

SNP council cuts: party brand themselves 'anti-austerity' but SNP are no strangers to cuts

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In or out? where should the left stand on Europe?

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by Ken Ferguson

IT SEEMS that with each passing day, the hard nosed Tory Etonians—running the UK on a minority of votes cast in May—land further blows on the poor, vulnerable victims of their austerity policies.

As they drive to destroy what is left of the welfare state, pinion the unions and silence what remains of a opposition, there can be no question that their plan is to reshape the UK as a market-driven privatised paradise for the rich, with a return to Dickensian charity for the rest.

Two events last week serve to skywrite the contrast in treatment for the rich minority on the one hand and the weak and vulnerable on the other.

Overnight, axeman Osborne sold of shares in RBS, owned by the taxpayer, at a loss of £1billion, telling the public that handing such a dripping roast to his City pals was good for business and to be welcomed.

Anti-welfare moves

Just days later, the pathbreaking Kids Company charity, which has supported thousands of vulnerable kids for two decades, folded amidst an orchestrated campaign in the usual Tory lapdog newspapers to portray them as spendthrift liberal incompetents wasting public money. Unlike the shadowy speculators who slunk off with there ill-gotten RBS loot, Kids Company were placed firmly in the harsh spotlight of Tory press “investigations” which served the twin purposes of demonising both the charity and turning the screw on the anti-welfare campaign aimed at the vulnerable.

However, the Tory demonisation is not just confined to the British market but has been given an international dimension with the openly racist rants about



AXEMAN:
George Osborne
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“swarms” of migrants and the disgusting diatribe from Essex man Philip Hammond—a Tory cabinet minister—warning that “marauding migrants” are about to undermine European living standards. This is a lie of ancient vintage which has ben deployed against Irish people, the so called “Yellow Peril”, former colonial peoples and now to east Europeans from the EU.

We look at this issue elsewhere in this *Voice* but it is was and always will be a blatant cynical lie deployed by the elite to sow division among those they seek to control.

Faced with this growing assault, the response from the so called peoples’ party, Labour, has been cringingly weak, with abstention on the vote on welfare changes a low point, even by the standards of New Labour. But there are, in this dismal landscape, some signs of a possible fightback. Hogging the headlines has been the growing prospect that left wing challenger Jeremy Corbyn might just win the election for UK Labour leader.

This is undoubtedly a positive development in the battle to win public purchase for alternative socialist

responses to neoliberal austerity, and you can smell the fear it has generated in the polished performers who inhabit the Labour leadership benches at Westminster.

From John McTernan (adviser to abject failure Jim Murphy) defending the wonders of rail privatisation, through Yvette Cooper warning of a return to the ’70s (when we had trade unions, reasonable jobs and a Welfare State) to media thug Alistair Campbell—a cornerstone of Blairism demanding “Anyone but Corbyn”—the attack dogs are loose.

Massive hostility

What this tells us is that, should he succeed, Corbyn will face massive hostility from the bulk of Labour MPs, and a sustained campaign of distortion and lies from an overwhelmingly hostile media.

The idea that there can be smooth reconquest of the ex-socialist Labour Party for socialist politics stretches credulity to breaking point.

Here in Scotland, we face the certainty that a plughole-bound Labour Party is about to elect a leader a million miles away from Corbyn’s left politics and even a Corbyn

leadership—still lined up in the anti-independence camp—seems unlikely to save them from oblivion.

Faced with an SNP likely to sweep to renewed power in Holyrood, and already dominant as Scottish MPs, the need for a coherent pro-independence left challenge which both keeps the demand for a second referendum on the agenda and fashions a coherent socialist approach to meeting the urgent economic and social challenges facing Scotland’s working people is surely the key need of the hour.

The Corbyn surge notwithstanding, the left analysis and energy which flowed from the indyref campaign must be the cornerstone of the building of a coherent challenge to austerity and war, not putting faith in the dubious politics of a Labour Party steeped in the anti-socialist approach of New Labour.

In this setting, the launch event for a new left alliance hosted by the Scottish Left Project at the end of this month is attracting growing support across he serious left in Scotland, and can form the basis for such a challenge.

What should socialists do about the EU?

by Bill Bonnar

BRITAIN IS a capitalist country operating within the EU. If Britain decides to withdraw from the EU it will still be a capitalist country. The principle aim of the left is to transform Britain from capitalism to socialism. This may seem a moot point but there is a point to this moot point.

For the left, its stance on the EU is not based on principle but rather tactics and strategy. In the first referendum in 1975 the entire left campaigned for a British withdrawal.

Most of the left supported the idea of a 'British Road to Socialism' based on the concept of a left Labour government supported by a mass movement outside parliament implementing a socialist programme. The EC was seen as a barrier to this project; undermining national sovereignty and acting as a block to its radical programme.

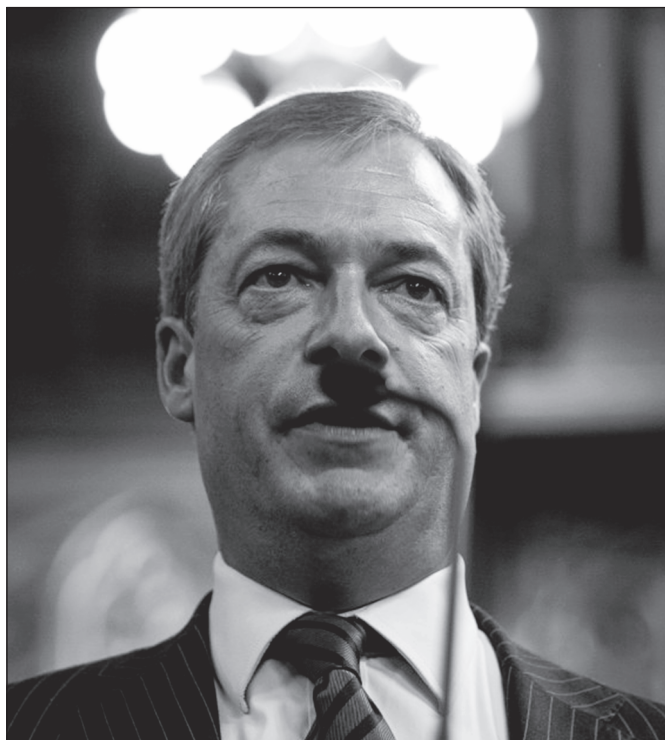
Altered position

In the course of the 1990s, much of the left altered its position. While still highly critical of the EU it did not call for withdrawal but rather posed an alternative vision of a social and progressive Europe.

In part, this was a response to Thatcherism. Under Thatcher, Britain moved considerably to the right, compared to most other EU countries.

In fact, many aspects of the EU now seemed progressive in comparison. It was also a response to a growing right wing opposition to the EU.

Across Europe the radical right became the main vehicle for anti-EU sentiment in which opposition to EU membership became enmeshed with a heady mixture of racism, right wing nationalism and xeno-



UNHOLY ALLIANCE: any anti-EU camp will include the likes of Farage

phobia. This was a direct response to the Maastricht Treaty, which allowed for the free movement of labour and a massive rise in migration between European states.

Sometime in the next 18 months, the Conservative Government will hold a referendum on Britain's membership of the EU. This agenda has been driven by a hard core of Tory MPs and members, fuelled by sections of the media determined to orchestrate a British withdrawal.

This position enjoys significant support among the British public; a section of society for which racism and xenophobia are common currency.

Opinion polls show a majority of the electorate in England would support Britain remaining in the EU but that majority is not large. In Scotland, the pro-EU majority is much more commanding.

If the left were to adopt an anti-EU position it would face an obvious problem in the

general nature of the anti-EU campaign. It does not take much of a leap of imagination to picture what that campaign would look like.

Imagine a large demonstration, festooned with Union flags and marching to the tune of Rule Britannia. It would be a campaign driven by the most reactionary sections of British society; an unholy alliance of UKIP, renegade Tories and the *Daily Mail*.

For all those who fear the rise of English nationalism, it would be as if their worst nightmares had become real.

The problem for the left is that, although they have a strong critique of the EU and could make a compelling case for withdrawal, they would end up objectively supporting the above because there will be only one anti-EU campaign.

And yet the left's critique of Europe remains valid and has intensified in recent months over the EU's treatment of Greece.

Here was a government elected by its people with an anti-austerity programme massively endorsed in a referendum being forced to ignore the will of its own people on the orders of Brussels.

In Scotland, anti-EU sentiment is much less, with opinion polls showing a clear majority in favour of Scotland remaining a member. This is likely to increase in the course of a referendum campaign in which all the major parties and almost all the media will campaign to stay in.

One-day event

For the left in Scotland, there is much discussion needed as to what our position in the referendum should be. Eg, if Scotland where an independent state and not a member; would we campaign to join the EU? Almost certainly not.

In the coming referendum, our position needs to be informed by the following: what is our socialist critique of the EU, and has that critique been altered by recent events?

Given that the British anti-EU campaign will be driven by reactionary forces and that most progressive forces in Britain will certainly coalesce around a pro-EU position, how does this affect our stance? Where does this issue fit into the current campaign for Scottish independence?

To deal with some of these issues, the SSP will be holding a one-day event, to be held before the end of this year. Its purpose is for the party to look at its existing position on the EU and discuss whether this is still viable; then to take that discussion into the wider movement. In the coming months, this will prove to be a crucial debate for the left and one which the SSP intends to lead.

by Ross Walker,
Edinburgh North SSP

SIGNS OF DISCONTENT AMONGST POLISH WORKERS

IN THE last week, a series of articles in the mainstream media have claimed that there will be a walkout of Polish migrant workers throughout Britain. The strike, if it is to take place, will be in protest at anti-immigrant rhetoric and t-shirts are being produced saying 'Enough: Stop Blaming Us'.

The Tory-loyal Telegraph said "More than half a million Poles now work in the UK and any concerted action could cause widespread disruption to businesses and services across the country, with the construction, food and health care sectors in particular hit hard."

In doing this, they not only exposed the fear of the capitalists and their right wing media but also mistakenly reminded its readership of the potential power of the working classes, specifically in this case of the Polish migrant workers in the UK.

Donating blood

The situation is unclear just now, as it does not have consensus from all British-based Polish organisations, some of whom are promoting the idea of collective blood donation instead.

The Express released an article with the headline "Britain set for first ever migrant workers strike because Polish people feel UNAPPRECIATED" (why the caps?) quoting a UKIP politician telling British people to feel "personally insulted" giving a perfect example of the kind of anti-immigrant rhetoric which Polish workers frequently come up against.

This action shows a great degree of self-sacrifice and potential militancy. If successful, it will be a big lesson and inspiration not just to Polish workers but to other migrant workers and even Scottish, English and Welsh workers.



However, they do realise that this proposal in its current form is far from ideal. It is very difficult for workers to take this kind of action, and the fact that it is even being proposed is a sign of just how bad things are for migrant workers here. This points towards a failure in the current official trade unions.

Since Poland's 2004 entrance into the EU and the mass immigration to the UK, there have been efforts on the part of some trade unionists to organise this new layer of the working class.

When Polish church-based community group Polski Bristol raised the problem that Polish people were having to pay taxes not just in the UK but also back in Poland, the South West TUC launched a campaign which pressured the governments of Poland and Britain to sign a treaty ensuring that this will no longer happen.

In 2008, the TUC and Polish union organisations Solidarnosc and OPZZ signed a protocol to help Polish workers in the UK. A Polish language website was launched (pracawbrytanii.org/) including guidance on workers' rights.

The following excerpt from a LibCom article shows a successful strike of Polish cleaners in Northampton in 2007:

"The mainly Polish workers employed by cleaning company Glenn Management to clean offices on the Moulton Park industrial estate, Northampton, had not been paid properly for around four months.

"However after only one day's strike action they were paid the money that they were owed. One employee told Libcom:

"We had been trying to get hold of our manager again and again but he was not interested in talking to us. Within half an hour of going on strike, however, he suddenly became very interested in what we had to say. First of all he told us that what we were doing was a disgrace and would endanger our jobs.

"When it became clear we would not be intimidated he tried to pay only those of us who spoke good English. When we made it clear that this wasn't good enough we were all paid in full."

As welcome and inspiring as this is, there is still a long way to go. The trade unions

have barely touched the surface in terms of recruitment of Polish or any other immigrant workers in the UK.

The labour movement must use this opportunity to back the strike and use it to recruit and unionise currently non-unionised and extremely exploited workplaces.

The bosses may take this as a warning. You can't exploit working people to this degree forever. Whether unionised or not working people will always fight back. It's not a matter of if but when.

Polish workers have a long radical and revolutionary history. From the Warsaw uprising in 1944 which almost defeated the Nazis to the Solidarnosc movement in 1980. Even earlier this year we saw miners in Silesia taking on the right wing government and partially winning.

Exploited

In the UK, we are in particular need of an internationalist outlook given the high numbers and poor treatment of immigrants in this country.

Immigrant workers are one of the most exploited layers in society. Vulnerability is exploited by the ruling classes to divide home born workers with immigrant worker and is further fuelled with the use of reactionary, racist and slanderous media.

The Scottish Socialist Party fights for a society, in Scotland and internationally, where the wealth created by the worker is owned, controlled and distributed by the workers.

This protest is extremely welcome development on the road for to this society and we will support our Polish brothers and sisters in this struggle.

Colin Turbett reports

UNTIL EARLIER this year, I was involved as a UNISON activist in responding each year to my council employer's budget proposals. In 2012, as elsewhere in Scotland, this changed as the SNP replaced a Labour administration—but in terms of budget proposals it was business as usual as SNP councillors delivered Tory cuts based on the austerity measures decided by the Westminster government.

The excuses offered were identical to Labour's—a mix of 'its not us it's the Tories', alongside 'what's wrong with efficiencies anyway?'.

When we argued that they could fight back by setting a 'defiance' or 'needs' budget—and accept the consequences, they laughed at us just as their Labour predecessors had.

Whilst this might have resonated pre-indyref with the promise of better things to come, events since September 2014 mean this is now wearing thin.

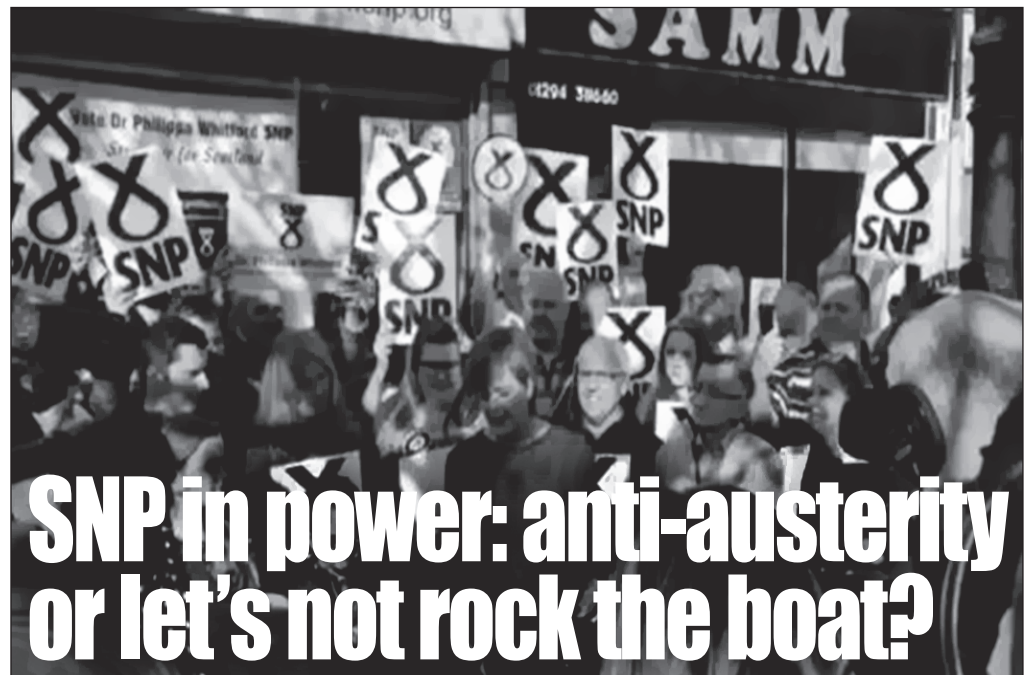
Council deals

So what are the SNP like in practice in the councils where they have power? Since 2012 they have held control of sorts in nine out of 32 local authorities in Scotland—two with overall control (Dundee City and Angus), and the rest with either minority administrations or coalitions.

These coalitions include councillors from all and any party they could do a deal with—including East Ayrshire, Moray and Stirling where they run the councils with the Tories!

Nicola Sturgeon's promise after the general election to take the 'anti-austerity message to the heart of Westminster' might mean more if local council representatives were not determining where the axe should fall at a local level.

This was covered up big style prior to the referendum as councils where the SNP had power, deferred difficult decisions until



BOOZE BEFORE YOUS: Dundee SNP councillors refused to cut their own free booze allowance and instead axed a teaching post in a project that kept vulnerable young mothers in education

2015 and 2016. There is no doubt that councils that are managed by highly paid chief executives to run like corporate businesses, have become smarter at camouflaging cuts—it is now more common to hear about 'reviews' and waste-saving 'efficiencies', than about closure of services and job losses.

In SNP-run North Ayrshire where I worked, this was dressed up as 'change' and staff cynically urged to tackle day-to-day frustrations at lack of resources with passion, focus and inspiration!

With £18million worth of cuts over a three year period, with the loss of 200 jobs on top of 800 already axed since the bank crisis began, this is hard to swallow for both users of services and staff in North Ayrshire—an area of hopelessness and despair that has missed out on George Osborne's economic boom.

With little left to cut outside statutory services, the axe is falling on education to the most vulnerable children—speech therapy and support for additional needs for disabled youngsters.

Over in Dundee City where the SNP have overall control, the council have decided on cuts of

£3.4million. Naturally the opposition parties had ideas for other savings but there was no anti-austerity message from anyone inside the council.

In a shameful February meeting, the SNP councillors turned down a proposal to cut their own hospitality (i.e. free booze) allowance, in favour of a cost saving measure that did away with a successful senior teaching post in a project responsible for keeping vulnerable young mothers in education.

SNP cuts

Next door in Angus, the other SNP majority council voted in February for an immediate £5.6million worth of cuts (or in their language 'savings') which included the meals on wheels service to elderly people and a 'review' of the area's youth justice team who work with young offenders.

They were last year reported to be considering how to save £19million on their budget over three years with the possible loss of 700 jobs. This is the real cost of Osborne and his Bullingdon boys' austerity politics.

Whilst grand fiery speeches are made in Westminster by

very well-meaning SNP MPs, back home their councillor colleagues are implementing punitive policies that are affecting lives of the poorest people in our communities.

As I explained in the last Voice, this should be no surprise as the SNP, who are not a socialist party, are trying to face both ways at once. They latched on to a vote winning anti-austerity message at the recent general election as this proved a good formula during the referendum campaign and marked them out from all the unionist parties.

However being anti-austerity also means being anti-capitalist and that the SNP most certainly are not.

Rising SNP star and ex-Tory businesswoman Tasmina Ahmed-Sheik MP, recently told *Prospect* magazine that her party's policies were a 'mix of pro-business ideas which would be traditionally thought of as centre or centre right with a strong sense of social responsibility'—the problem is that neoliberalism leaves no space for the latter, and that is the agenda the SNP are embracing whatever many of their members and left leaning MPs might wish.

KILL THE BILL.

Stop Tory wipeout of workers' rights!

by *Richie Venton, SSP
national workplace organiser*

EVEN BEFORE the election of the Tories—by a mere 24 per cent of registered UK voters—Britain boasted the reprehensible record of having some of the most repressive anti-worker, anti-union laws in the western world. Now David Cameron and his Business Secretary, Sajid Javid, have declared a war on workers' rights that exceeds even the worst assaults the hated Maggie Thatcher dared impose.

Their Trade Union Bill—and three accompanying so-called 'consultations' designed to add an additional dose of repression to existing laws without having to pass primary legislation—are potentially the biggest threat to rights at work in at least 50 years, if not since the infamous Taff Vale Act of 1901.

United action

The latter came in the wake of powerful collective action by railway workers, but was aimed at crushing the power of all unions, by making them liable for any loss of profits caused by a strike.

It triggered a wave of strikes and the formation of what became the Labour Party, to give workers a political arm to fight with. Waves of united action won repeal of the Taff Vale Act in 1906.

Fast forward to the 1980s, where Thatcher's Tory regime imposed six major anti-union Acts. Thatcher's laws—which are intact to this day, left undisturbed by the 13 years of Labour in government—throw

up multiple obstacles to the functioning of unions as a defence force for workers.

They insist on secret postal ballots (with full media interference on behalf of the employers) prior to any industrial action, rather than the fulsome debate of workers' mass meetings and a vote on the spot. They force unions to give employers 7 days' notice of a ballot and another 7 days' notice of any industrial action arising.

They ban 'secondary' solidarity strikes, or any deemed 'political', such as against privatisation.

They include multiple legal hurdles on the wording and conduct of ballots, which employers' lawyers have crawled all over for years, winning numerous Court injunctions to outlaw democratically agreed strikes.

They make unions prey to seizure of their assets, which has made many union leaders quivering wrecks in the face of demands by members to take action when it's the only means of self-defence.

Now we witness the ultimate paradox. The failure, for decades, of the majority of union leaderships to resist and defy this legal straitjacket has weakened the movement, so the state and employers feel far less need to accommodate the unions than if they'd put up a concerted fight.

The TUC and individual unions' readiness to embrace 'social partnership' with the employers, instead of independently standing up for workers' rights and distinctive class interests, has reduced the employers' need for social partnership! They instead

feel confident in resorting to brutal, undisguised class warfare.

This new onslaught is born of a recognition that the unions—with 6.5 million members in Britain, 630,000 in Scotland alone—still represent a powerful foe as the Tories plunge the knife into benefits, jobs, services and pay... provided union leaders stop pussy-footing around with empty rhetoric and apply themselves to a coordinated plan of action to halt austerity.

The measures included in their Bill and accompanying 'consultations' are a full-frontal assault on the human and democratic rights of workers.

Breach of rights

In flagrant breach of European Court of Human Rights rulings that "only the votes cast should count", the Bill insists on a threshold of at least 50 per cent of all who are eligible to vote in any ballot. They insist on a further 40 per cent of all those eligible having to vote for the action in what is now dubbed "important public services". This adds to their original list of "essential public services"; it now includes workers in health, transport, education, fire services, border security and nuclear decommissioning and waste disposal. A pernicious added clause includes workers who are 'ancillary' to such "important public services".

For the millions thus affected, it's not enough to get a majority of the votes cast; it must also be at least 40 per cent of all the members eligible to vote, regardless of abstentions.

This ballot rigging is from a Business Secretary elected by only 38 per cent of his local electorate; a parliament with 331 MPs elected without a majority; a Cabinet whose number would be cut by half, and whose Tory MPs would drop by 270, if they'd had to win the 50 per cent and 40 per cent thresholds they're imposing on workers' unions.

The only other countries with similar outrageous barriers in ballots are Bulgaria and Romania—states not frequently quoted as a model for progress!

But these outrageous 'high hurdles' are just the start of the effrontery to the free functioning of unions.

Ballot forms will have to give "reasonably clear details of the matters in issue in the trade dispute" and "the types of industrial action" when it's not a strike (so bosses' lawyers can challenge every syllable); and "the period or periods within which action is expected to take place" (so employers can plan to undermine its effectiveness, and legally challenge it if dates change because the situation demands tactical changes—and in any case, how in hell are unions expected to know the exact dates of action well over a month beforehand?).

Instead of giving seven days' notice, 14 days' notice will now be required, to neuter the impact by giving bosses ample time to plan counter-measures. Among the options will be hiring Agency workers to do strikers' jobs, as the Tories plan to scrap the ban on that, in place since 1973—including right through Thatcher's

years! So they are arming employers with a legal minefield to stop action, and an army of vulnerable Agency workers issued the choice of 'scab or be sacked'.

If, despite all this, a strike goes ahead, new laws on picketing aim to criminalise workers with the courage to fight back. The current Code of Conduct on picketing that limits it to six will become a law, so any more would be committing a criminal offence.

Unions will be legally obliged to have a Picket Supervisor, named to the police, with a badge or other ID, always either on or near the picket line, and in possession of a letter to produce to the police "or any other person who reasonably asks".

Unions will have to inform the government of pickets and protests in advance, and "whether there will be loud-speakers, props, banners, etc"!

Contrary to the loaded language of the Tories' 'Consultation on Intimidation of Non-Striking Workers', these police-measures are not aimed at some rash of threats by pickets in the past. In fact, they set up the 2014 Carr Inquiry to try and find some evidence of this, to justify themselves, but none was found!

Orwellian outrage

It's purely to intimidate workers into not exercising the right to withdraw their labour—a right that should be enshrined in any democracy's constitution. On top of that, they are 'consulting' on a new criminal offence of 'intimidation on picket lines'.

In a further Orwellian outrage, unions will have to give 14 days' notice of intent to use social media during industrial action, and "what blogs and websites will set out", or face fines.

Local authorities are expected to use Community Protection Notices against protesters.

A raft of other measures seek to abolish the right to represent members, and are a gross invasion of the internal democracy of unions. These include govern-



THIS MEANS WAR!
Tory Business Secretary Sajid Javid has declared a war on workers' rights that exceeds even the worst assaults the hated Maggie Thatcher dared impose

ment powers to remove all union facility time in the public sector; and draconian new powers for the Trade Union Certification Officer to seize union documents, interrogate officers, demand membership registers and interfere in all manner of union decisions—a police operation to be funded by union levies!

This battery of new measures is a cataclysmic attack on the right to be in a union that is in any way effective as a collective defence of workers' rights and conditions; on the right to strike; on free speech and freedom of association.

Those union and Labour leaders who spent two years telling workers to vote against Scottish independence and wait for 'justice with Labour' have a lot to answer for. But waiting for independence is not an option either, given the scale of wipeout of workers' rights we face here and now.

Urgent, immediate action in confrontation with the Tories, combined with a clear vision of an alternative future, is the order of the day. The Tories' bogus 'consultations' end early September, followed by a second reading of the Trade Union Bill. The TUC

has promised a day of action when that debate in Westminster happens, and a demo at the Tory party conference on 4 October.

Each trade union, the STUC and TUC need to act with utmost urgency, calling meetings and forums of trade unionists to arm them with the facts; motivate them into taking action with a harsh warning of what is threatened.

They should call a genuine day of action as an opening salvo, with strikes and rallies in every region or city, appealing not only to those workers most immediately in the firing line—those in 'important public services'—but all union members, and indeed non-unionised workers and Agency staff, who face the horrendous choice of being ordered to cross picket lines to undermine fellow-workers' jobs and conditions, or lose their own job.

Such strikes would often be in defiance of existing anti-union laws, let alone the new repressive measures being grafted onto them; so be it!

Unless union leaderships have the courage to take such action, the Tories will continue

to feel emboldened in pursuing their dictatorial measures. And unless such a lead is given, workers will lack belief in the ability of the movement to defy and defeat the Tories.

On the other hand, bold united action would win widespread support and involvement from working class people not yet even in a union. They need a vehicle to resist austerity. In fighting to kill off the Bill, the trade union movement and its allies need to make two other things crystal clear: a readiness to defy the Bill's measures even if the Tories ignore opposition and implement it; and a call not only to Kill the Bill, but also to repeal the entire package of already-existing anti-union laws that these new measures are being grafted onto.

It's widespread failure by most union leaders to defy the previous 30 years of anti-union laws that has emboldened Cameron et al. In contrast, those groups of workers who have defied these laws have always won huge concessions e.g. oil refinery construction workers.

Unify workers

The battle to confront and finish off the Bill should be combined with the demand for power over employment laws to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. That will unify workers who voted Yes and No in the referendum. It points to an escape route from Tory Westminster dictatorship.

And whilst the SNP leadership have never once publicly pledged to repeal the anti-union laws—the most vicious in the western world—the unions have the potential power to pound Holyrood into travelling that road, with the demand for a Charter of Workers' Rights to be ushered in as an example to the rest of the UK and beyond.

That's what the Scottish Socialist Party has consistently fought for. That's what the 630,000-strong trade union movement in Scotland needs to take decisive action in pursuit of.

Donate to socialist 2016 finance appeal

by Jim McVicar, SSP
national treasurer

AS WE enter the autumn of 2015, the Scottish Socialist Party and many other left forces in Scotland are discussing the prospects of a left electoral alliance for the Holyrood elections.

In the weeks and months that lie ahead, the leaflets, stickers and all the campaign material that will be used, either in the name of the SSP or a new left alliance will have to be paid for.

Unlike many of the parties who will contest these elections, the SSP has no millionaire friends or backers in big business.

We need a herculean effort. This work can't be left to a handful of individuals but must involve all our supporters, members and friends who will raise the crucial pennies, from the glass jars of change on mantel pieces to the large city centre event that will attract hundreds to support our ideas.

Unelected Tories

In these days of austerity and, as far as Scotland is concerned, an unelected Tory government—with Cameron and Mundell acting like some latter day colonial governor generals in a British colonial territory—like never before, working class people in Scotland need socialist representation to stand up for them and their interests both inside and outside Holyrood.

• You can donate in the following ways:

Online: scottishsocialistparty.org/donations

By cheque/PO, payable to 'Scottish Socialist Party', to: SSP, Suite 370 Central Chambers, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD

Bank transfer: 'SSP Appeal Fund' account at Co-op

Bank, sort code 08-92-99 / account no. 65094637



In 2003, when the SSP got six MSPs elected, we introduced bills and ideas to the parliament which we take for granted, like free school meals and free prescription charges, pioneered by SSP MSPs. In the coming weeks and months, we'll be asking every SSP supporter to make a financial contribution to the party's election campaign through or national election appeal.

We will be holding national fundraising events and a national crowd funding appeal and plenty of opportunities will be there to help the party campaign financially both at local and national level.

The Scottish parliamentary elections work on a constituency and regional list basic, with eight regions elections for eight regional list MSP.

The SSP have consistently stood on the regional list

basis which puts a great responsibility on the SSP branches and membership in the regions, who not only have help to run and organise the election campaigns, but will also have to raise the money for the deposits and the financing of the campaign locally, for printing of leaflets and other campaign material for every house in the regions.

The eight regions cover all of Scotland, from the Borders to the central belt, to the north east and the Highland and Islands; a massive job for us to get our socialist message out into working class communities the length and breadth of Scotland.

Deposits

To kick off the fundraising, we need to raise £4,000—that would immediately give us the deposits for the eight regions. I am asking *Voice* readers to text '100' to 07810205747, to make a pledge to donate £100 to our deposit fund. We will get in touch with details how to pay your deposit pledge.

Active SSP branches should visit every member,

supporter and friend of the party and ask for a donations and help with fundraising events, like the recent Cambuslang branch Cuba night, Glasgow South and Clydebank's successful Northern Soul night, and the recent quiz night in Edinburgh.

Football cards and pontoon cards in the workplace are great fundraising examples; someone recently suggested a sponsored walk, and I have been challenged to a sponsored silence, which could make the party some money—but I don't know if I would get past a few minutes.

We can never match the spending of the major parties on election campaigns, so we are already way behind the starting blocks. Lack of finance for the campaign can be made up for by our socialist ideas and guile—but we still need your pounds and pennies.

If you believe we need socialist representation in Holyrood, then please make a donation. Your support is crucial, and is much appreciated by the Scottish Socialist Party.

'No space for the right' call at Hamburg LGBT celebration

by Connor Beaton

THE STREETS of Hamburg were lined with flags, stalls and thousands of revellers this month as Germany's second-largest city embraced Christopher-Street-Day (CSD), its annual celebration of LGBT pride.

This year's parade and street party smashed through the 150,000-attendee record set in 2014.

This writer wasn't the only guest from abroad; a cargo bike flying a Front de Gauche flag could be seen navigating between other marchers during the massive parade, which flooded past an impressive line of stalls on the Ballindamm to join a street party with cocktails, music and dancing.

Tourists were drawn in their thousands to the spectacle unfolding in the centre of the city.

It is not an intensely political event, though Germany's left-leaning and progressive parties were out in full force at the three-day street party to highlight their respective programmes.

Criticism of SPD

A few metres separated Die Linke's busy stall from that of the SPD, Germany's ostensibly centre-left party that governs the country in coalition with the right-wing Christian Democrats.

SPD balloons were a common sight amid the revellers, but they were not spared criticism. LGBT



activists who marched with a "Refugees Welcome" banner were scathing of the SPD's lack of support for asylum seekers, many of whom have come to Germany fleeing persecution on the grounds of sexuality or gender.

I spoke to one Die Linke activist who was dismissive of the SPD's nominally large presence, telling me that those who accepted their balloons and stickers were not heavily political, but wanted an easy and socially acceptable way of participating politically at the rally. Likewise, many of those who accepted free

packets of cannabis seeds from the Pirate Party stall further along were not all likely to cast a vote for them.

Bigotry-free spaces

Tragically, few at all stopped to speak with the Free Democratic Party (FDP), whose parliamentary rout in 2013 foreshadowed the similar electoral collapse of their British cousins, the Liberal Democrats, two months ago.

Leaflets handed out by Die Linke activists included a call for CSD to provide "no place for the right", echoing similar calls in London to provide no

platform for UKIP's LGBT wing at Pride celebrations in the British capital.

Amid continued electoral successes by right-wing and xenophobic parties—as well as Die Linke's own impressive 8.5 per cent performance in the Hamburg state election in March—the importance of spaces free of bigotry is all the more important.

Die Linke's efforts to emphasise the plight of refugees and marginalise the right at Christopher-Street-Day are brave, principled interventions that set an example to be matched in the UK and Scotland.

'The poor' increasingly labelled and demonised

by Isy Hart

I WANT to argue here that the use of the term 'the poor' can be very divisive and as such is unhelpful as, at the very least we are labelling people.

When this label is used, usually little is said as to why people are poor and generally little is spoken about what people did before they were publicly labelled 'the poor'.

This is not a single story. Often many people's (those not pigeon-holed as 'the poor') reaction to this term focuses only on this aspect of people's life which in turn then becomes the main part of how others see them and how they see themselves. That's if people ever see themselves in the group described as 'the poor'.

Terms that I have read: 'Ordinary people and poor people', 'Working people and the poor...'

We're just people

We are all just people. Labels just help to distant us from each other, for example: "The poor are those working class people - so not you, me or us then because WE are all middle class now!" (Owen Jones [2011])

'The poor' are those scroungers on benefits who don't want to work - so not you, me or us then? 'The poor' are those substance misusers - so

not you, me or us then? 'The poor' are those young single parents who have children to get benefits - so not you, me or us then? 'The poor' are those homeless people - so not you, me or us then? 'The poor' are those young people - so not you, me or us then?

The list is almost endless. I am sure you can think of your own sub-labelled groups who are in turn also further labelled 'the poor'!

Before the label, they are people: people who are unemployed because there are no jobs; people who are sick; people who are disabled; people who do not have a house because of no jobs, extortionate rents, no decent affordable housing, etc; people who are pensioners; children of the parents in the circumstances and situation mentioned above.

In other words, people who do not have enough money to live off due to circumstances beyond their control, such as too few jobs available. Or people who are in low paid, in insecure jobs, due to few secure 'living wage' jobs existing.

People who are denied the basic human right to earn enough wages and are therefore often reliant on benefits in some form or another are called 'the poor'.

People put into the category

of 'the poor' has been increasing what with the inadequate minimum wage, zero hour contracts, lack of pay rises, employment and/or Trade Union rights to name a few, so even more people are falling into poverty.

The use of this term can detract from what makes people susceptible to being less well off than other people in their world. Capitalism and its inherent inequality. Women have the double whammy of patriarchal capitalism and its inherent gender inequality. The central rule throughout though is the exploitation of all workers for profit and more recently the ideology of undisguised greed by MPs, those parasitic owners, corporations, billionaires, millionaires to name the few!

Basic needs

The argument here is that people can't meet their basic needs because of inequality and exploitation of all people plus this governments drive to destroy the life of all but those who have at least half a million quid in the bank.

Successive governments and the media have convinced many people in the fortunate position of having a half decent job and pay that they are different from 'the poor' and that they would be better off if they weren't draining the system.

They encourage the use of the term 'the poor' to support the idea of some kind of deviant behaviour out-with society's norm, therefore an issue of social control.

Like most labels, it suggests people have a choice or at best it is thought there is passive acceptance of circumstances, instead of the reality of the day-to-day struggles of people trying to find work, to overcome ill health, to buy food, to pay their way in this world.

Toryville say they will get Britain working but do nothing to achieve this. In fact they do the opposite. So people experience poverty due to government policies.

When a government so blatantly turns on their own people, it's time to be afraid because whichever group you think you are in could be the next target group!

We need to be clear that it is people who are unemployed, people who are low paid, people who are ill etc and that there but for the will of some random government decision, corporation/fat cats wanting even more money, go you, me or us.

So please, if using this label, please use the words 'the poor' sparingly and wisely. Before the labels, they are people—not a sub category of people; just people like you, me or us.

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What is the real truth behind the Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bombs?

by Bill Bonnar

ON 6 August 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later, another was dropped on Nagasaki. An estimated 130,000 people died in both events with scores of thousands dying in the weeks and months after.

Japan announced its unilateral surrender six days later. This surrender allowed a narrative to develop; a narrative which has been challenged many times over the years. Terrible that these events were, it brought a speedy end to the war and ultimately saved many more lives. The alternative would have been a protracted land war which would have inflicted even greater suffering on the Japanese people and cost the lives of thousands of American soldiers. How true is this version of events?

That the US cared for Japanese civilian lives is contradicted by events leading up to Hiroshima. The US were already engaged on a bombing campaign aimed destroying Japanese cities and inflicting maximum civilian casualties. In the summer of 1945, 68 Japanese cities were destroyed in the greatest aerial bombardment in history until then.

Firebombing Tokyo

One million people were killed or wounded and millions left homeless. This culminated in the firebombing of Tokyo which on one single night killed 100,000 people. In fact, this campaign only stopped when the Americans ran out of cities to bomb. For the USA dropping atomic bombs was simply the next step up.

Was it true that the Japanese regime refused to surrender and would fight to the bitter end? No doubt some elements took that view but there were also powerful elements that recognised that the country had been defeated and were actively pursuing a peace deal.

In fact, this appeared to have thrown the American government into panic rushing through the decision to drop the atomic bomb before such a peace deal could be developed.

The no surrender strategy also fails to take in the reality that with much of Japan's infrastructure already destroyed, it simply did not possess the means to mount a meaningful resistance. The actual reason for Hiroshima and Nagasaki was to send a message. Not to Tokyo but Moscow. The Soviet Union had emerged



PICTURING EVIL: the US 'photo plane' that accompanied Enola Gay was called 'Necessary Evil'

victorious in the war in Europe, massively increasing its influence. Communist forces were close to victory in China and Korea.

Shortly before Hiroshima, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan, inflicting a massive defeat on the Japanese army in Manchuria; a prelude to an imminent Soviet invasion of Japan itself. The US could not allow this to happen and needed to bring the war to an immediate end, leaving the US as the sole occupying force. This, rather than concerns over a ground invasion, was the immediate motivation for Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Cold War in Europe was already heating up and the American message to Moscow was clear. We have these weapons and we have now shown that we are prepared to use them. In other words, the decision to drop the atomic bombs was about the emerging Cold War with the Soviet Union and not primarily about the war in Japan.

The Soviet Union took the message on board and immediately stepped up developments of its own nuclear weapons, launching the world into an escalating nuclear arms race in which today nine countries between them possess an estimated 10,000 nuclear missiles each, immensely more powerful than those dropped on Japan.

When a defenceless civilian population is subjected to a mass military attack which kills them in their thousands, this is a war crime.

The German bombing of Britain and other European countries during the Second World War was primarily aimed at the civilian population with the aim destroying their will to resist and the capacity of their society to respond.

This was a war crime for which Nazi leaders were executed in Nuremberg after the war had ended. The Allied bombing of German cities was the same. In particular the firebombing of Dresden; an act which had little military significance but was designed to kill as many defenceless civilians as possible.

American war crimes

The American destruction of Japanese cities and the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the same. A war crime is a war crime and should be condemned as such. A few years later, the people of North Vietnam would come to vividly understand this. The commemorations in Japan highlight the need to step up our campaign to rid the world of nuclear weapons; weapons which only exist to inflict massive war crimes on defenceless civilian populations.

In Scotland, a consensus has been built up around removing the nuclear missiles on the Clyde and making a future independent Scotland nuclear-free. Such an event would have a profound impact not just in Scotland but the rest of the world. Scotland would be the first country to unilaterally give up such weapons.

Danish students launch 'Firefund' for Kobanê

by Connor Beaton

TWO DANISH students are playing a part in the reconstruction of Kobanê by setting up a new online crowdfunding platform designed to support social movements and international solidarity. Firefund, currently in a beta testing phase, promises to become an "tool for social movements" around the world.

Though the platform is not yet ready for wider use, an early campaign has been launched in conjunction with the Kobanê Reconstruction Board, seeking \$130,000 to aid the Kurdish city's reconstruction. Firefund co-founder Karl Kristiansen spoke to the *Scottish Socialist Voice* about the progress of the campaign and his motivations in working on the project.

Solidarity

Challenged as to whether the Kobanê campaign can reach its target before the self-imposed 19 August deadline, he said: "I know it's possible, because there are 40 million Kurds around the world—and even more that stand in solidarity with them."

As the *Voice* goes to print, the campaign has raised around \$16,000.

Karl admits reaching the target is now "unlikely", but says his team will keep trying in the event of failure.

He said: "The city is still in rubble. They still need



FIREFUND: developed out of frustration at apathy towards the advances of the European right

machines to remove the rubble and ruined buildings.

"They're still in the same situation if we don't reach this goal—we cannot just launch another campaign with some other project, because this is the cause that needs funding right now. We're going to evaluate what happened, see what needs to be done, and learn from the mistakes of the first campaign."

Karl explained that his interest in developing Firefund, which he co-founded alongside fellow student Mikkel Thydal, comes from a frustration with "apathy" towards the advances of the European right.

He told the *Voice*: "It's hard to see how you can fight for another society when it seems like even your closest friends

and neighbours are becoming nationalists and racists."

Denmark's main centre-right party Venstre recently formed a minority government after June elections in which the anti-immigration Danish People's Party became the second-largest force in parliament, claiming 21.1 per cent of the popular vote.

Struggles

Karl told the *Voice* that he found it "so difficult to build a movement for another society in this part of the world", adding: "Of course we want to go and join the struggles in other parts of the world—but that's not so easy."

"Two white boys from Copenhagen with no experience in these kind of

struggles would just be in the way if we tried to join in on the same terms, and it would be ethically problematic to make it our battle. So, we've been talking a lot about how we can help without fighting other people's battles.

"Now we're in the tool-making business. We want to make tools for movements that are generic, that everyone can use—and if they can be used, that's great. If not, then we'll try something else."

Karl promised Firefund will soon clarify its "political borders"—establishing "who's OK to be on this platform and who's not"—and work will continue on opening it up to other projects.

• Find out more at firefund.net