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The Better Together zombies stagger into the election fray

BACK THE REAL ANTI-AUSTERITY AGENDA

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- **End zero hours contracts**
- **Axe anti-trade union laws**



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by Sandra Webster, SSP
national co-spokesperson

THE PRESS is full of pictures and interviews of ordinary everyday life in Number 10. Sam and Dave posed with their family. Dave was praised for combing his daughter's hair even though he is left handed. The emphasis was on an ordinary family with a father with an extraordinary job.

Look a little closer though and the staging of the pictures was evident. Despite the children sitting round the kitchen table doing their homework. The three Rs are important to the Camerons, the dishwasher was empty at 9.20am. Given most of us can't afford one how many "ordinary" dishwashers are empty at breakfast time? Then there was little Ivan who as usual was discussed.

The death of any child is a tragedy. Little Ivan only lived a short time. According to Sam Cam he changed their world forever. She talked about why their experiences of being Ivan's father was a good reason to re-elect Dave for another five years as he truly knows the impact of disability on a family.

Austerity cuts

All these happy family photographs the week after the nasty party may have become nastier. I didn't think that was possible either.

However, the cuts to welfare spending "leaked" by civil servants last week will have a huge impact on the lives of people with disabilities and their families. As Sam Cam described, with a disabled child in your family, life is fragile. For many families, these proposed austerity cuts will make life so much more



UNPOPULAR CHOICE: many people left disability charity 'Contact a Family' when Sam Cam was made their patron

Nasty party gets nastier

difficult, putting some at breaking point.

Carer's Allowance is a pitiful amount £62 a week but it provides a small payment to compensate carers for their unpaid work. At present it is a universal benefit. The leak announced this would only be paid to families in receipt of Universal Credit. Thousands of families will lose out.

For many, this is a safety net payment allowing people to remain at home rather than being cast into the workplace. That is if you are not too exhausted to work. Many carers work over 60 hours a week and there is no sick leave or respite.

ESA and Carer's Allowance may be taxable and again will be means tested. This will affect many young adults who stay at home with their families. The transition from children to adult services are difficult enough to traverse without this increased financial difficulty.

Perhaps most contentious is if you have more than one disabled child you will only be able to claim for one of them. This will decrease many families budgets but

not cover the extra cost of disability which multiplies with the number of disabled people in a family. Many disabilities have a genetic disposition which runs in families. Again the most vulnerable are under attack.

Child benefit may be limited to the first two children.

Again, this is a safety net benefit which means that parents can ensure there is food on the table.

Breadline Britain

In 'Breadline Britain', every penny counts for struggling families. All of the carers I have spoken to can barely believe what is happening. Things are difficult enough now but if these rules become legislation it will tip many over the edge.

The sad fact though is that this policy seems to be popular to some of the electorate. Their ire, fuelled by the ever growing list of programmes about how life on benefits is a bed of roses, means they believe the divide-and-conquer rhetoric of the Tories. Being poor is not protected by any legislation. It is acceptable to

call people out of work "feckless" and "lazy". These are the actions of Cameron's government. Life for carers and mothers is a thousand miles away from Number 10's cosy kitchen. Life is hard and a struggle.

Most carers I know are keen to emphasise how having a loved one with a disability has changed them. They are able to be more compassionate and walk in others' shoes. Can Sam and Dave Cameron say the same?

Looking at the world through Tory-tinted glasses, they may believe they are supporting families. Sam Cam is a patron of 'Contact a Family', a charity which supports families with a disabled child. I know many who left after they made Sam Cam patron.

Enough is enough though. Although people feel isolated and crushed by the present cuts, I can sense anger from people who have never been politically engaged before.

It is time for a change and a challenge to the Tories to face the inconvenient truth that their policies are not the oxymoron "caring conservatism" but an attack on the most vulnerable.

by Ken Ferguson

THE BRITISH state and its political class have a centuries-old, well deserved reputation for lying and duplicity which earned them the label Perfidious Albion across the globe.

The two-year referendum campaign with its scares, smears, prediction of doom and outright lies dished up by the politicians of the cross class Better Together and their "Project Fear" were but the latest refinement in the dark arts of duplicity that is their stock in trade.

As the days tick by towards the UK general election which seems to be moving inexorably to the doom of Scottish Labour and their erstwhile Lib Dem and Tory chums of last year, mounting panic is gripping the suave liars of Westminster.

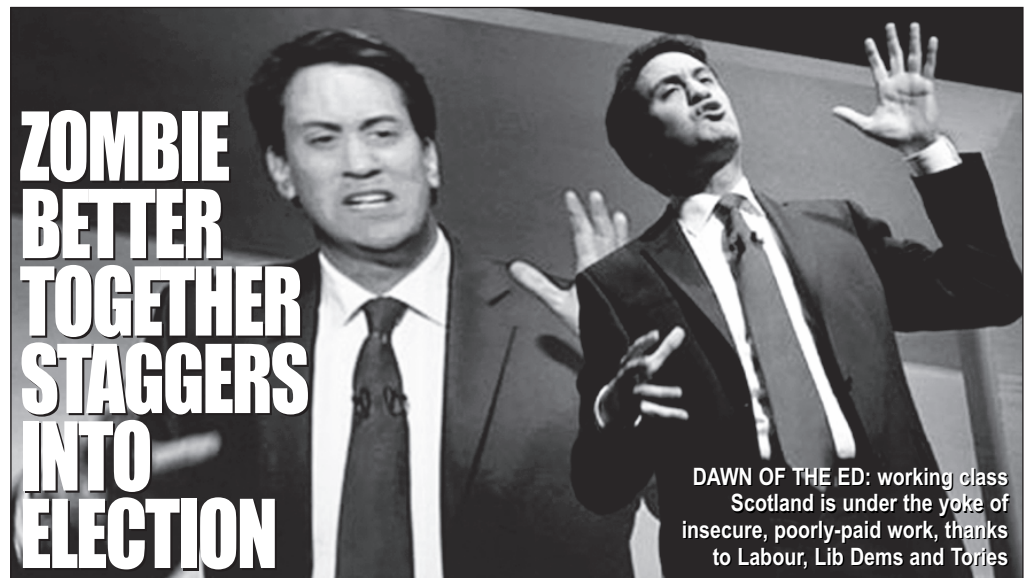
Enter then, in a *Dawn of the Dead* moment, the Zombies of the supposedly deceased Better Together to unfold, yet again, their menu of dirty tricks.

Sturgeonmania

In the wake of the leaders' debates and the growth of Sturgeonmania they furiously treated us to screaming headlines about the "most dangerous woman in Britain" and multiple variations on the theme as they scrambled to defend the unionist's austerity agenda at the heart of Labour, Lib Dem and Tory programmes.

However modestly and reasonably tabled, the idea set out by Nicola Sturgeon, Leanne Wood of Plaid and the Greens Natalie Bennett that there might be an alternative to austerity came like a thunderbolt breaking the cosy cuts "no alternative" message from the Westminster elite.

And it was this breaching of the core cuts consensus and the upsurge of public support for that alternative view which led to the mobilisation of the undead against it. The predictable suspects at the *Daily Mail* (once



supporters of Mosley's pro-Hitler Blackshirts) ran their right wing bile with variations on the theme from the rest of the media pack but it was left to the supposedly "quality" *Daily Telegraph* to open its pages to the Zombies.

Perhaps before examining the *Telegraph's* tawdry role we should recall the recent book by their Scottish man Alan Cochrane, a willing stooge of Britannia, in which he boasted of his role in spreading the manure for Better Together.

Thus, hot on the heels of the seven-way TV debate, the *Telegraph* broke an "exclusive" telling readers that Nicola Sturgeon had told the French ambassador that she favoured Cameron over Miliband for Prime Minister.

What a scoop!! In one fell swoop the carefully calibrated anti-Tory SNP message was exposed as a sham and desperate Labour chiefs—led by Miliband—seized on the tale like drowning men at straws as proof that the SNP are Tory supporters. However as the saying has it the tall tale went "up like a rocket and down like a stick" as first Sturgeon and then the French embassy denied that any such conversations had taken place. Worse followed when it emerged that, in clear breach of normal practise, neither the French nor Sturgeon had been asked to

comment before publication. Now it is clear that the "story" came from a Scottish Office civil servant answerable to Scottish Secretary Alistair Carmichael whose party, the flexible Lib Dems, are bywords for honesty and truth. Challenged on Channel Four, he once again showed that he is London's man dismissing it as "one of those things".

Amidst the clanging of Labour bosses deleting gleeful tweets and postings the Labour delight turned to gloom as one more Zombie bit the dust.

As 7 May approaches the significant development is that, despite the iron grip of big finance on all aspects of UK life from parliament to papers and TV, a glimpse of another way has broken the mass media blackout. Socialists, Greens and the progressive movement have, of course argued for an alternative to austerity since the great crash but for millions of voters such policies are either unheard in the corporate media or presented (as with the SNP) as wild, unworkable, extremism transforming Scotland into North Korea.

Yet new polling shows that an alternative to austerity has considerable support among Scottish voters and the debate reaction shows this shared across much of the UK.

The policies needs to make

this alternative a reality involve massive house building for rent, action to implement a £10-an-hour wage now and public ownership of key services as a step towards an economy putting people and planet before profit and greed.

The anti-austerity offer made during the debate is an opening towards such a politics but needs to go much further.

Profit-crazed bosses

Working class Scotland is under the yoke of insecure, badly-paid work and slashed benefits and this is not an act of God but the outcome of 30 years of ruling class war on workers which made trade unions almost illegal and left workers at the mercy of profit-crazed bosses.

All the fruits of their dominance from zero hours contracts to plummeting wages are rooted in arrogant and unchallenged bosses power and winning back workers right to organise is an essential first step to challenging them.

Therefore, welcome as any defeat for the politics of austerity on 7 May will be, the left and progressive forces need to step up pressure for a united challenge for an alternative meeting peoples' needs.

This is the case the SSP will be putting in the election and the case it will make after it.

by David Eyre

LIKE MANY socialists, I'm a strong supporter of The Co-operative movement.

Our household does its big grocery shop at The Co-operative Food stores in Dunbar. Our home phone, broadband supply and my mobile phone all come from the The Phone Co-op. Our electricity comes from The Energy Co-op. We got our washing machine from The Co-operative Electrical. My account is with The Co-operative Bank.

I do these things because I believe in co-operative values and principles. I want an economy based on democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. I want an alternative to the mad inhumanity of the unplanned, unprincipled market. I believe that co-operatives can be the building blocks of a new economy, where we can all come together to decide what we need to live a truly human life, and then devote our skills and energy and labour to achieving it.

Donations to Labour

Now, for around a century the Co-operative Party has been the political arm of the Co-operative Movement, trying to bring co-operative values into Government.

You'd think a strong co-operator like me would be a member of The Co-operative Party. But I'm not. You see, the Co-operative Party has an exclusive

Real Co-op campaign aims to break Labour monopoly on political fund

In 2013 The Co-operative gave £750,000 to The Co-operative Party.

The Co-operative Party works exclusively through Labour.

If you believe no one party has a monopoly on Co-operative values, get your membership card and join our campaign

realcoop.net



real co-op

agreement with the Labour Party. Members of the Co-operative Party are barred from being members of any other political party—except Labour. Co-operative Party candidates stand under the banner 'Labour & Co-operative'.

The Co-operative Party is largely funded by donations from The Co-operative Society and other big Co-ops. Last year the Society gave The Co-operative Party more than £750,000.

The Co-operative Party helps fund the election campaigns of its Labour & Co-operative candidates, such as Shadow Chancellor

Ed Balls. In Scotland it has helped MPs Cathy Jamieson, Ian Davidson, Gemma Doyle and Mark Lazarowicz. In the Scottish Parliament it has helped Johann Lamont, Kezia Dugdale, Claudia Beamish and James Kelly. In the past it also helped Gordon Brown, the Co-op Party's first ever Prime Minister.

My own personal view is that the millions and millions of pounds that have been spent on supporting Labour through the Co-op Party have too often failed to bring co-operative principles into Government.

For me, the biggest failure was when the economic crisis hit. Co-operative Party Prime Minister Brown didn't remutualise Northern Rock. He never considered creating a co-operative model for any of the big banks that were taken into majority public ownership. Instead, they were left in the hands of self-selected rich shareholders, who were happy to take our cash and carry on as normal, scamming the public and handing out big bonuses to their friends at the front of the corporate trough. Co-operative values never got a look-in.

So I've started the 'Real Co-op' campaign. The Real Co-op

campaign is for every member of The Co-operative Society who believes that no single party has a monopoly on co-operative values.

We believe it makes sense for The Co-operative Society to support political parties that share those values. But no single political party should be able to take our financial support for granted. And every party should be challenged to make sure that they support our co-operative values.

For the first time this year, The Co-operative Society AGM will be run on a one-member-one-vote basis.

We tried to get a motion to AGM that would have kept a political fund that would have been open to The Co-operative Party and others. But we were blocked by the Co-operative Society's bureaucracy from bringing it forward.

End the link

But there will definitely be a motion on whether to continue the Society's subscription to The Co-operative Party. So we still have the chance to end our exclusive link with Labour and start to build real co-operative politics.

If you're a Co-operative Group member, I hope you'll support the campaign. Please sign up at our website RealCoop.net—you'll find links there to our Facebook group and Twitter feed. Share the links with friends and family.

And together, we can get real co-operative politics on the agenda.

• *David Eyre lives in Dunbar and is a member of the East Lothian branch of the SSP. He's also a member of The Co-operative Society, The Midcounties Co-operative and the SCVO Credit Union. See RealCoop.net*

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by Scott McDonald

SSP backs One in Five campaign

I'M PLEASED to support the One in Five campaign—a campaign to encourage, empower and increase political participation amongst disabled people in Scotland. The campaign asks its supporters to sign up to a five-point charter which includes a pledge to make meetings accessible to all and to ask people what their needs are, then to put them into action where available.

It seems obvious, but it's often overlooked—how often do we inadvertently forget about accessibility and empowerment, having meetings up stairs, and focussing on able-bodied activism.

Ultimately, it's a promise from ourselves to widen access to our grassroots politics, to be aware, and support everyone's needs and contribution—and if there's one thing the referendum campaign taught us, it was the supreme value of all-inclusive politics. We should never, never forget it.

Support

Our Executive Committee unanimously agreed to offer support to the campaign. The Scottish Socialist Party's policy platform is a remarkably progressive and inclusive one with respect to disabled rights, therefore the One in Five campaign is a good fit for us.

The official campaign launch outside Parliament was well-attended, with disability and equality campaigners of all colours finding themselves in front of cameras. (Don't tell him, but Scottish Labour leader Jim Murphy was seen wearing the red and yellow colours of the SSP on his One in Five t-shirt.)

There are two people I'd like to namecheck for raising awareness of disability politics. The fearless Susan Archibald—who has fought tirelessly for disability rights with the Independent Living Movement. She's gotten a reputation as a personality who “gets things done”. The other person is possibly the single biggest reason I'm involved in politics today, the chair



of Trans Media Watch, Jennie Kermode. An infinitely patient teacher, writer, comrade and a friend—with hair-raising stories of getting around Glasgow in a wheelchair, with its long, steep, inaccessible pavements.

As a result of agreeing to implement the One in Five charter the SSP should work to ensure our branch meetings, activism, public events and publications are accessible. On the technical front: we're presently remastering our website, so screen readers work well, subtitling our campaign videos, training our comrades in live-streaming, so that as many of our public engagements as possible are available immediately online. We should also consult with the RNIB with respect to our published works.

These are just some of the ongoing matters that have been raised as a result of bringing One in Five to our executive. This sounds like a lot of overlooked work. And it is. In our ongoing campaign for socialism in Scotland—and the most progressive suite of disabled rights policies that I've ever seen—we occasionally drop the ball. We must pledge to pick it back up.

Sandra Webster, SSP national co-spokesperson said: “Supporting One in Five is the type of party we are. With the ongoing attacks

on people with disabilities and long term health conditions, it is crucial we as a party empower and support people with disabilities. This is not an optional extra but part of our political DNA.”

So, what's next? What happens when a council doesn't make its polling stations accessible? What happens when a political party ignores the needs of disabled people? In short, what are the political and social consequences and ramifications of ignoring the needs and the shutting off of a fifth of the electorate? We must back up words with actions.

John McArdle, of the Black Triangle Disability Benefits campaign put some quiet steel in his response: “Ignoring the votes of disabled people as Labour have done by not opposing disability cuts and joining in a LibLabCon

cuts and austerity consensus has meant that in Scotland the party has haemorrhaged votes to the SNP and other Yes parties.”

Jamie Szymkowiak, founder of One in Five, says: “I'm delighted The One in Five campaign has the support of the SSP. It's extremely encouraging that by signing up, they have reviewed their commitments to disabled members.

Diversity & equality

“I am particularly looking forward to meeting the Dundee branch as they have invited us along to discuss disability-related issues before signing up themselves.”

As is clearly stated in the SSP's diversity and equality policy agenda—we call for “funding and support for disabled people's organisations to ensure the views of disabled people are clearly heard”. This is a strong statement of intent.

We hereby invite and welcome all political parties and the Scottish Government to follow suit, to continue the inclusive work that they do, and ensure that we never ignore one in five Scots in participative political processes.

If we fail at this, we fail at democracy. End of story.

• If branches wish to have a One in Five ambassador speak about the campaign, see oneinfive.scot and email oneinfivescot@gmail.com



Join the SSP

Fill in this form and send it to: Scottish Socialist Party, Suite 370, 4th Floor, Central Chambers, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD. Or phone: 07810205747. Or join the SSP online: scottishsocialistparty.org/join-us

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by *Richie Venton, SSP national workplace organiser*

STANDING UP FOR SCOTLAND'S WORKING CLASS MAJORITY

IT WAS Easter Monday. As I drove to work, the car radio announced the next programme, 'Wake up to Money'. Aye, right, is that what they call £7.13-an-hour, at this hour of the day, on a public holiday? On 'Wake up to Money' some analyst from Aberdeen was bemoaning the latest report by KPMG on the profits of the five biggest banks. Apparently he found it disappointing they only mopped up profits of £20.6billion in 2014—a 62 per cent leap compared to 2013.

Seems like some people really do 'wake up to money', mountains of it! But they're a tiny handful, the 1 per cent: the wealth owners, not the wealth creators. We live in an ill-divided world, a class-divided Scotland, with 510,000 workers in 'severe poverty' whilst a handful of bankers 'wake up to money'. So since Labour's Jim Murphy launched his leadership bid for the Scottish branch Labour with the preposterous slogan "Standing up for the prosperous and the poor", he has some explaining to do.

Is Murphy really standing up for the low-paid Usdaw union members in retail who 'wake up to very little money', on wages hovering around the pathetic national minimum wage? Or is he doing what he and his Blairite Labour Party have done for decades, standing up for bosses and bankers with the help of the Thatcherite anti-union laws and the most deregulated labour market in the whole of Europe, as his mentor Tony Blair boasted, when Prime Minister?

Abolish Zero Hours

Labour has belatedly discovered some rhetoric about 'working people', after years of telling us, in the infamous phrase of Tony Blair, "We're now all middle class". In their desperate bid to con workers into voting for them, these Labour chancers promise "an £8 minimum wage", and to "tackle exploitative Zero Hours Contracts".

Two immediate, vital health warnings are required here. An £8 minimum wage seems attractive to those who do NOT 'wake up to money'—including the 1.2 million languishing on the pitiful minimum wage, or the millions more below anything like a living wage.

But Labour only pledge £8 by 2020—leaving millions to struggle with the promise of a minimum wage which by 2020 wouldn't be worth much more—if any more—than today's £6.50! When it comes to Zero Hours Contracts, these Labour vote-seekers speak with forked tongues. What do they mean 'exploitative' Zero Hours Contracts? They're all exploitative!

They should be abolished outright, straight and simple. But Labour want to amend Zero Hours Contracts, rather than abolish them.

To have a scheme where after 12 weeks on one of these contracts, you'd get a contract for the average hours worked. Leaves the power with employers to dodge and weave, cutting down average hours worked, or dismissing and replacing workers after 11 or 12 weeks to avoid this clause. We can be forgiven for doubting Labour's promises on Zero Hours Contracts; Blair promised to abolish them back in 1995 at the Labour conference yet despite 13 years of subsequent Labour government, Zero Hours Contracts have in reality rocketed to an estimated 200,000 in Scotland alone.

Labour's lamentable stance on these issues makes life easy for the SNP, making it easy for them to sound much more radical and worker-friendly than the party originally founded by trade unionists and socialists over a century ago. But before backing the SNP, workers need to listen carefully, both to what they say and what they do. On the issue of poverty pay, the SNP make all the right attacks on the uphill struggle to cope faced by working people in 21st century Scotland. Up until their very recent conference, the SNP confined themselves to their headlined support for the so-called Living Wage—currently £7.85-an-hour. At their recent pre-election conference/rally, the SNP sought to outbid Labour's cooing sounds towards workers by pledging not £8, but an £8.70 minimum wage. At least that would have the merit of being legally enforced.

But again, not for another five years, not until 2020, at the very best making it worth no more than today's when inflation rises again, as predicted by the economists are taken into account.

At least up until now, the SNP has regularly used the same phrase as Labour's about 'abolishing exploitative Zero Hours Contracts'.

So far, no unequivocal announcement of total, unqualified abolition of them all. And whilst the SNP have spoken and written about 'embracing the trade unions' they have nowhere and never committed to outright repeal of the battery of anti-union legislation that makes this country the most repressive, in terms of workplace rights, in the whole of Europe.

The SNP make much of 'Standing up for Scotland'. Sounds good, to people downtrodden by undemocratic diktats from Westminster for decades, suffering the theft of our natural wealth and taxes by a business elite concentrated in the City of London and the stockbroker belt of the Home Counties. But which Scotland do the SNP claim to 'stand up' for?

Over the past four years, in contrast to their current promises to oppose austerity, the SNP government in Holyrood has failed to 'stand up' to about £4billion in cuts to the nation's funding by Westminster. They've passed on these cuts to local authorities and the likes of Further Education colleges. In councils they control, the SNP has just as shoddy a record of imposing cuts to



THE SSP: a party that stands up for the millions, not the millionaires

jobs and services, and of keeping apprentices on the slave-labour rates of £2.73-an-hour, as their Labour councillor counterparts. And in the case of Edinburgh council, the SNP has joined forces with Labour in an axe-wielding coalition. They've restricted Scottish public sector workers' pay to derisory, below-inflation levels. They have shielded the likes of the NHS from the worst excesses of cuts, closures and privatisation imposed by successive Labour and Tory Coalition governments down South.

But a party that imagines you can 'stand up' for everyone in Scotland is ignoring the stark truth that there are two Scotlands, divided by class, by a gaping chasm of differences in wealth and power—and by a fundamental clash of interests, where the increased profits of one class are the decreased wages of the other (majority) class. Which Scotland are the SNP offering to 'stand up for'? The Scotland of the 432 individuals who own half of the entire land in the nation, including the vast tracts of rich, arable land—or the tens of thousands (including employed workers) who rely on the indignity of food parcels from food banks, for three days at a time, to avert literal starvation?

£10-an-hour NOW!

The SSP doesn't hesitate to declare which Scotland we side with. We will stand up for Scotland's working class majority. We are a working class socialist party out to end the dictatorship of capital, for socialist democracy, including in our workplaces and communities. We want a campaign not only for a maximum working week of 35 hours, as the first step to a 4-day week—crucially, with no loss of earnings—but also for employers to be obliged to offer a minimum number of guaranteed hours per week. In contrast to talk of £8 or £8.70-an-hour minimum wage a full five years down the road, in 2020, the SSP demands £10 NOW, in 2015, based on the modest formula of two-thirds median male earnings, with equal pay for women—rising with wages or inflation, whichever is the greater. We stand up for outright repeal of all anti-union laws, and the implementation of a Charter of Workers' Rights.

That to include: full employment rights from day one in the job; the right to join and organise unions without victimisation; full and equal employment rights for all, the constitutional right to strike, after a simple majority vote, including the right to take solidarity action with fellow workers full union recognition and free collective bargaining in all sectors.

We stand up for public, democratic ownership of the profiteering banks, all forms of energy, transport, construction, big industries, services. For those millions of working class people in Scotland who do not 'wake up to money', we need a party that stands up for the millions, not for Scotland's millionaires.

We need to 'wake up to the choices' between profit and pay, full and democratic rights of the working class majority, or the untrammelled right to get rich, at our expense, for the 1 per cent. The growth of support for the SSP amongst Scotland's working class majority is a vital part of that awakening.

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/

Glasgow South West – Bill Bonnar

The Scottish Socialist Party campaign in Glasgow South West is now in full swing.

Regular stalls, leafleting and canvassing are already giving the Scottish Socialist Party a high profile particular compared to other parties.

The campaign is also allowing the party to focus on key issues such as the £10 pound an hour Living Wage, Immigration, anti-Trident and, of course, independence. With one public meeting in Govan on UKIP and Immigration successfully under our belt; another is planned for Penilee.

The topic, among others, will be MPs salaries and expenses.

Only one hustings has been arranged to date in the constituency; by Sunny Govan Radio although the our candidate

Bill Bonnar has spoken at a housing event and a hustings organised by Amnesty International; both in Glasgow city centre. The local branch are also well on top of social media with regular features advertising our campaign.

With three weeks to go the party is now stepping up its campaign and whatever the final vote it is already proving to be a success.

Glasgow East – Liam McLaughlan

The SSP's campaign in Glasgow East is stepping up a gear, with a series of public meetings featuring our candidate Liam McLaughlan and others on fighting poverty pay, Zero Hours Contracts and benefit cuts. We are conducting mass leafleting and street action, engaging with working class people on the issues affecting them, rather than cheap sniping and false promises.

We are the only party calling any public meetings, where local people can hear and debate our policies. We have no fear of being cross-examined on the measures we advocate to redistribute wealth and transform the lives of thousands in one of the most deprived districts in the country. "We think having such a young and talented candidate will encourage more young ones to get involved in politics," said a couple at the first of our meetings, in Liam's home ground, Easterhouse.

"Our daughter is 17, she's showing an interest after seeing that Liam is standing, and we will encourage her along to the next one." They both joined the SSP at the end of a superb discussion—as did several others, who'd braved torrential rainstorms to attend and discuss a £10 living wage, taxation of the rich, creation of decent and secure jobs, abolition of Trident, and the whole big vision of a socialist Scotland. Liam is the youngest candidate in Scotland, is the only Glasgow East candidate living in the local community, and as a retail worker and student shares with other local people the struggle to survive on low incomes. One of the SSP policies most in tune with the people we've met is that Liam would only take an average worker's wage.

"They're out for themselves, and they'll tell you anything to get a cushy job", was the view of the other parties one woman expressed to me at a street stall. We are proud to raise the socialist banner high in a district that was at the heart of Red Clydeside.

Edinburgh South – Colin Fox

With now only weeks remaining to the General Election, the campaign in Edinburgh South constituency is now well under way.

We've made good headway so far: we've delivered 20,000 campaign leaflets; we've held our first public meeting of the campaign, delivering 5000 leaflets for that in a mere five days; stalls and canvassing are also well underway across the constituency. Yet despite all that the real brunt of the campaign is still to come: we're currently readying our campaign leaflet for the Royal Mail postal run, of which we'll be producing some 50,000 for this constituency alone; we're finalising the details of our next public meeting, this time down in the Inch, towards the South-East of the constituency; canvassing runs are being mapped out to cover substantially more of the constituency. Our message is clear, and unrivalled for its principle and commitment to a truly better society.

Our campaign plan is clear, geared towards building a substantially stronger SSP presence across Edinburgh South, and raising the profile of the SSP. What we need now is also clear: the more activists and the more financial resources that can be drawn together from across the East coast, not only the greater the impact will be on Edinburgh South, but also the greater the experience gained for other branches will be—a vital element for activists across the East coast to be able to take back to their own branches as we prepare for not only a rousing few weeks of General Election campaigning, but also for taking the SSP forward to the 2016 election dawning on the horizon. The Edinburgh South campaign is well under way. Let's be sure we continue to keep the flag flying properly!



PHOTO: Simon Whittle

Paisley and Renfrewshire South – Sandra Webster

Blue skies are here at last and comrades from Renfrewshire along with comrades from Ayrshire and Inverclyde have been using every opportunity to meet the public. We continue with stalls and soapboxes three times a week and have been thrilled by the wonderful response we have received. This fortnight we have been concentrating on Glenburn (where Sandra lives).

This will be the venue of our first public meeting where we will be calling for an end to austerity and showing how our policies offer a real alternative. Sandra had her first fortnightly column calling for a ten pound minimum wage now and was also mentioned in an election round-up discussing fracking. Renfrewshire is one of the first areas to be granted a licence. The success for our press must go to Alan Wyllie for his efforts and relationship with our local paper. From our experience folk are keen to hear about the Ten Pound an Hour living wage now and zero hour contracts. Only a few weeks to go but we continue to challenge the politics of the other candidates and are enjoying chapping doors and hearing folk's opinions. We will use this election to build in local communities and ensure we have a strong base in the Holyrood and local elections. Many thanks to all the comrades who have given up their time and came through to support us. We truly appreciate you!

Needs more than SNP to deliver indy dream

The Dream Shall Never Die: 100 Days that Changed Scotland Forever by **Alex Salmond**. Published by William Collins

by Colin Fox, SSP national co-spokesman and Yes Scotland Advisory Board member

'SALMOND TAKES us into the heart of the Yes campaign describing what was said and done behind the scenes as the referendum reached its climax' claims the publicity accompanying this book from HarperCollins. As a Yes Board member, I was naturally intrigued by such a prospect.

Yet aside from confirming the Board was never where key decisions were made, Alex Salmond's book provided little illumination.

'Tuesday 24 June 2014: I moved the decision-making [of Yes Scotland] to mimic SNP election organisation. Round the table, apart from Blair [Jenkins] and Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh from Yes, were Nicola, SNP Chief Executive Peter Murrell, my long-standing press adviser Kevin Pringle, Geoff Aberdein [Salmond's Chief of Staff], Stuart Nicholson, my political strategist Stephen Noon, and SNP Westminster leader Angus Robertson. These are the battle-hardened group who planned and executed the resounding SNP success in 2011'. [P72]

Alex Salmond's conclusion that 'The Yes side lost the vote but the referendum changed the nation' [P256] is undoubtedly true but the wider truth is that Yes mobilised people largely on the SNP's terms.

Nats need wider movement

Energising people to complete the journey to independence demands a greater political clarity and a propensity to confront the SNP leadership when they are wrong.

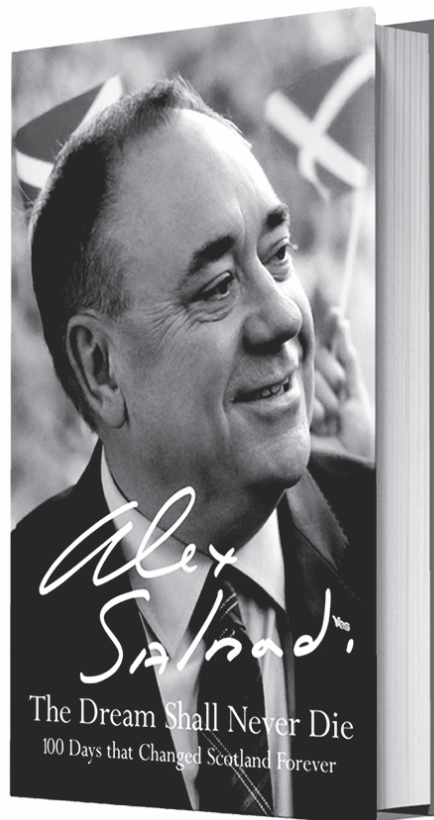
For the nationalists cannot do this on their own, they need the wider independence movement even though they give that admission only perfunctory acknowledgement.

Whilst reading this book I came across a fascinating essay entitled 'Socialists and the SNP' by Ray Burnett published in Gordon Brown's 'Red Paper on Scotland' in 1975.

Burnett 'nails' the essential character of the nationalists and explains how they like to present themselves as outsiders to 'the establishment circus' as Salmond puts it [P9] and insist with their party in Government in Scotland since 2007 'the accepted order has been

smashed'. Yet the truth is the SNP do not challenge the establishment in Scotland, they want to be part of it. Salmond is a politician whose goal is independence yet while in office he privatises with the worst of them, as the new Sick Children's Hospital in Edinburgh demonstrates. He makes cuts to public services as severe as any other party whilst attacking austerity. He backs NATO and decries warmongering. Like Labour, they support neoliberal economics and preach social democracy.

While his book chronicles the journey many like his 'skilled working class' father in the 1960s and others in 2014 have made from Labour to the SNP, Burnett can be heard



scoffing as the greatest tributes are reserved for wealthy businessmen like Brian Souter, Jim McColl, Tom Hunter, Tom Farmer, Martin Gilbert and Roy McGregor who have made no such journey. Such 'Outbreaks of ideological purity' [P24] as Salmond calls them however are scathingly dismissed by the powerful regime in control of the SNP.

Not that they are not ideological themselves. 'I turned the SNP into an avowed social democratic party,' boasts Salmond. [P256]

As a master tactician Alex Salmond is a remarkable man totally dedicated to his party with legendary 'hail fellow well kent' acumen and political stamina. But like all humans he

makes mistakes, some of them crucial. On Day Fifty-Five: Tuesday 5 August [P138] for example, displaying uncharacteristic humility, he admits 'The first TV debate. I lost. I acted out of character'. More substantially [P82] outlining the tensions within Yes Scotland over polls that unremittingly found us trailing the No camp, he showed how mistaken his tactics often were.

'YouGov poll shows 60:40 lead for No'. [P146] 'YouGov poll shows 56:44 for No' [P156] and it is here his considerable hubris is on full show. 'Every sense I have tells me we are home [will win the referendum] and plans are laid for key personnel to play specific roles thereafter. The London media believe we will be beaten, and beaten badly. They are wrong!' [P96]. They weren't, unfortunately. He was.

He argues that Gordon Brown's 'Vow' a week before polling day was crucial, yet research published by Edinburgh University has concluded only 2.5 per cent of No voters were influenced by it. Most said skepticism about the economic merits of Salmond's case for independence led them to opt for the Union.

And he is also badly out of step with public opinion today regarding Prince Charles's dangerous efforts to overturn Westminster Bills he does not like. 'It's not terrible at all' [P113] claims Salmond for the next monarch to try to usurp democracy in this way. Here then is the conservative Alex Salmond, the RBS-trained neoliberal economist and royalist.

The self-confessed 'sleekit' politician who covers his conservative tracks by quoting the famous Edinburgh socialist James Connolly. 'The great only appear great because we are on our knees' [P231].

Shameless

Famously fearless on tactics and strategy, Salmond is also shameless in calling in favours from wealthy backers like Jim McColl, Brian Souter, Jim McColl, George Matthewson, Tom Farmer and, of course, the Weirs.

As a participant in Yes Scotland, I enjoyed being reminded of our remarkable journey, but ultimately, Alex Salmond's book leaves you short.

It reads like a picturesque calendar reminding us where we have been but it provides little significant insight on why we lost.

Nor will it, I fear, inspire many of the undecided to come with us or conclude as I do that 'independence has been deferred not defeated'.

by Andrew Kinnell

Does the SNP offer semi-skimmed change?

THE SLOVENIAN philosopher, psychoanalyst and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek makes the point that in today's neoliberal society contradiction is the norm, people are increasingly offered "products deprived of their malignant property: coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, beer without alcohol".

Žižek argues that this combination of 'pleasure with restraint' is a fundamental part of the ideological framework that shapes our everyday lives; and I believe that the SNP's policies equate to a similar 'beer without alcohol', change without change approach, and that we on the left must remain critical of.

Nicola Sturgeon told the SNP conference that the SNP opposed the anti-democratic House of Lords, she also outlined their commitment to oppose the renewal of Trident Nuclear Weapons and said that the SNP wants to challenge the austerity politics of Westminster.

As a socialist, I welcome all of this and indeed support all of these measures, however that is not the full picture.

Monarchy

While the SNP are happy to slam the anti-democratic House of Lords, they paradoxically support the divine right of kings and believe the Monarchy has an important role to play in society, according to the First Minister the Monarchy operates as "a model that has many merits".

With Trident too, the SNP have made it clear that they are against the immoral weapons of mass destruction and will always vote against any renewal; and yet they support NATO, a nuclear military alliance designed to assist US imperial interests across the world.

The SNP have tried to position themselves as an economically 'progressive' party offering a different solution to the austerity agenda of West-

minster, however at a local level the SNP have, like all the other main parties, slashed budgets of local authorities.

The SNP's economics in particular highlight their attempts to appeal to all, to offer the 'coffee without caffeine' attempting to appeal to folk like Bryan Souter while concurrently trying to appeal to the working class voters who are sick of Westminster austerity.

The SNP suggest that Scotland can both have a 'competitive' market-led economy and simultaneously have a Scandinavian social democracy with generous welfare state supporting all in need. Research by Michael Keating and Malcolm Harvey in 2014 suggested that there would be two, distinct paths an Independent Scotland could follow: either follow the neoliberal market economy (the Celtic tiger' the SNP favoured until the crash) or the social democratic model with high taxation, a strong welfare system and state intervention.

While Keating and Harvey never considered socialism as an alternative their point was very much valid- there can be no socially just neoliberal economy, it's against the very nature of the system. The SNP's plans for the economy in an independent Scotland was one of their weakest arguments during the referendum campaign. They tried to appeal to the relatively affluent 'Tartan Tory' SNP heartlands while reaching out to the working class majority, (aided by RIC and the SSP) in the traditionally Labour heartlands of Glasgow, Dundee and much of the central belt.

The result of the referendum was clear, the working class

were much more likely to vote for independence with the better off most likely to oppose it. Yet too much of the SNP's effort went into appeasing the well off with 'change without change', 'beer without alcohol' pledges.

Yes we want independence but we'll keep the pound, we'll keep the Queen, we'll lower taxes and so on—only to meet with failure. Despite the attempts to win over and entice the Tartan Tory demographic they overwhelmingly voted no (including Alex Salmond's own constituents), while many working class areas voted in favour of self-determination.

Contradiction

Another contradiction in the SNP message has been their approach to the UK General Elections. The SNP, now with over 100,000 members are set to do very well in Scotland as working class voters rile against the long-declining Labour Party that toxically stood shoulder to shoulder with the Conservatives during the referendum campaign.

Current polls predict the SNP are to win at least 30 seats, some polls suggesting as many as 53. The SNP are pledging to be a voice for Scotland in Westminster and make sure the Westminster establishment deliver on their 'vow' of more powers for the Scottish Parliament.

This is a reasonable position, however their approach to the Labour Party has again been a contradictory one. Sturgeon has recommended voters back the progressive choice: the SNP in Scotland, Plaid in Wales and the Greens in England. However the SNP know that there will be only two parties seeking to form a

government, the Tories or Labour. The SNP as expected have completely ruled out any deal with the Conservatives but have remained open to some sort of deal with the Labour Party.

So while the SNP, quite rightly, attack Labour in Scotland, at a UK level they are willing to prop up a neoliberal Labour government which has pledged to have 'iron discipline' when it comes to deficit reduction. The SNP of course pledge to put the 'backbone' into a Labour government and have committed to force Labour away from austerity.

Yet the message is another coffee without caffeine solution: we want the Labour Party wiped out in Scotland but we want to see a Labour-led government in Britain. They want to play a part in a government led by a party they are apparently vastly different from in a state they committed to dismantling. This really is taking the change without change message to the extreme, May will tell how many Scots buy this message.

So while we on the critical left welcome the demise of the Labour Party's hegemony in Scotland, we must be equally critical of the currently buoyant SNP.

We want a better Scotland, a fairer Scotland, with social justice, democracy, internationalism and ultimately socialism at its heart.

The SNP like to think they offer this with their 'beer without alcohol, coffee without caffeine' solutions, but the message we need to tell people is it just doesn't taste the same. Change without change is not enough, we want the real thing. Another Scotland is Possible, we can't leave it up to the SNP to deliver.

by Bill Bonnar

WHAT'S THE REALITY BEHIND THE IRAN NUCLEAR 'DEAL'?

IRAN DOES not have nuclear weapons. There is no evidence anywhere that it has ambitions to develop such weapons. Even if it did it would not have the capacity to develop such weapons for years. Yet negotiations have just been concluded bringing to an end Iran's nuclear weapons 'ambitions'.

For Iran this was an agreement to lift damaging sanctions which have cost the country 150 billion pounds and ending the country's international isolation.

For the Americans and their international allies it is about building relations with a new potential ally. Nothing to do with nuclear weapons.

The United States invented Iran's nuclear threat as a way of isolating what was perceived a hostile state. It is a road down which Washington has travelled many times before.

Weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or Libya's responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing come to mind. No need to produce evidence; simply state the allegation as a fact, make sure the media are on board and international allies are on side with the message.

Israel's 'good' nukes

Of course, the region is menaced by an aggressive military power bristling with nuclear weapons. Israel's arsenal obviously comprise good nuclear weapons as are those of the United States and Britain. How about and international embargo on these countries until their threat is lifted?

The proposed lifting of sanctions and the move towards ending Iran's international isolation has been greeted with enthusiasm in Iran particularly among the country's secular, democratic and progressive forces. Less enthused are the ruling theocracy that used the threat from the United States to their advantage.



(STILL) NO NUKES: negotiations have just been concluded bringing to an end Iran's nuclear weapons 'ambitions'

As ever the dividing line in Iran is between the forces of Islamic fundamentalism and those of progressive secularism. Iran is formally an Islamic Republic ruled by a theocracy whose power is enshrined in the constitution. This emerged from the revolution of 1979 which established the Islamic Republic.

A popular mass movement against the pro-American dictatorship of the Shah was shaped by Islamic forces largely because the Shah, with American support, destroyed the left opposition; particularly in the Tudah (Communist Party).

The calculated destruction of the left meant that the space was clear for the emergence of a reactionary opposition. Yet also emerging were progressive elements committed to a democratic and secular future. These forces have battled it out for supremacy ever since with autocratic Iranian state also containing space for an elected parliament, elected President and partially independent press.

This struggle between two widely visions of the future de-

fine Iranian politics. Islamic fundamentalism; reactionary, anti-democratic and anti-women and progressive secularism; democratic and modernising.

Within the secular opposition are socialist forces although their strength is difficult to gauge because of repression. Overtly socialist parties are either banned or severely restricted in Iran.

During elections socialists would vote for the democratic opposition yet the country has a strong socialist tradition.

On 19 August 1953 the leftist Prime Minister, Mohammed Mossadeq was overthrown in an American and British organised military coup. The main reason was the government's nationalisation of the British-owned oil industry and its 'dangerous' lurch to the left. This reflected a growing radicalisation among many Iranians.

The Communist Tudah Party had emerged at the end of the Second World War as the first mass political party in the country's history with an estimated 100,000 supporters and

strong roots in the organised working class movement and among elements of the officer corp of the army. The coup led to the violent suppression of the party, which remains banned to this day.

United States policy in the region has been changing in recent years. Its opposition to the Assad regime in Syria has softened with the realisation that the main forces fighting the regime are Islamic fundamentalists. More worrying for Washington has been a general collapse of existing states with the destruction of Iraq spreading to Syria and Yemen.

This collapse is being filled by radical Islamic groups threatening western economic and strategic interests. The current military campaign against ISIS in Iraq has been driven in part by the concerns of American oil companies who are based in places like Mosul and Tikrit.

Progressive forces

The fear now is that the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria would lead to the general collapse of the state with almost unimaginable consequences for the region. In Iran, the growing strength of progressive secular forces should be welcomed by the left internationally. This can create the space for genuine socialist forces to emerge.

The country is experiencing a generalised economic crisis exacerbated by the banking crisis of 2010 and the effects of sanctions. In particular, in country where young people make up 60 per cent of the population youth unemployment has reached epidemic proportions.

Only the left can offer the kind of radical programme that can deal with these issues.

Don't believe Murphy hype

by Allan Grogan, formerly
of Labour for Independence,
now an SSP member

ANOTHER WEEK, another Ashcroft poll, another bad news story for the Labour Party. With the latest figures now estimating that the SNP could win up to 53 of the 59 Scottish Westminster seats, it has sent shock waves throughout the Westminster elite in both the Red and Blue Tories.

Closer to home, there is a puzzlement of how this can be. That despite winning the referendum, Scottish Labour are set to be wiped out north of the border, virtually eliminating any chance of forming a majority government following 7 May.

You can almost hear them at John Smith House, mutter in bemusement. How has this happened? It wasn't supposed to be this way! Even after the fallout of the referendum, after the huge influx of new members to pro independence parties, there was a feeling of wait and it will all return to normal.

UKIP obsession

I have to confess that I myself felt the SNP numbers would drop once the attention fell on Westminster issues, when smaller parties get squeezed out of the picture. Credit must go to the Greens, SNP and Plaid Cymru for gaining public support for their inclusion, although this support is more likely to have been outrage due to the media's obsession with UKIP, leaving them little choice but to include other political parties with greater representation.

The SNP has also played an attacking game, very different from their often too defensive position in the referendum, they



TOO ARROGANT TO NOTICE: that Labour are heading for the abyss

MURPHY'S PRE-LEADERSHIP RECORD

- Since 2001, Murphy has claimed over £1million in expenses
- Murphy voted to cap benefits in March 2014
- Murphy failed to show up to vote against the Bedroom Tax
- Murphy voted for tuition fees despite being NUS president
- Murphy went on 100 day tour of Scotland campaigning for a 'No' vote, which meant leaving his Eastwood constituency without an MP for almost a third of a year. Yet he still claimed over £200,000 in Westminster expenses
- Murphy is a major figure in Labour Friends of Israel, who refuse to recognise the state of Palestine
- Murphy strongly supported the illegal invasion of Iraq
- Murphy has never rebelled against the Westminster party line

have attacked the anti-austerity politics of the main Westminster parties and created a clear distinction with their stance on Trident, welfare and the economy, even dropping the dead weight of reducing corporation tax. You would have to wonder if they had been so forthright in the independence campaign then perhaps we would not still be part of the UK.

For Labour in Scotland, their

confusion stems from their own ignorance. How can traditional Labour voters not vote Labour? Why are we potentially losing our jobs? Why do they no longer believe the Daily Record? But the most prominent question is, why aren't they in love with Jim Murphy as much as we are?

Many within my former party are dismayed at the election of the arch Blairite Murphy, while others genuinely believe that his

appointment would lead to the resurgence of Labour in Scotland. The truth of the matter is that Jim Murphy represents everything that is wrong with the party today and every reason why Labour voters are leaving the party in their droves. Look at his record before he took over as leader.

Since taking on the job as Leader, Jim has had the media giving him a glowing report card, he has been getting to the very heart of issues affecting the people of Scotland. Forget unemployment, fuel poverty and food banks, drinking at football grounds, that is the real issue.

Labour as a whole have been no better, introducing their big pink bus to meet with women in their 'own environment' to discuss 'women's issues.' How incredibly patronising! The problem for Murphy and the Labour Party as a whole is that they don't get why they are so far off message. They don't understand why those whose 'mither and faither always voted Labour so I'm voting fir them too...' are now joining the SNP, SSP or Greens.

Changed landscape

Regardless of the referendum result, the political landscape in Scotland has changed, the public are better informed, more confident in their understanding of the issues affecting us all. Thankfully we now also have groups like Women for Independence ensuring that women are no longer confined to 'women's issues'.

Until Murphy and Labour understand that the lay of the land has changed, then they are heading for the abyss. The problem is they are probably too arrogant to notice.