



Mobilise, resist, defy the Tories: turn votes into resistance in communities, workplaces, campuses, Holyrood and Westminster

• see pages 2,3,4,5,6&7

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

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Scottish Socialist Voice

Tories win, City banker boasts: 'Lobster Thermidor is back on the menu! Buy shares in lap dancing bars!'

**NO MANDATE...
NO TORY
CUTS!**

Hypocrisy as Cameron calls Tories 'the real party for working people'

**40% of eligible voters
would be needed to
strike under Tory plans**

**24% of eligible voters
elected a tiny majority
Tory government**



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SANDRA WEBSTER

THE FIRST CUTS WERE NOT THE DEEPEST

by Sandra Webster, SSP
national co-spokesperson

WHILE ALL other parties promised at least to slow down the rate of austerity, and while the SSP's manifesto was a people's one, at the heart of the Tories election pledge was to make at least £12billion cuts to benefits.

Softened up by a media onslaught which portrays the poor as scroungers, this pledge is popular with many who voted Tory—we all need a scapegoat.

The first full Tory cabinet in 18 years met for the first time this week, with Cameron announcing they were the party of the workers—rhetoric not that far removed from the Labour Party pledging their support for hard working families. Away from the headlines though, the DWP report that, with a benefit system already pared to the bone, further cuts are going to impact on those who may have voted Tory. Of course, the most vulnerable will



PHOTO: Craig Maclean

FIGHT! take action and support those affected by the savage Tory cuts

always suffer. Within hours of the election result, the DWP announced the closure of a scheme that supported people with dis-

abilities into work. We know that benefit sanctions will continue, with more and more people having to rely on food banks.

Iain Duncan Smith has hinted at a form of food stamps where those not in work will be given a pre-paid card to buy food. Universal Credit will continue to be rolled out. Already in Edinburgh, it arrives in Glasgow in June.

DLA will be replaced by Personal Independence Payment with different criteria which makes it more difficult to get the financial support the long term sick and disabled rely on to lead an ordinary life. These cuts will not make up the £12billion promised and it is those in work who will be most affected.

Further cuts to tax credits are to be expected. An end to entitlement to statutory maternity pay has been leaked in the press, as has further limitations to child benefit. Carers Allowance, a universal benefit, may only be payable to those in receipt of Universal Credit, and PIP may only be payable to one

member of a family even if multiple members have a disability. Let's be fair to the Tories though—they will deliver what they have promised, and more.

These ideological cuts will be watched over proudly by Iain Duncan Smith and newly-appointed Priti Patel who is on record of supporting the death penalty. We may miss Esther McVey who lost her Merseyside seat. Many find hope that the new SNP MPs with their anti-austerity promises will be able to protect us in Scotland from the worst excesses of Tory policy.

After all, disability benefits have been devolved to Holyrood by the Smith Commission.

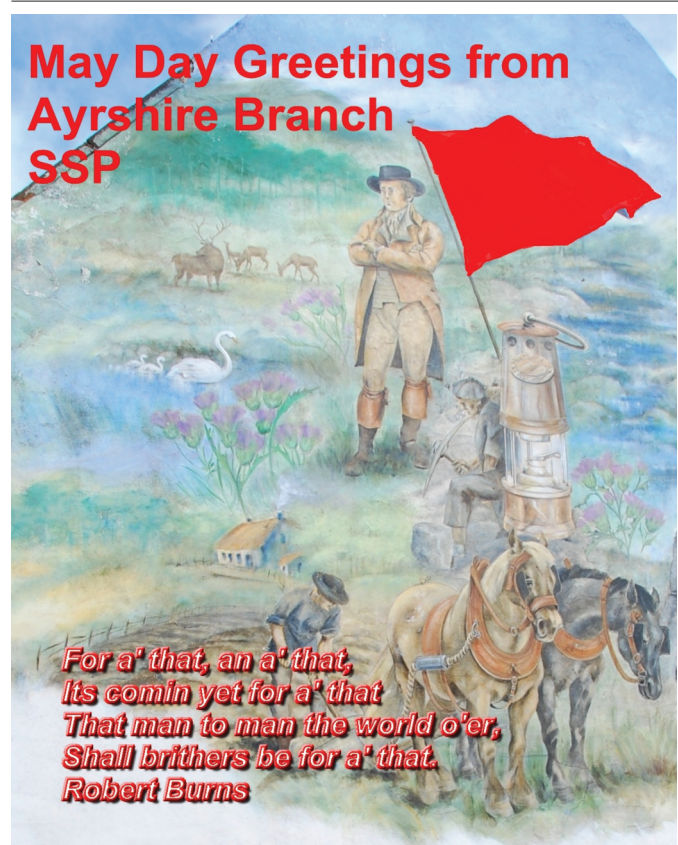
But as the first Tory cabinet meets, top priority will be given to the further dismantling of the welfare state and ensuring "benefit units"—as Iain Duncan Smith has referred to families in receipt of benefits—are most impacted on. When powers are devolved, PIP and Universal Credit will be rolled out leaving the Scottish Government with what may prove to be an impossible task in setting things right.

Tory misrule

Another five years of Tory misrule awaits us, and all the finest speeches against austerity will offer no protection. This is a rallying call to begin to offer support and hope. Be armed with the information. People need to fight benefit sanctions and be successful in claiming benefits.

Remember, austerity affects not only those out of work or in low paid work but in all of the public sector. The cuts will impact on teachers, nurses, council workers and civil servants.

We need to plan how to take action and support those affected. Only then can we hope to defeat the disgraceful Tory rhetoric. The first cuts were not the deepest but this time they will truly bite us all.



by Ken Ferguson

FIRST OF all, there is no doubt that the election result in Scotland is quite simply historic, sweeping away a Labour dominance which lasted for over half a century.

From pretend left leader Jim Murphy to puffed up foreign affairs shadow Douglas Alexander Labour place persons were crushed by the SNP juggernaut and as the dust settled a humbled Labour were left with one MP as were their former Better Together partners in the Tories and Lib Dems.

Without doubt, Labour paid a heavy price for their part in the two year 'Project Fear' No campaign which, though it won, enduringly linked them as partners to the widely detested Tories and totally discredited Lib Dems. But it is also clear that much deeper forces are also at work.

The cowing of Labour during the Thatcher years turned into a decisive break with socialist policies by Blair and ultimately ending in the morass of war, the bankers' bale out and unashamed pro-business priorities is not of itself unique.

Placating bosses

Confronted with a confident aggressive global capitalism, like Labour, social democrats across Europe moved to the right in a vain bid to placate the bosses and in the process attacked their own supporters with anti-union laws and spending cuts. However while this no doubt eroded Labour support there can be no question that, in Scotland, the merging of the break with working class policies and the rise of the national question proved decisive in the defeat of 7 May.

The experience of the brutality of the Thatcher years which saw mass unemployment, large scale industrial closures and the Poll Tax imposed on a Scotland which rejected them

Mass action central to defeat Tory brutality

PHOTO: Craig Maclean



FIGHT! take action and support those affected by the savage Tory cuts

by Westminster transformed the national question into a key demand with both a democratic and class content.

This basic truth was dramatically confirmed in the two year indyref campaign which saw the debate moved, through mass action from simply a constitutional argument to one which spotlighted a competing vision of Scotland's future anchored in the politics of an essentially red/green Scotland and informed by a range of ideas including feminism, anti-militarism and a rejection of consumerist greed.

Labour was on the winning side last September but in the process aligned itself with austerity, nuclear weapons and an essentially Westminster elite contempt for Scottish democracy trumpeted by the same media that is now busily running a quasi-racist anti-Scottish campaign. Labour simply

chose the wrong side with the wrong arguments and, on 7 May, paid the price. At the heart of the unprecedented SNP victory was their stance as an anti-austerity party which contrasted sharply—Jim Murphy rhetoric notwithstanding—with the pro-austerity policies of all three unionist parties.

As the Voice has pointed out before the SNP claim to ownership of the progressive ground of Scottish politics is challenged by a range of realities from council cuts through rail and ferry privatisation and policies of cuts which have led to attacks on workers wages and conditions. However there can be no question that in spotlighting boldly a rejection of austerity to mass audiences in TV debates and in a high profile campaign the SNP have decisively raised the question not just of the wisdom of austerity but the fact that there can be an alternative to it.

The reality is that, as argued by forces including the Scottish Socialist Party, many trade unions and a range of campaigners, the austerity programme far from a necessary evil is in fact a cover for a fundamental and final marketisation of the UK and massive destruction of the remaining welfare state.

The huge vote given to the SNP is both an endorsement of anti-austerity and a mandate for resistance to it both in Westminster and Holyrood and equally importantly in workplaces, communities and within Scottish society at large.

Building such a resistance must now be a key task for the period ahead.

Already there are signs from the trade unions that the reality that the Tory manifesto plans even worse anti-union laws will produce a response with figures such as UNITE's Len McLuskey and the STUC's Graeme Smith posing the need to break such laws.

For the socialist left which played such a key role in the referendum campaign to give it a left and progressive content working together to fashion a coherent anti-austerity campaign which both keeps the momentum against Tory brutality which 7 May represented and build a movement expressing it must be a central task.

Opposition

And, as the full horror of the Tory assault bites, opposition will be unlikely to be confined either to Westminster and Holyrood or simply to the brutal cuts signalled by Cameron but seems sure to see growing pressure for a fresh independence referendum.

In the light of the spectacular defeats in Scotland for the unionist parties—and £12 billion of savage cuts to be inflicted by a government with one Scottish MP—the demand for a second referendum can only grow.

by Colin Fox, SSP
national co-spokesperson

DISUNITED

THE TORIES' General Election victory has revealed a starkly divided 'Kingdom'. The distribution of the 650 seats in the House of Commons shows they are numerically dominant only in the South of England. Labour has a majority in the North of England [and Wales] and the SNP possess virtually all the Scottish seats. The result highlights the fractured state of British politics and casts a long shadow over the national question in Scotland.

So, what we can expect the Tories to do now? They plan to cut another £12 billion from Government spending, promote further casualisation of the workforce, oversee wider inequality and curtail what's left of public services and trade union rights in Britain. We have been warned.

That threat was reinforced in the small print of an article squirreled away on page 43 of *Scotland on Sunday's* business section where employment analyst Tony Shiret of Besi Research concluded Sports Direct 'which has come under fire for extensive use of zero-hours contracts' are a big winner [from this General Election] because 'employment laws will not be changed'. In other words, Cameron's victory is a triumph for sweatshop employers paying poverty wages. They will now face no restraints on their

exploitative behaviour. Working people on the other hand particularly those in sectors where poverty pay and casualisation are rife in retail, the care sector, agency jobs, hospitality and catering will suffer further falls in their living standards.

This election will solve nothing' insisted Will Hutton in *The Observer* at the weekend 'Inequality will grow. Low wages and insecure jobs will proliferate. The housing crisis will deepen. Public services will become even more threadbare.'

Enormous contempt

Britain's labour force certainly lost this election and so did the Labour Party. One week before Thursday's poll, the bookies had Ed Miliband favourite to become the next Prime Minister albeit in coalition with the Lib Dems.

But they were wrong. A week later 'Red Ed' was gone.

He failed to turn the enormous contempt for Cameron and Clegg to his advantage because he offered a pale imitation of the Tories. Labour's decision to support 90 per cent of Tory cuts was suicidal. They failed to persuade vot-

ers they were any more capable of growing the economy today than they were back in 2010.

Labour also supported the Coalitions continual victimisation of claimants and immigrants. Who can forget the remarks of Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Rachel Reeves MP who boasted 'Labour are not the party of people on benefits. We don't want to be and we're not the party to represent those who are out of work'.

Labour lost the progressive electorate right there. So when former Prime Minister Tony Blair says 'Labour lost because it was too far left' it shows how out of touch he is with the former Labour voters who now detest him.

For a long time the polls suggested this election was stuck in a stalemate between a Coalition Government that did not deserve to be re-elected governing as it did for a rich corporate elite drunk on its own greed and believing itself untouchable and an Opposition so bereft of ideas that all it could do was ape the reactionary policies of the Government on poverty and inequality, on privatisation, on warmongering and blaming claimants and immigrants for an economic crisis they did not cause.

If the result for Labour in England was bad it was off the Richter scale in Scotland. The Scottish Labour Party was swept away. It has never suffered a blow like this one. Working class Scots who had dismissed the party in unprecedented numbers in September's referendum stayed away and took their friends with them.

And there is no guarantee Labour will survive the blow of this 'political revolution'. It is a

party that does not stand for anything anymore. When former leader Johan Lamont described universal benefits as epitomising 'the something for nothing culture' the party was lost at sea.

The scale of Labour's defeat was breathtaking. It is the end of an era. The end of the one party state Scotland has endured for half a century. Such a rout was unimaginable back in 2010 when Labour won most seats by promising to 'Keep out the Tories'. But that was before they got into bed with them.

And yet in many ways the key question in Scotland now is, what has the SNP actually won?

Fifty-six seats yes. But independence? No. Or vital influence at Westminster? No. They face five years of opposition. And on past experience the SNP leadership will not condone or conduct extra-parliamentary action of any kind to defend Scotland from Tory attacks. They will encourage us to be passive and leave it to them just as Labour did.

Tory traps

The Tories are preparing traps for the independence movement. They plan to devolve the limited extra powers included in the Smith Commission Report as a way to temper the SNP's momentum. They have also offered full Fiscal Autonomy [FFA] which they believe is another way to trap advocates of independence. Full Fiscal Autonomy came up regularly during the General Election campaign. The Unionist parties were eager to see the SNP accept it and the SNP were understandably reluctant.

For the SSP I suggested the 'devil was in the detail' here.

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KINGDOM

PHOTO: Craig Maclean



MOVEMENT: the pro-market, pro-capital Scottish National Party can't secure 'self-determination' for Scotland on its own

FFA is said to give Scotland 'full tax raising powers' when in fact it proposes nothing of the kind. VAT, fuel, alcohol and tobacco duties are to remain with London as payment for Scotland's contribution towards Defence, Foreign Affairs and European Union Bills as well as a share of the UK National Debt. All these figures are easily manipulated to Scotland's detriment and Westminster has every incentive to fiddle the FFA negotiations.

At the same time Westminster will, as John McAllion explained recently in this newspaper, lay many traps for the SNP and their

plans for change. With his House of Commons majority David Cameron has ruled out a second referendum for example. And since the matter is reserved there is little prospect of this path to independence opening up again any time soon.

Bluster

For all their bluster about 'the people of Scotland deciding when the next referendum will be' [presumably based on opinion poll evidence] the SNP suggest that meantime 'Swinnerian competence' is the way to galvanise the independence movement! That will not work because fact is

the SNP's record at Holyrood leaves a great deal to be desired.

The independence movement is an energised working class force and we must remind the SNP that it cannot secure 'self-determination' for Scotland on its own, even with 100,000 members. The SNP is a pro-market, pro-capital, neoliberal party. Many others in the independence movement are not.

The SSP for example, remains a vital part of the movement, we are not pro-market, and we are anti-capitalist. We are not social democrats, we are socialists, there is a huge difference. And before our opponents seek to

dismiss our role in the independence revolution, the way Andrew Neil tried on *The Daily Politics* recently, we would point out the tens of thousands of voters who told us 'This [Westminster General Election] is not your turn. We need to get rid of Labour and under first past the post only the SNP can do that. Your turn comes next year with Holyrood when we have two votes and we need to get socialists [and Greens] elected there to hold the SNP to account.'

The Scottish Socialist Party was, and remains, an important part of the independence movement, for it is a movement and not a single party. It has its political wing but it must also have its industrial wing, its cultural wing and its wide breadth of support.

We knew our vote in 2015 would be tiny. Our job now in the SSP is to work with others to 'hold the SNP's feet to the fire' as it were, to insist they keep the promises they made to the Scottish working class to defend them from Tory and bosses attacks.

Tide of illusions

The timing and tone of our criticism of the SNP will therefore bear that role in mind. Will the SNP deliver? No they will not, in our view. That is why our 2015 manifesto in contrast to theirs was entitled 'Standing up for Scotland's working class majority'.

In 1997 New Labour was as popular as the SNP are today and the SSP [or Scottish Socialist Alliance as it was then] was the only left party to stand against them and the tide of illusions in them too. We were vindicated by subsequent events. The Scottish Socialist Party will continue to work with others to expose the illusions in capitalism and its true character and present the socialist case afresh.

'I am a great believer in what you say before an election should be what you say after,' said Nicola Sturgeon. So are we, Nicola.

by *Richie Venton, SSP
national workplace
organiser*

NOW DEFY TORY CLASS WAR!

WORDS FAIL to adequately convey the enormity of the 'ballot box revolution' witnessed in the General Election.

But an emboldened Tory dictatorship, backed by only 24.4 per cent of the electorate, have unleashed unmitigated class war, targeting benefits, public services and the organised workers' unions for full-frontal assaults.

An unprecedented tsunami of support for the SNP swept all before it. Labour plunged to its worst election result in Scotland since 1918, ending 50 years of remote, corrupt dominance. The treacherous Lib Dems were wiped out, with the loss of 4 million votes, in punishment for their collaboration with the Tories.

'Euphoria returns'

But the results at UK level could not have been more profoundly different. Literally within hours, £40billion was added to FTSE 100 share values.

One brazen City Investor told *The Guardian*: "Euphoria returns to the City! Lobster Thermidor is back on the menu! Buy shares in lap dancing bars! The City is safe for five years!"

Black despair at the prospect of escalated reliance on food banks, child poverty, slashed jobs and wages was the more typical response in working class households. The Tories did not win any landslide mandate for their plan of

brutality against the working class, benefits and basic human rights; 63 per cent voted against them. Their share of the vote crept up a minuscule 0.4 per cent, to 24.4 per cent of the total electorate.

It was their claim to be 'anti-austerity' that was key to the SNP's historically incomparable landslide. The SNP's was both an anti-Tory and anti-Labour vote, a continuation of the Referendum momentum, but especially a vote for change, for an end to austerity.

After the euphoria of crushing Labour comes the reality check for all those who've invested their hopes of change in the SNP and 'Nicola'. What will the 56 'Strong Voices for Scotland' do about the class war unleashed by Cameron's capitalist cabal?

Despite 63 per cent voting against them, Cameron's Tories feel immensely emboldened in their mission to destroy the remnants of the welfare state, which they ideologically detest. They plan to fast-track crucifying austerity cuts, with an immediate 100-day blitz. Before the election the Tories feared their plans would need to be diluted under a

Coalition deal. But now they can unleash the dogs of class war.

Within the £30billion overall butchery is £12billion cuts to welfare benefits, clobbering some for the poorest to satiate the appetites of the new influx of Tory MPs. But if anyone imagines it's only those unfortunate enough to fall sick, be disabled or simply unemployed that are in the Tories' gunsights, think again; they plan to rob £3.8billion off Tax Credits, which low-paid workers rely on to survive.

While squandering £100billion on Trident renewal, the Institute of Fiscal Studies predicts the Tories' public sector plans will wipe out 1.3 million public sector jobs by 2019. Zero Hours Contracts and insecure temporary jobs will let rip. Pivotal to this plan to rob millions on behalf of the millionaires, the Tories are determined to effectively wipe out trade unions. They see the unions as the first and last line of defence for working people.

Smashing the unions

New Tory Business Secretary, Sajid Javid, has announced the Queens Speech will include laws to make it virtually impossible to take strike action on jobs, wages or workplace victimisation; requiring a 50 per cent turnout in any union ballot for action, plus a threshold of at least 40 per cent of all members voting for it. So says a Tory regime with 24.4 per cent of all eligible voters!

To enforce even harsher dictatorship of big business over workers, they will also lift the current ban on use of Agency workers to scab on strikes, to dragoon workers suffering terri-

ble job insecurity to undermine other workers' wages and conditions. So what will the 56 SNP MPs do in the face of such wholesale butchery, which flies in the teeth of everything Scottish voters gave the SNP a mandate to pursue?

They've spoken about how they are there to be constructive, not to destroy. Of course they should use every parliamentary committee, Westminster debate, and Prime Minister's Question Time to expose and oppose the scorched earth policies of the Tories towards benefits, jobs, public services, workers' rights, civil liberties, and against Trident renewal.

But they face a stark, simple choice: even if they convince some or all of the other opposition MPs to vote with them against Tory measures, they will still lose the parliamentary vote, and then either mobilise 'extra-parliamentary' mass movements, or end up impotent as a minority at Westminster.

When Labour had 50 Scottish MPs in the 1980s/90s, they were dubbed the 'Feeble 50' for their refusal to lead a movement of mass non-payment of the Tory poll tax, imposed by Thatcher's parliamentary majority. The same fate awaits the SNP 56 if they repeat that failure to use their elected authority to spearhead mass movements on the streets, in workplaces and communities against what is an even more savage package of attacks than those of Thatcher.

The SNP have made the welcome demand for far more powers to be devolved to Scotland, including welfare, income tax, the minimum wage, employment



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MOBILISE, RESIST, DEFY: a mass movement can defeat the Tory mission to destroy PHOTO: Craig Maclean

law, business tax. Cameron is likely to make concessions on powers in the face of the SNP tidal wave, in the hope of not becoming 'the last Prime Minister of the UK'. But he'll make no concessions on austerity.

So serious questions confront those who entrusted the SNP to oppose austerity - especially the 80,000 new members who stampeded into the SNP to fight austerity and win full independence: are the SNP leadership going to lead a mass movement to defy and defeat the Tory butchery, or just make fine speeches in parliament and then pass on the cuts whilst blaming the Tories?

Will the SNP Holyrood government refuse to pass down Westminster cuts to the Scottish budget, and mobilise the newly awakened masses in a huge movement to win back our stolen £billions in defence of every job, service and pay packet? Or will they continue what they've done for the last four years, devolving about £4billion of Tory/Lib Dem Coalition cuts to colleges, councils, and public sector workers?

Will the SNP demand powers over employment law so as to repeal every single anti-union law on the statute books? And replace them with a Charter of Workers'

Rights, including the right to strike, and to take solidarity action with fellow-workers, even when the strike is deemed 'political'? Certainly they've never promised to do so up until now. Yet that is the minimum required in the face of Cameron's onslaught.

The looming juggernaut of cuts and effective ban on trade unionism by Cameron spells disaster unless a mass movement is mobilised to resist, defy and defeat the Tory mission to destroy.

Break anti-union laws

As STUC general secretary Grahame Smith rightly wrote in the *Sunday Herald*, "Democracy is about more than politicians and parliaments...the unions are well placed to provide a legitimate and effective voice if the Tories' cruel plans are to be thwarted." He also wrote: "New anti-union laws will be fiercely resisted and, if they remove our democratic right to organise, broken."

That's precisely the spirit that needs to become real and decisive action, and without delay or prevarication. Mass demos to garner public opposition to the cuts by a Tory government with absolutely no mandate in Scotland should be called by the STUC, with or without the active support of the SNP

56. These could build confidence for more decisive action, including coordinated strike days and civil disobedience, such as community occupations of threatened facilities.

Such mobilisations outside parliament should be used to pound the MPs, MSPs and councillors - whether SNP or what remains of Labour - to defy Westminster's cuts, set No Cuts Defiance budgets when the time comes at Scottish and local authority levels, and mount a struggle of the increasingly expectant Scottish working class to win back the funding off Westminster, rather than simply make parliamentary opposition speeches and then surrender to the inbuilt Tory majority.

Politically, the unions in Scotland need to stop propping up the bankrupt project that is Labour. We were told to reject independence last year and get 'social justice with a Labour government' in 2015. That's failed, utterly.

We've seen attempts by the biggest of all unions, UNITE, to drag Labour back to the left. That's proven utterly futile.

We now see a rising chorus of demands for Labour to return to undiluted Blairism, to appeal to 'the aspiring middle class'. The same Blairism that retained Thatcher's vicious anti-union laws.

It's about time the union leaderships broke from these failed attempts to reclaim a party that is a shell, dominated by pro-capitalist place-seekers, with a Scottish Labour leader about as popular as herpes. They should instead combine with the SSP and all genuine socialists to build a mass, working class, socialist party to stand up for Scotland's working class majority population. There's been an electoral mass uprising for change, sweeping change. But to tackle the underlying causes of austerity cuts, we need not only taxation powers, but the powers and political will to take the banks, energy giants, transport companies, construction and big business into democratic public ownership. That's why the socialist vision and socialist policies of the SSP are more indispensable than ever.

Second referendum

Rather than succumb to another five years of escalated class war from a Tory dictatorship with absolutely no mandate in Scotland, we need to call for a mandate in the 2016 Scottish parliament elections for a second Referendum - and demand that the SNP leadership do likewise.

The political landscape has been transformed by an incredible movement through the ballot box. But to implement and achieve the aspirations of those who swept the SNP into the hallowed chambers of Westminster, we need a mass movement on the streets, in the workplaces and communities against Tory class-driven atrocities.

It's mass movements that bring about real change. Witness the defeat of anti-union laws and imprisonment of workers through mass strikes in the 1970s. Or the downfall of the hated Poll Tax and its architect Maggie Thatcher, which founders of the SSP helped spearhead.

The unprecedented mass movement for change through the ballot box lays the foundations for a campaign of mass defiance on the streets against Tory dictatorship. The alternative is unthinkable.



The East Kilbride branch of the Scottish Socialist Party sends May Day greetings to all workers in struggle across the globe.

"The great only appear great because we are on our knees. Let us rise."

For international Solidarity and Socialism



The SSP Podcast sends May Day greetings to all Voice readers

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point is to change it."

— Karl Marx

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"Freedom is always the freedom of dissenters"

Rosa Luxemburg



Militant celebration marks abortion act anniversary

by Norman Lockhart

IN EDINBURGH on Saturday 25 April there was an international militant celebration of the 47 years since the passing of the Abortion Act which started to decriminalise women taking control over their own bodies and fertility. Since 1967, there has been a positive campaign that means many trade union bodies such as the STUC, UNISON and PCS have been convinced this is a class as well as a feminist issue.

Even when illegal, the rich could often afford to get abortions through private clinics that would record another procedure, while the poor relied on the secret help of so called “back street abortions” that were often the source of infections and worse.

Ann Henderson, STUC Assistant Secretary, said: “We owe a great deal to those women and men who came before us, campaigning for the provision of abortion services, family planning and contraceptive services, provided free and without judgement in our communities. For working class women on lower incomes, this has always been particularly important. There is no other access to safe, legal services, if not provided through the



NHS. These are the voices that must be heard today, not those who seek to roll the clock back, endangering women's lives.”

In Scotland, it is an anomaly that while the NHS is a devolved matter, abortion is reserved to Westminster. Some try to argue this is to safeguard the limited progress, once welcomed, by the 1967 legislation.

However, that is certainly not true for women all over Ireland where it is still totally illegal. Neither does it account for the constant attempted attacks on women's rights from the 1970s to now and the restrictive amendments to unrelated laws.

Abortion is often the source of heated debate amongst socialists but it is worth looking at the example of Canada—one of the very few countries in the world that has NO criminal law restricting abortion at all.

The law there against abortion was first liberalised in 1969, then their Supreme Court threw it out completely in 1988. Since then, they have managed without any limitation on women's choice, providing fully qualified medical support and professional facilities. This would be a fine example of a future independent Scotland committed to social progress for women.

**Scottish
Socialist
Party**

**Executive
Committee**

**The Executive
Committee of
the Scottish
Socialist Party
extends May Day
greetings to all
our friends and
comrades, both
in Scotland and
internationally**

Why has US blockade on Cuba been lifted?

by Bill Bonnar

IT WILL come as a relief to the peoples of the world that Cuba has now been removed from the list of 'rogue nations sponsoring international terrorism'. This gesture from the United States; a country which virtually invented international terrorism; is another sign of the collapse of the US strategy of trying to isolate Cuba and another victory for the Cuban revolution.

In fact, the term, 'rogue nation sponsoring international terrorism' is an almost perfect description of the modern history of the United States role in Latin America. Whether it be the promotion of right wing death squads in places like Nicaragua in the 1980s or its support for violently repressive regimes conducting reigns of terror against their own people; the United States stands accused of being the largest exporter of international terrorism in history.

Dramatic change

The change in US policy towards Cuba in recent months has been dramatic. Up to this point the strategy was to isolate the Cuban Revolution preventing it from spreading and infecting the rest of the region and ultimately to overthrow its government and restore freedom, democracy and capitalism to the island.

It is worth recalling what capitalist Cuba was like before the revolution. A country was ruled a succession of American sponsored brutal military dictatorship which stayed in power by violence and repression.

A country reduced to colonial status with most of the economy owned by American companies and tied into humiliating treaty arrangements with Washington. A country rife with poverty, inequality and corruption lacking in even the most



EMBARGOS TO AMIGOS: Obama with Cuban President Raul Castro

basic social services and a base of operations for gangsters from all over the United States. No wonder there was a revolution.

To restore the country to this capitalist paradise US intervention over the years have included the following. An economic embargo which has cost the Cuban government an estimated sixty billion dollars.

Terrorist attacks ranging from the blowing up of a civilian airliner to numerous assassination attempts on the life of the President to the bombings of economic targets and a failed invasion. Also the beaming of counter-revolutionary propaganda into the country and an international campaign of disinformation to turn world opinion against the revolution. And it has all failed.

In recent years this strategy has left the US more isolated than ever with the Cuban Government winning new friends and allies all over Latin America.

This is why American policy towards Cuba has changed. By engaging with Cuba the United States hopes to influence developments in that country and end its own isolation in the region.

This at a time when a tidal wave of progressive change has swept across the continent.

Since 2000 a number of left of centre governments have come to power across Latin America.

They range from the mildly social democratic as in Argentina to the overtly revolutionary as in Venezuela but they have a number of things in common. One is a complete and total rejection of the kind of neo-liberal, free market economics which so devastated the continent in the 1990s; in fact the election of those governments were a direct political response to that experience.

Another is the refusal to accept the Munroe Doctrine which gives the United States carte blanche to intervene in the affairs of Latin America if its interests were threatened. This resulted in a century of military interventions and brutal right wing dictatorships which have scared the continent. Another is that the problems of poverty, inequality and under development cannot be resolved by free market policies; in fact these policies have proved to be the problem rather than the answer.

Only government intervention can change the lives of the people for the better. This intervention has ranged from massive public spending on health, education, social care and measures

to directly increase living standards, bringing key industries into public ownership and establishing far greater level of state control, regulation and planning.

Another has been the drive to bring about far greater economic, social, military and political unity across the continent. For these governments and the people of Latin America the US treatment of Cuba is an affront to their sense of dignity and solidarity and a graphic example of everything that has been wrong with the US attitude to the continent. It is this anger and hostility which has caused the change in US policy.

We should be clear however that this does not reflect a change in the objectives of Washington. Their aim is still the removal of all 'anti-American' governments and a return to the status quo.

They have been actively supporting the counter-revolution in Venezuela, given massive support to the brutal regime in Colombia, supported the rigging of national elections in Paraguay and Mexico and have doubled the size of the American 7th fleet which is positioned to attack any country in the region.

Threats remain

In fact, the Obama administration's biggest criticism of the previous Bush government is that it allowed these governments to come to power in the first place.

Many of the developments in Latin America in recent years have been a cause for celebration by left and progressive forces around the world but we also have to realise that real threats remain.

In particular in Venezuela where the possibility of counter-revolution and civil war are very real. Our solidarity with Cuba, Venezuela and the rest of a continent struggling to throw off the shackles of imperialism and build a better future has never been more important.



SSP STIRLING BRANCH

SENDS A MESSAGE
OF FRIENDSHIP AND
SOLIDARITY TO
WORKERS IN
SCOTLAND AND
ACROSS THE WORLD
THIS MAY DAY.



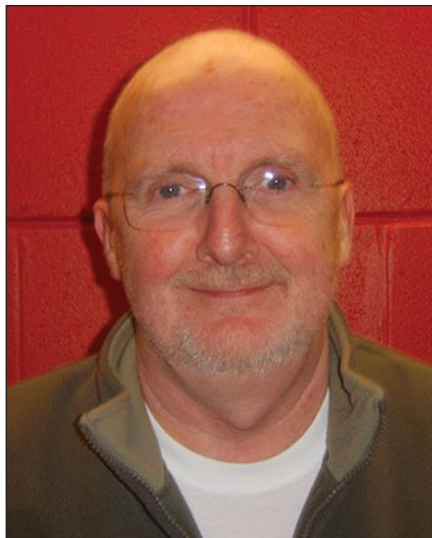
FOR PEACE, INTERNATIONALISM AND SOCIALISM

SSP councillor's Israeli arms boycott backed

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE Council has unanimously backed a motion from SSP councillor for the Leven ward, Jim Bollan, opposing council pension funds investing in firms supplying arms to Israel.

West Dunbartonshire is one of 12 councils whose pension funds are part of the Strathclyde Pension Fund and holds a multi-million investment portfolio. The motion backed by all 22 councillors says:

'Council agrees to encourage the members of the Strathclyde Pension Fund Committee not to invest any funds in Lockheed Martin the largest military contractor in the World who manufacture Trident, Cluster Bombs and F-16 Fighter Jets or Raytheon who sell weapons to the Israeli Government. Raytheon weapons were used by Israel in the 2014 invasion of Gaza during which 2,000 Palestinians were killed. Council calls on the Strathclyde Pension Fund to invest in ventures where the yield to the fund is similar or higher, but where the venture



JIM BOLLAN: "No peace for apartheid Israel without justice for the Palestinian people"

is constructive rather than destructive.' Councillor Bollan told the *Voice*:

"The Scottish Socialist Party were delighted the motion they put forward to

the full council meeting in West Dunbartonshire last week was agreed unanimously by all 22 councillors."

"West Dunbartonshire already have a boycott of Israeli goods in place and this further move to call for productive, instead of destructive investments with pension funds from council workers confirms our position of seeking truth, justice and equality for the Palestinian people. Cutting of the supply of arms to the Zionist apartheid regime in Israel is of paramount importance and must be top of the political agenda for any individual, group or organisation that shares these values.

"Apartheid Israel uses Gaza, an open prison, as a testing ground for these weapons and the SSP is committed to doing all we can to ensure pressure is brought to bear to stop parts for these weapons being manufactured anywhere in Scotland. There can be no peace for apartheid Israel without justice for the Palestinian people."

Scottish Socialist Party



CAMPSIE BRANCH

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Use your list vote in 2016 for the SSP!

**Campsie SSP Branch sends May Day
greetings to all Voice readers**

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