inglis was told when she offered to set up a hundred bed hospital during WW1. She went on and set up hospitals in Serbia and The Russian Front. What would have happened if she had gone home and sat still?

In Glasgow, the Women's Library have been organising workshops around the suffragettes and will be marching on 7 March at 2pm from the library to Glasgow Green, so get involved.

To all the amazing women we know, we applaud you for all you do.

Women in our party have used their voices to campaign at Faslane, to support Women For Independence, to always struggle for our voices to be heard.

We thank you all and offer our support to all women who in their day to day struggles, or as part of wider campaigning help make our world a better place to live in.