

John McAllion: 'Labour Party are committed to even more austerity than the ConDem Coalition...'

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Scrap Trident: Glasgow demo on 4 April. Faslane blockade on 13 April

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Scottish Socialist Voice

As official report reveals 50% of Scottish wealth is owned by just 10% of the people, Labour's hatchet-woman Rachel Reeves spells out her party's policy:

We are not the party of people on benefits. We don't want to be seen, and we're not, the party to represent those who are out of work

RACHEL REEVES
Labour MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

Labour's Plan for Britain's Future

We say:

- **£10/hour min. wage NOW**
- **End zero hours contracts**
- **Axe anti-trade union laws**



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by Ken Ferguson

NICK CLEGG makes a desperate bid to rally about to be eclipsed Scottish Lib Dems and makes fantasy world claims about his party defeating the SNP.

In the heart of Red Clydeside in Clydebank Ed Miliband twists and turns in what looks like a desperate attempt to stem the SNP tide engulfing Scottish Labour and ignore the likelihood that he will need their support to form a government after May.

Nobody bothers to factor in the Tories and UKIP's sole elected representative is universally condemned for his ugly racist attacks on Scottish minister Humza Yousaf.

Welcome to the reality of Scottish politics with only weeks to go until a UK general election.

Bemused unionists who, just last September, were hugging and kissing under the Union Jack as Project Fear paid off and delivered a No vote are now counting down to defeat in what will be seen by many as the second half of the independence match.

Smell of panic

The smell of panic from the smug London pundits is overpowering whether its *Guardian* cartoonist Steve Bell increasingly shrill efforts or any one of a dozen "grown up" Westminster scribblers and politicians unsure whether to portray Scots voters as fools or lunatics.

Tories have a cartoon Salmond bogey man, supposedly serious journalists queue up to parody and misrepresent any alternative posed by the Scots electorate to their dismal austerity consensus while comic duo Danny Alexander and Paddy Ashdown dip into the insults book as they beg for Tory voters to save them.

Two questions arise for the Left in this unprecedented confusion and disarray besetting the beleaguered band of former Better Together comrades in arms.

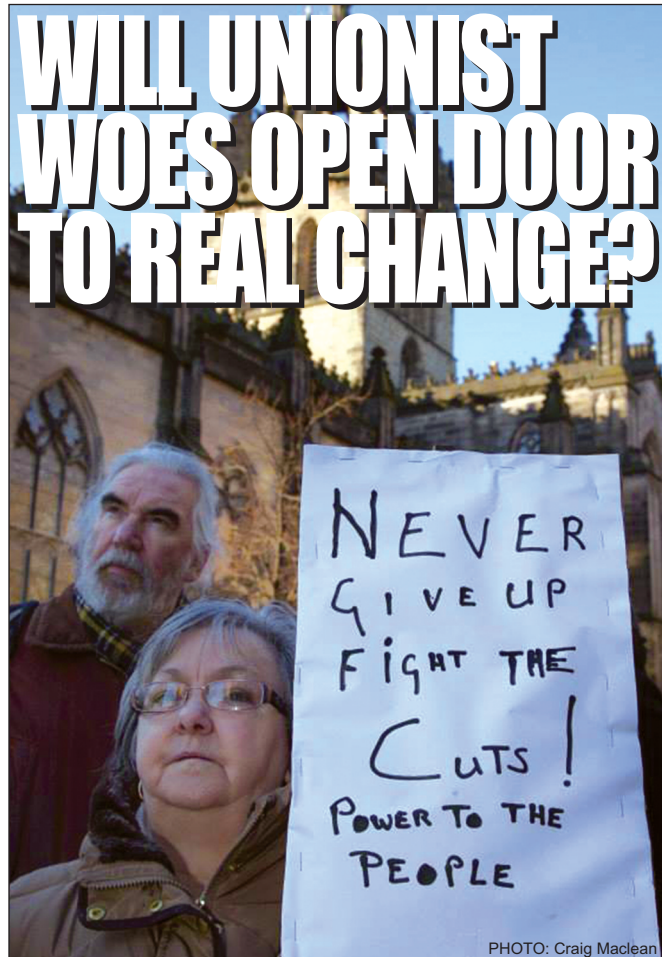


PHOTO: Craig Maclean

First, how did we get here and secondly what to we need to do next? There is no question that the drama now unfolding is firmly based on the fact that the recent indyref campaign not only fought for a Yes vote but in doing so built a process of mass engagement which went beyond the democratic issue to look at what kind of Scotland might flow from it.

While the mainstream politicians debated currency union, EU membership, oil and so on, in village halls, town meeting up and down Scotland a much more deep discussion developed in which a view of what was possible was forged and that view—on poverty, equality and peace—developed a growing conviction that another world is possible.

What has resulted is a growing understanding that, despite the dismal drumbeat from the Westminster elite that austerity is the only way, an alternative is not only possible but essential. This underpins the membership

surge for the Scottish Socialist Party, the Greens and most spectacularly the SNP, and at the same time is dire news for the business-as-usual unionists.

Of course the demise of Lib Dems has been long predicted, and the Tories dismissed years ago, but for Labour, so long top dog, the outlook is doubly grim: wipeout in Scotland and failure to win in Westminster leaving them facing a meltdown in their former stronghold.

Labour's plight has been worsened by the fact that, since they lost power at Holyrood in 2007 they have moved rightward as Scotland moved left, and far from solving the problem, the anointment of arch Blairite Murphy as leader has simply made things worse.

No amount of noisy left-sounding policy pronouncements look like altering the fact that Labour is tied into a policy of austerity and nuclear weapons increasingly rejected by Scottish voters, and that their

50 year grip on Scottish politics is increasingly endangered.

The likely winners, the SNP, by contrast have occupied the social democratic ground deserted by Labour of universal benefits, a public NHS, free prescriptions and opposition to Trident and a droves of former Labour voters are set to back them in May.

Certainly, the demise of Labour may be exaggerated but there seems little doubt that after 7 May, the political terrain in Scotland will be transformed and looks likely to be open to a policy direction informed by the vision of the Yes campaign and ultimately a fresh look at the independence issue.

For Scotland's left there is much to welcome in these developments with the SNP demanding an end to austerity and opposing Trident renewal as a part of any type of deal it could do with a minority Labour Westminster administration.

However welcome as such a policy shift is, it leaves much to be addressed if Scotland is to take a course which advances the interests of people and planet.

Dogma

Key to this is a break with the blind faith in market economics and privatisation which has dominated UK politics since 1979 and is the ruling dogma of the EU's unelected ruling commission.

It is this dogma which keeps railways private, power firms in the hands of profiteers and has seen the demise of large swathes of manufacturing industry. Along with legal shackles on trade unions and the low wage/zero hours culture this approach has seen a massive shift of wealth and power from the many to the wealthy few.

The task of the SSP and the wider left is to develop and popularise policies which address issues such as pay, scarce housing, fuel poverty, free public transport and many others to construct a policy offering distinctive socialist answers to Scotland's challenges.

by Jonathon Shafi

Can Westminster poll open the way for revitalised Scottish left?

MUCH HAS been made in recent months about the depth of the crisis of the British state. The UK state is used to crisis of course. It has withstood wars, domestic unrest, general strikes and it has experienced serious economic crises. During the general strike of 1926, the government sent war ships to Tyneside to quell dissent.

In the past, troops, police and tanks confronted workers in George Square.

In the 1970s, trade union organisation and militancy was such that it threatened to bring the commanding heights of the economy into workers control.

In recent years we saw millions march against a war that stretched legitimacy in the state to breaking point, a mass student rebellion which physically rocked London, and of course that most intense period of crisis, the independence referendum. It is often said that people in the UK are indifferent to political and social regressions, and don't resist. In actual fact there is in many senses a very healthy history of resistance.

Resisting the system

The chartists, the suffragettes, the anti-apartheid movement and the defeating of the Poll Tax are just some examples to add to the great miners strike, the UCS work in and so on. In fact, when you think about it, we have resisted the system with tenacity over the decades. Across these islands, working people have fought back against exploitation as they have world wide. This is the bedrock of internationalism; the understanding that since the system is global, so too are the imperatives that drive movements of opposition.

So there is a history of crisis, war and resistance which surrounds the British state. But there is something more profound than usual about the



GLASGOW, 1919: the British State sent tanks into George Square to quench a mass workers' rebellion

present crisis in Britain. There is a reason why the political atmosphere is so fraught. In short, this is because the crisis is multi-dimensional.

We are not talking about a stand off battle with a particular Prime Minister. We are talking about the long decline of every single institution in the British polity. Not just the government of the day, but the media, the financial institutions, national political structures and local councils. Every level of authority is being questioned. In addition, it is hugely underplayed the degree to which the concentration of wealth in modern Britain amongst a tiny elite is exacerbating frustrations, bubbling away, ready to form the next social explosion.

At Prime Ministers Questions they may bawl and guffaw, but in the bars of the elite there is serious concern. The concern is punctuated in particular by the situation in Scotland. And that is what adds a further dimension to the crisis of the parties of the 'extreme centre' as Tariq Ali refers to.

This is a long crisis. That means it is one which proceeds at steady pace as the contradictions in the political framework of the British state

fail to resolve themselves over a period of time, until it becomes untenable to sustain.

They have strategies to combat the crisis. For one thing the privatisation agenda continues at a fast pace, though this builds its own problems into the situation. If you think the economic crisis has been bad, the next one stands a chance of being much worse as the shallow recovery built on sand becomes undone.

For us in Scotland the recent and historic political awakening means that there is massive radical potential. Historically there have been two primary barriers to the development of the movement of the working class: the Labour

Party, and the British State. Now, both of these institutions are in rapid decline, and the general political conditions under which their decline is taking place have been furnished by the radical left throughout the referendum.

That means, despite the surge to the SNP, that the situation remains fluid. It means that there is an opening that will develop more visibly after the General Election for socialists to draw up a framework through which we can deliver mass radical politics not just in the movement, but at elections.

New left opposition

That is the moment where the left can set out its stall and start a mass process of replacing the Labour Party as the official opposition in Scottish politics.

Not only will this revitalise the possibility of genuine working class representation in parliament, it will intensify the unstoppable movement to independence, and open a left front in Northern Europe which can relate to and stand with the development of Podemos and Syriza in Southern Europe. Make no mistake—if we work together to achieve this—we can do it.

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by Colin Fox, SSP
national co-spokesperson

'It's the economy, stupid'

GEORGE OSBORNE'S

Budget acclaimed UK economic growth of 2.5 per cent last year, record employment levels and low interest rates. Designed to win the Conservatives a second term in Government he dispensed with tradition and avoided increasing duty on alcohol, tobacco, or fuel.

His message to the UK electorate was that the Tories, having inherited an economy deep in recession and deep in debt, had managed to turn the situation around and secure the second highest growth rate in the Western World. 'But we still have a long way to go' he insisted warning his plans for further cuts in public spending were the worst yet. It would be 'No more Mr Nice Guy' he inferred as he 'needed another term to finish the job'.

The question that inevitably arises from George Osborne's apparent success is why are the Tories not streets ahead in the polls then? Might the answer be that this growth is again based on a highly problematic South East of England housing bubble and it's associated borrowing?

Low paid jobs

Might it not also be said that most of the new jobs created are casual, on zero hour contracts and lowly paid? And since the average worker is now £1,800/year worse off than they were in 2010 isn't each household's economic standing in stark contrast to the picture he paints of UK PLC?

These are of course rhetorical questions. With prices having gone up as wages have fallen Britain is now suffering significant deflationary pressure. Most people do not have the money to buy the things they want and that is dampening economic growth. The fact interest rates are at such a historic low reflects this economic reality. The Tories



are not going to win the election insist the pollsters because voters do not feel Osborne's recovery themselves. Rather they see their own standard of living falling year after year.

Given such widespread economic discomfort why is Ed Miliband not streets ahead in the polls? Good question.

The answer is that Labour has not been forgiven for its own economic incompetence in getting Britain into the 2008 debt-ridden recession in the first place.

Furthermore, its proposed economic solution involves making the same deflationary cuts and implementing the same austerity measures as the Tories. That then in a nutshell explains why bookmakers have installed 'No overall majority' as the 1/7 favourite as the most likely outcome of the 7 May General Election.

The SSP's 'alternative budget' would have emphasised the need to reflate the economy and reduce growing inequalities in Britain today by, for example, introducing a £10/hour living wage and abolishing zero hour contracts. The Government admit

you need to be earning £10/hour in order to pay your own way today and stop qualifying for top-up benefits. That then is rationally the level at which the living wage should be set.

Osborne and Ed Balls are intent on making the most vulnerable pay for an economic crisis caused by the banks. The SSP rejects that criminal conclusion.

Alternative budget

Our 'alternative budget' would move to solve the chronic shortage of affordable housing in this country. We would build 100,000 new homes in Scotland each year to alleviate the appalling pressure on local authority waiting lists, to deflate the speculative and harmful house price bubble and provide much needed jobs for construction workers.

This issue was brought into sharp focus again last week when the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations Annual Report announced they had demolished more houses than they built in 2013/14.

There are hundreds of thousands of families living in ac-

commodation unfit for their needs. There are also tens of thousands of under-employed construction staff. Building quality public homes for rent is therefore a far better solution to the nation's housing crisis than leaving it to speculators who leave more and more people behind in desperate need of a satisfactory place to live.

As well as introducing a £10/hour living wage and launching a massive public sector house building programme we would also cut class sizes, introduce free school meals, introduce free public transport to address climate change and improve accessibility and replace the Council Tax with an income based alternative.

These measures would be paid for by increasing taxes on the well off, clamping down on tax evasion and avoidance, introduce a 'Tobin Tax' on financial transactions and of course re-deploy the £100billion earmarked for Trident II.

Our manifesto for the forthcoming General Election setting out all these policies in more detail will be available in the next few weeks.

by John McAllion

SOUNDBITE LABOUR STILL SIGNED UP FOR AUSTERITY

THE RECEPTION given to the Coalition's pre-election budget was universally hostile among what remains of left of centre newspapers in Britain. An *Observer* editorial described it as "a manifesto for a more divided and less humane Britain". One leading *Guardian* columnist called for Labour "outrage" against George Osborne, a Tory politician her employers dismissed as the "chancer Chancellor."

In response, Labour's Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls commented that he wouldn't "change anything very much" in Osborne's tax and spending proposals except for a few minor changes in the levels of capital spending and tax breaks on offer. Even the re-invented Jim Murphy struggled to sell such a comment as Labour "outrage" against the wicked Tories.

Labour press stunts

Yet that comment reveals more about the current state of the Labour Party than does the avalanche of press releases and stunts being rolled out under Murphy's leadership of his party's Scottish branch.

Despite Tory rhetoric about helping hard working families, savers and first-time house buyers, this was a budget that did nothing for the poorest, little for low earners and lots for better off families on above-average incomes.

The raising of tax free personal allowances to £11,000 over the next two years was hailed in the Tory press as saving "workers" £900 a year on average. In reality, three quarters of the £14billion annual cost of this tax cut will go to better off taxpayers on above average incomes.

The country's five-million poorest paid workers who earn less than the new threshold will get nothing at all. The

LABOUR MP RACHEL REEVES:
'We are not the party of people on benefits. We don't want to be seen, and we're not, the party to represent those who are out of work.'



biggest winners will be the richest 20 per cent of taxpayers. Labour will not change this tax cut for the rich.

The much hailed "help to buy ISA" that offers a 25 per cent Treasury gift to first time buyers saving for a house deposit through an ISA account will cost another £2billion over the next five years. Experts predict that this will benefit the wealthier to a greater extent and do nothing for the vast majority of young people living in areas of housing shortage and already crippled with consumer debt.

Outstanding personal debt in Britain now stands at a staggering £1.432trillion. The STUC has denounced these ISAs as "bad" policy with major distributional impacts. Labour isn't listening.

The Coalition obsession with deficit reduction and reducing the national debt has carried with it enormous social costs for the weakest and most vulnerable among us. Over the lifetime of the next parliament the Tory Chancellor plans to eliminate the present £90billion deficit and to move into surplus in 2017/18. In addition to cuts already announced, he plans

an additional £30billion of public spending cuts to achieve this goal. These cuts will fall overwhelmingly on in work welfare benefits and on public services in the poorest parts of the country.

Not only has Labour committed to matching the Tory cuts planned for the first year of the next Parliament, but in a recent Commons vote they also joined the Tories and the Lib Dems in the lobbies to support a budget responsibility charter that endorsed the additional £30billion of cuts.

Only five Labour MPs voted against in a 515 to 18 majority for the cuts. Ed Balls tried to excuse his party's betrayal by arguing that Labour would only implement "sensible" cuts and by claiming that a vote against austerity would allow the Tories to characterise Labour as "irresponsible" on deficit reduction.

Balls has repeatedly emphasised that, like the Tories, a Labour Government would cut the deficit every year, get the current budget into surplus and reduce the national debt "as soon as possible in the next Parliament". These statements commit the next Labour

Government to continuing with even more austerity than was inflicted by the Coalition over the past five years.

The Labour leadership is running scared of being portrayed by the Coalition parties as deficit deniers and simply will not contemplate fighting the forthcoming election on an anti-austerity platform.

No-one should therefore be surprised by labour's continuing rightwards drift as the general election looms. Labour's outright condemnation of the VAT rise to 20 per cent in George Osborne's first budget in 2010 has now been replaced by a pledge not to raise it any further in the next parliament.

Cost of living crisis

Their claim that a cost of living crisis had been caused by a 20 per cent VAT rate has been conveniently forgotten. That "crisis" rate will stay under a Labour Government.

On taking office Rachel Reeves, rising star and Shadow Minister for Work and Pensions, infamously warned that Labour would be tougher than the Tories in cutting the benefits bill.

She has now followed this up by insisting that Labour is neither the party of the welfare state nor of those out of work and relying on benefits.

Most benefit claimants, of course, are already in work. Those workers will now be targeted by the £30billion cuts she and her party have voted for.

The big three Westminster parties are all committed to deficit reduction and to austerity. A vote for any of these parties is a vote against the interests of the vast majority of working class people.

by *Richie Venton, SSP
national workplace
organiser*

YOU COULD be forgiven for forgetting that the working class make up the vast majority of the population, judging by how our interests and aspirations are ignored or trampled on by politicians representing the tiny minority who have grabbed most of the country's wealth—the 1 per cent.

Then the election looms, so mainstream politicians who hold the working class in contempt suddenly spout nice-sounding promises in a cynical drive for votes. Jobs is one of the critical issues to judge the competing political parties on.

The Tory/Lib Dem Coalition makes hay of falling unemployment. But scratch the shiny surface and you find an ugly reality. Unemployment figures have fallen as a result of 1.5 million new jobs since 2010. But a new wave of self-employed makes up an incredible 32 per cent of these.

Now new research shows 80 per cent of the self-employed are living in poverty! These are mostly people who would rather have a secure job but can't find one and end up self-employed rather than rely on insecure, part-time and temporary jobs—the main types created since 2010.

Zero Hours Contracts

As the TUC reported, only one in 40 of the new jobs are full-time and permanent. There are still 80,000 fewer full-time jobs in Scotland than before the 2008 recession.

Many of those removed from the unemployment figures are eking out an existence on low-hour contracts, typically of 8-12 hours a week. This gives all the power to the employers, who can tap into this ready-made pool of reserve labour to do extra hours—but with no premium rates of pay for 'over-

time'—when busy spells in their business demands it. Underemployment has become the new variation on unemployment.

All too often workers rely on two or three different part-time jobs to try and pay the bills.

The pinnacle of job insecurity and lack of workplace rights, are Zero Hours Contracts.

An estimated 200,000 workers in Scotland alone are living the cruel insecurity of Zero Hours Contracts (ZHCs). This gives all the flexibility to the

employers, all the risk and low incomes to those working for them. It means being contracted to work for a particular employer, but with absolutely no guarantee of how many hours of work you will get each week.

Workers on ZHCs have absolutely no automatic entitlements to sick pay, holiday pay or redundancy pay. They are expected to be on call, unpaid, waiting by their phone or emails to find out when they're wanted. And real life experience proves that contrary to the baloney about the flexibility afforded to workers, when people decline a shift offered to them, they frequently aren't offered any more for days or weeks after, as bosses exercise their power to punish them.

These are rife and spreading in every High Street and retail park.

Over 90 per cent of McDonalds workers are on them: 82,000 in total. Boots employ at least 4,000; 80 per cent of JD

Wetherspoons staff; Burger King; Dominos Pizza; Sports Direct; Pizza Hut; Subway; Next; Cineworld; universities... Social care relies on a vast army of ZHC workers—including the social care wing of the Church of Scotland!

The Tories and Lib Dems have shown in action they are parties that view cheap, casualised, insecure jobs as a virtue.

Labour has belatedly tried to appease the demands of the working class voters they rely on

Labour and the SNP: abolish ALL Zero Hours Contracts. They're ALL exploitative, so scrap the lot and instead offer secure contracts, with guaranteed hours, whether part-time or full-time.

Jobs are not the only issue working class people need to judge the rival parties on. Pay is equally important.

The much vaunted new jobs are overwhelmingly low paid, as well as insecure. Two-thirds of people who found a job in 2014

Workers ask: WHOSE SIDE ARE THE PARTIES ON?

by promising measures on youth employment. And they repeatedly trot out the same two phrases about Zero Hours Contracts, phrases that should be seen for the cruel deceit they are!

Labour promises to "tackle Zero Hours Contracts". What the hell does that mean? Why not say clearly they will ABOLISH them?

Dodgy word-games

Their other phrase, especially used when they are targeting trade unionists for votes, is that Labour will "abolish exploitative Zero Hours Contracts".

Unfortunately, that same phrase has also been repeatedly used by the SNP leadership.

Watch out for the deceit in that word 'exploitative'. Does that mean they'll keep 'good, non-exploitative Zero Hours Contracts'?

The SSP has an honest, simple alternative to the dodgy word-games played by both

are paid less than £7.65-an-hour. The government—and its allegedly impartial adviser, the Low Pay Commission—have the audacity to boast that a full 1.2 million workers will 'enjoy' the 20p rise on the over-21s national minimum wage next October, rising to the giddy heights of £6.70 an hour. That should be a source of shame, not boastfulness.

But what do the other parties offer?

Labour is trying to work the biggest con-trick in modern times with their pledge cards promising an £8 minimum wage. What they coyly hide from the casual reader or listener is that they won't introduce it until 2020!

So what do they expect millions to survive on for the next five years? And how much better than today's £6.50 will that be worth by 2020, if any? And what about the fact they make no promises of scrapping the lower youth rates?



FOR REAL WORKPLACE DEMOCRACY: the SSP wants outright repeal of anti-trade union laws

The SNP headline their support for the so-called Living Wage, currently £7.85. For workers on or just above the miserly £6.50 minimum wage, this would be a very welcome pay rise. But apart from the fact it is still too low to be accurately described as a ‘living wage’, it is entirely voluntary, not legally enforceable, which of course allows the SNP to sound good to workers whilst not offending businesses who have no intention of voluntarily paying that rate.

And to underline their stance, for anyone not paying proper attention to the policy of the SNP, they blocked and amended a Motion in the Scottish parliament last week which called for a minimum wage of £10 an hour—not now, but in five years’ time, 2020. Even that modest plan, put by the Greens, was far too much for the SNP, as well as—predictably—Labour MSPs. By way of contrast with all the pro-

big business parties, the SSP has persistently demanded a war on poverty pay by the introduction of a living minimum wage—currently of £10 an hour, for all over 16, abolishing the lower youth rates. We call for that £10 NOW, in 2015, not 2020 or some other distant date—based on the modest formula of a legally enforced minimum set at two-thirds median male wages in Scotland.

£10 now!

It’s a policy we share with the Bakers’ union (BAFU) and indeed the entire TUC. It’s time the trade union leaders fought for this fine policy, instead of handing members’ funds—and trying to hand members’ votes—to a Labour Party that has neither a track record nor any intention of seriously banishing poverty pay.

This general election comes just after the 30th anniversary of the 1984/5 miners’ strike. That defeat for the NUM, at the hands

of Thatcher and the entire state apparatus, was a decisive turning point in the fortunes of the working class—a defeat that could easily have been an historic victory if the leaders of other unions and the Labour Party had shown an ounce of the courage displayed by the miners, their families and communities.

It is no accident that the 30 years since have been marked by growing poverty and inequality in the midst of vastly increased wealth for the 1 per cent.

One of the chief weapons fashioned and used by the employers and their governments to drive down workers’ wages is the battery of anti-trade union laws—devised by Thatcher’s Tories, retained by New Labour during their 13 years in government, and added to by David Cameron, Vince Cable et al since 2010.

Where is the hue and cry about this vicious apparatus for keeping the working class in ‘their place’?

In contrast, the SSP shares the demands of most trade unions for outright repeal of these laws. Laws which price workers out of justice through £1,200-plus fees for Employment Tribunal hearings; make it virtually impossible to recruit openly to the unions in most workplaces; hamper the ability of union reps to function and represent members; and ban united action, including solidarity strikes and those deemed ‘political’.

We want to collaborate with workers and their unions to instead demand a Charter of Workers’ Rights, including the right to join, be active in and organise unions without fear of victimisation; for full, open access to workers for union reps and officials; full legal rights from the first day of employment (not after two years!); the re-establishment of free collective bargaining; the right to strike after a majority vote, including the right to take solidarity action with fellow workers; and ultimately for boards of directors to have a majority of elected workers’ representatives on them, for real workplace democracy.

Jobs, pay and workplace rights are central issues to judge any party by. And on their track record, not just their election-time promises! These issues put them to a central test: whose side are they on? Working people, or the profiteers?

Deeds not words

The working class majority population will remain when the general election circus moves on after 7 May. We should put the politicians on the spot, spear their falsehoods and vague words, and resolve to build a mass, working class socialist party that stands up for decent, secure, well-paid jobs and workplace democracy.

Scotland’s socialist party, the SSP, is here to stay beyond 7 May, to play our part in that struggle.

by Sandra Webster, SSP
national co-spokesperson

Is mainstream primary policy just buzzword bingo?

GLASGOW CITY Council are the latest local authority to push forward the aims of "propensity to mainstream" for children entering primary schools. This means no child entering primary one except with extremely complex needs this year will have access to specialist provision.

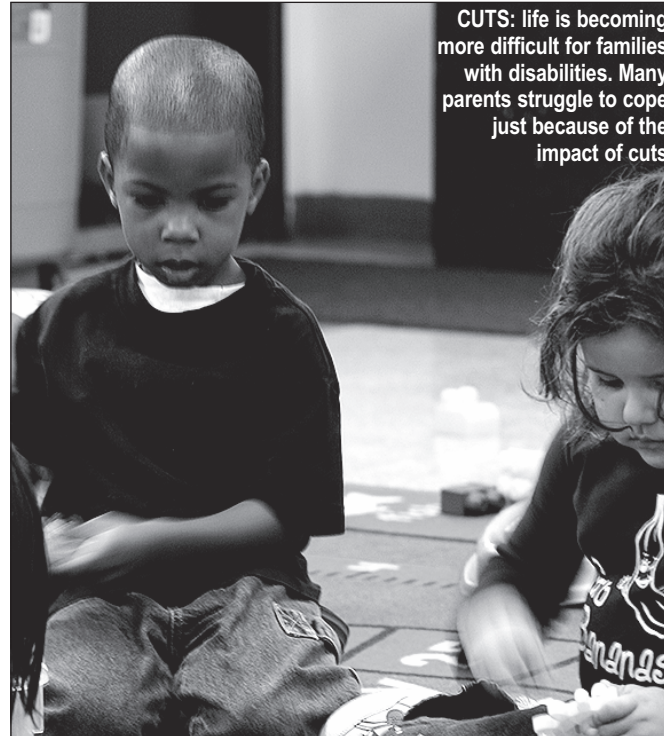
Instead they will have to attend mainstream primary for six to eight weeks before a decision is made. They are following in the footsteps of other local authorities but is this about equality or saving money?

Don't get me wrong, I believe children with disabilities should have access to attend their local primary. Children learn from each other about what being different means and acceptance of others.

For some children though, they need the extra support, and the additional support for learning that school brings, which means smaller classes and a curriculum designed to meet their needs.

Cuts to support

No parent wants to send their child to specialist provision. Many parents now are going through hell wondering how their child will cope in a class of 30. A decision to attend mainstream



CUTS: life is becoming more difficult for families with disabilities. Many parents struggle to cope just because of the impact of cuts

should also mean that there is funding to support children.

Alongside the cuts that are hitting hard are the cuts to support in school.

Classrooms assistants and specialist classroom support are being cut back on, leaving children to sink or swim. There is also lack of support in the playground or at meal times. This lack of support is just setting children up to fail.

Michael is a single parent from Glasgow who has been told his son will have to attend mainstream, starting primary one in August. This is despite his son having autism and being non-verbal.

He has an assistant to help him one-to-one in his nursery. He has been refused specialist provision and told his child will have to attend mainstream for six to eight weeks before being assessed. Michael said:

"I am worried sick about how he will cope. He finds change difficult enough. The thought of him being in a class of 30 worries me. I know he won't help. He has one-to-one in nursery. How is he going to manage in mainstream? This is madness."

Michael is not alone in his concerns. With more and more cuts, life is becoming more difficult for families with disabilities. Often tension in

school has an impact on home life. Many parents struggle to cope just because of the impact of cuts.

This is ironic shortly after the Scottish Government announced they may fine councils for children from poorer backgrounds not achieving as much as their more affluent peers.

How will this encourage teaching staff to choose to teach in schools in areas of deprivation, fining authorities instead of putting support directly into schools where support and mentor ship is most needed?

All about the money

However, it is all about the money. Mainstreaming should not be one selection but a good choice when a child can not only survive but thrive and do well.

For some children, mainstream is not the answer. If I had a magic wand, I would ensure there were enough funds for every child to attend their local school. The reality though is if the will is there the financial support is not.

"Propensity to mainstream" is a great ambition as well as being buzzword bingo.

The Scottish Government have to ensure that funds are spent on children to support them in mainstream.

My advice for Glasgow City Council? Many parents will be calling you out on this policy. First they came for adults with disabilities, now the children. People are becoming more angry.

Not a good idea in the run-up to a general election.



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Poetry and the SSP

by Alan Gay

IT IS astonishing how most of us accept the suffering caused by the huge economic divisions in our society—£6.50 an hour and zero hours contracts existing alongside bankers' pay; you could list the inequalities in nearly every walk of life. Yet we accept this as normal and tend not see that there is an alternative. Capitalism is only one way of organising society. There is another, fairer way. I became an activist to help bring about change leading towards socialism. I use poetry as a way of saying things that cannot easily be said in any other way. Poetry is my way of revealing what is hidden in the underbelly of capitalism. It might help get members on to the streets.

TOADS

Toads are those who own mansions with swimming pools.

The rest of us rent flats.
All we own is the power in our backs
which we sell to the Toads
to build more mansions.

To the Toads, we are a pot
from which froth is creamed off
to pay more of us
to build even more mansions.

They never let us prosper
otherwise we would build
mansions for ourselves
and not work for them.

They hide behind smiles
telling us they are forced
to pay £6.50 an hour
so that they can compete
against other Toads
-the lying toads!

Toads smile a lot
because they swim in prosperity
forcing us to work for them.

We carry banners saying
GIVE US £10 AN HOUR
'Our work put you in mansions in the
first place.
We own the froth you creamed off.
Hand it back.'

The Toads smile, then waddle-off to
their mansions
and beside their swimming pools, squat.

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/

Paisley and Renfrewshire South – Sandra Webster

As we move into the last few frantic weeks of campaigning we continue to challenge the status quo.

We have at least two stalls a week one in the constituency and others in the areas we are targeting for the election. These have all been very successful and we continue to meet new voters.

We are building for a public meeting on 9 April in Glenburn (where Sandra lives) and are grateful for the offer of support from other branches. With blue skies coming we are looking forward to canvassing all through the month ahead.

We have to say a huge well done to Lindsay Brown for all his fundraising on local stalls which have helped us to arrange printing and other costs.

Also a thank you to all at Strangeways Night who raised a magnificent £250 for the election. We are overwhelmed by others' kindness.

So we look forward to the door-chapping and the continuation of Sandra's soapbox and reaching out to so many new people who are keen to hear about our policies and how they can transform lives.

Glasgow South West – Bill Bonnar

The SSP campaign in the Glasgow South West constituency is now in full swing. In fact, it could prove to be a biggest campaign on the ground of all contesting parties other than the SNP. Already the first batch of 10,000 leaflets have been delivered door to door.

This highlights, among other things, the Scottish Socialist Party campaign for a £10 per hour Living Wage. The party is holding regular street stalls, primarily in Govan and have just held the first of two public meetings. This was on the issue of UKIP and Immigration and took place in Govan with National co-spokesperson, Colin Fox the main speaker.

The meeting was very successful and another public meeting is planned for the end of the month. The SSP is also using the local media to great effect, particularly the community radio station; Sunny Govan Radio which will broadcast an interview with SSP candidate, Bill Bonnar, prior to a major hustings with the other candidates.

The party is also planning to carry out some very specific canvassing. Financially the campaign is going well with the deposit secured through some good election fundraising and more money on the way.

The contest should prove to be a tight battle between the Labour Party and SNP with sitting MP Ian Davidson no doubt hoping that enough Tory voters will tactically vote Labour to secure his seat. So much for 'vote Labour to keep the Tories out'. For the SSP this election is about creating a real presence in the constituency and continuing the efforts to build the party.

Edinburgh South – Colin Fox

Around six weeks remain to the General Election, and the SSP campaign in Edinburgh South continues apace with leafletting, canvassing and stalls. With each passing week many of the new activists we recruited during and since the referendum campaign are displaying increased signs of confidence as they gain the campaigning experience and develop the practical skills that will prove so crucial for the party our and our cause, not only now, but in 2016.

The latest drive has been to build for our upcoming meeting covering the Marchmont and Bruntsfield area to the northern end of the constituency, looking at the additional powers the SSP works to see devolved to Holyrood. Between the Edinburgh branches we've delivered all 5000 leaflets in only five days. Further, we've held successful stalls in the area itself, whilst still running stalls four times a week on Princes Street. The response? Positive and heartening.

These stalls for the meeting have found further evidence of what our canvassing already shows: in Edinburgh concentrated and consistent campaigning has done a great deal to raise the profile of the party and

our programme, and continues to do so. At one recent stall in the constituency, the question of replacing the council tax was raised several times – our proposal for the income based Scottish Service Tax on each occasion proved popular, and a number of votes were wholehearted pledged to the SSP. We've raised the SSP's banner high as the clear and credible alternative to austerity. The time and opportunity to be building the SSP as Scotland's alternative to austerity is now. Don't miss it!

Glasgow East – Liam McLaughlan

Since the last issue of the voice, it's been a pretty hectic few weeks here for Glasgow East SSP. As I write,

we've just come in from a leafletting session in an Easterhouse 'scheme' promoting this coming Monday's public meeting to highlight our £10 an hour minimum wage demand and end to Zero Hours Contracts with myself, Christine (an ex-councillor for the area) and our national co-spokesperson Colin Fox.

Tomorrow, we'll be outside Easterhouse Shopping Centre with our regular stall and our leaflet to promote the public meeting while we're at it. With six weeks to go, we will hope to be an ever-present campaigning force in the area and hope to raise as much publicity and recognition for the party as possible.

With several local hustings on the way, many more leafletting and canvassing runs to come, and the possibility of another public meeting, there's plenty to be done.

Any and every bit of help is greatly appreciated, and we remain confident of shifting the debate in the area to the left and once again highlighting the SSP's unwavering commitment to bettering working class people's lives.

As well as this, in having the only locally based candidate and the only candidate pledging to take no more than the wage of a skilled worker in Scotland if given the privilege and honour of representing the East End, we've got plenty to shout about.



AFTER NETANYAHU VICTORY, WHAT NEXT?

by Bill Bonnar

THE GENERAL election in Israel last week saw the re-election of a reactionary, hawkish government and represents a blow to any kind of peace process in the Middle East. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu secured a fourth consecutive victory for his Likud led coalition defeating the more left leaning Zionist Union; a coalition comprising The Labour Party and Hatnuah.

The Zionist Union went into the election offering the prospect of a negotiated settlement with the Palestinian Authority and a social and economic programme centred on providing better housing and health care and tackling the decline in workers living standards caused by rampant inflation.

While the international media tend to concentrate on the implications for the wider Middle East situation this was an election dominated by domestic economic and social issues.

Agenda challenged

The fact that up until the final days of the election, the Zionist Union was running neck and neck with Likud shows that there are forces in Israel which challenge the reactionary agenda of Likud and the far right.

The Zionist Union define themselves as a Left Bloc and also contain some smaller parties including the Green Movement. Formed last December they polled 18 per cent of the vote and won 24 seats as compared to Likud's 23 per cent and 30 seats.

The result shows an increasing polarisation in Israeli politics with Likud only able to form a government through alliances with extreme right wing parties.

Along with the above the Palestinian issue was significant central in the success of the Zionist Union showing large numbers



POLARISATION: the left leaning Zionist Union challenged the reactionary agenda of Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud and the far right

of Israelis wanting a negotiated settlement with Palestine and more than willing to embrace the proposed two-state solution.

In fact the creation of the Zionist Union in December was in part sparked by a sense of outrage amongst many ordinary Israelis at the slaughter in Gaza last summer.

In the Washington, there was a sense of dismay at the result. Now fully committed to a two state solution, the US government clearly sees the Likud-led coalition as the main obstacle to peace.

This may change if the Republicans win the next presidential election with the Israeli lobby already hard at work to get the American administration back on track. The creation of a Palestinian state co-existing alongside the state of Israel is the only feasible solution to this conflict and the only solution which can be embraced by the left.

The argument for a Palestinian state which supplants the state of Israel has become the almost exclusive property of reactionary Islamic fundamentalist forces and even not all of them while opposition to a Palestinian state is driven by reactionary

forces in Israel. These latter forces are continuously promoting their agenda of military confrontation with the aim of pushing Palestinian forces into a conflict which they cannot win, ethnic cleansing in places like East Jerusalem and ever expanding Jewish settlements.

Their aim is to make a reality out of the original claims of reactionary Zionists. 'Palestine is a country without people for a people without a country'. Their strategy, ruthlessly pursued for nearly 70 years, has been to drive Palestinians out of Palestine killing as many as they can in the process.

Breakthrough

For Palestinians the decision by a majority of countries who make up the General Assembly of the United Nations to recognise Palestine as a state was more than simple a welcome gesture; it represented a dramatic breakthrough and has given all those pro-Palestinian forces around the world a hook to build their campaigns around. Britain as expected voted against the proposal.

In Scotland, we must continue to build on our strong

record of solidarity with the Palestinian people. As was seen at the time of the slaughter in Gaza last summer large numbers of Scottish people were moved into solidarity action with demonstrations, pickets, meetings and the supply of much needed aid.

The referendum campaign opened up the debate around what the foreign policy of an independent Scotland would be. The consensus was that it would be very different from the pro-imperialist policies of successive British governments and would seek to ally Scotland with progressive movements around the world.

One of the first acts of an independent Scotland would be to recognise the Palestinian state but why wait till then? There is no reason why the Scottish Parliament could not take this decision now.

It might have no status in international law but then many of the stances taken by the British Government vis-a-vis Israel have no basis in international law. For the Palestinian people it would represent a welcome act of international solidarity and a demonstration that they are not alone.

by David McKenzie,
Scrap Trident Coalition

“A country is not only what it does, it is also what it tolerates” – Kurt Tucholsky 1933

“Nukes are so 20th century” – Anon.

THE SCOTTISH Stir is seriously aggravating the already developing anxiety within the British state about its sovereignty, identity and power. In the midst of this crisis the question of nuclear weapons goes on being an emblematic and awkward piece of grit, as a key symbol of the old order and its inability to recognise the nature of human security in the 21st century.

One of the illustrative features of the crisis is the contradiction between frenetic attention to borders and immigration on the one hand and the casual acceptance of invasive and destructive aspects of globalisation, such as TTIP, on the other.

For ordinary working people, this is of course the double whammy—being stripped of rights, decent reward and security if here at home and of all these plus life itself if elsewhere or desperately on the move.

Designed to murder millions

For progressive movements the imperative is to articulate ever more clearly our understanding of global human security worldwide. This is of course one of the good paradoxes of the independence movement—to separate so that we can join the world in solidarity.

And where better to illuminate the true meaning than up against its antithesis—the insane world of Dr Strangelove?

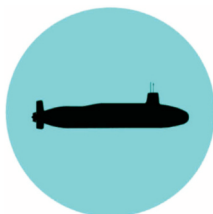
And as folk more and more realise the malign realities of a weapon system designed to murder millions, so do they more clearly see and treasure the things that matter for humanity.

The demo on 4 April and the blockade of Faslane on the 13th have been designed to provide a good context for expressing exactly that.

In Scrap Trident, we recently had a mild but provocative comment about what the writer saw as our negativity, our relentless concentration on the dark.

It was a fair point. We all need to remember the positive vision that lies

BAIRNS NOT BOMBS



NATIONAL DEMO

Glasgow Saturday 4 April

Assemble 10:30 March 11:00 Rally 12:00 George Square Glasgow



BIG BLOCKADE

Faslane Monday 13 April

Non violent direct action training Glasgow 12 April



SCRAP TRIDENT

Ballot Thursday 7 May

Vote out MPs who support Trident replacement

behind our opposition and rejection, that it is all about love, about peaceful community, about fairness among us, far-stretching hands of solidarity, deep understanding between us and care for this magical perch. This is why we chose ‘Bairns not Bombs’ as the core of our message.

We are now beginning to get a sense that the march and rally in Glasgow on 4 April is going to be big but there is still time for all those who share this vision to go that extra mobilising step, and in particular to talk it over with friends and family.

The same goes for the blockade on the 13th. For those who might be considering

risking arrest at the blockade we are providing training sessions in nonviolent direct action.

But there is also need for many to be there in active support, as legal observers, tea-makers, photographers, filmmakers, banner drapers, singers, drummers, welfare-watchers, transport helpers, interview givers, etc. etc.

• *Saturday 4 April, March and Rally, 11am, George Square/ Monday 13 April, Faslane Blockade, from 7am. Details of both events—including a full briefing for the blockade—can be found at scraptrident.org*