

**“People’s manifesto”:** Sandra Webster on the party that’s not afraid to put people before profit  
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# Scottish Socialist Voice

**Before the election/after the election...**

## INCREASE ACTION AGAINST AUSTERITY

PHOTO: Craig Maclean



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



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by Sandra Webster, SSP  
national co-spokesperson

# A PEOPLE'S MANIFESTO

FEATURED PHOTO by Craig Maclean

**WE SHOULD** be proud of our manifesto which is a blueprint for our policies. Policies which present our vision of independence and a statement of intent that for us independence is only the beginning.

It truly is a people's manifesto which puts the interests of humans before big business. Investing in people rather than in global corporations will create a more equal society. Trickle down economics have been proven not to work in this government's five years in office. The rich are getting richer or at best holding on to their capital.

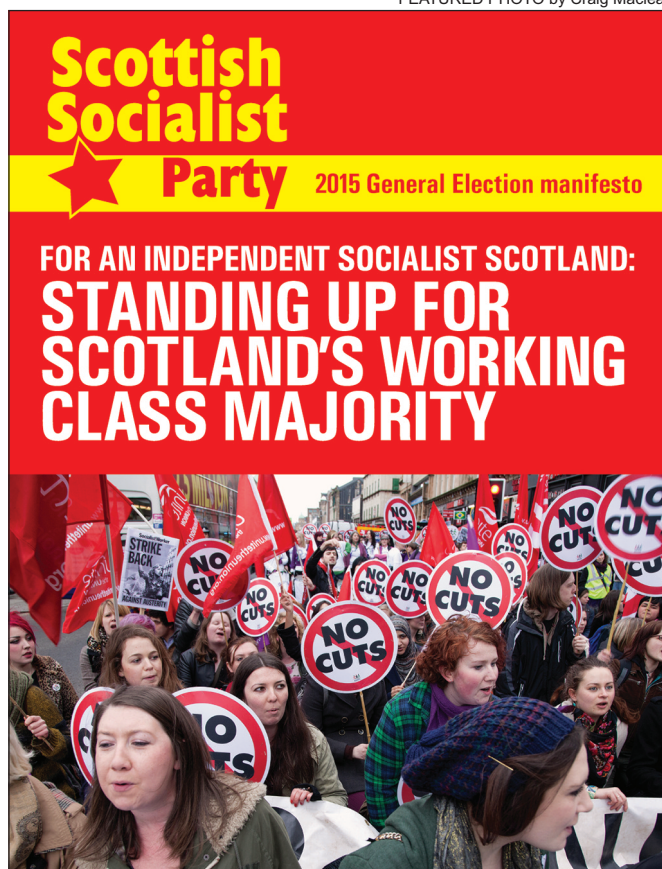
Social "entrepreneurs" increase their wealth from the misfortune of others' lives. We as socialists have the opportunity to share another narrative.

Greed isn't good, despite the Thatcherite mantra. Caring for others and a more equal distribution of wealth will create a more compassionate society.

## People before profit

That is why I am proud that our manifesto is not ashamed to put people before profit. No other party has said they will protect the most vulnerable.

While other parties pledge to continue austerity and only reach out to "hard working families" we recognise that whatever unit you live in, you want the best for those you care for.



MANIFESTO: to get yours, phone 07810205747 or see the SSP website

Our policy of '£10-an-hour now' will take thousands out of poverty not in some distant utopian state like a carrot dangling before us but immediately.

We will also reach out to carers, ensuring they have the same opportunities. This will transform the lives of people with disabilities and those who

care for them. Despite listening to carers and the promise of the Smith Commission in devolving disability benefits to Scotland, the best the SNP could come up with is increasing Carer's Allowance in line with Jobseeker's Allowance. The SSP is also the only party that is critical of existing Self Directed Support which has created a postcode lottery throughout Scotland.

Individuals face real hardship, having to pay the "care tax" which means a certain amount being taken off care benefits at source before an individual receives a personal budget. This has led to increased poverty among people with disabilities.

We also acknowledge that the current welfare system is unfair and unfit for purpose. Civil servants are expected to stick to targets to enforce benefit sanctions rather than their role as ad-

visers. A friend with a sick child was sanctioned recently as she could not attend her weekly interview because her child was ill. This led to her family being affected and having to rely on a food bank. Sanctions don't only affect the individual but punish the whole family. Other reasons for sanctioning include not applying for 60 jobs a day, or being late. We will put an end to this regime and allow staff to support people to find work.

Our other policies, such as free public transport and the building of more council housing could have the benefit of creating more work, if these are brought into public ownership.

Imagine a Scotland too where people have access to free public transport and where a council house is another option instead of private renting.

At the moment, Housing Benefit is nothing more than rich landlord's subsidy going into the pockets of those who least need it. Housing Benefit paid into the public sector will support an ongoing programme of building more social housing.

## People's election

These are a few highlights of the manifesto. A people's manifesto for what I hope will be a people's election. It was written not by political mandarins but by people with experience in life. We are not poverty-tourists but a party who will always put people before profit.

As a candidate in the General Election, I see it as ammunition and the chance to show we are different from the other parties. During the indyref, we moved politics to the left, and this process will continue during this election and those that follow. I'm proud of this manifesto and of being able to stand with you, comrades.

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# The more Cameron vilifies the SNP, the more Scots voters flock to the nationalists

by Colin Fox, SSP  
national co-spokesperson

**THIS GENERAL** Election appears to be a foregone conclusion. The polls all predict another hung Parliament. And the more David Cameron vilifies the SNP (in order to weaken Miliband's support) the more Scots voters flock to the nationalists.

The Tories having failed to persuade voters they deserve another term may win the largest number of seats but it looks like it will not be enough to govern, even with the help of their allies the Liberal Democrats, UKIP and the Ulster Unionists.

On the other hand, Ed Miliband having failed to mobilise the widespread anger at the ConDem Coalition, and despite his 'pre-election denials' that he will not work with Alex Salmond, seems the most likely to form a government involving Labour, the ever-available Lib Dems and the SNP.

## Corrupt force

Labour's 'triumph' however will be bittersweet in Scotland where their political collapse means the end of the one party state that has dominated this country for 50 years. No one who favours progressive political advance will mourn its passing. Labour has been a socially conservative and politically corrupt force in Scotland for decades.

On another important level however this election will change very little. Working class people will continue to suffer regardless of who wins.

Low wages and Zero Hour Contracts will not disappear. The chronic shortage of affordable, social housing will remain. Inequalities will continue to widen. Opportunities denied working class people will not



**ELECTION:** socialists ought not to get carried away with SNP propaganda

suddenly appear from Nicola Sturgeon's handbag.

The neoliberal economic policies these pro-capitalist parties share will continue to dominate our lives. None of them are about to challenge the corporate elite who run UK PLC and control its political institutions.

The most common experience SSP canvassers face on the doorstep is listening as people vent their contempt for Jim Murphy and the Labour Party. And because the mood is so anti-Labour most will simply not hear any criticism of the SNP.

They almost put their hands over their ears when we point out the nationalists' own record of austerity at local government and Holyrood these past few years.

The situation reminds me of 1997. New Labour and Tony Blair were seeking election and the dominant view was 'we need to get rid of the Tories. Nothing else matters'. Ironically many of the same Scottish cheerleaders for Tony Blair then now advocate a 'SNP landslide to shake up Westminster'. They appear to have forgotten what they said in 1997. That is because Tony Blair—their great messiah—attacked the benefits of single par-

ents, introduced tuition fees and PFI, restricted trade union rights and launched an unforgivable war on Iraq based on lies and naked warmongering. But the SNP are different it is claimed, they don't support privatisation of the NHS, they don't make cuts.

In Edinburgh, construction workers have just begun laying the foundations for the city's new Sick Children's Hospital.

It will stand alongside the Royal Infirmary Labour built in 2005 using their infamous Private Finance Initiative. Whilst Labour's privatisation was condemned by the SNP, the nationalists are not so keen to tell voters the Sick Kids they commissioned is also privately-owned.

The SNP's record in government is not something we believe that should be hidden from voters.

And neither are their cuts to pay and conditions of government staff! Last week, PCS members at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh went on strike over management plans to cut thousands of pounds from their wages by withdrawing a long-standing weekend allowance for anti-social hours. NMS management

argued the move was unavoidable after their budget was cut by the SNP government.

So, for all Nicola Sturgeon's opposition to austerity, the SNP make cuts all the time. Edinburgh City Council, run by a Labour/SNP coalition, last month voted to cut £30million from frontline services.

And their promise to increase public spending by 0.5 per cent looks 'progressive' only because the other parties want cuts. But a 0.5 per cent increase is paltry. It means accepting 13.5 per cent of cuts implemented since 2010 and will do little to grow the economy.

This is the same SNP who voted for Scotland to join NATO in 2013. They also promised to eradicate fuel poverty in Scotland by 2015 (in its 2007 manifesto) but that pledge was abandoned just when it was most needed.

Now Nicola Sturgeon suggests only that she would restore the Winter Fuel Allowance.

## Monarchy

And in response to the widespread financial corruption at Westminster SNP candidates refuse to match the SSP's commitment to live on the same wage as those they represent. They also favour the monarchy over a modern, democratic, republic.

So whilst we rightly celebrate the end of Labour's hegemony in Scotland, socialists ought not to get carried away with SNP propaganda. Nor should they build illusions in another corporate party armed with a neoliberal economic programme similar to New Labour. That message may not be popular in Scotland today but it is important to understand if progress is to be made towards the goal of an independent socialist Scotland.

by Ken Ferguson

AS HUNDREDS perish in coffin ships in the Mediterranean, fleeing poverty and war, the elites running the EU call a meeting.

These are the same elites who last year agreed to scrap the Mare Nostrum rescue operation which saved thousands of refugees on the grounds that having lifesaving services on call would act as an incentive for more refugees to try and escape.

In that one statement the cold callousness of the supposed humanitarians in both the Westminster and Brussels elites is laid bare, exposing the utter hypocrisy behind their brave talk of human rights, freedom and democracy.

As they bow to pressure from anti-immigrant forces such as UKIP and the French National Front and scapegoat immigrants as the source of all economic and social woes the drownings in the Mediterranean are simply the most extreme outcome of their anti-people policies.

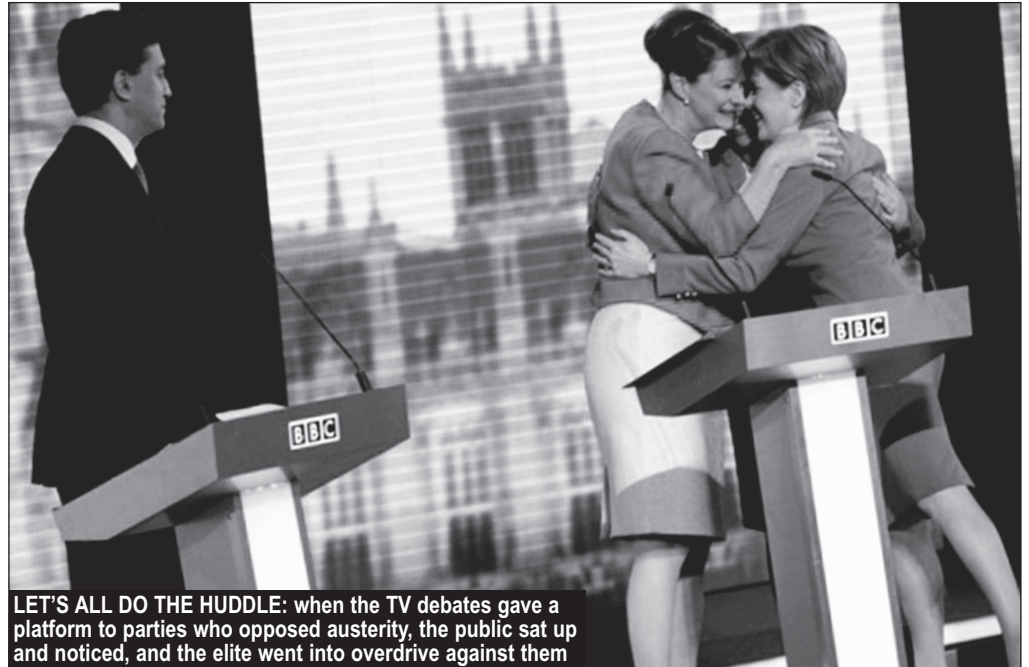
## Ruthless power

That such horrors are justified by politicians and their acolytes should not really come as great surprise. They have a long history of exercising ruthless power and lying about what they are doing.

Here in Scotland, we saw this approach during the referendum and we are seeing it on a daily basis as the mainstream Westminster parties go all out to sell the idea that their austerity agenda of misery for the many and millions for the few is the only possible choice.

Even the SNP, despite its anti-austerity pitch still lay stress on dealing with the deficit albeit slightly more humanely and over a longer period of time.

# THE CRUELTY AND GREED OF WESTMINSTER'S ELITE



At the heart of the election battle is the simple question—what side are you on?

In staged events, “leaks”, briefing by insiders and cheesy and cheesier “campaign events” the austerity message is hammered home with carefully spun “facts” about more jobs, economic success and an endless round of claim and counter claim.

However these events stand in sharp contrast to the reality experienced by millions of people every day as they suffer the direct consequences of the cuts imposed by the professional politicians in the cosseted Westminster bubble where poverty is as rare as hen’s teeth and subsidised dining rooms are the norm rather than food banks.

Across the UK close to a million people now need food banks and 157,000 people are on Scotland’s housing waiting lists. Last year more

Scots were sanctioned by the benefits system than were fined by the courts and thousands of those who supposedly benefited for from the so called “jobs boom” actually face zero hours, miserably paid near serfdom.

## Anti-austerity

Against this miserable prospect it is hardly surprising that when the TV debates gave a platform to parties who opposed austerity—from the Greens, SNP and Plaid—the public sat up and noticed, and the elite went into overdrive against them.

Whatever the outcome on 7 May however, any conceivable anti-austerity programme faces the implacable opposition of big business, the city and the cross-party deficit reduction consensus.

It remains to be seen if a much bigger SNP Westminster group could force concessions from a minority Labour party still smarting

from its Scottish defeat. As we discuss elsewhere in this *Voice*, the great unspoken in this election is the ability of working people to organise to defend and advance their own interests for decent pay, proper non-casual jobs and an end to unchallenged bosses power rather than totally depending on politicians promises.

Key to this is the repeal or defiance of the anti-union laws which make collective action all but illegal and so marginalise trade unions that millions who need them are discouraged or even afraid to join them.

Of course winning the best most progressive government is central but the left must both set out its own distinctive agenda and seriously address the urgent task of winning the conditions to build a powerful movement to win a decisive break with neoliberalism and its various supporters of whatever party.

former MP and MSP John McAllion sounds a warning

# What awaits new SNP MPs – if the polls are correct?

**LABOUR'S LEFT** wing icon Nye Bevan was first elected as a MP in 1929 shortly before the Wall Street crash that led to the last Great Depression in the 1930s. Writing almost a quarter of a century later he set down what his biographer Michael Foot would describe as “a young Labour member’s initiation into parliamentary mysteries”.

To the then 32-year-old Bevan, Westminster’s seat of power seemed to have a church-like quality with its vaulted roofs and stained glass windows. The rows of statues of Britain’s great statesmen, the echoing halls, the Serjeant-at-Arms’ soft-footed attendants, the whispered conversations—all were alien and all seemed designed to overawe and intimidate a working class miner from the Welsh valleys.

Bevan pronounced it a form of “ancestor worship” before reminding himself and his working class readers that these were not “our” ancestors.

## A conservative force

If the current opinion polls are accurate, more than 40 new SNP members will, like Bevan before them, be introduced to “parliamentary mysteries” that will be outside anything they have previously experienced.

The 2015 Parliament that convenes later this year may be a very different and reformed institution compared to its 1929 predecessor, but at its core it remains a deeply conservative force and influence that has successfully held together a democratically flawed “Crown State” for more than 300 years. New MPs should be warned.

Since the widening of the franchise to include workers, Westminster has successfully withstood waves of would be revolutionaries. In 1914 Labour, as a member of the Second Socialist International, was a com-



mitted anti-war party pledged to use any war crisis to bring about social revolution. On the outbreak of the war its MPs voted for the patriotic war and joined with the other bourgeois parties on the green benches in singing “God Save the King”.

The “Red Clydeside” MPs elected in 1922 pledged that the atmosphere of the Clyde would get the better of the House of Commons. It never happened. Then left-wing firebrands like Davie Kirkwood and Manny Shinwell would end their Westminster days wrapped in ermine and safely ensconced in the House of Lords. Jimmy Maxton, the most iconic of the Clydeside revolutionaries, would later be patronised by Churchill as “the finest gentleman in the House of Commons”. When he died in 1946, the entire House of Commons stood for a minute’s silence, a tribute without precedence for a back-bencher.

The list could go on. Part of Westminster’s continuing allure is the atmosphere it generates of

being the “most exclusive club in Europe”. In the next Parliament, members will have a basic salary of £74,000 plus expenses. They will automatically carry the title of “Honourable Member”.

Staff across the parliamentary estate will be charged with recognising who they are and then treating them with due deference and respect. They will have access to subsidised “member only” bars and dining rooms. Only members and their guests will be allowed on the exclusive terrace that overlooks the Thames.

Members from far-flung constituencies enjoy first class air and rail travel. They are entitled to second homes in London. Through cross-party parliamentary groups, they will be able to join fact-finding missions to every corner of the world. Their ringside seat at the UK’s centre of political power brings with it the attention of other powerful and wealthy interests.

Gordon Brown earned almost £1million and George Gal- loway over £300,000 in outside

earnings in the most recent year. Once inside the magic Westminster bubble the world can look a very different place.

Westminster also sets the boundaries within which “national” politics are conducted. Since the onset of capitalism’s latest crisis in 2008, dealing with the Government’s deficit has been the dominant theme of political debate. The big three Westminster parties are all committed to austerity and to a slash and burn attack on public spending and services.

Absurdly, Labour—the would-be peoples’ party—has even based its appeal to workers on the theme of a “Budget Responsibility Lock”. Challengers to this orthodoxy will be dismissed across the Westminster influenced media as “deficit deniers”.

## Unforgiving hostility

Those elected next month on an anti-austerity ticket will be charged with challenging that orthodoxy. On arrival in London, they will be beset on one side by flattery and temptation and on the other by the unforgiving hostility of a House that is overwhelmingly unionist.

Their personal behaviour will come under the scrutiny of rival Whips, a biased media and security services that rate Scottish independence as a threat to UK national security. They will need the strength of lions and the solidarity of each other if they are to survive in the longer term.

Scotland’s newly elected MPs will arrive in London as Westminster outsiders. If they are to retain the trust of those who voted for them and complete the job they have been elected to do, they must remain outside the Westminster bubble.



# FOR WORKERS' ACTION NOT PLEAS TO POLITICIANS

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

**THE WOMAN** serving me a coffee at the STUC Conference spoke volumes in a short chat. After asking where I was from, and me explaining I represent the SSP, she said: "I've always been from a Labour family, but I don't know who to vote for. I can't stand Labour, but I'll never vote SNP."

"I don't trust Nicola Sturgeon," she added in a whisper, as if in fear of upsetting polite society. But her most telling comment was her parting shot, after we exchanged views and experiences of low pay in retail and catering.

"No matter which of them wins, I'll still have to come to work on the 8th of May."

The election and media circus will move on, but reality will remain for the working class majority: the struggle to survive on poverty pay, Zero Hours Contracts, part-time and insecure jobs, and the ongoing brutality of savage cuts to vital public services.

## Two Scotlands

But the potential power of the working class to change all that is reflected in the language of the competing parties; they've suddenly discovered the need to harp on endlessly about "hard working people" and how much their rival brands of capitalist visions 'represent' us. Even the Tories shamelessly claim to be "the party of working people". Jim Murphy

and Ed Miliband borrow spin doctors' phrases: "Scotland succeeds when working people succeed". The SNP bid for traditional Labour voters with talk of being "the voice of working people", alongside their central slogan of "standing up for Scotland."

Looking beyond 7 May, workers (and their unions) need to cut through the fog of slick spin and vague promises, and get back to basics. Those joining the annual May Day celebrations of international workers' solidarity need to recall the fundamental features of this society, and how workers internationally have ever won improvements in life, living standards and rights.

The SSP quite consciously entitled our Election Manifesto 'Standing up for Scotland's Working Class Majority'.

We are courageous enough to tell the truth. There are two Scotlands, divided by a chasm of class differences. The Scotland of the richest 100 with wealth of £25billion; 432 landlords owning half the land; millionaires like Brian Souter funding the SNP from the fortune he grabbed from transport privatisation. And the Scotland of 100,000 relying on food banks to avert starvation, and workers socially isolated by fares they can't afford.

Class is at the heart of society. Class exploitation is the very nature of capitalism. Soaring profits are sourced from the unpaid labour of the working class. It requires collective organisation and

collective action by the working class majority to overcome that exploitation, that class division, where the richest 10 per cent of Scots own 20 times the combined wealth of the poorest 30 per cent.

Yes, we need to demand maximum reforms and redistribution of wealth from whatever combination of parties takes the reins. And the seismic upheaval of Labour being swept aside by an SNP that stands a bit to their left will immensely increase expectations of radical wealth transfers from the rich to the rest of us.

But to secure that requires lighting bonfires beneath their backsides, with rallies, demos and even strike action, or it won't happen—because every single one of the parties likely to be in government ultimately stands up for big business, for capitalist Britain or capitalist Scotland—not for the working class who produce the wealth of goods and services. It's wise to not forget the basics.

## Bids war on wages

The growing clamour for an end to poverty pay has forced the rival parties into a bidding war—for votes. The hateful, upper-class Tories claim the minimum wage will 'naturally' rise to £8 by 2020. Labour promises £8, with whispered asides "by 2020"—which would make it virtually no rise at all on today's pitiful £6.50.

The SNP have very belatedly gone beyond—or at least given the appearance of going beyond—their previous mantra of "support-

ing the Living Wage", £7.85. That cleverly appeals to workers desperate for a pay rise, without upsetting big business, because the Living Wage is entirely voluntary! Now, to outbid Labour, they've declared for an £8.70 minimum wage, but again not until 2020. In reality that would be less than today's £7.85 Living Wage, although with the saving grace of being legally enforced.

Standing out from all this noise about what they'll do for us in five years' time, the SSP has unequivocally demanded a living minimum wage, legally enforced, of £10 NOW, in 2015. Based on the modest formula of two-thirds median male wages. The other critical difference is we demand it for all workers and apprentices over 16, whereas both Labour and the SNP would retain the monstrous age discrimination of lower youth rates.

The same milk-and-water promises are made into headlines by Labour and SNP on the modern serfdom that is Zero Hours Contracts. Both repeatedly talk of "tackling", or "clamping down", on what they both insist on calling "exploitative Zero Hours Contracts". When are they not exploitative? Why not just abolish the lot, and bring in secure contracts with guaranteed hours, full-time or part-time?

Labour has elaborated a system where after 12 weeks of regular hours worked, that would become the contract hours. But what's to stop employers dodging



**AFTER THE ELECTION:** workers need to organise action for a living minimum wage, secure jobs, redistribution of wealth, resistance to escalated austerity cuts, and workplace rights

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

such 'regular hours', or simply shedding and replacing workers after 12 weeks—like the avoidance tactics used towards improved agency workers' rights?

In truth, it's only because some unions and the likes of the SSP have spearheaded persistent campaigns demanding £10 NOW, and outright abolition of Zero Hours Contracts, that these mainstream parties have gone as far as they have. The underlying reality is that only collective action by workers, up to and including strike action, will enforce a decent living wage or secure job contracts for all.

The strangling repression of workplace rights—the most vicious anti-union laws in Europe—help hold down workers' conditions. Which makes it all the more significant that in contrast to the noisy bidding war of words between Labour and SNP over wages, there is deafening silence from both of them on repealing the anti-union laws.

It is no accident that wages as a share of national wealth, GDP, peaked in 1975. That was an era

of massive union membership and waves of strike action for better wages. The reign of terror of the last 30 years has reversed that process, leaving wages at their lowest share of GDP on record. Inequality was at its lowest when 83 per cent of workers were covered by union collective bargaining, whereas inequality is now at its worst, when only 23 per cent are covered. Workers learn from international experience too. In the heart of the capitalist beast, the USA, wages have plummeted since the 1970s. Most of that time, labor union leaders capitulated, merely begging the capitalist Democrats to be their friends. Since 2012, a wave of courageous actions have been taken by brutally low-paid workers in the fast food and retail sectors.

### International lessons

Several strike days and protest marches by Walmart workers and fast food staff have won more concessions on wages from their multinational employers than 40 years of pleading by union bureaucrats. Wednesday

15 April saw the biggest fast food strike in history with 60,000 workers involved in over 200 cities, demanding a minimum wage of \$15 (£10). Walmart recently conceded \$10. Cities like Seattle and Chicago have agreed to phase in \$15.

As we head for the ballot box, and march on May Day events, working class Scots should take inspiration from our own past struggles, and the present struggles of fellow workers in the USA. They have defied anti-union laws, taken militant action, marched for decent wages, and at least won substantial concessions. Those are the methods of collective struggle that will be required to squeeze something out of whatever new government is elected, and off the unelected, obscenely overpaid boardroom bosses of companies whose whole source of profit is the wages they don't pay workers.

Anti-union laws have been instrumental in enforcing a reign of terror on the 'shopfloor'. That's why they need to be repealed, replaced with a Charter of Workers'

Rights. That's why those workers rightly abandoning the Labour Party that long ago abandoned them, should not in turn be blinded by the SNP's kindly rhetoric. Not once, ever, has the SNP or Nicola Sturgeon pledged to dismantle the anti-union laws.

They make welcome noises about "embracing the unions", "respecting the unions' voices", "recognising the value of collective bargaining". Compared with Labour's words and deeds, this is very welcome, and sounds "progressive", to use Nicola's current buzz word. But it's mostly all candlelight and mood music, a wooing of the working class, with no sharp, defining, concrete measures to guarantee workers' rights and ability to organise collective action.

Post-election, workers need to organise action for a living minimum wage, secure jobs, redistribution of wealth, resistance to escalated austerity cuts, and workplace rights—with collective action, where necessary in defiance of the anti-union laws concocted to help the capitalist minority rob wages and public services off the working class majority.

### Workers' action

Workers will need to organise and demand concessions from a government that will be in crisis, as the ruling class panic at the demise of their most reliable prop in the working class—Labour. Not as spectators at an election circus—heavily populated by clowns and opportunist politicians juggling words and principles—but as the one reliable active force for change and progress.

The socialists of the SSP will continue to stand up for and with the working class majority in pursuit of a fundamental redistribution of wealth and power. We will not plead for crumbs off the capitalist politicians, but advocate and take workers' action to win a decent life for the likes of the woman at the STUC coffee bar. No matter who wins on 7 May, we will be back to work for socialism on the 8th!

# Homeless caseworkers' strike

by Richie Venton, SSP national workplace organiser

**SEVENTY CASEWORKERS** in Glasgow city council's Homeless Service have been staging an indefinite strike since 31 March. These workers, members of UNISON, are battling against being paid a grade lower than 400 other workers doing very similar frontline jobs in other areas of the Social Work department. All they ask for is parity.

Those on strike provide a critical service to many of the city's most vulnerable people. Between them, the 70 strikers have nearly 3000 people on their caseloads. They assess the needs of homeless people and families, organise and oversee crucial support for them, helping them get emergency, temporary and permanent accommodation. But they are being treated with high-handed contempt by senior management and the Labour council, who have refused to even meet them for negotiations. Instead of awarding these key workers the job evaluation they richly deserve, the Council is squandering £millions of taxpayers' money to use expensive private B&B accommodation, to pretend all is normal despite the strike.

I spoke to UNISON shop steward Stuart Graham about the background and issues at the heart of a dispute that deserves the fullest solidarity of all workers.

**F** This is a pay dispute over the concept of care management within social work. We identify issues impacting on people's ability to sustain accommodation, then put services in place by making initial referrals, advocating on behalf of the service user, reviewing the services after a suitable time, and changing them where necessary.

We want members of the public to get the best service they can, because after us they have nothing; we are their final service. For eight years, we've had managers saying we provide this high level of care management. The council was only too happy to tout our statistics on reducing homelessness when they come under criticism during winter months. But after we lodged a collective grievance about our grading in November 2013—which wasn't acknowledged until February 2014—management agreed that we do provide all these services, but because we're on a grade lower they claimed this can't possibly be a Care Management function, only an aspirational form of care management! We find this arrogant and patronising.

We've always reduced homelessness amongst marginalised people, but the level of contempt from senior management reflects the service group we represent. There's a fundamental disconnect between front line staff and senior management; they genuinely don't realise how much work we do to reduce homelessness.

When collective grievances got us nowhere we held a strike ballot at Xmas, with 84 per cent voting for an in-

definite strike. Once the decision was reached, 100 per cent of UNISON members have come out on strike. But despite that, Glasgow city council have not come near the negotiating table. We first held a nine-week work to rule, during which 300 households were identified as needing our services.

But instead of resolving the issue the council left these people in limbo, in temporary accommodation, without the services they're entitled to. The council has tried to put on a 'business as usual' front during the strike, at first telling people it was an IT problem and that we'd be back at work within a week! Their claims of maintaining a full service is a joke; we can barely do that with the full workforce!

The solidarity from other trade unionists, especially others in social work who have refused to do our work, has been tremendous. Only managers are trying to cover our work. People in Glasgow can help us by contacting their councillor to ask why they're not negotiating with the workforce in a legitimate, democratically mandated industrial dispute.

If people are in need of the services we provide they should demand them of the council, rather than be fobbed off. They are entitled to that—it's a statutory obligation—and that's what we pay taxes for.

*• These workers need and deserve all forms of solidarity. To send donations to their strike fund, or send messages of support, or ask for a striker to address your union meeting. Contact: enquiries@glasgowcityunison.co.uk*

## Donate to SSP General Election campaign fund

**LIKE EVERY** election campaign the Scottish Socialist Party 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 Scottish Socialist Party 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 we're appealing directly to you through the pages of the *Voice* to make a pledge or donation to the general election appeal fund today.

Every penny the Scottish Socialist Party receives will go directly to funding our campaign.

### 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 jimmcvicar.scottishsocialistparty@hotmail.com or text me on 07810205747 or and let Jim 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/](http://scottishsocialistparty.org/donations/)



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by Bill Bonnar

# How can alliances for socialism be built?

**THE RECENTLY** published book on Gramsci's early political writings, *A Great and Terrible World*, is a timely reminder of the tremendous contribution Antonio Gramsci made to socialist ideas in the 20th century.

Born in Sardinia in 1891, he was one of the founders and leaders of the Italian Communist Party until his untimely death in 1937. Despite crippling ill health and eight years spent in a fascist prison, his contribution to the theory and practice of socialism marked him out as one of the great Marxist thinkers of his time.

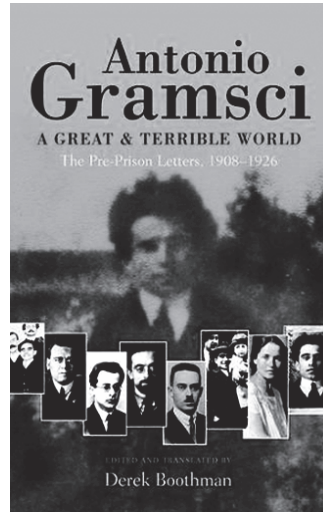
Despite coming from a strong Bolshevik tradition and emerging as one of the key leaders of the revolutionary movement which swept Italy after the First World War, and in the wake of the Russian Revolution, he came to question the validity of the Bolshevik model as a strategy for achieving socialism in the relatively advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe.

## Civil War

The Bolsheviks came to power in Russia following the collapse of the Russian state and ruthlessly defended that power during the civil war; something which Gramsci completely endorsed. However the likelihood of such a collapse happening in Western Europe was, for Gramsci, highly improbable and undesirable. A different strategy would be necessary for the advance to socialism.

At the heart of this was a question. In a capitalist country which has a democratic political system; how does the ruling class rule? The standard Marxist reply would be through its control of

the institutions of the state. For Gramsci this was true as far as it went but did not tell the full story. In a capitalist democracy the ruling class rules through consent because the majority of workers overtly or tacitly support the system. For them the ideas of capitalism have become the common sense ideas of the age. At the same time the ruling class doesn't rule alone but forms alliances



with other classes and social/cultural movements in society broadening its support base.

For socialism to succeed the ideas of socialism have to move from a set of utopian ideas to a blueprint for the practical reorganisation of existing society along socialist lines with those ideas replacing capitalist ideas as the common sense of the age. The working class would also require to form strategic alliances with other social and cultural movements.

Implicit in this strategy is the idea that socialism will not be achieved through a single dramatic revolutionary moment as in Russia but rather involve a process of transformation over a period of time.

The timescale and nature of this transformation will be set by the relative balance of forces between the working class and the capitalist class and their respective allies. The aim would be the election of a left government committed to a transformational programme supported by a mass, radical movement in the country. This programme is likely to stop short of socialism but when implemented will have shifted the balance of power from the capitalist class to the working class in favour of the latter ready for the next stage of struggle and the road to socialism.

Gramsci died more than 70 years ago and his ideas only became widespread in Europe after the war so why are they relevant today? For socialists here the key question is how to build an organised movement for socialism in a post-industrial society? When Britain had an industrial economy this was a fairly straight forward question. Britain had a large working class centred on industry and organised through the trade union movement. This created the labour movement including a mass party of the working class; the Labour Party or in Italy; the Italian Communist Party.

For socialists the labour movement was the vehicle for socialism and their role was to work within that movement moving it to the left and resulting in the election of a left government. The only tactical discussion was whether socialists should work within the mass party of the working class or build a distinctive socialist party within the movement.

That was then. Today Britain is an archetypal post-industrial

society. In Scotland the overwhelming majority of workers either work in the public sector or the retail and financial sectors. Manufacturing industry represents only a small proportion of the economy. The result is that the organised working class is much smaller and less influential than before and has largely lost its industrial base.

It alone can no longer be the same vehicle for socialist change it was in the past. It has to forge alliances with wider social forces seeking to build a broad based alliance against capitalism. This alliance would include community based organisations, social movements and single issue pressure groups as well as the trade union organised working class united by the struggle against the effects of capitalism on the people they represent. This broad movement will be the vehicle for radical change with socialists working within it to link the particular struggles with the overall aim of socialism.

## Struggle

Gramsci rejected a doctrinaire approach to the struggle for socialism or the form that a socialist movement might take at any one time. The struggle for socialism and the form the movement takes will be shaped by the specific events and conditions at the time. In Scotland the post-industrial nature of the economy and the welding of the struggle for socialism to the struggle for independence is creating its own distinct movement with socialists playing a leading role. Building that broad based movement is the key to achieving socialism.

Bill Bonnar gives a personal recollection

## Vietnam's 'Great Spring Victory' over the US – forty years on

**PICTURE THE** scene. It is 1am in Moscow on May 1st 1975; 40 years ago. I was an 18 year old on a delegation walking home to my hotel. All around workmen were putting up huge banners of Ho Chi Min; the former Vietnamese President along the route of the Moscow May Day demonstration which would take place the next day. By the time I got back to my hotel the significance was clear. Vietnamese liberation forces had entered Saigon and driven the last of the American occupiers out. Vietnam was free.

This marks the 40th anniversary of that tumultuous time and the end to one of the defining struggles of the 20th century. Vietnam had been a French colony until the French were driven out by the liberation forces led by Ho Chi Min.

### Peace conference

In 1954, a peace conference was held in which the country would be divided between the North with its capital in Hanoi and the South with its capital in Saigon. The arrangement was to be temporary pending elections.

These elections took place in the North resulting in landslide victory for the communist-led Liberation Front. Fearing the same result in the South, the United States organised a military coup and the permanent division of the country.

From 1956 to 1975 South Vietnam was ruled by a military dictatorship controlled, armed and financed by the United States; a puppet regime. It was the start of American military aggression against the Vietnamese people which would eventually lead to two million dead, millions more wounded and the total destruction of the country, before they were eventually defeated.

The aggression started slowly with Operation Phoenix in 1958 which involved American con-

trolled death squads running an assassination programme. By 1960 an estimated 200,000 Vietnamese had been murdered. When this proved ineffectual US ground forces arrived to take the fight for 'freedom and democracy' to the heart of the conflict.

Proving no match for the National Liberation Army the Americans increasingly relied on air power which soon took on the character of a war against the whole Vietnamese civilian population. By the beginning of the seventies this war had reached almost genocidal proportions aimed at destroying Vietnam as a functioning society.

Targets included cities which were reduced to rubble and fields and irrigation systems with the aim of starving the population into submission. Vietnam's centuries old system of dams were targeted causing catastrophic flooding. The strategy also embraced chemical warfare with millions to tons of chemical defoliants dropped on forests, jungles and fields. Even today huge numbers of Vietnamese suffer cancers and disabilities caused by this chemical warfare. The United States even considered using nuclear weapons but decided against fearing the reaction of the grow-

ing anti-war movement at home. Anyway, they didn't need them because they had something just as effective up their sleeves; Operation Rolling Thunder.

This was an attempt at what Secretary of State Henry Kissinger described as 'bombing Vietnam back into the stone age' For one week over Christmas 1972 the United States launched the greatest ariel bombardment in history. During that week more bombs were dropped on North Vietnam than on the whole of Europe during the whole of the Second World War. This saturation bombing destroyed every city and town in North Vietnam as if they had been attacked by a barrage of nuclear weapons. And still it did not break the resolve of the Vietnamese government and people.

In fact from 1973 the Vietnamese Liberation Army based in the south supported by North Vietnam gradually pushed the South Vietnamese/American forces back resulting in the final victory in May 1975. The cost of defeating the American aggression was enormous in terms of human lives and a totally destroyed society. In that sense Kissinger succeeded. They did bomb Vietnam back into the

PHOTO: Philip Jones Griffiths



stone age and it is only now that their society is beginning to recover. As part of a final sick irony Henry Kissinger and the Vietnamese Foreign Minister were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize after peace negotiations in 1973. The Foreign Minister described the award to Kissinger as 'an insult to the intelligence of the people of the world' and refused to accept the award.

Although the liberation of Vietnam lay in the hands of the Vietnamese people themselves they were supported by a worldwide anti-war movement particularly in the United States which plunged American society into crisis as more and more ordinary Americans came to recognise what their government was doing in their name. Most telling were veterans of the US army which helped to liberate Europe during the Second World War. They regularly described American action in Vietnam as similar to what the Nazi's did in Europe. In Britain the anti-war movement was also very effective particularly in forcing the hand of the then Labour Government into not actively supporting the American aggression.

### Victory for humanity

As a young socialist activist who first took part in an anti-Vietnam war demonstration as a 14 year old in 1972 protesting against Operation Thunder and who followed the course of the war almost daily from that point on; that May day demonstration in Moscow in 1975 was one of the highlights of my life. Particularly the sights of hundreds of Vietnamese students from Moscow's Patrice Lumumba International University marching proudly behind an enormous banner of Ho Chi Min. We all shared in this victory for humanity.

# Amsterdam students force uni rethink

by Jack Ferguson,  
in Amsterdam

**THE STUDENT** movement at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) has scored a symbolic victory with the resignation of the President of the Executive Board, Louise Gunning. It follows a dramatic PR disaster for University bosses, after they pressured city authorities to sending police officers to violently evict staff and students occupying the University Senate, known as the Maagdenhuis.

The Maagdenhuis was the third University building that had been occupied since the beginning of the academic year last September. The previous site, part of the Faculty of Humanities which is threatened with drastic cuts, has also been forcibly evicted, which sparked a mass march and the further occupation of the University Senate back in February. Students turned the large building into an alternative teaching space, with staff donating their time for free lectures under the banner of De Nieuwe Universiteit.

## Occupation

In the weeks following this, it appeared that the College van Bestuur, or Executive Board, was listening to protesters, releasing a statement that they understood their concerns and were willing to negotiate.

This was facilitated by a much greater involvement of staff in what had been a student led protest, with hundreds of professors and lecturers publicly supported the issues raised by the occupation.

The core of the protest is a feeling that UvA has suffered because of financialisation – research and teaching agendas are being moulded to only ensure profitability, rather than advancing knowledge and education.



**MAAGDENHUIS:** occupation agreed to leave voluntarily on 12 April

This has been accompanied by the entry of the University into the world of property speculation, as it has engaged in all kinds of financial dealings on the back of its large portfolio of property in the centre of one of Europe's most crowded and expensive cities.

Alongside this, there is a feeling that professional managers and bureaucracy have removed democracy and academic involvement from the decision making of the University, in order to implement this neoliberal agenda.

After discussions between De Nieuwe Universiteit, ReThink UvA (a body grouping critical staff), the Humanities Rally (against cuts to their faculty), the officially elected Employee's and Student's Councils, staff unions and the Executive Board, a tentative agreement was reached. Two committees are to be formed, one examining the financial affairs of the University, and the other to oversee democratisation of its governance.

The protest groups are to play a leading role in their formation and implementation.

Fragile trust between management, staff and students had been built up on this basis. The occupation agreed to leave voluntarily on Sunday 12 April.

However, in a move that has backfired spectacularly, the Board declared that this was not fast enough for their purposes, and pressured the Amsterdam city administration to send in police during the final event of the occupation, an academic Festival of Arts and Sciences. Nine were

arrested, and others violently evicted in shocking scenes.

The eviction was met two days later by a massive march through the University campus, with near universal chants of "Resign" in reference to the Executive Board. Their hasty actions have radicalised many who were previously more moderate, and shattered what trust had been built up in their good faith. After hundreds of staff signed an open letter demanding they go, the position of President Gunning became untenable.

## Victories

An interim replacement has been appointed, with hopeful signals that incoming managers are more inclined to listen to the protests' demands. In the meantime, work on the committees forges ahead. Occupiers emphasise that the eviction cost the movement nothing but a building, and has in fact brought many more people over to the cause.

With their position significantly weakened, the Board are in much less of a position to resist implementation of change.

It is to be hoped that the victories of the movement here at UvA can be built on, to provide a working example of change at a University won by radical movements, which can provide an example across the Netherlands and around the world.



## 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](http://scottishsocialistparty.org/join-us)

☐ I would like to join the Scottish Socialist Party

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## Paisley and Renfrewshire South – Sandra Webster

Only days until the election and Renfrewshire activists supported by members from other branches continue with a level of activism that other parties might envy. We continue to have regular stalls and leafleting and canvassing in the local community. We have had two public meetings under our belt which we have used to talk to folk living in the local community emphasising that our candidate Sandra is a true neighbour. People know who we are because of our community activism and regular stalls we hold throughout the year. We are going through an unprecedented election. When we decided to stand it was assumed this was a safe labour seat but many polls indicate that the SNP may take this seat. Very surprising when Douglas Alexander's majority was 16,000 at the last election.

We never underestimate the party machinery of the bigger parties though and acknowledge our financial resources are less than the rental of the SNP's and Labour's rent of their hubs. Our main expense has been a leaflet which has been delivered to the GPO for delivery. One positive of this being such a too close to call seat is the amount of press we have received. Sandra has regular columns in both local papers which cover the local constituency. She has also been interviewed by national press and will be on the radio soon. We will continue to use these links after the election for the benefit of the local and national party. We hope to increase our vote but expect to be squeezed as people vote tactically. This will not stop us though getting the message out there and using this election as a pathway to future elections. We have learned so much and will put this knowledge to good use. People know we are here to stay not just for the duration of the election.

## Glasgow South West – Bill Bonnar

Days go and the Scottish Socialist Party's campaign in Glasgow South West is in full swing. Tens of thousands of leaflets have been distributed, hundreds of people canvassed, lots of public stalls organised, two public meetings staged and a lively debate held by Sunny Govan Community Radio. The campaign has already achieved its primary objective which was to continue to build the Scottish Socialist Party in the constituency. The party profile has greatly increased over the past few weeks with significant numbers of relatively new, younger members being involved. It has also allowed the party to campaign on key issues like the £10-per-hour minimum wage and the ending of Zero Hours Contracts. In fact, on the stalls and at meetings it is this latter issue which is raised most often. Whatever the eventual vote the campaign has proved a worthwhile exercise in getting the party out there and promoting the case for socialism and independence. The experience will stand us in good stead for the Scottish Parliament election next year.

## Glasgow East – Liam McLaughlan

Another busy period here for us in Glasgow East SSP in the run-up to the election. We've had another successful public meeting in the area, this time in Tollcross Community Centre and have managed to recruit another two new members to the party locally, following on from our earlier successful event and four new comrades in Easterhouse. Postal votes are beginning to arrive in the constituency and we remain ever hopeful of receiving a respectful voting figure the party can be proud of. We've always had our first local hustings event last week were our unique socialist message highlighting the £10-an-hour living minimum wage went down a bomb with a fiery and passionate as ever East End audience and we look forward to the second hustings this coming Thursday in Easterhouse. Our royal mail leaflet has been printed and is being handed in later this week with 40,000 lucky east-enders getting to view the SSP's distinctive and unashamedly class based message. We will continue to hold regular street stalls at Parkhead Forge and Easterhouse Shopping Centre and are relishing the chance to carry the torch for socialism in Glasgow East into May 7th, proudly

standing up for Scotland's working class majority and for a locally based workers MP on a workers wage.



## Edinburgh South – Colin Fox

The SSP campaign is only growing more intense in Edinburgh South as the General Election approaches. Since the last report, the Edinburgh South SSP campaign has produced and prepared 45,000 quality election leaflets to be delivered by the Royal Mail and further delivered door to door another batch of nearly 5000 leaflets for our next public meeting, "£10 Now! Come and hear the case for the £10 Living Wage!"

featuring our Edinburgh South candidate Colin Fox. With more of our posters for this campaign, and for the meeting starting to appear about the constituency, we've been keeping our visibility and profile high in the area. Every home in the Inch area of Edinburgh South will soon have received at least three leaflets, had its door chapped by a canvassing team at least once, and been invited to a public meeting. In the Marchmont area, by the end of the campaign every home will also have received at least three leaflets, been invited to a public meeting, and in this instance, if the weather permits, there is still the scope and resources for at the least a sizeable portion of the area being canvassed by the end of the campaign. Across the rest of the constituency the story is the same. SSP leaflets and canvassers are increasingly common sights at the door! There is still the need for that final push before the election though. That last chance before the 7 May to send a powerful message around the constituency to say that our communities will not sit idly by and accept the brutal austerity without a fight. To say that it's time we gave ourselves a voice by voting for the Scottish Socialist Party on 7 May, and that going forwards beyond then, the SSP will always be prepared to stand up with and for the hard-pressed people of Edinburgh South.