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hate group plan
Scottish demo
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on why Labour's domination in
Scotland is finally at an end
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**As bakers' union
spearheads
fast food pay fight**

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ISN'T PIE IN
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by Ken Ferguson

MURPHY'S LIPS ARE MOVING...

NO NEED for a smart watch to count the ticking countdown to what looks increasingly like Labour's date with doom on 7 May.

Just count the increasingly frantic policy announcements from Messiah Murphy as he twists and squirms to reposition Scottish Labour in Scotland's mainstream.

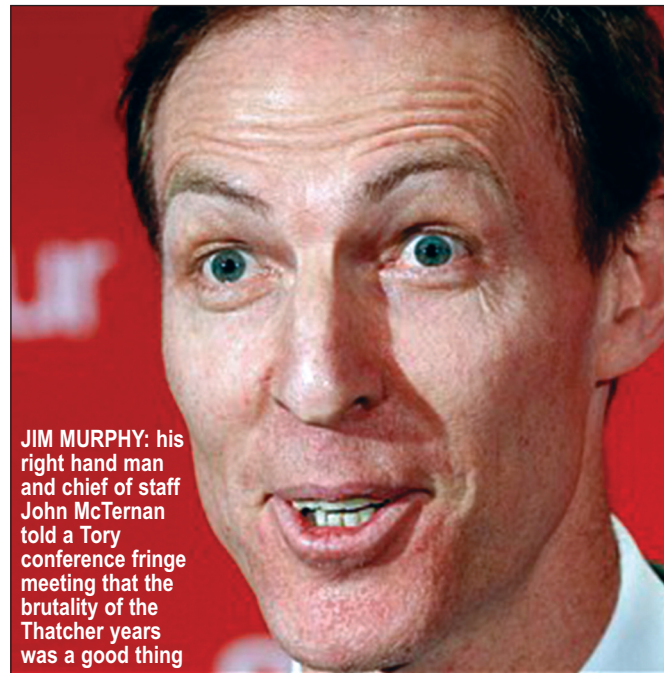
A thousand nurses, cash for young workers, public ownership of rail—the left sounding promises come thick and fast.

But there's a problem. The ideas being sold by Murphy are ones which the arch Blairite has spent his political life opposing and voting against.

Credibility gap

An outstanding example is his pledge not to introduce tuition fees if Labour takes power in Holyrood in the future. Let's leave aside the fact that pledges on tuition fees after the Clegg betrayal face a credibility gap, Murphy was a member of the Blair parliament that introduced them and enthusiastically backed them.

In many ways this far from mainstream issue has become of symbolic importance in the mind of a public who know



JIM MURPHY: his right hand man and chief of staff John McTernan told a Tory conference fringe meeting that the brutality of the Thatcher years was a good thing

that Murphy, like failed Prime Minister Gordon Brown and incorrigible warmonger Lord Reid enjoyed a fee-free grant-supported university education before hauling up the ladder for others and saddling them with debt.

No amount of policy posturing seems able to erase the public's belief that the once people's party is, like the other Westminster politicians, is just as self-seeking and servants of the rich and powerful.

Faced with this, Comrade

Murphy's heart must have been in his boots when, on the heels of more "socialist" rhetoric, a recording emerged of his right hand man and chief of staff John McTernan telling a Tory conference fringe meeting that the brutality of the Thatcher years was a good thing.

Pit closures, Ravenscraig demolished, Poll Tax introduced—the list is a long one and burnt the idea of the anti-Scottish Tories into the public mind.

Now the recent hugging and kissing—literally in some cases—with Scottish Labour and Thatcher's heirs in Better Together is a central reason for their near terminal crisis.

The rapid rise of the SNP and the likelihood that they are about to replace Labour as the dominant force in Scottish politics is discussed in some detail in this *Voice* and it has proved a significant attraction for many on the left with clearly progressive policies against Trident renewal, on equality and opposition to the privatisation madness sweeping England's NHS

alongside demands for an anti-austerity programme.

However, leaving aside the speculation about the post-May landscape, the issue is how the left advances ideas and campaigns to meet the real needs of people and how to fashion the forces to make them a reality.

One myth that must be put to the sword is that idea that socialist ideas are old fashioned and out of date.

Poll after poll shows support for key socialist demands such as public ownership of rail and profiteering power companies, and an NHS without greedy money-seekers leeching on it are highly popular.

Likewise, socialist ideas have a key role to play in solving the housing crisis with a large scale programme building quality sustainable homes for rent or tackling pollution with free public transport.

Political will required

The ideas and resources to take head on the major problems of poverty, inequality and spiralling rents exist. What is required is the political will to introduce them.

The Scottish Socialist Party has fought for such policies since its formation in 1998, and it is its pioneering work which has led to gains such as a free prescription and free school meals—both originally proposed by the SSP.

In the teeth of austerity and war, faced with a spiralling social and environmental crisis, we boldly assert that another Scotland in another world is both possible and vitally necessary.

We will work all-out to win that struggle, and work with others of like mind to bring it about.

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Fiz Garvie reports

IN THE last few days and weeks, the 'Pegida' phenomenon has been spreading from Germany where it first started in October 2014 to other European countries, including Denmark, Belgium and now the UK where it staged its first demonstration in Newcastle on 1 March with further plans to march in London and Edinburgh. What is it and why is it happening now?

Pegida is an acronym for 'Patriotic Europeans against Islamisation of the Occident (West)'. Its leader is Lutz Bachmann who initially had to resign after photos of him in a Hitler outfit appeared on social media; he has since been re-elected amongst ongoing internal faction-fighting and despite (or perhaps because of) his well-known links to the fascist NPD (National Party of Germany).

NPD is the biggest fascist organisation in Germany with 5,000 members but has had very little electoral success in the past few years as right-wing extremists have regrouped around other organisations. Some of these were electoral parties such as 'AfD'—Alternative for Germany—set up in 2013 with an anti-EU, anti-immigrant programme, but increasingly, fascists are taking openly to the streets—and Pegida seems to have given them exactly the opportunity they were looking for.

Brutal history

There is a history of brutal attacks on immigrants, asylum-seekers and anti-fascists in both east and western Germany, with 184 people murdered by neo-Nazis between 1990-2012 and 68 arson attacks on refugee hostels.

Pegida originated in Dresden, the capital of Saxony in eastern Germany, with weekly demonstrations of several thousands, and has remained strongest there, with 15,000 marching through the centre of town on 28 February. NPD-councillors marched openly with them plus football hooligans from local club Dy-

Pegida plague creeps beyond German base



DEMO: following their recent demo in Newcastle, where they were totally outnumbered by an anti-fascist counter demo, Pegida UK are planning to demonstrate in Edinburgh on 21 March

namo, to such an extent that Dresden police said they couldn't guarantee to prevent violence.

In general, the police doesn't have a good reputation for clamping down on the extreme right, being 'blind in the right eye' as the saying goes.

However, despite the obvious parallels with organisations like the English Defence League, Pegida also draws its support from some middle class voters who fear a loss of social status and the fragile economic gains made in better years; and the usual anti-immigrant rhetoric finds favour with those who already feel themselves second class citizens within Germany as a whole, where the legacy of reunification has meant lower wages and more economic insecurity in the east.

Less than 0.5 per cent of Dresden's population is Muslim; but the fact that the main left-wing party, Die Linke, has not stood up for its poorer citizens in east Germany is probably more sig-

nificant. They have formed local government coalitions with the Christian Democrats (Conservatives) and voted to privatise social housing where there is a shortage. In Saxony too Die Linke lost 15,000 votes to AfD because they were seen as part of the 'establishment'.

A survey by national television channel ZDF mid-January showed 17 per cent supported the Pegida demos in Dresden while 74 per cent were against. Germany has a proud and strong history of anti-fascist and anti-racist resistance and the Pegida marches were met with counter-demos many times their size all over Germany.

On 28 February, 72,000 people marched in the big cities, organised by trade unions, anti-fascist organisations, youth groups, refugee support agencies, churches and charities.

In Dresden itself, there was a 'Refugees Welcome' demo and an immigrants' camp was set up

outside the famous Opera; this was subsequently attacked by Pegida supporters and then taken down by police.

But Germany's terrible history of fascism in the last century means that there is a huge awareness of the dangers this type of movement presents and a huge willingness on the part of young people, the trade unions and progressive groups in society to ensure fascism can never take hold again.

They also understand that they can't rely on politicians and police to prevent racists and fascists from raising their ugly heads and must organise themselves.

Germany is now well into its second term of austerity politics, cuts in social services, attacks on workers' living standards, privatisation and growing social inequality under Angela Merkel.

Austerity narrative

After the banking crisis, it didn't suffer as deep a recession as the UK but the economy is slowing down; indeed according to the Bundesbank (German Central Bank) report in December, it is now hampered by a lack of skilled labour and actually calls for 500,000 immigrants to fill the gaps!

So immigration is not a real issue but in countries where there is little difference between left and right, Pegida will find a foothold. And in the UK, where Labour goes along with the Tories' austerity narrative, disillusioned and desperate voters will turn to the likes of Pegida and UKIP, falling for their lies and racist rhetoric—unless we stop them, get bodies on the ground and promote a socialist alternative to the misery of capitalism.

SSP national workplace organiser **Richie Venton** spoke to the Regional Officer of the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union, **Alan Milne**

RICHIE ASKED Alan about the background to his union moving the motion—passed unanimously!—that committed the British TUC to a national minimum wage of £10 per hour for all workers. They also discussed the BFAWU's 'Hungry for Justice' campaign, which targets Fast Food workers to organise them and win a £10 minimum.

"We agreed at our national union conference to campaign for a £10 minimum wage.

"We since got support for it at the TUC conference. Part of what are doing is the Fast Food Campaign across the whole UK. We've already been on the streets of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen.

"We want to explain to people that £10 is the basic minimum people can survive on. We need people spending again.

"A lot who work in the likes of McDonald's, Burger King, KFC, and Starbucks are on the minimum wage and often Zero Hours Contracts.

Common sense

"They get help off the government in supplements. So we're paying for people to work in companies like Starbucks whose profits go abroad.

"That will never make our economy viable.

"A £10 minimum would cut off a lot of benefits, but it would give people pride because they wouldn't be

Bakers' union leads fight for £10 min. wage



relying on state handouts.

"They'd feel they were contributing to society, buying products, keeping others in a job. A lot of people think what we say makes common sense.

"I was listening to a Labour MP in Durham, one more on the left, at a Northern TUC meeting about the Living Wage, where we were as usual pushing for the £10.

"He couldn't see anything wrong with it himself, but told us there are many in the Parliament think companies will pull out of the country if we push the minimum wage too high, or if we push too hard for them to pay taxes.

"But what if we didn't have Starbucks on our high streets, what would happen?

"Somebody else would take over, maybe a local company, one paying taxes, unlike Starbucks.

"Why should we

subsidise companies like this, when our money is going abroad through the profits they make?

"If companies were taxed right, all workers could have a £10 minimum, and more than that in many companies.

"It would give them a reasonable lifestyle, not a great one, but reasonable, and they'd be spending, paying taxes, helping the country to survive.

"Most of the Fast Food companies pay the National Minimum Wage. And the likes of McDonald's, KFC, Burger King and the pubs also rely on Zero Hours Contracts.

Target low wages

"One company I was dealing with told workers 'You're not on Zero Hours Contracts, we will give you up to 40 hours a week'. Up to! It's a joke.

"McDonald's told people yes, we'll give you work,

it's Zero Hours Contracts, but we'll guarantee you four hours a week!

"Also, we have evidence that a majority of the people employed by these fast food companies are younger, meaning they're on the lower rate of minimum wage, which makes a huge difference to the wage bill.

"We're targeting these companies to put pressure on them. They don't recognise unions or properly negotiate. We are linking up with similar campaigns in the USA.

"Now the USA is one of the most brutal societies when it comes to workers' rights.

"But in Seattle they've won a \$15 minimum, and it's working for the state.

"I've no doubt the capitalist system will cry out against the Seattle minimum wage, but it's working there, so why not in the UK too?"

by John McAllion

WESTMINSTER POLITICS

has long been haunted by the spectre of Scottish independence. Since the SNP's Winnie Ewing sensationally captured the previously rock solid Labour seat of Hamilton in 1967, there have been successive waves of devolved initiatives loosed in the forlorn hope of permanently and finally cementing Scotland into the now 308 year-old Union.

Starting with Ted Heath's infamous Declaration of Perth in 1968, both the Tories and Labour have tried to pass off power devolved (i.e. allowed) from Westminster as the real deal on Home Rule and the settled will of the Scottish people.

A series of commissions from the one initially led by Lord Crowther in 1969 through to Lord Smith's that reported last year have all sought to suffocate demands for genuine Scottish autonomy.

These Commissions spawned various white papers, Scotland Acts, a failed (1979) and a successful (1999) devolution referendum.

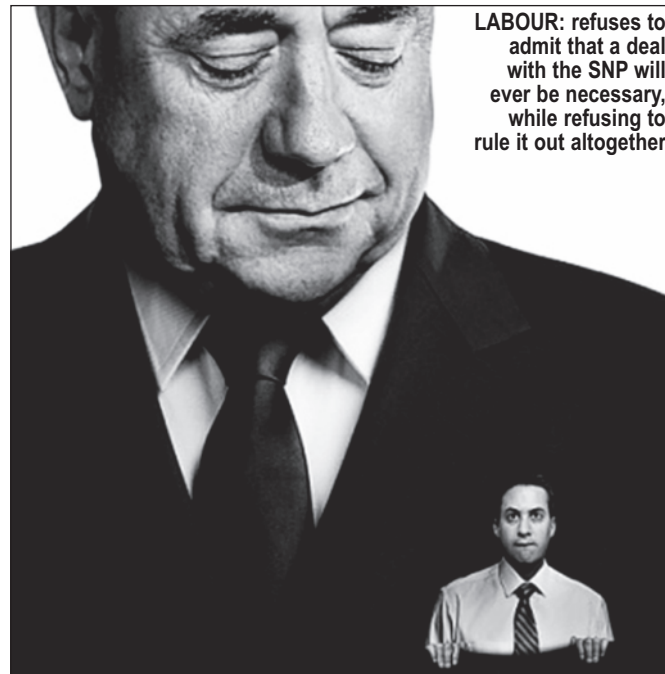
Failed strategy

Along the way, this devolution bandwagon gave rise to a cross party Constitutional Convention and various grassroots campaigns from Scotland United to Common Cause and Democracy for Scotland. From a unionist perspective, the purpose all of this activity was, in the infamous words of George Robertson, "to kill nationalism stone dead".

Today's majority SNP Government in Holyrood and last year's independence referendum stand as witness to the continuing failure of this unionist strategy. Moreover, despite the No Campaign's "decisive" victory in that referendum, Scottish public opinion has stubbornly refused to accept that it is all over now for the cause of independence.

The latest polls on voting intentions show the SNP set to

WILL WESTMINSTER'S INDY NIGHTMARE RETURN AFTER MAY?



LABOUR: refuses to admit that a deal with the SNP will ever be necessary, while refusing to rule it out altogether

win as many as 50 of Scotland's 59 Westminster seats in two months' time.

The inevitable panic in unionist ranks has been highly entertaining. The Tory leadership, now exiting a five-year long coalition deal with its former Lib Dem enemy, demands that Labour rule out any similar post-election deal with their common enemy the SNP.

The Labour leadership refuses to admit that such a deal will ever be necessary, while refusing to rule it out altogether. Meanwhile, Labour and Tory activists on the ground prepare for tactical voting in favour of the best placed unionist candidate in every constituency contested by pro-independence candidates.

Buoyed by the polls and by a spectacular rise in membership that has left it with more members than the British Army has soldiers, the SNP now promise to hold the balance of power in Westminster and to use that power to broker a coalition deal

with a minority Parliamentary Labour Party that will deliver a progressive and anti-austerity programme for government.

Such a programme will in turn protect the people of Scotland from the pro-austerity policies of the other traditional Westminster parties.

Such a post-election scenario could, of course, attract support from those former Labour voters in Scotland who, according to the polls, are deserting Labour in droves. However, it is fraught with problems.

What form would such a Labour-SNP coalition take? Would there be a formal coalition with the SNP being allocated a variety of Cabinet seats including the post of Deputy Prime Minister? Would those voters who switched from the "Red Tories" to the SNP accept their new party putting the same "Red Tories" back into office and then working with them to deliver what will be a mainly "Red Tory" programme?

There is, of course, the less formal "confidence and supply" arrangement where the SNP agree to support a minority Labour Government on any no confidence motion and on its budget in return for concessions. The SNP parliamentary group would then be free to take its own position issue by issue on the rest of the Government's programme.

The problem with this arrangement would be that Labour budgets may be "austerity-lite" but they are still based on austerity. Could SNP members realistically vote for a budget in 2015-16 that included up to £25 billion of cuts in public spending? Could they support Labour in a "no confidence motion" when that Labour Government was going ahead with Trident renewal?

Ancient regime

It is difficult to imagine either of these scenarios being acceptable to voters across Scotland who had switched to the SNP because they were opposed to austerity and because they were opposed to weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, if the polls are right, and we have a hung parliament and an SNP parliamentary group of up to 50 members, there will be enormous pressure on those mainly inexperienced and largely unknown politicians to quickly adopt a line that could tie them down for the lifetime of the next Parliament.

Will such a group meekly and loyally follow whatever leadership line is dictated to them? Or, fired up by the political watershed of the referendum campaign, will they give voice to the views of the voters who elected them rather than rubbers stamp whatever they are told by Nicola Sturgeon or Alex Salmond?

Since we do not yet know who they are, we cannot yet answer that question. But if the polls are right, the next parliament could yet turn out to be fascinating and potentially the beginning of the end for Westminster's ancient regime.

by *Richie Venton, SSP national workplace organiser*

IF YOU believe George Osborne, David Cameron and a chunk of the media, workers are back in the land of milk and honey. We're told our wages are exceeding inflation for the first time since before the 2008 recession. Reality is a bit less rosy for those working to remain poor.

Real wages plummeted by £50 a week in 2014. For the first time since the 1920s, real wages are lower at the end of a government's term of rule than when they seized office. And a special report by Ernst Young ITEM Club last month punctured the Tories' celebratory balloons. Their chief economist, Martin Beck, wrote:

"Real wages have fallen by nearly 10 per cent since 2008, but workers will finally see more money in their pockets this year. However, this is not a normal recovery. The move towards later retirement and huge increase in the workforce has depressed real wages as workers have priced themselves into jobs. We don't expect a return to boom-time wages any time soon."

Try telling the 200,000 Scottish workers consigned to the pitiful pay and hellish uncertainty of life on Zero Hours Contracts that things are getting better!

The bribes don't work

In any case, any workers aspiring to be as well off as they were before 2008 severely lack ambition! This was already one of the most unequal states internationally, with some of the lowest pay, longest hours of work and shortest holidays in Europe.

But just in case we're not all convinced to rush off to vote Tory by their claims of rising wages, the Tories hope to bribe the gullible as the general election looms. Osborne's plans have leaked out: to raise the tax threshold "towards £11,000", with bogus boasts that this will rescue the lowest paid. In fact it wouldn't even touch many of the poorest people, because they're paying no taxes right now, due to earning below the existing £10,000 tax threshold.

That includes vast armies of part-time workers, women in particular. It includes hundreds of thousands in retail jobs, the biggest single employer in the country, and also the biggest single sector of poverty pay.

Nor will this minor tax threshold adjustment compensate public sector workers for the increased pension contributions they face next month—so they can work longer and get less in their pensions, if they aren't

RECOVERY: WHAT RECOVERY?



forced to work 'til they drop. Very few will be fooled by the Tories' claims. Workers know full well that when VAT, Council Tax and other regressive taxes are added, the poorest 10 per cent of the population pay 43 per cent of their lowly incomes in taxes—whereas the richest 10 per cent only pay 35 per cent of the incomes they grudgingly declare! And of course they systematically dodge tax on an industrial scale, as the recent HSBC scandal confirmed.

Anger at the way wages make up a shrinking slice of the national cake of wealth is turned into justified rage when you look at the incomes of the giant employers—and of those who decide the salaries of their chief executives.

A recent survey of the incomes and directorships held by what's called the Remuneration Committees of the FTSE 100 top companies makes dangerous reading for anyone with high blood pressure! These bodies

decide the pay of company executives. They consist of a narrow pool of directors of other companies, a cosseted elite who might as well be from another planet. The survey found that the average income of the members of these Remuneration Committees was £441,383 last year, 16 times the average worker's wage of £27,200. And the highest paid member of this self-serving clique of capitalists was awarded over £9.2million—an incredible 339 times as much as the average worker's wage for 2014.

In stark contrast, workers eking out an existence on poverty pay have their very own 'Remuneration Committee'—the Low Pay Commission, which annually recommends what levels of national minimum wage the government should introduce. Their latest report shamelessly boasts of 'inflation-busting increases' for the minimum wage, claiming 'the highest increase since 2007'—because they've recommended a 3 per cent rise on the over-21s rate...wait for

it...to the princely sum of £6.70 an hour! In case such 'inflated' pay might bust the allegedly booming economy, these worthies have proposed £5.30 for workers aged 18-20, £3.87 for 16-17-year-olds, and a slave rate of £2.80 for apprentices.

This Low Pay Commission has one distinct feature: none of its nine members has even the remotest idea what it's like to live on low pay! It's made up of employers, 'independents' and those allegedly from an 'employee background'. One of the two claiming the latter role is John Hannett, general secretary of Usdaw, the biggest union in the retail sector, with 45,000 members in Scotland alone.

But those of us who are Usdaw members, working in retail on £6.50-£7.20 an hour in various firms, don't seem to be our general secretary John Hannett's first consideration; he and the UK leadership of Usdaw actually submitted a proposal to the Low Pay Commission for a £7 minimum wage from next October!

As reported in the Usdaw union magazine, our general secretary isn't on £6.50 an hour, nor even the £10 an hour he voted for at the TUC conference; he's on a salary of £94,514, plus NIC and pension contributions, plus a union car—in-work benefits totalling another £42,408! No wonder he's not storming heaven to mobilise workers in retail and other low-paid jobs to demand a decent living wage.

Stand up for workers

Far from feeling that all is glorious and comfortable for millions of workers, people are not seeing the benefits of the much trumpeted recovery in the economy, are struggling to cope with the household bills—and desperately need to become part of a massive campaign for a living minimum wage. We need our own, genuine, 'low pay commission', a force made up of the low paid and their allies, organised and determined to demand decent wages.

The SSP is determined to be at the heart of such a struggle, and are proud to have common cause with the Bakers union (BFAWU) and others battling for £10 now for all workers. We appeal to the leaderships of all trades unions to take up the cudgels in pursuit of the £10 minimum wage which every one of them voted for at the 2014 annual conference of the seven-million member TUC. And we appeal to workers to join us in the fight for union rights in every workplace—as part of the struggle to banish poverty pay, Zero Hours Contracts and the disgusting inequality created by capitalist profiteering.

Donate to the Socialists election campaign fund

by Jim McVicar, Scottish Socialist Party National Treasurer

THE GENERAL Election takes place on 7 May this year and will give the people of Scotland an opportunity to let David Cameron and his unelected Tory/Lib Dem coalition government know exactly what the people of Scotland think of them.

The Scottish Socialist Party after the very positive campaign during the independence referendum, which saw the Scottish Socialist Party membership increase and new branches of the party being established in every part of Scotland with a renewed air of confidence in the party and the socialist ideas that we represent we have decided to stand a number of candidates in targeted seats at the general election in May.

Like every election campaign the SSP is involved in, it has to be paid for and unlike the London or Edinburgh based parties the SSP has no rich friends or big business backers to bankroll our campaign.

The SSP rely solely on the support of our members, supporters and friends to finance our campaigns, and while our

local branches have been working hard to raise money locally for the campaign, we feel that to develop the general election campaign at local and national level we have to ask our members, supporters and friends to financially support our campaign.

That is why I am appealing directly to you through the pages of the *Voice* to make a pledge or donation to the general election appeal fund today. Pledges or donations can be post-dated, paid now, paid in instalments or on line through the party's website—whatever method is easier for you.

I appreciate that these are difficult financial times for many comrades, but whatever you can afford to donate to the General Election campaign fund is much appreciated by the party and every penny and pound that we receive will go directly to funding our general election campaign, ensuring that socialist ideas are firmly on the political agenda in May.

If you have already made a pledge or donation to the Scottish Socialist Party general election appeal fund at local or national level, on behalf of the SSP, thank you it is appreciated, and thank you for your continuing support.

HOW TO DONATE:

You can make a pledge or donation to the Scottish Socialist Party General Election Appeal in the following ways:

- Pay donation direct into the appeal fund bank account through a bank transfer account details are The Co-operative Bank. Sort Code 08-92-99 / account number 65094637 (if you pay direct into the account, can you please text me the details of the donation on 07810205747, so we can keep a record of your donation).
- Pay by cheque made out to 'Scottish Socialist Party' and return to Jim McVicar at the SSP national office, Suite 370 Central Chambers, 93 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 6LD.
- At your local SSP Branch meeting or directly to your branch organiser or branch treasurer.
- Email me at jimmcvicar.scottishsocialistparty@hotmail.com or text me on 07810205747 or and let me know the details of your pledge/donation and I will make arrangements to get it collected.
- Pay via PayPal, using this email address: jim.sspfinance@gmail.com
- Donate directly to the SSP through the donate facility at our website at scottishsocialistparty.org/donations/

Building the SSP in Glasgow South West

by Voice Reporter

OUR GLASGOW South West candidate Bill Bonnar is currently co-chairperson of the Scottish Socialist Party and has a strong connection with the Greater Govan part of the constituency, having worked there for a number of years. The political make up of the constituency is typical for a Glasgow seat with the Labour Party winning around 60 per cent of the vote at the last election and the SNP coming second with around 20 per cent. It will be a lot closer this time. The Scottish Socialist Party's campaign is already well underway.

There have been regular stalls in key parts of the constituency and the first batch of 10,000 leaflets are being distributed. The first of two public meetings will be held later this month and the party will also have coverage from Sunny Govan Radio, the local community-based radio station.

The aim is to put over the distinctive and positive case for voting for the Scottish Socialist Party. This will focus on issues like the £10-an-hour living wage, resistance to the Westminster austerity programme and the SSP's campaign for an independent socialist Scotland. The last 12 months has seen a massive rise in the fortunes of the Scottish Socialist Party in this constituency in terms of membership, campaigns and profile. We want to use this election to continue to build the party as Scotland's party of the left.

SSP is here to stay and build in Glasgow East

by Liam McLaughlin

WITH THE Lord Ashcroft polls indicating a seismic shift in opinion here in Glasgow East with the SNP in a double figures lead, it's no surprise that Ed Balls and Vernon Croaker have been seen scurrying around the East End these past few weeks. Only this Sunday it was revealed in the *Herald* that some Labour insiders are saying the seat is now "unwinnable" and that too much resources are being thrown at trying to save Maggie. Just as a reminder, this was one of only two seats in the whole of the UK that the Tories lost a deposit in 2010, and it's been a labour stronghold since the 1930s when it was then the old Bailleston and Shettleston seats, bar a surprise by-election win on a recount for the SNP's John Mason in 2008. Over the next seven or eight weeks until the General Election, we will be taking our unique socialist message to the area, particularly highlighting our unwavering commitment to a £10 an hour minimum wage for all over 16, an end to Zero Hours Contracts and a workers MP on a workers wage who is representative of the great people they will have the privilege and honour to serve. While being realistic about our chances in a first past the post UK General Election, I'm very proud to be flying the flag of socialism in my home constituency and am quietly optimistic of a respectable voting figure. Regardless of who wins this seat on 7 May, treating Glasgow East as a number on the board are over, and of that I'm determined to make sure. The days of Labour hegemony in Glasgow East look numbered, and after 7 May, the Scottish Socialist Party are here to stay and build.

Socialist message becoming more familiar in Edinburgh South

by Calum Martin, SSP election agent in Edinburgh South

EDINBURGH SOUTH has been a narrow hold for Labour in the last two Westminster elections with a majority of 316 over the Lib Dems in 2010. The extent to which the people of Edinburgh have been sold out by their current crop of erstwhile representatives is clear. Austerity bites; Zero Hours Contracts and poverty wages abound through much of the city. It is against this background that the SSP in Edinburgh has raised its banners to say that change for the better is not only absolutely essential, but is inherently possible. The SSP's campaign in the area, is taking a highly proactive course.

The first batch of 25,000 leaflets for door to door delivery are now nearly all finished. SSP canvassing teams are also working through the constituency, bringing back several membership applications with them already! The SSP's distinctive message is becoming more familiar in Edinburgh South. A worker's MP on a workers wage, calling out parliamentary corruption. A guaranteed £10 Living Wage, tackling exploitative bosses. An alternative to austerity, rejecting the neoliberal agenda of the Westminster parties. These have been the

key messages we've been working to put out, and signs of progress are starting to appear.

Getting that message out is long work and often hard work, but it is essential work. If we want to make a real difference, at the heart of doing so is effectively taking the campaign to the streets and into our communities.



Election shenanigans in Paisley and Renfrewshire South

by Sandra Webster

THE PAST two weeks have been interesting for us. I as a candidate had to keep to my manifesto and "Get Dougie Telt". There was a story in the local press about how Douglas Alexander alone by writing to the health minister had saved our much-loved Children's Ward at the RAH from closure. Douglas had attended none of our meetings. He turned up for a photo opportunity for at the maximum 30 minutes and held our banner. He tweeted his picture as proof of his involvement. I called him out. The response on social media as amazing with thousands of people sharing my response and responding.

It is evident the Labour Party are concentrating on the NHS rather than what they can change in Westminster. In the real world though, we continue to campaign in communities by setting up stalls and talking to folk to let them know there is an alternative to voting Labour and SNP. I am grateful for the support of my branch and especially those of my campaign team Alan Wyllie and Geoff Knowles. We would appreciate more support though and thank everyone who has offered personal pledges. Blue skies are coming and we look forward to taking out to the communities we live in that a vote for the Scottish Socialist Party is an alternative. As a comrade Wullie Cunningham said, vote SSP and vote with your heart and mind. We will encourage folk that we are not a protest vote but an alternative to the present state of politics.

by Colin Fox, SSP
national co-spokesperson

LABOUR'S HEGEMONY IN SCOTLAND IS OVER

WITH THE General Election two months away, the polls predict a hung Parliament at Westminster and Labour being routed in Scotland. David Cameron is desperately trying to milk figures showing an 'economic recovery' with record numbers of people in work and living standards returning to 2008 levels. Ordinarily these would see the Tories emerge triumphant on 7 May. But most voters do not feel better off and George Osborne's promise of further austerity infers more dark days ahead.

Given the unpopularity of the Tories and Lib Dems Labour should be streets ahead but Ed Miliband's programme and leadership does not inspire confidence. Voters have clearly not forgiven Labour for the 2008 crash or the worst recession in 80 years that followed it.

So another Coalition Government seems likely. Bookmakers Ladbrokes offer odds of 1/5 on no overall majority with the Tories favourites to win most seats. If such a result does occur Labour will dump 'Red Ed' as their leader. And he will not be the only Labour MP to lose his job. Most of his Scottish 'colleagues' are set to join him.

Labour's 'dead hand'

Scotland's famous 'one party state' where Labour ruled for generations is finally at an end. Their 'dead hand' domination of Scottish politics is over 'bar the shouting' as the SNP appear set to win 30-40 seats.

Labour are in complete political and tactical disarray. Allan Cochrane writing in *The Daily Telegraph* [9/3/15] claimed Jim Murphy has even been trying to 'out left' the SNP. For Blairite Jim Murphy, such a strategy represents utter desperation after a decade trying to outdo them on the right.

Cochrane also informs us that Tory and Lib Dem voters in Scot-

land intend to vote Labour to 'keep the Nats out'. But there are simply not enough of them to compensate for the number of Labour voters flocking to the SNP.

In his speech to Labour's Scottish Conference in Edinburgh Miliband emphasised how terrible a Tory Government would be for Scotland in an attempt to persuade votes to stay loyal. From the man whose party was 'in bed with the Tories' throughout the Referendum this was richly hypocritical.

Labour compounded their unpopularity by reneging on their 'Vow' promising more powers for Holyrood in their submission to the Smith Commission in January. So their demise has been entirely of their own making.

They are now split on whether to rule out a pact with the SNP if they don't win an overall majority. Blairites like Ian Murray MP [Edinburgh South] desperately try to hold the line that an

SNP vote puts the Tories back in Downing Street.

But Miliband refuses to rule out a deal because he fears it will only invite further enquiries about whether he supports coalitions with the Lib Dems or the Greens.

And yet he knows his refusal incites a further backlash from Labour voters who watched him 'get into bed with the Tories' but now rule out 'getting into bed' with the left of centre SNP.

Labour voters are abandoning Miliband in record numbers because they want more powers for Holyrood and believe, rightly or wrongly, the Nationalists are the best way of getting those powers.

Of course there is also a warning for the SNP in all this as Labour voters are uncomfortable at being described as 'nationalists'. Theirs is, on balance, more of an anti-Labour mood than a pro-SNP one.



Scottish Socialist Party canvassing teams in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Paisley report some Labour voters are moving to us. The SSP's message is clear. We want more powers for Holyrood to protect working class people from another Tory Government.

We want powers that will improve the lives of Scotland's working class majority such as a £10/hour living wage, ending zero hour contracts, ensuring women receive the same pay as men for work of equal value, rescinding the worst anti-union laws in Europe, extracting politics from the grip of the money-men who control it and clearing out the stinking corruption at Westminster.

Whilst the SNP airily claim to be 'standing up for Scotland'—without outlining which one they mean—the Scottish Socialist Party can be much more honest and clear.

Insecure contracts

We are standing up against exploitative bosses and the rich, against greedy and apparently uncontrollable bankers, against the landed gentry reaping billions in subsidies from the wind farms on their enormous estates. And we stand up for the majority of Scots, those who are toiling on poverty wages and casual, insecure contracts.

We stand alongside those on welfare, those victimised and stigmatised by UKIP, young Scots in need of a home of their own, a trade, and an adequate income. And our manifesto will outline our unique programme for an independent socialist Scotland, a modern democratic republic when it is published in the next few weeks.

by Bill Bonnar

IN 2011, Nato attacked Libya at the head of a reactionary alliance leading to the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime and the effective collapse of the country. This may sound blunt but is essentially true.

The Nato assault was presented to the British people on a foundation of lies even more glaring than that which saw the invasion and destruction of Iraq.

The first lie was that there had been a nationwide uprising against a highly unpopular regime. In fact there was a regional uprising in one part of the country in a situation where large swathes of the population supported the regime.

The second was that the revolt was basically a democratic revolution to establish freedom and civil rights in the country. One look at the anti-regime alliance put paid to that idea. They were a heady mixture of regional and tribal based groups, Islamic fundamentalists and disaffected elements of the army. Hardly a democrat among them.

Thirdly that the Nato intervention was essentially humanitarian in nature aimed at defending a defenceless civilian population against attacks by the regime. In fact Nato intervened in a civil war to ensure one side triumphed and played the lead role in the conflict.

NATO airstrikes

It was the Nato airstrikes which proved decisive in a conflict. Day by day rebel forces were only able to advance into areas cleared by Nato bombardment. Without Nato the rebels would have been easily defeated.

Since the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime the country has effectively disintegrated into civil war and economic collapse and in fact hardly exists as a functioning state at all.

There are two rival governments overseeing a patchwork of territories run by as many as

Libya in turmoil four years after NATO bombing



AIR STRIKES: Egyptian war planes bombed Islamic forces in Libya

300 militias. The economy functions at a fraction of its pre-war level while the hitherto extensive system of social provision has disintegrated.

Thousands of Libyans have fled abroad while the political agenda is largely a battleground between Islamic fundamentalists who want to establish an Islamic state and regional and tribal forces who want to defend their own narrow, sectional interests.

The majority of Libyans including many who opposed Gaddafi must wonder at what has happened to their country and long for a return to the pre-war situation. They are not blind to the faults of that regime; it was authoritarian and corrupt.

However it also presided over

an economy which was the most advanced and stable on the continent, living standards at almost European levels, highly developed social services and a secular state which protected and promoted the rights of women and ethnic minorities.

For the former their situation has been thrown back decades while the latter mostly African population are among many of those refugees desperately trying to reach Europe and often dying in the process.

The Western intervention; like the intervention in Iraq has proved to be disastrous; even to western interests. Their motivation was to overthrow the Gaddafi regime, not because it was a dictatorship but because

it could not be relied on to acquiesce to western dictate. They wanted a regime which would put western interests first.

They also wanted strategic control of Libya's huge oil reserves. What they have actually won is a monster. If Libya survives it is most likely to be in the form of a fundamentalist Islamic state and if it finally collapsed it will lead to widespread instability in the entire region.

Only the Libyan people can resolve the crisis; without any more disastrous western intervention. Most Libyans want a return to a stable, secular society and strong central government. They are fearful of the Islamic fundamentalists on the one hand and the regional and tribal militias on the other.

Pan-Arab intervention

One ray of hope is that in neighbouring Arab states such as Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt Islamic and regionalist forces have been defeated and the secular nature of their societies has been consolidated. These governments now look on with growing concern at events in Libya and are increasingly intervening.

Two weeks ago, Egyptian war planes bombed Islamic forces near the Egyptian border. While western intervention should be vigorously opposed, pan-Arab intervention is an entirely different matter.

For Libya to be saved from disaster the Islamic and tribal/regional forces need to be defeated and disarmed and strong central government restored in Tripoli.

The country must re-establish the secular foundation of its society as the only way towards a stable future and while the Gaddafi regime and its excesses need to be brought to account as the spark for this conflict the country must return to the kind of social and economic programme which brought such benefits and advances for the Libyan people.

by Jack Ferguson, in
Amsterdam

NEOLIBERAL POLICIES SPARK AMSTERDAM STUDENT PROTESTS

THE UNIVERSITY of Amsterdam (UvA) has been rocked by an escalating series of dramatic student protests. A movement has been gathering since the beginning of the academic year last September, but has grown dramatically in recent weeks since the occupation of the University's Senate House forced concessions from the UvA board.

Protestors are angry at the destruction of education in the Netherlands by neoliberal values, meaning only subjects that provide financial results are prioritised, student support has been gutted, and both teachers and students are forced to participate in endless rounds of pointless bureaucracy.

Many are also unhappy at the dealings of UvA with its valuable property portfolio in the centre of the city, which has seen much loved buildings closed and sold off.

Occupations

The Maagdenuis, as the Senate building which is currently occupied is known, is the third University building to have been appropriated by students since the academic year began. At the end of 2014 students took a space that had been a social centre for students and staff of the Anthropology and Social Sciences department, just before it was due to be sold off and removed from academic use. It remained open as a free educational and social resource in the heart of the city centre until Christmas. Then in the New Year they took to the Bungehuis, close to Dam Square and the palace of the Dutch Royal family.

When the University evicted the occupiers from this



THE MAAGDENUIS: 'the most interesting place in Western Europe right now'

second location, it sparked the largest student protest march in recent history at UvA, with hundreds of activists swarming on the new location, the senate house.

As noted, the issues at stake are complex. The subjects grouped under the Humanities have seen brutal cuts after a financialised administration failed to see their potential for profit.

Staff across the university are angry and demotivated about the way they are managed and the amount of time they need to spend on non-educational paperwork. And across the Netherlands, the right wing national government has just scrapped student grants in favour of a loans and debt based system, leading to nationwide protests. Protestors demand a moratorium on further restructuring, a full independent audit of what has

taken place, and crucially, mass democratisation of the university, under an elected leadership.

For anyone who was around for the 2011 student protests in the UK, and university occupations such as the six-month Free Hetherington experiment at Glasgow University, the Maagdenuis seems familiar, albeit on a grander scale than anything we saw in Scotland.

Staff involvement

Hundreds of staff and students are daily involved in running a huge space providing free lectures from internationally renowned academics, artistic, musical and cultural events, and daily organising meetings.

As UvA Professor and noted critic of financialisation Ewald Engelen put it:

"The Maagdenuis is the most interesting place in

Western Europe right now."

Staff involvement has snowballed since the most recent occupation, due to the fact that the board has clearly been caught off guard.

Not expecting the scale of protest they have faced since their eviction operation, they have issued a conciliatory statement acknowledging many failing and giving a ten point plan for working with the academic community to strengthen existing representative bodies for staff and students and open the structures up to more scrutiny.

Whilst this is welcome, it does not go far enough, and continues to present changes in neoliberal management speak. As the *Voice* was going to press, organising was continuing across the University, with staff discussing the possibility of sympathy strike action with their unions.

by Sandra Webster, SSP
national co-spokesperson

IN OCTOBER of last year, ATOS—much loved by campaigners against the work capability assessments—announced they would be exiting their contract with the ConDems government early.

They had always been held in disrepute for their role in helping to carry out the ConDems blitzkrieg on people with disabilities, also known as welfare reform. The whip has been handed over to a new company Maximus.

Like ATOS, Maximus are a global company. Their website speaks of their presence in Canada, Saudi Arabia and the USA.

Profits from misery

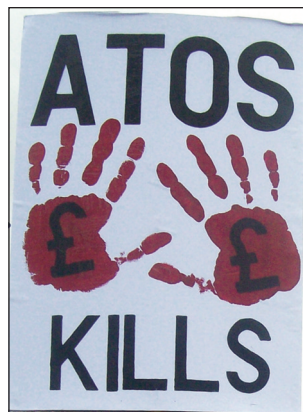
They are another company who prosper in times of austerity. Making their profit from the misery of many, and all for a price, of course—Maximus expect to receive between £590million and £650million from the UK government over the next three years.

Maximus claim they will make more time to listen to those being assessed. They have recruited Sue Marsh whose blog, *Diary Of A Benefit Scrounger*, described her inability to work due to a debilitating illness.

Many people with disabilities feel let down by her actions. Especially those deemed fit to work by her new employers.

Maximus have already started working in Scotland. I spoke to someone who has recently attended a PIP assessment in Glasgow. He says he felt as if words were being put into his mouth. Six weeks later he is still awaiting

What difference will replacing ATOS make?



SAME OLD STORY:
ATOS may have been
replaced by Maximus,
but they are just
another global
company that profits
from misery
PHOTO: Simon Whittle

the results of his assessments. Iain Duncan Smith claims the moves towards Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and the work capability assessments are not about money. They are.

He also had an epiphany after speaking to Bob Holman in Easterhouse about making work pay. Holman later spoke out about the abuse of this conversation. The realities for those of us living in Easterhouse and Glenburn is there are no jobs to take us

out of poverty. Instead we are punished for being poor.

Stuart Hall said culture is a mirror of our society. How many disabled actors, musicians indeed MPs and MSPs do we have?

In the dark winter of austerity people with disabilities the most vulnerable are being targeted more and more. They have no need of tin hats full body armour would be much more sufficient.

That is why I support One in Five, a new campaign

group challenging political parties to ensure that people with disabilities have the support to get involved in politics.

Our party should be proud of our policies on disability but like all other parties, we can help smash down the walls that prevent politics being more accessible for all.

This also includes hidden disabilities such as learning disabilities. Access is much more than wheelchair access.

Our party has a proud history of encouraging and enabling stigmatised groups and most importantly giving them a voice.

Crucial voices

I feel these voices will be crucial to changing others perspectives of how to perceive people with disabilities.

This will challenge the propaganda of the ConDems as people with disabilities being skivers. Rather than patting folk on the head let's give them a hand up and let them be listened to.

The ConDems will continue with their war on the poor and give millions to global companies who "service" disabled people. We need a better way. The Smith Commission promised devolved powers on disability benefits to Holyrood. That is two years away and too long for many to wait. The campaign must begin now. Let's offer an alternative.