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Museum staff strike over wage inequality

by Stephanie Cuthbert

I BEGAN working as a visitor services assistant in the National Museum of Scotland in April 2014. It was my first “proper” job after completing my degree, and I was excited to be working in such a great venue. As it turned out, I was right to be excited! I now work with an amazing and diverse team of people, in a lovely building, and I get to speak to interesting people from all over the world. Who would complain about a job like that?

But the fact that I enjoy my job, and love the people I work with, makes it all the more uncomfortable that some of my colleagues get paid weekend allowance for working unsociable hours. Others, such as myself, don’t receive such an allowance. When the museum reopened in 2011, the weekend allowance was not given to the new staff. The allowance equates to between £2000-£3000 extra a



STRIKING: staff at NMS PHOTO: Craig Maclean

year—for doing exactly the same job. This kind of inequality between the wages of staff makes me determined to join my colleagues on the picket line for this seven-

day strike, and to fight for equal pay for people doing exactly the same job. In this difficult economic climate, it is all the more important to ensure that staff, many of whom have children and families to support are earning fair wages for their work.

This fact was highlighted this year, when two of our colleagues became fathers for the first time—neither of whom receive the weekend allowance. I feel it is of utmost importance to fight so these two baby girls fathers’ pay is equal to that of their friends and colleagues, when doing exactly the same unsociable hours. After all, these new dads only have one weekend out of every seven to spend with their families.

I am very pleased with all the positive messages we have received from the public, and very grateful to have such excellent and hard-working union representatives, working to help us get fair pay.

We can only hope that the strike has the positive outcome we are looking for.

SCOTTISH UNIVERSITIES Supporting Palestinian Students (SUSPS) received the personal backing of world-renowned intellectual and activist Noam Chomsky. SUSPS is a campaign supported by the Scottish Government, Scottish NUS, STUC and the UCU.

The campaign aims to help bring a postgraduate student from Palestine to Scotland to study. Scottish Socialist Party co-chair, Andrew Kinnell, who is also President of Stirling Students’ Union has been championing the campaign since taking office in June and

Noam Chomsky backs Scottish universities’ Palestine initiative

was delighted to have Noam Chomsky declare his personal support. Kinnell said:

“I knew Noam had been supportive of a similar project which took place at the University of St Andrews so I dropped him an email asking if he would endorse the SUSPS campaign; to my delight he got back in touch within 24 hours sending his backing”.

Chomsky said: “I understand that SUSPS is working to raise money to bring a Palestinian student to Scotland to study. It is a fine initiative. Palestinians have suffered bitterly and still do, and the US and UK have their inglorious share of responsibility for their plight. The SUSPS program is a way to begin to pay that debt and at the same time to help prepare a better future for the people of Palestine and the region.”

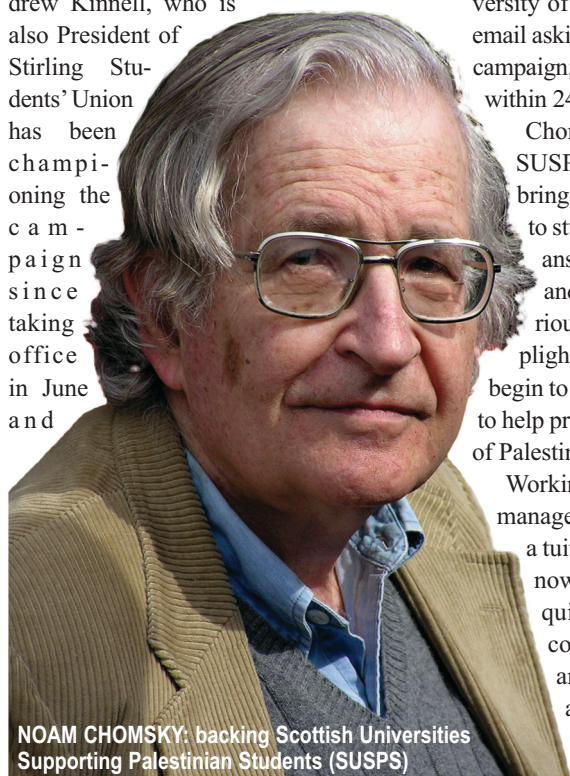
Working with Stirling UCU, Kinnell has managed to get the University to agree to a tuition fee waiver, the campaign will now focus on raising the £10,000 required to provide a scholarship to cover flights, accommodation, visa and living expenses. Kinnell added: “This is a campaign I’m passionate about and I’m hoping students will get behind. Many

of us take education for granted and the difficulties that many students in Palestine face are almost unimaginable for us here in Scotland.

“I’m delighted that the University have agreed to a fee waiver and I’m confident that we’ll raise the money to provide a scholarship. The scheme will make a huge difference to the life of one student but will also raise awareness of the plight Palestinians face in their day to day lives—particularly in regards to education”

SUSPS Convenor Elizabeth Stitt welcomed the endorsement saying: “SUSPS was founded in 2014 in recognition of the difficulties faced by Palestinian students, particularly at postgraduate level, in accessing an education. Bringing students to study in Scotland not only benefits those individuals, but also highlights the inequalities faced by talented Palestinian students who wish to fulfil their potential and whose chance to do so is thwarted because of who they are and where they live. Noam Chomsky has championed the Palestinian cause for many years and we welcome his support for the SUSPS scheme and congratulate Andrew on his initiative in approaching him.”

• SUSPS can be contacted at SUSPS2014@gmail.com



NOAM CHOMSKY: backing Scottish Universities Supporting Palestinian Students (SUSPS)

by Ken Ferguson

ONE HUNDRED years ago, as the industrial slaughter of World War One gathered pace, Rosa Luxemburg wrote her famous Junius pamphlet denouncing the imperialist blood letting and called for a socialist society as the only alternative.

Often summed up in the slogan 'Socialism or Barbarism', her message has been confirmed over the bloody century after it was published which has seen millions perish in war and millions more starved, enslaved and oppressed to feed the insatiable hunger for profit which still drives the profit system.

Indeed Luxemburg herself was to die just four years later, murdered by paramilitary thugs in the counter-revolution against working class power which followed Germany's defeat.

Today's world, just as 100 years ago, is one dominated by capitalist greed and sacrificing human need to feed the unending drive for expansion, profit and more expansion without thought of the impact on the lives of millions of people or the very existence of the planet.

Brink of suicide

We now have benefits staff being advised on how to deal with claimants driven to the brink of suicide by benefits sanctions imposed by Tory ministers. Some desperate parents are even contemplating putting their kids into care in order to ensure that they are at least fed.

And this economic war is waged by the suave toffs in Downing Street who are in reality the velvet glove covering the iron fist of greed.

Thus the ceaseless attacks on claimants as "scroungers" peddled by ministers and backed by such social pornography as Benefits Street and their many repulsive siblings.

The same forces that daily lecture us that pensions, healthcare, decent homes and secure jobs are

More than ever, the stark choice is people or profit



SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM:
100 years on,
Rosa Luxemburg's
message is as
relevant as ever

no longer "affordable" cheerfully slap each other on the back as they hand over billions to City speculators selling taxpayers shares in RBS at a massive loss as it "good for business."

Any attempt to fightback by Britain's shackled unions are met with plans for even tougher anti-union laws which all but make strikes illegal to cheers from the *Daily Mail*. But the brutal drive for profit is also international and in its most extreme form visits war and misery from Iraq through Afghanistan to Libya and Syria.

Each night the consequences are flashed across TV screens as tens of thousands risk death at sea to try and reach safety only to be met with the quasi-racist calls by establishment politicians to send them back to the living hell we have made of their countries.

Finally, the same profit driven greed trashes the Arctic looking for still more oil and menaces communities with fracking in its profit drive which has already made waste huge swathes of the planet. Far from being outdated then, faced with the national and international crisis driven by he profiteers, democratic socialist ideas—informed by both people

and planet priorities—are essential to any alternative not based of endless growth and greed.

The rise of so called Corbynmania is an indication that after decades of relentless "greed is good" propaganda, the reality is coming home to roost and has the Labour leadership desperate with fear at the possibility that their pro-capitalist project might face a challenge from the left.

Indy hostility

The fact that socialist ideas are now receiving mainstream discussion should be welcomed by all socialists. However, in our view, there remains much of the Corbyn prospectus which is problematic in the context of Scotland. First of all and most glaringly, Corbyn is hostile to independence, opposed to a second referendum, and does not appear to be across the debate about increased powers for Holyrood.

Given that the major growth on the left in Scotland has not been to the decimated Labour Party but amongst those who supported a Yes vote and were energised by the socially progressive vision developed by the mass campaign, it is certainly

difficult to see how those competing visions can be reconciled.

At heart the Corbyn campaign is a re-run of the politics centred on the idea that leaders not people change politics. It is barely credible that a Labour Party in an advanced state of political decomposition can be revived by a new leader of the same old right wing politicians.

But the launch of RISE Scotland's Left Alliance which aims to harness the energy generated by the mass independence campaign offers a real prospect of building a movement based on democracy which can open the way to real change in Scottish politics. Both the *Voice* and the SSP are fully involved with RISE and bring to the alliance years of campaigning and policy making experience, and will be working all out to make it a success.

Despite the dominance of the SNP, and allowing for the near extinction of Labour, there is clearly an audience and a potential electorate for a pro-independence, socialist politics which, according to one recent poll, reflects the view of 15 per cent of Scottish voters. RISE can mount that challenge.



PHOTO: Craig Maclean

We need to be a nation of immigrants

by Sandra Webster, SSP national co-spokesperson

RIGHT WINGERS choose their targets carefully. Along with those out of work and the disabled, those who come to our country in search of work and a future are easy scapegoats for the right.

The lessons of history show that fascism on the march leaves a dark shadow. Unfortunately this xenophobia is not limited to the history books; the economic time is right and we have a Tory majority who need someone to blame.

All of us have been shocked by the news reports from Calais of people desperate to enter Britain. They have become dehumanised.

Glimpses of news stories which people tut at and then put out of their minds. David Cameron has described these people as “hordes”. It is reported he did not want to use “swarms” as it has biblical links.

The important thing is to remember that these are people, individuals, parents, partners, children and loved ones.

Though it was a while ago, one of the strengths of the Yes campaign was its support of how immigration was essential to Scotland. I was privileged to participate and listen to many speakers, most of whom emphasised that Scotland is a nation of immigrants.

For myself and many other Scottish families, we are the grandchildren of economic migrants who came from Ireland looking for work. In Lochee in Dundee, there was an area of poor housing called locally “Tipperary”. I was told this by my dad as he showed me pictures of his grandparents.

I can still recall the grainy black and white picture of my great grandmother and her aunt wearing shawls. Their faces caught in a moment which has passed through history. There was a time when it

was acceptable to post signs which read ‘No Blacks, No Irish’—explicit racism. Racism is institutional.

It has always been here; the subject of many a *Daily Mail* article. The left have challenged this. I feel proud to be part of a movement which challenges racism and shouts out loud about it wherever we find it. May this always continue; may we always call out the shame of those who pass on hatred.

With a government, though, who seem unashamed of their racist comments, we will have to continue to make a stand.

Let’s be honest, the government’s comments are more than racism.

The people they attack are portrayed as choosing to come here to sponge off our benefits, take from the NHS—no mention of the hard work carried out by those who come to our country to work and contribute to our tax system, and make us a stronger and more di-

verse society. Britain does not export immigrants, instead we have ‘ex-pats’, some of whom create their little piece of Britain in other countries.

Do we condemn these people for not speaking the languages of the nations they live in? An example of the hypocrisy of the right, of which there are many.

Immigration has shaped Scotland, made us more diverse. We should welcome all those who wish to come here. We should criticise the government rhetoric as another example of their divide-and-conquer narrative.

I, like you, am proud to belong to belong to a nation of immigrants. I am proud to be the great granddaughter of economic conscripts.

Our role as socialists is to empower people and give them a voice.

I know that as a movement, this is at the heart of all we believe in, and should always be.

by John McAllion,
former Labour MP and
MSP, now an SSP member

ANY OBSERVER of the current panic enveloping the Labour establishment at the prospect of Jeremy Corbyn becoming the next Leader of Her Majesty's official opposition would need a heart of stone not to laugh.

Former Labour leaders Neil Kinnock and Gordon Brown, who between them never won a general election, have the temerity to brand the only socialist standing in this election as "unelectable". The party machine that engineered an internal democratic revolution via one-member-one-vote and the new £3 supporter membership, has now unleashed a purge of the new members it intended to attract into the party.

Two of the rising stars of the PLP, Chuka Umunna and Tristram Hunt, have even set up "Labour for the Common Good", a new organisation widely seen as a platform for a possible SDP-style breakaway in the event of a Corbyn victory.

As one commentator wrote, the chaotic leadership election has made Labour "the laughing stock of the Edinburgh fringe."

Except that no one is laughing at Jeremy Corbyn.

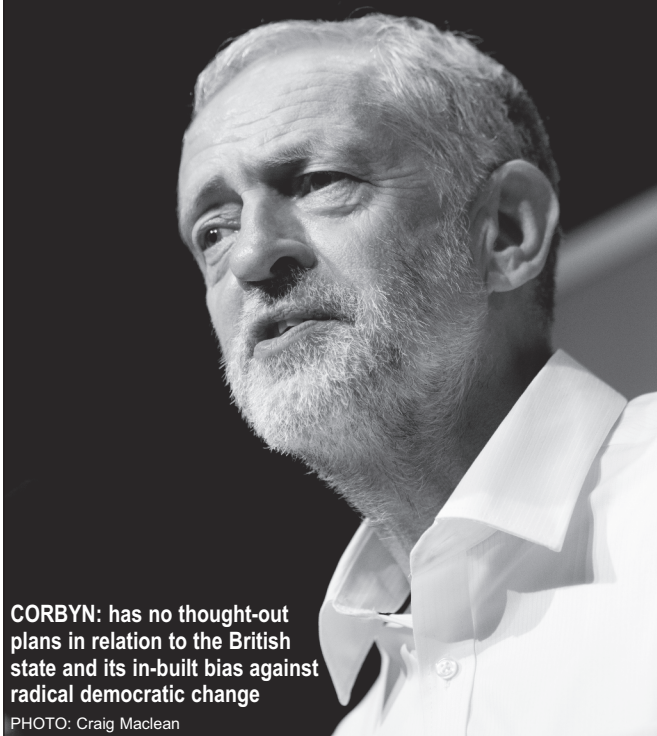
Anti-austerity

Two thousand supporters packed out halls during his 36-hour tour of Scotland's main cities. The surge in Labour membership, north and south of the border, is in large part a response to his unrelenting anti-austerity political message.

Jeremy Corbyn is a genuine socialist and, if elected, will be to the left of any Labour leader since 1945. Already his supporters, like Communist Party general secretary Rob Griffiths, are claiming he represents the potential for a united cross-border campaign for a federal and socialist Britain.

Certainly his policy platform has much that the Scottish left

Winning Labour's leadership could be the easy bit for Jeremy Corbyn



CORBYN: has no thought-out plans in relation to the British state and its in-built bias against radical democratic change

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

could commend. Bringing the railways and energy companies back into public ownership is both popular and achievable.

No renewal of Trident and a rejection of illegal wars is the common sense of Scottish politics.

A National Investment Bank linked to people's quantitative easing is a positive and mainstream alternative to Tory austerity. Support for strong trade unions and opposition to the latest Tory legislative attack on them is a given across the left. Politically, Corbyn and the Scottish left have much in common.

Yet, as even his own supporters acknowledge, Jeremy knows nothing about Scottish politics. His voice was silent throughout the entire referendum campaign. His only reference to Scottish independence during his whirlwind visit north of the border was to say that he didn't think there should be another referendum anytime soon. As for devolution, the Scottish Parliament should

get on with using the powers it already has to oppose Tory austerity. Jeremy has never given any serious thought to Scotland's future relationship with the rest of the UK and it shows.

Just as importantly, he appears to have no thought-out plans in relation to the British state and its in-built bias against radical democratic change. A republican himself, he has made it clear that he has no plans to challenge or change the powers and role of the unelected monarchy. He continues to support the first-past-the-post electoral system that is the basis of a Tory-Labour duopoly that has successfully kept British politics anchored in centre-right politics since 1979.

The Tory Government will now use the opportunity of being in office on its own to introduce boundary changes in England which will make it easier for them and harder for Labour to win the next general election in 2020. The packed

halls and the tens of thousands of new members and supporters are testament to the fact that there is genuine grassroots support for the kind of policies that Jeremy espouses. He is likely to win around 50 per cent of the first ballots of the 600,000 plus who are entitled to vote.

That will still leave him more than 11 million votes short of what the Tories polled earlier this year. Winning the party leadership is the easy part. Keeping his party and his policies intact under the fierce assault that will inevitably be unleashed by a hostile British establishment is where the real struggle will begin.

In that struggle he is unlikely to have the support or backing of his own parliamentary party. Already, his own voting record has become an issue. He defied the Labour whip on 238 occasions when Labour was in power.

'Common Good'

The Labour MP Mike Gapes has promised to show him "as much loyalty as he showed other leaders." He will not be alone. Yvette Cooper, Liz Kendall and Chuka Umunna among others have all signalled they will not serve under him. Expect to hear a lot more from "Labour for the Common Good" in the years ahead.

The Tory press and pro-establishment broadcast media will give these moderate "rebels" their enthusiastic support. General and admirals will be wheeled out to warn against the disarming of our defences. Former Prime Ministers and Chancellors will be unearthed to predict the end of British civilisation. Business leaders will foretell of economic collapse. Project Fear, honed during the independence referendum, will ride again.

The idea of a federal and socialist Britain that inspires Jeremy and his supporters fails to take account of the actual British state that exists precisely to prevent that kind of Britain ever being realised.

Energy of mass independence campaign creates need for RISE

by Jonathon Shafi

WE LIVE in a historical moment marked by deep and profound ideological and social flux. If you are unconvinced by this, just think back ten years from now: Tony Blair had just won a third term, Gordon Brown was stating boom and bust was over and Jack McConnell was First Minister of a Labour-Lib Dem administration in Scotland.

A decade ago Alex Salmond had just taken over for a second time an SNP that looked as far away from its goal of independence as ever, and Jeremy Corbyn was speaking at Stop the War rallies about the UK-US annihilation of Fallujah in Iraq, as far away from power in the Labour party as ever.

In that time, all the old certainties of British politics have disappeared under the weight of multiple, intertwining crisis, some that have been festering for years, and some that came with a bang: the economic crash and the austerity agenda, the legacy of the Iraq war, the growing mistrust in the establishment, the decline of newspaper readership and the rise of social media, the unprecedented growth in inequality and the economic disparity between London and the rest of the country.

The political manifestation of this in recent times in Scotland was of course the referendum. All of the contradictions of our time were centred on that constitutional vote, and those crucial years gave voice in coherent fashion to the underlying injustices that people feel about modern capitalism.

Surge in far left attitudes

That is why it is not surprising that recent statistics show a surge in attitudes described as being on the far left of the spectrum in Scotland. The findings, uncovered by Stirling University political scientist Craig McAngus, found that whereas one in ten people in the rest of UK place themselves on the radical left, that number is one in seven north of the border. This means that the intellectual case for the ideas of the radical left penetrating mainstream politics as they did during the referendum, also has a clear social base at the ballot box.

Comparing the election results of radical left parties across Europe over the past decade, Scotland had a lot of catching up to

do with countries like Spain and Greece, but also Holland and Germany, where the radical left's base has become a substantial parliamentary force in that time.

But it is undoubted that given the experience of the referendum and the social forces involved that the left has a big chance to develop in the same way as the various manifestations of progressives left wing vehicles have emerged in Europe. Each of these have their own problems and contradictions which especially come to the fore upon taking power. We need to learn from those mistakes, but the basic idea of the left—that society should be run by and for people not profit—is as important now as it has ever been.



In Scotland, the SNP has emerged from the referendum with by far the most political capital. But spanning such a broad swathe of Scottish society has its own complications—can a party committed to big business also contain the support of socialists for a long period of time? The other factor in the strength of SNP hegemony—a recent poll put the party on 62 per cent for the constituency vote in 2016—is that it could open up space for ‘second vote’ tactical voting—if the SNP win every constituency seat in Glasgow, voting for them on the list is worth one-eleventh of using your second vote on another pro-independence party, such is the nature of our additional member system.

And then we have the Corbyn factor. Whereas in England Corbyn is breathing new life into social democracy, his appear-

ance in Scotland was marked by two contradictions. The first is that he has nothing in common with Kezia Dugdale, or much of the broader leadership of Scottish Labour.

Her volte face on previous comments, where she said Corbyn could leave Labour ‘carping on the sidelines’, fooled no one. There is no place for a living Corbynism, working hand in hand with a diverse social movement of the left, in Scottish Labour.

Secondly, Corbyn's speeches also showed that despite tapping into the mood of much of working class England, he was out of touch on the changing face of politics in Scotland by opposing a future referendum on independence and ending any lingering hopes in a new ILP-style home rule politics for Labour in Scotland. That said, the Corbyn phenomenon is energising an ideological debate in a similar way to the referendum. It is claimed the Tories would love nothing more than to have a Corbyn opposition.

Political home

But this fails to understand British conservatism as a hegemonic project. The Tories prefer a right wing Labour Party because the political atmosphere this generates allows them to deploy measures that go even further to the right. Additionally, it allows the Tories to create a split between Labour and its social base.

The independence movement and the Corbyn surge both challenge this strategy and are expressions of mass movements of people searching to find political representation. That is why the same forces that clamped down on independence are turning their attention to Corbyn. The reality is those inspired by Corbyn's electric campaign don't have an obvious political home in Scotland. Many of those people will also have been inspired by the independence movement and grassroots initiatives like the Radical Independence Campaign.

They will make up the one in seven of the radical left in McAngus's findings. The work of developing a political home for the diverse social movements of the radical left, born from the referendum, moves into action with the launch of RISE—Scotland's Left Alliance. This comes on the back of dozens of Democracy Now policy forums that have been taking place all over Scotland.

You too can be part of this exciting process by joining and shaping RISE.

by Jim Sillars

TO KNOW why the Scottish Parliament, after the 2016 election, must command a majority for a second independence mandate, look not only at the present but at the 2020 Westminster election and the certainty of another Tory government able to go further in dismantling the welfare state, intensifying attacks on the working class, shackling the trade unions and hammering the poor, whose crime is to be poor.

With their majority in the present Parliament, the Tories plan to guarantee they will win the 2020 election, by legislating to reduce the number of MPs from 650 to 600 in the next one, and bringing in boundary redistribution by 2018, all calculated to give them an extra 20-25 seats.

No matter who wins the leadership vote, Labour cannot overcome that handicap.

We are not contemplating a few more years of a Tory government Scotland despises but one that will last until 2025, and probably beyond that.

Tory nightmare

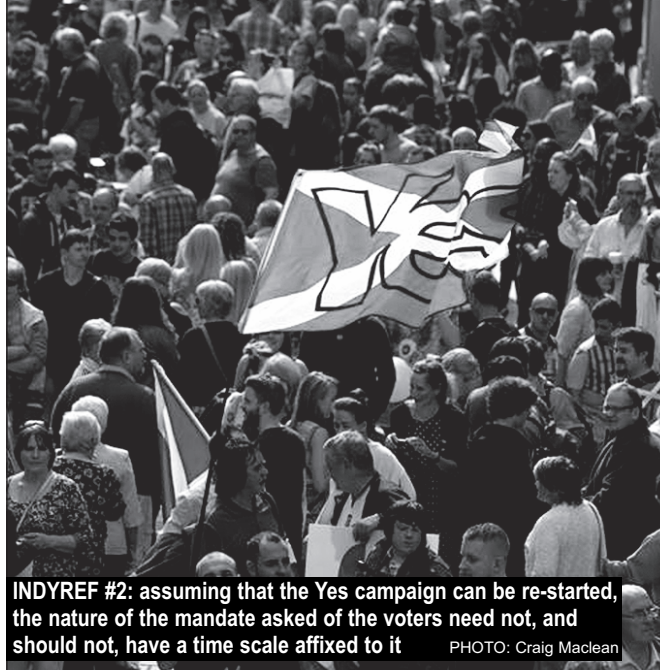
As that political nightmare descends on Scotland, with austerity forced on the Scottish Parliament, there will be no escape to independence without a mandate for a referendum.

Whatever emerges from any review of the Scotland Bill, there is one incontrovertible fact: a big chunk of the Holyrood Parliament's budget will still come from Westminster, and that will be cut.

The idea that limited Income Tax powers can be used to make up that shortfall is risible. Scotland is a low income country, with far too narrow an income tax base to be able to generate the cash needed to substitute for bloc grant cuts. The next Scottish Parliament faces the agony of not whether to cut but what to cut.

There is little being said now about the consequences of the

Holyrood 2016 needs mandate for second indyref



“The SNP argument, that a referendum will be held only when the Scottish people want one, is either a piece of sophistry or the product of muddled thinking...”

Scotland Bill and the financial constraints imposed by a Tory government austerity regime of substantial cuts in public services but that is the reality all MSPs will face as they take their seats after the 2016 election.

If there is no mandate for a second referendum, what is to be done? Yell, scream, denounce the Tory government, demonstrate, march? Might as well wring our hands at home because without that mandate, we in Scotland will have no power to change our circumstances, and the Tories will know it, and ignore us.

Opponents of seeking the mandate in 2016 say we would

lose an early referendum. They are right. The reason they are right is the old ‘cart before the horse’ example. No one wins an independence referendum without first engaging in a successful nationwide independence campaign. That is the ‘horse,’ the ‘cart’ is the referendum.

There is no such campaign now. What exists are arguments about devolution, and how much the Scotland Bill differs from the Smith Commission. Scottish political thinking and energy has been cleverly diverted down a dead end.

It is imperative to get back on the independence track. The SNP argument, that a referendum will

be held only when the Scottish people want one, is either a piece of sophistry or the product of muddled thinking.

For the people to give a mandate, a political party, or a group of parties, have to ask for it from the electorate. There is no other way the people can decide on the issue. No ask, no mandate, no matter what the opinion polls may say over the next four years.

Assuming that the Yes campaign can be re-started, the nature of the mandate asked of the voters need not, and should not, have a time scale affixed to it.

If we turn our minds back to the SNP manifesto four years ago, there was no time given for the referendum; the timing came from a statement by Alex Salmond in a debate. In the Parliament previous to that, again there was no time given, and it never happened because the SNP did not have the necessary majority to hold one.

Gross inequality

So, in practice, a manifesto that seeks the principle of a referendum but not the timing is not new. The important thing is that it enables those holding that mandate to judge when and if to use it. When and if will depend on the success of an independence campaign, which must precede everything else.

What I suggest is a manifesto statement along the lines of “It is our view that only a Scottish Government invested with the range of powers that come with independence, can our nation’s abundant resources be used to end austerity by rebuilding our economy, ensure a fair distribution of wealth, and bring an end to gross inequality in our society.

“We therefore ask the people for a mandate to hold a referendum when, and only if, events and circumstances are right for such a mandate to be exercised.”

That would give us the power, following a successful independence campaign, to choose our moment sure of victory.

Socialists clear on case for transformative local tax reform

by Calum Martin

THE RECENT Local Tax Commission seems to have created a dilemma for some. The responses evidences submitted to the commission produced some interesting results. It found that overwhelmingly people agree that the Council Tax is fundamentally regressive; overwhelmingly, people wish to see it scrapped; overwhelmingly people want to see it replaced with a fairer and more appropriate local tax model.

Where then, you might be asking, is the dilemma? Surely the Commission's findings have displayed there is a clear consensus for progressive change?

The dilemma in question is an uncomfortable problem facing both Scottish Labour and the SNP. On the one hand, they both seek to be seen as radically progressive parties. On the other hand their economic policies reflect little more than, as leading economists Jim and Margaret Cuthbert once described the SNP's policies, "neoliberalism with a heart". Neither of them have shown any particular preparedness to tackle the iniquity of the economic status

quo, other than to blame the other for things not being fairer. In government their resistance to tax models which require the rich to pay their fair share has been visible. It's hardly surprising then that much of their commentary on the question has been to argue that Tax reform is 'too complex' or 'too complicated' to deliver.

The truth is though, this question would only look too complex or too complicated if you don't have your priorities clear.

Scottish Service Tax

Our priorities however are clear. We are entirely committed to the cause of building an equal society, one where Social Justice is a reality and not just a buzzword. For us then, there is no conflict of interest.

For us, people come before profit. The millions before the millionaires. The Council Tax must go. In its place we believe the case is clear for the Scottish Service Tax. A clear and costed local tax designed specifically to redistribute wealth from the richest to the rest of us.

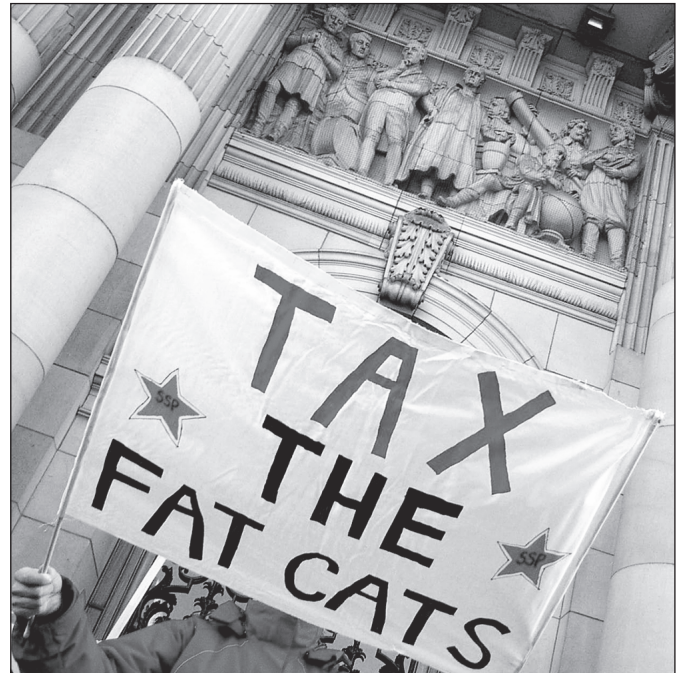
The provisions of the Scottish Service Tax are both simple and effective [see table].

Scottish Service Tax explained:

Unlike the Council Tax, with the Scottish Service Tax the bill is based upon ability to pay, and taxes incomes through six bandings which apply at higher rates as incomes rise. These bandings are carefully calibrated across income ranges at a fair and balanced rate:

The first £0-£10,000 would go tax free
Income between £10,000 and £30,000 would be taxed at 4.5 per cent
Income between £30,000 and £40,000 would be taxed at 15 per cent
Income between £40,000 and £50,000 would be taxed at 18 per cent
Income between £50,000 and £90,000 would be taxed at 21 per cent
Income above £90,000 would be taxed at 23 per cent

For example, with an income of £25,000 a year, the first £10,000 would be under Band 1, so you would pay no tax on that. The following £15,000 would be under Band 2, giving you a total bill of £675 each year. This bill is around a third of what might be expected under current Council Tax rates.



IT'S ONLY FAIR: let's make the rich pay their share PHOTO: Simon Whittle

Under these provisions approximately 77 per cent of households in Scotland would find their local tax bills fall.

By introducing the Scottish Service Tax as the new model of local taxation, Holyrood could pro-actively use the principles of progressive taxation to redistribute Scotland's immense wealth. The Scottish Service Tax was designed for this exact purpose in 2003 by eminent economists Geoff Whittam and Mike Danson.

Since then the SSP has continued to champion this potentially transformative tax model. When the Local Tax Commission opened its call for evidence, the SSP submitted the case in full for the Scottish Service Tax. There is widespread support for the policy through much of the progressive movement in Scotland. The Common Weal group within their submission to the Commission included a section supporting the Service Tax, lending their voice to argue that it "would reduce inequality by shifting responsibility for local

services and infrastructure to those most able to pay".

The case then should be clear. The Local Tax Commission has brought the question of replacing the Council Tax once more to the fore of Scottish politics. Holyrood has all the powers needed to resoundingly answer this.

Taking a stand

It is crucial we ensure that the neoliberal parties so dominant at Holyrood cannot be allowed to simply try to kick this question into the long grass and hope we all forget about it. Let's make sure then that they can't just hope we'll forget the issue.

Let's make sure that we can get a voice back in Holyrood next year to remind them that creating a socially just society is about more than buzzwords and media spin. It means being prepared to take a stand to put the millions before the millionaires. If that's "too complicated" for them to do, then perhaps it's our turn to be clear again—if they won't do it, we will.

by Jack Ferguson

Citizen's Income right policy to unify reds and greens

TO MANY people in places as diverse as Switzerland, Finland, the Dutch city of Utrecht and the Canadian province of Alberta, a Universal Basic Income (UBI) is an idea whose time has come. UBI, or Citizen's Income, is the radical idea that everyone should have the right to the basics they need to survive, whether or not they are in paid employment.

In contrast to the patchwork of (ever diminishing) benefits payments that are given to certain groups today, it would award everyone a guaranteed payment to meet their needs, with any other income earned coming on top of this baseline. It seems like an impossible dream, and yet it has in fact been implemented successfully several times.

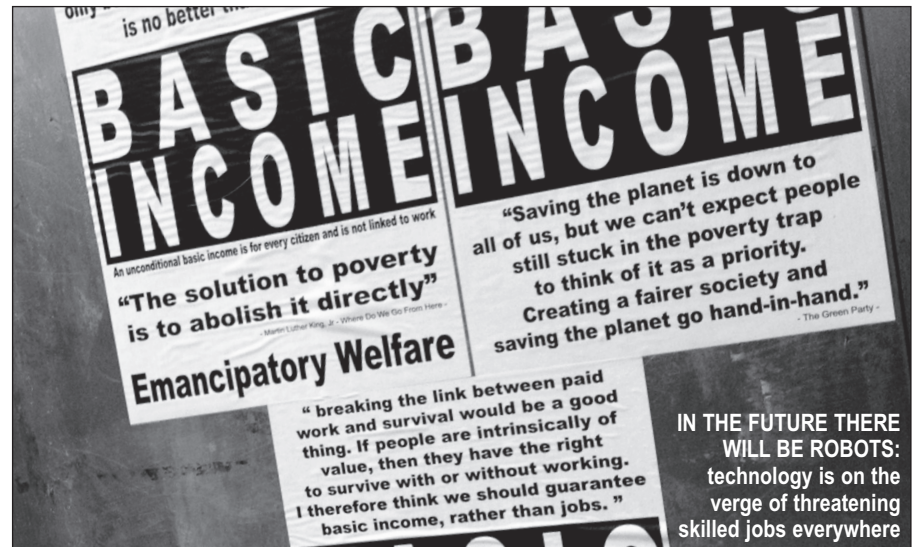
Now, with the launch of RISE and the most significant realignment of the left in a generation taking place in Scotland, it's time to put the plan firmly on the Scottish agenda. Probably the most well known experiment with UBI took place in the '70s in the Canadian town of Dauphin, where families were given a regular minimum cash payment. The results show that people reduced their work slightly, though most still wanted to be economically active.

The people who cut back on work the most were new parents spending time with their babies, and teenagers focusing on school and no longer required to be assistant breadwinners. Individual tales of people whose lives were changed abound, such as a woman who was able to quit working as a waitress and is now a successful professional artist. Then there's the fact that hospital visits dropped dramatically, as did mental health problems, work related injuries, car accidents and even domestic abuse.

Political consensus

Now the Dutch city of Utrecht has announced it is to undertake a similar experiment, although this will be limited to current recipients of welfare as a pilot. In Finland, there is a growing political consensus behind UBI, which is supported by both the right and now the left. This follows the decision of Social Democrats and trade unionists to drop opposition, believing that UBI is the right way to respond to changes in employment, and that the labour movement must be part of the fight to implement the plan in a progressive way. Mayors of the Canadian cities of Calgary and Edmonton are also hoping to push a pilot through Alberta province.

Since the Great Financial Crisis began in 2008, both the left and the unions in the UK have had the limited response that the government should spend money, and employ



more people to do socially necessary work. This is similar to the New Deal works programme in the 1930s US, and is known as Keynesianism which advocates “priming the pump” like this to save capitalism.

The problem today is that technology is on the verge of threatening skilled jobs everywhere. Very soon, workers in the wealthy world face not being undercut by their Chinese counterparts, but by robots.

The advances in self-driving cars should give many in the US pause, where over half the states list “truck driver” as the most common job. But artificial intelligence is now advancing to a point that it threatens even skilled managerial and intellectual jobs. So while a massive programme of public works is clearly needed, it won't be enough to keep everyone in society out of the food bank.

But what if this was not a threat, but an opportunity? What if we saw the growth of machines as a chance to liberate humans from the necessity of drudgery? With a basic income, as the residents of Dauphin found, everyone gets a little part of the luck extended to the children of the privileged – the chance to take time off work, focus on your family, yourself and your community, develop new skills, become politically active or an artist.

The liberated potential of all the people chained behind desks and fast food counters doing what David Graeber has memorably called “bullshit jobs” is thrilling. It would also be radically better for the environment if people were only able to undertake work that was actually needed, and wouldn't work in dangerous, destructive industries

negating the conflict between environmentalists and the unemployed.

Politically, the time is right to fight for this in Scotland, and for UBI to form the centrepiece of RISE's welfare policy. Welfare “reform”, despite the mass misery, premature deaths, and suicides it has trailed in its wake, is tragically one of the Tories more popular policies with much of the public.

We have been dragged back to Victorian debates about the deserving and undeserving poor. Rather than agreeing to fight on Tory terms about which groups are most needy, we should flip the whole argument, and demand that everybody deserve the essentials of life.

Major social progress

Meanwhile, UBI has for decades been the flagship policy of the Greens. In my view, the left unity achieved by RISE is an essential first step towards major social progress in Scotland. When we look to the longer term past this coming election however, I would argue that left-green unity is the essential next step.

Both sides are anti-capitalist, even if they differ on details, and both recognise the existential threat that our current economic model poses to human survival. Unity would mean hard work and compromise. As a concrete first step, I propose that RISE left greens come up with a detailed joint-proposal demanding the full devolution of welfare powers, in order to implement a high basic income. Joint campaigning for a worthwhile goal would present opportunities to build relationships and trust towards greater future co-operation, an approach which is already bearing fruit for socialists.

by Bill Bonnar

What next after Greek left splits?

BEFORE THE Scottish Socialist Party was the Scottish Socialist Alliance; a broad based socialist movement aiming to unite a range of organisations and individuals into a new left alliance. It was based on a simple and ultimately naive idea called the 80/20 rule; if the left could agree on 80 per cent of policies why let the remaining 20 per cent get in the way of unity?

Naive because it depended on what the 20 per cent actually was. If it were something like housing policy we could all probably live with the division but what if it were something more fundamental like independence. One is either for independence or against it. To have these two positions existing within the same party would create irreconcilable divisions and probably destroy the party.

Something similar has happened in Greece with Syriza. What started as a successful and broad based anti-austerity movement has had to deal with an irreconcilable difference leading to an inevitable split in the party. As stated Syriza were formed as an anti-austerity party and were elected to government earlier this year on a platform of rejection of the kind of draconian austerity measures which have been inflicted on Greek people over recent years.

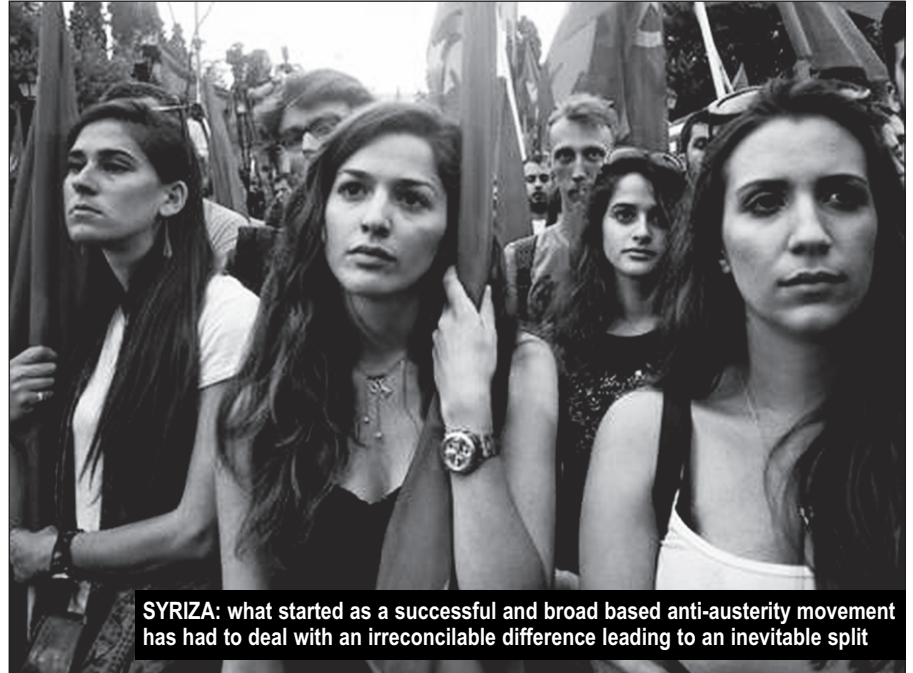
After tough negotiations the government called a referendum which overwhelmingly rejected austerity seemingly strengthening the governments negotiating hand. But further talks ended with what looked like a complete capitulation by Syriza and the acceptance of even more stringent measures.

Why did Syriza capitulate?

This has led to a split in the movement and the launch by the left of Syriza of Popular Unity; a new movement committed to maintaining the struggle against austerity. The split was inevitable when it became clear that a significant number of Syriza MPs refused to vote for the package, leaving Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras dependent on the votes of right wing MPs to get the proposals through parliament.

Why did Syriza capitulate? They would argue that they simply had no choice. The country was facing immediate bankruptcy with the imminent collapse of the banking system. Agreeing the new bailout deal was the least of two bad options because it would stabilise the country in the short term and buy the government time.

This view has been strongly rejected by opponents within the party who believed that the government should have rejected the proposals and fought on with the support of the



SYRIZA: what started as a successful and broad based anti-austerity movement has had to deal with an irreconcilable difference leading to an inevitable split

people as expressed through the referendum. Whatever the validity the government's position it seems strange in the extreme that they appeared to have had no plan B in case the negotiations failed. That failure to come up with an alternative meant that capitulation was inevitable. It should be remembered that despite the radical rhetoric Syriza are essentially a coalition of socialists and far from radical social democrats; the latter moving to Syriza from the wreckage of the old PASOK party. It is these more 'responsible' voices which have come to the fore in recent times.

With the departure of much of the left Syriza is now likely to occupy that space vacated by PASOK and simply become another social democratic party. For the left a major regrouping is underway. How strong it is with the electorate and within existing Syriza will become clearer after elections due to be held in September. What cannot be ruled out after September would be the emergence of a National Government made up of an informal alliance between Syriza and the current right wing opposition with the left providing a vibrant opposition.

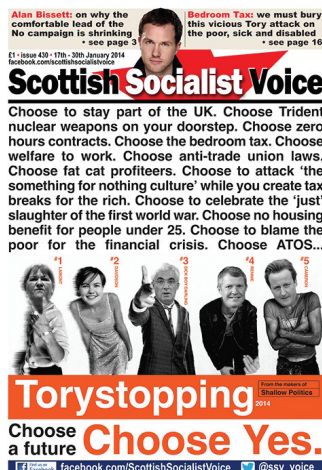
As always the outcome will be determined by the balance of forces in the country, the impact of the latest round of austerity meas-

ures and what happens to the Greek economy. So far the signs are not good. As opponents of the latest austerity package have argued this package does not resolve the fundamental issues; merely buys the country some time until the next negotiated bailout.

Socialism or defeat

Whatever happens, it is difficult to see the centre ground holding. The proposals by the Troika of the European Central Bank, European Commission and International Monetary Fund have no strategy other than never ending austerity; something accepted by the right and now, seemingly, Syriza. Their problem is with the Greek people themselves. What if they simply refuse to accept more austerity? The government would have no choice but to impose its programme by force.

The alternative would be a radical emergency restructuring of the Greek economy including the introduction of capital and trade controls, the nationalisation of the banking system and other radical measures. Measures which tackle the crisis by tackling capitalism itself. As one leading socialist commentator said, the choice is now between a catastrophic defeat for the working class or socialism.



We're Scotland's socialist newspaper

by Ken Ferguson, editor,
Scottish Socialist Voice

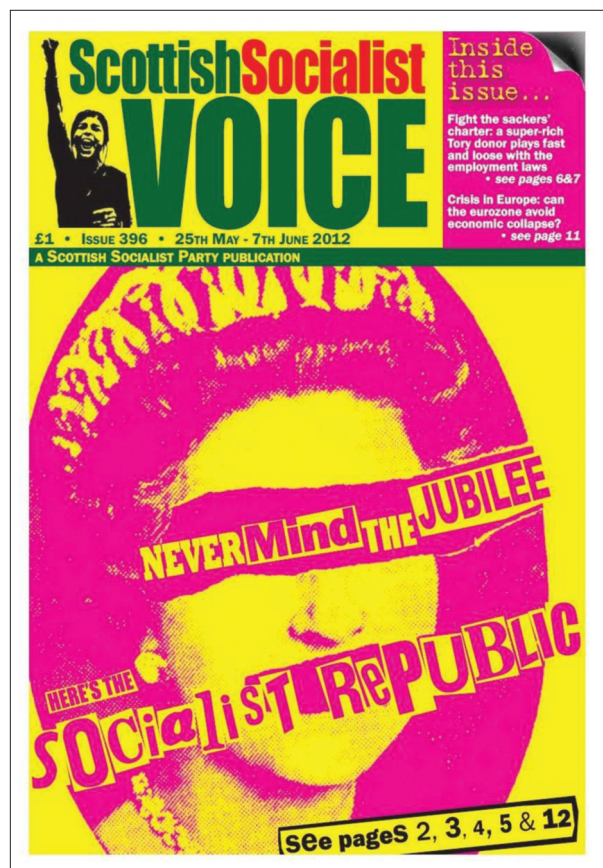
I HOPE you enjoyed reading the latest edition of the only socialist paper written, edited and produced in Scotland.

Since our launch in 1996, we have aimed to inform and mobilise readers on a wide range of progressive issues from the anti-war struggle, challenging poverty, supporting communities and workers fighting against austerity and campaigning for union rights.

During the referendum, we supported both the Yes campaign and devoted space and coverage to the diverse, mass citizens movement which was central to the campaign. We are the fortnightly

paper of the Scottish Socialist Party but as you will see from this issue, we open our pages to and carry articles from a broad spectrum of the broad Scottish left and progressive movement, many of whom are not SSP members.

Among those who have written for us are Alan Bissett, Pat Kane, Maggie Chapman, Jim Sillars and Isobel Lindsay and our pages aim to reflect the diversity of the viewpoints which drove the mass indy campaign and now needs to be brought to bear to break with neoliberal austerity opening the way to a Scotland putting people before profit. I hope you agree with this aim and invite you become regular Voice reader.



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Scotland's Left Alliance launches socialist challenge for Holyrood

by Colin Fox,
SSP national co-spokesperson

I SPENT this week on the picket line. Two hundred staff at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh have been on strike over management plans to cut their wages by £46 per week.

PCS members face losing a weekend shift allowance worth £2,300 after management claimed the SNP government at Holyrood had cut their budget by £2million. Almost 200 men and women, who can ill afford it, face losing 15 per cent of their income. Management insist the allowance is no longer appropriate when so many other people routinely work weekends.

The strike is important for many reasons, not least because strikes themselves are so rare nowadays. It is a sign that some people at least are prepared to resist management attacks on their pay and conditions.

It is to be hoped that it encourages others to stand up for themselves. But it is also important because the SNP say they are against austerity and yet make cuts at every level of government.

'Better than Labour'?

They say they are against privatisation but have sold off Edinburgh's Sick Kids hospital and may also sell off Caledonian MacBrayne Ferries. They promised to replace the Council Tax with an income based alternative ten years ago and have done no such thing. They claim to oppose fracking, yet provide blank cheques to frackers like INEOS.

They have presided over the deterioration in further education provision in Scotland. They have failed to arrest widening inequalities despite having significant extra funds and powers at their disposal at Holyrood. The conclusion that 'at least they are better than Labour' is no longer enough in times like these.

Fortunately for working people in Scotland, not everyone has been convinced by the SNP. This weekend sees the launch of RISE Scotland's Left Alliance at the Marriott Hotel in Glasgow. It is the most important left unity project in Scotland for a genera-



tion. It aims to strengthen and promote left wing ideas and improve their effectiveness by bringing together activists much as the Scottish Socialist Alliance did in 1998.

Who is in it? As well as the Scottish Socialist Party, it involves many individual members of the Radical Independence Campaign and the wider Yes movement. Those involved recognised we have many views and aims in common. The Scottish Socialist Party is part of this new alliance and very much its main component. We look forward to working with others to tap into the huge potential we believe there is for progressive campaigns and left wing ideas.

In pooling our resources and talents, we intend to offer a pro-independence left alternative to the SNP—a party full of contradictions.

RISE will be launched against the background of apparent SNP ascendancy and Corbynmania. And talking of contradictions, those exposed by the fleeting fad of Corbynmania offer perhaps the most extraordinary of all.

Whilst Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour leader will be astonishing if it happens, the right wing remain in complete control of the party. Labour's 'existential crisis' will deepen whether Corbyn wins or not.

They simply do not know what they stand for anymore and the gulf between Corbyn and the other three candidates simply illustrates how little they have in common.

But since Jeremy Corbyn does not support independence, or further powers for Holy-

rood, or a second referendum, he offers little to hold progressive left opinion in Scotland.

Both these issues—of the SNP's apparent hegemony and Corbynmania—will be discussed in detail this weekend. But posing a left alternative to the SNP is central to our strategy.

More significantly, Scotland's new left alliance will be launched amid another stock market crash. With a slowdown in the world economy now imminent, Scotland will not escape its consequences. Exports will suffer and jobs will be lost with pay and conditions generally forced down further by neoliberal market forces.

SNP ambiguity

The SSP want the left to present its strongest possible challenge in next year's Holyrood elections and get some MSPs elected. SSP members already play a significant role in it and this will be clear both on Saturday and in the crucial months to come, as we prepare for next year's elections. We are convinced the prospects for RISE are strong.

And they will be boosted further as the shine comes off the SNP. Nicola Sturgeon's ambiguous comments on austerity, cuts, privatisation, fracking, a second referendum, neoliberalism and much else are not a sign of strength but of weakness.

And it is one we intend to expose more and more in the months to come because working class people in Scotland need an effective left alliance more than ever.